

fish, "and I was just practicing my new pas when your hat got in my way. It is a very pretty ballet—'The Water Sprite.' Have you been to the rehearsal before?"

"No, I have not had that pleasure. Are you rehearsing alone?"

"No, indeed! don't you hear them on the stage? The music hasn't begun yet; they are just exercising. Do you dance?"

"I might pull through a Virginia reel with a good partner," answered Rush.

"I don't know that dance. Is it for the ballet?" said she, passing her foot over her head just for practice.

"No, it's not a ballet. Take care! you'll fall," said Rush, who had never seen a woman stand on one leg so long, putting out his hand to steady her.

She poked him playfully in the ribs with her slippered toe. "You don't know much about the ballet or you would not think that anything I can put my leg straight up in the air and come down the stage on one foot. I get a call for that every night. Haven't you ever seen me do it?"

"That is a pleasure still in store for me," answered Rush, with a gallant bow.

"Hark!" said the dancer, leaning forward. "Didn't you hear old Nani rap on his violin? I must fly."

"Before you go pray let me know the name of the charming young lady whose agility was the occasion of this pleasant acquaintance."

"You don't know me? What a strange fellow! I am Leon! Come, follow me if you want to see the rehearsal." And, taking his hand, she led him in and out among the dusty scenes, and finally stationed him in the wings in full view of the stage, which was dimly lighted by two large gas jets in the center. A queer looking old man in a swallow tail coat, buttoned up to the chin, stood ready with his violin under his arm. By his side was an eminently respectable looking woman in a plain stuff gown and bonnet.

"Now, ladies, are you ready?" said she, and, touching the old man gently, "Signor Nani, begin if you please." Then, beating time vigorously with her foot, she sang, "One, two, three." A row of legs was lifted towards Rush, who began to feel very much as though he were playing the role of Peeping Tom. "See-saw" went the violin in the most marked time, followed by the voice of the woman and the sharp beating of her foot on the bare boards.

Rush had seen ballet dancing before, but never in such queer costumes. There were no two alike. All the dancers wore short skirts, but from the waist up they were covered with dressing gowns of every conceivable style, except one who had on an ordinary black body and a black bonnet with a long crepe veil, which floated out behind her as she came tripping down the stage. Some had on old tights, others their usual stockings. The woman who was rehearsing them was the most energetic person Rush had ever seen. She not only sang all the music, but she beat time with her hands and feet, and whenever a particularly difficult step occurred she picked up her petticoats and danced it with the girls—"ladies" she called them. If they showed the slightest hesitation, they had to dance it all over again. Rush had never had such a treat in his life. He enjoyed every note of Signor Nani's music, and every step of the corymbes. But where was his agile friend? Ah, there she stood in the opposite wings, watching the trainer intently. The corymbes made a backward movement, Signor Nani played a flourish, and Leon bounded to the front of the stage.

Away flew Signor Nani's fingers over the strings, and away flew Leon around the stage; then the music slowed up, and the dancer came down the stage in a series of courtesies; then she pirouetted around on her toes and finally drew up in the center, and, placing one foot as high over her head as she could get it, wriggled down to the foot lights on the toe of the other slipper. It was a difficult task well done. Nani rapped on the back of his violin with his bow, and Mma. Kathi Lanner—for it was no less a personage training the ballet—clapped her hands delightedly, while Rush joined in the applause from the wings. Leon made him a graceful bow, and then, crossing over to him with the ungraceful walk of the ballet dancer, said, "I told you I could do it. I never did it so well at a rehearsal before, but I wanted to show you what I could do."

"Thank you very much," said Rush. "You did beautifully. You are as graceful as a swan and as light as a fairy. I never saw anything more exquisite; that last bit was the very poetry of motion."

Leon looked at him as though she had heard that expression before, but she did not say so.

"Ladies of the demon ballet!" shouted Mma. Lanner; and in a moment the air was filled with the clanging of cymbals.

"Do you dance again?" said Rush, amid the din.

"Oh, yes; I lead the demons."

"As an angel of light?"

