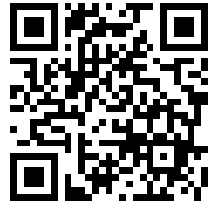
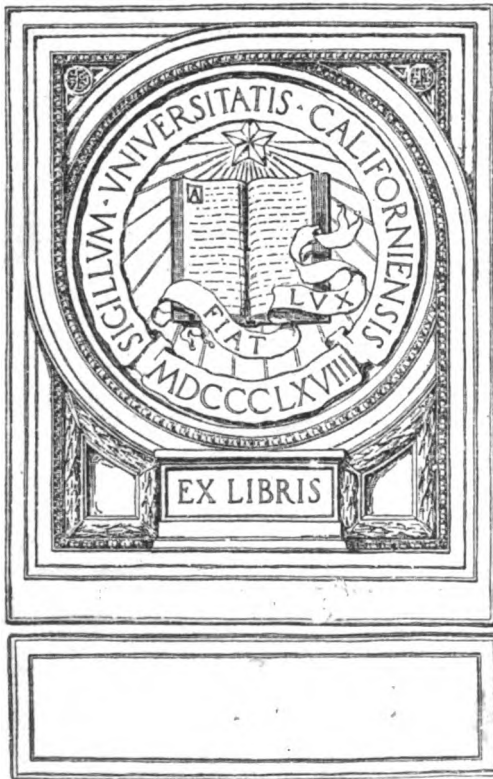

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LIPPINCOTT'S

MONTHLY MAGAZINE

By Mrs. Easton January 1909 *Easton*
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A Novel of Humor

Complete in
This Number

"The Flight of Robert Sevier"

Relating How, When,
and Where he Flew

By *Grace
MacGowan Cooke*

Author of

"Of The Lion's Breed"
"Love Among Thieves"
etc. . . . etc.

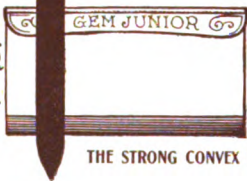


EDGAR ALLAN POE
Born January 19, 1809

Other contributors are Will Levington Comfort, La Salle Corbell Pickett, Harrison S. Morris, George L. Knapp, Thomas L. Masson, Edwin L. Sabin, Jane Belfield, and twenty others.

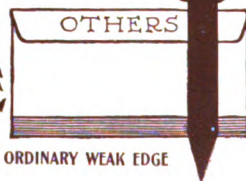
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LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

A POPULAR JOURNAL
OF GENERAL LITERATURE



UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

VOL. LXXXIII.—JANUARY TO JUNE, 1909

PHILADELPHIA
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1909

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CONTENTS

And Away They Galloped Together.....	<i>Will Levington Comfort</i>	749
Another Reversion to Type.....	<i>Thomas L. Masson</i>	254
Apparition, The.....	<i>Ella Wheeler Wilcox</i>	458
As Played by the Orchestra.....	<i>Marion Hill</i>	331
Being Nice.....	<i>Dorothea Deakin</i>	362
Blind Spot, The.....	<i>Edwin L. Sabin</i>	128
Brains.....	<i>Thomas L. Masson</i>	121
Captain's Charm, The.....	<i>Anne Warner</i>	472
Changing the Earth.....	<i>Clifford Howard</i>	255
Clue, The.....	<i>Carolyn Wells</i>	385
Comic Supplement, The.....	<i>Herman Scheffauer</i>	381
Crudity, The.....	<i>Will Levington Comfort</i>	223
Deductions.....	<i>Walter Pulitzer</i>	346
Departure, The.....	<i>Ella Wheeler Wilcox</i>	614
Desperate Character, A.....	<i>Owen Oliver</i>	728
Eavesdropper, The.....	<i>Minna Thomas Antrim</i>	630
Elmina's Living-Out.....	<i>Elsie Singmaster</i>	214
Epigrams.....	<i>Elizabeth Burger Conover</i>	256
Epigrams.....	<i>Warwick James Price</i>	256
Epigrams.....		512
Exit the Hustler.....	<i>Ellis O. Jones</i>	766
Feed the Children.....	<i>Ellis O. Jones</i>	126
Flight of Robert Sevier, The.....	<i>Grace MacGowan Cooke</i>	1
For the Sake of the Kid.....	<i>Theodore Waters</i>	353
Freight That Went South, The.....	<i>Caroline Lockhart</i>	478
Fresh Calamity, A.....	<i>Clifford Howard</i>	510
Friend of Jimmie's, A.....	<i>Eleanor Mercein Kelly</i>	230
Garden of Forgotten Things, The.....	<i>Ella Wheeler Wilcox</i>	318
Get Rid of Your Illusions.....	<i>George L. Knapp</i>	380
Girl Who Forgot, The.....	<i>Eleanor Mercein Kelly</i>	107
Green-Room, The.....	<i>Will Levington Comfort</i>	82
Honor of the Chapter, The.....	<i>J. R. Fisher</i>	115
Ignorant Foreigner, The.....	<i>Ellis O. Jones</i>	639
Inferences.....	<i>Minna Thomas Antrim</i>	319
In the Day of the Cave Men.....	<i>Harvey B. Bashore</i>	488
Is Present-Day Fiction Quite Ephemeral?.....	<i>J. B. E.</i>	383
January Generals, The.....	<i>La Salle Corbell Pickett</i>	101
Kiss Money.....	<i>Bolton Hall</i>	371
Knight Errant in Broadway, A.....	<i>Rupert Sargent Holland</i>	257
Lady Godiva at the Springs.....	<i>Mary Roberts Rinehart</i>	593
Lanier of the Cavalry; or, A Week's Arrest.....	<i>General Charles King</i>	129
Last Great Biography, The.....	<i>Harrison S. Morris</i>	112
Lincoln.....	<i>George L. Knapp</i>	207
Literature and the Man of State.....	<i>W. B. Blake</i>	637
Little Fat Skeleton, The.....	<i>Augusta Kortrecht</i>	460
Man, Mere Man.....	<i>Peter Pry Shevlin</i>	125
Miss Cluny of Cartmel.....	<i>Will Levington Comfort</i>	504
Miss Tooker's Wedding Gift.....	<i>John Kendrick Bangs</i>	320
Mollycoddle, The.....	<i>Augusta Kortrecht</i>	718
Mrs. Marsham.....	<i>Maarten Maartens</i>	603
Nemesis of the Ticket Office, The.....	<i>Wilmot Price</i>	249
Nerve of Joe, The.....	<i>D. C. Lawless</i>	372
New Mail Service Proposition, A.....	<i>Willard French</i>	764
On the Making of Good Resolutions.....	<i>R. T. H.</i>	128
Open-Faced Diplomacy.....	<i>Phil Collom</i>	512
Our Wasteful Politeness.....	<i>Clifford Howard</i>	638
Plea for Less Coal, A.....	<i>George Ethelbert Walsh</i>	347
Poe.....	<i>George L. Knapp</i>	74

Contents

Pomegranate Seed, The.....	<i>Katharine Metcalf Roof</i>	513
Royal Line, The	<i>Grace MacGowan Cooke</i>	641
Shoemaker-Poet, The	<i>Jane Ellis Joy</i>	235
Sinful Smith	<i>Adèle Marie Shaw</i>	239
Some Spoons and a Dog.....	<i>Alice Louise Lee</i>	756
Such Is Life	<i>Peter Pry Shevlin</i>	234
Temperament	<i>Eleanor Mercein Kelly</i>	739
That Denied "Giftie".....	<i>Mella Russell McCallum</i>	754
"Thousand Dollar" Daggett.....	<i>Elsie Singmaster</i>	616
Tree, the Rope, and the Man, The.....	<i>Will Livingston Comfort</i>	341
Trees	<i>Thomas L. Masson</i>	361
Tricks of Memory, The.....	<i>William Trowbridge Larned</i>	624
Truth, the Whole Truth, The.....	<i>Thomas L. Masson</i>	737
Turquoise Ring, The.....	<i>Karl von Kraft</i>	94
Wanted—More Books for Young Girls.....	<i>Sarah D. Upham</i>	767
Way We Say It, The.....	<i>Ellis O. Jones</i>	253
Western Story, The.....	<i>Ellis O. Jones</i>	509
"Woman Disposes"	<i>George Allan England</i>	492
Woman Problem, The	<i>Ouida</i>	586
I. Shall Women Vote?		586
II. Love Versus Avarice		712
Woman Who Had No Needs, The.....	<i>Jane Belfield</i>	122

POETRY

Afloat	<i>William H. Frost</i>	248
Blessed Barren, The.....	<i>Charles L. O'Donnell</i>	222
Fame's Crown	<i>Francis Marquette</i>	503
Farewell, A	<i>Charles L. O'Donnell</i>	100
Filipino Scout, The.....	<i>Alfred Damon Runyon</i>	360
Garden Beautiful, The.....	<i>Clinton Scollard</i>	755
Hope and Despair.....	<i>Clarence Urmy</i>	346
If the Faring Forth Wrought All.....	<i>Mary Byerley</i>	111
Little Song, A.....	<i>Florence Earle Coates</i>	370
Moderns, The	<i>Elsie Casseigne King</i>	738
Mother to Her Son, The.....	<i>Caroline Wood Morrison</i>	471
Nature's Millionaire	<i>Dixie Wolcott</i>	487
Night Worker, The.....	<i>Chester Firkins</i>	317
Of Laughter	<i>Mary Byerley</i>	379
Rastus's Baby	<i>Cora Walker Hayes</i>	636
Road to Yesterday, The	<i>Mazie V. Caruthers</i>	727
Song	<i>Mary Byerley</i>	206
Spring of the Year, The.....	<i>Alice E. Allen</i>	613
Spring Song, The.....	<i>Roscoe Gilmore Stott</i>	585
Theory of Dragon-Flies, A.....	<i>Helen Talbot Porter</i>	238
Toast, A	<i>Jane Belfield</i>	711
Trail of the Silent Land, The.....	<i>J. B. E.</i>	629
Tropic Dawn	<i>Josephine Morris Rowan</i>	457
Underground Trolley, The.....	<i>Charles L. O'Donnell</i>	640
When a Great Man Dies.....	<i>Charles Hanson Towne</i>	125
When Phœbe Looks.....	<i>Annette Williams</i>	81

LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

JANUARY, 1909



THE FLIGHT OF ROBERT SEVIER

RELATING HOW, WHEN, AND WHERE HE FLEW

BY

GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE

Author of "Hulda," "Love Among Thieves," etc.

I.

HE stood back, hypodermic syringe in hand, his fascinated gaze glued to a rabbit into which he had just injected ten drops of the fluid from the glass. The bright-eyed, furry little creature stirred and undulated strangely; yet Sevier could not be sure but that it was merely humping itself into a more comfortable position after the sting of the needle.

Suddenly it began to tremble with violence, then rose, kicking and twitching, until he could see light between it and the table-top. His breath came in gasps as he watched the animal slowly ascend toward the gas-fixture.

"It works," he said in an exultant, vibrating whisper. "It works on the living animal!"

Rigid, his head thrown back, clenched hands dropped at his sides, he remained staring, still half incredulous, at the unhappy rabbit which went aimlessly knocking about the ceiling, after tangling its ears in some sort of contraption the Professor's sister-in-law had made and suspended from the gas-fixture to hold burnt matches. Finally, with a long sigh as of a sleeper awakened, and a half-bewildered glance around him, the experimenter came to himself, took pity on the novel and unique misery of his subject's situation, sprang lightly upon the table,

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VOL. LXXXIII.—1

1

and caught it down, securing it by means of the upturned waste-basket to keep it from floating.

"I may as well——"

He looked dubiously about upon a curious gathering of small animals.

"Yes, of course I must try it on all the others," he concluded, "before I attempt it on myself. It may work differently with man."

For a few moments he was feverishly busy with syringe and glass among the reluctant, resentful, or complaining creatures. Then he went back to the rabbit to see if the lightness were dying out of it, or if it would yet float as formerly. He was interrupted in his investigations by the abrupt rise of the guinea pig he had left on the table behind him. The little creature shot up with great suddenness, bumping its nose into the ceiling, and its piteous squeaks reminded Robert to lock his door.

Holding the rabbit under his arm, since he found it was still lighter than the atmosphere, he climbed after the elevated guinea pig. At that moment a small dog mounted slowly, but not silently, before his face. The yelps of this last victim were so harrowing that he feared they would bring interference, and he once more turned toward the door.

But he had got the guinea pig under the other arm now, and was grabbing for the dog as he stepped off the table, when a cat whom he had left sitting decently on the hearth-rug suddenly assumed a most undignified position, standing on her fore-paws, trailing her insulted nose upon the floor, and with hind-legs and tail borne high in the air as she scudded across the carpet under the impetus of the dose he had given her, and—natural conservative—yowled out her horror at this reversal of established custom.

The Professor, pausing a moment, flushed and rumped, admitted that he should not have experimented upon all of his subjects at the same time. Yet it was most interesting to note that the levitation had localized itself in the cat's rearward parts, rendering them buoyant, while her fore-feet still clung to and clawed the carpet. He was so absorbed in this manifestation that he let go rabbit and guinea pig, and even relinquished the dog he had just secured. The latter shot ceilingward just as the cat became light enough all over to go up.

Pussy, with true feline logic, blamed the thing nearest her for her plight. With a tremendous volley of most profane hisses, she struck out at the floating dog, landing on his ear and causing him for a moment to forget that he was in the air.

The humane Professor was about to interfere in this riot when another basket heaved and rolled, and a young pig, with a terrified squeal, emerged from it and ascended about six feet from the floor,

where it hung stationary, vainly stirring the air in a mad attempt to walk, while a second cat joined the other animals in the air.

Feline number one refused to let go of the dog; she had found what she considered firm footing on his back, where she remained, spitting and clawing. In his wild efforts to rid himself of her, the dog turned quite over and floated feet uppermost, while the cat still clung.

The air of the room was full of small animals, growling, yowling, squealing, loudly accusing each other of the broken laws of nature. Sevier, his thick hair wildly rumped, his dark eyes shining with ardor and apprehension duly mixed, ran and jumped and struggled in a vain attempt to get them back into their receptacles. It reminded him whimsically of what the copy-books tell us of spoken words which can never be recalled.

A step on the stair set him to madder efforts. His sister-in-law had not the scientific mind. She regarded his dubious activities, if not himself, with a sort of kindly contempt. She was a notable housekeeper, and the messing up he did was a sore subject between them. He would scarcely have ventured this experiment to-day had he not known that she was at a luncheon. He must get the creatures down and quieted before his performance was found out.

"Me-owl—ye-owl!" went the cats. They had discovered each other now, and were apparently in doubt as to whether they should turn to a mutual attack or band together and exterminate the dog.

"Ki-yi—hi-yi!" supplied the dog. He was used to treeing cats, but not to being treed by them.

The shrill "E-i-i-i!" of the young porker dominated all the other sounds. Only the poor guinea pig bumped its round back and the white rabbit tapped its pink nose on the ceiling in silence. Robert sprang from one article of furniture to another, and grabbed for the floating zoölogical collection, which evaded his hand as particles in a cup of tea evade one's spoon.

"Hello, Uncle Robert!" came a boy's pipe at the door.

"Bobby"—the voice was relieved, but it was not that of a successful scientist; it had the tremor of a small child detected in the jam closet—"Bobby, where's your mother?"

"Over to Miss Alice Kercheval's. Let me in."

"Not now, my boy," returned the Professor, making an unsuccessful grab at the reversed dog. "Ouch!"—as the cat, for which he next reached, sent home a short-arm jab to his wrist. Professor Sevier clapped his hand to his mouth exactly as the small jam-purloining child might have done. "Bobby, you run away and don't interrupt me for half an hour, and I'll give you my rabbit—I'm done with it."

Still sucking the clawed wrist, he looked up to where the innocent

animal floated lightly, and wished that he were as near done with these vociferous creatures in the air about him.

"What you doin', Uncle Rob? You killin' 'em?" inquired Bobby's awed tones from outside.

"No, no; I'm not hurting them—the shoe's on the other foot. Your rabbit's all right as soon as I get it down."

"Well, you must be hurtin' their feelin's pretty bad, then, the way it sounds to me. Will you give me the rabbit and the dog too if I go an' watch for ma and tell you when I see her comin'?"

"I will indeed—ouch!" agreed the Professor with hearty emphasis, as he desperately secured the amalgamated cat and dog, and was liberally clawed in the process.

There was a scamper of small, heavily-shod feet down the stair; the front door slammed. With a sentinel posted, the temptation was irresistible to experiment upon himself with the fluid then and there.

Levitation was subsiding in the little creatures he had failed to pull down, and they one by one slowly landed upon chair, table, or floor, with a queer look of shamed bewilderment in their small faces—a knowledge quite too great for their rudimentary intelligence to hold. He put them back into their baskets, then set forth a vial and sterilized his hypodermic syringe. It was necessary to have light to measure the dose; he raised a shade. To make assurance doubly sure that he was alone in the house, he moved quietly out into the hall and listened. It was very still. No sound of the negress singing in the kitchen—she always went out as soon as her mistress did.

He stepped back into his room with that exaltation of mood which comes to the experimenter as he sets his foot upon unknown territory. Fairly breathless with eager excitement, he went hastily over the calculations as to his bulk and weight and the bulk and weight of the animals upon which he had just experimented, drew the fluid into the syringe, and carefully inserted it under the skin of his arm. Trembling and a little pale, he pressed the piston down until every drop had entered his body.

Standing by the table, resting his hands upon it, he awaited developments.

Professor Robert Sevier held the Chair of Chemistry in a Southern mountain university. He was a tall, dark-eyed, good-looking fellow, sweet-tempered, timid, absent-minded in the ordinary affairs of life and with two objects for his soul's devotion—science and Alice Kercheval, daughter of the president of the college. For two years he had been working on a fluid which, injected into the blood of a living creature, would, he believed, levitate the entire organism, freeing it wholly from the laws of gravitation.

It began with the levitation of fluids by gases. In the course of

some experiments along this line he found that he could send a bladder of water to the ceiling without converting it into steam or any other vapor. He reasoned that if these fluids could be levitated—meanwhile leaving them uninjured for their owner's uses—the human body, which is three parts water, could, too, and that we might thus float in the air—fly—without exterior aid.

A world-shaking discovery this, but the young Professor of Chemistry had no vision of notoriety. He wooed science as he would have wooed Alice, had he the position and the courage to do so, with a pure ardor for the success itself, and no thought about the trappings it might wear, or the incidental advantages it might bring him. There was but one feature of the matter that presented itself to his mind outside the fever to discover for discovery's sake. If he made his name famous among men he would have the right—and might develop the courage—to ask Alice Kercheval to wear it. His pulse drummed; he blushed enthusiastically, to his very soles, and all by himself, at the thought of going boldly to her with his success and offering it and himself to her.

What did it? The blush, perhaps—it was a very robust and far-reaching one; and blushing is a disturbance of the circulation. In the blood Professor Sevier's levitation fluid did its work. All at once as he stood by the table he felt a curious swimming sensation, as of one wading in very deep water. He made an incautious movement, and found himself reversed, hanging head down beside the table and about ten inches above the floor.

“Ha!” said the original cat, with a very profane and insulting epithet. “How do you like the trick yourself? That's it; waggle your hind legs. Much good may it do you!”)

He kicked out wildly, and came in contact with some breakables on the table-top.

“Uncle Robert! Uncle Rob! Ma's coming!”

The shrill childish pipe sounded up the stair. Robert Sevier grasped the table-leg with desperate fingers, and pulled himself down to where he could clutch the foot of the heavy sofa, then the edge of a tacked-down rug, holding insecurely to the place that man was born to tread, his feet waving freely above him like joyous pennons. He heard Bobby's step on the stair.

“Ma's got Miss Sally Sorsby and Miss Alice Kercheval with her,” volleyed the sentinel. “I heard her say she was goin' to bring 'em right up to your room for something.”

Then it occurred to the helpless man that after he had stepped into the hall to assure himself of solitude he had forgotten to lock the door!

“Head 'em off, Bobby!” he entreated. “You head 'em off, and I'll give you *all* my animals.”

"I'm sure Robert will do anything you girls ask him to," came his sister-in-law's confident tones. They were passing under the window now, and Sevier, pinching the deep pile of the carpet between his fingers, struggled vainly toward the door on his hands.

"Your Uncle Robert is up-stairs, is n't he?" inquired the same clear, high voice, as the feminine trio turned in at the front hall and came on with a swish of skirts which sounded to the wretched man as loud as the roar of cannon.

Oh, Bobby the faithless—Bobby the all too honest! Alas for the children of the conscientiously inclined, who are taught that truth is a virtue at all times. They are sadly hampered in the affairs of life.

"Yes 'm," agreed Bobby with reluctance, evidently barring their way and halting them on the stairs. "Uncle Rob's up there—he's been doin' somethin' awful to some cats and dogs and pigs—but he said I was to——"

Above-stairs Professor Sevier broke into a profuse perspiration as he inched across the carpet on his finger-ends, sometimes pulling himself forward a foot and floating back nearly two. Happily Mrs. Sevier interrupted her offspring at this point and pushed past him.

"Come on, girls," she said carelessly. "Rob's so bashful that he'll never know what you're asking, but if he once says yes, he'll come and do what he promises."

There were light steps, and little bubbles of sound which irreverent people call giggles, but which some sentimentalist has said are only companionless kisses.

"I know he would keep his promises," said Alice Kercheval's soft voice. "The boys tell me he does wonderful things in the class-room, but he may think it's beneath his dignity to give us amusing experiments at a lawn-party."

Something about those velvety tones gave the Professor power to scratch his way faster towards the door, and he turned the key just as Laura Sevier rattled the knob.

"Ro-bert! Ro-bert!"

"He has gone out, after all," suggested Alice Kercheval gently.

"He's so absent-minded he's liable to forget to answer. Ro-bert!" The Professor's sister-in-law was used to him.

"Do you suppose," inquired Miss Sorsby, in a loud voice, "that he could be absent-minded enough to lock the door on the inside when he went out?" Sally Sorsby was called witty in a college town.

Mrs. Sevier, who had no sense of humor, responded, as she continued to rattle the door, and even kick on it softly with a small suède slipper,

"I should n't wonder at all. It would be just like him. Bobby says

that the other day he put his dress-coat in the bath and tried to hang himself up in the closet."

All this time the Professor had been clinging to the door-knob, panting, imagining they must hear his breath or his heart-beats, fearing desperately that some of his animals would give tongue. But at this speech he suddenly released his hold and began to crawl up the wall as he had crawled across the carpet. With such energy did he scabble that, before he knew it, his fingers were on the picture-rail, and his head in imminent danger of contact with the ceiling.

"I heard a sound," whispered Alice Kercheval's voice outside. "He must be in there. Oh, dear Mrs. Sevier, do let's go away!"

"I know he's in there," asserted Bobby. "He's doin' awful funny things to cats an' dogs an' rabbits. I know, 'cause he would n't let me in either."

"Let's go down-stairs and wait until he finishes his experiments," insisted Alice. "I don't think we ought to interrupt serious work with our frivolous demands. Father says there'd be more great men if women were considerate. He thinks Professor Sevier is going to surprise us all one of these days."

Robert paused, anchoring himself by the picture-rail, to enjoy the sweetness of this speech. Then he became aware that one of his bedroom slippers was sliding off. In vain he waved arms and legs—he could not connect the two members. His body felt like beaten egg-whites; a cold perspiration glued his clothes to that frothy body. He recalled a saying of his old nurse: "Worldly success brings worldly trouble. When you buy a new house you buy a place to set coffin trestles. When you make money you make it to spend for handkerchiefs to sop up tears." Into what humiliation was his great discovery steering him? "Slap!" went his slipper on the floor. Falling from near the ceiling, it made a good loud noise, and the dog barked.

"He's dressing," promptly commented Laura, who lacked delicacy. "I hear him changing his shoes. He won't be long now."

"Oh, I guess not. You peep through the key-hole."

It was Miss Sorsby who made this suggestion. She whispered it, but he caught the words. He remembered that he had been beguiled into escorting this young lady to a college dance; he recollected with a sinking heart that he had forgotten all about her, walked home by himself, and left her in dudgeon and humiliation. He realized how she would enjoy what she might not be quite able to see through that key-hole—the spectacle of him held up in this absurd situation by a power beyond his control.

His other foot was now waving like a wing, and he could not get to it. Its slipper kept loosening a bit; and as he vainly clutched the air above it, it came off and fell. The women heard.

"Oh, dear Mrs. Sevier, please do let us go down-stairs," begged Alice's sweet tones. "This is—why, this is horrid of us!"

"I have to do this way about Robert," explained his sister-in-law plaintively. "He is n't like other men. Now he'll forget we've been here if we don't keep on calling him. Robert, don't wait to lace your shoes clear up—tie them around the ankle and come on. Do come on. I have to do that way, or he would forget while he's lacing them," she explained as they started down the stair.

Given a respite, the Professor was able to exercise some control over his body. With the aid of the picture-rail, he crawled to a mirror-top and perched upon it while he took stock of the situation. It had worked. The levitating fluid had worked. It was a success. The animals he had experimented on now crouched where they had alighted, or crept to shelter. If he could thus render his own body lighter than the atmosphere, and float, the same thing could be done for others. Of course he must experiment until he found that the effects were always uniform and reliable. Also he must assure himself that there were no evil after-consequences.

Then—then the great discovery would be given to the world, and he might speak his mind and heart to Alice Kercheval. How sweet she had been!

In the intoxication of this remembrance, he believed that his invention would revolutionize travel, solve the problem of railway monopolies, give lightning transportation for fruits that rotted on the trees while the sick in great cities perished for their cool, reviving juices. And he had a vision of ropes stretched across states, continents, hemispheres, with travellers floating, guided by this new kind of trolley, to any destination.

The cruelty of the cattle trains would be a thing of the past when the pent-up, anguished beasts would be no longer dragged by tortuous lines across desert and over mountain. Each fat heifer or bucking steer or squealing pig would make private headway, led by the guide-ropes through the safer paths of air. Tail up, legs anywhere—up or down—what a spectacle the animals would present as they were thus transported! Robert laughed a little, softly.

Lost in these reflections, the present was forgotten, until a pair of stout short legs projected themselves into the room by way of the window, the body of a small boy logically following. Bobby ran across the room, and, unlocking the door, had his mouth open to call his mother up, before he noticed where the Professor was.

"Shut that door—shut it!" hissed Sevier from his perch. The awful possibility of being floated out into the corridor head down and dressing-gown inverted, shoeless feet waving, of being thus floated down-stairs, sickened him with fear.

Bobby stopped with very round eyes. The Professor tried to throw himself down from where he sat, but it was no use, he was only in danger of floating, and he grasped the mirror again to anchor himself.

"What kind of a slack rope have you got up there?" his eight-year-old nephew shouted in wild excitement. "Let me call ma and the girls to see you. Oh, look out, Uncle Rob. You're kicking Venus into Apollo." For the Professor's wildly waving feet had swept across the mantel-shelf, and, mindful of other occasions and destroyed bric-à-brac, Bobby added in a lower tone, "Maybe I'd better not call ma just now."

The levitation went out so suddenly that Professor Sevier had the effect of leaping upon his small relative as he cried:

"Don't—call—anybody!"

"You're a regular athlete, ain't you?" Bobby inquired, backing off and eying him. "When did you do your training, Uncle Rob? I did n't know you ever went to the gym. Miss Alice and Miss Sally would be tickled to death if you'd do some o' them stunts at their lawn party. That's what they came over to ask you about."

"Are they here yet?"

"Yep. Ma told me to hustle you down. She said for me to notice that you had all your clothes on, and to bring you along."

"I can't go," protested Robert Sevier, remembering Miss Sorsby. "I wish I could," he added, on recollection of Alice Kercheval. "You tell them that I said I would do anything I could to make their lawn fête a success. And, Bobby"—clutching the small boy as he prepared to depart—"don't you say a word about anything you have seen in this room."

"Huh!" snorted the nephew. "If I could do them stunts I'd be proud. I would n't care who knew it. You'll teach me, won't you, Uncle Rob?"

"Yes—yes! Anything—if you'll only go downstairs and get rid of those women."

II.

"BUT, father, we were very careful—there were six of us, and we hunted up all the almanacs on the place. I never made such a careful appointment with the moon in my life."

Alice Kercheval's pretty face puckered with anxiety as she looked out over the campus, where Chinese lanterns were proving somewhat inadequate substitutes for a luminary which had incontinently deserted the lawn fête at nine o'clock.

"You should have consulted me about it," said President Kercheval, shaking his gray head. "I have already—er—dislodged three couples from the deep shadows of those trees over there. I will not have you

running about in this twilight with the students—irresponsible young men. If I can find Robert Sevier, I will put you in his care.”

Alice fairly pouted.

“You speak as though I were a package,” she protested. “I can’t help it that we girls got a last year’s almanac. Just because I’m the daughter of a college president does n’t make me all-wise. Any way, I supposed the firmament was the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. I think it’s ridiculous for heavenly bodies to scratch their dates and have new engagement books every year. It strikes me as a very worldly thing to do. Besides, Professor Sevier may not care to be bothered with your daughter.”

The young man himself, having accomplished wonders of parlor magic by means of chemistry, and sufficiently delighted his audience, now made his appearance wandering among the booths, the groups of students and summer girls. Appealed to by the President, it seemed that he would be delighted, and it was no time at all before another couple were seeking the shadows of a little hill that rose near the long main building.

After that first overwhelming success, Professor Sevier had been progressing indifferently with his levitation experiments. The fluid had a tricky way of delaying its action, which puzzled him. The injection made, he would wait sometimes an hour, sometimes ten hours, before getting results. Then there was always the danger that the effect would be localized in some one portion of his frame or another. Last night he sat up until almost dawn, waiting for a large dose to manifest itself in works. He had put in the weary hours thinking of Alice Kercheval, and his nerves were in a state which made the presence of the girl he loved act upon them as a double stimulant.

“Father has been lecturing me because I got hold of a last year’s almanac and thought it was full moon to-night,” the girl began as they strolled quietly along. “I think it was horrid of the man in the moon to turn the whole thing over the horizon like an empty cup on the night of our lawn fête.”

“Perhaps one of the gods threw it,” suggested the young Professor, with unexampled daring. “There’s one of them, I believe, that’s a mighty good friend of timid l—lovers; he knows that men are bolder in the dark.”

The girl laughed a little. “Bolder in the dark!” she echoed. “Father said something like that. What a lot you male creatures seem to know about each other!”

Then the bashful Professor did a desperate deed. He caught the little hand that swung by her side, lifted it, and drew it through his arm.

"Come," he whispered. "Come on. Let's get to the place where I shall not be afraid to tell you—to tell you——"

Her step lagged. She looked over her shoulder at the strings of lights like magnified fireflies among the greenery, the moving figures of men and maids within the circle of their brightness.

"I think the mandolin club is going to play now," she said faintly, as in duty bound.

Of course she longed to hear what he had to say. Of course her little feet were eager to fly to those shadows where he should be bold. But she was a well-brought-up girl, before whose eyes it loomed large that maidenly modesty—a reasonable degree of coyness—was one of woman's chiefest charms.

"Don't you want to come with me? Are you angry?" inquired the Professor, his heart choking in his throat, his knees trembling. "You are angry! Oh, Miss Alice, forgive my effrontery! Please forget all about it, and we'll go back and listen to the band."

Alice could have wept. She stopped short, and went neither forward nor back.

"I don't see why you act as though you thought I were offended," she protested. "I'm not angry a bit. I never was offended—at you."

She turned a little and gave him the glory of her eyes in the dim light.

"You're always so good and kind," she breathed. "You don't seem to me like other men. I—I could n't be angry at you."

"Oh, Alice, don't look at me like that!" burst out the wretched Professor. "I—I——"

"You need n't be afraid to say anything in the world to me," persisted Alice sweetly. She felt that she understood this shy, sweet-natured, gifted man—that she knew him better than he knew himself.

"I want to tell you," the Professor began desperately, realizing that this was more serious even than the levitation experiments—"I've had the idea that if you once knew, I could get on with my work better—that I am trying, for your sake, to rise in the world."

He broke off in sudden panic. He had been so literally trying to rise in the world for some months, he had so greatly feared the ridicule that might follow his experiments, that he listened in an anguish of trepidation to hear her laugh at him.

They had come to the crest of their little hill. Below them the street lamps of the small city silvered a river that curved and shimmered down the valley. Nearer at hand the lights on roof and tower of the college buildings shone out, while lawn and grove and campus were dotted everywhere with the dimly luminous Chinese lanterns. Tents were scattered over the grass like mushrooms. The mandolins had indeed begun, and were playing rag-time softened into elfin music

by the distance. A murmur of voices from the young people moving in and out among the booths came up to them. The air was like thin silk drawn past your cheek.

Alice looked at the velvety shadows toward which they had been travelling, then down at the uniforms of the students—for the little University was a military school. Not one of those boys would have been afraid to say anything that came into his head on a night like this, even to the President's daughter. Yet it was not from one of them that she wanted to hear such words. She was so still that poor Robert Sevier doubted her disclaimers, and believed that she must have been annoyed. He drew a little away from her, yet as her warm hand slipped off his arm, it suddenly dropped into his. The fingers trembled and curled up within his palm like the petals of a rose. He heard her sigh gently. Of course she was grieved—shocked at his precipitancy. In frantic haste to resume the old kindly relations between them, he rushed nervously into excuses.

"It was nothing important I had to ask you," he began with a breezy manner which covered a sinking heart. "I merely thought I'd suggest that you—that you should have some ice-cream with me, Miss Alice."

The girl started as though she had been struck. Then, "Certainly, Professor Sevier," she said with dignity. "But"—with a touch of bitterness—"it was rather absurd for us to toil away up here on this hill, past all the booths, for you to ask me that."

This reduced Robert to abject idiocy.

"You see, I wanted to know whether you would take chocolate or vanilla or strawberry," he explained in tones of the most disproportionate tenderness as they made their way back toward a stand at the edge of the grounds.

She settled her white skirts and her belt with that infinitesimal, haughty little movement that no man ever quite takes the meaning of.

"Chocolate," she said briefly. "Everything is a little dark and off-color to-night."

There was nobody near them but a white-jacketed boy behind the counter. Sevier began eating his cream in great spoonfuls, not in the least aware of what he was doing.

"Miss Alice," he urged humbly, "I believe I displeased you by something I said back there, but really you misunderstood me. I had no idea of its sounding the way it did. I—I hope you won't consider my words—as—that is, consider them seriously."

The girl's very ears burned. He had guessed her secret, then. Her agitation when they stood together in the dark night, curtained round by its soft veiling, and when words that set her heart fluttering with anticipation were uttered by the man she loved, had betrayed her.

