FRANCIS THURSTON paused on the threshold of the workshop, balancing a cup of coffee in one hand and a plate of rolls in the other. Through the open door came the rhythmic whirr of a potter’s wheel, and beyond the tubs of clay and great yellow crocks of glaze she caught a glimpse of a black cap upon a rough gray head, and of broad shoulders under a streaked white blouse.

So intent was the potter upon the mass of clay growing into shape beneath his hands, that he did not note his daughter’s presence until her voice at his side called to him eagerly:—“There, father! That is lovely just so,—there—do not let it spread any more at the rim!”

With a last lingering twirl the man drew his foot from the treadle and bent to scan the vase with frowning intentness. “It is just as I planned it, Francis,” he cried jubilantly, “just as I saw it in my mind!”

“Then, sir, I hope you will deign to eat your breakfast,” the daughter answered with mock severity, as she cleared a mass of broken jugs and stilts from a corner of the table. “You were firing until after midnight, so I would not let Marie Celeste waken you for breakfast, and here you have been working all the while I thought you asleep!”

The potter laughed as he washed the clay from his hands; “I did sleep until six, Francis,” he pleaded like a boy caught in mischief; “but this shape kept shining before my eyes,—a tall jar with the subtle curve of a magnolia bud;—see, do not the lines merge graciously? And it is to be glazed in dull yellows, deepening to tawny!”

“Like a faded magnolia blossom,” the girl suggested roguishly; but a moment later she dropt a repentant kiss upon the stubborn gray curl on his temple. “It will be lovely, father! And what a fine lamp it will make! I will plan a glass shade for it, just the shape of a bellflower. At Homon’s they want more lamps.”

“At Homon’s?” The light faded from the potter’s face and he broke a roll with savage energy; “Must everything I put my heart into be sold?—go out among people who care nothing—” “Never mind, father,” the daughter interposed soothingly; “we will just keep this beauty as a Thanksgiving-day gift to ourselves! We have kept nothing but failures this year.”
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"It would not be so hard to sell them, Francis," the potter pursued querulously, "if there were any real feeling for beauty out there in the world; but beyond a few painters shut up in their studios and a group of students here and there,—there's none!"

"There you are mistaken, father," the girl answered softly from the doorway; "All about us there are people longing for the beautiful, groping blindly after it,—even as you and I."

"Then the longing is hidden so deep it never comes to the surface," the potter rejoined; but his daughter had vanished into the sunshine.

As she crossed the court-yard, Francis met an old quadroon woman scrubbing the narrow walk with her pail of brick-dust beside her, and the girl in passing laid a light hand upon the stooping shoulder. "You never tire of making things clean and sweet, do you, Mammy? I think that is your way of adding to the beauty in the world." Marie Celeste lifted puzzled eyes to the face bent above her, smiling vaguely because it smiled, but when a moment later Francis in hat and jacket passed again on her way to the street, the woman's glance followed her with loving, dumb intentness.

The Rue Chartres was steeped in sunshine when Francis stepped into it; above high garden walls the green of oleanders and spiked yucca gleamed against the mellow reds and yellows of stucco dwellings; and afar, beyond the broken line of light-poised balconies and jutting gables, against the blue of the southern sky rose the cathedral's trinity of spires.

"The earth itself is keeping Thanksgiving," the girl whispered to herself as she entered a tiny shop, whose projecting windows, under the drooping pent-house shed, were filled with yellowing books and wood-cuts.

"Is Monsieur Jean within?" she asked of the smiling, blue-eyed proprietor. "But yes, mademoiselle;" and the little withered man, with eager courtesy, guided her through a labyrinth of dusty tomes to his lodger's door at the rear. "Monsieur Jean! Here is a lady to see you."

In the narrow zone of light about the one small window of the inner room an old man sat at work before a table strewn with tools and bits of leather. As Francis entered, he lifted shining, abstracted eyes,
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blinking vaguely at her from his far dream-world. "What, Mon-
sieur Jean, at work on Thanksgiving day?" the girl demanded gaily;
"You are every bit as bad as father."

In joyful recognition the book-binder scrambled to his feet and
hospitably emptied a chairful of books upon the floor. "Ah, I am
glad to see you, mademoiselle! I have a great joy to tell you.
Here—here—where are they now?"—fumbling with tremulous
hands among the shadowy book-shelves. "Ah, here they are! The
romances of the great Hugo, whom I so love; and I am left free to
bind them just as I wish,—say what he means to me;—is not that a
joy?"