"Oh, no; I'm the red devil. Wait till you see me in my red tights, with my face covered with phosphorus and a gold pitchfork in my hand. We give the ballet on Friday night. Will you be here?"

There was no coquetry in the girl's manner, she was proud of her performance, and she wanted every one to see it. "I shall certainly try to get here," said Rush.

"It will be grand," she continued. "We give 'The Water Sprite' first, then comes the new opera, 'Helen of Troy,' composed by M. Gounod expressly for Mlle. Knowlton, who will appear as Helen for the first time. You had better come."

"I shall do so, or perish in the attempt," answered Rush, with an emphasis that rather surprised the girl, who began to think that she had made an impression on the young man's heart. "You spoke of Miss Knowlton; does she come to rehearsals?" he inquired. "Will she be here to-night?"

"Of course she comes to rehearsals—what a stupid question!—but she doesn't come to the rehearsal. She was here all the morning rehearsing 'Helen.' Mlle. Knowlton works hard, and she is just as anxious for the singer of the smallest

part to make a hit as to make one herself; but she always does that, and she is going to have a grand triumph as Helen. You ought to see her costumes. They are lovely. She let her dresser show them to all of us ladies of the ballet and the chorus the other day."

"She must be very admirable and good. You can tell that by looking at her," said Rush.

"Good! I should think she was good! She is not like some prime donne I have danced with. People talk about ballet girls—with a shrug: 'I could tell them something about prime donne if I would, but I'm not a gossip. I have enough to do to look after my own affairs, without troubling myself about other people's. If you come to know us you will find that we are not as black as we are painted. Some of the hardest working and best women I have ever known have been ballet dancers. Because some one has given us a bad name we are the target for all the simple headed fops and bald headed rakes in the country; but these wicked men find themselves mistaken sometimes, and learn that a ballet dancer can take care of herself and that she has others to take care of her. You should have heard my father tell how he thrashed Lord Bellflower on the stage at Covent Garden one night for chucking my mother under the chin. My mother was a dancer—one of the most famous fairies in the pantomime, though you wouldn't think so to see her now—very beautiful. Old Bellflower admired her across the footlights, and thought the only thing he need do to make her acquaintance was to speak to her. He was well known behind the scenes of the theatre; my mother was not—she had just come from Italy; and he sauntered across the stage to the wings where she was standing, and, with an insolent leer, put out his big be-ringed hand and caught her by the chin. Oh, dear me! I have to laugh whenever I think of it. My mother drew back in affright as my father stepped up. My father was a famous athlete—the champion cannon ball tosser of Europe. He took his lordship by the seat of his trousers and the collar of his coat and ran him the length of the stage, the entire company looking on and trying not to laugh; and when he got him to the drop curtain he kicked it aside and fired my Lord Bellflower clear over the orchestra into the pit. You can imagine what a sensation this made. My mother had to leave the theatre, as his lordship was a large stockholder and one of the directors; but both she and my father got a splendid engagement at another house. If my father had intended doing something to make himself popular, he could not have hit upon a better device; and I can tell you that ballet dancers were better treated by the swells for some time after that."

And Leon raised herself on her toes and laughed.

"A capital story, capitally told," said Rush; "and I shall have a care in future not to chuck ballet girls under the chin until I find out if there are any athletes in the family."

"I don't believe you are that sort of a man," said Leon. "If I did, I would not have stood here talking to you; but there is something about you that tells me that you are an honest young fellow and have not been in the city long enough to be spoiled by its wicked ways. Ah! there is my cue."

Rush was young enough not to feel altogether flattered by Leon's estimate of him, but he took it as it was meant. He was very much pleased with the girl; she was very handsome, her manner was as attractive as it was frank, and she danced like a sylph. He made up his mind that he would ask permission to call upon her, and when she pirouetted around his way again, he said, "Mlle. Leon, since you have been kind enough to express such a good opinion of my character, perhaps you would not mind proving what you say by allowing me to call upon you at your home." And he smiled a most winning smile.

Leon looked him straight in the eyes; then she said: "If you would really care to call at my humble apartment you are quite welcome; but first give me your name, that I may introduce you to my mother; she is here waiting for me. She comes for me every night and we go home together."

