

Burnett Frances Hodgson

# Louisiana



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# Содержание

CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	10
CHAPTER III.	14
CHAPTER IV.	17
CHAPTER V.	19
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	20

# Frances Hodgson Burnett

## Louisiana

### CHAPTER I.

### LOUISIANA

Olivia Ferrol leaned back in her chair, her hands folded upon her lap. People passed and repassed her as they promenaded the long "gallery," as it was called; they passed in couples, in trios; they talked with unnecessary loudness, they laughed at their own and each other's jokes; they flirted, they sentimentalized, they criticised each other, but none of them showed any special interest in Olivia Ferrol, nor did Miss Ferrol, on her part, show much interest in them.

She had been at Oakvale Springs for two weeks. She was alone, out of her element, and knew nobody. The fact that she was a New Yorker, and had never before been so far South, was rather against her. On her arrival she had been glanced over and commented upon with candor.

"She is a Yankee," said the pretty and remarkably youthful-looking mother of an apparently grown-up family from New Orleans. "You can see it."

And though the remark was not meant to be exactly severe, Olivia felt that it was very severe, indeed, under existing circumstances. She heard it as she was giving her orders for breakfast to her own particular jet-black and highly excitable waiter, and she felt guilty at once and blushed, hastily taking a sip of ice-water to conceal her confusion. When she went upstairs afterward she wrote a very interesting letter to her brother in New York, and tried to make an analysis of her sentiments for his edification.

"You advised me to come here because it would be novel as well as beneficial," she wrote. "And it certainly is novel. I think I feel like a Pariah – a little. I am aware that even the best bred and most intelligent of them, hearing that I have always lived in New York, will privately regret it if they like me and remember it if they dislike me. Good-natured and warm-hearted as they seem among themselves, I am sure it will be I who will have to make the advances – if advances are made – and I must be very amiable, indeed, if I intend that they shall like me."

But she had not been well enough at first to be in the humor to make the advances, and consequently had not found her position an exciting one. She had looked on until she had been able to rouse herself to some pretty active likes and dislikes, but she knew no one.

She felt this afternoon as if this mild recreation of looking on had begun rather to pall upon her, and she drew out her watch, glancing at it with a little yawn.

"It is five o'clock," she said. "Very soon the band will make its appearance, and it will bray until the stages come in. Yes, there it is!"

The musical combination to which she referred was composed of six or seven gentlemen of color who played upon brazen instruments, each in different keys and different time. Three times a day they collected on a rustic kiosk upon the lawn and played divers popular airs with an intensity, fervor, and muscular power worthy of a better cause. They straggled up as she spoke, took their places and began, and before they had played many minutes the most exciting event of the day occurred, as it always did somewhere about this hour. In the midst of the gem of their collection was heard the rattle of wheels and the crack of whips, and through the rapturous shouts of the juvenile guests, the two venerable, rickety stages dashed up with a lumbering flourish, and a spasmodic pretense of excitement, calculated to deceive only the feeblest mind.

At the end of the gallery they checked themselves in their mad career, the drivers making strenuous efforts to restrain the impetuosity of the four steeds whose harness rattled against their ribs

with an unpleasant bony sound. Half a dozen waiters rushed forward, the doors were flung open, the steps let down with a bang, the band brayed insanely, and the passengers alighted. – "One, two, three, four," counted Olivia Ferrol, mechanically, as the first vehicle unburdened itself. And then, as the door of the second was opened: "One – only one: and a very young one, too. Dear me! Poor girl!"

This exclamation might naturally have fallen from any quick-sighted and sympathetic person. The solitary passenger of the second stage stood among the crowd, hesitating, and plainly overwhelmed with timorousness. Three waiters were wrestling with an ugly shawl, a dreadful shining valise, and a painted wooden trunk, such as is seen in country stores. In their enthusiastic desire to dispose creditably of these articles they temporarily forgot the owner, who, after one desperate, timid glance at them, looked round her in vain for succor. She was very pretty and very young and very ill-dressed – her costume a bucolic travesty on prevailing modes. She did not know where to go, and no one thought of showing her; the loungers about the office stared at her; she began to turn pale with embarrassment and timidity. Olivia Ferrol left her chair and crossed the gallery. She spoke to a servant a little sharply:

"Why not show the young lady into the parlor?" she said.

The girl heard, and looked at her helplessly, but with gratitude. The waiter darted forward with hospitable rapture.