Now he was warning her against himself. He was trying to draw back from her too ready, too consenting reception. Had she needed a humiliation so complete? She looked down and trifled with her spoon. Tears swam in her eyes and blinded her.

"Really, I have forgotten what we were talking about," she smiled bravely. "It does n't matter anyhow. Men expect to make some foolish speeches at a place like this, don't they?"

"Oh, don't say that, Miss Alice!" The Professor had bolted his ice-cream, and now began to scrape his empty saucer. "I"—savagely—"I am such an idiot when I try to talk to any lady; and when it is you I— Miss Sally Sorsby told me once that I was a drivelling dolt, and I begin to think she was exactly right."

"Oh, you wanted to confide something to me about Sally Sorsby, did you?" Alice inquired sharply.

The boy behind the counter was bored. He looked away from them, and busied himself with some matters in the back of his box-like stand.

"No, what I said to you has nothing to do with Miss Sorsby," the Professor gathered wit enough to assert. "I'll say it all over, and allow you to judge whom it concerns, and let you be angry if you will. I am trying to rise——"

He broke off suddenly. There came the all too familiar feeling of being in deep water. He was trying to rise indeed. He clutched the edge of the counter and sought desperately to keep his feet on the ground. He perceived Alice looking strangely at him.

"It—it won't stay down," he muttered almost unconsciously, through paling lips.

What could she connect such a speech with except the ice-cream which she had just seen him bolt so violently? What could she do but considerately turn her head away? As she did so, a fellow whom Robert Sevier both feared and hated came strolling into the circle of light about the booth—a debonair and self-possessed young gentleman, who was never troubled by bashfulness, and who flaunted the advantage of having grown up with Alice Kercheval, and graduated from the University several years before.

Dabney Tate was a prosperous insurance man in Unaka now, and notoriously in love with President Kercheval's daughter.

"Such luck to find you alone, Alice," he began eagerly.

"Alone?"

The Professor had in his dismay let go the counter, caught vainly at the post of the booth as he went up, and failed to anchor himself until he came to the flag which floated free above the stand. Here he now clung, head down, and saw the look of offended astonishment

with which Miss Kercheval regarded his vacant place. A gentle sympathy succeeded her first anger.

"Oh, he must be ill!" she cried in alarm. "He was so pale, and he said he could n't—that is," she explained hastily—"that is, Professor Robert Sevier was here with me a minute ago, and I think he was suddenly taken sick. He must have gone that way"—pointing down the hill. "Please follow and find him, Dabney."

When she had sent away her new cavalier she was confronted with an unexpected dilemma. A caterer's boy was spinning on the small counter an aluminum check for forty cents.

"Wha—what's this?" she asked weakly, as he presented it for her inspection.

"Cake-an'-cream-for-two," came the business-like response.

"But you can't charge me that way," she protested. "This thing was got up for the benefit of my church. I helped to get it up. It—why, it's really my lawn fête."

"I'm sorry, miss; but if you helped to get it up you know that this booth is runnin' half and half. 'Tain't all the church's. I can't give away no cream to nobody."

The Professor, hanging above her with crumpled legs and anguished soul, like some new and rather unusual sort of guardian angel, wrapped the stripes of the flag about him and wondered if it would do to call down to her. His hasty consumption of the frozen food must have jarred into action the dose of levitating fluid which had refused to work the night before. He would make a note of that.

But now—might he venture to drop money on the counter? What effect would it produce on the boy to have a rain of small change come out of the air to pay that bill? He dared not do it. He could only pray that the random result of the fluid might die out sufficiently to let him descend before Alice, who was lengthening out her dish bravely, had actually finished it. But he forgot Dabney Tate, and that gentleman was one of the people whom it is well to remember. He came hurrying back now with a glib lie.

"Professor Robert Sevier is sitting down there beside Sally Sorsby, listening to the music," he declared. "The man looks comfortable enough. I don't believe he's sick or has been sick. He's forgotten all about you. Come on, Alice; let's take a little walk up there on the hill."

The occupant of the flag—if a flag may be said to be occupied—almost lost his grip on the staff as he wagged a shaking fist at the serpent who had invaded his Eden and proposed to take his Eve up on the little hill where they two had stood so happily twenty minutes ago.

Should they walk? Alice looked genuinely distressed.

"Dabney," she began in a low tone, "Professor Sevier asked me to have some ice-cream with him, and—and—he forgot to pay when he left. I—I—you—I'll have to borrow the money from you, please."

Above them Robert Sevier writhed and groaned. He turned over on his back and floated, that he might not see. But Tate's voice came up to him in a bellow of crude laughter.

"Asked you to have cream, and then went off without paying for it! Good Lord! what a queer duck that fellow is!"

In the face of Tate's assertion that the Professor was now down listening to the music, Alice forbore to repeat her statement that he had been suddenly ill.

"Are you going to pay—or are you not?" she inquired rather fiercely.

"Pay? Of course I am," Tate said genially. "I'm the kind of fellow that pays; and yours for the asking—for the taking—you know that, Alice."

The practical clerk rang up the money as though it were not the price of another man's honor.

"I thought I seen somebody coonin' it up the post," the white-jacketed youth ruminated as these two left. "Wonder if that long, slim man shinned up there to get out of payin'. B'lieve I'll go and look if he's on the roof."

But he was dilatory, and before he came out to see whether the Professor was perched on the giant Japanese umbrella that served to roof the stand, that unfortunate lover had flung himself by pure force of will towards the branches of an elm beneath which Alice and young Tate were passing, and was scrambling forward to keep up with their laggard pace.

"Your Professor's a queer duck," repeated the young man. "Did you ever hear of the time he made a speech at the faculty dinner? He forgot all about it until his brother hunted him up and dragged him in, and then he got it through his head that he was in his own class-room, and he rose and remarked, 'I hope I shall not be troubled to-day by the levity which you young gentlemen so frequently show in this apartment.'"

Robert gnashed his teeth. The story was almost true. Alice smiled pleasantly in the half-light. She was very angry. To her ears the distant band was playing funeral marches, for there, listening to it in company with Sally Sorsby, sat the man who had seemed all timid, tender devotion under this very elm so short a time ago.

"He certainly is the limit," Tate hurried on, fancying he had pleased the girl because she smiled. "But it looks to me as though his absent-mindedness often comes in sort of handy, as it did to-night. He forgets to pay for cigars that same way."

Robert Sevier did not smoke, yet he thought it better not to shout this information down to confute his defamer.

"His sister-in-law told me a funny story about his peculiarity and a pretty waitress they have down at Snow's. He had been carrying off napkins and silver from the club on this absent-minded racket, and he went down to Snow's, and tried——"

The young Professor was a member of no club, he had never been at Snow's, yet he hung up there in a tall tree-top, his inadequate feet waving like a bird's broken wing, perfectly helpless, while the lying Tate put forth his inventions.

"Don't tell me any more," broke in Alice Kercheval, to his relief, yet greatly to his distress. "Let's talk about something sensible. One would think that such an idiot as that might forget to draw his breath."

Tate laughed a hateful laugh.

"Oh, I never heard of his forgetting to draw his salary," he observed. "You notice he remembered to eat his ice-cream to-night before he forgot to pay for it."

Robert Sevier choked on words unseemly as he appealed to the cosmos for justice. But the two young people were passing from the shadow of one tree to another, and it took all his wind and speed and dexterity to keep up with them. What he thought he might do, what explanation he could offer, from the altitude he had now assumed, is not clear; yet he scrambled along in the tree-tops like a member in good standing of the bandar-log, and saw the young heads close together, heard the low murmur of words, but could not distinguish them.

They paused on the crest of the hill where he had stood with her.

"Allie," said the young insurance man suddenly, "it's no use holding me off and on like this. You're the sweetest girl in the world, but I won't hang around forever begging. You give me a kiss and say 'yes' right now. Why not?"

The Professor's delicacy should have forbidden eavesdropping under such circumstances: yet he listened with all his ears for the reply.

But President Kercheval was a resourceful man. They had a searchlight on the tower of the observatory, and this the old gentleman had set to methodically investigating the shadows of his daughter's lawn fête. Its prying circle of white light suddenly enveloped Tate and his partner. They stood quietly smiling at each other, yet of course the man could not urge his proposition, and when the impertinent glare passed the girl said quietly:

"I'm going down the hill. I must look after matters down there. This is my party, and I'm rather responsible for its success. Don't talk foolishness, Dabney."

"There's no one else, is there, sweetheart?" asked the young fellow, rather put on his good behavior by the turn of affairs. "You don't want to start a museum of freaks by annexing that fool Professor, do you?"

Burning with a sense of her wrongs, Alice declared stoutly:

"No, there's no man in the world—except father—that I care a snap of my finger for. You're a tiresome, unprofitable lot."

"But I'm rather less tiresome and unprofitable than some," returned Tate hopefully. "I'd always pay for your ice-cream."

"Do hush," commanded the girl fretfully. "It's so—oh, I—well, we're both too young, Dabney."

"Too young!" echoed Tate in amazement. "Well, I'll tell you, Alice, age is mighty catching"—with rather grim humor. "We can't live in this world long without catching it."

"You might be as old as the hills," returned the girl snappishly, "and my answer would be the same."

"But you don't hate me, Alice. I think you might give me one little kiss to encourage me—don't you? This is such a nice dark place. Come on, girlie! . . . What's that?"

"That" was language in the tree above their heads—language that no amount of self-control could smother. Nothing but the realization of how much worse it would be to be caught standing on his head in a tree-top than to let matters proceed as they were could have quieted the Professor; but that did silence him, and with a suddenness and completeness that kept his listeners in doubt of their own ears.

"It was one of the cadets," Dabney Tate suggested carelessly, after they had harkened awhile. "We can't be seen here. He did n't know we were so close or he would n't have spoken so loud. Please, Allie, just one kiss—just one. Please—please!"

"No!" roared Professor Robert Sevier, dead to all considerations of prudence. "I forbid it! It—it's wrong, and——"

The two young people fell apart and gazed at each other dumfounded, then all about them. Tate said nothing.

"Is—was—was n't that Professor Sevier's voice?" inquired Alice in astonished incredulity.

She pulled sharply away from her too pressing wooer, and was starting down the hill, when the searchlight on its patient round once more caught the mall up with its moment of high illumination.

A roar from the crowd below announced that many eyes had been following its progress, and told the wretched Professor of Chemistry that they had discovered not only Dabney Tate and Miss Kercheval in the pose of quarrelling lovers, but that he himself was evident pendent in the tree-top.

Then merciful darkness, and the sound of retreating footsteps, as Dabney and Alice hurried down the hill.

The mandolin club, spurred thereto by the loud appreciation of its friends, played through its entire repertory, with many repetitions. One by one the gay voices sank into silence, groups of townfolk who had come up to assist at the festivity went down the long slope, with much looking over pretty shoulders and calling back good-nights. Lights began to flash out here and there in the dormitory windows. These in their turn were darkened, as yawning boys went about putting out the magnified glow-worms of Chinese lanterns.

It was well into the small hours that the buoyancy began to die out of Robert Sevier's body; he ceased to cruise haplessly among tree limbs and roosting birds, got his feet once more to earth, and stole home to his own room, there to spend what was left of the night concocting notes of explanation and apology to Alice Kercheval.

Toward morning he achieved an epistle which seemed to him hopeful, and went out in the dawn to walk until he could find a messenger to carry it. The reply which he received later in the day contained these words:

You need not keep on telling me about our friendship. I know we are only friends, and can never be anything else. That is all I ever thought we were. It is all I ever wanted to be. But I am not in the least angry with you—why should I be?

Dabney Tate paid for your ice-cream.

Alice Kercheval.

After his lecture and classes were over, the Professor sought out Mr. Tate and to him proffered forty cents.

"Really," objected that young gentleman, looking exceedingly well pleased, "I beg you not to mention it. It was a privilege, really. Did you know, Professor, that they have an awful story going around up at the college that you climbed a tree and that they found you with the searchlight?"

Without a word, Robert Sevier laid his small silver on Tate's desk and fled.

III.

"ROBERT," began William Sevier, Professor of English and Modern Literature at Unaka College, husband of Laura Sevier, and brother of the man whom he addressed, as the two strolled together across the campus at the close of day—"Robert, though not many years your senior, I have tried to fill the place of a father to you. Hitherto I must say you have been a most satisfactory—a hum—individual; you have not resented plain speaking on my part, and you have taken my

advice. For the first time, I have to-day to talk to you seriously of conduct on your part which grieves me."

Robert regarded his brother apprehensively. William was a dull man; he lacked practicality quite as much as the Professor of Chemistry, and he was without that touch of genius which made the younger man's lack in some sense a grace. The two Seviers looked alike; but in William the brown eyes had faded to gray, the brown hair was stiff and straight, as though it forbore to curl for reasons of dignity and propriety. It was not in the Sevier blood to be unkind, but William had that touch of self-righteousness often seen in men who have done much with a limited endowment.

"I'm sorry if I've seemed to do anything you don't approve," Robert said finally in a low tone.

"I can't approve," pursued William with some heat, "when I learn that you descend to a sort of clownishness during prayers in chapel."

Robert looked relieved. He was sure he had done nothing of the sort.

"Who told you a thing like that?" he demanded brusquely. "What do they say I did?"

The Professor of Literature blushed in the stress of bringing forward such an accusation.

"Uncle Abner—now, Robert, you know he's reliable, if he is a negro and the janitor—Uncle Abner says you wiggled your ears." He looked with a most curious mixture of helpfulness and disgust at the accused. "I remember when we were boys you used to be vain of that silly accomplishment, and—I'm afraid I believe it, Robert."

The young Professor's hand went involuntarily to one of the offending members. He had felt strange twitchings and tremblings in them at various times when his newly invented fluid localized its effect in the head, yet he had not supposed that there was sufficient motion induced to be observable. When this localization took place in an arm or leg, he was aware of it, and guarded carefully, since the member was liable to fly up if he neglected to hold it down, and he had more than once hastened to his room with every appearance of dancing, hopping, stepping six feet high; yet he believed this matter of the ears was his first partial betrayal in public—and William was taking it very seriously.

"I know there are men who hold that an instructor gets on better terms with his students by making himself one of them," the elder pursued in the high monotonous tone that dull people make use of to advise and scold; "but I did not think a Sevier of Sevierville would, at your age, so lower himself as to w-wi-wiggle his ears in chapel."

The houses of the faculty were grouped about an open grassy sweep,

with that of the President drawn a little apart at the head. Robert Sevier had a glimpse of the President's daughter swinging in a low rocker on the vine-wreathed porch. Since the night of the lawn party he had dreaded and fled from sight of Alice Kercheval. Now he gasped, "It shall not occur again, brother," and crowded on all sail for the Sevier cottage. On the doorstep Bobby met them.

"Uncle Robert, you have n't given me my dog yet. He's shut up in your room, and he's been whining all afternoon. Mamma would have let him out, only she said you carried away the key."

"Yes, indeed, Bobolink!" cried the young uncle, glad of the diversion. He bounded up the stairs two at a time. He had been careful to carry away that key, for the small black and tan securely crated up in his room had received a dose of the levitation fluid early that morning, and any time within three hours thereafter its inventor considered that results might be expected.

He lifted the whining little creature from its prison and hefted it judicially. No, it was the usual weight. He had failed that time. He might as well take the dog down-stairs and give it to Bobby.

It was not until Beppo was placed on the dining-room rug that a strange disposition in his hinder parts to rear themselves aloft, causing him to walk on his fore-legs and apparently dig his nose into the floor, made the Professor wish he had left the dog in his crate.

"He's mad!" promptly shrieked Laura Sevier, skipping nimbly up on a chair, and drawing her crisp skirts about her. "Take him away, Robert. Take him away quick."

"No—no!" screamed Bobby enthusiastically. "It's only dancing. I'll bet Uncle Robert taught it—he can just do anything."

"Dancing!" snapped his mother in disdain. "It's trying to burrow through the floor. Oh, see its legs shake! Look at those legs! If you won't take him away, somebody pull 'em down."

"I guess Bobby is right," put in the young Professor feebly. "The dog does seem to be dancing."

"A thing would n't dance on its head unless it was mad," argued Laura from her perch. "It may go madder and bite Bobby."

"It can't bite me unless I get down on the rug," that young gentleman asserted, not without some color of reason. "I'll bet Beppo has just forgot which legs Uncle Robert taught him to dance on. He's got so many that he gets confused—don't you think so, ma?"

"Why, no—I never imagined anything like that." And practical Laura stared at her offspring, lost in the intricacies of his explanation.

"Well, just think about it now and imagine it," the small boy insisted. "If your arms were legs"—his mother began hastily and absently to pull down her short sleeves—"and Uncle Robert taught you

to dance on your leg-legs, and then he picked you up and carried you down-stairs right quick, don't you think you might get confused?"

There was no doubt about Laura's being somewhat confused by this speech.

"Bobby," she said sharply, with a very pretty pink in her cheeks, "that kind of talk is thoroughly improper. You can mention legs, but you must n't speak of anybody's legs in particular; certainly not of —of"—the pink in her cheeks deepened—"well, certainly not of anybody's legs in particular. Will you remember that, Bobby?"

"Yes, ma, I will," agreed Bobby. "I'm sorry I mentioned your particular legs; and I won't do it any more."

The dog sank twitching to the floor and looked mournfully over his shoulder at the portion of his anatomy recently levitated. Laura jumped from her chair. William, who had been looking on at the latter part of the scene, shook his head sadly.

"Teaching dogs to dance, and encouraging your namesake to mention his mother's l-limbs—I'm afraid you often forget the dignity of your position, Robert," he said, as they left the small black-and-tan to recover himself, and drew about the table for their evening meal.

During these days Robert Sevier had the sensation of a new swimmer breasting a choppy sea. He was continually in doubt as to whether he could make it. The element in which he found himself slapped him in the face and tingled in his ears; yet he got, too, a mental impression of closing his lips tight, breathing hard, and keeping resolutely on. Since the thought of meeting Alice Kercheval had come to be a horror, he avoided all the small social activities of the little settlement, and devoted every spare minute to his discovery, working at it with feverish activity as a means of distraction, as the one hope of regaining his standing with the girl he loved.

Talk about the Sevier tea table languished, and Bobby finally got down to feed his dog. With the inconsequence of youth, he returned abruptly to a speech of his father's earlier in the evening.

"I wish you'd all let him alone, anyhow," he said querulously, as he bent over his new pet and stroked it, much to his mother's alarm. "He can't be dignified and dance on tables too."

"That dog dignified!"

"No, ma, I mean Uncle Robert. He——"

Then Robert Sevier trembled for his secret. But William put in ponderously,

"Hush, my son; the peculiarities of a member of our family are not to be disclosed, either in that family or outside of it."

The Professor of Chemistry had had enough supper. He mounted the stairs to his room, tingling uncomfortably, and half ready to give up. How absurd he must have looked in chapel, with ears twitching

like those of a horse in fly-time! Suppose somebody told Alice of it. He must—he would—find once for all a way of controlling the fluid; and he spent the rest of the night trying different sizes of dosage in various parts of the body.

But for some reason the action was absolutely unreliable or sulky. An arm would be levitated and fly up; a hand would become light so abruptly that it would twitch almost at a right angle to the wrist; a finger would jerk itself free from its fellows and point jauntily toward the ceiling, but any reasonably expected result held aloof.

In the gray dawn he undressed himself in a mood of absolute despair, put on his night clothing, and crept to that refuge of the unhappy, the harassed—bed.

There comfort found him in dreams. He was floating—floating—floating, relaxed and happy, upon a sea of measureless ether, the world beneath him a mere whirling speck.

He had, in fact, got the full “back-kick” of all the minute doses used during the night, and in the perfect relaxation of sleep he rose smoothly, just as in his dream, and sailed serenely about the ceiling, the bed-clothes trailing across his long form.

Rindy, coming to bring his shaving water, noted first the empty bed. Then her frightened eyes rose to the floating figure over by the window. A light breeze rippled the coverings, and disclosed the face of the sleeping man.

“De good Lawd hab mussy—Marse Robert done riz!” she howled, as she backed abruptly toward the door, spilling the scalding water on her foot, and emitting a mellow African whoop, at which the inventor awoke abruptly from his pleasing dreams.

“Go away—go away quick!” shouted this most modest of men, as he grasped convulsively for his trailing blankets.

These, so long as he kept a true horizontal, rested lightly upon him; but when his contortions of modesty began to fling him into strange positions, they one by one slipped off, and he soared after, grasping vainly for their fluttering edges.

“Judgment day! Judgment day!” yelled Rindy, tearing down the hall. “Marse Robert’s done riz—and de kivvers risin’ wid ’im!”

Laura Sevier opened her bedroom door, huddling a kimono over her gown as she came.

“Have you gone crazy, Rindy?” she demanded, halting the frantic negress at the head of the stairs.

“He done riz, I tell ye!” asserted that damsel, her eyes rolling, her teeth rattling. “I spec’ he gwine to heaven in a chariot o’ quilts. Mebbe dat’s his soul wid dem big bare feet a-risin’! Oh, Lawd, show mercy on dis house, and let us all rise too!”

“Well, he must n’t take the quilts or my best blankets, wherever

he's going," commented practical Laura Sevier, as she turned to hurry down to her brother-in-law's room.

"Robert, put down those bedclothes this minute, if you're going away," she called.

"Don't make him do dat!" pleaded the handmaid, in a sort of strangled whisper. "Don't make Marse Robert do dat. He riz widout bein' dressed to go. He's sich a forgetful somebody, hit's des like his soul not to recomember to put on his clothes."

"He's an absent-minded goose, and he may carry off my bedding if I don't stop him," persisted Laura, forging ahead. Rindy began to whimper and clutch at her head-handkerchief,

"I ain't gwine to stay whar men-folks don't lay in dey beds, but gits up and sails round de ceilin'. I's gwine from here."

This threat roused her mistress to action. After all, Robert could look out for himself; but for the cook to go was a serious matter.

"He's just playing some silly joke on you," she said reassuringly. "Now, you come right along with me, Rindy, and I'll show you."

Robert Sevier heard them coming as he churned the air with pajama-clad legs and got nowhere. He could hear the maid volleying in a hoarse undertone:

"Leggo my awm, please'm, Miss Laury. I do' want to go in dar no mo'. I's been skeered enough."

"Ma—ma! What's the matter?" shrilled Bobby's treble, as he leaped from his bed with unwonted nimbleness and joined the procession.

"Is there—ah—anything I can do?" inquired William's deep tones, as he opened his door; and his brother heard his approaching footsteps added to the others.

When they reached the threshold one last convulsive effort had secured a blanket in which Robert Sevier wrapped the indelicacy of his night costume. Then, for the sake of holding his discovery secret a little longer, he grasped the gas fixture, and with his bare feet streaming out toward them as the breeze from the window propelled him, he gasped through chattering teeth,

"Will you all go away, please? I was just taking my exercises. I'm—er—doing a little training, and——"

"There is n't a feller in the gym that could do that stunt!" crowed Bobby as the Professor remained almost at right angles with the bit of gas-pipe, supporting himself apparently by one hand. Suddenly he felt the levitation give way—he was learning that it had a trick of doing this under stress of excitement or chagrin. With a jerk that almost dislocated his shoulder he came to the floor, presenting a red face that looked up from a convulsed bundle of bedding.

"Goed gracious!" ejaculated Laura Sevier.

"He done fell!" cried the maid. "He riz, and den he fell!"

"It seems to me you try difficult exercises," contributed William in a bewildered tone.

"Well, he need n't take my best bed-clothes for a mattress to break his fall," snapped Laura, having got her breath a bit.

Of what avail was it to be a great scientist, to wrestle with the mightiest of world forces and conquer it, when a housekeeper declared you an enemy of clean bedding? Robert arose somewhat sadly to his hands and knees.

"I think you 'd better all go away now," he said imploringly.

"Uncle Robert's going to be an acrobat! Uncle Robert's going to be an acrobat!" chanted his namesake as he pranced off to dress.

"Do' know what kind o' bat dat is," grumbled Rindy, following him, "but he did fly some like a bat, an' den some like a buzzard."

William Sevier stood, tall, grave, over the prostrate offender against the proprieties.

"Are you sick, Robert?" he inquired icily.

"Take your wife away!" ejaculated Robert, the slow rage of the gentle nature boiling up at last. "She does n't understand. I want to dress myself and get out of the house. This atmosphere is stifling."

"Laura," rebuked her husband, "you hear what my brother says. Is it not indelicate for you to remain here?"

This view of the situation put Mrs. Sevier to flight with a muffled scream.

"I had hoped you would rise above these eccentricities," the elder brother was beginning, when Rindy, who had crept back to look and listen, yelled suddenly:

"Don' ax 'im to rise, Marse Willie, honey—foh de good Lawd's sake, don' ax him to rise! He 's only too apt to 'commerdate yo' about dat!"

The head of the house turned somberly to his handmaiden.

"There must be no servants' talk about this," he counselled her gravely. "My grandfather used to say that greenbacks were like moss on old tombstones—they bespeak forgetfulness. I'll give you a five-dollar bill if you will promise not to remember anything about what has happened here this morning, my girl."

"Yass, suh—yass, suh, Marse Willie; I sho ain't gwine say nothin' to nobody 'bout Marse Robert's doin's," Rindy eagerly promised, and went bobbing curtsies and fingering the money which William had, at his brother's insistence, taken from a bureau drawer in that room.

Yet when, a few moments later, Mrs. Sevier put her head in at the kitchen door to ask if the rolls had risen, the girl screamed and threw her apron over her head.

"For de good God's sake!" she begged. "Don't you nebber say

dat word to me again, Miss Laury. You-all kin take it outen my wages, ef you 'll vow and promise nebber to say dat word in dis yere kitchen. Only de good Lawd knows how I 's gwine to stand it to see rolls or bread a-rising atter dis."

"What do you suppose it was?" inquired Laura vivaciously when she and William were safe behind the closed door of the conjugal chamber.

William Sevier, in the early stages of his matutinal toilet, shook his head solemnly, and a man who can be solemn in knit underwear is very solemn indeed.

"I don't know, my dear," he said impressively. "But this I do know; Robert has been applying himself to study and experiment much too deeply of late. If he has injured the brain itself—well—we must face things as they are, and not as we would wish them to be—and he is my only brother. I stand in the position of a father to him. I mean to watch him closely, and at the first sign of actual mental lesion, we must invoke restraint. I had not intended to mention it to you, but I am credibly informed that yesterday in chapel during prayers, he w-wi-wiggled his ears!"

The last words came out in a small, flat diminuendo of William's big booming voice. But practical Laura evidently saw nothing alarming in the statement.

"What do you suppose he did that for?" she asked mildly. "I guess a fly must have lit on one of them. I always say it is a shame to insist on clasped hands in chapel during fly-time—and they've got no screens at the windows."

Her husband regarded her mournfully. They were both without a sense of humor, yet each at times felt that lack in the other.

"I think I can tell you what Robert needs," his sister-in-law observed with rare good sense. "I believe that all he lacks of being just like other people is a nice wife. I wish we could marry him off to some nice girl who would look after him."

Then William shook his solemn head.

"We'll have to get him in better shape than he is now," he declared oracularly, "or no girl of any sort will ever have him." And he sighed.

IV.

It was early morning, but the President of Unaka College was walking across the campus accompanied by two members of his faculty. Sally Sorsby's father, who held the Chair of Mathematics, had sought this interview to bring up informally a charge that he felt would hardly be suitable for mention in an open meeting of the faculty.

"I object to absent-minded men," he rasped away in his harsh,

monotonous voice, that reminded one curiously of a tool going through cross-grained wood. "By some it is held to be a mark of genius. For my part, I should say that the size of the mind itself was the question, and not its disposition to vacate on occasion."

"Now—now—now, friends, let us be generous before we treat ourselves to being just," the gentle old President deprecated. "Absent-mindedness is simply the reverse view of very high concentration. Perhaps young Professor Sevier concentrates on matters outside his classes when he ought to be concentrating on the work in hand. It is a fault of youth. Let us forgive it at this vernal season which starts the sap in even old trees, and sets young things at strange antics."

"How beautiful the view is at this point!" broke in the Professor of Dead Languages, with the idea of creating a diversion. "I never noted the sky-line as near sunrise as this. How those bushes over there break its slope with just the right mass of dark against the blue! What's that?"

"That" was a tall figure darkly silhouetted on the sky-line which Professor Humber had admired, and near the clump of bushes commended by that gentleman. As they looked it lifted one foot from the ground and, in an apparent ecstasy, waved it briskly. The motion of the elevated leg seemed to swing the man's entire body; and as he spun around he caught sight of the three astonished spectators. In what seemed to be an agony of embarrassment, he finally clutched his elevated knee and gradually forced it downward till he stood uncertainly on both feet and smiled foolishly at them. It was Professor Robert Sevier, the man whose eccentricities they had come out to discuss.

"The sap rises also, it appears, in *young trees*," remarked Professor Sorsby drily.

President Kercheval looked distressed.

"I think he is taking exercises of some sort," he suggested, rather unnecessarily. The levitated leg, with a new impulse, was now driving the wretched young man directly toward them. Holding his left knee with both hands, a stiff breeze at his back, he came hopping, his face crimson.

"Why—yes," drawled Sorsby; "I should call that exercise—of a sort. But I should be inclined to inquire what stimulated to that particular variety of motion."

The hopper was almost upon them when his leg gave a twitching motion and jerked up suddenly, the heel apparently smiting him in the back. He fell on his face in the grass, where he lay helpless, letting the lightened ankle wave in waggish defiance.

With one impulse, the three old men turned and walked away.

"He's undoubtedly—full," murmured the Greek and Latin man in a commiserating tone.

"And so early in the morning!" chuckled old Sorsby maliciously. "Now, my dear Kercheval, I think you will have to listen to me at last; and I really believe that I might as well drop this lobbying method and bring the matter up before a faculty meeting."

"Yes—yes; I fear some action will have to be taken," sighed the dear old man who was at the head of the University. "We have to consider the young men—the boys in our hands. It would n't do for them to see a thing like that. Yet I think we never had a more able, agreeable man in this school than Robert Sevier."

"Perhaps one of us might go back—and assist——" began Professor Humber.

The three old fellows looked cautiously over their shoulders.

"He's gone," breathed the President. "He has somehow found equilibrium sufficient to get away." He drew out and consulted a fat gold watch. "It's just about his regular hour," he mused. "I wonder how he will manage. I scarcely know how to meet such a situation as this."

"If you'll let me, I'll meet it for you," broke in Professor Sorsby truculently. "I'll go and speak to that young man, if he has the face to be in his regular class-room in this condition. The college shan't get into a scandal while I can defend it."

The President gave silent and unwilling consent, and the Professor of Mathematics marched away with determined tread. Some action seemed necessary, since students were already beginning to move by twos and threes toward Sevier's class-room for the regular recitation in chemistry.

Robert Sevier had managed to walk or hobble to his desk by sheer, obstinate force of will. He sat with his knee jammed beneath that desk, certain that the levitation was not sufficient to raise the weighted wooden structure. There was the defiance of the hard-pressed in his eye as he faced Sally Sorsby's father.

"Young man," began that worthy, edging close that he might sniff for contraband odors upon the breath of the suspected one—"young man, I want to ask you a question."

"Ask it."

A sudden flux of the levitation into the right arm took place on the instant, and the clenched hand laid upon the desk shot up and swung itself before the interlocutor's face. Robert could not retire it without taking hold of it with the other hand, and this he hesitated to do.

"I beg your pardon," stammered Sorsby, backing away. "I had no

intention of precipitating a quarrel with a man in your condition. I merely wanted to ask——”

Young Professor Sevier seized his wrist with his left hand and pulled it down.

“Now,” he said, bracing both his hands against the desk edge and throwing his body forward somewhat to pin them in place, “I should like to know what you mean, Professor Sorsby, by alluding to my ‘condition.’”

“Do you feel yourself fit to conduct your classes this morning?” inquired Sorsby, in a lower tone, since the students were straggling in and taking their places on the long forms.

The tone was menacing, but young Sevier met it steadily.

“I do,” he said, “or I should not be here in my chair. What leads you to suppose that I should not?”

“Why were you lying on your face in the grass a moment ago, shaking your leg in the air?” inquired Sorsby, in a tone which he vainly tried to maintain at the proper pitch of ferocity.

“Is there anything wicked in such a performance?” inquired the Professor of Chemistry, pushed to extremities in his own defense. “I’m told the ancients exposed the soles of their feet to the god of day as he arose—why not I, if I choose, Professor Sorsby?”

Professor Sorsby had little sense of humor; yet the sheer impudence of this defense, and its unexpectedness from such a source, tickled what little he had. If Robert Sevier was drunk, it certainly was on a peculiar kind of liquor. The older man drew back and thrust his hands far down into his pockets.

“Will you permit me to advise you,” he grinned, “not to worship Phœbus in quite so primeval a manner on the campus? Dr. Kercheval wanted me to see if you were fit to lecture. I guess you’ll do as well as usual. Good-day.”

Robert went through a shaky hour with his class. The fluid was in his system, and evidently at its baffling and alarming method of localizing, so that he never knew what part of his anatomy might become unmanageable. Yet, with the old familiar routine at hand, and little dread of the observation of the boys, he got through successfully. He was a fagged and weary Robert Sevier when, on his way home to lunch, he chanced to spy Alice Kercheval coming up from the library. It was their first direct meeting since the night of the lawn fête, and he decided to stop and speak with her. She looked very trim and sweet in her spotless white linen, with the broad white hat, and his heart began to lose the merciful numbness of recent days. She paused and waited for him where the path divided, one way leading to the Sevier cottage and one leading to her own home. He hurried forward to meet her, his eyes beginning their old trick of uttering unutterable words.

"Miss Alice"—he started his hand in the direction of his hat, and then groaned in utter dismay. It shot past the brim and flung itself upward in the air, nearly jerking him off his feet, and waving a jaunty salute which might have been permissible for a group of students, but which, to his fastidious taste, was well-nigh an insult to a lady. He felt the needle-pricking of the levitation going up his spine to the back of his neck, and spreading itself upon his scalp. His chin rose. He could not have bowed had his life hung in the balance as forfeit. He felt that his head was wobbling about above his collar like a toy balloon—a very scarlet balloon. And his feet—it was hard enough to keep them on the ground, and his best endeavors could do no more than make enormous strides past the girl waiting with large, frightened eyes, the smile of welcome stiffened on her lips, away and up the path to his own home!

