

Night was falling when the train arrived at L.; and Aimée left the carriage, in which she had not exchanged a single word with any of her companions. Plodding on steadily, without a thought of fatigue or fear, until she came to the village, she approached the humble home in which she had left her childish heart. Through the uncurtained window she saw the family seated around the supper table. Softly opening the door, she stood before the astonished group.

'I have come back!' she cried. 'I have come back! I have run away. My father is dead, and my mother will not be sorry that I am here. If you do not let me stay with you, I will throw myself in the river. And if they take me back, I will throw myself out of the highest window, or under the feet of the horses in the street.'

Then, bursting into a paroxysm of tears, the first she had shed since she left the cottage, she fell into Catherine's arms, opened to receive her.

Strange as it may appear, Madame Punol did not attempt to redeem her daughter. Utterly indifferent to Aimée as she was, her departure afforded her more satisfaction than regret. As soon as possible negotiations as to the future were arranged between herself and the Martins; and Aimée entered once more into the life she loved, and became, as formerly, in every particular a model child.

At the age of sixteen she began to teach the village school. At twenty she married the nephew of the curé, a young doctor from Nevers, who had come to pass the vacation with his uncle. At that time it became known that a suitable marriage portion had been provided for her by her mother—a welcome addition to the modest purse of the young physician. From this period Aimée passed for ever out of the lives of the Martins, whose family were in homes of their own. But tender memories still existed between the child and her kind foster parents.

As soon as she was transplanted to another atmosphere, the soul of Aimée expanded and adapted itself to circumstances more fitted to her refined nature. The beautiful and gentle Madame Dirmontel was everywhere loved and admired. Three lovely children came to bless this ideal union.

When the Dirmontels had been married ten years the health of the doctor began to fail, and they decided to spend the summer near Trouville, with their children, satisfied that a complete renunciation of business would effect a cure, which proved to be the case. A cottage was rented, and the whole family entered into the full enjoyment of their holiday.

One morning, her husband and children having preceded her to the beach, Aimée, after attending to some household duties, prepared to follow them. A small runabout in which two ladies were seated passed her, going very quickly. They were elderly persons, very well dressed, and had the air of people of some importance. Suddenly, through the cloud of dust they left behind them, Aimée perceived a grey chiffon veil, which fell to the ground at her feet. She stooped to pick it up, and at the same moment saw that the carriage had turned about and was approaching the place where she stood. She made a step forward with the veil in her hand. The elder of the two ladies, who was very handsome, in a cold, statuesque way extended her hand.

'Thank you, madame!' she said politely, as she received the veil. 'If I had had it on my hat where it belongs, instead of on the seat beside me, I should not have lost it.'

'You are welcome, madame,' answered Aimée, and for an instant the two women looked into each other's eyes. It was over in a moment; the travellers resumed their journey. The lady turned to the driver.

'Do you know the name of the persons who live in the cottage we have just passed,' she inquired—'where that lady was standing who picked up the veil?'

'They are the Dirmontels,' he replied. 'He is a doctor.'

'Do they reside here?'

'They are from Nevers—here for the season only.'

'Thank you!' responded the questioner, while her friend remarked:

'That was a very good-looking and refined young woman, quite out of the ordinary. Don't you think so?'

'I agree with you,' said the other.

'I fancy you looked very much like that at her age,' continued her friend.

'Perhaps I did,' replied her companion, thoughtfully. 'But I never had those soft, dark eyes. They are the crowning feature of her face.'

'Yes, you are right,' rejoined the other, mentally contrasting them with those of the woman beside her, which were a hard, steely grey.

The elder woman took a note-book from her pocket and wrote a few words; then she leaned back, silently musing, until they came in sight of Trouville, where they were sojourning.

Aimée walked slowly toward the beach, musing in her turn. The subject of her reflections was not a pleasant one.

'That was my mother,' she said to herself—'my mother! And she recognised me! God forgive me, but the sight of her has aroused the worst feelings of which I am capable—terrible feelings of resentment and aversion, which I thought were forgotten in the great happiness of my life! But this shows what I might have become, what possibilities there are within me, which, owing to fortunate circumstances, have not been developed. I do not wish her evil—oh, no!—but, God, Thou knowest it, I wish also never

again to meet her! And, if I am not altogether mistaken in her character, this first meeting, if she can so order it, will be our last. O Catherine! O Claude! What, where would I have been if you had not sheltered me? I shudder to think of it.'