"Dis yeah's de way, miss," he said, "right inter de 'ception-room. Foller me, ma'am."

Olivia returned to her seat. People were regarding her with curiosity, but she was entirely oblivious of the fact.

"That is one of them," she was saying, mentally. "That is one of them, and a very interesting type it is, too."

To render the peculiarities of this young woman clearer, it may be well to reveal here something of her past life and surroundings. Her father had been a literary man, her mother an illustrator of books and magazine articles. From her earliest childhood she had been surrounded by men and women of artistic or literary occupations, some who were drudges, some who were geniuses, some who balanced between the two extremes, and she had unconsciously learned the tricks of the trade. She had been used to people who continually had their eyes open to anything peculiar and interesting in human nature, who were enraptured by the discovery of new types of men, women, and emotions. Since she had been left an orphan she had lived with her brother, who had been reporter, editor, contributor, critic, one after the other, until at last he had established a very enviable reputation as a brilliant, practical young fellow, who knew his business, and had a fine career open to him. So it was natural that, having become interested in the general friendly fashion of dissecting and studying every scrap of human nature within reach, she had followed more illustrious examples, and had become very critical upon the subject of "types" herself. During her sojourn at Oakvale she had studied the North Carolinian mountaineer "type" with the enthusiasm of an amateur. She had talked to the women in sunbonnets who brought fruit to the hotel, and sat on the steps and floor of the galleries awaiting the advent of customers with a composure only to be equaled by the calmness of the noble savage; she had walked and driven over the mountain roads, stopping at wayside houses and entering into conversation with the owners until she had become comparatively well known, even in the space of a fortnight, and she had taken notes for her brother until she had roused him to sharing her own interest in her discoveries.

"I am sure you will find a great deal of material here," she wrote to him. "You see how I have fallen a victim to that dreadful habit of looking at everything in the light of material. A man is no longer a man – he is 'material'; sorrow is not sorrow, joy is not joy – it is 'material.' There is something rather ghoulish in it. I wonder if anatomists look at people's bodies as we do at their minds, and if to them every one is a 'subject.' At present I am interested in a species of girl I have discovered. Sometimes she belongs to the better class – the farmers, who have a great deal of land and who are the rich men of the community, – sometimes she lives in a log cabin with a mother who smokes and chews

tobacco, but in either case she is a surprise and a mystery. She is always pretty, she is occasionally beautiful, and in spite of her house, her people, her education or want of it, she is instinctively a refined and delicately susceptible young person. She has always been to some common school, where she has written compositions on sentimental or touching subjects, and when she belongs to the better class she takes a fashion magazine and tries to make her dresses like those of the ladies in the colored plates, and, I may add, frequently fails. I could write a volume about her, but I wont. When your vacation arrives, come and see for yourself." It was of this class Miss Ferrol was thinking when she said: "That is one of them, and a very interesting type it is, too."

When she went in to the dining-room to partake of the six o'clock supper, she glanced about her in search of the new arrival, but she had not yet appeared. A few minutes later, however, she entered. She came in slowly, looking straight before her, and trying very hard to appear at ease. She was prettier than before, and worse dressed. She wore a blue, much-ruffled muslin and a wide collar made of imitation lace. She had tucked her sleeves up to her elbow with a band and bow of black velvet, and her round, smooth young arms were adorable. She looked for a vacant place, and, seeing none, stopped short, as if she did not know what to do. Then some magnetic attraction drew her eye to Olivia Ferrol's. After a moment's pause, she moved timidly toward her.

"I – I wish a waiter would come," she faltered.

At that moment one on the wing stopped in obedience to a gesture of Miss Ferrol's – a delicate, authoritative movement of the head.

"Give this young lady that chair opposite me," she said.

The chair was drawn out with a flourish, the girl was seated, and the bill of fare was placed in her hands.

"Thank you," she said, in a low, astonished voice.

Olivia smiled.

"That waiter is my own special and peculiar property," she said, "and I rather pride myself on him."

But her guest scarcely seemed to comprehend her pleasantry. She looked somewhat awkward.

"I – don't know much about waiters," she ventured. "I'm not used to them, and I suppose they know it. I never was at a hotel before."

"You will soon get used to them," returned Miss Ferrol.

The girl fixed her eyes upon her with a questioning appeal. They were the loveliest eyes she had ever seen, Miss Ferrol thought – large-irised, and with wonderful long lashes fringing them and curling upward, giving them a tender, very wide-open look. She seemed suddenly to gain courage, and also to feel it her duty to account for herself.