"By heaven, I'll never experiment on myself again!" he vowed in bitterness of soul as he pranced along, eating up the distance like him of the Seven League Boots. "I'll go back to the animals. I don't care what Laura says. I will have rabbits in my room. I'll pick up a dog whenever I can, and I'll rush this thing through till it can be made public. I can't bear to see that look in her dear eyes. What a brute she must think me—what a maniac—what a fool!"

As if in reply to this declaration, a Skye-terrier came frisking up to his feet. It seemed a lamb-caught-in-the-bushes miracle to him. He picked up the little creature and hurried across the porch.

"Another dog!" scolded Laura from her sewing chair on the veranda. "Can't you and Bobby see that two-footed creatures bring in more dirt than one woman can sweep out? Why will you insist on getting something with four feet to track up the floors?"

But Robert made no reply. He strode determinedly up the stairs. He entered and locked his door. He set forth vial and syringe. He had intended experimenting upon himself with an injection in each fore-arm, hoping that it would raise him evenly, and tend to draw him forward. He would do the same thing by putting it in the dog's fore legs.

He took up the silken little creature gently, and pricked it skilfully twice with the hypodermic needle, looking to see that just the right amount of solution was injected.

"Uncle Robert," called a familiar voice from an upper balcony outside his window, "what you doing in there? Getting blood corpus-cules? Lemme in."

Without waiting for permission, the boy threw up the sash and stepped inside. He stared at his uncle and the dog with avid interest. The dose took almost instant effect. With a yelp the small creature arose, Robert sprang and grasped for it; but, failing to get a hold upon it,

his finger-ends only gave it a smart shove, so that, its white hair set like beautiful sails, it flowed—that's the only word for it—through the window.

Professor Sevier ran to the sill and looked after it. A small, awe-struck nephew clung to his arm and stared wildly where the disappearing silver speck grew smaller against the sky.

"Gee!" whispered the boy. "Gee, Uncle Rob, what made you sling him so hard? I never saw anybody throw a dog like that. Say—I wish you'd play on our ball team."

"Ro-*bert!* Ro-*bert!*" sounded his sister-in-law's familiar, insistent summons. "Miss Sally Sorsby is down here. She says her dog followed you home. She wants it."

"Good heavens!" Robert leaned upon his small nephew and panted. "I do think I'm the most unfortunate man living!"

"I won't tell on you," promised the boy instantly. "You just don't know how strong you are, do you, Uncle Rob? And your strength-kind of gets away with you when you start to slinging things."

He looked curiously from his uncle toward the direction in which the small dog had disappeared.

"Hyacinth—Hyacinth!" A distressed female voice with an edge of shrillness upon it came up from the porch below, then the pitiful attempt of a girl trying to whistle.

"Was that Miss Sally Sorsby's Hyacinth?" moaned Professor Sevier weakly.

"Sure," said the small boy. "Say, Uncle Robert, where do you reckon he'll land?"

"Ro-*bert*, I told Sally I saw you carrying a dog up-stairs. If it is Hyacinth, she wants him. Stick your head out of the window please; she's waiting to speak to you," called Laura in all seriousness.

"Bobby," gurgled the bedevilled Professor in despair, as he sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands, "you go and tell Miss Sally that I have n't got her Hyacinth, I don't know where her Hyacinth is, and I never expect to know—and I don't care—and I won't try to guess."

And he sat with drooping head, oblivious to the fact that the urchin had gone whooping off to deliver his message verbatim. He sat silent for half an hour, and then the click of Laura's heels upon the stairs aroused him.

"Ro-*bert*," said Laura herself from the doorway, "come right down-stairs to your lunch. Sally Sorsby's gone. Never mind about her silly dog. She'll find it sooner than anybody else wants her to. I wish all creatures with four feet would disappear. I don't blame you a bit. I suppose"—looking about—"the thing just ran off when it saw your room. The dear gracious knows it's enough to scare even

a dog. Ro-bert—Ro-bert Sevier! Have you been taking hypodermics?"

She pounced upon the outfit spread forth upon the table.

"Robert Sevier, you know better than that—you're not sick. What do you take such stuff for?"

He turned up toward her such a woe-begone countenance that she changed her tone.

"There—there!" she murmured soothingly. "Come down and have some coffee—I've heard that it's an antidote. I'll get Rindy to make you some awful strong."

"Laura," said her brother-in-law, much moved by this unexpected kindness, but too wise to attempt explanation or argument, "I wish you'd let Bobby bring up my lunch—there's a good girl. I don't intend to leave my room this afternoon. You tell William so, won't you?"

She laid a motherly hand upon his forehead. "You don't feel feverish; but I'm not used to—to—what is it they call 'em? Dope fiends? I suppose I can learn how to do for people in that condition, too. I mean well by you, Robert. When I promised to love, honor, and obey William, I intended to get along with his family, whatever they did. But please don't go jumping off the bed and swinging on the gas fixture when Rindy brings up the lunch; it scares her, and she threatens to leave me. I'd send Bobby with it, but he might drop the tray and break the dishes."

"All right—I won't," said Robert humbly. He was a scientist working out one of the most tremendous discoveries of his day; yet when a hen-minded small woman measured him in her pint cup, he admitted that he fell far short.

When he was alone, he closed the window and flung himself miserably into his lounging chair. With lax trailing arms hanging almost to the floor, and with head on breast, he sat and waited for what he knew must come. The hours crept by. Should he trust William with his precious secret? William shared all information with Laura, and Laura was a bosom friend to the world at large, and believed in confidence between friends.

No, when the elder brother came up, he must stave off inquiry as best he could and struggle on alone. To-day's apparent calamity had taught him how to use the levitating fluid to support the body in flight. Had a man been dosed as Hyacinth was, and given some propelling force at his back, he would have gone through that window and off over the tree-tops exactly as the small dog had done. A few more tests, a propeller and steering apparatus, and he would have something that would be worth disclosing.

At regular intervals Laura came knocking at his door, with her

loud, cheerful "Ro-ber-t—are you all right?" Laura was taking care of him. Rindy brought up his lunch and left it on the floor outside his door, advising him of the fact from the stair-head. Later, dinner came in the same fashion. About ten o'clock that night the inevitable arrived—William knocked at the door, entered, and, laying an affectionate arm about the bent shoulders, began gently:

"My dear, dear brother, I have a very serious matter to discuss with you."

"Laura has been talking to you."

"I'm coming to that," said William, with reluctance. "Do you know where I was this evening? The faculty had a called meeting from which you were purposely omitted."

"Called to discuss me?" inquired Robert, looking up suddenly.

His brother bent his head in acknowledgment. Words were for the moment beyond him.

"Well," inquired the younger man, with what the other deemed undue hardihood, "what did they bring against me?"

"Can you ask?" inquired William Sevier in a trembling tone. "I can scarcely command myself sufficiently to answer you. You are accused of being intoxicated this morning on the campus, and of having shaken your fist at Professor Sorsby when he went to your class-room to remonstrate with you upon your conduct. They also say—it seems incredible, but they say that, in a spirit of revenge for his interference, you inveigled his daughter's pet dog to your apartment and made away with it."

The case seemed black enough.

"Sorsby is an old fool," said Robert heatedly. "He knows well enough I was n't drunk when he talked to me in my class-room. I did n't shake my fist at him. My—my hand got up there and—wagged round some, but I pulled it down as soon as I could."

This explanation sounded so crazy—so much worse than the offense—that Professor William Sevier was brought with a round turn to what his wife had told him when he reached the house.

"I did my best for you, Rob," he said, returning unconsciously to the boyish name. "I told them how you had been overworking of late, and that you were always nervous and absent-minded. I said that I thought a vacation was what you needed, and that maybe they could postpone action until you came back in better shape than you are at present."

Robert Sevier's hand went up to rest affectionately upon the shoulder of his elder brother. The two men waited thus a moment in silence; then William went on in a lower, shaken tone,

"When I got home Laura told me about the—hypodermic syringe. Can't you leave that with me when you go away into the mountains to

gain health and tone? I don't know how those things are broken off, but there must be a way for a good man like you, Robert."

Young Sevier got to his feet.

"I—I'll have to ask you to take my word for it that I'm not a victim of drugs or alcohol, Billy," he said at last, in a tone that held more manly resolution than his voice had known for weeks. "I'll be obliged to take the apparatus with me—I'm conducting some experiments. When they are completed, I'll let you know about it. Meantime, you and Laura—the only kinfolks I've got—will have to stand by me, I reckon. You'll have to trust me in spite of what other people think."

The brothers shook hands solemnly; but as he closed Robert's door after him, William sighed and wagged his head.

"Trust him—when he can't trust himself!" the elder murmured disconsolately. "I guess that's about what people in his situation always ask of their friends."

V.

THE Far Cove neighborhood was a feud district; Robert Sevier knew that when he decided to go there for his vacation. The Sevier estate owned coal lands up in the Turkey Track mountains, and the two Sevier boys had hunted all over those wilds, and fished the clear mountain streams in happy summers and autumns twenty years ago. He thought the spot would offer solitude for the development of his discovery. He knew the disposition of the mountain people to let alone that which lets them alone, and he confidently presented himself at the home of Juletta Gannon and asked for board.

He found the Gannon cabin a double log house surrounded by a bunch of small frame structures made from the raw boards that the portable saw-mill rips out as it eats its way across the flanks of the Cumberlands. Juletta was a widow now, and she took summer boarders. This was not, however, the calamity that it at first might have appeared; for in those high latitudes, where June is still a crisp, cool month, the season was not open yet, and he might hope to be through and on his way home before the first comers began to arrive.

She that had been Juletta Blackshear received him with the eager hospitality of commerce—which had replaced the old freehanded, Arab style of the mountains. He remembered her a little girl in a torn homespun frock, with a tangle of dark curls blowing about her wild black eyes, shy, hardy, fierce, like some untamed woods-creature, holding her own against five half-savage brothers. He found her a tall, lank woman whose height very nearly equalled his own, muscular, weather-beaten, naturally taciturn, forcing a dribble of awkward con-

versation because the hotel-keeper must, and looking old enough to be her own mother.

She addressed him persistently and frequently as "perfesser," evidently intending the title as flattery. She installed him in the best room of the main cabin itself. He would have preferred one of the outlying buildings, but she sternly negatived that, as her conscience would not let her charge so much for them, and told him that every one of them was "done took."

Naturally incurious, she yet had her attention concentrated on him more than was agreeable to the investigator of levitation. He was finally forced to seek some hiding-place away from the house for the mechanical steering apparatus whose parts he had ordered from a skilled model-maker, and which he was now assembling and testing.

Jeff, Jabe, Jate, Jim, and John Blackshear, brothers of the widow, grown from half wild boys to silent, alert, and immensely efficient men of their type, had a highly embarrassing way of appearing, singly or by twos and threes, and taking an interest in the "town feller's" movements. He would come on one of them sitting relaxed under a balsam, with a shoe off and some laconic hint of a gravel that pestered him; or two of them would slouch past, rifle on shoulder, but no game in hand, and give him a shifty-eyed greeting. Once he walked inadvertently out on the whole group drawn up to rest on a big gray boulder, their lean, dark forms and fierce, black, hawk-like profiles silhouetted against an evening sky. He was carrying a bundle of materials at that time; and as he hurried past, anxious to avoid observation, the suspicious glances which followed him aroused even his attention, and showed him that he was under surveillance as a possible revenue spy.

Soon, however, things began happening about the Gannon farm that completely occupied such wits as the widow could bring to bear upon them. Self-reliant as she had always been, she yet welcomed the advent, late one afternoon, of her nearest neighbor, Mandy Card, since she was bursting with information concerning strange doings, and, having bread in the oven, could not well leave to communicate it.

"I been wantin' to git somewhar that I could talk to somebody 'bout the business," she began abruptly, so soon as her visitor was settled in the splint bottomed chair in the kitchen, "sence my hens has went up."

"Lord, you ain't the only one! Mine's up too. I sold the last lot for thirty-five cents apiece," was the unimpressed rejoinder.

"You ain't got the sense you was bawn with—an' you ain't got that right good!" rejoined Juletta Gannon warmly, pausing, towel in hand, fingers rested upon hip. "I tell you strange things is takin' place on this here farm."

"'Tain't the first time," commented Mandy Card laconically; but without any evil meaning.

"I 'm a widder," asserted Taylor Gannon's relict, somewhat superfluously. "My man has done left me to do for myse'f as best I can. I kept the *re-sort* alone for six year. I have shore sawn some curious things when these here town folks comes up. But I want to say here an' now that, as a wife an' widder, I have never sawn nothing to compare with what 's agoin' on in this place sence Perfesser Sevier come."

The other woman straightened herself up from where she sat limply in her chair, and a gleam came into her faded eyes.

"You don't mean to tell me that that there town feller is a-courtin' you a'ready!" she said with some animation.

"I ain't plumb shore," replied the widow cautiously. Such an idea had never occurred to her, yet to decline the glory of it would be beyond even such strong feminine nature as this.

"I tell the man about the things I see happening, and he calls them phenomenas. They shore ort to have a name as long as that. I wisht I may never ef two of my settin' hens ain't riz this mornin'—riz, and went to Kingdom Come with they feathers on!"

"Riz up in the air, do you mean?"

"Riz right up offen their nests," confirmed the widow Gannon solemnly. "I was out in the hen-house a-lookin' for aigs, when I seen 'em begin to stir like, and sorter puff theirselves, as a body may say. I'd sot 'em outside in the bushes, beca'se it's gittin' too warm for settin' hens in the house. As I run toorge 'em, they riz right up, scrawling and scratching, and looking awful surprised. They wings was spread out same as they had been over the aigs, and I thort for a spell they was flying, some new way. But I stood there like a fool and watched 'em, and they went up, and up, and up—they got littler and littler, tell they looked like a speck in the sky; an' when I could n't see 'em any more I jest come hollerin' in to find the perfesser, and he said it was phenomenas that the chickens had. They ain't much to spare betwixt that an' cholera—either way, you lose your fowls."

Mandy Card had listened to this recital, her weak mouth open, her underhung jaw dropped, her big, watery blue eyes slightly converging in their stare at the narrator. She crouched in her chair, at the beginning; she rose spasmodically as the chickens began to go up; and her thin chest heaved with waxing emotion. Blev Card's wife was the standby to start the shouting at revivals. The smallest excitement served to set her off, and many an exhorter depended on her to warm up a cold crowd and get the mourners forward. What Juletta Gannon had told was quite sufficient to precipitate an unusually lively performance on her part. With a swift motion she flung her apron over her sun-bonneted head and began to shout:

"Oh, good Lord! Oh, good Lord! It's the last days!"

"Last days!" echoed her hostess, half angrily. "I never thought of sech as that. Them that's worthy shall be caught up into heaven in the last days—but they ain't nothing said in Scriptur' about settin' hens. What's worthy about them? The dominacker one was meaner 'n sin."

"Oh lawsy! don't ax *me*. I don't know. But hit's shore a miracle—the Lord's doin's is shorely in it," quavered the visitor, making ready to clap her hands and sway, and resolute not to be done out of her opportunity to shout. "Mebbe hit's the saints; they've been caught up suddent, and they're hongry."

"Huh!" snorted the widow incredulously. "Must be the African branch of the Church—hongry for chicken, and takin' my hens like that."

Mandy Card dropped the gingham apron a moment to rejoin with naif shrewdness:

"Oh, no, Juletty; niggers would n't never make a mistake and take settin' hens. Hit's shore the white saints you been called upon to feed. Hit's a honor. You ort not to begrudge it."

The widow Gannon looked bewildered and half convinced.

"Begrudge 'em!" she echoed grumblingly, opening the oven door, looking in at her bread, slamming it shut. "I don't know as I do. I'm a religious woman—but I'm a-runnin' a *re*-sort, and you know the first dish a summer boarder asks for is fried chicken. Half the Church, or the whole o' mankind what's gone befo', might be a-campin' in glory jest over my farm. That would n't be plumb fair on a lone widder woman."

"Hit's the end of the world! Hit's the end of the world!" screamed Mandy, getting the proper nervous twitch in her forearms, and beginning to clap as she swayed rhythmically. "Don't the good book say that in that day the fust shall be last, an' the last fust? Chickens is mighty humble, ornery kind o' critters, an' humans is plumb proud an' upstandin'. But in this great day the po' mean, scrawny dominacker settin' hens is tuck up into glory, an' them that thinks so much o' theirselves is left tell the last."

The widow turned on her with dignity.

"Well, you need n't be so turrible excited about it," she said curtly. "We ain't out of this vale o' tears yet. You'd better git home and see if they've robbed *yo'* hen-roos', an' notice ef it makes you as happy as it does when my chickens is took."

Seeking for some sympathetic ears, the shouter got dramatically to her feet, ran down the garden path, and out into the white dusty road. Back to the woman in the doorway came the high, hysterical shout:

"Hit's the end of the world! Hit's the end of the world! We shall all be caught up into glory!"

Juletta Gannon was turning once more to her cooking when she caught sight of a red and white calf, the apple of her eye, behaving strangely over in the small pasture lot. As she snatched up her sun-bonnet and ran toward the animal, she saw that young Professor Sevier was there ahead of her. Down the rickety snake fence it came, apparently trotting along on the top rail. As she got to the bars, the Professor, sprinting after it, caught the animal by one flying foot.

"Hang on!" shouted the woman, "and don't pay no 'tention if you notice the angel that's a-leading him. I can't spar' that calf—now I jest p'intedly cain't! The hens they can keep—both of 'em was mighty skinny."

Robert laughed exultingly as he flung an arm over the calf's back and hastily dosed it with the antidote whose exploitation was responsible for this performance. The little fellow capered away on his four feet, shaking an indignant and protesting head, proving that the antidote worked immediately and perfectly. And as he turned to Mrs. Gannon, the happiness which bubbled in the young scientist's mind was ready to overflow on the first human being he met.

"I'll pay you for any live stock you lose through me," he declared eagerly. "The calf's all right; and if a dollar will do for the hens, why, you're all right too."

"Ef what that fool, Mandy Cyard, said was true, and they've went to feed the saints, hit might add some several stars to your crown," debated the widow as they moved toward the house.

At the porch edge she turned, and the two sat down on the doorstep to rest a bit.

"Lawzy—lawzy!" sighed Mrs. Gannon, laboriously making conversation. "I've always heard that some shall live through further days of tribulation, and my summer boarders ain't the kind to be h'isted easy. Most of 'em would have to travel mighty light to get through. Once they come here this summer, it would n't do me a bit o' good to tell 'em my chickens had been caught up to heaven by saints. The men folks would be wantin' to send me to t' other place for makin' up sech a tale. I'd look mighty foolish putting corn-bread and buttermilk on the table, and holdin' forth that the risen Church had done eat all the fried chicken. I reckon hit would n't be business."

Her words went past Robert Sevier's ears, meaningless, signifying no more than the drone of the locust in the catalpa tree, the chirp of a cricket in the grass. Low in the west, over beyond Yellow Old Bald, the sun had left his rear-guard with tattered crimson banners. A little new moon rode easily on the swimming sea of color. Its silver sickle tangled in the branches of a crooked pine tree. When a pine tree is

crooked it is worth the moon's attention. The dreamer sitting on the porch by the hard-handed mountain woman lost himself in the clear exquisite pools of green netted with gold. A song was written for him on the still evening sky, with crotchets and quavers of black against the greenish silver.

His mind had wandered as far afield as Unaka College and a certain dusk, vine-shadowed porch, where a little rocking-chair swung and swayed beneath the light weight of the dearest girl in the world. He forgot who this was talking away, woman-fashion, at his elbow. He told himself that now he was ready to open up his discovery to his brother scientists. The greatest in the land would greet him as one among them. William and the faculty would be made to understand what and who he was. He could go to Alice with all concealment brushed aside, and the gilding of success upon his arms. Perhaps she would be sitting there that night under the wistaria vine, her white frock showing like a patch of moonlight in the shadow. He saw himself walking up the path; and she would lean forward, looking to see who it was; her eyes would deepen and darken, the dimples play in and out of her flushing cheeks; he would stretch out his arms to her and say:

"Now at last I can tell you, dear. You are the one woman in the world for me—there never was anybody else!"

Juletta Gannon was mute for a moment, her weather-bleached face a mask of sheer, dumfounded amazement, her sharp black eyes for once blank and vacant. She looked slowly and dazedly all about her, and took a long breath. As the young Professor, after those murmured words, remained silent, apparently allowing what he had so rashly asserted to stand, she once more filled her lungs, her blood resumed its customary round in arteries and veins, and her faculties awoke. Whereupon she ejaculated in a totally indescribable tone:

"Oh, *Per-fesser!* Who'd 'a' thought that that was what you was up to all this time! Well, wisht I may never. Ef men-persons don't beat all!"

Robert Sevier jumped to his feet and came suddenly back to a realization of his surroundings. But now the widow clung to him in violent agitation. Startled, confused, a little apprehensive, he wondered if it were possible that he had absent-mindedly treated her with the levitation fluid—it was what he did in these days to most animals that could be persuaded to hold still long enough. He noted with alarm what he thought a tendency on her part to rise in the air; and he flung a hasty arm around her waist to hold her down.

"Did you mean it? Did you mean them words you said jest now?" inquired Juletta Gannon, laying hold of his coat lapels and shaking him in the stress of her excitement.

Young Professor Sevier reflected a moment. What had he said? Oh, offered to pay for any loss she had sustained in the way of live stock—proffered her a dollar for the levitated hens.

“Yes—yes,” he agreed somewhat impatiently; the widow had a heavy hand, and she hung upon him awkwardly. “Of course I meant it.”

“Well—well!” mused Mrs. Gannon in deep satisfaction, as she looked with eyes of proprietorship at the tall and comely young town gentleman who had so suddenly declared himself the captive of her bow and spear. “I been a widder goin’ on seben year, and you ain’t the first feller that’s been projecting round to see would I change my condition; but you been so quare about the business I never sensed what you was at. You’ve shore got ways with you that a woman person is bound to like; but a lone widder has to be keerful these days. I don’t want no foolishness. My folks never was that kind, an’ you know I been well raised, ef I do say it that ort n’t. You’ve got to be straight with me.”

This sounded a bit odd, but the Professor, lending, as of custom, but half an ear to her words, was still haunted by the fear that he might, in one of his absent-minded lapses, have levitated her, and anxious to bring the conversation round to something that would reassure him.

“I’ll prove to you that I’m in earnest”—running a tentative hand down into his pocket. He found no money there. Devoted soul, his last silver had gone to pay the man who brought up from the express office that very afternoon a package of materials, and some new parts for his propeller. But his fingers came in contact with a ring which his sister-in-law had given him for a birthday present. He was averse to jewelry, and had chosen to compromise with Laura by wearing it in her presence and carrying it at other times.

“Here,” he said, with a certain relief, “you take this and keep it for the present. It’s all I’ve got by me that’s—that’s at all to the purpose; and I’ll redeem—I’ll replace it when I go down to the city.”

The widow’s fierce eyes fairly bulged. There was no mistake—he meant it. He was offering the ring!

He put the jewel in her hard, brown hand, watching her narrowly and anxiously. His gaze travelled solicitously over her stalwart form. He was not sure he could hold her down if she got started.

“How do you feel?” he inquired with mild deprecation. “Any sensation as if you were in deep water? A feeling of floating? Is your head quite clear? How does your pulse go?”

“Oh, *Per-fesser!*” gasped the widow, slipping the ring finally on a smaller finger than she had at first attempted. “You know jest how it is yourse’f, don’t you? You describe my feelin’s to a T.”

Her head dropped upon his shoulder. And the one-ideaed man, in a panic of fear that she would at any moment start upward, clutched her more tightly.

"It will soon pass," he reassured her. "You'll feel better. You're perfectly safe. I give you my word it will be all right—I'll make it all right."

A cackle of laughter drowned her murmured reply. Under the crooked pine, their tall, lank figures rendered colossal by the tricky light, filed the widow's battalion of brothers. They had come over to pay one of their usual curious visits. It was their custom to drift in thus silently, of an evening, sit about, for the most part mute and watchful, and as silently drift out about nine o'clock. But upon the already overstrained nerves of the University man their advent just at this juncture had the effect of a nightmare.

Suppose their only sister should escape from his clasp and go sailing off before their eyes? Jeff was known to have killed three men, for far less provocation. Jate was a famous marksman, even in this land of gun-handlers. They all held the cave-man's attitude toward homicide—and he had given the last of the antidote to the calf!

When they spoke it became evident that Mandy Card had been talking to them.

"We hearn that you was a-feeding angels from this hotel," Jeff chuckled, "but we did n't 'low hit was a young he-angel with curly hair."

The widow forcibly extricated herself from the Professor's anxious embrace. This was not accomplished without difficulty, for he was continually beset by the terror that she would float away in the evening air, and that he would find it hard to explain to the Blackshears.

"Him and me has jest finished our courtin'," she announced solemnly, and Robert saw her abashed grin as she scintillated the ring. "The Perfesser has jest axed me would I have him, and I've jest said I would."

The tall, lean mountaineers ranged themselves along the porch edge, sitting at ease, looking contemplatively up from under their slouched hats at the Professor and their sister. The proposition was somewhat puzzling,—certainly it was sufficiently amazing. But these people, if they are capable of the emotion of surprise, never suffer it to be seen. It is their code to play up to any situation which may be presented to them.

"The preacher's a-gwine to be at Brush Arbor church to-morrow," drawled Jate suggestively. "Might be a good time to settle this thing;" and he added in a lower tone, presumably intended for the ear of his sister alone: "Town folks is tricky."

With the advent of the men, light had begun to dawn on Robert Sevier. Juletta's statement to them showed him plainly that something he had said must have been taken by the widow for a proposal, and that she had accepted him. He was an engaged man! And his prospective brothers-in-law eyed him from the porch edge with the solemn, impersonal curiosity of carnivora not, at the moment, hungry. How was he to explain or even to discuss matters with a tribe of male savages who had small use for language and a deep-seated suspicion of those who purveyed it freely; men who judged motives as the bull bison or the panther might, and who would act from the primitive springs, and with unembarrassed swiftness?

"If you will excuse me," he began, backing toward the door, "I'll go up-stairs. Somehow, I don't believe I'm feeling very well."

"Now, don't you git skeered, honey," Juletta reassured him, edging toward him in the dusk. "I'll send these hyere boys to the kitchen. I'm a widder, I am. I've had experience, and I know how to manage. Jest don't let yourse'f git skeered."

"Looks like hit's Juletty that's a-skeerin' him," growled Jate to Jeff sardonically.

But the miserable Professor put his hand to his head and groaned.

"Did that there fool calf kick you when you was workin' with 'im so noble?" inquired the widow eagerly.

"I'm afraid it did," faltered Robert mendaciously. "I think I'd better go to my room and get some witch-hazel and put on it."

"Lemme see the place—lemme see whar you're hurted, honey," entreated Mrs. Gannon movingly. She was a woman transformed. "Don't you let yourse'f git skeered, now—Rob—Robert."

"No—no! You can't come," protested the Professor almost fiercely.

She eyed him with a curious look. Evidently she resented his putting her thus in the wrong before her kindred.

"Then I reckon we might as well bid the boys in," she said, "and talk this here marryin' business over a little bit before you go."

Robert opened his mouth to speak. The tacit deceit was unendurable to him. But a look at the solid phalanx of suspicious, ignorant, hostile kinsmen on the porch edge closed his lips. There was nothing for it now but to gain a little time. Hating the duplicity thrust upon him, he yet forced a sickly smile.

"In the morning," he managed to mutter with deceitful friendliness. "Good-night—"

"You can call me Juletty now," the widow said positively. Her hypnotic eye was on him; also the eyes of those five brothers, roosting along the porch edge.

"Good-night—Juletta," he gasped, and fled.

Once in his room, he pulled his bed against the door and then pitched his clothes into his valise. His clearing brain gave him a good idea of what had occurred on the porch. Some details may have been wanting, but he knew enough to be aware that it would be best for him to put distance between himself and Mrs. Juletta Gannon and the Blackshear tribe.

When his breathless labors were accomplished he went to the window and looked out. How sweet and still the night lay on the mountain top! The little moon had gone down, but the big, white, steadfast stars were all over the blue-black vault of heaven. And he should be sailing out under them, not waiting breakfast demands, and sight of the resolute widow and of her solidarity of male kindred, whom he felt sure would not now leave the house while he was supposed to be in it.

"Perfesser—Robert—honey," came a voice from behind the closed door. "Yo' supper 's ready."

"I think I won't take any to-night—Juletta."

"Air ye bad hurt, honey? Whar did that fool calf hit ye?"

"It 's nothing much. Just a little bruise. I 'll be all right in the morning."

"Rob—Robert. Won't you open the do' a crack, an' lemme see you?"

"Why, I—I 'm—I 'll see you to-morrow," the trembling Professor lied.

There was a long silence. He could hear her stir and breathe on the other side of the panels.

"Ain't ye—don't ye want to—ain't you a-goin' to give me nary kiss?" the widow asked, almost humbly.

Shivers ran up bashful, sensitive Robert Sevier's spine. He looked at the big, heavy four-poster, shoved it closer against the door, and set his back to it.

"To-morrow!" he cried. "To-morrow—Juletta." Then in complete, reckless desperation: "Plenty of them to-morrow!"

He heard her heavy foot go slowly back down the stair. Later, when the supper noises had died away below, he heard the six of them move out onto the porch, where they remained, laughing and talking, for hours. When the house grew quiet he strapped his light valise across his shoulders and crept to the back window, swung out of it into the boughs of the apple-tree beneath, and slipped to the ground.

The spotted calf bleated and ran when it saw him coming. Sleepy chickens stirred and clucked a bit in the branches as he passed beneath them. But the dog knew him and was silent. Every nerve atingle, he

crossed the deserted fields back of the buildings, and set his face for the hiding-place of his apparatus. With that in hand he was off for love and freedom.

VI.

It was a regular Cloutie's Croft—the acre in Scotland given over to the devil—that Robert Sevier had chosen for hiding his aerial propeller. A little green depression like a dimple on the cheek of the mountain it was, a dip that held dregs of shadow swimming in the bottom of it all day long.

Squirrels chattered there at noon, and rabbits danced freely in the moonlight; for there no man found space to plant or reap. And in this primitive workshop the young inventor had spent long happy days tinkering at the light, exquisite machine that was to propel and guide his levitated body through space. Here he had spent the past night too; and now in the gray twilight of approaching dawn he drew the machine from its place, slipped the straps over his shoulders, took out his hypodermic and treated both forearms to a dose of the fluid. His valise he had attached to one foot, so that if the levitation failed to raise it he could kick it loose and leave it.

Up he went suddenly in the branches of the tree above him, softly touching the leafy ends, rousing small feathered things that twittered in amazement and semi-friendliness. He turned a lever and made a swift circle above the little dell, looking down toward the ground to see that nothing was left behind. Over his head was a beetling cliff whose forbidding rocks could never have known the foot of man. Far below in the valley lay the tiny hamlet where he had taken the mountain hack for the Far Cove neighborhood; and between it and the great flanks of the mountains themselves were the farms, their tilled land showing like squares on a checker-board.

But he had no time to view these marvels, scarcely breath or thought to realize that he was actually putting his discovery to practical use. He must make a swift flight to Unaka before morning was sufficiently advanced that he could be observed. So, literally rising above his troubles, he set the propeller up notch after notch till he seemed fairly to whistle through the air.

Beneath him the sulky curl of morning smoke from village chimneys apprised him that the world was waking. Five o'clock saw the mass of University buildings on the hill, disentangling gable, arch, and window, till he recognized the Sevier cottage, dropped gently, by means of his carefully replenished and prepared antidote, in a nearby bit of woodland, and with propeller and valise on his back stole to his brother's house, climbed to the upper balcony, and slipped the catch of his own window, so that he was soon fast asleep in his bed.

"To-morrow I'll take the world into my confidence," he told himself as he sank into delicious slumber. "To-morrow—to-morrow I shall receive all I have worked for. To-morrow my trials and troubles shall end—to-morrow!"

As he slept the Professor dreamed. It would seem that nothing more wonderful than his recent experiences could have visited the halls of sleep; yet he had vague, nebulous visions of doors in the sun swinging open to his knock, of star inhabitants flinging up windows, and of blessed damozels leaning on the ramparts of heaven to watch him with his propeller navigating interstellar spaces. Gradually he settled into a more distinct dream of a vast lecture hall filled with people. There were German scientists whose names he was aware of as we are aware of things in dreams, and Frenchmen so great that one wondered to see them in the flesh. All Europe had sent representatives to listen to his revelations. His brother, the faculty, his fellow townsmen, and a few charming women, among whom sat Alice Kercheval—these all waited with shining eyes before a platform on which the dreamer stood and gave an exhibition of his wonderful discovery.

By the perversity of dreams, he found himself telling this vast and inspiring audience all the absurd things he could think of about the action of the fluid. Taken in the side, he advised them, it would raise the body in a twisted, ludicrous fashion. Then he stepped to a stand on the stage which contained vials and syringe, administered a dose to himself, rose free of the floor, and went dangling head downward, with crumpled legs, across the platform, amid gales of laughter from the onlookers. He was not aware that he had arisen from his bed, sought out the old and imperfect supply of levitating fluid which was left behind in his room, and actually taken this dose. But he blushed in his sleep at the thunders of visionary mirth that shook the dream hall.

In point of fact, the imperfect fluid, instead of dangling him about head downward, had exhibited one of its most familiar tricks and refused to work at all. He awoke after a time, unrefreshed, and was appalled to find, when he looked at his watch, that it was late afternoon. He dressed and descended the stairs.

"Why, Robert!" Laura Sevier stood and stared at her returned brother-in-law. Work in the open air, particularly that portion of it which consisted of flights above the tree-tops when hats were a superfluity, had burned his smooth olive cheeks to a rather consistent red; also that, and his poor sleep of the night before, had left eyes and nose sufficiently inflamed to rouse unhappy suspicions in the breast of a strictly practical woman who already harbored most erroneous ideas concerning her brother-in-law, and who knew nothing of flights—those of the fancy or of the body.

"When did you come?" she inquired sharply. "Why, we did n't expect you for a week and more yet."

"This morning," he replied mildly. "I had reasons for returning earlier than I had planned. Could you give me some breakfast? Or lunch, or dinner?"

"Morning?" echoed his sister-in-law. "The early train came in eight hours ago. Where have you been since then?"

"Asleep," he answered honestly.

She took another look at his burned countenance, his reddened eyelids. "Don't you think you'd feel better to lie down again and sleep it off before you try to eat?" she inquired finally.

"Don't you do it, Uncle Robert," vociferated Bobby, pitching himself into the room and upon his tall uncle at one motion. "We've got ambrosia for dinner, and if you wait you won't get any. Come, let me show you."

He dragged Robert, nothing loath, into the dining-room. "Miss Alice Kercheval says ambrosia looks like stars soaked in the milky way," he communicated as they paused before the sideboard.