"I think you keep Thanksgiving all the year, monsieur," the girl
answered with whimsical tenderness, as the volumes were tumbled
unceremoniously into her lap;—"Thanksgiving of the spirit. But to-
night I want you to keep it in the flesh with us;—just an informal pic-
nic supper at my home."

The recluse retreated in shy alarm; "I thank you, mademoiselle,
but that—is—impossible. Why," in sudden ingenuous relief, "I
have not any fine evening clothes, mademoiselle!" "But neither
have father nor I, monsieur, and you will surely come! Why, no one
ever refuses me anything, Monsieur Jean!"

Francis paused next at an old brick dwelling upon whose door a
dingy placard proclaimed "Rooms to let;" and up one flight of stairs
after another she climbed, to a broad low chamber under the very
eaves. "A happy thanksgiving to you, Miss Marta," she cried gaily
to the girl who met her at the landing.

"It is Miss Francis, Petria," Marta called back joyously over her
shoulder to an older woman who sat at work close beside the dormer
window. "Petria is trying to finish a strip of lace before to-morrow
night," the younger sister explained with her quaint Russian accent.

"She knows she must never stop work for me, for I love to watch
her fingers fly," Francis said, crossing the spotless room to Petria's
side, "But I have come to invite you to a Thanksgiving picnic at my
home to-night." The sisters looked at each other in startled dismay;
"It is very sweet of you to ask us," Miss Petria murmured with deli-
cate formality, "but we have no dresses and—" "Why, you can wear
just the gowns you have on," Francis urged; "You surely, surely will
not disappoint me! Think it over, and you will certainly come."
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But it was with a heart very doubtful of success that she felt her way down the narrow stairs.

A few moments later she rang the bell at a gateway in the Rue Royal, and as the green wicket cut in the larger door, creaked ajar, a weazened black woman blinked up at her beneath a red and brown tignon.

"Is Madame Lambert at home, 'Toinette?" Francis asked, smiling into the near-sighted eyes. The brown wisp of a woman nodded in bright recognition; "Ah, yes, mam'selle! Madame Odille is working in her window; but she is not well," the quavering voice fell to a plaintive tone; "she is always tired."

"We must make her play more, 'Toinette," Francis responded cheerily, as the spare figure pattered at her side down the long, dark corridor to the sunny court. Climbing the spiral stair, the girl sped with soft footfalls along the upper hall,—the huge chambers, cool, and white, and silent, stretching away on either hand,—till she reached the long drawing-room, where Madame sat alone amid great mirrors framed in tarnished gilt. A tiny woman, with a face like carven ivory and the slow, sweet grace of the olden time, was Madame. She laid aside a lapful of billowy lawn and rose with delicate formal-ity to greet her guest; but as Francis threw herself impulsively down at her side the old lady sank back into her chair and gathered the girl's face tenderly between her withered palms.

"It is good to see you, dear, and you have come just in time to de-cide a troubled question." From the basket at her side she caught up a strip of white linen, scattering over it skeins of yellow silk and soft gray green. "It is an order for a gold and white room," she explained, "and I want it to shimmer like a bit of sunshine. I shall use the cosmos as it is yet in blossom and I can work with a vase of it on my stand; only the green puzzles me."

"But that silvery green is perfect with yellow," Francis answered in quick decision, "and now tell me your design, Madame."

As the little old lady unfolded her thought, her cheeks flushed faintly, and the dark eyes grew young with eagerness. "I shall have such lovely hours working it," she ended with a happy sigh as she folded the shimmering silks away and took up a tiny strip of muslin. "It is always a delight to work with colors; just as I used to feel a joy unlike all other joys on entering my grandmother's rose-garden."
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Francis laid her hand over the fragile fingers and swift-flying needle; "You are not to sew any more to-day, dear Madame; it is Thanksgiving." "Yes, I know it is Thanksgiving day," Madame smiled; "I told my daughter Amenaide to order a turkey and cranberries and have 'Toinette's fig-pudding; our boarders would expect that;—but even if it is Thanksgiving, dear, people must have baby-caps, and this must reach the shop to-night. I can keep Thanksgiving here in my heart while my needle flies."

As the busy fingers finished the second cluster of thread tucks and began a chain of gossamer daisies in the space between, a musing smile crept about Madame's lips. "I wonder," she murmured dreamily, "what little head will wear this! I used to work caps for my own babies,—for my eldest little one I made one all of thread-lace;—and so I know how those other mothers are dreaming of the baby that is coming to them;—such happy dreams! You would laugh, dear, if you knew all the happy things I think of as I sit here in the silence."