"I shouldn't have come here alone if I could have got father to come with me," she revealed. "But he wouldn't come. He said it wasn't the place for him. I haven't been very well since mother died, and he thought I'd better try the Springs awhile. I don't think I shall like it."

"I don't like it," replied Miss Ferrol, candidly, "but I dare say you will when you know people."

The girl glanced rapidly and furtively over the crowded room, and then her eyes fell.

"I shall never know them," she said, in a depressed undertone.

In secret Miss Ferrol felt a conviction that she was right; she had not been presented under the right auspices.

"It is rather clever and sensitive in her to find it out so quickly," she thought. "Some girls would be more sanguine, and be led into blunders."

They progressed pretty well during the meal. When it was over, and Miss Ferrol rose, she became conscious that her companion was troubled by some new difficulty, and a second thought suggested to her what its nature was.

"Are you going to your room?" she asked.

"I don't know," said the girl, with the look of helpless appeal again. "I don't know where else to go. I don't like to go out there" (signifying the gallery) "alone."

"Why not come with me?" said Miss Ferrol. "Then we can promenade together."

"Ah!" she said, with a little gasp of relief and gratitude. "Don't you mind?"

"On the contrary, I shall be very glad of your society," Miss Ferrol answered. "I am alone, too."

So they went out together and wandered slowly from one end of the starlit gallery to the other, winding their way through the crowd that promenaded, and, upon the whole, finding it rather pleasant.

"I shall have to take care of her," Miss Ferrol was deciding; "but I do not think I shall mind the trouble."

The thing that touched her most was the girl's innocent trust in her sincerity – her taking for granted that this stranger, who had been polite to her, had been so not for worldly good breeding's sake, but from true friendliness and extreme generosity of nature. Her first shyness conquered, she related her whole history with the unreserve of a child. Her father was a farmer, and she had always lived with him on his farm. He had been too fond of her to allow her to leave home, and she had never been "away to school."

"He has made a pet of me at home," she said. "I was the only one that lived to be over eight years old. I am the eleventh. Ten died before I was born, and it made father and mother worry a good deal over me – and father was worse than mother. He said the time never seemed to come when he could spare me. He is very good and kind – is father," she added, in a hurried, soft-voiced way. "He's rough, but he's very good and kind."

Before they parted for the night Miss Ferrol had the whole genealogical tree by heart. They were an amazingly prolific family, it seemed. There was Uncle Josiah, who had ten children, Uncle Leander, who had fifteen, Aunt Amanda, who had twelve, and Aunt Nervy, whose belongings comprised three sets of twins and an unlimited supply of odd numbers. They went upstairs together and parted at Miss Ferrol's door, their rooms being near each other.

The girl held out her hand.

"Good-night!" she said. "I'm so thankful I've got to know you."

Her eyes looked bigger and wider-open than ever; she smiled, showing her even, sound, little white teeth. Under the bright light of the lamp the freckles the day betrayed on her smooth skin were not to be seen.

"Dear me!" thought Miss Ferrol. "How startingly pretty, in spite of the cotton lace and the dreadful polonaise!"

She touched her lightly on the shoulder.

"Why, you are as tall as I am!" she said.

"Yes," the girl replied, depressedly; "but I'm twice as broad."

"Oh no – no such thing." And then, with a delicate glance down over her, she said – "It is your dress that makes you fancy so. Perhaps your dressmaker does not understand your figure," – as if such a failing was the most natural and simple thing in the world, and needed only the slightest rectifying.

"I have no dressmaker," the girl answered. "I make my things myself. Perhaps that is it."

"It is a little dangerous, it is true," replied Miss Ferrol. "I have been bold enough to try it myself, and I never succeeded. I could give you the address of a very thorough woman if you lived in New York."

"But I don't live there, you see. I wish I did. I never shall, though. Father could never spare me."

Another slight pause ensued, during which she looked admiringly at Miss Ferrol. Then she said "good-night" again, and turned away.

But before she had crossed the corridor she stopped.

"I never told you my name," she said.

Miss Ferrol naturally expected she would announce it at once, but she did not. An air of embarrassment fell upon her. She seemed almost averse to speaking.

"Well," said Miss Ferrol, smiling, "what is it?"

She did not raise her eyes from the carpet as she replied, unsteadily:

"It's Louisiana."

Miss Ferrol answered her very composedly:

"The name of the state?"

"Yes. Father came from there."