At the name Robert's heart gave a bound, his sluggish blood began to move in his veins. Then came the familiar sensation of wading in deep water. He leaned forward and clutched the handles of the sideboard drawer. As he swayed back, it came out in his hand, and when he went up he scattered silverware and doilies all over the floor.

The dose of impure fluid taken in his sleep had begun its unreliable, erratic action. It hoisted its unfortunate discoverer to the top of the sideboard, where he came to an upright position, the ends of his toes dipping in the great crystal bowl of ambrosia. He had the appearance of one treading the wine press—or perhaps the orange press is the more exact expression. Bobby drew back with a shout of dismay.

"Uncle Robert, you're ruining the ambrosia! Your slipper's coming off in the cocoanut. Oh, what makes you do that way? I don't like acrobats in my dinner!"

William Sevier's first sight of his returned brother was in this unseemly position, at this occupation.

"Robert, descend at once!" he thundered from the hall doorway. "Laura, shut that door and keep the negroes out. Such behavior is indecent, and must not become public. You'll break the china, Robert."

His blistered face more scarlet from mortification, Robert rose and fell above the sideboard, one foot in the ambrosia bowl, the other raking over small matters of mayonnaise, glasses, and the water pitcher. He felt the juices squelching up and coming over his house slippers. He saw Bobby burst into tears. Laura, a wild look on her pink-and-white face, was at the kitchenward door, holding the knob. He dared

not bend over to attend to matters on the sideboard, lest he should reverse himself in air and hang head downward, as had frequently been the case.

"Never mind, Bobby. Don't be scared, Laura. William, I can explain all of this perfectly. I'll come down in a minute and tell you all about it."

But the spectacle of a demented or inebriated brother climbing down from the sideboard, his feet adrip with orange juice and grated coconut, proved too much for Professor William Sevier. Uttering a smothered exclamation, he thrust Bobby away from the hall door, and with bent head bolted from the room.

"I have made a great discovery!" Robert cried after him in loud, excited tones. "I want to demonstrate it to you. I have compounded a fluid which, injected into the living organism, will render the blood lighter than air, and cause the subject to float. I——"

In the hall William turned at bay. Sound of Rindy's approaching footsteps nerved him to make an end of the scene.

"Silence, sir," he ordered. "Have respect for the name you bear, and for your mother's memory. Your face and conduct give ample witness to the levitation of certain fluids. We don't need anything further to explain your present condition. I—I can't believe it! That a Sevier of Sevierville should——"

"Will!" called Laura sharply as her husband groped dubiously his way up-stairs. "It's all very fine for you to be so dignified and everything, but are you going to leave me here to take care of Rob in his present condition? Here's Rindy with the dinner. Just take it back and wait a minute, Rindy. I'd like to know what you expect me to do?"

This appeal brought the dignified Sevier brother scuttling back down-stairs. He laid forcible but not unkindly hands upon the young Professor of Chemistry, and drew him to the floor.

"You must n't try to talk now, Robert," he said earnestly. "Go to your room till you are in better condition. I won't listen to a word now."

"When will you give me a chance to explain?" inquired Robert somewhat impatiently, as he was towed away up the stairs, unhappily aware, while he clung to William's solid bulk, that he was doing everything to favor their false hypothesis. "I want to know just when. Are you never going to listen?"

"Yes, yes, I'll listen to you when you are fit to talk," said William soothingly, hauling the slighter man with some difficulty around the upper newel post. "I can't abandon you, my dear brother, wayward though you are. Robert, it seems like a providence that there is a great temperance revival going on in the college just now, and the

biggest meeting we have had will be at the tabernacle to-night. If you will accompany me to that place, and there publicly sign the pledge, I will listen to anything you may adduce—afterward. Hush! Not another word. That is the last thing I have to say to you about it.”

Robert looked at his brother, and forbore further argument or urgency. But he was hungry, and also a little daunted by the situation. His one hope for comfort lay in practical, unimaginative Laura.

“You’re doing me a great injustice,” he could not refrain from saying as William all but shoved him through the bedroom door. “You’ll be sorry for this. Tell Laura to come up, won’t you?”

The calm assurance of manner, the rational words, somewhat startled and almost convinced Professor William; but a glance at the stockinged foot dripping with ambrosia, another look at the suspiciously reddened countenance, hardened his heart.

“I’ll let Laura come up if you will promise not to beg her for any intoxicating beverages,” he said ponderously—William’s most sincere and genuine emotions, it seemed, could only be expressed cumbrously.

“I won’t ask for anything more intoxicating than coffee. I’m fearfully hungry,” grumbled the culprit sullenly.

“You shall have sufficient food and drink—ah, table beverages—in your own room,” agreed William, trying to be fair, but finding it hard not to resort to severity when he seemed able to make so little impression. “I’ll ask you to remember that Laura cannot keep servants in the house unless you are more discreet. And Bobby—what sort of example do you set your nephew and namesake?”

“He stamped the stuffin’ out of the ambrosia,” put in that small boy from the foot of the stairs. But his mother, good soul, checked him.

“Don’t make the poor thing feel any worse,” she admonished, wiping her eyes. “But you must take warning from your Uncle Robert’s condition, Bobby, and never do as he does.” She was on her knees, picking up the scattered silver. “You must never touch intoxicating liquor. But you must be kind to him. He’s more to be pitied than blamed.”

Robert shut the door sharply. This sort of thing might be amusing to an outsider, but it was beginning to become monotonous to the protagonist. Yet he ate heartily when Laura herself brought up his dinner on a dainty tray. Good girl, she busied herself hunting up cold cream for his peeling nose, and making him presentable for his appearance at the meeting where he was to sign the pledge. She seemed quite hopeful that their troubles were nearly over, and Robert sincerely hoped with her.

VII.

PROMPTLY at seven o'clock William knocked at his brother's door. He eyed that brother with covert suspicion when the door was opened, and sniffed the atmosphere of the room, fearing to find that some one had proved faithless and that his charge would not be fit to go out.

"Well, you look pretty decent," he admitted dubiously, as the other stood tall and, in spite of himself, cheerful, prepared for departure.

"You make me feel like a small boy that is under suspicion of stealing jam," the younger brother proffered good-humoredly. "In a few hours you'll be laughing at yourself, Billy."

"I hate to hear you make use of that jaunty tone, Robert," the other rejoined almost rancorously. "You need to meditate and pray. You should pray without ceasing. It is plain to me that you don't realize the horror of this habit that is closing its coils around you. Let us both engage in silent prayer as we walk over to the meeting."

Had it been anybody else but William—but again the younger brother looked at the elder, dense, ponderous, impenetrable, and again refrained from attempted protest or explanation.

It was a solemn affair, that journey across the campus. Robert contrasted his passage above that same space in the morning alone. The levitation was still tingling in his feet, as it had a trick of doing now when the antidote was used. It lifted them high. Any moment, by taking a deep breath, he could rise a foot or two from the ground and float forward for some distance. Now he sighed and stepped beside his brother in silence, greeting the friends whom they encountered with a mere bend of the head, till they came to the great tabernacle, already filled with earnest people.

"The faculty are sitting on the platform," William instructed him in grave, hushed tones, as they reached the door.

"Very well, you go ahead and show the way," Robert agreed hastily. He had caught sight of Alice Kercheval in her white dress. He thought she looked at him; he thought the color rushed to her face as her gray eyes encountered his and were swiftly withdrawn. But Dabney Tate sat beside her, and he scowled as the Professor of Chemistry passed up the aisle.

The meeting was a good one. The lecturer who had been speaking for the past week was a man of ability, and Unaka College was famous for its excellent music. Robert, sitting on the platform, enjoyed his evening as he had not deemed possible. But he was in a mood to praise God and raise anthems unto Him who has left in this old world so many marvels for man in his free state to discover.

The speaker brought his remarks to a close; the appeal was made

that all who needed help to struggle against perverted appetites should rise and ask the prayers of the Christian people there gathered, and after, if so moved, should come down to the speaker's stand and sign the pledge.

William laid a hand on Robert's knee. Old Sorsby fastened his eyes on the Professor of Chemistry. Silvery-haired President Kercheval tried to look unconscious, but failed to dissemble the fact that William had consulted him, and he knew to what end the younger man was brought to the meeting.

"Robert," whispered William energetically, "Robert, my brother, rise!"

And then occurred one of those unexpected and exaggerated responses which make us question whether a friend has the right to urge upon another the course he himself deems proper. How often has man insisted that his fellow should adopt his creed, and then by an adoption so enthusiastic, so complete, so all-embracing as to reverse their positions, been forced to remonstrate for over zeal, where he had blamed for negligence! Robert Sevier shot up to the full of his very considerable height, and stood a moment swaying slightly from side to side. A wild look came in his eyes; he flung out an arm, catching for something solid; but his brother shrank back, and his fingers encountered only the smooth wall. Clutching vainly at this, his face a luminous carmine, the younger Sevier went bumping up beside the window, then above it toward the ceiling. As he scrabbled, vainly snatching at pillar and scroll-work, he had the appearance of climbing like a monkey to the roof. That he was carried by a power beyond his control did not—of course it could not—occur to the shocked, amazed spectators.

"Is he crazy, or is it just a plain drunk?" inquired old Sorsby in a hoarse whisper that was clearly audible through the entire auditorium.

None answered.

"Oh, somebody help that poor man!" wailed a woman's voice. "He 'll fall—he 'll fall and be killed before our eyes!"

In spite of his terror, William Sevier was angry. That he should have been made a laughing-stock of in this public place seemed so gratuitous. Why could not Robert have said before coming that he would not sign the pledge? Why must he seek publicly to dodge the matter in this ape-like fashion?

Half the audience were on their feet now, watching with appalled eyes while young Sevier rose and rose above them, apparently clinging to the most insecure projections. Glancing below, the Professor of Chemistry saw their terror and realized the cause of it. They were afraid he would fall on them. It might cause a panic.

"There's no danger!" he shouted down to them as he grasped the swinging sash of a ventilator. "I'll go through this and come down outside."

But once on the steep roof, the levitation abruptly subsided—it was the erratic product of a chance-measured dose of the imperfect fluid—and he was left clinging to the gutter, calling miserably for help.

William, who had hurried from the tabernacle overcome by humiliation and distress, looked up and heard his appeal. Recognizing the peril of his graceless brother, he fled to the fire hall just across the square, where a few professional firemen were always on duty to reinforce the volunteer student corps who attended to the safety of the college and grounds.

The hook and ladder outfit rattled noisily, with much clanging of gongs, to the relief of the unfortunate Professor on the tabernacle roof. The entire audience from within had gathered on the campus to see him taken off. He came down in the arms of a fireman, a limp, almost fainting figure. The overdose of impure fluid, the long ride of the morning, the strain and worry of the preceding hours, and the danger and utter mortification of the moment, had proved too much for his sensitive, delicately strung nature. Young Professor Sevier hung supine in the stalwart arms that brought him safely to earth and laid him on the grass.

"Robert—don't you know me?" cried William Sevier, flinging himself on his knees beside the prostrate form. He was now convinced that his brother had suffered some mental shock and lost his reason.

"It was the old fluid," came the peculiar response. "It does n't work well—does n't keep me up."

He took hold of the nearest man and pulled himself to his feet. Dabney Tate, who had forced himself into the front rank of spectators, looked meaningfully from one to another.

"There are a lot of fellows in the asylum that talk just that way," he observed in a quiet tone. "Drugs and drink put 'em there, of course; but they're crazy all right."

William Sevier got to his feet shudderingly, and looked about him like a man dazed.

"Of course this may be a temporary attack," pursued Tate consolingly. "I'll go home with you if you like, Professor Sevier, and help you out with him. He needs a keeper, and you're not fit to look after him, that's plain."

"Why, Dabney Tate—you impudent scoundrel!" shouted Robert, going into one of his infrequent rages. "I certainly do not need a keeper, William. If I did, I could n't let that puppy fill the position."

You promised me that you would listen to my explanations to-night, and you would bring Dr. Kercheval to hear them, if I would sign the pledge. I did my best to, but the old fluid got away with me. I must have had a dose that I did n't know anything about."

"Haw, haw! Well said! They often do!" chuckled the fireman by whose shoulder Robert had pulled himself to a standing position. "I been a nurse at Elm View for ten year, and it's always a dose they did n't know they took, or some such, that upsets 'em."

"See here," remonstrated Tate officiously, and William shuddered as he looked around at the interested, listening faces—"see here, it won't be safe for two physically frail men like yourself and President Kercheval to be shut up in a room with this man to-night. God knows what scheme he's got on hand."

"Wants to cut their throats, most likely," commented the fireman and ex-nurse, with indifferent professional interest.

In despair William turned his back upon the crowd and addressed himself in a low tone to Tate and the fireman.

"What would you advise me to do?"

"It'll be the safest way to take him to the station-house," suggested the fireman.

"No, no," William demurred; "he must be brought to my home. I can't let him be taken anywhere else—yet."

Professor Sorsby pressed through the crowd, and, laying an urgent hand upon William's arm, led him away. As they turned to go, Robert heard the words,

"Come, this is too painful for you. Young Tate will see that he gets home safe, and is cared for. It's not as though it were a sudden attack, my dear sir. You must have been prepared for this."

Robert whirled upon Dabney Tate. "I warn you, Tate," he said fiercely, "I won't endure any more of your foolishness. You've made all of this trouble. I'm not out of my head. You know very well that I'm perfectly sane. I don't want you. I won't have you."

"You're going to need help," remarked the fireman to Tate. "I'll get leave from the fire hall and go with you for a dollar. I'm used to lunatics."

"But this is ridiculous," expostulated the inventor. "You're all crazy."

The fireman nodded, pleased, like any other scientist, to find his particular line of reasoning working out as usual.

"That's just what they all say," he ruminated. "They're sane, and the rest of the world's crazy. Well—mebbe so—mebbe so; but you just catch him under the arm on your side, and we'll run him over to his room and undress him and get him to bed."

Dabney Tate complied rather gingerly. Robert took stock of the

expressions upon the faces about him, and yielded to the situation.
Oh, for the strength of Sampson!

And he had looked forward to this day!

VIII.

THE house seemed deserted when Dabney Tate and his assistant marched young Professor Sevier, prisoner fashion, into it, up the stairs and to his old room. William and Laura had evidently not yet returned from the meeting. Robert could fancy them detained by the curiosity and condolences of friends. Bobby was in his little room, which adjoined theirs, sleeping the healthy sleep of childhood. Rindy, who was supposed to be looking after the house and him, had gone out as usual about fifteen minutes after the departure of her master and mistress.

"Wonder if we're going to have to rope this fellow," debated the fireman, whose name turned out to be Friskens. He thrust his hands into his pockets and observed Robert with the impersonal attention we give a bale of goods or a field of potatoes.

"Oh, I guess not," said Tate, backing suddenly away as the Professor of Chemistry threw up his dejected head and stared hard at the two of them. "He—he might make trouble if we try that. No need to be harsh—unless he gets worse"—hopefully. "I guess we'll just sit up and watch him."

Robert brought his teeth together with a click, and fought for composure. He knew that if he could take the situation lightly, playing the host and offering the men anything they needed for their work, he would eventually convince dull Friskens that their commission was a ridiculous one. In his own mind he was unable to decide whether Dabney Tate was altogether malicious or partly misled. Yet he called in vain for the tone which should have shown them his composure and sanity. All he longed for, the one thing that filled the entire horizon for him, was a chance to demonstrate his discovery in the presence of his brother and President Kercheval; and who would trust a crazy man with a hypodermic syringe and a vial of some unknown drug? Would not his assertions that with it he had overcome the law of gravitation be sufficient to decide adversely any commission of lunacy? As he sat revolving these things in his mind, he heard Laura and William come in.

"Do we do anything in particular?" she was asking in a high, excited voice. "Is there any etiquette about your friends going insane? If there is anything in particular I ought to do, just tell me. Folks don't wear black, do they? I seem to get it mixed."

There was a little stir of lowered conversation when they reached Bobby's room; then Robert heard his namesake's tearful tones:

"You won't send my Uncle Robert to the asylum! If you do, I'm going along. I love my Uncle Robert—so there!"

"Bobby," wheedled his mother, "won't you run down to the door and ask Mr. Tate to see if your uncle has the ring I gave him for his birthday. In his condition anybody might get it away from him if he goes to the asylum. That's a valuable ring. I paid——"

Involuntarily Robert clutched his hands and thrust them behind him. Juletta Gannon was wearing that ring, and he had no rational explanation to proffer as to how she came by it. He was relieved when he heard William's serious accents remonstrating with his wife for thinking of a trifle like that when Robert's reason trembled in the balance.

Then came a penitent Rindy to offer coffee and sandwiches to the men. They were to go down one at a time to the dining-room and help themselves from the sideboard. She said she would leave the coffee-pot on the kitchen range. It was fearfully like the sitting up with a corpse.

Robert chose the time when Tate was down stairs to kick off his shoes and fling himself on the bed with his face to the wall.

"How long do you reckon they will keep him in the house?" asked the fireman when Tate came back, flushed, bright-eyed, wiping his lips and diffusing an odor of supper. Tate glanced at Robert's relaxed form. He may or may not have thought that his rival was asleep as he answered cheerfully:

"I think they'll send him out to Elm View to-morrow. He is n't fit to be in the house with a woman and child."

"Kinda bad, too, ain't it? Nice-lookin' young feller," commented Friskens, with pleasant frankness.

"Oh, I don't know," deprecated Tate, searching over the Professor's table to find matches for his cigar. "Men have to take their chance in this world. There's trouble for everybody. Some get it one way and some get it another. I reckon the variety don't make much difference in the long run, and I never did have any sympathy with people who bring on their own misfortunes, as this man's done."

In his researches he had come upon a picture of Alice Kercheval.

"Hello!"—whistling softly. "That ought n't to stay here, under the circumstances."

Robert started up on his elbow and glared at the speaker. Then it occurred to him that Miss Kercheval would certainly not want her photograph made the subject of a fist fight between two young men, and he dropped back on his couch, silent, as Tate thrust the card into his pocket with the muttered statement that he'd see it got to the proper parties.

The whole thing was so absolutely monstrous that it acted upon its victim with the paralyzing effect of an anæsthetic.

So the night wore on. The two keepers took turns sleeping and watching. Robert tossed from side to side on his bed or lay staring at the ceiling. His weary mind went the round of every plan by which he might gain credence for his statements, and permission that he explain his discovery and test it on himself in the presence of his brother and the physicians who would certainly be summoned to pass upon his sanity. And always he knew that the urgent demand for the hypodermic syringe would mean to them only the drug victim who was habituated to its use and could not do without it, and the description of his marvellous achievements would certainly spell nothing less than lunacy to the country practitioners who might be called in to examine him.

Dawn brought a banging of shutters, and an opening and closing of doors, and a smell of boiling coffee stole up the stairs. Later the telephone bell rang, and William could be heard down-stairs in the back hall, answering.

"Thank you, Dr. Kercheval, yes, he passed a quiet night. I have arranged with Dr. Watkins to bring his partner and make the examination to-day. Yes, the Doctor will come prepared to remove him to his own sanatorium at Elm View; we have n't much doubt as to what his decision will be. You are right. It is hard. He has been brother and son to me. Oh, I understand the safety of Laura and my little boy must come first. If I were a man of means, I should be able to devote my whole time to taking care of my brother. He should n't have to go to an asylum then. But as it is——"

"William," called Robert sharply, sitting up on the edge of his bed in his stocking feet—"William, come here."

It was a haggard, white-faced William, a very wreck of himself, that answered that sharp summons, coming to a stand mutely just inside the door.

"Look here, Billy," began the younger brother doggedly, "you're giving yourself and me a lot of unnecessary pain. Let's just put an end to this ridiculous nonsense. I'm not out of my head. I can prove it in about six minutes. You open my top desk drawer, there's a good fellow, and hand me the vial and hypodermic syringe from the left-hand compartment. Then you get me a rabbit, a dog, or any small beast, and I——"

William turned away with a gesture of dismissal. Robert looked at the grinning Friskens, the well pleased Tate, and realized how senseless his words must have sounded to them. But a scientific man, a relative, who loved him, ought to make some effort to understand.

"It's for a test, Will," he pleaded. "This thing is getting serious.

I may never ask another favor of you. Better do what I request while it's in your power. You'll be sorry if you refuse to listen to me now. Get me the hypodermic syringe——"

"God help you, Robert, I *can't* give you that! It is the root of all your trouble, poor soul. My dear brother, I can't bear to see you like this—I can't! It's not safe for me to be with you. Let these men who are not near relatives handle the case—I'll not come in again;" and with something very like a groan he turned and rushed from the room.

"Close the door, please," said Dabney Tate, full fed with the authority William had so prodigally bestowed.

"His eyes look pretty wild, don't they?" assented Friskens, with that curious air of discussing an inanimate object which sick nurses and attendants of the insane so easily fall into.

"No," returned Robert, making a strong effort to control himself and take advantage of the last chance left him; "I don't look wild at all. I don't look wild, because I'm not wild. I think Mr. Tate knows that I'm neither drunk nor crazy, but he has his own reasons for not wanting to help me. Now, my man," and he addressed himself exclusively to the fireman, "I have made a tremendous discovery. I have compounded a fluid that would make you float around this room like a toy balloon. There should be millions of money in the thing. If that is so, and I ever get my hands on it, I'll give you half if you'll help me out now. Open my desk—or let me open it—and get out——"

"No, no!" hastily interposed Friskens, as the Professor of Chemistry got to his feet and started across the room. "No revolvers and no hypodermics goes with *me*! I've took care of your sort before now. It's all the world for a hypodermic or a razor or a gun, with you all; and when you get it the fool that gave it to you can go and tell Gabriel what made him do it. No, no!"

Robert glanced toward Dabney Tate. Under a thin surface of decent sympathy there was readily discerned a lively personal satisfaction in that gentleman's face and bearing.

"Don't apply to me, please," he remarked rather unnecessarily; "because my sense of duty to your relatives would keep me from furnishing you with the means of destroying yourself or anybody else."

With a quiet disregard which was rather more settling than a sneer, Robert averted his gaze. Rindy came to the door carrying three breakfasts; one on a wooden platter, without knife or fork.

"Where is my shaving water?" Robert inquired of her, as he rubbed a cheek beginning to be brambly.

"Now, look-a-yere, honey," she pacified him, "you cain't have no razzer—you knows you cain't. Dis yere gemman gwine cut yo' meat

foh ye. Would n't even let yo' have a table knife nor a fork—co'se yo' cain't have no razzar."

Robert swallowed the remarks that this brought to his mind, and managed to swallow also the breakfast which Friskens, refusing to trust a fork in the hands of his charge, fed him.

"Tate," called Professor Sorsby's voice from the hall, as the meal was being concluded—"Tate, we need you down here."

Robert heard a low-toned consultation, and when Dabney Tate returned he was not surprised to hear him say:

"We may as well pack up his things before Dr. Watkins comes. Nobody doubts what the verdict will be, and then the doctor can take him on out to the asylum."

William had refused to return. It was like a nightmare to Robert to sit there in the midst of his possessions, and see an ignorant man and a personal enemy plunge their hands into desks and drawers sacred to the memoranda of his research. There were manuscripts in the pigeon-holes, and bundles of notes and data, that nothing but patient years of work would replace. Yet he hesitated to plead or urge the value of these things, since Friskens's ignorance would take his statements as further confirmation of insanity, and Tate might be malicious enough to wish to destroy that which was of value to his rival. He trembled every time they came near the case which contained his propeller.

Powerless he sat and watched the desecrators who handled his clean linen with respect and, with sly grins and nudges, flung his precious test materials into a corner. Dabney Tate, a neat dresser himself, creased the trousers that he packed in Robert's trunk, and was particular to lay the handkerchiefs straight; but Robert had a growing suspicion that if the young man knew the value of the fluid and notebooks that had been pushed in a bundle on the floor at the trunk's end, he would promptly have tossed them into the grate and applied a match.

The telephone had been ringing all morning. Now Tate was called down to answer it. Robert asked Friskens to leave the door open, and listened as his self-appointed keeper replied, evidently to Doctor Watkins:

"Yes, you might come up any time now. Oh, he seems pretty quiet. Delusion? I don't know. He begs pretty hard for a hypodermic, and talks about going up in the air. He says he's got a scheme for making folks fly, and that there's millions in it. No, I have n't felt afraid. I've got a good strong professional nurse with me. Professor William Sevier has seen nobody—he's entirely prostrated. But he will meet you here. Yes, he will be present at the examination—though he dreads— Yes, maybe so. Yes, indeed, the sooner you take his brother away, the better for him. Oh, yes, he ate his breakfast

—a good breakfast, too. If you 're going to be up as soon as that, I 'll wait. Oh, by the way, doctor, this man Friskens wants to know if you can use him. You 'll have to have help to get Sevier out to the asylum. He 's quiet here in the house, but there 's a look about him that I don't like. Friskens thinks he tried to get a gun awhile ago, and he pretended that he wanted to shave himself for the sake of getting his hands on a razor. Yes. Well, I 'll tell Friskens you 'll take him then—the Seviers will pay.”

Robert rose and bathed his face. They stood over him while he brushed the thick curling locks into shape.

“Why did you say that I pretended I wanted to shave?” he inquired furiously. “Would n't any gentleman want to shave for his morning toilet?”

The sound of wheels on the gravel before the door came up to them while the room was still being ransacked, and Robert thought desperately of every means by which he could secure the protection of his precious notes and manuscripts. It was a closed carriage from which Doctor Watkins and his partner, little Doctor Gibson, descended, and evidently intended to take the patient to the sanatorium in.

Robert looked about him in agony as the time for departure approached. There in a corner for Rindy to sweep out was a bunch of manuscripts which recorded all of his experiments made up in the mountains—his final tests. The propeller had been set on the floor of his closet among some wornout foot-gear. A vial of the pure fluid lay in the midst of the disordered papers, the cork loose, and ready for any tilt to send it spilling on the floor. They were looking for his hat, and since he had worn none home from the meeting last night, and mutely refused to inform them where his others were, the search was somewhat delayed.

A vehicle came up to the side door. It was the express wagon ordered by Tate after his final talk with Watkins. In a sort of waking nightmare the young Professor saw his trunk and satchels go down the back stairs on the shoulders of a big darky.

The telephone rang. Rindy answered it.

“Naw 'm. Miss Laury she 's on de baid; she cain't come to speak to you. Yassum, dis is Rindy. Yassum. Marse Robert 's plumb crazy, Miss Alice—I reckon dat 's shore true. Naw 'm, you mistaken. 'Tain't no new thing. He used to jump round in his room, a traipsin' de blankets after him, and skeer me 'most out o' my senses. Yistedday he clum' up on de sideboa'd and stuck his toes in de dessert. He suttinly done so. You wants to say good-by to him? I don't reckon dey 'll let him come to you-all's house. Spec' you better not come yere, honey. Marse William he 's takin' on pow'ful. Whut's dat! Oh, de ker-ridge done come for him. Yassum, and de doctors bofe in it. Yo'

blue silk—wid de poonchy sleeves? Oh-oh-oh—ow! Yassum. I shore will dat! *Yassum!*”

Rindy dropped the receiver with a clatter, and, two at a jump, ran up the stairs and burst into the room where the two attendants were searching for head-wear. Grinning broadly, she announced:

“Miss Alice Kutcheval comin’ over to say good-by to Marse Robert—you-all got to wait.”

“It’s out of the question—it would be unsafe,” snapped Dabney Tate. “I’ll go down and speak to Doctor Watkins. I know he won’t allow it.”

“You stand right whar you’ at,” ordered Rindy, squaring herself in the doorway, arms akimbo. “Miss Alice done promise’ me her las’ summer’s blue silk—and hit as good as de day hit ’uz finished—she say I shall have it ef I hold him ’till she run across de campus, and dat’s what’s goin’ to be did.”

“God bless her—oh, God bless her!” cried Robert Sevier, sinking into a chair.

“Now, see here, my girl,” said Dabney sharply, trying to push past the grinning Rindy. “Professor Sevier is n’t safe for a lady to see.”

“Naw, he ain’t,” mocked the negress. “He’s a heap too good-lookin’, ’cordin’ to yo’ way o’ thinkin’.”

Dabney Tate’s face reddened angrily, and he made as if to speak, but seemed to think better of it.

“Are you about ready for us, Mr. Tate?” came the pompous voice of Doctor Watkins. “Shall we make the examination up there or will you bring him down to the parlor?”

“Step in de poller, please, suh,” directed Rindy, before Tate or Friskens could make any reply. “One o’ Marse Robert’s partic’lar frien’s is a-comin’ over to say good-by to him. He’ll be down in de poller when he gits dar, and den you’ll see him.”

The slightly bewildered physician had moved into the room and seated himself before he became aware that he was put off. Then he fairly bounced into the hall and called up:

“This is unreasonable. You folks had plenty of notice. Bring the patient down at once—I can’t wait.”

“All right,” called Tate from above-stairs. “Come on, Friskens—we can go past Foster’s and buy him a hat. Will you come quietly, Professor Sevier?” And Tate signed to Friskens to close in on the other side.

Absurd and monstrous—monstrous and absurd! Yet it looked as though, what with the victim’s mistaken earlier policy of reticence, the stupid incompetence of those nearest him, and Dabney Tate’s energy and ability, the young Professor would be railroaded into a

sanatorium that was simply a private asylum for the insane, before the sun set.

As they moved to go, Rindy, muttering, ran out ahead of them, down the stairs, and out the front door. Robert unobtrusively closed his eyes and prayed.

And the next moment two pairs of running feet sounded on the porch, and they heard Alice Kercheval's voice cry out as she came through the hall.

IX.

"OH, Doctor Watkins, is that you?" Alice exclaimed. "You're going to let me see Professor Robert Sevier—I know you are."

She was hastening to the stairway even as she spoke. They heard Dr. Watkins's important bass rumble, apparently in remonstrance. Then Alice's "But I must see him—I will see him!" And her light step mounted the stair.

"Keep hold of him, Friskens," ordered Tate sullenly. Alice Kercheval should see what kind of person her very particular friend was. If outside irritation could drive Robert Sevier into misbehavior, into ridiculous, unseemly, or violent resistance, Dabney appeared to have decided that it should not be lacking. "Don't you let loose of him a minute while that lady's in the room," he adjured.

"You'd better ketch a-holt of him on the other side," Friskens agreed cheerfully. "They're mighty tricky sometimes. It'll be safer for the both of us to hold him when there's a lady round that might be screaming or fainting or such."

Robert saw the uselessness of a struggle. He stood quietly between his captors, and ignored them as much as possible.

The girl came into the room with a rush. Her face was plainly flushed with weeping, and her gray eyes were still brilliant with unshed tears. To neither of her lovers had she ever seemed more lovely, more womanly and adorable, than at that moment. Ignoring the others as Robert had done, she advanced to within a foot of the suspected maniac and stared steadily into his face.

"Well," she began gently, "what have you been forgetting or leaving out now, that people call you crazy?"

There was even a little ghost of laughter about her lips as she spoke, and the fearful tension of the moment relaxed, for Robert at least.

"Miss Alice," he said, with a flickering up of hope, "you could help me—if you would. Get these folks to delay this fool examination, and let me make a demonstration of my new discovery—it was in working over it that I made them think I was crazy."

Carried away by his interest, forgetful of where he stood, Robert

was turning toward his desk when Friskens caught his arm and dragged him back.

"None o' that!" growled the keeper. "You stand still and answer when you're spoke to; but you can't go opening drawers and getting things out of 'em—ain't that so, Mr. Tate?"

The girl's amazed, horrified eyes followed the speaker's and rested upon the countenance of Dabney Tate when he was thus interrogated; and as he nodded affirmatively, the indignant crimson rushed over her face, and she drew up her tall young figure to its utmost height.

Robert, worn and exhausted by much harrying and long nervous strain, his powers of resistance at their lowest ebb, pulled away from their detaining hands and threw himself into his chair, muttering:

"I guess it's no use to try. Any innocent movement on my part is taken as a manifestation of insanity now." And his head went forward on the arm he flung out across the stand.

But Alice Kercheval came fresh to this battle. She was of a different nature from the young Professor; she had a pretty temper of her own, and this situation called loudly to it.

"You idiots! You brutes!" cried the girl, apportioning her remarks appropriately between Tate and the fireman.

She stood a moment looking down at the bowed head of the man she loved. His own people had run away, lest they might be pained. There was no one else to help him. If she did not, he was worse than dead for lack of it. With a little sobbing breath she sank upon her knees beside his chair, laid a hand over his that trembled on the arm of that chair, and said softly:

"Now, Robert, I'm here to do what you want done. Tell me what it is. You can trust me, can't you?"

"Trust you?" Robert forgot to be bashful; he forgot that she was a pretty girl, the girl he loved, the girl of whom he had been so dreadfully afraid. "Trust you!" he echoed. "Of course I can trust you. The question is, will you trust me? I am afraid to repeat—with Doctor Watkins and his partner in the house—that I have invented a fluid which causes living bodies to float in the air like balloons. Watkins will take it—it seems to be agreed among them all to accept it, without allowing me any chance to prove my statement—as an evidence of lunacy and nothing else."

"Oh, I won't—I won't!" cried Alice, grasping his arm and shaking him a little in the excess of her earnestness. "I saw you in the tabernacle. You did n't climb up the wall—you rose. Oh—and they'll shut you in an asylum, where all your brilliant work will be lost! Quick—tell me what to do. Whom shall I call?"

"Your father—get Rindy to go over and bring Doctor Kercheval.

He's a sensible man—he'll be neither frightened nor incredulous, once I can have a chance to explain to him."

"Oh, I will. We're on the right track now," cried the girl, with shining eyes. "I saw you in the tabernacle. You did rise."

"Yassum—and he done riz here one mornin', widout stopping to dress hisself, an' trailed Miss Laury's bedclothes all over de place, and skeer me out o' a year's growth," chimed in Rindy, from the doorway. "But ef you feel lak yo' say 'bout de blue silk, I ain't goin' to stand in yo' way, nor yit in his. I'll run over for Marse Kutcheval—yassum."

Dabney Tate and his assistant, the one half sullen, the other merely dubious, had perforce drawn back a little.

"Robert," said Alice, as the negress hurried down the steps, "you need a friend—you must have some one—and I'm going to be that friend. I understand that you have been afraid of me for months because——" she hesitated, then took it with a rush, as a gallant hunter might an ugly leap—"I betrayed my deep attachment for you at the lawn fête this spring. Oh, Robert, dear Robert, you need n't be afraid of me! I can be your friend always—and nothing more. I understand that your feeling for me is only friendship—but it would break my heart to see you carried away to an asylum."

