

Version à faire pour la rentrée de Khâgne - 2018/2019

Flora was alone in the back parlor, which she had appropriated for a sort of boudoir. She sat in her rocker, in front of the parlor stove, absorbed in "Little Dorrit." Her well-groomed girlish form was enveloped in a kindly warmth whose tender embrace tinged her interest in the narrative with a triumphant consciousness of the snowstorm outside.

Little by little the rigid afternoon light began to fade into a melancholy gray. Dusk was creeping into the room in almost visible waves. Flora let the book rest on her lap and fixed her gaze on the twinkling scarlet of the stove-glass. The thickening twilight, the warmth of the apartment, and the atmosphere of the novel blended together, and for some moments Flora felt far away from herself.

She was the only girl of her circle who would read Dickens, Scott, or Thackeray in addition to the "Family Story Paper" and the "Fireside Companion," which were the exclusive literary purveyors to her former classmates at the Chrystie Street Grammar School. There were a piano and a neat little library in her room.

She was rather tall and well formed. Her oblong ivory face, accentuated by a mass of unruly hair of a lustreless black, was never deserted by a faint glimmer of a smile, at once pensive and arch. When she broke into one of her hearty, good-natured laughs, her deep, dark, appealing eyes would seem filled with grief. Her nose, a trifle too precipitous, gave an unexpected tone to the extreme picturesqueness of the whole effect, and, when she walked, partook of the dignity of her gait.

A month or two before we make Flora's acquaintance she had celebrated her twentieth birthday, having been born in this little private house on Mott Street, which was her father's property.

A matchmaker had recently called, and he had launched into a eulogy of a young Jewish physician; but old Stroon had cut him short, in his blunt way: his only child was to marry a God-fearing business man, and no fellow deep in Gentile lore and shaving his beard need apply. As to Flora, she was burning to be a doctor's wife.

Flora hated the notion of marrying as the other Mott or Bayard Street girls did. She was accustomed to use her surroundings for a background, throwing her own personality into high relief. But apart from this, she craved a more refined atmosphere than her own, and the vague ideal she had was an educated American gentleman, like those who lived up-town.

Accordingly, when the word "doctor" had left the matchmaker's lips, she seized upon it as a great discovery. In those days—the early eighties—a match of this kind was an uncommon occurrence in the New York Ghetto.

Flora pictured a clean-shaven, high-hatted, spectacled gentleman jumping out of a buggy, and the image became a fixture in her mind. "I won't marry anybody except a doctor," she would declare, with conscious avoidance of bad grammar, as it behooved a doctor's wife.

But what was to be done with father's opposition? Asriel Stroon had never been the man to yield, and now that he grew more devout every day, her case seemed hopeless. But then Flora was her father's daughter, and when she took a resolve she could not imagine herself otherwise than carrying it out, sooner or later.