"But you did not tell me your surname."

"Oh! that is Rogers. You – you didn't laugh. I thought you would."

"At the first name?" replied Miss Ferrol. "Oh no. It is unusual – but names often are. And Louise is pretty."

"So it is," she said, brightening. "I never thought of that. I hate Louisa. They will call it 'Lowizy,' or 'Lousyanny.' I could sign myself Louise, couldn't I?"

"Yes," Miss Ferrol replied.

And then her *protégée* said "good-night" for the third time, and disappeared.

## CHAPTER II. WORTH

She presented herself at the bed-room door with a timid knock the next morning before breakfast, evidently expecting to be taken charge of. Miss Ferrol felt sure she would appear, and had, indeed, dressed herself in momentary expectation of hearing the knock.

When she heard it she opened the door at once.

"I am glad to see you," she said. "I thought you might come."

A slight expression of surprise showed itself in the girl's eyes. It had never occurred to her that she might not come.

"Oh, yes," she replied. "I never could go down alone when there was any one who would go with me."

There was something on her mind, Miss Ferrol fancied, and presently it burst forth in a confidential inquiry.

"Is this dress very short-waisted?" she asked, with great earnestness.

Merciful delicacy stood in the way of Miss Ferrol's telling her how short-waisted it was, and how it maltreated her beautiful young body.

"It is rather short-waisted, it is true."

"Perhaps," the girl went on, with a touch of guileless melancholy, "I am naturally this shape."

Here, it must be confessed, Miss Ferrol forgot herself for the moment, and expressed her indignation with undue fervor.

"Perish the thought!" she exclaimed. "Why, child! your figure is a hundred times better than mine."

Louisiana wore for a moment a look of absolute fright.

"Oh, no!" she cried. "Oh, no. Your figure is magnificent."

"Magnificent!" echoed Miss Ferrol, giving way to her enthusiasm, and indulging in figures of speech. "Don't you see that I am thin – absolutely thin. But my things fit me, and my dressmaker understands me. If you were dressed as I am," – pausing to look her over from head to foot – "Ah!" she exclaimed, pathetically, "how I should like to see you in some of my clothes!"

A tender chord was touched. A gentle sadness, aroused by this instance of wasted opportunities, rested upon her. But instantaneously she brightened, seemingly without any particular cause. A brilliant idea had occurred to her. But she did not reveal it.

"I will wait," she thought, "until she is more at her ease with me."

She really was more at her ease already. Just this one little scrap of conversation had done that. She became almost affectionate in a shy way before they reached the dining-room.

"I want to ask you something," she said, as they neared the door.

"What is it?"

She held Miss Ferrol back with a light clasp on her arm. Her air was quite tragic in a small way.

"Please say 'Louise,' when you speak to me," she said. "Never say 'Miss Louisiana' – never – never!"

"No, I shall never say 'Miss Louisiana,'" her companion answered. "How would you like 'Miss Rogers?'"

"I would rather have 'Louise,'" she said, disappointedly.

"Well," returned Miss Ferrol, "'Louise' let it be."

And "Louise" it was thenceforward. If she had not been so pretty, so innocent, and so affectionate and humble a young creature, she might have been troublesome at times (it occurred to Olivia Ferrol), she clung so pertinaciously to their chance acquaintanceship; she was so helpless

and desolate if left to herself, and so inordinately glad to be taken in hand again. She made no new friends, – which was perhaps natural enough, after all. She had nothing in common with the young women who played ten-pins and croquet and rode out in parties with their cavaliers. She was not of them, and understood them as little as they understood her. She knew very well that they regarded her with scornful tolerance when they were of the ill-natured class, and with ill-subdued wonder when they were amiable. She could not play ten-pins or croquet, nor could she dance.

"What are the men kneeling down for, and why do they keep stopping to put on those queer little caps and things?" she whispered to Miss Ferrol one night.

"They are trying to dance a German," replied Miss Ferrol, "and the man who is leading them only knows one figure."

As for the riding, she had been used to riding all her life; but no one asked her to join them, and if they had done so she would have been too wise, – unsophisticated as she was, – to accept the invitation. So where Miss Ferrol was seen she was seen also, and she was never so happy as when she was invited into her protector's room and allowed to spend the morning or evening there. She would have been content to sit there forever and listen to Miss Ferrol's graphic description of life in the great world: The names of celebrated personages made small impression upon her. It was revealed gradually to Miss Ferrol that she had private doubts as to the actual existence of some of them, and the rest she had never heard of before.