Before Robert could utter the eager disclaimer that trembled on his lips, "Well," cut in Tate, with ill-restrained fury, from where he stood at a window, drumming upon the pane, "it appears to me that everybody round here is as crazy as Bob Sevier. I must commend your courage, Miss Alice. Have you heard the story of how he slung Miss Sally Sorsby's little dog Hyacinth out of the up-stairs window and killed it?"

Alice turned to Robert Sevier for confirmation or denial of this statement. He merely looked distressed and discountenanced.

"Has Mr. Tate any right to direct your course in any way, Miss Alice?" he asked finally.

"He has not," she answered brusquely.

For a moment the young Professor of Chemistry hesitated, desperately uncomfortable; then he broke out:

"I had taken a dose of the fluid, and got to floating round in the air, Alice, and I was up above you that night at the lawn fête. I heard what you and Dabney said while he lied to you and told you I was down with Miss Sally listening to the music."

For a moment there was silence in the room. Then Friskens, bulwarked by invincible ignorance, yawned. The maunderings of a lunatic were rather boresome in his estimation. Alice, who believed implicitly what Robert said, was going over that evening in deep embarrassment, and thankfully remembering that she had not let Tate kiss her. That young gentleman saw that Robert Sevier must have been

within earshot of his statements, whether floating in the air or otherwise.

"What the devil is all this nonsense?" he finally demanded, listening to the evil counsels of his rage, and letting go all manners and appearances. "I'm going to call Professor William Sevier and have it stopped."

But he had no longer Robert Sevier to deal with.

"I wish you would!" flashed Alice. "He'll get here about the same time papa does. Why is n't he here now? He ought to be thoroughly ashamed of himself—and Mrs. Sevier, too; letting all sorts of ignorant, irresponsible persons in here to browbeat and insult Professor Robert. I'd like to see him and speak my mind to him. *He's* the one that's acting crazy!"

Tate fell back before this plucky onslaught, and Friskens looked a bit cheap and bewildered. But now, "Mr. Tate," boomed the voice of Doctor Watkins from the hall below, "President Kercheval is here, and Professor William Sevier has come down-stairs to receive him. I desire to know at once, shall Doctor Gibson and I come up and make that examination now?"

"Yes!" called Alice. "Bring papa and Professor William Sevier right up with you."

"Alice, are you going to stand by me?" demanded Robert in a low tone. "It may be worse than you think—more difficult. I've had enough of it to know."

The others were looking toward the open door, where their visitors would appear. He felt the brush of velvet lips across his cheek.

"You poor boy—yes," she breathed in his ear. "Don't be frightened that I'll expect more of you than your honest friendship; but I'll stand by you—forever."

With assurance so sweet, so humble, what could an ardent lover like Robert Sevier do but meet the incoming deputation with the surprising accost, "Wait a minute. Before this investigation goes any further, I want to say to President Kercheval that I have loved his daughter for two years. During those two years I have been working on my discovery, and if it issues hopefully from this mix-up, and I am found to be not only a sane man but a successful one, I shall ask him for her."

The newcomers had ranged themselves round the room. Dr. Kercheval looked with some surprise at the reputed madman, glanced keenly at those who had him in charge, and inclined his head in courteous, if non-committal, response to this speech.

William turned aside in humiliation, and shaded his face with a trembling hand.

But Dabney Tate folded his arms and buried his chin in his necktie,

that he might regard the young Professor through lowered eyebrows, muttering:

“Crazy—crazy—crazy as a loon!”

Alice turned on him sharply.

“So you think he’s crazy because he wants to marry me, do you? Well, I’d marry him to-morrow, if papa says yes,” she flung at him, looking for all the world like an indignant small boy who cries to a dishonorable opponent, “Take that!”

Friskens nudged the gloomy Tate and whispered in a perfectly audible tone:

“I say—there’s a pair of ’em. Both of ’em crazy as they get.”

Dr. Kercheval looked at his spirited daughter, at young Professor Sevier, then at the others, and seemed at least very doubtful. And he forbore to check the girl.

“We can’t have this sort of thing,” fumed Doctor Watkins. And little Gibson confirmed, “We certainly cannot.”

“We’re here to make an inquiry into this man’s sanity,” proceeded Watson. “I want to see if he is capable of—I want to ask him a certain set of questions, and deduce a certain thing from his answers to those questions, and these irrelevant matters put me all out.”

Alice flew to the old gentleman’s side with her most blandishing smile. Years ago, when he was a hard-working general practitioner, he had taken her through measles and whooping-cough, and she understood just the best method of getting around him.

“No, they don’t,” she declared sweetly. “Nothing ever puts me out. You want Professor Robert to talk a good deal, so that you can see whether he’s crazy or not. If he has made a great discovery, you know, Doctor Watkins, you would n’t want him to be taken out to an asylum for it—they’d say you ought not to have committed him under those circumstances.”

Little Gibson started nervously.

“That’s so—that’s so,” agreed Watkins, staring owlishly at the sweet young face through his round spectacles. “Well, since you seem to be managing this matter, ask the young man what he wants next.”

“I’ll have you get me the hypodermic syringe out of the desk there—the little left-hand drawer, dear—and pick up that bottle of stuff in the corner that’s in danger of being spilled. It’s very precious. It is the only fluid of its sort in this round world. A dose of it will make a two-hundred-pound man float around the ceiling of this room like a feather.”

Dr. Kercheval looked anxious. Friskens snickered. Dabney Tate joined him. Here seemed something hopeful to his purpose. The two doctors exchanged a significant glance.

“No, no,” objected Watkins. “As I understand it, the hypodermic

use of drugs is what has brought Professor Sevier to this condition. I cannot be party to any such action."

"Aw, let him have his dose," put in Friskens. "What's the difference? He'll feel better, and come along peaceable. He's bughouse all right, anyhow; and when they get that way they have to have a dose to steady 'em."

With sparkling eyes, Alice ran to do her lover's bidding. As she put vial and syringe into the young man's hand, "You can't take a dose of that infernal stuff that has led to your ruin here in my presence!" thundered Professor William unexpectedly.

"If I had a rabbit—or a dog," sighed Robert, instantly dejected at this check.

"You can try it on me," said the young girl bravely, though her cheek paled a little. She looked appealingly to her father. The old gentleman was game and uttered no demur.

But the ordinarily peaceable William, who seemed to have reached a stage of irritation which rendered him absolutely unmanageable, came charging into the situation again, with "You shall torture no more animals—nor shall you risk the life or reason of Miss Alice."

In his extremity, the good practical sense which always lay fast asleep under Robert Sevier's absent-minded dreaminess came to his rescue. His eye fell upon Friskens. He remembered what Tate had said about the Seviere paying for this man's services.

"Alice," he suggested hopefully, "you go down and ask my sister-in-law to give you ten dollars. These men have taken all my money. They packed it in the trunk—it has already gone; but she'll have that much by her—Laura always has."

Alice was out of the room instantly. Laura herself answered the call with two five-dollar bills in her hand.

"Now, then, Friskens, this stuff won't hurt you a bit, except to make you float in the air. There are positively no evil after-effects, and I've got an antidote that will bring you down whenever you say you want to come. Here's the money—ten real dollars, out of a perfectly sane woman's pocketbook—to pay you for being experimented upon. Is it a go?"

Friskens, who had been fretting himself and mumbling, "Nobody ought ever to trust 'em with good money, or they're liable to throw it out o' the winder," promptly agreed to the arrangement.

"I'm going to throw this money away—on you," Robert observed gaily, as he pushed up the sleeves on the big, powerful fore-arms.

Friskens grinned. He winked as he slowly dipped his finger into the fluid and tasted it to see whether it was any drug with which he was familiar. Its flavor suggested rain water, and he decided he would

earn his ten dollars easily. A lunatic with a mouth full of polysyllables was no more formidable to him than any other variety.

With a quick, skilful touch Robert injected the fluid twice, watching carefully each time that the entire dose passed beneath the skin. As he cleansed and unscrewed the little instrument and put it away, there was an oppressive silence in the big, old-fashioned room, during which Bobby crept to the door sniffing, and Rindy followed him.

The men had drawn somewhat together. Laura clung to Alice, as to one feminine and therefore presumably comprehensible, amid this bewildering masculine farrago. In the sharp suspense of that moment, every head was craned forward, and every face showed unconsciously the mere naif, instant emotion. Dr. Gibson had opened his mouth to speak just as the injection was given. He stood staring and forgot to shut it. Everybody's breathing became suddenly audible.

But Friskens maintained an air of tolerant and amused superiority. There was a grin on his fat face; and as Robert bent to put away the hypodermic, the keeper winked confidentially to the others, over the young scientist's head, and reached for the coat which had been taken off for the hypodermic injections.

Suddenly the big man began to sway on his feet, and a rush of blood made his face deep crimson.

"I—I can't stay down!" he choked, and shot upward so abruptly that the young Professor had just time to catch him by the waistband of his trousers and save his head from sharp contact with the ceiling. William collapsed into a chair. Dr. Gibson's fallen jaw rose slowly till his teeth came together with a click. Alice flashed a mute look about the circle of faces.

"A-a-ah!" ejaculated Doctor Kercheval keenly.

"Good Lawd!" moaned Rindy from the doorway. "Dat's jes' de way Marse Robert done riz!"

"No!" shrilled Bobby. "Uncle Robert went up feet first. His head was all hanging down!"

Friskens was getting his breath in great snorting gasps, while his arms and legs wagged like those of a man swimming.

"You 'll have to quit that," said young Sevier impatiently. "If you kick around that way your heels will fly up, and I can't keep them from it. Hold yourself steady."

"I can't—stay down," asserted Friskens monotonously.

"If everybody is satisfied," said Robert, looking about him, "I 'll give this man a dose of the antidote, and he can get his feet on the floor."

"But wha—what the devil's the reason I can't—stay down?" boomed Friskens, like the undertone of the sea on a stormy day.

Robert undertook no explanation to the elevated one, but said again to the others:

"Well, are you satisfied? Anybody got any questions to ask before I administer the antidote?"

Dead silence for a moment. Then, "I've—I've heard of remarkable cases of levitation at—at——" began Dr. Watkins doubtfully, feeling it incumbent upon him to speak.

"At spiritual seances," supplied Gibson respectfully.

"Seances!" echoed President Kercheval. "Did n't you see Professor Sevier inject the fluid into the man's arms? And did n't you see the man rise as Sevier said he would? And don't you see him remain in air, unable to get his feet to the floor? We are beholding the first results of a very great discovery. Gentlemen, we should take off our hats to this young man. I, for one, am thoroughly convinced, and profoundly grateful that the shame of persecuting a successful scientist has not come upon Unaka College."

"Unless—unless Bob Sevier's holding the man up there; he's got his hand on him," began Tate, who had not succeeded as an insurance agent for nothing. "Friskens, is he holding you up, or what is it makes you behave so peculiarly?"

Friskens rolled his eyes about him and paddled feebly with his hands and feet. In the effort he pulled loose from Robert's detaining fingers and rose instantly to the ceiling, where he went slowly bumping about, erratically directed by a random breeze from the window.

"I can't—stay down," came the apparently automatic but fairly appropriate reply to Tate's question.

Robert Sevier, who had prepared a dose of antidote, laid hold of the voyager's foot, deftly pushed up that trousers leg, and with a slight prick above the ankle brought the cowed and dumfounded man safely to earth.

"Then—then you think he's not—you think he's entirely—that is, you believe I'm not needed here?" inquired Doctor Watkins incredulously.

"You—ah—really deem the young man sane?" little Gibson chimed in after him.

"Are n't—are n't you going to have Watkins take him out to Elm View—for a while, at least?" stammered the pertinacious Tate, but on a falling note. "Don't you think—is n't he a lunatic at all?" This was a man to lead a forlorn hope.

"If he is, his lunacy's contagious. I've got it, right now, and the rest of the world will soon have it as bad!" cried the good old President. "Come up here and apologize, Dabney, for making such a nuisance of yourself to one of the greatest young scientists of his day. I'll set you a good example. Robert, here's my hand. Pardon me for not disbelieving appearances, and looking closer into this matter—for not acting as Alice did. At least, we can both be proud of her.

William, if I were your brother, I'd never forgive you for your part in this ridiculous business. Laura—well, she gave ten dollars to bring the miracle about—she's bought her indulgence."

Under the old man's rain of genial common-sense, matters began to straighten themselves out in every-day fashion. William, still bewildered and somewhat at a loss as to whom he should reprove, yet came up and made his *amende* like a man. Alice forbore to triumph. She stood beside her lover and watched with shining eyes as even Dr. Watkins and his partner showed a marked disposition to remember that they were fellow scientists. And Tate—for even an insurance man must know when to give in—offered a regretful hand, deploring the complications which had arisen from his over-zeal in friendship's cause and his ignorance of what he facetiously termed "high science."

Friskens was stepping high, and regarding his feet as though they belonged to somebody else.

"That'd be handy stuff to have when we wanted to cross a river and did n't have a boat," he suggested thoughtfully, as he took his hat to go. "Say, mister, if you get to giving shows with it and need a handy man to help on the stage, I'll be there—see!"

X.

It was wonderful to find how many people had known all the time that young Professor Sevier was as sane as you or I—just a genius, and his people were so commonplace that they did n't understand him. Oh, yes, and that Sorsby girl was crazy about him, and when he showed so plainly that he was in love with Alice Kercheval she just put her father up to making most of the trouble. But really what Professor Sorsby did was n't a circumstance to Dabney Tate's goings on! Yes. They do say that he and Sally Sorsby have fixed up a match—trying to cover their feelings at getting left so. Oh, the story was a real godsend to the gossips of the little town.

And Robert worked away happily, and demonstrated his results to a chosen few. Dabney Tate made an effort in the course of a week or two to patch up his somewhat damaged standing in the Sevier household, and induce the successful investigator to put him in charge of the commercial exploitation of his discovery. It was at that time that President Kercheval's eldest son, Alice's favorite brother, came down from New York and insisted upon taking all of that business into his own hands. Scott Kercheval was a pushing metropolitan business man, who understood the value of advertising, and he maintained that there was a fortune for all concerned in the Sevier-Kercheval discovery.

"We want to keep it very quiet now. When we're ready I'll let the big newspapers at you, and we'll get the most sensational free advertising that's to be had. Then I'll offer shares in the company,

and in less than six months we'll have Rockefeller doing chores for us and shaking down our furnace."

So said Scott Kercheval, middle-aged, prosperous, confident in his own powers. He might as well have talked turnip culture to an astronomer. Robert Sevier was not only a scientist, he was a man in love and about to be happily married. This in no way troubled his prospective brother-in-law, and the preparations for the wedding and the preparations for the launching of the great company went cheerily on side by side.

One radiant June morning Robert had been to the county clerk's office for that necessary document known as a marriage license. How he ever summoned sufficient courage and confidence to ask for it he never knew. Now that it was in his pocket, it made a warm spot over his heart, and he was reminded of radium, which, wrapped in a cloth and carried in a similar fashion, may even blister the body.

The sight of Dabney Tate and Sally Sorsby chatting together on a corner affected him agreeably. He hoped they loved each other. He wanted everybody to love and be happy. He stopped and beamed upon them as he took off his hat and gave them good morning.

"Good morning," returned the young lady, with deceitful suavity. "How is the rising young man of Unaka College this morning? Be careful you don't rise forever and never come down, as my poor Hyacinth did."

A cloud dimmed the attractive brightness of young Professor Sevier's countenance.

"Miss Sally," he replied seriously, "I felt awfully bad about Hyacinth right at the time, and I've been feeling worse and worse ever since. I mean to get you another pet, if you'll accept that partial reparation from me."

Poor Sally! She never could look at Robert Sevier, at his inches and his innocent eyes, at the breadth of his shoulders and the way his thick hair curled about temple and ear, without a twinge of misery. Now she turned to Tate with a little shrug of her shoulders and remarked indifferently:

"Oh, I ought to be willing to make a small sacrifice in the cause of science, I reckon. I gave up Hyacinth—but I don't want any other dog. Science has a way of running over people's rights that I suppose is perfectly natural to big things; but Hyacinth can never be replaced."

"Miss Sally," repeated Robert in an agony of self-abasement, "I don't make science an excuse. It was I who lost your pet, and I ought to at least try to make it up to you. I always keep my promises——"

"Well, I'm shore glad to hear that!" sounded a deep voice behind him, and the three people turned and stared.

"Honey, I've been a-lookin' everywheres for you!"

It was the widow Gannon! Robert had never seen her before in town trim, and for a moment he scarcely recognized her.

In mad defiance of the hot June day, a small red cloth jacket, dragged on over her purple calico frock, clad the upper part of her lean, muscular frame, the tight sleeves holding her big, bony arms almost akimbo. A tiny flower toque composed almost entirely of forget-me-nots framed the weather-bleached anxiety of her countenance.

Robert cast a glance of terror about him. Up the street, there, was home and safety—Alice waited for him, sitting on the porch, putting the last stitches in the long white seam.

Then Sally Sorsby snickered.

"Wait a minute," she said in a perfectly audible undertone, catching Dabney Tate by the arm. "Stay here with me—I want to hang around and see what this means."

Juletta Gannon glared at the bold town girl; and, to do Sally justice, she was well glared at in return. While these amenities were in progress Robert Sevier sought to execute a withdrawal movement. But plainly it was not necessary for the widow to look at him in order to see him. Now she wheeled upon him.

"Hold on—ain't you glad to see me, honey?" she inquired, with rising menace in her tone.

"I—why, certainly. But I just have to meet a man up the street here, and I thought——" began Robert desperately.

Dabney Tate and Miss Sorsby made no pretense of not listening. One or two passers-by checked, turned, and stood for a moment, wondering what the difficulty was. Suddenly the swinging green doors of a place of cheer near at hand flew open, and out filed the five Blackshears. They slouched forward in a careless-looking group and greeted the Professor each with an indifferent nod; yet one who supposed they were present without a purpose, and that they were not difficult men to deal with, would have been sadly mistaken.

"I brung that thar ring down," Juletta explained in a high-keyed, unnatural voice, "thinkin' you might like to git it made bigger for me. I cain't wear it on ary finger but the little 'un, and that ain't the right engagement finger, is it?"

She smiled upon the shrinking Professor with a sort of savage fondness, such as one may imagine a cannibal indulging toward a prospective dinner. He stretched out his hand for the jewel with a relieved countenance.

"Oh—the ring," he said promptly. "I'm glad you brought it. I'm ready to pay you the money now—you understood, of course, I meant to leave it with you as a pledge?"

"Oh, Lord, yes, we all understood that—did n't we, Jeff?" she returned easily.

The tall mountaineer nodded solemnly.

"As a pledge," he repeated. "That 's what a feller means when he gives an engagement ring, and Juletta 's come to redeem the pledge an' git wedded right now."

"But Professor Sevier is going to be married to——"

It was Sally Sorsby's voice which broke in, shrill and insistent, drawing the attention of everybody for a block.

"You 're mighty right, he 's goin' to git married!" declared Taylor Gannon's relict. "The feller that gives me his faith is apt to dance up when the time comes."

"See here," began Robert in exasperation, "this is ridiculous; let's go somewhere that we can talk without having the whole town for listeners, and I'll explain matters. We're blocking the sidewalk."

"Not on your life!" said the widow, bringing out a bit of slang acquired from her summer boarders. "I don't sneak around to hide my actions. I want your fine town friends to hear. I've come to bid them to the weddin'!"

"Wedding!" repeated Robert, staring at her.

"Yes, weddin'," repeated the widow doggedly. "I ain't the kind of woman to have my feelin's all trompled up and nothin' said. When a man passes his vows and makes his proposal to Juletty Gannon there 's goin' to be somethin' did. It's mighty like that I looked prettier to you by moonlight—most women of my age does—but you 're pledged an' bound, an' I 'm the kind of a woman that keeps a man true."

Shifting sand seemed to gather and flow beneath the feet of the unfortunate Professor. It needed no dose of the magic fluid to give him the sensation of being in deep water. He looked into Dabney Tate's grinning face, at the cool, sneering smile on Sally Sorsby's blond countenance, and despaired of any help. Jeff had lined up his men on the curbstone like a sheriff's posse; there was nothing for it but to try conciliation.

"Mrs. Gannon," he said very earnestly, "I don't know how you got the idea that I ever said anything to you about love or marriage. I'm quite sure I never intended to. In point of fact, I am going to be married very shortly to the daughter of our college president."

"You—you give me a ring," choked the mountain woman. "Ef I git my hands on that other gal—she'll wish't I had n't!" And she extended an awkward member, upon one of whose fingers gleamed Robert Sevier's unlucky birthday present.

"I know that ring," exclaimed Sally Sorsby vivaciously. "I helped Laura Sevier choose it. She gave it to her brother-in-law on his last birthday."

The girl felt that her wrongs, and the woes of Hyacinth, were about to be avenged.

"Oh, he won't deny the ring," said the widow Gannon, with emphasis. "Mebbe he wants to deny now that he give it to me; but he did—he put his arm around my waist and squeezed me awful tight, and said a whole lot of pretty words and big dictionary talk, and give me the ring!"

Robert's sensitive face crimsoned. "I did give you the ring," he acknowledged honestly; "but it was to pay for live stock that I feared I had destroyed with my experiments. If I said anything to you about love and marriage, I must have been dreaming."

"No, you was n't," countered the widow shortly. "When men dreams they don't do nothin' but snore. One of 'em has to be pretty wide awake to git his arm around *my* waist!"

"Ain't they a justice of the peace about here somewheres?" inquired Jeff's drawling tones suddenly.

"Just round the corner—I'll go with you," Dabney Tate eagerly assured him. "I'll go with you—I know the chap."

"And you'll take me along, won't you?" inquired Sally Sorsby.

"I got to stop and git me a—git me something at the store," explained the widow blushing.

And before he knew it Robert Sevier was hustled, in the middle of the crowd, into a department store, where the five lank, fierce mountain men tramped like Indians, with the still, wary tread of the hunter, among piles of calicoes and stands of embroidered collars, while Dabney Tate and Sally Sorsby looked enjoyingly on. It created a small sensation among the clerks.

"You set right here, Robert, honey," the widow said triumphantly, as they reached the waiting-room on an upper balcony. "I've got to go in this yere little pen an' try 'em on. I wish't the town gal'd come with me."

Sally Sorsby was keen to go, thinking that she would here get wholesale a budget which it would be a delight to retail. Jeff and the other brothers, with Dabney Tate, lounged about the supposed bridegroom, the Blackshears always preserving that air of solemnity which the mountaineer feels belongs with town doings.

Suddenly there was a flare of music in the street outside. The pickaninny band of a travelling minstrel show was parading the streets to drum up interest in the evening's performance. The committee from the Far Cove neighborhood made for the windows as one man. Professor Sevier gave a single glance at the momentarily absorbed Dabney Tate, then turned and fled toward the nearest exit.

Alice Kercheval had finished her sewing and let it drop in her lap. Her soft eyes were wells of happy dreams. Suddenly up the walk came the central figure of all those girlish visions, a flushed, breathless,

excited lover, who caught her hand and began speaking before she had fully realized that he was with her:

"Dearest, we're to be married to-morrow night, anyhow. There's an awful widow from up in the mountains down-town, who thinks she has some sort of a claim on me. You'll understand in a minute that she has n't. But she could make it dreadfully unpleasant for both of us. I came to beg you to fly with me."

"Really to fly?" asked the bride, with sparkling eyes. "I've wanted to so bad, and you never would try it on me. Oh, Robert, I feel as if I could almost go up without a dose of It!"

"Get your hat, dear. The license is in my pocket. We'll be married at Arlington. I'll telephone from there to our people here, and have the trunks and things forwarded, and we'll go right on to Niagara just the same. Arlington's only nine miles—it is n't any distance at all for the fluid to carry as we have it now; and my new propeller's perfect, and powerful."

"Oh, Robert—look!" cried the girl.

A car had stopped a half-block from the cottage. A large woman in a tight red jacket and a small blue flower toque, breathing very hard, rushed up the street, followed by five lean and wiry mountaineers in single file. Sally Sorsby and Dabney Tate brought up the rear. As the horrified eyes of the two young people on the porch took in this scene, Professor Sorsby and President Kercheval sauntered over from one of the buildings and came almost abreast of the rabble, where Scott Kercheval and Professor William Sevier joined them.

Alice had caught up and tied on her wide garden hat. Robert opened a case which stood on the porch—he had intended to call for it on his way past—and took out one of the newest make of his propellers. He slipped his right arm and Alice's left through the straps, since they would have to use one machine, and, drawing out his hypodermic from his case, gave each a lightning dose from it.

The instrument was put back into his pocket, his arm dropped naturally around the slim waist of the girl he loved. They turned and began moving swiftly away across the grass, looking back over their shoulders at the panting pursuers.

"Is that her?" screamed the widow breathlessly.

"Yes!" gasped Sally Sorsby.

The brisk breeze was drifting the levitated pair directly toward a group of oak trees. Robert had no wish to display the workings of his discovery before this audience, but necessity made him turn the propeller in such a way that they rose lightly against the green ends of the tree branches and passed quietly over.

As the pair were outlined for a moment upon the clear blue of the morning sky, the widow's voice ascended in an impotent wail.

"Stop 'em!" she pleaded. "That thar man belongs to me—and they say the sky's plumb full o' preachers. Mebbe he'll wed the other girl befo' ever he 'lights."

"Rock 'em down!" howled Jate, bending to search for a stone.

But to Jeff the hip-pocket argument appealed. He had drawn his gun and taken fair aim when a newly arrived policeman sprang upon him, knocking up the wrist with a ready baton, half breaking it with the blow, and shouting:

"Hey! You 're under arrest for shootin' with intent to kill."

"Good Gawd," growled the mountain man as he rubbed his arm and ruefully observed the officer confiscating his weapon, which had exploded harmlessly, "I don't see how town folks lives, with these here little do-funny policemen poppin' up ever' minute to make an' to meddle, an' stop 'em from any little innocent thing they want to do!"

"Why, it's Alice and Robert Sevier!" exclaimed Dr. Kercheval about this time. "That foolish bashfulness of Robert's has got the better of him, and he's running away from a big church wedding. The reckless girl persuaded him to give her a dose of the fluid. They are——"

He broke off, waved his arm at the disappearing pair, and called:

"Alice—Alice! Robert!"

"Running away! They're flying," Scott spoke low in his ear. "Let 'em alone, father. If this suits them, it certainly pleases the business office. I could n't get Bob worked up to give a public exhibition." He chuckled buoyantly. "I've been at him for a week. But this is better—it's just what I want. The newspapers can get plenty out of it."

Again he laughed, and smote his thigh.

"Oh, mamma! think of the headlines! 'Rise Above Your Troubles.' 'Every Man His Own Balloon.' 'Icarus Outdone.' Bob and Allie will get it about like this: 'Scientist Snaked Skyward. Wafted to Their Wedding.' But it's just what we want to get the publicity department of the Levitation Company off on the right foot."

Up in the sky Alice's white dress faded like a gull's wing. Down on the ground the widow Gannon went into something as near hysterics as the strong-nerved mountain woman could compass.

And to-morrow, or next day—or it may be next week—you are liable to get a long blue envelope which will offer you preferred stock in the Sevier-Kercheval Levitation Company, Limited. Don't fail to buy, for you have inside knowledge of how good a thing it is.



POE

By George L. Knapp

GENERALLY speaking, the history of American literature has been singularly peaceful. But Poe, and in a later day Whitman, have been storm centres which have almost made us forget the summer calm of our literary landscape. It is not so much that the facts of Poe's career are in dispute; though the record leaves something to be desired in the way of authenticity. It is rather that those facts are viewed through the spectacles of prejudice; spectacles now rosy with affection, now green with envy, but never by any chance colorless. One biographer dwells on the testimony of Willis, that Poe was the gentlest gentleman who ever did hack work in a newspaper office; and treats us to long descriptions—usually written by women—of the poet's remarkable beauty, his charm of manner, his old-world courtesy. Another lingers with loving malice over the fact that other men paid Poe's tailor bills, that he reprinted his old articles and poems as new ones, and that he had been known to sleep off his potations on the sawdust-covered floor of a low-class bar-room. One tells us at length of Poe's undeniable love for his wife; and another of his equally undeniable efforts to marry some wealthy woman—any one would do—during the days of his widowerhood. That Poe was a great and a morbid genius the world is fully agreed; and it is agreed on very little else concerning him.

The greater part of Poe's life history is an oft-told tale, but one that seems to gather fresh interest with each retelling. That he was born in Boston, in 1809, the son of a worthy actress mother and a worthless, well-born father; and that a little more than forty years later he was picked up unconscious in a Baltimore slum and taken to a hospital to die, are items in the mental furniture of millions. The death of his mother before his third birthday; his adoption by John Allan, a shrewd Scotch merchant settled in Richmond, Virginia; his admission to and expulsion from West Point, are likewise common property. It is not so well known that prior to his West Point experience he served two years in the regular army under an assumed name, that he won a non-commissioned officer's place by good, steady work,

and that he was reported by his officers to have no bad habits whatever. Every one knows that through a considerable part of his life Poe was a periodical drunkard; not so many are aware that he was a confirmed user of opium. The memory of his stinging criticisms has outlasted the life of the critic—and usually the reputation of the criticised. His stories are still acknowledged masterpieces of plot and workmanship; and the place where “The Raven” is unknown is a place where the English language has not penetrated. Also, Poe was the first American author to gain an international reputation of any value. All these things and many more are known to all who care to interest themselves in Poe. One would think that on so broad a foundation of fact it might be possible to rear a consistent estimate of the strangest character; but such has not been the case.



For the great, obvious fact of Poe's life and work was the morbid, oppressive, horror-shadowed nature of both. His indeed the light that never was on sea nor land; but his as well the phantoms of strangeness and loathing that come up through the ivory gate. It was something deeper than mere melancholy; something immeasurably more genuine than the gloom which Byron coined into trade dollars for literary export. Poe's is a dark, unwholesome habit of mind that shows in all his best work; and is so much a part of him that, with few exceptions, when you miss the morbidity, you miss the genius as well. This is the riddle that must be solved before one can properly appraise the man; and so far, no one has offered a solution. that any great number of persons seem inclined to accept.

Yet to my mind, the solution is a curiously simple one. The secret of Poe's jaundiced outlook on life is not his drunkenness nor his opium eating, neither his strange genius nor his undeniable selfishness. It is rather that his temperament and genius and vices combined with the society in which he was placed to shut him off from his fellows, to make him a creature apart. Poe's was the morbidity not of liquor, but of loneliness; not of opium, but of isolation. And that is the worst and most hopeless morbidity of all. Once let the vitalizing stream of human life be walled off, and the clearest waters of thought gather into stagnant and unwholesome pools, where creeping things breed and flourish, and where shapes of fear and foulness haunt the shades. I may add in passing that it seems to make little difference how slight or how massive the barrier may be, if the prisoned individual admits his separation. The abnormality which isolated Poe was trifling compared to that which made Oscar Wilde a prisoner in a haunted cell. Yet “The Fall of the House of Usher” is as great and as morbid as

"The Ballad of Reading Gaol"; "The Conqueror Worm" is as demonthadowed as "Salome."

We shall never understand Poe's isolation if we fail to take into account the society in which he was placed. And that is not so easy a task as one might think. Much water has gone under the national bridge since the days when Pittsburg was away out West, and the Declaration of Independence was read each Fourth of July under a flag that sheltered the largest body of chattel slaves in the civilized world. Poe died in the year of the gold discovery in California; his best work was done before the telegraph was an accomplished fact, and while the steam railroad was still an experiment. Even in matters of physical environment it requires a distinct effort to put oneself back in those days and remember that one is still in America; and the changes in the intellectual life of the country have been still greater. There is no more amusing contrast in history than that afforded by the difference between the industrial life of America from the War of 1812 to the Civil War, and the intellectual life for the same period. In the business of conquering a continent, building up a splendid though one-sided civilization, working out a code of government, multiplying inventions, and piling up wealth, we were the most active, the most healthy, the most egotistical people on earth. But in matters of literature and science and art, we stood like beggars, hat in hand before Europe or even the casual European traveller; pleading for a crumb of approval; accepting it, when given, with fawning thanks; and resenting the sharp criticism which came more often to our lot, with declamations in which a sack of nouns was drowned, like kittens, in a river of adjectives. Like most beggars, we were thieves as well; reprinting the books of other lands without either thanks or payment. "As a literary people," said Poe, "we are one vast, perambulating humbug." Even the good-humored Lowell felt obliged to tell his countrymen that

You steal Englishmen's books, and think Englishmen's thought;
With their salt on her tale, your wild eagle is caught.

Or not caught. Desire sometimes outran performance.



This was one phase of our mental life in those days; and one can see how it would tend to wall up in brooding loneliness a literary workman like Poe. There were other phases quite as unfavorable. Full justice, I think, has never been done to the art-destroying properties of that sturdy Puritanism which lies at the basis of our national life. We are accustomed to think of Puritanism as belonging only to

New England. In reality, it was almost country wide. Puritanism was but one form of Calvinism; and the only sections of our land which were not Calvinistic at the close of the Revolution were parts of Maryland and the tidewater region of Virginia. For the rest, Puritanism, with its iron strength, its unbreakable stubbornness, its priceless traditions of democracy, and its lamentable contempt for the softer things of life, reigned supreme. The attitude of the old, undiluted creed toward all forms of art is told by Hawthorne in the sketch of the "Custom House" with which he prefaces "The Scarlet Letter." "A writer of story books!" he imagines one of his ancestors saying to another, with reference to their latest descendant. "What kind of a business in life—what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in this day and generation—may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!"



Such, or very nearly such, were the traditions of five-sixths of our native stock; and in our case tradition jumped with circumstance to render us a stiff-necked, intensely practical, profoundly inartistic people. What place was there in such a society for Edgar Allan Poe? Where weakness was regarded as a crime, and even harmless self-indulgence as at best a venal sin, what charity or understanding could there be for one whose towering genius was ready to tumble in the mire at the slightest push of temptation, and whose aims at best were reckoned rather piffling work for a full grown man? With a continent in the hair-cloth-sofa stage of culture, from which a favored few were graduating to the glories of red plush, what fellowship was there for this worshipper of beauty, whose very opium dreams were filled with visions of a fearsome loveliness? The answer is, none. Had Poe's lines been cast with that group of men who were making a literary oasis in New England, it is possible that he might have been braced to a steadier manliness and a saner ideal—only possible, for his was not a pliant nature. Elsewhere in our land any real human fellowship was out of the question. We need seek no farther than this for the source of his eerie horrors. To bear the burden of an isolation produced by a defect to which the world imputes no moral significance, is quite hard enough. Milton halted noticeably under the load; and even Beethoven sometimes moved with wearied pace. But to bear the burden of an isolation produced by traits to which the world attaches the stigma of damning sin—that is a task which no human being ever performed and kept his perfect sanity.