"My name is Rush Hurlstone, and I am a journalist—fresh from the country, too, as you surmised. I shall be most happy to meet the mother of so charming a daughter, if you will take me to her," said Rush, in his most convincing manner.

"This way, then, please."

Rush followed her across the back of the stage, and there in a remote corner sat a tall, thin Italian woman, with a wrinkled, yellow skin, large nose, sharp pointed chin (the very chin Lord Bellflower had touched with his coat), and coal black eyes with heavy lids. They must have been handsome eyes when she was young—not so many years ago, either; but Italian women fade rapidly.

"Mother, I want to introduce Mr. Rush Hurlstone, from the country, who would like to call on us some day," said Leon.

The way she pronounced his name amused Rush very much, but he was too well bred to smile. He bowed politely to the mother and shook her hand so heartily that he knocked her knitting out of her lap as she attempted to rise.

"I am very glad to meet you, Signora Leon," said he, "and I hope for a better acquaintance with both you and your daughter."

"Thank you," said she, in English more broken than that of her daughter. "But my name is Cella."

"Leon is my stage name, you know," added the daughter. "You have to have a fancy name in the ballet. At home I am Lisa Cella; here I am Leon—'the only Leon,' as they say on the bills."

While they were talking there were loud cries for "Meister White," the gas man. Mma. Lanner wanted to try some of the colored light effects and Mr. White could not be found. "It's very funny," said the back door man. "I saw White standing out in the rain over an hour ago and called him in. What's more, I saw him come in; but I haven't seen him since. He couldn't have come

out, for I haven't left the door for a moment." Rush felt a guilty flush steal up to his cheeks, but as it would not help matters for him to explain that it was he, and not the gas man, who had been called to enter the academy, he said nothing. It being impossible to try the colored lights without Mr. White, Mma. Lanner said that she would expect to meet them all the next morning at 9. Leon and her mother got ready for the street, and Rush asked if he might not accompany them to their door, as it was rather late for unprotected women to be out.

They smiled at the idea of the lateness of the hour; it was then not more than half past 10, and often they had gone home alone as late as 1 o'clock; but if Mr. Hurlstone was going in their direction they would be pleased to have his company. They lived in East Tenth street, which was quite convenient for him. The rain had ceased, and the moon was shining brightly, as the three stepped out into Fourteenth street. Rush thought of the one he had seen coming through that doorway the night before, as he gave his arm to Signora Cella. The conversation turned from the stars of heaven to the stars of the stage, as they walked down to East Tenth street; and when they reached the modest house where the ballet dancer and her mother lived, Signora Cella insisted that he should come in.

"We always have a little supper after the theatre," said she, "and it would please us very much to have you eat a bit of bread and drink a glass of wine with us. Giuseppe will be glad to see you, too; he sees very little company, poor man."

Leon added her invitation. Rush looked at her handsome eyes, glistening in the moonlight, and accepted. Signora Cella's night key admitted them, and they were soon in a comfortably furnished room in the second story. A table spread with a snowy cloth stood in the middle of the floor, and by the melow light of an oil lamp, Rush saw that it was set for the late supper of which all people connected with the stage are so fond, and which is really necessary to their health, as they can eat very little before the performance. After the performance is over their minds are at rest, and they can sit down quietly and enjoy a tolerably hearty meal. A stick of French bread, a cut of that delightful Italian sausage, salami, and a bottle of Chianti wine stood upon the table. Rush noticed this at a glance, and at the same time he saw a large man, with a face showing signs of great suffering, propped up with pillows in a big chair by the fire. Leon ran lightly across the room, kissed the invalid's hand and laid it gently upon her brown curls, as though its touch carried a blessing with it.

The man leaned over and kissed her on the forehead, saying something in Italian that Rush did not hear, and would not have understood if he had. Then Leon arose and introduced Rush to her father. This poor sufferer was the famous cannon ball tosser. He had tossed one ball too many, for the last time he appeared in public the biggest and heaviest one hit him on a tender point of the spine, and this had been his condition ever since. He would never get well, he knew it; and the knowledge added to his suffering.