"You never read 'The Scarlet Letter?'" asked her instructress upon one occasion.

She flushed guiltily.

"No," she answered. "Nor – nor any of the others."

Miss Ferrol gazed at her silently for a few moments. Then she asked her a question in a low voice, specially mellowed, so that it might not alarm her.

"Do you know who John Stuart Mill is?" she said.

"No," she replied from the dust of humiliation.

"Have you never heard – just *heard*– of Ruskin?"

"No."

"Nor of Michael Angelo?"

"N-no – ye-es, I think so – perhaps, but I don't know what he did."

"Do you," she continued, very slowly, "do – you – know – anything – about – Worth?"

"No, nothing."

Her questioner clasped her hands with repressed emotion.

"Oh," she cried, "how – how you have been neglected!"

She was really depressed, but her *protégée* was so much more deeply so that she felt it her duty to contain herself and return to cheerfulness.

"Never mind," she said. "I will tell you all I know about them, and," – after a pause for speculative thought upon the subject, – "by-the-by, it isn't much, and I will lend you some books to read, and give you a list of some you must persuade your father to buy for you, and you will be all right. It is rather dreadful not to know the names of people and things; but, after all, I think there are very few people who – ahem!"

She was checked here by rigid conscientious scruples. If she was to train this young mind in the path of learning and literature, she must place before her a higher standard of merit than the somewhat shady and slipshod one her eagerness had almost betrayed her into upholding. She had heard people talk of "standards" and "ideals," and when she was kept to the point and in regulation working order, she could be very eloquent upon these subjects herself.

"You will have to work very seriously," she remarked, rather incongruously and with a rapid change of position. "If you wish to – to acquire anything, you must read conscientiously and – and with a purpose." She was rather proud of that last clause.

"Must I?" inquired Louise, humbly. "I should like to – if I knew where to begin. Who was Worth? Was he a poet?"

Miss Ferrol acquired a fine, high color very suddenly.

"Oh," she answered, with some uneasiness, "you – you have no need to begin with Worth. He doesn't matter so much – really."

"I thought," Miss Rogers said meekly, "that you were more troubled about my not having read what he wrote, than about my not knowing any of the others."

"Oh, no. You see – the fact is, he – he never wrote anything."

"What did he do?" she asked, anxious for information.

"He – it isn't 'did,' it is 'does.' He – makes dresses."

"Dresses!"

This single word, but no exclamation point could express its tone of wild amazement.

"Yes."

"A man!"

"Yes."

There was a dead silence. It was embarrassing at first. Then the amazement of the unsophisticated one began to calm itself; it gradually died down, and became another emotion, merging itself into interest.

"Does" – guilelessly she inquired – "he make nice ones?"

"Nice!" echoed Miss Ferrol. "They are works of art! I have got three in my trunk."

"O-o h!" sighed Louisiana. "Oh, dear!"

Miss Ferrol rose from her chair.

"I will show them to you," she said. "I – I should like you to try them on."

"To try them on!" ejaculated the child in an awe-stricken tone. "Me?"

"Yes," said Miss Ferrol, unlocking the trunk and throwing back the lid. "I have been wanting to see you in them since the first day you came."

She took them out and laid them upon the bed on their trays. Louise got up from the floor and approaching, reverently stood near them. There was a cream-colored evening-dress of soft, thick, close-clinging silk of some antique-modern sort; it had golden fringe, and golden flowers embroidered upon it.

"Look at that," said Miss Ferrol, softly – even religiously.

She made a mysterious, majestic gesture.

"Come here," she said. "You must put it on."

Louise shrank back a pace.

"I – oh! I daren't," she cried. "It is too beautiful!"

"Come here," repeated Miss Ferrol.

She obeyed timorously, and gave herself into the hands of her controller. She was so timid and excited that she trembled all the time her toilette was being performed for her. Miss Ferrol went through this service with the manner of a priestess officiating at an altar. She laced up the back of the dress with the slender, golden cords; she arranged the antique drapery which wound itself around in close swathing folds. There was not the shadow of a wrinkle from shoulder to hem: the lovely young figure was revealed in all its beauty of outline. There were no sleeves at all, there was not very much bodice, but there was a great deal of effect, and this, it is to be supposed, was the object.

"Walk across the floor," commanded Miss Ferrol.

Louisiana obeyed her.

"Do it again," said Miss Ferrol.