Among his contemporaries, Poe had three titles to celebrity: his critiques, his poems, and his stories. The first are known to us mainly

by the tradition of their cutting savagery. The modern who takes the trouble to read these much discussed articles will usually find himself agreeing with the critic's judgment; but wondering what there was in the case to make the judgment worth passing. Poe never learned that it is a waste of lather to shave an ass. Yet all his critiques are not of this kind. Poe was the first to discover the genius of Hawthorne; the first to hail Longfellow as the foremost of American poets—this in spite of his foolish charges of plagiarism against that kindly man. Poe picked Tennyson as the greatest poet of the day; he championed the merits of Dickens and George Eliot when these authors were almost unknown; and his estimate of the scope of Dickens's powers has been confirmed by time.

When we turn from Poe's critiques to his imaginative work, we pass from cleverness to genius at a step. Here his lack of "scholarship," that prized possession of those who sit in the grand-stand and tell how the game should be played, was a help, rather than a hindrance. He has literary faults, even here; but they are not vital ones. He mars some of his best passages by the introduction of seraphs and Psyches and eidolons and other needless things. His heroines always have a beauty suggestive, to the modern reader, of the tubercle bacillus; his heroes are high-born misanthropes; his surroundings are tarns and castles and perishing domains. In a word, though not of the world, he could not wholly escape its influence; for these things were reckoned in Poe's time the indispensables of art. They had a number of queer hallucinations in those days, when you stop to think of it. They even imagined that Fenimore Cooper wrote English, and that William Gilmore Sims produced literature.



To many people, Poe is the poet of a single poem, "The Raven." His really great verses, indeed, are remarkably few; but I think there are several which surpass the rather artificial perfection of this the most famous of the list. "The Haunted Palace" has always seemed to me the foremost of Poe's poems, with "The Bells" a close second; and only after "The Conqueror Worm" and "The Sleeper" had received their due would I turn to the bird of ill omen, on the pallid bust of Pallas, just above the chamber door.

Poe defined poetry as the rhythmical creation of beauty; and he held himself rigorously to that standard. Measured by this test, he would be the greatest of American poets; with Keats and Tennyson and Shelley as his sole superiors in the language. But I do not think any one but Poe ever seriously accepted that definition. It measures "Kublai Khan" perfectly; and "The Lotus Eaters," and the "Ode to

a Nightingale," and most of "Prometheus Unbound." But will any one pretend that it can be stretched to cover "Childe Harold," or that it even hints at the philosophy and insight and melody and majesty that make up "Othello" and "Macbeth"? Yet, faulty as was the definition, one cannot help wishing it had found a wider acceptance. If Browning had been convinced that poetry is the rhythmical creation of beauty, what quarrels and headaches and jawaches we should have been spared! It would have helped still more if some other missionary could have made Browning believe that poetry is the rhythmical expression of sense.



Poetry, I take it, is the articulate language of the emotions; as music is their inarticulate language. Doubtless this, too, is a faulty definition; but it is better than none. The emotion may be the love of sheer beauty, as with Keats and Poe. It may be the love of intense action, as with Scott; or of struggle, as with Byron; or of masterful power, as with Kipling. It may be the fiery complex of loves and hates which we find in Shelley; or the greater, calmer, and more ordered complexity of Shakespeare. It may ask—and seek to answer—the question of the ages, as does Job; or tingle us with its daring defiance, as does Omar Khayyam-Fitzgerald. So long as the emotion gives the key-note and moulds the style of the work, that work is poetry. Poe touched but one string of the world harp; and that only to melodies of the churchyard. He was a musician's poet; his faults and virtues are the faults and virtues of music; as witness his over-use of the refrain. To me, he is more like Chopin than like any man of letters whatsoever. But within his narrow range Poe was technical master of his art. He never wrote a poem to compare with "Sir Launfal"; but he would have starved sooner than send forth lines like "Earth gets its price for what earth gives us," or "Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold"—lines that splutter and sizzle like coffee spilled on a camp-fire.

And this technical mastery is yet more in evidence in the best of his short stories. The flawless literary workmanship, the balanced sentences which somehow are never monotonous, the perfect unity of plan and singleness of effect which are shown in a dozen of Poe's tales have never been surpassed. They may deal with utter impossibilities—but you never feel this while reading them. The intense horror never goes far enough to produce the revulsion of disbelief, the suggestion is always kept a suggestion; and when you reach the climax of "Ligeia" or "The Tell-tale Heart," you feel that you have been an eye-witness to the terrors set forth. The only time Poe scores a failure is when he tries to be humorous; and then he scores very bad failures indeed. Humor implies sympathy with one's fellows, and that quality was very

nearly left out of Poe's make-up. He despised most of his contemporaries, and was totally indifferent to the rest. The only persons he ever loved were his cousin-wife and himself; and the second-named passion began earlier and lasted longer than the first.

Leaving out the abortive "grotesques," Poe's tales, like ancient Gaul, may be divided into three parts. There are those which for want of a better word we must call the romances: "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "Ligeia," and many others. There are the studies of monomania: as "The Tell-tale Heart" and "The Black Cat." There are the stories with a scientific basis: as "The Descent into the Maelstrom," "The Gold-bug," and the three detective stories. These last have been the subject of many acrid and amusing debates. It is charged that Conan Doyle modelled Sherlock Holmes on the lines of Poe's Frenchman, Dupin; and that the whole spring of the tales whereof the cocaine-using Londoner is the hero may be found in Poe. I believe the charge to be equally true and unimportant. If one does pleasing work in an acceptable fashion, why should it be counted a reproach that he learned his trade under a competent workman? To my mind, Poe has few greater claims on modern gratitude than that of being literary grandfather to "The Five Orange Pips," "The Priory School," "The Hound of the Baskervilles," and "The Second Stain." I do not include "The Dancing Men." For this particular tale to be found in the possession of one who had read "The Gold-bug" seems less a case of inheritance than of larceny.



The studies in monomania have never, I think, been equalled; not even by Maupassant. That bit in "The Tell-tale Heart" which describes the long terror of the old man sitting up in bed, trying to persuade himself that the noise he had heard was *not* at his chamber door, is one of the most fiendishly perfect things in literature. But I believe that Poe reached the climax of his powers in his romances. "The Pit and the Pendulum" alone would have made the reputation of a lesser author; the weird yet ordered horror of that tale haunted my boyhood dreams for months. Yet if I could save but one of Poe's works from destruction, that one would be "The Fall of the House of Usher." That is a tale as near to absolute perfection of its kind as human wit can either perform or appreciate. Study it over and over, pick it to pieces in anywise you will; the wonderful mastery is still there, showing ever brighter the longer you look. By the way, Debussy is writing a symphonic poem on that theme. It should be well worth hearing.

And as if to burn redder the mark on this man's brow which sets

him apart, these tales in which his genius rises highest are likewise those in which his craft of ghastly dissection outstrips anything of the kind in literature. Other men have written tales of horror. Kipling, in his "End of the Passage," takes you through a house of chilly terror as real and fearsome as anything ever fashioned by Poe. But somehow Kipling never lets you forget that just without the enchanted walls is a world where the sun is shining, and where men and women are working and making love in healthy human fashion. Poe gives you no such relief. In his tales of horror the charnel house does not merely dominate the landscape; it *is* the landscape. The ghoulishness of Kipling is incidental; that of Poe is inherent.

A great, a wonderful, a morbid genius; that, at the last as at the first, is one's judgment of Poe. We may mourn for his wasted life, but not for his early death. The best of him was dead already. The flawless taste had failed; the unrivalled craftsmanship was lost; the jingle of "For Annie" had followed the melody of "The Haunted Palace"; "The House of Usher" had given place to the transcendental folly of "Eureka." Whiskey and opium had done their perfect work. The evil things in robes of sorrow had finished the ruin of the monarch's high estate; it was but the husk of greatness that was borne to the hospital on that night in the lonesome October of sixty years ago. The symphony was over; it was time for the leader to go. It was best, it was kindest, that the mumming should cease with the music, that the score of the haunting harmonies be intrusted to the world's safe keeping; and the rest be left to grow

a dim remembered story
Of the old time entombed.



WHEN PHŒBE LOOKS

(A TOAST)

BY ANNETTE WILLIAMS

SWEAR she is innocent, swear she is wise
 (Feminine witchcraft of seeming!)
 Mockery, mystery, promise her eyes,
 Tempting with depths they reveal yet disguise—
 Here's to the spell that in woman's glance lies
 (Subtle and magical meaning!)

THE GREEN-ROOM

By Will Levington Comfort

The little toy dog is covered with dust,
But sturdy and stanch he stands;
And the little tin soldier is red with rust,
And his musket moulds in his hands.
Time was when the little toy dog was new
And the soldier was passing fair,
And that was the time when our Little Boy Blue
Kissed them and put them there.

—EUGENE FIELD

THEY were children together, merest children. He had the odd and rather winning name of Shelley Torns, and she was Martha Bridges. Most simply and quickly they met and loved. All that they had they gave to each other, and the world rushed on. Those who lived, not less precariously, but possibly in a greater width of sin—makers, all, of the vaudeville game—such regarded Shelley Torns and the girl with amusement and affection and wonder, for the pair were happy mornings, happy twilights, happy in their work. Each to the other was a sunny cosmos.

It was their business to sing and dance and joke together for fifteen minutes twice a day. Shelley Torns could sing, and Martha expressed herself admirably with her marvellous dancing limbs; but when they danced and sang together, neither the secrets of art were opened nor the founts of harmony drawn dry. Still, all was well. They were fillers of the profession, the unheralded but very desirable details of a programme. It was a goodly life that fitted their youth, a life of trains, hotels, draughts, trunks, delays, and changes. They drew eternal inspiration from the banks of lit faces everywhere, snatched a sweet romance between-times, and took the hedges and ditches of the game tranquilly and together.

As a matter of course, they married, and, just as naturally, one of them went down into the valley of the shadow and found a queer little god there. Up to this time Shelley Torns had held dreams, despite the artist in his soul, not of opulence, but of financial quietude. These were wrecked. The babe caused the spring end of a vaudeville contract to be broken as well. Throughout an eternal summer they remained

at a farm-house in upper New York State (the same house wherein Martha came to be), and the young father could not forget that they might have been earning fair money at the summer garden theatres.

Shelley Torns rebelled—not particularly at the little boy; certainly not at the woman; but at some vague source of things.

And as he rebelled in that long yellow summer, he made hay and other stuff of the field and farm. He had demanded to work, and Farmer Bridges had demanded to pay. Eighteen dollars the month, or some such arrangement was entered into. It grew hastily ridiculous to the singer, and savagely hard, that ten-hour daily task. No one knows how hard, save one who has sung a song for money. Still, he would not change it while he was forced to remain. Another thing was hard to this fledgling father. Martha was no longer a sweetheart, but a rapt and busy little slave, untimed except to the voice and needs of the new lord; so completely a mother, in fact, that she did not perceive the vast trouble of the sire.

He would appear with the dews, when the day had all but expired, the heart of the simple young male within him crying out for the old lithe arms of the dancing girl, warm, strong, slender, and the uplifted face. . . . Just enough of the honeymoon had been given, and an approach to perfection so close, according to his lights, that he was lost, crushed, because her arms were so often folded, her eyes down-turned, and the mother-breast filled. How young was Shelley Torns and how sorrowful!

“But we must go out on the circuit in September,” he managed to say one night at the farm-house, when August had spent the passion of the land.

“Oh, I think we had better not, for John’s sake, dear. . . . Hand me that powder-puff, please. John’s little neck——”

“But we *must* go, Martha! It is our life!” There was a terror in his face she did not notice.

“Really it is n’t necessary, and John is so, so tiny! And think, dear, what it would mean to you—a winter of complete rest! Think what this summer in the outdoors has done for your strength to draw upon in the future.”

“Yes, I have thought and thought already. My throat is filled with seven kinds of sticky pollen, and I have been dying by inches of loneliness and silence; and you are soft and out of training and there is not a dance in you; and suppose we stop for a season—my God, Martha, we could never get back! You know the competition, the novelties. We would be forgotten as the dead are. I say we must begin rehearsals—and go out in September!”

“Shelley Torns, darling, I have n’t forgotten how to dance,” she answered, “nor you how to sing. I am so happy that I could dance

my heart out, only—only some woman will have to take care of John. It will be hard for our little boy, Shelley, the night travel and the change of rooms.”

“You and I work together,” he finished, holding back from his voice the acid that was biting his heart. “If we are farmers over one winter, we are farmers always. We’ll have to get some one in each town to take care of John while we work!” . . . Many times they talked it over after that, occasionally in the midst of the night, when the little boy aroused them. . . . Martha worried because John did not cry more.

“He is so noble, I am sometimes afraid, Shelley!” she would say, as he turned his eyes away from the lamp. “Look at him! A little hurt never pulls a whimper out of him, and often I have to wake him up to feed him!” . . . So it was that Shelley Torns who hungered to seize the woman was restrained by the mother.

Now and then when he was left alone with the new thing, he would pull back the arcanum of coverlets. . . . Yes, it was a formation human. The fingers were so slim and long, the bare tow head so genially round; lips so facile, sounds so inimitable! Shelley Torns was forced to think. The endless wonder was that this man-atom, living upon another plane so completely, must needs have a woman of earth to keep him there. Still, the father did not really feel the twinings of the thing about his vitals. He was too young; he loved the mother and wanted her whole heart. Moreover, the days made him very weary. It seemed so empty, so indirect, to the city-bred one—this waiting upon a season’s fruitage for one’s substance. Things were managed better in New York.

And yet, once or twice he was surprised at himself, in the last days at the farm. His thoughts of Martha, as he drove the team homeward in the twilight, were complicated by the little boy submerged in linens and flannels. . . . Once he thrust his finger into the slim little fist, partly open like a trap. The warm damp thing closed—bound itself about the hardened finger—and the nerves of the man registered an everlasting impression upon his brain.

They were driving from the farm to the station at last, the three alone, a drowsy dusk all about the rig. The little town was some miles ahead, and the road ran through swails and sloughs, groves and graveyards and orchards. Over all was a warm ripe wind. . . . Shelley Torns felt the lover rise in greatness within him. In truth, Martha had been won, but this little boy seemingly had intervened and left his father without a heart-home. . . . Already Shelley Torns felt the zest of New York, that sublime stimulus. A night’s ride and the

marvel-world of running things would crowd his senses. Here was the utmost woman of it all—whom he had won. He forgot the unadjectived third for a moment in the dream of a fresh conquest of the glorious Martha—now, in the warm, sweet breath of the night.

She brushed him carelessly with her arm. Strange little sounds came from her throat, rhythm or knowledge having nothing to do. He bent and kissed her on the cheek.

She sighed quickly. "John, darling," she whispered to the manikin, "your father loves us very much!"

He felt the passion oozing from him. "Martha," he said, fluttered and stumbling, "think of the old hotel nights! To-morrow we will be back on salary. . . . Does n't it seem dark and sweet to breathe?"

"Yes," she answered, with a tremble in her low tone; "I have thought of those old hotel nights. They were good, but incomplete after all! My God, Shelley, think of the dreadfulness—if you and I had to be alone now—without John!"

He did not speak. After an interminable distance the station lights appeared. They could not afford a sleeper. Martha dozed prettily with the babe. The man thought of the city and the work. Early the next morning they met the crowd in the Grand Central Station. Shelley Torns was carrying the child. Somehow the old haunts shamed him with the burden. It was not that he met any one he knew; but he faced New York, and he felt earthy, shy from the fields; the artist and the parent were incompatible. . . . He trembled for the woman during their first performance, but in the fulness of her heart, Martha danced to fit the managerial eye. The act was even and desirable.

John passed from arm to arm in their brief intervals of work and rehearsal, from chambermaid to prima donna; from the wives of knife-throwers and acrobats to the latest flames of the incomparable baritone. He won them all; his conduct left nothing to be desired, save to Martha, who worried still at his stoicism. The winter came late, but tightened brutally, and the Torns were carried far north into New England. Draughty chair-cars, the pent, drouthish air of upper berths, vast chilled rooms in under-heated hotels, bus-rides in the night, over crackling roads in the dead, stinging cold—through all these and countless other contingencies which kept the mother heart in continual agony, the little boy preserved his life and held his peace like one who is bound to win. . . . But there came a terrible night away up in the peak of the New England coast, the night that Martha had feared, the night that had seemed inevitable, though unspoken, to the others.

That town was set upon an angle of land, rugged as a point of amethyst and jutting out into the sea. The North Atlantic was bring-

ing its wildest and iciest gale to beat upon the rock, on the day that the vaudeville people came. The natives had brown, angular faces, lame to all smiling, in that little austere village, and the play and the theatre were regarded among the dissipations of the uncherished younger set. A grim and ancient building was the hotel, and it had faced the sea so long, as to have sucked the bitterness of death into its gray walls. The theatre was a town-hall, cold to assemblies these many weeks. . . . The woman who held John in the green-room—the monologue artist had named it from the mould upon the walls—screamed while the Torns were at work. Martha rushed from the stage, answering the scream. The care-taker of the town-hall, one of the elder curfew people, made a significant remark: “It is a visitation of Providence!”

All suddenly, in the midst of his father’s song, the little boy had departed from health, in a fashion not strange to babes.

Even the doctor had the coldness of his coast and the granite of it in his face; yet he took the child upon his bony lap; and the sea-mothers came in to watch the players weep and to mourn with them in their waiting, tearless way. The green-room was made hot with crackling logs. Shelley Torns remembered these things.

“If he does n’t have a second convulsion, he will likely live,” the doctor said, looking down at the imploring face of the mother at his knees.

The father watched and watched and paced the floor. Hours passed. Series after series of new terrors assailed his brain. The women stayed. This grim intruding world and his own suffering angered Shelley Torns to a point of madness. He felt that Martha might have saved the babe alone—or Martha and himself and their love! . . . This old human rock of a doctor and the whispering women, women of uncharted hearts and desert faces, settling like vultures to feed upon his grief—these had ignited and were fanning his brain to an expression of violence. . . . He ran out of the room at last, through the winter-vault of the auditorium, out into the deserted street which roared with the din of the sea and the havoc of the gale.

His own faculties answered storm for storm, and out of the clash were hewn thoughts of tragedy in all depth and clearness. . . . Tiny and impotent, unformed for protest, the little boy awaited the decision of Nature. . . . “I, Shelley Torns, singer, have cried out against this little soul in my heart—I, the father—and would have graven upon it my own devilish selfishness, were it not for the mother’s power of purity. I would have deformed it with a man’s passion—my little boy—now at the gates of life and death. I caused it to be brought here that I might sing for money before crowds who suffered me to pass, while they waited for worthier performances. . . .

I would have taken the mother's heart from you, little boy, because I wanted it all—more than the sweet mother could give——”

Original from the block, his evils were sculptured from the chaos of the storms; and about these evils now were gathered black pictures from memory. . . . In that memorable ride from the farm-house to the station, he had turned sullen, because the mother had spoken of the babe, unconsciously breaking the point of his fervor in that ardent autumn night. . . . Wrong after wrong to that round little head which had borne so much in a few brief weeks—that tender little boy, babe of his own blood, who did not rebuke his father, nor scream his wrongs! . . . And that little boy meant a man, and he, the father, Shelley Torns, had destroyed the man; and in some far heaven or hell, he must meet that man face to face.

The tableau in the green-room returned to mind—the figure of the loved woman at the doctor's gaunt knees; the babe, so ill, so wan, so unexpressed, fashioned to live and tell his story, designed to be nurtured by the mother and defended by the father for his chance at the large tasks of men—John Torns, who had no voice in his coming, no will in his passing. Sheath after sheath of the man's heart was torn away until there remained to rival his love for the woman, only that which had been hitherto unmanifested, the purer passion of fatherhood.

“My babe must live—must be made glad that he lived—must be paid back for my baseness in services of love and blood!” This was the ultimatum, when storm met storm out in that furious night.

He hastened back into the building and to the green-room, carrying a blast of cold air and the winter in his garments. There had been a change. The women were gathered closer about the old man, closer to the fireplace. Martha turned to the open door a hollow, waxy face, a blighted thing, which tore out the very roots of her husband's sanity. Her voice was unknown to him and hateful:

“In the name of God, Shelley Torns, go away and don't bring the cold here!”

He faltered an instant, closing the door behind with a slow, fumbling movement. The light had expired from his eyes, yet they were horribly held by his wife's face. . . . The doctor's rough gray head bent over the centre of things. One of the women was whispering, as if to some one deaf. The sound penetrated to the farthest angles of the room. And then the singer was obsessed by a mad savage. His hands and his voice were raised to the old sea mothers.

“Quick, out with you—out of here!”

They arose mumbling; their good hearts outraged. The doctor looked up in a quick, knowing way at the menacing figure of the husband, and turned with a mute appeal to Martha, who took little notice. Shelley Torns slammed the door upon the last of the women; then

faced the old man. Suddenly, he darted forward and seized the child in his arms. The doctor dared not resist for the child's sake. The crazed player's hands and face and garments were chilled from the night. Torns strode rapidly up and down the room, his eyes concentrated upon the little head. Martha ran at his side, praying. The doctor watched them from his seat by the fire. Only a few moments passed when he spoke, low and sorrowfully:

"Look at the babe's hands. I'm afraid it has come—the second visitation. . . . You mean very well, my son—but——"

Martha saw the stiffened arms, the darkened face beneath the covers. Her cry, utterly beyond the suggestion of written words, availed nothing. What was in the brain of Shelley Torns no one knows. He must have seen; yet he strode up and down, carrying his burden lightly.

"Oh, Shelley, darling," the woman implored at last, "give him to me, to his mother! Our baby—our little baby is dying—would you keep him from his mother?"

"You would have sent me away," he said dully. "You ordered me out into the storm—as if I were not the father of this boy! He shall stay with me, and he shall not die!"

There was something in the old doctor that did not make for flight. His work was done. The brave little unspoken soul had risen. The show people came, and Martha was with them, mercifully dulled with drugs. Gray morning filled the green-room and Shelley Torns was singing. It was a dreadful hour. The doctor watched the drama of the players until the end—the father singing and pacing the floor with brute flesh in his arms. It all came over the mind of Shelley Torns when pale sunlight was in the window. His God had not forgiven him, nor his child. Martha was a stranger. . . . He placed the dead child upon a pillowed chair at last, and met the eyes of his wife, as she left her friends and knelt beside it. The doctor was leaving and he followed the old man out of the green-room.

"Am I a murderer?" he asked in a slow, harsh way.

"I would hardly say that," the other answered. "We were fearing a second attack. Still, your hands—you had just come in from the cold—my poor boy. I am sorry for you!"

It was the next afternoon and all was over but the memories. Shelley Torns and his wife met in the twilight of the hotel corridor. They had not spoken since the end.

"Please give me enough money to go home," she said. "I am going home."

He gave her all he had. Without speaking, she returned a portion and entered the room, where he later found his own things left behind.

The looted, rudderless human drifted to New York. For weeks he spent his time upon the streets by day; in a high tenement room at

night. Upon his face was graven a subtler ruin than that of drugs or drink. Without Martha, he could obtain no engagement; he was refused at any price. Queer artist that he was, he felt no shame at the realization of his commercial worthlessness alone; only it made him feel the more tragically the need of the woman in every thought and fruition of his life. Money was gone and the ability to earn it, his personality, his voice itself. Something in the appearance and face of the young man placed him among the great outcast to the eyes of those who hire singers. In his heart-starvation, Shelley Torns had forgotten his linen and his lips.

There was a buffet finally in the lower end of town, the management of which consented to allow him to sing for his bread and sausage. When he happened to sing to please the desultory ear, his tenement room was paid. Thus the winter passed, the boy in a dreadful dream. Throughout the uncertain balances of his artist's brain, no thought of reconciliation was conjured. He had read in her eyes that he was the murderer of her son—that was the end. Martha was lost to him, but loved—God only knows how she was loved and the price his sensitive soul paid for that night of tragedy in upper New England. Strange again that all the gladness of his life was concentrated (in those wistful dreams of his) upon that autumn night of their ride from the farm to the station on the way to New York. . . . To have Martha with him again in the dusky witchery of that night—with the little boy at her breast—but he could not think farther and live! The memory evolving beyond this point strangled his vitality.

One night in the saloon, he looked up from a song at a little old man standing close, a strange, wee figure with overmuch white hair and a long coat that had nothing to do with prevalence.

"Come with me," the stranger said, and Shelley Torns obeyed. It was midnight and the journey covered an hour in the subway and afoot. "Listen," said the queer individual at last, as they paused before a building dark from the outside. "This is my club—the Lost Artist's Club. You will sing for artists here, men who have failed as you have, men of the vital spark, but not the balance nor the body nor the steady hand. You have lost yours, young man, or never had it, so do not laugh at your peers. I am rich and this is my hobby. Ah, but I love my artists!"

A strange drinking throng, effete, stimulated, variously replete with lesions of the body. They were generously supplied with all that they wished to eat and drink, and beds were above. What a charity! Look for him in New York, this oddest and most lovable little old man, but you must be a decayed artist to find him. Shelley Torns sang, hardly disturbing the tumult of voices at first, yet his enchanted brain awoke. He felt a tithe, a semblance of appreciation, and heard a faint applause

with a gladness that was pitiful. The old days of conquest rushed back. Slowly the men turned from their talk, as he sang again one of the little love-songs which had failed in vaudeville. Long afterward, toward morning, indeed, he never could tell how nor why, though it may have been the wine which the artists pressed upon him, Shelley Torns sang his own song, the lyric and the music of the little boy.

. . . He saw bending toward him a thin, devastated face. It stood out from the throng with a warm and instant appeal—as if he had known before the soul behind that sunken flesh, as if a kindly elder brother had embodied it in some past life. The moment was indescribable to him. He quite forgot that he was singing, yet his own dominant sorrow lost none of its poignancy, even though it mingled with the tragedy of that human face which his singing had ignited. That face had looked at death; upon it was subtly, yet deeply, painted lofty failures and despicable reactions.

Shelley Torns had won them all, yet he moved toward one uplifted hand as he finished, and sat down before a pair of dry burning black eyes.

“Why did you sing that, Torns?”

“I do not know. Because I could not help it.”

“Drink something, if you care. Did you ever sing it before?” The man spoke like an Englishman. His linen was clean; his clothing shabby.

“Once before—the night I murdered my little boy.”

“Ah, would you mind telling me about it—the whole story, please?”

There was no thought of resistance. Torns whispered of Martha, and the winning of her, which had been to him and always should be the supreme achievement. Softly, hungrily, as was the wont of his own bereft life, he dwelt upon that night of the ride from the farm to the station, the sweet still air, the twilight, the dusk, the flight, the woman, and the babe at her breast like Horatio holding the bride.

“I would give my voice, my little bit of sanity,” he panted, “for that ride again with Martha and the little boy. And yet I was only a sullen animal—then!”

From New York up the circuit, the story leaped from town to town. Upper New England and the night of the wintry gale on the bleak coast. To the black eyes that burned upon him now, Shelley Torns, a vibrant figure, revealed the father, as well as the lover of Martha—the father who had learned to love too late.

“It was not that I seized the child from the doctor’s knees,” he was whispering, as if explaining to God. “I was mad then, utterly mad. It was not that I carried him against my cold damp coat. I did not know what I was doing until hours afterward—they told me I sang this song as I walked—when he was cold, cold as his mother’s heart to

me. . . . What kills was that I did not know him before! That I did not see the Martha in him! That I did not feel my flesh and my future in him—that he was son of mine!”

Shelley Torns gulped his drink. Subconscious but perfect drama lived in his conclusion of the whole matter, thus: “What an awful beast I must have been!”

The intent, listening face smiled. The man arose unsteadily, drew the shades from the nearest window, opened it wide, thrust his head out, and breathed.

“Come here,” he said.

The singer obeyed.

“Put your head out!” he went on quietly. “Smell it. Smell the spring in it! This is the first day of spring! Think how the country roads will look this morning. See the sun coming out warm. Think how that country road of *yours* will look—that road where all your memory-life is gathered. We all have our high moments, our memories and our roads, Shelley Torns. Some time all of us who think and do at all are carried high up to the origin of things. Likely as not we miss the meaning, but certainly for the moment we live.”

The inscrutable wreck of a man went on musingly:

“And so yours was a country road in the dusk with your woman and your babe. You were a boy, and he was a boy, and she was the mother of you both in heart. . . . All in a country rig, the fields behind, New York ahead——”

“Please don’t. You hurt, sir!” whimpered Shelley Torns.

The other did not seem to notice, but breathed deeply of the morning. “Think of that country road this morning,” he said. “It has not rained. The turf is hard to the heart from frosts, but wet on the surface from the sudden warmth of the sun—all alive on the surface, this resurrection morn in the country! . . . You *are walking* along that road, Shelley Torns, with New York behind—and before you—white with waiting—Martha——!”

The singer stepped back from the window, shivering with antagonism, yet held by some psychic force of the man.

“We all have our moments and our country roads, sometimes English roads in dear old Kent, the garden, Shelley Torns,” the stranger resumed, as one rapt in pictures of his past. “Some of us even have our Marthas! . . . Oh, Father Bountiful!”

He called to the little old man who was host and master of ceremonies, who left a group and stepped forward eagerly.

“Give this boy ten dollars. He is going home to the love of his youth, Father. . . . Oh, God, if I were as white-souled as he! . . . And yet this boy thinks he is damned forever! . . . There is humor, Father Bountiful, in being a youth. . . . No, I

am quite drunk enough, thank you. I am going home, too,—upstairs!" He laughed.

A country road at night, black as the last paths of sin, running with small lake and river systems and beaten by wind-blown sheets of rain. The evening of that first day of spring. Shelley Torns has left New York behind; the dim station lights of the little country town are left behind. Before him are miles of rain-covered road, through swails and sloughs, groves and grave-yards and orchards. All these are lit at intervals from the ripping cracks in the sky.

The first mile is not half-won, yet rain and mud can add no ruin to his garments. He runs when the lightning makes the footing clear. The old splendor of youth has returned; his veins are dilated, his heart singing. From that lost artist's brain of brooding desolation has come the rekindling of Shelley Torns. In a flash of the old acumen, the English stranger has shown the boy what means real human debris, and the chaos which rules the human heart when hope has winged away.

The returning one sang as he ran in the lightning flashes. . . . Martha Bridges had once been won by a boy. She would be won again by the man of that boy. . . . The new-young heart of Shelley Torns told him this must be; the listening stranger had promised it; the lightning carved it in letters of hope. It was as sure as the virtue of the warm rain upon the frozen heart of the soil. . . . And John, the little boy, John, would forgive him. This was real to him now, as real as the God of little boys, who called them unto him and made his Heaven thereof. . . . Martha would forgive him. It may have been that she had forgiven him long since; that she had written him to come home to her. Having no address, how could he have known? He had not reported at their old headquarters for weeks—nor since they had refused him at any price. . . . He ran, his lips forming and reforming the words, "white with waiting—white with waiting——"

Faint lights in the eyes of the struggling, gasping figure in the highway. They were on the left, with a background of woods; and the long, low house sentinelled by a mountain-range of barns—all this the lightning had made clear!

For the first time on the journey, the heart of Shelley Torns faltered. The next few moments meant the verdict of life or death. All that he could win or lose; all that God had given him to win or lose in this life was in that house.

At the gate he stopped to breathe. Suddenly, in a spitting snake of light, the twin pines in the huge yard were carved against the rushing clouds. The crash like a splitting world desolated his senses ere

the sweep of light was past. He was clinging to the pickets of the gate, when his scattered faculties crawled back, and the burnt smell in the air was washed out by the rain hastily, as if it were not meant for the nostrils of man in the plan of Nature.

He fumbled for the latch of the gate. A dog barked dismally from the barns. Lights moved within the house. . . . Shelley Torns was singing from some inner volition. The front door opened, and a woman rushed out into the torrent to meet him. An after flash showed her empty outstretched arms as she ran. It appealed to him strangely—her empty arms.

The family was gathered in the sitting-room to hear his story, Farmer Bridges, the elder Martha, and others. He could not speak; his brain was still dazed from the shock. He could only peer into the paradise he had regained—the eyes of a face close to his, a face white with waiting.

“He is ill from the lightning. He must not try to speak to-night!” Martha commanded. “Ah, my lover, my tired lover, come with me and rest—to our room!”

Up the stairway, he followed, the old farm-house scent in his nostrils, his life rushing back, his heart healed. The room was dark. The door closed upon them. Dully he fingered the wall for the old place of the matches, but her arms found him, her lips, and he forgot.

“My husband, just a minute,” she whispered at last; “stand out in the hall!”

He obeyed and the door was shut upon him. He heard her fingers in the tin match-box, heard the flare and the lifting and placing of a lamp chimney. . . . Then there was a creaking sound, as of furniture being moved across the rag-carpeted floor. It was a familiar creak.

His mind caught it all with a stab of the old pain. She was sparing him the sight of that which she had not suffered to be removed. . . . The closet door was opened, the object thrust within, the door shut again. In the dark, with a door between, he saw it all, the woman and the wooden thing. She called at last, softly, eagerly:

“Lover mine—come to me!”

Her empty arms were outstretched in the lamp-light, those warm, lithe, slender arms, the haven of his dreams in hunger and thirst and madness. Yet he halted a second, looking beyond them, to the place where the little black walnut cradle had been by the bedside.



THE TURQUOISE RING

By Karl von Kraft

“NO, my friend, I am not superstitious, but you yourself shall judge whether I am right in refusing ever to part with my so beautiful turquoise.”

“It is really perfect,” I said, thinking more of the Contessa’s matchless hand than of the jewel it seemed moulded to display.

“Yes,” she assented. “In Petersburg, in Paris, in Teheran, in Mexico, and in your—how do you say it?—‘little old New York’—I have never seen its like. Sometimes as I look at its soft sea-tones, I fancy it actually gazing back at me—lovingly, understandingly. See, is it not so?” And then after a moment, “I think I want you to hear about Luigi—and the ring.”

The Contessa took a final sip of her Mocha.

“I was born, you know, in December—they call it ‘the crown of good fortune.’ So it is my birthstone, this *turkis*, as our Florentine lapidaries still name it. However, I had never owned one till—but that is my story.

“One day—I was then sixteen, and almost a woman—I was idling before the quaint shops on the Jeweller’s Bridge across the Arno, when I espied this superb gem displayed in a small window.”

The Contessa held out the turquoise, but I only breathed a kiss upon the pink tapering fingers, and checked the loving words I longed to pour out.