"Here I sit, a great, useless hulk, dependent on my poor little Lisa for support. 'If I could only work I could bear the pain; but I must sit here calmly as I may, with mind and body both on the rack.' There had been more or less of the animal in Cella's appearance when he was a young man, but he was always handsome, and now that suffering had refined his face and whitened his hair, he was really aristocratic looking. He shook Rush cordially by the hand, but he said only a few words, as his English was very imperfect.

Signora Cella disappeared in another room and left Leon to entertain Rush. In a few moments she returned with a bowl of smoking soup and a golden hued omelet. They wheeled the ex-cannon ball to the table. He opened the bottle dexterously, took the oil out of the neck with a little wad of cotton, and then all drank the health of the guest. So merry a meal Rush had seldom sat down to. The old man was not in as much pain as usual, and he told some amusing anecdotes of his athletic days. Leon was all excitement, owing to the new ballet, and good humor reigned. When the clock struck 12 Rush bade his kind entertainers good night, and thanked them for one of the pleasantest evenings of his life. It was all so unconventional; Leon was so beautiful and had so much common sense, and he was astonished at the refinement of the family.

He had always imagined that ballet dancers were a rather ignorant lot, and fastidious; yet here was a girl who, while she appeared before the public in skirts above her knees and earned a larger salary than her companions because she could kick her legs higher, was yet as modest and refined by nature as most ladies, though the associations of her life made her freer in her manner with strangers than if she had been born in more exclusive circles. There was nothing coarse about either of her parents, though her father had been a professional athlete and her mother a dancer; and they were evidently very careful of their daughter. As Rush walked across town to his lodgings, he wondered if he was the same Rush Hurlstone who three days ago was an unfledged country boy. Only two nights had passed, and here he was in love with a prima donna and supping with a ballet dancer!

CHAPTER III.

RUSH HURLSTONE was not the only young man in New York in love with Helen Knowlton.

There were scarcely a man in the city who was not in the same condition. I cannot say that all were as hard hit as our young friend, but several of them

thought they were—whose amounts to the same thing for the time being. This is not to be wondered at, either. Helen Knowlton was a woman of remarkable attractions. Aside from her gifts as a singer (and she was now at the zenith of her powers), she was a clever woman, a student of books and of men, and with sentiment enough to enable her to interpret poetic characters most successfully. While not, perhaps, what would be called a beauty, she was strikingly handsome.

According to classic ideas, her features were not perfect; yet one seldom sees finer eyes or a straighter nose, or a handsomer mouth than hers when she was talking or laughing. Some people thought her mouth too large, but Rush never liked a small mouth in man or woman; a large mouth with glistening teeth always attracted him. Her eyes were brown, with jet black lashes and brows, the former so thick and long that when he looked into her eyes he thought of fire burning its way through shrubbery. Her hair was brown, and grew in waving lines around her brow, and the line that marked its growth at the back of her neck was as clearly defined as though it had been drawn with a pencil. This may seem a small matter to speak of, but it is a great beauty in a woman. Her figure was exceedingly well proportioned, and she dressed with the most exquisite taste. With all these physical attractions, she had an unusually bright mind. She was constantly adding to her store of knowledge, and what she knew she knew thoroughly. If she had not been a prima donna, she would have distinguished herself in some other walk in life.

As to her character it was peculiar. When Rush came to know her intimately he told her she was the most singular combination of baby and woman he had ever met, and so she was. She lived in the world, but she was not a woman of the world. She could not say one thing and mean another, and her friends used to tell her that was an accomplishment a prima donna, of all persons, should possess. She was credulous, yet suspicious; she was practical to a fault, yet sentimental; she seemed cold in her nature, yet she unconsciously hungered for love. She made friends easily and took no pains to keep them, yet somehow or other they stuck by her. She was at this time just a little spoiled and with reason. The town was at her feet. There wasn't a man, woman or child who would not have been proud to do her a favor. Ladies vied with one another in entertaining her at their houses, young men fought for an introduction and old men toasted her at their clubs. I believe that if she had chosen to have Union club men pull her carriage instead of horses they would have humored her whim.

