'Yes,' said Teresa, a slight flush of color rising to her brown cheeks, 'I worked hard to get done in time.'

'And now your flowers are all gone.'

'All but these. I kept them——'

'For me!' said Antonio, taking the splendid, glowing carnations from her hand. They had moved away from the porch as they spoke, and crossing the green turned into a path which led sideways from the highway across a common blazing with golden broom, toward the river. The young man stopped for a moment to fasten the flowers into the top buttonhole of his waistcoat. His coat hung loose over one shoulder, but the blue back of the waistcoat served all the better to show up the whiteness of his snowy shirt-sleeves, embellished on either shoulder with delicate stitchery.

'There!' he said. 'I have seen no finer in the town. You know how to treat them, and that is a fact. You know how to treat everything, Teresa, chickens, pigs, all we have. I never remember the old mill so comfortable as since the day you came there first——'

'It was three years ago,' said Teresa. 'I was only a child.'

'You were nearly sixteen. And even then I fell in love with you, Teresa. Do you remember how——'

'I remember how angry your mother was,' said the girl, 'and how she threatened to send me away if ever I listened to a word you said.'

The young man's face darkened. 'And I had to promise not to think of you. And then I went for my time as a soldier. But I did not keep my promise, Teresa. I have been thinking of you ever since. And now, since I am home again——'

He stopped short in the middle of the path, turning to her.

'Now it is still the same.'

'But so is she,' said Teresa. 'I am only a poor girl, an orphan, and you are Antonio of the mill.'

'You are Teresa, who has been as a daughter to her for nearly three years, and it is you I want for my wife. Never fear, Teresa, this time I shall have my way.'

He seized her hand as he spoke, and she did not resist. It was sweet to believe him, to pledge her own word in return, to lay her future in his charge. There might be struggles, but they were far off in this calm evening hour as they lingered on their way through the fields of wheat, rustling gently in the evening breezes, under the vine wreaths garlanding each wayside tree, and across the common where the crickets made loud music in the golden sunset hour.

The old mother, Tia Rosa, standing at the top of the worn granite steps leading from the yard, her thin form, in its gaudy cotton skirt and patched print bodice, sharply defined against the dark background of the kitchen, saw the pair coming slowly toward her up the hollow lane, so deep in happy talk that they never noticed her. Her eyes flashed angrily. Then for a moment she relented. The sight brought back the memory of just such another golden hour, long-faded gold, alas, when it seemed as if heaven on earth was opened to her. She, too, had been an orphan, penniless as Teresa, and not even as clever and capable as she. If she let them have their way—but experience, the long years of poverty which lay between that hour to this, the struggle so hard to her failing strength that she never remembered how light it had seemed to her young love——

'No, no, the old know best,' she said to herself. 'Love is good, but bread in the cupboard is better still.' And then she raised a hand to her mouth and shouted, the sound breaking harshly through the evening calm.

'Oh, Teresa, *anda, moça*! One would say thy feet were glued to the earth. Come, I have news for thee!'

The girl started, blushed, and then hastened forward, Antonio keeping by her side.

'Yes,' said the mother, her sharp grey eyes on the girl alone. 'Thou wilt remember that I told thee of my talk with the Senhor Abbade. Well, to-day he had news from the town. There is a family in Coimbra looking for a young, active country-girl for the children. They will take thee, three *mil reis* a month to begin. It is time thou shouldst think of saving for thy old days, and I can not pay thee thy value. They want thee as soon as possible.'

Teresa stood as if turned to stone, then her look sought Antonio. But he, too, seemed petrified. The old woman went on:

'Now that Antonio is home again to look after things, I can do much of what was thy work, and soon no doubt he will marry——'

Now was the opening. Why did not Antonio speak? He opened his mouth indeed, but his mother left him no time.

'He must, of course, find some one with money. We can barely live as it is, in spite of Joaquim's good wages, and the mill needs repair.'

Then Antonio found his tongue. 'Mother,' he said, 'I want to marry Teresa.'

The old woman turned quickly, a hand on either hip, and he shrank back, almost like a schoolboy fearing a blow.

'Teresa! What a child thou art still! Has Teresa money? When she has, then it will be time to talk.'

To the girl the words seemed to come like the knell of all her hopes. But Antonio appeared to derive consolation from them.

'Then you will consent, mother.'

'Oh, certainly, then I will consent.'