She seemed scarce to notice—the past was living again; and I sighed. Would she ever forget?

“That love of a ring, my friend,” she went on, “it fairly called me, from its curiously-wrought casket of tawny gold. The setting, too, was a rare thing, as you see; and has a history—for another day,” she smiled. “From the instant my eyes rested upon the pale beauty of that patrician thing I knew I must possess it. I tell you my soul leaped toward it with a passion of desire—I, who never cared for jewels, and wear them not at all: except always my precious luck-stone.”

She paused to lift her hand and look fixedly at the ring, turning it slowly upon her finger. I have never seen that look in any other woman’s eyes: inscrutable, seer-like—and loving. Her snowy bosom heaved, a deeper rose-glow suffused her dear cheek, she seemed to see

into the past, and perhaps also the veil of the future was parted for an instant before those great brown eyes. . . . When she spoke again it was with a softness expressive of her tender mood. Ah, how I adored you then—and now, Contessa!

“The ring,” she resumed, “perfectly fitted my girlish finger—that was twenty years ago, my friend—so in a few little minutes I was running along the Lung Arno and threading the other streets on the way to our old *palazza*. Think of it, in my glee I had utterly forgotten that the poor cousin Luigi was still waiting to take me home in his *fiacre*!

“The first person I met was my old nurse Giulietta, dear and dumpy, a bundle of motherhood and *martinette*. I held up my hand, demanding to know if the ring was not beautiful.

“‘A turquoise! Ah! *Multa bella!* Thou shalt now have fortunate love—with constancy and happiness!’ cried Giulietta. ‘My little lamb has chosen a true luck-stone. But thou must never put it off. No, not even for one small hour,’ and she wagged a pudgy finger. ‘That would bring the evil fortune. Ah, now my lord Luigi—’

“‘Hush, thou foolish old match-maker,’ I laughed, stopping her speech with a kiss—but my heart surged with the joy of her prophecy. And from that hour my *turkis* has been twined about with the strands of my destiny. Oh, I do not know how it may be, but so it is.”

“God send with it always prosperous love—for us both!” said I softly.

“Yes, for us both, my friend,” she whispered, but her thoughts were far away, I knew.

“Well, that very day my life began to bud. Count Luigi, my distant cousin, and heir to the finest estates in all Lombardy, had long been visiting his uncle, whose *palazza* adjoined that of my father. Daily we were together, like the happy children we still seemed. His tall, military figure, slender and supple as one of his native poplars, often rode beside me down the long over-arched vistas of the *jardino publico*, or accompanied my carriage on wonder-drives to Vallambrosa and our villa at Fiesole.

“What would you have? We loved and—we loved. It was our whole day—the very heaven of all hope, as cloudless as my cerulean turquoise. And on that day—the day I bought my gem—we were with the consent of our families betrothed.

“That night as Giulietta attended me I was about to draw the ring from my finger and lay it in my jewel case.

“‘What wouldst thou do, thou thoughtless child!’ cried Nurse almost harshly. ‘Throw away thy good luck? Are noble lovers like the Count Luigi then so plenty that thou wouldst toss him aside like a rose plucked in the Boboli gardens?’

“Toss my Luigi aside? Oh, Giuletta!”

“Have I not told thee? *Never, my lambkin, never lay aside thy turquoise.* If thou dost part with it, thy luck will leave thee, and with it the constancy of thy lover.’

“In her earnestness Giuletta blinked solemnly into my eyes—dear old owl—and gripped my wrist until it ached. Tell me, my American friend, why did I not heed that warning? I do not know. *Ay di mi!* So I only laughed affectionately and patted her leathery cheek—but for an instant an ominous chill swept through my veins as the full moon suddenly hid behind a sombre cloud. I remember it well. Do you believe in omens?

“But I cast off the foreboding, and that night went to sleep with my turquoise laid close against the cheek on which Luigi had pressed his lingering betrothal kiss.

“After that my life flowed along as do other lives—we were wedded, romanced in a summer villa at Monza, and tasted every bliss of young love. And always I wore my turquoise ring, with no other jewel at all. And always my joy and good fortune were constant, though I rarely thought of the ring as the talisman of my happiness. But you shall see; you shall see.

“When the winter came we returned to Florence and occupied an old *palazza* of my father’s. We lived in rooms that had been scarcely more than opened since the time when, four centuries ago, the second duke of our line had taken a wife from among the Visconti, and built this huge barrack to house his bride. There was some new furniture, but for the most part the old arrangements had been restored, and many an hour Luigi and I amused ourselves by weaving fancies about the old courts and halls, repeopleing them with the throngs which had gayly colored them in the days of the old duke’s splendor.

“One morning in December—it was the fourteenth, just two days before my birthday—I laid aside my ring. It had become too tight. In my bedroom was the same tawny gold case from which, in the little shop on the Jeweller’s Bridge, it first sent forth its enchantment. There I thoughtlessly placed it. Alas, old Giuletta was not there that day to warn me!

“Before retiring that night, for no reason at all I lifted the lid of the casket. The ring was gone. Everywhere I searched, every one I questioned—but no trace. At length, thinking it would turn up the next day, I dismissed the matter and fell asleep.

“At midnight—on the minute—I was awakened by a shriek of such penetrating horror as fairly froze my heart. I leaped from my bed fully standing. How long I stood, dazed and stone still, I do not know; but at length I was aware of old Giuletta in her night clothes, approaching me with blanched and working countenance. Her eyelids

were contracted in unspeakable terror; she contorted her stiffened lips in an effort to speak, but no sound came. Then, with a whimper like that of a terrified child, she toppled over at my feet.

“By this time the corridor was a tumult of chattering servants and fluttering lights, and I recovered my wits enough to wonder why my husband did not appear. Suddenly it dawned upon me that the scream might have come from his rooms, so thither I flew. His bed-chamber was empty, his bed untouched.

“I rushed out again into the dim corridor—and now I thought I understood what had given *Giulietta* her fright. Coming slowly along the further end of the long hall were five fantastic shapes. Four of them were carrying something on a litter, swathed in a white sheet. In a moment I saw that they were our serving men, half clad, as though just aroused from their beds. Oh, God, what a moment! The other servants that had gathered were huddled in tragic groups, some holding lights, some sobbing, some quaking with fear, all far in the background. None came near me, and I seemed powerless to move.

“Now I became conscious of the fifth figure. It was a woman, crazed, or so it seemed, her long black hair wildly streaming and her white robe blotched and stained a sickening crimson. She was weaving about, now moaning over the prostrate body, and again waving aloft a ring—it was my turquoise. My soul congealed with nameless horror. All my flesh puckered until the creeping chills fairly vibrated my body. It was *Jocosa*—*Jocosa*, my pretty little body-maid—frenzied, blood-stained, cursing my turquoise as the author of this woe.

“This woe! What woe? A hot iron seared my brain; I felt a flash of consuming heat; then I could think once more. I fixed my eyes on the litter, and every sound seemed hushed. A red speck appeared on the upper left side of the sheeted form. Under the sickly light of the flickering candles it slowly spread, sinister and red, until a fatal spot as large as my palm stood out upon the pallid field.

“In an instant I knew. ‘*Luigi!*’ I wailed, and would have torn aside the napkin that covered his face; but they stopped my hands, while old *Giulietta*, who had recovered from her swoon as best she might, drew me away. Ah, my poor *Luigi!*

“When at length my husband’s body was laid upon his bed and a surgeon summoned, they said that he still breathed; and, later, that he had revived and was asking for me. What joy and fear were mingled for me then! But only for a short moment was I allowed to kiss his black curls, answer his feeble smile with an adoring look, and steal on tip-toe away. They told me that the stiletto thrust—for such it was—had been turned aside by a bone, and he might live!

“Just what had happened no one knew, but from *Giulietta* I wrung enough to set me guessing.

“‘The Madonna knows, my lambkin,’ she sobbed, ‘thou dost force me to speak. I know only what I saw, and would believe not even that. It must be some devilish night-dream. Ah, if only thou hadst not parted with thy turquoise!’”

“‘Hush, thou silly thing, is not my lord recovering? And has not my ring been found by Jocosa? Did not I see it in the poor wench’s hand——’”

“‘Jocosa! Accursed be that daughter of lies! Jocosa! It was she, my dearie, who charmed thy lord away from thee—she with thy *turkis* upon her hand.’”

“‘Charmed my lord away!’ What new hell was yawning to engulf my joy!

“‘Aye, now ’t is out—that was what I saw;’ and the faithful old soul towered in a frenzy of wrath as she told me all.

“‘Did not I, being as my lady knows a light sleeper, hear thy door softly open and close? Well, my hearing has ever been over-keen——’”

“‘Go—on—Giulietta!’”

“‘Aye, my lambkin—my old bones told me that something was amiss and so I looked into the great corridor. There stood that imp of sin, Jocosa, wrapped in thy white garden cloak, and wearing boldly thy turquoise ring. I saw it plainly in the moon-glow through the casement. She moved along the corridor as silently as evil-doers will, past the landing of the grand stair-case, and so she went on—oh, my baby, that I should live to see thee so dishonored!’”

“‘Giulietta! Say on,’ I panted.

“‘On—on toward my lord’s apartments. Just then thy Count came alone, and quietly, up the grand stair-case. Seeing Jocosa, he stopped short, but in a moment made swiftly after her. Once, seeming to hear footsteps, she looked behind her, and then hurried the faster. Whereupon my lord also quickened his pace. Suddenly Jocosa began to run, my lord following with equal speed, and I silently after them both, keeping always to the shadows. In a moment the wanton had turned the corner into the east wing, and just as I rounded it after them both she pressed the spring in the secret door—of which I thought no one but thy ladyship and us old servants knew aught. For an instant she stood in the open doorway, masked, as I could then see, and smiling at my lord, her finger that wore the turquoise ring raised to her wicked lips, the hussy!

“‘Then my lord leaped swiftly forward, and, crying out something I could not rightly hear, clasped her in his arms. Whether they slipped down the first step in the secret stairway I could not say, my lady, but they both reeled, and Jocosa shrieked as though all the fiends of hell were after her. Then the door flew violently shut. So much I saw, my lambkin, and may Saint Sebastian pierce the wicked wench with a

thousand arrows for stealing thy turquoise and thy husband, all in one evil night!' And old Giulietta began to weep.

"I could not say one word, my friend. Not far away, on his bed, lay my Luigi, nigh unto death, stabbed by whom I knew not; and here I, done to death by the faithful words of my old nurse.

"I was roused from my dazed despair by a sound of sobbing. Giulietta lumbered to the door. There lay Jocosa, beating her forehead upon the threshold, hoarse gasping sobs racking her body, while she tore her hair in abandonment. She still wore the tattered fragments of my white garden cloak, splashed with the bloody stain, which seemed in the dimly lighted corridor to glow angrily. It sent a fierce pang to my breast when I reflected whose blood it was that formed that unholy badge.

"Then a sudden wave of pity surged up. After all, what had this silly creature done, she who had always been so pink and piquante—too pretty for a lady's maid? Did not the fault lie rather with him?—but I crushed down my disloyal thought and strove to hold judgment in even balance.

"When Jocosa saw me she grovelled at my chair, flinging herself at my feet. 'Have mercy, my lady,' she begged in choking sobs. 'It was not I, indeed it was not! Oh, I would die for him, rather; for I love him so—Mary in heaven forgive me, but I love him so—and never so much as one look from my lord for such as I;' and she rocked herself to-and-fro in a tempest of despair.

"I was ashamed to feel the glow of joy that flamed in my bosom at the sound of those words—'never so much as one look from my lord for such as I.' Alas, that I should have doubted him! My heart that had seemed of stone was indeed of flesh.

"By degrees I drew from the wretched maid the truth—how that she had loved my lord, as a common daisy may love the glorious sun, and he both unconscious and uncaring; how that she had stolen my turquoise ring in the hope that it might charm to her the love of the Count; and how that, awaiting the hour of his return, she had tricked herself out in my garments to simulate my appearance, thinking so to gain his eye. The secret stairway had been but the thought of an instant, and when, crying, 'My wife, what dost thou here!' my Luigi had rushed upon her, in terror she had shrieked and swooned in his arms."

The Contessa paused, a soft light on her brow, a limpid moisture in her eye.

"And the dear Count grew rapidly well," she finished, "so that in two days he drank a cup in honor of my birthday—and kissed the turquoise upon his lady's hand."

"And the stiletto?" I ventured after a while, more in love with the sweet Contessa than ever.

"Yes, the stiletto," she echoed. "That was Francesco's, at that time our *major domo*. He was wildly in love with Jocosa, you see, but she would always flout him. And when he, returning from the grooms' chambers that night, saw my lord emerging into the courtyard from the secret stairway—for the upper door had blown shut and the Count must needs carry the unconscious Jocosa down the stairs—Francesca thought some baseness was meditated toward his love, and so his hot Calabrian blood ran riot—and then the stiletto!

"But, my friend, 'all's well'—you know the rest." Her eyes looked out far beyond the distant Arno, a silver strand beneath a silver moon. "No, I am not superstitious, but now you know why I have never again parted with my turquoise—and why what you ask can never be."

We were both silent for a little while.

"It is now five years since my Luigi went the long journey. And—now as always—our love is constant—and fortunate, even though he waits for me among the unseen." The Contessa paused again. And then—

"After all, do you Americans love like we Italians? I wonder."
But I—I did not wonder. I knew.



A FAREWELL

BY CHARLES L. O'DONNELL

FORGET me, and remember me, O heart!
Forget me for the dear delight of days
We walked together down fair, fragrant ways;
Remember me for that I now depart.

For that I give our one sure hour of bliss
In barter for the distant promised peace,
Leave joy, for hope that joy may ne'er decrease—
Reluctant heart, forget me not for this.

So may we, when no vesture of the clod
Between our spirits makes the need of bars,
Together watch the gold beads of the stars
Slip through the fingers of our patient God.

THE JANUARY GENERALS

By La Salle Corbell Pickett

JANUARY is an appropriate month for the birth of great soldiers. It looks backward at the long and bloody way whereon the world has travelled so far toward civilization and forward to the coming struggles for yet higher conquests. Its god kept his gate closed in time of peace, and when war flashed a fiery torch across the world he threw open his portal and came forth to lead armies to battle.

The god of January presided over the beginnings of things. So the January warrior might be always expected at the forefront, possessed of a faculty for keeping ahead of competitors. The confidence of the followers of two of our January Generals is illustrated in the story of a captive Southern soldier who chanced to see General Grant hastening by.

“General, where are you going?” asked the Confederate.

“To Petersburg, I think,” was the reply; “but maybe to heaven or hell.”

“Well, I tell you, General,” replied the soldier, “Bob Lee’s at Petersburg and Stonewall Jackson’s in heaven. I guess hell’s the only place left for you.”

That Grant appreciated the grim assignment was indicated by the smile of amusement on his face as he went on.

January 19, 1907, is the centennial anniversary of the birth of Robert Edward Lee. Stratford on the Potomac, a royal gift to a distinguished colonial Lee, had sheltered many a famous soldier, but never one who shed greater lustre upon the history of arms or more deeply and truly lived up to the higher motives of manhood than did Robert Edward Lee, destined to become the greatest leader in the mightiest war of the century. His father, “Light-Horse Harry,” said that the military hero was the most useless member of the human race “except when the safety of a nation demands his saving arm.” It remained for the son of that dashing horseman to show the world that a military hero, though weary with fruitless toil, crushed with defeat, surrounded by a poverty-stricken country, may be among the most useful members of the race and far greater than any mere follower of war, however successful.

Not only did the god Janus select the boy for his own and point out

before him the crimson way. The blood of a race of warriors had flowed through many generations into his veins. Lancelot Lee helped the Norman Conqueror to win his kingdom. Lionel Lee followed the Lion-Hearted Richard to the Holy Land. The father of Robert Edward Lee, finding the early politics of this country no more suited to his taste than many a later statesman has found those of his own days, had retired to the seclusion of Stratford to talk and write of past glories of warfare when he had led the cavalry of Washington's army. The first atmosphere which the new-born infant breathed was thunderous with guns, brilliant with sword flashes, glowing with crimson splashes in the sun.

Nor was the external atmosphere which surrounded the young soul less adapted to fill his veins with martial fire. The flames that had long been blazing in foreign lands were beginning to scorch the Atlantic shores. The echo of the guns that presaged the second war with England broke upon the infant ears while the young mind was too unused to the world's noises to discriminate between sounds.

It has been said that soldiers, like poets, are born, not made. How could a soldier better be born than in the month of January, in the County of Westmoreland, famed for the prowess of her sons, in the family of Light-Horse Harry and while hostile guns were trained upon his country?

"Fame, in arms or art, is naught unless betrothed to virtue," wrote Light-Horse Harry to one of his sons. The wonderful force of the union of fame and virtue has never been more happily exemplified than in the life of the January soldier whose century is just completed. By his fame was he known to the world, but it was something higher and deeper than fame which led an imprisoned soldier of the Confederacy just after the surrender to write to his old Commander: "The boys want you to get us out if you can. But if you can't, just ride by the Libby and let us see you and give you a good cheer."

The soldiers of the North knew his fame, but they were not thinking of that when a detachment of them passing his window waved their swords in salute, lifted their caps, and joined their voices lustily in a tribute to the man no less than to the warrior.



On January 21, 1824, another great soldier was born to Virginia and to the South. No royal gifts had secured to him a noble domain on which to look as his own when his eyes first opened to the world. Misfortune had come to his family, and the external glories of life had so narrowed for them that it is likely that fame was the last gift to which they could possibly have aspired for the life just dawning. But

the embryo soldier was of good fighting stock and strong puritan force, and he had wondrous power within himself. Perhaps the most courageous deed of all his brave life was the journey of eighteen miles which he made at the age of eight years on foot and alone over the mountains in search of independence. The same spirit some years later led him, with scant preparation and little money, to seek entrance to West Point, with the certainty of his ability to climb over all the difficulties which lay in his way.

Tom Jackson, as he was then known, must have been plentifully endowed with the vigor of his bracing, wintry birth-month, for he never let go of a thing which he had once grasped and never failed to surmount obstacles.

He seemed to have inherited the ruggedness of January, being capable of such absorption in the important affair of the moment as enabled him to set aside extraneous matters and proceed with the work at hand regardless of his own position. Sometimes this habit brought confusion to others, but it was all a matter of course to Stonewall. A colonel marching his regiment in the early morning under orders from General Jackson came upon a plain-looking man wearing a small cap and mounted upon a pony. Soon after daybreak the stranger suggested that the colonel halt his men for breakfast. "I will before long," said the colonel. Later the unknown man repeated the suggestion and received the same reply. After some time he said to the officer, "Colonel, halt your men for breakfast." The colonel thought he was a countryman who was sorry for the men and he decided to gratify him. When they started on again the stranger observed that the men were straggling, and the colonel gave the command to "short-step." "No," interposed the unknown; "that will throw them out of line. It should be slow-step." As the men did not know the step, he dismounted, took the head of the column, and showed them how to march. The colonel asked his adjutant who the stranger was and to his dismay received the reply: "Stonewall Jackson." The General was on foot so near the enemy that the battle was on in half an hour and was teaching the men how to march.

Having been so enterprising in the choice of a natal month, Stonewall continued to keep ahead. He could even circumvent the interviewing reporter. When some English correspondents in company with Wolseley called upon him and attempted to interview him he engaged them in animated conversation about their own country, asking so many questions and showing such wide information upon the subject that they had no opportunity to ask him anything. It is apparent that if the January General had chosen to go into the diplomatic instead of the military service he would have attained equal success in that slippery field.

The belief of the men in the ability of their January General to arrive on time was illustrated by a conversation between two Confederates in a Northern prison when the news of the great warrior's death came to them. "Do you know how Stonewall got to heaven?" "No." "Well, when the news of his being killed was carried up to heaven two angels were sent to escort him up. They went to our army and looked around the field of battle and about headquarters and could n't find him. They went over to the Feds and looked for him there and still could n't find him. After searching all day they gave it up and went back to heaven, where they found that he had flanked them and got there without their knowing it."

The god Janus had given to his favorite son the capacity for appreciating soldierly qualities in an enemy as well as in a friend. At the battle of Antietam one of Stonewall's men was about to fire upon a young soldier on the other side of the creek. Jackson said: "Stop! Lower your gun. I have watched that boy all day. He is too brave to be killed." Thus was William McKinley, at seventeen years of age, saved to become twice President of the United States and die by the assassin's bullet.

Jackson was not content with following Janus; he must find every opportunity to be in front. Upon one occasion he asked General Taliaferro to go with him to overlook the artillery fire. While watching the shots fall among the enemy, now and then exclaiming, "Good, good!" he asked General Taliaferro if he had a family. The General replied that he had a wife and five children, adding, "and if we stay here there will be a widow and five children." "Good, good," said Jackson, and they galloped away. General Taliaferro said afterward, "I have no doubt that Stonewall's life was saved that day by his sympathy for my children."

Some one said that the Lord had made up his mind that the South should not win, and to prevent it he had to remove Stonewall Jackson. Surely the storms of his natal month hurled themselves against the Confederacy from the day of his tragic death to the end.



I think General Pickett must have inherited all the varied moods and phases of the changeful and glittering month of Janus. General Jeb Stuart, pointing to General Pickett at a dance in the Yellow Tavern, said:

"When I see Pickett dance I think he ought to have been a dancing master. When I hear him whistle I think he ought to have been a bird. When I hear him sing I think he ought to have been a great tenor. When I see him ride I think he ought to have been a leader of cavalry.

When I see him in the drawing-room I think he should have been a court gentleman in the days of chivalry. When I see him lead a charge I think he should spend his life on the battlefield. Pickett can do everything."

With the battle storm of his nativity, he had also been endowed with the sunniness of the balmy days which sometimes bring their glow and beauty into the rigorous month. There was no room in his nature for hatred or anger. He never forgot the admonition which Lincoln had given him when at West Point about the "drop of honey," and he kept the sweetness always in his heart. It made his own life gentle and bright and put sunshine into the lives of all around him. It won the heart of the little child and inspired the rugged man with an impulse to follow him to the gates of death. Pickett was one of the Generals of whom it may truthfully be said that their men followed them. He never pointed out a path in which he was not ready to go. He did not send his men into battle; he led them there.

I am reminded here of a meeting with an old Federal soldier in 1898 at the Peace Jubilee in Philadelphia. On being introduced to me the veteran said: "I read in the paper that you were here, and I came because I wanted to see you." We entered into pleasant conversation, in the course of which he told me this incident:

"I could have killed General Pickett at the battle of Gettysburg. I saw a man on horseback not far from the stone wall, with the bullets falling thick around him. He sat there watching the field as coolly as if he had been on a quiet road enjoying the scenery. I took aim, thinking how easy it would be to shoot him down. Then the feeling came to me that I could not kill a man like that. So I lowered my gun and turned back. Behind me were three men in the act of lowering their guns. 'We can't shoot a man as brave as that,' they said. I did not know then who the officer was, but afterward learned that he was General Pickett."

"I was praying for him every minute," I said. "I thank God that bravery or prayer, whichever it was, stayed your hand."

The cheerfulness of the General's nature was evident in the musical whistle with which he uplifted the hearts of his men on the weary march through rain and mud or under the pouring rays of the mid-summer sun. It was a bugle call to the charge upon the hostile ranks of fatigue, discouragement, starvation, and all the miseries with which his men were forced to contend, and they never failed to respond to it manfully and bravely. This musical habit of his might have caused him to fall under the ban of "Stonewall," who, hearing some of his college company whistling in the adjutant's office, put in his head and called: "Young gentlemen, when I want any whistling at these headquarters I will have a special detail made for the purpose."

"Boys, give them a cheer!" General Pickett called out as Armistead with his glorious band rushed up the slope of Cemetery Ridge. The cheer was given with a right good will, and perhaps the scroll that marks the spot where Armistead fell beside the guns stands farther within the old Federal line because of the uplift of that ringing response. A few moments later the leader who had cheered his men on to the last supreme effort was walking down the slope beside the stretcher on which lay his wounded Brigadier, Kemper, protecting him from the scorching rays of the sun and doing all in his power to allay his suffering and strengthen his spirit.

As he left the field a tall, lank private of the Twenty-fourth Virginia sprang up and said: "General, let's go it again!" But the General knew that the battle was over, and the gallant proposal of the young Virginian was not favorably considered.

After Gettysburg the General rode home, cloaked with the glory and the gloom of the world's greatest battle. Along the way men and women and little children came out to meet him and cover his horse with flowers. The air was rent with cheers as he went on his way. He had been the central figure of a scene so grand that it needed not victory to crown it with glory, and the whole South did him honor.

The next day, as we went to church in Richmond, we saw a little Jewish boy crying. "What is the matter, my little man?" asked the General. The child explained that his shoes hurt his feet so that he could not walk. He said that they made him feel as if he were walking on burning cobs. He was a dirty little rascal, and his plaintive condition did not add to his charms. There was nothing attractive about him but his youth and his misfortunes. Either alone would have been effective with the General. Taking the child in his arms, he asked him where he lived and carried him to his home. Having delivered him safely to his natural protectors, he proceeded on his way with the pleasing consciousness of having "done it to one of the least of these."

So thoroughly was Pickett's heart filled with the bracing sunshine of the brightest January days that after having galloped through a rain of fire and balls to his command at Five Forks he rode through the lines with the men falling upon all sides, waving a battle-flag that he had caught from the hand of a fallen color-bearer, and joined his men in singing, "Rally 'round the flag, boys."

The January Generals have passed beyond earth's warfare, but their memory has made the brave old month one of glorious renown, and the varying phases of its wintry days bring back to us remembrances of the valiant three, so different in their characteristics, yet united in one cause by ties stronger than life or death.

THE GIRL WHO FORGOT

By Eleanor Mercein Kelly

A BISHOP is more amusing to chase than a delivery-boy, I think, because he is fat, and puffs and wabbles so absurdly. Ours is undoubtedly the reincarnation of a pug mother used to have when pugs were in fashion. He has the same disposition, and figure, and appetite, and the same all-soul expression of the eye when he gazes at mother. I did not expect to hurt him much—I never do when I start—but callers and even delivery-boys are getting scarce, and I do so love to see people run. Everybody leaves parcels and messages with Wilhelm at the garden gate now, and life is very dull.

That afternoon I found the Bishop proposing to mother again, and also, as usual, talking about me. I listened behind a portière.

"You still refuse to think of putting her into this excellent private establishment, where she would have expert care, leaving you free to live again?" said the Bishop.

"She is just my little baby girl again," said mother. "How could I give her away to strangers?"

"Ha—a dangerous baby girl!" muttered the Bishop. "Get a sane woman companion here, at least, or you'll be going mad yourself."

"Women will not stay. It makes them nervous. You know I've always been rather a man's woman, any way, Charles," smiled mother.

The Bishop got to his feet, and puffed round the room excitedly. I quite expected him to bark.

"Oh, what a life!" he cried. "What a waste of your beauty, of your charm, of your great heart and brain! Just the keeper of a lunatic."

"Just the mother of a grown-up child," she answered. "Charles, if I have beauty and charm and heart and brain, thank God for me. I need them all. But Helen is not to be feared so long as I carry this, you know"—touching the yellow fan—"and as for women, men servants are far more satisfactory. My cook is quite wonderful, don't you think?"

"That is what I find so hard to bear—your calmness," said the Bishop wretchedly. "Can't you possibly have me, Alice? It is my calling to help carry burdens, and think how dear this one would be to me! All these years of loving you—are they to bring me nothing,

not even the joy of service? I know I'm a fat, ugly old man now, but I can diet. My heart does n't seem to have grown fat and ugly."

I peered from the portière, laughing. But tears were rolling down mother's cheeks.

"Nor your soul," she said softly, laying her slim hand on his pudgy purple one as if she liked to touch it. "Thank you, no, Charles. This is a burden I cannot share, even with you."

The Bishop blew his nose. "At least, it won't be long now," he said after awhile. "Acute dementia kills—thank God!"

I slipped out into the garden to wait, picking up a nice sharp sickle from the grass as I passed. The Bishop deserved something for making mother cry. I will not have her sad. I want her to be waiting in Heaven for me just as she is, always smiling and gay, with her pretty frocks, and the new white hair that is so beautiful a contrast to her blue, blue eyes. I often ask her how she keeps so cheerful in this tiresome, stupid world, and she says it is because of me. That is fortunate, for sad people are bad for lunatics, I have heard the doctor tell her. And she must surely be in Heaven before I get there, for strangers are bad for lunatics, too. Well, I have killed the old collie, so at least one friend will be waiting for me. And I shall kill mother the first time I find her without the yellow fan. Dear mother!

She came to the door with the Bishop. "You will not need me, I think," she said. "You are not afraid of my Helen? The gardener will take you to the gate."

I chuckled. Old Wilhelm as a body-guard! Whenever I come near him, he seizes a rake or a hoe and begins to tremble. I met them on the path. The Bishop started slightly, but took my hand.

"How beautiful you are, and how like your mother!" he said huskily. "But you look a little pale. Are you quite well?"

I smiled sweetly, and murmured, "Acute dementia kills, thank God."

The Bishop dropped my hand, and edged down the path toward Wilhelm. "Your mother wants you at the house, my child," he said.

I pretended to believe him, but when his back was turned I let out a whoop—lunatics are supposed to whoop, you know—and started after him with the sickle.

"Acute dementia kills little Bishops," I added.

"Ach, make *schnell*, sir—she excites herself!" cried Wilhelm.

It was surprising to see how fast their legs twinkled down the path, the Bishop's well ahead. He would not wait for the gate to be unlocked, but shinned up Wilhelm and clambered from his shoulders over the wall. Such a nimble old cleric! I was out of breath myself, or I should have followed him over.

"*Ach*, Miss Helen, naughty, naughty!" gasped Wilhelm, keeping a firm hold on his trusty rake. "Think shame how you the mamma's Bishop treat!"

"You should not exercise so violently. You are quite purple," I said. "Will the Bishop be coming soon again, do you think?"

"Not so!" replied Wilhelm, with conviction. What a pity! I really ought to have caught him. Perhaps the next time I shall not have a sickle.

Presently there came the moon. It seemed to call me through the garden and the wood and beyond, seeking something—I have forgotten what. And there is no beyond, only a high wall at the end of every path. When I try to remember what I am looking for, the headache comes. That means the yellow fan presently—a horrid thing of plumes that wave slowly to and fro across my face, with a great shadow following, following, upon the wall. I want to scream, to run about, to break things; but when the plumes begin to wave I have to lie rigid, watching them come and go. And beyond the plumes I see mother's quiet blue eyes, and hear her voice saying, "Careful, careful, dear. Go to sleep."

In the moonlight I sing, to amuse the people who listen on the outside of the wall. I hear them whispering there, and when I cry "Boo!" they run. So I know they are real, and not the other people who follow me everywhere, wailing and laughing and not to be frightened away. That night a sweet French song came to my mind, the kind of song that makes one pleasantly sad. "Ohé, Robert, ohé," it goes. And a soft voice answered over the wall, "Ohé, Hélène, ohé!"

My heart beat very fast. A young man swung himself down to me, so handsome and eager that I held out my arms to him in delight.

"You know me—you know me at last," he whispered, straining me close. "Oh, Helen, Helen! Was it a surprise they were keeping until to-morrow—our own day? But I have waited so long! They should have sent for me instantly. . . . Every week your dear mother has begged me to wait a little longer, for fear of the shock. I knew, I *knew*, it would be all right as soon as you saw me again. Love is better than medicine—she has forgotten that. . . . I used to follow you on the other side of the wall, just to hear your voice. Such queer, crazy little songs, darling, and children from the village listening fearfully and daring each other to call to you. Oh, it was cruel, heart-breaking! But to-night when you sang our own song so tenderly, I knew that the wall would never be between us again."

He kissed me very often. It was pleasant.

"They tell me your mind has been a perfect blank," he said presently. "What is the last thing you remember, dearest?"

"The yellow fan," I whispered, shuddering.

"Your mother was putting you to sleep with it when they made me leave you that night," he said. "That dreadful night! The delirium came very suddenly. I held you down in the bed till my strength was nearly gone—you had a knife. Then they heard me and broke in the door, and your mother laid her hand on your eyes and began to fan you with that great yellow fan, saying quietly, 'Control yourself, dear—control yourself.' I shall never forget it. One doctor thought the hypnotic movement of the fan quieted you, but I believe it was nothing except her strong will calling your poor sick mind back to sentry duty. . . . Oh, it has been so long, my wife! Do you know"—his arms tightened around me—"I had to go away from you because you wanted to kill me? It was brain-fever, of course, and the fool doctors feared insanity. Thank God they were wrong, and it's all over!"

"It is you I have been looking for whenever the moon called," I told him.

For a long time he talked to me about the things I have forgotten—our wedding, and journeys, and a baby that never came. I smoothed his hair and his face, and smiled at him, for he was more beautiful even than mother. The sickle lay beside me, and sometimes I felt its edge to be sure it was sharp enough. Dull knives hurt. I killed old Rover so nicely that he wagged his tail until the very last.

"The mound we're sitting on is Rover, you know," I mentioned presently.

"Why, the poor old fellow!" cried Robert. "I am sorry he died, though I was always a little jealous of him because you loved him so."

"I killed him because I thought he ought to be in Heaven when I get there," I explained. "And I killed the canaries, too, and tried to kill old Nurse, but she got away."

"Helen!" said my husband hoarsely. He took me by the shoulders and looked deep into my eyes. I laughed and nodded at him. His lips went gray, and he hid his face in his hands. I kissed his hair, and his fingers, and tried in every way I could to make him nice again.

"Don't be sad, beautiful man," I whispered. "Sad people are not good for lunatics. If you don't want to be dead, you shall climb back over the wall. But you would n't have long to wait," I coaxed, "and I want you more than anybody to be in Heaven when I come." I showed him the sickle. "See how nice and sharp it is," I said. "Do you care so very much to live?"

"No—my God, no!" he cried. "Kiss me, Helen."

And while I kissed him I ran the sickle quickly over each wrist. It is horrid to see the blood spurt out regularly as a clock ticks, so I put my hands over his eyes. He settled against me heavily, whispering, "Sing, dearest, sing now." I sang, "Ohé, Robert, ohé," until his

body was limp in my arms and I knew he could not hear any longer. I sang so beautifully that the people on the other side of the wall applauded.

Presently mother found us.

She sat beside my bed a long time before the fan put me to sleep. Very often she wiped dampness from her forehead, though the night seemed cool and pleasant to me.

"Do you love me, mother?" I murmured once.

"You are just my little baby girl," she answered.

"And you're always happy because of me, aren't you?" I asked.