Everything new that came out in the way of bric-a-brac, jewelry or books was sent to her on the instant by some known or unknown admirer. Artists painted her in their pictures and poets lauded her in their lyrics. She had had so much of this adoration that she took it almost as a thing of course; yet she was pleased by every new attention, and never tired of being flattered.

Guarded like a hot house plant herself, the breath of scandal had never blown towards her. You could not look at her and believe that she was otherwise than pure, and the veriest old roue would have found himself awed by her innocence. Yet she was no prude. She was fond of the society of men and enjoyed a good time as much as any one, but she was possessed by a very strong idea of what a woman should and should not do. Her position made it necessary for her to be particularly careful, and, although she was 25 years old, she had never entertained a man alone in a room in her life. Foreigners, with their ideas of women on the stage, could not understand her; but none the less they joined with her countrymen in burning incense to her.

Helen Knowlton's parents had died when she was a baby, leaving her in charge of an aunt, Miss Rebecca Sanford, her mother's sister, who was known to half of Helen's friends and the whole musical profession as "Aunt Rebecca."

This good lady was a dragon of virtue. She looked upon her niece as a child and treated her as such; and, as it was kindly treatment, it had the effect of keeping her young, so that at 25 she was as fresh and youthful in her ideas as most girls of 18. Aunt Rebecca never let "that child" know any of the business details of her profession. The good lady stood between her niece and the managers. She read the contracts; Helen signed them. It was a shrewd manager who could get the better of her in a bargain, and the managers knew it and respected her cleverness.

There were, naturally, a great many visitors to the little Gothic cottage in West Twentieth street, where the prima donna made her home; but they all had to pass the eye of Aunt Rebecca before they could see her niece, and even then the matron seated herself in the room, let the visitor be man, woman or child, and never left till he or she had gone. She did not always take part in the conversation, but would often busy herself with a French novel (Aunt Rebecca was very partial to Georges Sand) and let the young people talk of their own affairs. It must be confessed that she rather overdid the guardianship at times; but if any very intimate friend suggested this she would say: "I don't want to give wagging tongues a chance. If any gossiping creature says such and such a thing occurred at such a time I can reply: 'My friend, you lie, for I was there.'"

Aunt Rebecca used sharp language at times, but, as she said, "What is the use of beating around the bush? You might as well beat the devil as drink his broth."

Never having known anything different, Helen was well satisfied with her aunt's guardianship, and never questioned it. Sometimes she would say to her young friends, as they started out for a walk in Fifth avenue, "I envy you your freedom to come and go as you please, but I suppose while I am a public singer I must accept the situation and give up the usual amusements of young women of my age." So she would go back to her room and superin-

tend the making of a costume with so much interest that she would forget all about the ordinary pleasures of life, and be wholly wrapped up in the dry details of her profession. She studied hard every day, and exercised and ate as carefully as an oarsman in training for a race. Properly speaking, she had never had any childhood, as she had begun her studies when very young and had been singing since she was in her teens. She liked the life of a singer and she didn't like it. The act of singing was of itself a pleasure, and there was nothing in the world so exciting to her as a large and enthusiastic audience.

"If an audience only knew how much better music it gets from an artist when it gives her something in return," she used to say, "I think it would always show a sympathetic spirit." She had little to complain of on the score of coldness in her audiences. In New York she was always treated as though she were the particular favorite of every auditor, and the applause when she came upon the stage only ceased that they might hear her sing.

It is not surprising that a woman of this sort should have had many admirers. It was said in society that she could marry any man she wanted—that they all would only be too happy to bestow their hands and fortunes upon her, from Uncle Lightfoot Myers to that much courted young man, Mr. West Hastings.

