'I'm not particularly interested in that sort of people,' observed Mrs. Wilcox languidly. 'But I agree with you; they ought to be kept in their place.'

'There she is now!' whispered Mrs. Sparks, as a young lady issued from a French window on the other side of the piazza; and, after a pleasant 'Good-morning!' to the two ladies—who returned it with stony glances and stiff bends of the head—hastened briskly down the steps.

'Did you ever!' exclaimed Mrs. Wilcox, when she could command herself.

'The impertinence of some people! It is becoming almost insufferable!' said Mrs. Sparks.

'Probably she is a maid sent on in advance of her mistress, or a governess,' replied Mrs. Wilcox. 'I see she came out of the most expensive suite in the house.'

'O dear! I do hope we are not going to be annoyed by a pack of children,' grumbled the other lady.

'I share your hope; but I imagine there is nothing to fear,' observed her friend. 'If she were a governess, the children would be with her. I fancy she is a lady's maid.'

'She is wearing a beautiful linen blouse.'

'Yes; and that blue cloth skirt must have been an expensive purchase. That kind of people put every cent they can on their backs, you know.'

'She seems quite at ease.'

'Oh, they always do! They are very adaptable.'

This remark called forth a ripple of laughter from the two ladies, who passed the remainder of the morning in more or less harmless gossip—carefully refraining, however, from wounding each other's feelings, though commenting freely on the faults and failings of their absent friends and acquaintances.

About the middle of the afternoon Mrs. Wilcox sought a secluded summer-house, with a novel in her hand; preferring solitude to the company of her new friend, of which she had already grown slightly wearied. Arrived there, she found the young woman of the linen blouse and tailor-made skirt seated at one of the small tables. She seemed to be examining a map or chart. She looked up pleasantly as the other woman entered, but Mrs. Wilcox gave no sign of having seen her. The girl sat very quietly, studying the papers before her; Mrs. Wilcox furtively watching her, resenting her presence, and inwardly fuming at what, if she had expressed herself in words, she would have styled the 'odious self-possession of such persons.'

She was not to escape her new acquaintance, however. In a few moments Mrs. Sparks came slowly along in the same direction. Glancing into the summer-house and seeing Mrs. Wilcox, she entered and seated herself in one of the wicker rockers. Presently the pair began a whispered conversation, which, if there is any truth in the accepted adage, should have caused their neighbor's ears to burn. But she was so deeply engrossed in her task that she took no heed of their loud whispers or peculiar glances. At length she arose and began to roll up the papers on the table, confining them with a wide rubber band. Suddenly she put her hand to her breast and uttered an exclamation. She looked on the table and under it, the two ladies watching her with silent curiosity.

'I beg your pardon, ladies!' she said at last. 'I think I must have lost a precious gold cross after leaving the hotel.'

'Was it so very valuable?' asked Mrs. Sparks.

'To me, at least, it was,' rejoined the girl, resuming her search for the missing trinket.

As she moved the roll of paper from the spot where she had placed it on the table, the cross fell to the floor, resting at the feet of Mrs. Wilcox, who picked it up, and, instead of offering it at once to the owner, passed it to Mrs. Sparks, who began to examine it. It was about two inches in length, beautifully chased, and encrusted with small diamonds. An enamelled leaf, studded with emeralds and rubies, lay across the centre. It was a most delicate piece of workmanship.

'Ah, I am so glad I did not lose it!' exclaimed the girl.

Mrs. Sparks continued to examine it.

'Did you ever see anything more beautiful?' she asked of her companion.

'Never!' was the reply. It is a *chef-d'œuvre* certainly. And the design is so odd. The chasing is exquisite.'

'It must be very old,' observed Mrs. Sparks. 'It is fit for a queen.'

'It is reputed to have belonged to Catherine de' Medici,' said the girl pleasantly; quite unsuspicious of what was passing in the minds of the other two ladies.

Now, Mrs. Sparks and her friend had, between them, only a hazy idea of who Catherine de' Medici had been. But they were aware of the fact that she had helped to make history; and, while her past ownership of the cross served in their minds to make it more desirable and valuable, the fact of its possession by the present owner rendered it, in their opinion, doubly strange and suspicious. Mrs. Sparks, the more daring of the two, again turned it over in her hand before she asked:

'And where did *you* get it?'