The girl dropped a quick impulsive kiss upon the tender hands; "Dear Madame, I think you keep Thanksgiving always in your heart! But to-night I want you to keep it with me in my home, after the wont of less ethereal creatures!"

"Dear! You ask me?" The startled chatelaine shrank back in alarm; "You know I never go anywhere,—and that I have no gown"—"I know," Francis coaxed, "but it is just an informal picnic,—not dinner,—the coffer is too light for that. No one there will notice whether your sleeves are puffed at the top or at the bottom; and father himself will see you home. Come, it is just to cheer father."

"But, my child,"—The girl stopped her protest with a kiss; "Dear Madame, you must give me flowers to make my table beautiful; and you know you are coming!"

Once more Francis stopped on her homeward way; this time at a tiny shop in an alley, where a pale-faced lad was chasing a slender silver drinking cup. This worker also she asked to her feast,—"Feast of reason, not of turkey," she explained in laughing postscript, over her shoulder as she stood on the threshold, poised for flight.

The wheel was no longer whirring when Francis peeped into her father's workshop, but amid an army of yellow crocks a big figure in a splashed white blouse stood by the table glazing jars. His back was turned to the door, but the angry slant of the cap above
the stiff gray curls and the savage energy with which he poured the glaze, were eloquent to the daughter’s eyes.

“But, father darling, the poor little innocent jugs have not sinned!” she protested, slipping her arm into his. “Who has been naughty to my little father while his big daughter was not here to protect him?”

“His saucy daughter you mean,” the father growled, but a smile crept into the glowering eyes and he set the last jug less vindictively upon its stilts. “You had best remain at home, Francis, to drive imbeciles away.” The girl arched merry brows; “Is it possible such have ventured to beard you in your den?”

The potter splashed the glaze viciously over a pitcher, but set his lips in silent wrath.

“What! was the adventure too terrible to relate? But never mind, you poor abused little father; forget your woes for a while and come to luncheon.” As she poured the chocolate in the tiny white dining room, Francis flashed a merry glance across the round table; “Now, sir, I shall tell you about my morning; how the sun shone and the little children laughed and the violets sent their fragrance drifting to me over the high walls.”

The potter smiled in irresistible sympathy, and Francis, emboldened by that smile, added bravely, “And now I must tell you of a great honor that awaits you to-night; you are to be host at a Thanksgiving party.”

“Why, Francis, child, are you mad?” Francis slipped quickly around to his side, where she could finish her confession with her arm across his shoulder; “It was all the funniest adventure, father,” she laughed; “Your daughter, like the rich man of old, went forth to invite guests to a feast and every single one pleaded the lack of a wedding garment! Since you and I haven’t wedding-garments either, that plea failed! They are all dear people who do lovely things with their hands, but I am not going to tell you a single name!”

“But, Francis,—” “Yes, father, in a moment! And the feast is to be held in your work-shop, little father;—yes, sir, you needn’t squirm and look unhappy; it’s the only place that is big enough.”

“But, Francis,” the potter urged desperately, “we can’t afford a supper! Surely you know, daughter.” Francis tenderly patted the rough gray head; “This is not going to be a ‘fatted-calf feast,’ father;
and my last copper bowl has furnished the wherewithal. We will have Marie Celeste’s sandwiches and *pralines*, and Miss Thurston’s delicious coffee; and you, sir, will talk William Morris for desert!"

*That* night, when the guests were ushered into the work-shop that had been made bright with cosmos and fragrant jugs of sweet olive and violets, there was no opportunity for awkwardness, with Francis’ happy spirit to melt all into harmony. As they gathered about the glowing grate to roast apples and crack nuts, the last remnant of stiffness vanished and heart spoke freely to heart, unashamed and unafraid. Even the old patrician, cuirassed in stately tradition, was moved to lay aside her delicate reserve; while to the lonely German lad, this contact with living men and women,—poor like himself,—who wrought and suffered and dreamed even as he,—was as the wine of life. The dreamy book-binder, among these spirits akin unto his own, ventured to speak out the thoughts that lay hid in his beautiful soul; and the potter bowed his head in loving reverence as the little band of workers talked together of the men in the past who had toiled that beauty might become a common heritage.

"Why, I have felt that all my life but I never knew it was written in a book," murmured Miss Petria, listening shyly to a quotation that was spoken; "The only bit of beauty that brightens the lives of our peasant women is the red and blue embroidery they work on winter nights, and I have often wondered if it must not mean to them all that books and pictures and lovely things mean to richer lives."

"Just as the hungry soul of the Scotch woman, Margaret Dawson, working at her loom by her sick husband’s side, was nourished on the roses that sprang into bloom on her web," Francis responded thoughtfully.