Five years later the Dirmontels came into possession of a large fortune, left them, it was said, by a distant relative of Aimée's; but the husband and wife knew the real source of their increased wealth, and whence came the tardy recognition, the effort at atonement for years of indifference and neglect on the part of a most unusual and unnatural mother.—*Ave Maria.*

## ARTHUR ALDIS' GREAT WORK

When Margaret Donovan married Arthur Aldis, she said, 'My life is magnified this day above all my days,' and for a year she believed it. Then came the awakening. Slowly it dawned on her that it was not her handsome, dreamy, good-tempered husband who was doing all the work on their farm, but her freckled, raw-boned brother Tom. The farm in the far west had been given to her as her wedding dower by her father, whose broad cattle ranch, in the shadows of the Rockies, stretched for miles beyond her own land.

It was one summer when she was just back from her convent school in Denver that she had met Arthur Aldis, artist, literateur, and dreamer, who had come out to Colorado and Wyoming because of some slight tendency to delicacy of the lungs, and, loving him with all her heart, had married him. Two months later her father died, and his broad lands had passed to her eldest brother, Robert. Then it was that Tom, the youngest son, and Margaret's favorite brother, had come to live with them, and gradually Arthur had handed over to him first one thing on the farm and then another, until, at the end of a year, Tom was doing practically all the work.

'He likes it,' the optimistic dreamer told his wife, 'and as for me, I can now have more time for my literary work.' So he fitted out the most attractive room in the house as his 'den,' and proceeded to write magazine articles that brought him a slender pittance, which, had it not been for the farm, would have utterly failed to provide for them.

In five years the faithful Tom married, left for a home of his own, and confronted with the necessity of assuming the reins of government, Aldis settled it to his own satisfaction; 'Joe will look after everything,' he said, 'and he can report to me from time to time.'

Joe, a farm hand, with the best of good will, but no executive ability, scratched his head and looked at Margaret doubtfully as Aldis' graceful figure disappeared in the house, seeing which, Margaret smiled bravely. 'It's all right, Joe,' she said, 'Go to the north field and start the boys ploughing it; then come to me.'

In the years that followed it was Margaret who became the dominant spirit, while Aldis continued to write and to assure himself and everyone else how well Joe did the work under his direction. In the meantime, had he not wisely abandoned writing for the magazines, and was he not engaged in a monumental work that would bring him fame and money—nothing less than the 'Interdependence of Literature,' a book that was to astonish the world. Margaret did her best, but her babies came fast, and sixteen years after her marriage she died, leaving her husband to face life with their nine children, the eldest of whom was only fifteen.

It had pleased Aldis to give his children poetic names, and it was the eldest, a girl named Mona Lisa, to whom the dying woman recommended her own children. 'You will do your best, Mona—always love your father, and teach the others to love him; and have patience with Don and Vittoria, and be a mother to little Angelo.'

Three years passed, and it was Twelfth Night. The snow lay deep on the far western land, as Mona Lisa stood in the warm farm kitchen, preparing the midday meal. It was a lovely face that bent over the stove, the counterpart of Aldis'. Three years of heavy responsibility and care had brought shadows to the girl's eyes, and at eighteen she looked over twenty. Nobly she had fulfilled her mother's trust, and all that she could do had been done; but the great work was still unfinished, the farm was not half tilled or cultivated, and money grew more scarce every year.

The kitchen door was flung open, and with a whirl there entered Don and Vittoria, sworn allies, and the most high-spirited and turbulent of the flock. Mona Lisa lifted her delicate flushed face from the frying pan and smiled at the newcomers.

'Don,' she said, 'please take some fresh logs to papa's den, and Vittoria, would you go and see if Angelo has awakened from his nap?'

Vittoria Colonna, a sturdy, handsome girl of thirteen, departed, and Donovan gathered up an armful of logs and disappeared down the passage leading to his father's sanctum. He was back in five minutes.

'The governor wants a cup of tea right away, Monny. He says he's cold and can't write when his fingers are so stiff.'

A little pucker appeared on Mona's forehead, but she busied herself getting the tea, and presently handed it to the none too willing Donovan, who again departed down the passage-way. In the boy's heart was a growing re-