Having been obeyed for the second time, her hands fell together. Her attitude and expression could be said to be significant only of rapture.

"I said so!" she cried. "I said so! You might have been born in New York!"

It was a grand climax. Louisiana felt it to the depths of her reverent young heart. But she could not believe it. She was sure that it was too sublime to be true. She shook her head in deprecation.

"It is no exaggeration," said Miss Ferrol, with renewed fervor. "Laurence himself, if he were not told that you had lived here, would never guess it. I should like to try you on him."

"Who – is he?" inquired Louisiana. "Is he a writer, too?"

"Well, yes, – but not exactly like the others. He is my brother."

It was two hours before this episode ended. Only at the sounding of the second bell did Louisiana escape to her room to prepare for dinner.

Miss Ferrol began to replace the dresses in her trunk. She performed her task in an abstracted mood. When she had completed it she stood upright and paused a moment, with quite a startled air.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed. "I – actually forgot about Ruskin!"

## CHAPTER III. "HE IS DIFFERENT."

The same evening, as they sat on one of the seats upon the lawn, Miss Ferrol became aware several times that Louisiana was regarding her with more than ordinary interest. She sat with her hands folded upon her lap, her eyes fixed on her face, and her pretty mouth actually a little open.

"What are you thinking of?" Olivia asked, at length.

The girl started, and recovered herself with an effort.

"I – well, I was thinking about – authors," she stammered.

"Any particular author?" inquired Olivia, "or authors as a class?"

"About your brother being one. I never thought I should see any one who knew an author – and you are related to one!"

Her companion's smile was significant of immense experience. It was plain that she was so accustomed to living on terms of intimacy with any number of authors that she could afford to feel indifferent about them.

"My dear," she said, amiably, "they are not in the least different from other people."

It sounded something like blasphemy.

"Not different!" cried Louisiana. "Oh, surely, they must be! Isn't – isn't your brother different?"

Miss Ferrol stopped to think. She was very fond of her brother. Privately she considered him the literary man of his day. She was simply disgusted when she heard experienced critics only calling him "clever" and "brilliant" instead of "great" and "world-moving."

"Yes," she replied at length, "he is different."

"I thought he must be," said Louisiana, with a sigh of relief. "You are, you know."

"Am I?" returned Olivia. "Thank you. But I am not an author – at least," – she added, guiltily, "nothing I have written has ever been published."

"Oh, why not?" exclaimed Louisiana.

"Why not?" she repeated, dubiously and thoughtfully. And then, knitting her brows, she said, "I don't know why not."

"I am sure if you have ever written anything, it ought to have been published," protested her adorer.

"I thought so," said Miss Ferrol. "But – but *they* didn't."

"They?" echoed Louisiana. "Who are 'they?'"

"The editors," she replied, in a rather gloomy manner. "There is a great deal of wire-pulling, and favoritism, and – even envy and malice, of which those outside know nothing. You wouldn't understand it if I should tell you about it."

For a few moments she wore quite a fell expression, and gloom reigned. She gave her head a little shake.

"They regret it afterward," she remarked, – "frequently."

From which Louisiana gathered that it was the editors who were so overwhelmed, and she could not help sympathizing with them in secret. There was something in the picture of their unavailing remorse which touched her, despite her knowledge of the patent fact that they deserved it and could expect nothing better. She was quite glad when Olivia brightened up, as she did presently.

"Laurence is handsomer than most of them, and has a more distinguished air," she said. "He is very charming. People always say so."

"I wish I could see him," ventured Louisiana.

"You will see him if you stay here much longer," replied Miss Ferrol. "It is quite likely he will come to Oakvale."

For a moment Louisiana fluttered and turned pale with pleasure, but as suddenly she drooped.

"I forgot," she faltered. "You will have to be with him always, and I shall have no one. He won't want me."

Olivia sat and looked at her with deepening interest. She was thinking again of a certain whimsical idea which had beset her several times since she had attired her *protégée* in the cream-colored robe.

"Louise," she said, in a low, mysterious tone, "how would you like to wear dresses like mine all the rest of the time you are here?"

The child stared at her blankly.

"I haven't got any," she gasped.

"No," said Miss Ferrol, with deliberation, "but *I* have."

She rose from her seat, dropping her mysterious air and smiling encouragingly.

"Come with me to my room," she said. "I want to talk to you."