Aunt Rebecca smiled at the attentions of Uncle Lightfoot, but she was more severe upon West Hastings, though the latter was of a suitable age, had an income of eighty thousand dollars a year, and was considered a most desirable parti altogether. He was looked upon as a confirmed bachelor until he met Helen Knowlton, to whom he began paying devoted attentions very early in their acquaintance. Hastings was a man of the world, a member of half a dozen clubs, and lived more like a European than do most Americans. He had inherited his money, and had never done a day's work in his life, which was so much the worse for him; but he was not so good-for-nothing as are many of his countrymen similarly gifted by fortune. It was said that he patronized the ballet in the persons of its premieres; but, however this may be, you could never find a woman in society who would believe it, for there was nothing in his manner to betoken that he was not a man of the most exquisite refinement. If it had been Livingston Dash, or Charlie Vernon, or any one of half a dozen other well known club men, who had been so accused, the accusation might have been believed.

When Archie Tillinghast told his cousin Bessie Archer that he had seen West Hastings' coupe, with the blinds up, driving away from the stage door of Niblo's Garden during the run of "The Black Crook," she left the room in indignation, and would hardly speak to him the rest of the evening, though he was her escort to the Charity ball. When it became generally known that Hastings was paying marked attentions to Helen Knowlton the women said that she would do well to accept him; that a marriage with him would be a brilliant close for a brilliant career; but some of the men who knew him best shook their heads and said that, while West Hastings was a "good fellow," he was hardly calculated to make a good husband; that he would get tired of the best woman in the world if he was married to her, and they wanted to see Helen Knowlton married to a man who would make her happy to the end of her days.

That Hastings was interested in Miss Knowlton is not surprising. She was the most meted woman in New York, and she was the one woman whose head was not turned by his attentions. He had been used to a different sort of woman on the stage. Here was a prima donna who was as much of a lady and as pure a woman as his own sister. He began by pouring the ordinary compliments of a man of the world into her ear (he had to do it in Italian, for Aunt Rebecca was always on hand); but he soon saw that it bored her, and that she was only interested when he talked sense. He had traveled far and wide, had heard the native music of many countries, and could be very interesting if he chose. That she listened to him best when he appeared to the best advantage pleased him. Indeed, she pleased him altogether, for she gave him a new sensation, and if there was anything in this world that Hastings honestly loved, it was a new sensation.

He was beginning to think that he was in love with Helen Knowlton; and so he was, to a certain extent. He thought her cold, but he also thought her the most interesting person he had ever met; and then he liked to be considered the favored suitor of the most popular prima donna in the country. It pleased him that the men at the club called him a "lucky dog," and he enjoyed hearing it whispered, "That is West Hastings with Miss Knowlton."

"I believe I'll marry that girl," he would sometimes say to himself, never taking into consideration the fact that "that girl" might refuse to marry him. Then he would think of his luxurious bachelor quarters, of his perfect freedom from all domestic ties, and he would conclude to wait awhile longer before making a formal offer of marriage, believing that he could occupy the field as long as he cared to.

Helen Knowlton liked West Hastings very much. He was attentive and amusing, and he didn't ask her to marry him. I think that if he had put the question seriously she would have refused him. She was in love with her art. Music was the only thing that realized her ideal. She looked upon men, the little she saw of them, as pleasant companions, that was all. Music had satisfied her longings up to this time, and Aunt Rebecca had instilled into her mind the idea that men were a delusion and a snare; that her art was the only thing upon which she could rely.

"The more you do for men, the more you may do," said that wise woman; "but the more you do for art, the more art will do for you. Don't tell me! I haven't lived all these years among men for nothing. They can't take me in, and they never could." I don't think the

man ever lived who could have been induced to take Miss Rebecca Sanford in, for he would have known that if he did so he would have to give the reins into her hands and resign the driver's box forever.

Aunt Rebecca didn't intend that her niece should marry, at least for many a long day, and her influence was very strong. She wouldn't say: "You mustn't know So and So," or try any of the usual means of keeping a girl from falling in love; but she would with her witty tongue put a man in so ridiculous a light that Helen could never think of him again without laughing. Aunt Rebecca was very clever in her way, and she was more than a match for her niece. If she had once given Helen a chance to fall seriously in love the girl's attachment would have been too strong to be shaken by her shafts of ridicule. But she did not. When she thought West Hastings was becoming a little too attentive she asked Helen if she had noticed how he picked all the trifles out of the pate and put them on his own plate and selected the delicate bits of the celery for himself. Helen had not noticed this, so she supposed that if her aunt said so it must be true.