'Well, we can wait, Teresa. We are promised now, and we will wait.' He took her hand as he spoke, and looked into her face. 'Thou wilt be faithful?'

'Yes, I will be faithful,' she answered, her eyes to his. Then she broke away from him and stumbled blindly upstairs to her own little room under the roof.

Late that night, sick and exhausted with weeping, she looked out of the tiny window into the orchard close. A nightingale was singing in the apple tree covered with young fruit she would never see ripen, and at the further end, dark against the silvery stream beyond, an unfamiliar blotch of shadow showed that some one else was sharing her vigil. A little warmth crept into her aching heart, and for a while she stood watching the dark figure, till at last it moved and stood upright against the dim sky. If he saw her they might at least exchange a few words. Then she drew back into the darkness. The man had turned, stretching out his arms to her window in a gesture of despairing grief. But the light of the pale young moon fell full upon his face, and she saw that it was not Antonio, but his younger brother, Joaquim.

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Coimbra was not the terrible place which, in the first anguish of parting, Teresa had dreaded. Once safely over the difficulties of the journey, the noise of the train, the breathless passage on the swaying iron bridge high over the Douro, the fear of not being recognised by the servant sent to meet her, in spite of the red cotton bag held well to the fore and the yellow-fringed head kerchief which every one stared at in the town, Teresa began to take an interest in her new life. Shoes were tiresome after one has run barefoot always, or pattered about in wooden pattens, and the other servants often laughed at her northern accent. But they were good-natured enough, and the children won her heart from the first. True, the elder boys were rather inclined to tease her with the marvels they pretended to find in their school books, things quite incredible although printed, and the old grey streets of the town were dull enough after the gleaming fields, which the silvery olive-groves and distant, green-clad mountains could not replace. But the ancient buildings were full of marvels to be later faithfully recounted to those at home, and the narrow streets were enlivened by the students, who swarmed in every direction, their long, loose black cloaks fantastically draped, and their dark tousled heads uncovered to sun and wind. In spite of all fidelity to Antonio, Teresa was too much of a woman not to feel pleased when one of the '*senhores*' looked her way with a well-turned compliment, and not even her heavy heart prevented her enjoying the delights of the Eve of St. John, when, under the guard of the old gardener, she and two other maids walked up and down the gaily lighted streets, listening to the singing, the merry shouts, the guitars, watching the blazing bon-fires, the paper balloons, the rockets that went whizzing up in long trains of fire into the starry summer sky. Next year, when she returned to the village, as she had promised, there would be marvellous things to tell them all of this strange place.

But when next June came round, and St. Anthony's Day drew near, there was no holiday for Teresa. Little Ruy, the youngest of the children and her especial pet, was very ill. How could she leave him, when he would rest in no one's arms but hers? He could only sleep a little when she walked him up and down during the long, hot nights, singing the plaintive *fados* of the Minho, which her own mother had sung to her in the days which seemed so far removed from these.

Teresa had written, and Antonio had answered once or twice during that year, stiff, awkward letters in which their love struggled vainly for expression. But there were thirty *mil reis* in the envelope with her name on it in Senhor Carvalho's safe, and by next summer it would, please God, be doubled.

By next summer it was more than doubled, for Teresa had proved her worth and earned better wages. But that very worth made the Carvalhos anxious for her to stay with the children when they went late in May to the waters. Teresa consented—there was time till June. And so there would have been had not a few days' illness interrupted the course of treatment, so that it had to be begun over again. Of course she could have gone after their return. They made no objection, but the feast was over, and the journey homeward complicated by the fact that they had moved south to a watering-place near Lisbon.

When the following summer came, Teresa's resolve was fixed. She would go this year, cost what it might, the more so that Antonio had not written since the early spring.

Her resolution was put to a severe test. Senhor Carvalho, an eminent architect, had been offered an excellent appointment in the south of Brazil. If Teresa would come with them they offered her still higher wages, whereas to leave now meant, doubtless, never to see them again, her curly-headed Ruy, little Zézé, the bigger boys, their parents, the friends and comrades of these last three years. But Antonio had her word, and though it tore her heart to say good-bye, Teresa stood firm.

Very early on a summer morning, when all the wide river lay half-veiled in opal mists, Teresa watched the big steamer disappearing down the Tagus, and then made her own way to the station, tremulous with eager hope, her little store of notes carefully placed in the bosom of her