The pale cheeks of the girl became crimson. She was small of stature, but her height seemed to overtop that of her rude inquisitor as, with head thrown back and eyes flashing, she indignantly said;

'Madame, I am not at all aware that it concerns you. You have asked a most impertinent question. Have the goodness to hand me my cross.'

'*Your* cross!' said her interlocutor, incredulously. 'What do you think, Mrs. Wilcox?'

'Give it to her, of course,' was the reply. 'It is none of our affair.'

'But I am almost sure it does not belong to her. Probably she has appropriated it to her own use as an ornament, during the absence of her employer—intending to replace it, I hope; and was very much alarmed when she thought it lost.'

'Give it to me at once!' exclaimed the girl imperiously.

Mrs. Sparks laid the cross on the table.

'What insolence!' she muttered, as the girl, seizing the cross and the roll of paper, hurried from the arbor.

The animadversions and criticisms of the two ladies, their unkind suspicions and petty remarks on what had occurred, would not interest the reader. Let them be confined to the four walls of the summer-house, as unworthy of being recorded here. But fully an hour was occupied in discussing the incident, when the setting sun, which warned them that the train which was to convey their respective and, we trust, respectable husbands might perhaps already have arrived.

So it proved. As they neared the hotel, Mrs. Wilcox perceived the Judge standing on the piazza, fanning himself with his broad Panama; while Mrs. Sparks could not repress an exclamation of astonishment at what her eyes beheld. Seated under the shade of a pergola near the driveway was her husband; and beside him, earnestly engaged in pointing out something on the unrolled chart she held, sat the girl whom she had insulted an hour previously. The supper bell had rung before they separated—the young girl going in the direction of the French window of the suite from which she had issued in the morning; while the architect came toward his wife, who was standing with Judge and Mrs. Wilcox, awaiting him.

'Who *is* that girl, Ernest?' inquired Mrs. Sparks, after a hurried word of greeting and introduction. 'How do you happen to know her?'

'That is Miss Van Anken,' replied the architect, smilingly. 'She has come down for a day about the church.'

'Ah!' exclaimed Mrs. Wilcox, in a tone of unconcealed vexation.

'O—h—!' wailed Mrs. Sparks, in a voice that sounded like a cry of hopeless and unavailing despair.

She had relied much on the coming of Miss Van Anken; confident, through her husband, of meeting that young lady; and counting upon the fact of being, like the benefactress of religion, a Catholic—for such she was in name rather than practice. The belief they shared in common, added to the business relations between her husband and Miss Van Anken, had seemed to her sufficient to promise great things in a social way. She had looked forward with much pleasure to the moment when she would present the heiress to Mrs. Wilcox, whom, in her own narrow little heart, she already accused of being a 'snob.'

But one sudden and devastating blow had scattered her deeply-laid plans; and, dreadful to contemplate, it was her own hand that had worked their destruction! She had been overtaken by the Nemesis which occasionally lies in ambush for such as she. There was just one way of escape from the humiliation, the mortification, that awaited her; either to plead illness on the morrow and until Mrs. Wilcox should have departed, or herself depart. The latter plan was not feasible; she must remain with her husband, to whom she could explain nothing.

But she need not have passed a sleepless night, as she did; for Judge Wilcox and his wife left the hotel early next morning, while Miss Van Anken took her departure shortly after. And the architect never heard the story.

Teach the boy to be true to his word and work; to face all difficulties with courage and cheerfulness; to form no friendships that can bring him into degrading associations; to respect other people's convictions; to reverence womanhood; to live a clean life in thought and word as well as in deed; that true manliness always commands success; that the best things in life are not those that can be bought with money; that to command he must first learn to obey; that there can be no compromise between honesty and dishonesty; that the virtues of punctuality and politeness are excellent thing to cultivate. Criticisms never hurt anybody. If false, they cannot hurt you unless you are wanting in manly character; and if true, they show a man his weak points.