If she had ordered her to follow her to the stake it is not at all unlikely that Louisiana would have obeyed. She got up meekly, smiling, too, and feeling sure something very interesting was going to happen. She did not understand in the least, but she was quite tractable. And after they had reached the room and shut themselves in, she found that it *was* something very interesting which was to happen.

"You remember what I said to you this morning?" Miss Ferrol suggested.

"You said so many things."

"Oh, but you cannot have forgotten this particular thing. I said you looked as if you had been born in New York."

Louisiana remembered with a glow of rapture.

"Oh, yes," she answered.

"And I said Laurence himself would not know, if he was not told, that you had lived all your life here."

"Yes."

"And I said I should like to try you on him."

"Yes."

Miss Ferrol kept her eyes fixed on her and watched her closely.

"I have been thinking of it all the morning," she added. "I should like to try you on him."

Louisiana was silent a moment. Then she spoke, hesitatingly:

"Do you mean that I should pretend –," she began.

"Oh, no," interrupted Miss Ferrol. "Not pretend either one thing or the other. Only let me dress you as I choose, and then take care that you say nothing whatever about your past life. You will have to be rather quiet, perhaps, and let him talk. He will like that, of course – men always do – and then you will learn a great many things from him."

"It will be – a very strange thing to do," said Louisiana.

"It will be a very interesting thing," answered Olivia, her enthusiasm increasing. "How he will admire you!"

Louisiana indulged in one of her blushes.

"Have you a picture of him?"

"Yes. Why?" she asked, in some surprise.

"Because I should like to see his face."

"Do you think," Miss Ferrol said, in further bewilderment, "that you might not like him?"

"I think he might not like me."

"Not like you!" cried Miss Ferrol. "You! He will think you are divine – when you are dressed as I shall dress you."

She went to her trunk and produced the picture. It was not a photograph, but a little crayon head – the head of a handsome man, whose expression was a singular combination of dreaminess and alertness. It was a fascinating face.

"One of his friends did it," said Miss Ferrol. "His friends are very fond of him and admire his good looks very much. They protest against his being photographed. They like to sketch him. They are always making 'studies' of his head. What do you think of him?"

Louisiana hesitated.

"He is different," she said at last. "I thought he would be."

She gave the picture back to Miss Ferrol, who replaced it in her trunk. She sat for a few seconds looking down at the carpet and apparently seeing very little. Then she looked up at her companion, who was suddenly a little embarrassed at finding her receive her whimsical planning so seriously. She herself had not thought of it as being serious at all. It would be interesting and amusing, and would prove her theory.

"I will do what you want me to do," said Louisiana.

"Then," said Miss Ferrol, wondering at an unexpected sense of discomfort in herself, "I will dress you for supper now. You must begin to wear the things, so that you may get used to them."

## CHAPTER IV. A NEW TYPE

When the two entered the supper-room together a little commotion was caused by their arrival. At first the supple young figure in violet and gray was not recognized. It was not the figure people had been used to, it seemed so tall and slenderly round. The reddish-brown hair was combed high and made into soft puffs; it made the pretty head seem more delicately shaped, and showed how white and graceful the back of the slender neck was. It was several minutes before the problem was solved. Then a sharp young woman exclaimed, *sotto voce*:

"It's the little country-girl, in new clothes – in clothes that fit. Would you believe it?"

"Don't look at your plate so steadily," whispered Miss Ferrol. "Lean back and fan yourself as if you did not hear. You must never show that you hear things."

"I shall be obliged to give her a few hints now and then," she had said to herself beforehand. "But I feel sure when she once catches the cue she will take it."

It really seemed as if she did, too. She had looked at herself long and steadily after she had been dressed, and when she turned away from the glass she held her head a trifle more erect, and her cheeks had reddened. Perhaps what she had recognized in the reflection she had seen had taught her a lesson. But she said nothing. In a few days Olivia herself was surprised at the progress she had made. Sanguine as she was, she had not been quite prepared for the change which had taken place in her. She had felt sure it would be necessary to teach her to control her emotions, but suddenly she seemed to have learned to control them without being told to do so; she was no longer demonstrative of her affection, she no longer asked innocent questions, nor did she ever speak of her family. Her reserve was puzzling to Olivia.

"You are very clever," she said to her one day, the words breaking from her in spite of herself, after she had sat regarding her in silence for a few minutes. "You are even cleverer than I thought you were, Louise."

"Was that very clever?" the girl asked.

"Yes, it was," Olivia answered, "but not so clever as you are proving yourself."