"As I work," Petria added musingly, "I think of the many hands that have wrought on the very patterns I am using,—as the lace-strip slowly lengthens I picture to myself the brides who used that very pattern to make trimmings for their wedding gowns, and the girls who have woven on it edging for their aprons and kerchiefs." "Petria’s lace tells her stories just like the romances," laughed Marta tenderly.

"I know," Francis nodded sagely; "I have all kinds of visions of where my work is going, and of the people who may read in it what it meant to me. And all the men who loved beautiful things of old, and
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worked for beauty, come and talk to me as I build my lampshades, piece by piece, or beat out my copper bowls.”

“Is it so with you, also?” asked the wistful German lad; “They come to me, those splendid fellows of Florence and Pisa, and France and Germany; and the men of our day who make beautiful things and dream beautiful dreams; and they hold up before me the ideals for which they toiled. It is they who give us courage to go on.”

“After all,” murmured Madame’s low, cultured tones, “it is the knowing that one’s work is as well done as one’s hands can do it, that really gives one courage. If it is only a long white seam, its exquisite stitches may give the worker joy.”

Roused from happy reverie by Madame’s last words, the bookbinder smiled on them with luminous eyes; “Sometimes,” he murmured dreamily, “I wonder if there is any joy greater than the worker’s,—the joy of his work, and of his thoughts,—yes, and of the free sunshine.”

“Ah, not all of us are happy, dear Monsieur Jean,” sighed mischievous Francis, “Now, father, poor man, could a tale unfold! Father, darling, can you not ease your soul by describing to us the ‘Invasion of the Imbeciles’?”

The potter darted a threatening glance at his daughter, but he had the grace to blush as he shook back his shaggy mane. “The first invader was a girl,” he growled in his deep voice, “a girl who wanted me to paint her pet poodle in the centre of a plaque, with two verses of poetry printed about the rim.”

“Poor lamb,” murmured Francis, “did you devour her, little father, poodle and all?” “I told her the paint would run and the poodle come out weeping;” the potter smiled grimly. “Then came a man who is putting up a mansion on the Avenue; and he wanted a big jardiniere with pink cupids, pink, modelled in high relief, and swinging garlands of pink roses and purple violets, violets are his wife’s favorite flower, all against a blue sky and white clouds.”

“And what did you say, father dear?” queried Francis, with dancing eyes. “I told him it would be hideous and that my clay would make cupids the color of Indians.”

“Ah, father, father! Dear Monsieur Jean, can you not persuade this fierce father of mine, that the way to lead people into the World Beautiful is not to knock them down at the gate?”

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WITH laughter and jest, the guests filed out of the big workshop into the cool silence of the night, and Francis mused alone on the firelit hearth. She was still dreaming there when the potter returned.

“Was it not a success, father dear?” she asked, drawing him down to her side. “Yes,” he answered absently, “yes, little daughter;” then very thoughtfully; “It is good to know that there are people right about one working all quietly for the highest ideals. That bookbinder now; why his tools are sacred to him!—and that young fellow with eyes like one of Burne Jones’ mystics!”

“And the quaint Russian ladies, father, and dear Madame; surely they are genuine. And not only these,” the girl added musingly, “not only these who have found utterance, but also the many souls who as yet are inarticulate. Yesterday, father, as I was studying a quaint necklace in an antique shop, a young girl in a dream of a lavender gown, all silken and perfumed and gauzy, bent over an old cake basket of beaten silver. As our eyes met, we smiled, and she murmured wistfully, ‘How happy the people must be who can make these lovely things!’ Father, does not she also understand?”

As the potter smiled assent, Francis, nestling against him, continued dreamily: “And as I hurried along Chartres Street this morning a bevy of children on a door-step were holding a bazaar of colored sand, the blue and brown and yellow heaps ranged with loving care; and on another threshold a little tot sat crooning to herself as she strung a thread of blue and purple beads;—father, those children were touched by the same deep note that thrills our hearts! And when I reached the fruit-stall at our corner, there in the doorway, beneath the garlands of gray onions and swinging bunchs of bananas, sat old Nicola clumsily working a blue-check gingham in Turkey-red cross-stitch;—father, she, too, was groping!”

“But, yes,” she repeated, nodding at the coals with wide, honest eyes, “Nicola, too, is groping toward the beautiful; and your poor rich man, with his fat cupids,—he also is feeling blindly after the ideal,—longing for something of poetry,—a something that life has never given him;—and he does not know where to find it. Yes, some of us may have stumbled a little farther into the light, but all are touched by the same deep need.”