Aunt Rebecca was always ready with an anecdote against Hastings, which she told with a good natured laugh that entirely diverted suspicion. No one knew why she was so opposed to Helen's marrying, except that she wanted her to make even more of a career and add still more to her bank account. And she really did not believe that a woman was any happier for being married. "Marriage is a lottery, where all the tickets are blanks," she would say; and she got her niece to be very much of her opinion.

In the case of West Hastings, Aunt Rebecca's plan was to impress Helen with the idea that he was a selfish old bachelor (he was only 30), and every little thing he did that might be regarded as selfish she magnified. He was a selfish man, there is no doubt about that. Most wealthy bachelors are. They have had few or none of the experiences that are supposed to sweeten a man's disposition. Hastings had everything in the world that he wanted, and he was never crossed in any of his pleasures. It piqued him a little that Helen Knowlton did not seem to be more impressed by his attentions, but he never for a moment dreamed that he would be unsuccessful in a serious suit of that young woman.

At the time Rush Hurlstone saw him escorting Miss Knowlton to her carriage at the stage door of the Academy of Music more than one-half of society thought that he was engaged to be married to her, though neither of the persons most interested had heard the rumor. Aunt Rebecca took a wise course in the Hastings affair. From the day Helen first met him at Bessie Archer's "coming out" ball she showed a greater liking for him than for any man she had met before, and the astute Miss Sanford said to herself, "To break this off I must be diplomatic. It never does to oppose young people openly in matters of this sort. Let him come to see her. I will sort him from going too far if I can, and if I can't I shall accept the situation gracefully (he has eighty thousand dollars a year) and consider myself shelved for the rest of my days. But I don't propose to let him go too far. I don't see myself shelved at my time of life."

Aunt Rebecca enjoyed the business details of the operatic profession as much as her niece did the artistic part. To outwit the managers was as exciting to her as a game of chess is to some people, and she loved to plan a winter's campaign. No traveling was too hard for her, not even a "jump" from Boston to Chicago. She could make herself as happy in a car as in a drawing room. Her mind was on the gallop all the time, and it could work as well in one place as in another; indeed, she contended that the motion of a train only stimulated her thoughts. Helen was naturally of an active disposition, but she had grown passive under her aunt's dominating influence, and did not assert herself as much as she should have done. Once in a great while she would rebel, but it was a mere flash in the pan. Few people who did not know Helen Knowlton can imagine such a person, and there is no doubt that she was an exception to the rule of womanhood.

Just at the time of which I write, she was absorbed in the study of her new part, and the thousand and one things that had to be attended to before the eventful night on which the new opera was to be produced. Every one in New York who had a picture or a book relating in any way to Helen of Troy sent it to her, and all took a personal interest in the presentation of the opera. The night was drawing near. The Saturday matinee was postponed that she might get more rest and study, and there was to be a full dress rehearsal on Sunday, to which the critics of the press and a favored few were to be invited. Monday night was the great night, and you may imagine that she was more or less nervous in anticipation. Uncle Lightfoot Myers sent her a set of gold bands for her hair, with his best wishes for her success, and West Hastings sent her a beautifully wrought golden girdle, with the inscription, "And, like another Helen, I fired another Troy," engraved on the inside.

It seemed as though every one in New York wanted to have some part in the production of the opera beyond the mere buying of seats. In that they were generous enough, for everything in the house was bought up the day the box office opened. Monday came. There was a flurry of spring snow in the morning, but by afternoon it was bright and clear. Helen did not get up until 12 o'clock. She ate the lightest sort of breakfast, and at 4 had a heartier meal. All day long she was not allowed to speak—which was no deprivation, as she did not feel like it, being too much excited for words. At 7 o'clock the carriage was at the door, and she was driven to the Academy with Aunt Rebecca and her maid. For the next hour everything was confusion in the dressing room at the foot of the little stairway. Stitches that had dropped had