But Louisiana did not smile or blush, as she had expected she would. She sat very quietly, showing neither pleasure nor shyness, and seeming for a moment or so to be absorbed in thought.

In the evening when the stages came in they were sitting on the front gallery together. As the old rattletraps bumped and swung themselves up the gravel drive, Olivia bent forward to obtain a better view of the passengers.

"He ought to be among them," she said.

Louisiana laid her hand on her arm.

"Who is that sitting with the driver?" she asked, as the second vehicle passed them. "Isn't that –"

"To be sure it is!" exclaimed Miss Ferrol.

She would have left her seat, but she found herself detained. Her companion had grasped her wrist.

"Wait a minute!" she said. "Don't leave me! Oh – I wish I had not done it!"

Miss Ferrol turned and stared at her in amazement.

She spoke in her old, uncontrolled, childish fashion. She was pale, and her eyes were dilated.

"What is the matter?" said Miss Ferrol, hurriedly, when she found her voice. "Is it that you really don't like the idea? If you don't, there is no need of our carrying it out. It was only nonsense – I beg your pardon for not seeing that it disturbed you. Perhaps, after all, it was very bad taste in me –"

But she was not allowed to finish her sentence. As suddenly as it had altered before, Louisiana's expression altered again. She rose to her feet with a strange little smile. She looked into Miss Ferrol's astonished face steadily and calmly.

"Your brother has seen you and is coming toward us," she said. "I will leave you. We shall see each other again at supper."

And with a little bow she moved away with an air of composure which left her instructress stunned. She could scarcely recover her equilibrium sufficiently to greet her brother decently when he reached her side. She had never been so thoroughly at sea in her life.

After she had gone to her room that night, her brother came and knocked at the door.

When she opened it and let him in he walked to a chair and threw himself into it, wearing a rather excited look.

"Olivia," he began at once, "what a bewildering girl!"

Olivia sat down opposite to him, with a composed smile.

"Miss Rogers, of course?" she said.

"Of course," he echoed. And then, after a pause of two or three seconds, he added, in the tone he had used before: "What a delightfully mysterious girl!"

"Mysterious!" repeated Olivia.

"There is no other word for it! She has such an adorable face, she looks so young, and she says so little." And then, with serious delight, he added: "It is a new type!"

Olivia began to laugh.

"Why are you laughing?" he demanded.

"Because I was so sure you would say that," she answered. "I was waiting for it."

"But it is true," he replied, quite vehemently. "I never saw anything like her before. I look at her great soft eyes and I catch glimpses of expression which don't seem to belong to the rest of her. When I see her eyes I could fancy for a moment that she had been brought up in a convent or had lived a very simple, isolated life, but when she speaks and moves I am bewildered. I want to hear her talk, but she says so little. She does not even dance. I suppose her relatives are serious people. I dare say you have not heard much of them from her. Her reserve is so extraordinary in a girl. I wonder how old she is?"

"Nineteen, I think."

"I thought so. I never saw anything prettier than her quiet way when I asked her to dance with me. She said, simply, 'I do not dance. I have never learned.' It was as if she had never thought of it as being an unusual thing."

He talked of her all the time he remained in the room. Olivia had never seen him so interested before.

"The fascination is that she seems to be two creatures at once," he said. "And one of them is stronger than the other and will break out and reveal itself one day. I begin by feeling I do not understand her, and that is the most interesting of all beginnings, I long to discover which of the two creatures is the real one."

When he was going away he stopped suddenly to say:

"How was it you never mentioned her in your letters? I can't understand that."

"I wanted you to see her for yourself," Olivia answered. "I thought I would wait."

"Well," he said, after thinking a moment, "I am glad, after all, that you did."

## **CHAPTER V. "I HAVE HURT YOU."**

From the day of his arrival a new life began for Louisiana. She was no longer an obscure and unconsidered young person. Suddenly, and for the first time in her life, she found herself vested with a marvellous power. It was a power girls of a different class from her own are vested with from the beginning of their lives. They are used to it and regard it as their birthright. Louisiana was not used to it. There had been nothing like it attending her position as "that purty gal o' Rogerses." She was accustomed to the admiration of men she was indifferent to – men who wore short-waisted blue-jean coats, and turned upon their elbows to stare at her as she sat in the little white frame church. After making an effort to cultivate her acquaintance, they generally went away disconcerted. "She's mighty still," they said. "She haint got nothin' to say. Seems like thar aint much to her – but she's powerful purty though."

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