"Go to sleep, dear," she whispered, laying across my eyes a hand that shook.

But I pushed it away, and looked at her.

"Your voice is tired," I said. "It's such a stupid world, with walls at the end of every path. Dying is very easy. Put away the fan, mother—put away the fan!"

Her eyes closed under mine, and the fan stopped waving. I thought the moment had come at last. My hands are strong, and her throat so soft and slender. One grip—

But the fan began to move again, slowly, steadily, and mother said her prayers aloud. She got as far as "Lead us not into temptation," and she repeated that over and over.



IF THE FARING FORTH WROUGHT ALL

BY MARY BYERLEY

A LITTLE of life, a little of love,
A little of joy,—little worlds to move,—
And the day is over.

A glint of the heaven that might shine through,
A little of life—so little of you
That the mountains rise and the mists renew
When the day is over.

Ah, Sweet, if the faring forth wrought all,
With the heart and breath of me ever athrall
To your beauty, Love's lover,—
Then 't were to laugh in broad, glad day,
And round up the stars, and live, I say!
For oh, if the faring forth wrought all
Day ne'er would be over!

THE LAST GREAT BIOGRAPHY

WHISTLER PERSONIFIED BY JOSEPH AND
ELIZABETH ROBINS PENNELL

By Harrison S. Morris

IF Whistler is revisiting the glimpses of the moon, whose terrestrial effects he did so much to caress into artistic permanence, he must be chuckling with his old glee over the masterly biography which his dear friends—almost his only loyal friends to the end—Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell, have just produced.

Here is, indeed, matter for delight—and perhaps revenge—to those whom the Master called “the rare few who early in life have rid themselves of the friendship of the many”—who have understood and quietly applauded, even taken contumely for their adherence,—the exclusive remnant that were steadfast in admiration of maligned genius true to beauty struggling to free a world that trampled it in the mud.

Two volumes bound in the symphony of Gold and Gray that Whistler designed for the “Gentle Art of Making Enemies”; rich in mechanical devices and opulent in pictures, hold as consummate a piece of constructive biography, as complete an embodiment of a varied and memorable character, as ever was rendered into English.

Whistler, in spite of the radiance of the lime-light, was a man of mystery. This, indeed, contributed to his celebrity. He appeared in London and startled the insular conservatives with his astonishing canvases. Where did he come from? Who was he? Why was he there? Nobody knew about his antecedents, nobody could answer. And his fellow countrymen could do little more. He testified in the Ruskin trial that he was born in St. Petersburg; he was claimed by Baltimore; Lowell, Massachusetts, was his birthplace. Like Homer, he made cities notable that even assumed his nativity; like Shakespeare, his nonage and youth were hidden.

These biographers, with exhaustless energy and intelligence that seems inspired, have run down the clues, found every living witness, made the camera do its utmost, and have opened vistas that might have been forever closed by the passage of a few more years. Houses

would have vanished, the memories of old friends would have faded; the Whistler of mystery would have endured; the misrepresentation and bitterness would have had no answer.

James Abbott McNeill Whistler is one of the everlasting names in the art of the world. As he once said to William M. Chase: "I'm not arguing; I'm telling you." It is not any longer a matter of opinion; it is a matter of fact; and the remarkable circumstances about it is that it has taken only thirty years to convince a world affronted and incensed at his art that its judgment was blindly wrong. He is an enduring witness of beauty, and our level of culture and of ideals has been forever lifted by his existence.

Hence the value of such a record—no perfunctory biography, but a living, organic realization of character, with its spots of tarnish and spots of brightness, its failings and successes, its kinks and whims and vanities just as in life they were. Here was a marked man, a personage in any age, bringing the fundamentals of art which Japan discovered and Velasquez perfected from those remoter days to our own thresholds. Every item of his personality is precious, every idiosyncrasy lends illumination to his achievements. When our far-off descendants stand in front of the "Mother," in the Louvre of that day, as we stand to-day before the treasures of the Prado, will it not be a deep satisfaction that the painter still lives in this admirable and authentic embodiment?

The Whistler thus portrayed was a two-sided person of outwardly wayward habits and inwardly keen and reflective character. Evidences of both qualities are abundantly given in every chapter, and the mingling of romance and drollery, prophetic taste, combativeness and sayings that cut like a knife, with sympathies that rushed to the aid of distress and knowledge that was deep and sure, makes reading that fastens you the page and which it is impossible to forget.

What, for instance, could be apter as a cradle for the man of destiny than the career of Whistler's father. He was a West Point graduate, who built some of our earliest railroads and was suddenly landed by the tide of progress in St. Petersburg. He built the first line in Russia and met everybody from the Czar down. His family learned Russian ways, and little Jimmy had his first drawing lessons in the Academy of Fine Arts on the Neva. Remote, indeed, from the Lowell and Stonington homes of austere angles and the society of his orthodox maternal relations. Then his sister, with romantic fitness, married the young physician, Seymour Haden, destined to become one of England's most distinguished etchers. Whistler drifted to Paris, and his life there was that of Murger's "Bohème," full of color, incident, adventure. His friends, his models, his art, are sources of endless delight, screaming farce, or overflowing wit. There is hardly

anything he did at this period which is not full of delicious fun and extravagant buffoonery. And yet he was laying the foundation of his maturer talent, and even through the glamour of his wayward, careless existence, there are spots of solid thinking and well directed energy. After a while the scene shifts to London, and the practical jokes become passages of wit and droll stories. These, every reader of the biography will look for, and he will not be disappointed. The measure is full and running over, new stories told as if by phonograph, with the familiar accent and the irritating laugh. What could better render the butterfly spirit than this, showing how he had hung the pictures in the Liverpool Exhibition of 1891:

You know the Academy baby by the dozens had been sent in and I got them all in my gallery—and in the centre, at one end, I placed the birth of the baby—splendid—and opposite, the baby with the mustard pot, and opposite that the baby with the puppy—and in the centre, on one side, the baby ill, doctor holding pulse, mother weeping. On the other side, by the door, the baby dead—the baby's funeral—baby from the cradle to the grave—baby in heaven—babies of all kinds and shapes all along the line, not crowded, you know, hung with proper respect for the baby. And on varnishing day, in came the artists—each making for his own baby—amazing! his baby on the line—nothing could be better! And they all shook my hand, and thanked me—and went to look—at the other men's babies—and then they saw babies in front of them, babies behind them, babies to right of them, babies to left of them. And then—you know—their faces fell—they did n't seem to like it—and—well—ha! ha! they never asked me to hang the pictures again at Liverpool! What!

And how droll is the little dinner to the solemn buyer, who had to be tolerated as a matter of business:

Mr. Freer felt it necessary to entertain the party, which he did by talking pictures, like a "new critic," and Japanese prints like a cultured schoolma'am. Whistler slept peacefully through it all, and we tried to be attentive, until at length, at some psychological moment in Hiroshige's life or in Mr. Freer's collection, Whistler snored such a tremendous snore that he woke himself up, crying: "Good Heavens! who is snoring?"

Light and shade follow each other over the pages in startling succession, and many emotions are excited by the vicissitudes of a career so comic, so noble; but through it all the dapper and delightful little Butterfly flutters in the security of a spirit that knows and loves beauty and that has found the touchstone of the elevated life: Taste.

Taste is probably the epitaph he himself would prefer. And by that hackneyed word, meaning perhaps the rarest quality in modern life, Whistler, of all others, seems unreservedly to be characterized.

THE HONOR OF THE CHAPTER

By J. R. Fisher

“O H-O-O-O! Jimmy Wallace!”
I looked up from my economics. The hail came from up-stairs, from the care-free top floor. I started from my chair. Inclination said, “Go and smoke a pipe with the gang;” but Duty, reënforced by my fear of the impending examinations, held me back. I wavered a moment, then the voice of Duty prevailed. I sank back into my chair, fixed my tired, rebellious eyes on the book, and once more tried to grasp the effect of immigration on the standard of living.

“Oh-o-o-o! Jimmy Wallace, come up here!”

Again I wavered. Inclination gained. A breath of warm intoxicating spring air blew through the window and turned the scale. “I really might as well see what they want,” I thought. “I’ll study all the better for a little rest.” Inclination galloped home; Fear of the Finals a bad second; Sense of Duty left at the post. I picked up my favorite pipe and hurried up-stairs.

The gang was assembled in Fusser Parsons’s room, but that Mecca of the frivolous lacked its usual charm. A general air of desolation was all-pervading. One gas-jet flickered dimly on the lavishly decorated walls, where pennants, keepsakes, dance-cards, trophies, showing dimly in the half-light, intensified the gloom with their reminder of happier days gone by. Johnson, looking as if in him were centred all the sorrow of the universe, perched on the desk, hugging one knee; on the window-seat Kid Williams was dejectedly rolling a cigarette; and Parsons, his usually smiling face furrowed with dogged, unavailing thought, stood before the unlit grate, his hands deep in his trousers pockets. From the mantel behind him a row of young ladies’ photographs smiled frigidly down, each seeming to take a cynical enjoyment in the depression of her sometime worshiper. He greeted me abruptly: “Got any money, Jimmy?”

“Not to speak of,” I confessed. “But I’ll stand for the beer if that’ll do. What’s the matter? They can’t any more than flunk you. Go get us something, Kid! Here’s the widow’s mite;” and I tossed my last remaining half-dollar to Williams.

"Beer be hanged!" broke in Parsons. "But you might as well get some, Kid. It is n't the finals. We're in an awful hole. Lend me twenty dollars!"

I settled myself among the cushions in the big Morris chair and leisurely lit my pipe. "I'll wait till you wake up, Fusser," I answered, between puffs. "Would n't I be *likely* to have twenty dollars two weeks before class day? That half is the last real money I'll see until I sell my stuff to get out of town. Can't you raise anything on the Campus?"

My innocent question seemed to annoy Johnson—he threw a magazine at me. "College!" he snorted. "Why, I never met such a cheap crowd in my life. I've been up there all day, and there is n't a dollar-bill that is n't nailed fast. Oh, we've tried college, and it's no use."

"Well, then, pawn something," I ventured.

"Pawn what, you drooling jackass?" yelled Parsons. "Know any one who'll take old dance-cards as security? How much can you raise on two Ingersolls and a busted stop-watch? Pawn your dressing-gown, fat-head! If that's all you can think of, go back and grind. Besides, it's too late; we need it first thing in the morning. See here, Jimmy, have n't you *any* money?"

I went through my pockets methodically. "I seem to have just thirty-five cents, and I need that for car-fare—I'm going over to see Miss Warren off in the morning."

Parsons came across the room and sat on the arm of my chair. "That's just it, Jimmy, that's the trouble," he said, with intense seriousness. "I'm going over, too. We've simply got to send her flowers. We all come in on it. How are we going to raise the money?"

"We are n't. We can't do it," I said. "I've thought it all over. I'd like to send her something—she's been awfully good to me this winter—but I can't manage it. That settles it as far as I go."

"That's the first sensible word I've heard to-night," boomed a deep voice from the sofa, as Billy Brown rolled his six-foot-two body free from the fancy presentation cushions and sat up. "That's what I've said all along. We'd like to send her something, and we ought to, but we can't. We've done our best, so what's the use fuming? Wish the Kid would come back with that beer. You chumps can't see when you're beat, and when a chap talks sense to you you sit on him. She won't know the difference—she'll get lots of flowers."

Parsons jumped up and stamped across the room, kicking the litter of books, shoes, and papers out of his way. "Oh, you make me tired!" he snapped. "Of course she'll get lots of flowers—that's the very reason why we've got to send her some ourselves. Have n't you any fraternity pride? The Alpha Gamma crowd is sending her a peach. I was in Morton's to-day, trying to get him to trust me, and Billy Lea

blew in and ordered a box of American beauties sent to the ship. What do you think of that? Marion Warren's been our frat sister all winter, she came to both the dances, she poured at the reception, she's wearing my frat pin now, we've sponged on her for tea two or three times a week all spring. Now she's going to Europe, and the Alpha Gam bunch, that she's only known two weeks, are putting up for roses, while we are n't sending a thing. What's she going to think of us? That we're a lot of short skates! And we are, if we don't make good. It's a question of the honor of the chapter, and you fellows are laying down without half trying."

Brown pulled thoughtfully on his wheezy brier. "Well, why did n't you borrow from Billy Lea? The Alpha Gams seem to have money." He dodged, expecting battle to follow the suggestion—a show of prosperity to our rivals was the first article of our creed—but Parsons was too wrought up even to notice. Encouraged by his immunity, Brown went on: "You fellows have been talking rot all evening. Fraternity rivalry's all right in its place, and Marion Warren's a bully fine girl. No one would like to send her off in style better than I. I'd go over and see her off only I've an exam. She's a nice girl, and she's been pretty good to us, and she's a lot too good a sort to rate fellows by what they give her. Hurray! here comes the Kid with the beer!"

Kid Williams came in, loaded with cheese, rye bread, and an innocent looking kerosene can, dedicated to the carrying of intoxicants back in the days of puritanical dormitory blue-laws, before there was a chapter-house; and his coming scattered the gloom. Brown reached down the steins from the mantelpiece, I made sandwiches, and Johnson produced cigarettes from a cunningly hidden cache behind the book-case. Parsons alone refused to drown his sorrow. He did not join the circle round the table, but, with folded arms, leaned against the wall and scowled at us.

We all felt a bit nervous under the disdainful scrutiny of our acknowledged leader, I think, but with Billy Brown, heterodox though he was, filling the steins, flesh and blood refused to struggle longer with hopeless wearying subjects. After all, Brown was right. We had done our best—and we were very thirsty. What use to lament the inevitable? We drank the historic first toast with enthusiasm. "To the future of the Faculty!" we chorused. Each of us emptied his stein, banged it on the table, and pointed in a direction exactly opposite to the one where heaven is supposed to lie. Then we settled down and Johnson began to tune his mandolin. This was too much for the neglected chieftain. Disdaining even to glance at the stein we offered him, he stalked across the room to the door. There he turned and faced us.

"You fellows may forget the honor of the chapter," he said, "but I don't. I'll either show up with a decent send-off to-morrow or I won't be there at all. I'm going out now. Amuse yourselves all you want to."

We looked at each other a little ashamed. Down-stairs a door slammed. The Kid went to the window and watched him down the street. "I wonder what he means to do," he mused.

"Perhaps he's going to burgle the Alpha Gam house," suggested Brown. "Fusser's all right, but he takes life too seriously."

"Well, whatever he does, I bet he does it! He never falls down when he really tries," cried Johnson, with all the enthusiasm of a disciple. "Everybody in this!" He struck a chord and broke into a familiar tune.

We sang the Stein Song, or at least we tried to—its range hardly fits the untrained voices of American youth. The "good song" rang anything but "clear," and we were all relieved when Billy Brown, unaspiring and practical, took the mandolin. He played an air that we all knew, unknown to fame, uncertain of origin, but offering unequalled opportunities for what the college man considers "close harmony." It runs, as nearly as I can reproduce it, as follows:

"A-n-d I s-a-a-w the f-i-e-l-d-s of cot-ton, and f-a-a-c-e-s long f-o-r-got-ten;
I s-a-a-w-my d-e-a-r-old Moth—er stand-ingby the cabin door.
A-n-d the e-e-v'ning bells were ring—ing, fond rec-olec-tion bring—ing,
I s-a-a-w it i-i-n the m-o-o-o-n light—long—l-o-n-g—a-go."

Thirsty from our exertion, we sought refreshment, but the can was empty. Brown tucked the pick away among the strings, yawned, looked at his watch. "Do you fellows know it's half past one? Guess I'll turn in. I've an exam."

"So've I. Do you know anything about History 1, Johnson?" asked the Kid anxiously.

Johnson stood up and stretched himself before answering, "Only that I'll never pass it. Neither will you. Denison always flunks freshmen on principle. This makes my third whack at it. I'll be with you in the morning, Kid. We'll go under together. Give my regards to Miss Warren, Jimmy. So long, every one," and the party broke up.

Stewards, officers, porters, parcel-laden tourists, were rushing to and fro in a mad, hurrying disorder; raucously tooting tug-boats all but drowned the undercurrent of explosive Platt-Deutsch objurgation: everything was confusion and excitement as I stood by the gang-plank saying good-by to Miss Warren.

This ceremony was not altogether as I had imagined it. In fancy we had stood apart from the crowd, somewhere in the bow of the ship, and I, resplendent in a new spring suit, had delivered in felicitous set-phrases the official farewell of the chapter; but though the reality with its hurried good-by, shared with half a dozen of her girl friends, was by no means so impressive a scene, I was far from sorry I had come. Never, it seemed to me, had she looked prettier than she did now in her natty sailor suit and tam-o'-shanter. I thought higher of Parsons's discernment. She was indeed a girl to break all the commandments for.

The gong had sounded, and she was giving us a last hurried handshake. She was wearing our fraternity pin—Fusser's pin. Lucky Fusser! My heart swelled with pride as I noticed it. But the pin was holding a rose. "One of Lea's roses," I thought. "One of the Alpha Gams' roses," and the sight made my blood boil with the angry mortification of defeat. Up to the last moment I had put a blind desperate hope in Parsons. It was too late now. For once the infallible had failed.

Miss Warren held out both her hands to me. "Well, good-by, Mr. Wallace. Good luck in your finals. I'm awfully glad you came over. I was afraid the exams would keep all the boys away. Give my very best to all the chapter, and tell Mr. Parsons what I think of him for saying he'd be here and then not coming."

Here was my chance to sidetrack Alpha Gamma. I took it at a gulp. "He'll be mighty sorry," I said. "He left the house in plenty of time, but he was going to stop and get some flowers for you. That must have delayed him."

Miss Warren flushed. "How kind of him! I wish he had n't waited, though. I'd rather have seen him than get any number of flowers, but it was nice of him to think of it. You tell him the chapter sister is going to wear his pin all over Europe. Tell him—no, I'll send him a letter by the pilot. Oh, hurry, Mr. Wallace! They're going to take in the gang-plank!"

I ran quickly down to the dock. The plank was run in, the hawsers cast off, and, amid much waving of handkerchiefs, cheering, and tooting of whistles, the big ocean steamer began to back slowly out into the river. I waved my hat; Miss Warren waved her handkerchief. Suddenly I saw her start, turn, and point to the shore. I looked, but the river wall cut off my view. From her higher position she could look over it, and something beyond seemed to excite her immensely. She leaned over the rail and called to me. Above the din of the whistles I caught only one word: "Parsons!" Could it be Fusser she saw? I sprang clear of the crowd and looked back along the pier. No! It could n't be. Yes! Perhaps. There was a black patch against

the glaring sunlight of the entrance. I strained my eyes. It was a man running at top speed. He was a long way off, but coming nearer as fast as his frantically moving legs could carry him. I looked back at the ship. It was going out faster; only the tip of the bow now showed through the opening in the wall of the dock. Leaning over the extreme end of the railing, I saw Miss Warren, breathless, expectant. I looked back to the runner. Yes, Heaven be thanked! it was Parsons. His long tan rain-coat trailed out behind him in the air, one hand clutched his straw hat. In the other was a big oblong box. He had not failed. By some miracle he had got the roses. But would he make it? Perhaps. He was close to me now, I could see his drawn face blotched with exertion. Some one in the crowd grasped the situation and began to cheer. Now he was abreast of me. "To the end of the dock!" I yelled, and together we sped in a last grand sprint to the end of the pier. Parsons is our quarter-miler, but excitement lent me wings, and I beat him to the gateway. Just as I flashed into the sunlight I heard a shout behind me and spun around. His foot had struck a coil of rope, he was staggering, and, even as I looked, he fell with a crash. His hat flew into a pile of freight, but the precious box slid along the planks to my very feet. I snatched it up. The ship was far out now, but not for nothing had I trained for the hammer-throw. Grasping it firmly by one end, I whirled it twice around my head, then, with my arms extended, swung my whole body. Twice I pivoted, every muscle keyed to the utmost endeavor, and as I came round the third time I put every ounce of heave I possessed into my arms and launched the box like a projectile after the receding ship. Away it flew in a glorious parabola. It reached, and my yell of victory was echoed by the admiring crowd. I saw a steward pick it up, saw Miss Warren claim it and wave her handkerchief to me; then a heavy hand clutched my shoulder and, turning, I looked into Parsons's white, scared face.

"Run!" he gasped. There was fear in his eyes, and I obeyed without question. If we had run before, now we fairly flew. His breath was coming in quick gasps, and his head was sawing the air with exhaustion, but he led me furiously down the dock, across the yard, out into the street. On we tore, block after block. At last endurance could stand it no more; we shot through the gate of a beer garden and fell exhausted on a bench. I got my breath first.

"What's the matter?" I panted. "I got it on board all right."

"Yes, I know. That's it. We're ruined."

I stared at him dumfounded.

"It's all over now," he went on. "We'd better not tell the bunch." The words came slowly as he gasped for breath. "I could n't get any flowers. Tried to bluff it out. Hunted up one of the old boxes—the

ones the dance decorations came in. Waited half an hour for the ship to start. I meant to heave it short into the water, but my foot slipped."

"And I threw it on board!" I groaned. "What was in it, Fusser?"

"Nothing but some old newspapers and half a brick to make it sink. Let's go home."

We never have told the fellows. We never even speak of it to each other. But I think Miss Warren must have kept her word about writing with the pilot, for the next day Fusser Parsons was again wearing his fraternity pin.



BRAINS

By Thomas L. Masson

BRAINS are common to all parts of the country, and traces of them have even been discovered in summer in Lenox, Bar Harbor, and Newport. They are originally used to obtain money, but when money is obtained by them it usually takes their place.

The quality of brains varies in different localities. Mixed with ginger, they become very valuable. With a spine, they are a necessity in every household. At one time they influenced literature, but the discovery was made that literature could do without them. Since then they have been almost exclusively devoted to advertising.

Brains are employed in various enterprises. They make bridges, railroads, and other systems of transportation. They also create capital and are used extensively in evading the law. They mix with water and gasoline, but are absorbed by alcohol.

Brains are bought and sold in the open market. They may be traded in on the exchange, in Washington and Albany or in other political centres.

The best quality, however, are not traded in. Indeed, oftentimes they are not even heard of until long after they have passed away.

THE WOMAN WHO HAD NO NEEDS

AN EMOTIONAL MONOTONE

By Jane Belfield

HE was so very sorry for everybody's troubles that he walked through his own little plot of ground unseeing. When he found his neighbors' fences badly in need of repair, their gardens overgrown with weeds, their children neglected, he was sure the good folk did not know the right way, and he felt within himself the power to help them towards better things.

So keenly alive had the man become to the ignorance, the misfortune, on all sides, that he could scarcely allow himself a moment of rest. The haunting consciousness of the pain of the world rose between his eye and the pages of his book. He saw it in the flowing stream—felt it in the sunlight—listened for its insistent reminder in every strain of music. The realization of the suffering of the many gripped his very soul and would not loose its hold.

How dared he let himself go even into slumber, when perhaps a projected thought of his might lighten the load?

At break of day he knocked on his neighbor's door, at noon he carried food and water to those who toiled in the fields. The sick, the aged, the stricken, watched for his ministrations; but still the knowledge of others' misery robbed the man of peace.

"There must be something more that I can do." He spoke restlessly to her who dwelt ever by his side; and the woman with ready sympathy glanced up from weeding their own garden-plot.

"Surely not, beloved; surely you are doing enough. You are but one man—God cares for the world!"

"But through us. Ah—now I understand! The talent he entrusted to me! The gift of song—I will lift up my voice by the wayside!"

Then the man left the woman weeding their garden and stood without the gate, and as he lifted up his voice in song, those who passed by stopped to listen, whispering one to the other,

"What manner of man is this, and what is the burden of his song?"

"Do you not hear the message?" The woman lifted her head a moment and spoke to those who gathered around the singer. "He sings of the pain of the world."

"Yes, we hear," answered the toilers. "This is he who brought us water at noon-day;" and one who was blind crept nearer to clasp the hand of the singer.

"He is from the Master—the song is for us—he understands!"

And from that time many of those who came to listen to the song dwelt with the singer. She who labored in the garden-plot ministered unto all.

Then it was that a sudden inspiration came to the man. He saw himself as in a vision gathering the army of the desolate and going upon a great pilgrimage. Banded thus, they would be strong to carry the message of deliverance to those who suffered in other lands.

Thereupon early and late the man sang by the wayside and a great light shone in his eyes as the company of those who were to fare forth with him grew into a mighty throng.

"But you are destroying yourself," the woman pleaded; "you are worn to a shadow—you never sleep. It is too great a price to pay, beloved. God does not ask so much from one man. You cannot carry the whole world. Think of yourself!"

"Afterwards," he answered steadfastly, "afterwards I will rest."

The woman's eye wandered sorrowfully over their little plot of ground which all her efforts could scarcely keep clear of encroaching weeds.

"Beloved," she faltered, "we are a part of the rest—you and I."

"I am a child of God." He glanced where the road wound towards the sunset. "I must fare forth!"

So he gathered his neighbors, and with the company of those who had listened to his song, they left their own gardens and went rejoicing upon the great pilgrimage.

Now many years passed ere the man returned again to his own. He had succeeded, according unto the measure of his hope,—he had helped to lift the burden of the world. Therefore did his voice ring out joyously as at the head of the pilgrim army he was borne with shouts of triumph along the familiar road—hailed as a savior of men!

Eagerly among the welcoming multitude his eye sought her who once had dwelt by his side. Brightly and with confidence his thoughts returned at last to the one who had made no demands upon them—the woman who had no needs—yet she came not forth to greet him!

Now the pilgrims passed a garden-plot choked with weeds and wild grasses. Once there had been a hedge, but now the thick underbrush grew out into the highway and the tangled trees hid the home-

stead. Yet something strangely familiar about the neglected garden half awakened fragrant memories stifled in the stress of later years. The leader spoke to those who bore him and all that mighty throng surged and pressed against the hedge—yet the woman came not forth.

“*Where is she?*” the man cried in sudden, dreadful doubt—and through the host a murmur swept and swelled, “*Where is she?*”

But ere the echo of that cry had hushed an aged wayfarer tottered from the deserted garden and the multitude listened as their leader sprang to embrace him:

“Father—Father! Lean on me!”

“At last, my son!” the old man faltered. “At last—and alas, my son!”

“But, Father! Why do you weep? Behold the vast company of the saved!”

The old man turned his face sorrowfully towards the garden choked with weeds. “I see only this plot,” he murmured brokenly. “Here have I dwelt these many years.”

“Dwelt—*here?*” the other repeated in bewilderment. “No—but in thy home—and with her who always kept the garden well. Why is not she too here to welcome? Why do you not both rejoice with me, Father, in this my hour? Waste no more thought on this plot of weeds. To-morrow we will find the owner of the garden and help him restore his home.”

“Too late, my son! Have you indeed forgotten? The man whose home *it was* is here.”

“What! The plot is yours, dear Father?”

“Poor boy!” The old man fell upon his son’s neck and clasped him close. “After all, only my poor boy—blind to his own! How we both have loved you—she and I. The plot is yours, my son!”

The singer shook with sudden fear and strained forward, peering into the dense foliage.

“Father!” he gasped in trembling anguish. “*Where—is—she?*”

The old man drew himself upright, leaning both hands upon his staff. “While her strength lasted, she kept the garden well, as you have said, my son; and when her strength was gone”—he led the man by a twisted path deep into the heart of the underbrush—“she waited for you—here.”

Blindly the singer stumbled into the little clearing and cast his eyes shudderingly to the ground. In agonized memory, he who went forth to save the world fell upon the grave that marked the spot where once his home—and *hers*—had stood.

How many years—how many years since he had left his own!

“Beloved,” she had faltered on this very spot, “we are a part of the

rest—you and I. You are destroying yourself. It is too great a price to pay!”

And he had answered, obsessed only by his mission, “Afterwards—I will rest.”

Afterwards! Was this their *afterwards*? The murmur of the multitude reëchoed in his stricken heart, “*Where is she?*”

The man stretched wide his arms over the mound. “‘It is too great a price to pay, beloved.’ . . . Ah, verily I know—I know! My empty heart bears witness for the heart I set at naught—too great a price, beloved—even for the pain of the whole world!”



WHEN A GREAT MAN DIES

BY CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

THE flags are hung half-mast to-day,
But they'll all be high to-morrow!
This is the big world's cruel way,
Ah! this is how we sorrow!

A moment's grief, a brief delay
From plough and field and furrow—
The flags are hung half-mast to-day,
But they'll all be high to-morrow!

We mourn one hour, we pause to pray
(Sad prayers that we must borrow!)
One little while we softly say
Poor words of pain and sorrow;
The flags are hung half-mast to-day,
But they'll all be high to-morrow.



MAN, MERE MAN

FLATTERY is a counterfeit that vanity cashes.

PUBLICLY to praise a noble deed is to take part in it.

THE average man feels innocent of any crime of which he cannot be convicted.

A WISE and brave man may thrive on ill-luck; a fool may drift to disaster on a tide of fortune.

Peter Pry Shevlin



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

FEED THE CHILDREN

NEWSPAPERS and charitable institutions in all our large cities agree that there are hundreds and thousands of children who go to school unfed or ill-fed, to say nothing of those babies not included in the school census, and yet there seems to be a remarkable impotency in dealing with the question. To speak figuratively, we stand around sucking our thumbs like befogged imbeciles.

As fast as some remedy is suggested, some one offers an objection, whereupon we forget the children and take up the pros and cons. If it is suggested to give them food, some one objects that that would pauperize them or that in this way children who did not deserve food might get it. For that matter, all children deserve food, whether their parents are intemperate and improvident or not.

If it is suggested to provide for them out of the public treasury, some eminent attorney or legislator, as shrewd as he is heartless, objects that such a method is illegal. At other suggestions, so-called professional charity-dispensers object that the suggestions are not scientifically formulated.

Rot! It is strange that we, as a people, cannot attack a question directly, without beating around the bush, without ceremony and red-tape. A hungry child cannot wait until its case is carried up to the Supreme Court. A hungry child wants food and wants it quick. The thing to do is to get the food.

Where shall we get it? Wherever it happens to be. How shall we pay for it? Never mind. We'll settle that later. We have all winter for that.

That's the way they did it in San Francisco at the time of the earthquake. That's the way we did it when there was a famine in China. That's the way we do it after every big calamity or holocaust. The first thing we do on such occasions is to deliver the goods. The question of pay does n't primarily enter. A well-fed child, however, is a good investment for the future. We can wait for the dividends.

Like those instances, this is an emergency calling, not for debate, but for emergency measures. Laws are as sand in the face of an emergency. These children must be fed, whether they are black or white, Catholics, Jews, Protestants or infidels, foreign or native. They are the next generation. They are our successors. Upon them is the burden of the race. As the twig is bent, the tree's inclined. As the child is well nourished, it will grow into beautiful manhood and womanhood. If it is neglected, it will grow into ugly brutehood, and all society will suffer as a consequence, you and I and our children.

Feed the children. Don't stand around asking how. If your house were afire, you would not call an investigation committee to discuss the best way of putting it out. You would turn in the alarm and go to work. Whether you had ever thought much about fires or not, you would attack that fire instantly, with whatever knowledge you already had at hand. You would know enough at least to throw on water. From a scientific standpoint, you might make mistakes, but the fear of mistakes never justified any man in supine indifference. We all make mistakes, all the time. We learn by our mistakes.

So with the children. What they need is food. No mistake about that, and we cannot make a mistake if we get it to them in a hurry. Many of them need warm clothing and a corner near a hot stove besides. Let the authorities provide these things. Do it now. Later we can tell where the mistakes were, and we can do better next time.

When we had a panic in Wall Street our national authorities took \$150,000,000 out of the public treasury and rushed it to New York. The act was not sanctioned by law, but it was supposed to be for the public good. Perhaps it was and perhaps it was not. But the point is, that it was an emergency, and the authorities did the obvious thing without thought of law. What the banks needed was money. Let the authorities do the obvious thing now. What the children, the little, helpless, blameless children, need is food. They can't wait. The house is afire. Get the food to them. There is plenty to be had. Borrow, beg, or steal it and give it to them. Don't stand on ceremony. Feed the children.

ELLIS O. JONES

THE BLIND SPOT

IN all vision there is a blind spot; every savant is a fool upon some topic. This is exemplified by the readiness with which the most astute business and professional man will dabble in speculation—such as mining and allurements similar.

What man of ordinary common-sense would think of buying a house which he had never seen and his agent had never seen; or a horse, or a gun, or almost anything into which he is putting money, without privilege of examination and expectation of using that privilege? And yet the majority of men will invest, "sight unseen," as the boys say, in a mine, in an oil well, in a rubber plantation, merely upon the word of a machine-made prospectus.

Somehow, ninety-nine out of a hundred men who thus invest, as a side issue, seem to anticipate that chance will overlook their utter disregard of business principles, and will work a miracle in their favor. They go upon the theory "A fool for luck." This is why speculation of this nature is fallen into evil ways, and why a gold mine so often proves a gold brick.

The public has itself to blame. Mines, oil-wells, rubber plantations, can be made sources of profit, and are made sources of profit; but they should not be played as one plays a slot-machine.

EDWIN L. SABIN

ON THE MAKING OF GOOD RESOLUTIONS

THE gibes of the comic papers have gone far towards bringing into disfavor the good old custom of "turning over a new leaf" on the first of the year. Yet, taken all in all, was n't the making of good resolutions on this day of days a good thing for everybody? Of course there was much backsliding—to err has not ceased to be human—but most of the resolutions were adhered to at least for a time, during which the makers were in all probability the better therefor. So don't hesitate to make good resolutions New Year's time. One good one would be, not to encourage other people to break theirs.

R. T. H.



LIPPINCOTT'S
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LANIER OF THE CAVALRY
OR
A WEEK'S ARREST

BY

GENERAL CHARLES KING

Author of "The Colonel's Daughter," "Captain Blake," etc.

I.

THE sun was sinking low beyond the ford of the foaming Platte. The distant bluffs commanding the broad valley of the Sweet-water stood sharp and clear against the westward skies. The smoke from the camp-fires along the stream rose in misty columns straight aloft, for not so much as a breath of breeze had wafted down from the far snow fields of Cloud Peak, or the sun-sheltered rifts of the Big Horn. The flag at the old fort, on the neighboring height, clung to the staff with scarcely a flutter, awaiting the evening salute of the trumpets and the roar of the sunset gun.

The long June day had seemed unusually, unconscionably long to the young girl flitting restlessly about the vine-covered porch of the roadside cottage. She laid the big binocular aside, for perhaps the twentieth time within the hour, with a sigh of impatience, a piteous quiver about the pretty, rosebud mouth, a wistful, longing look in the dark and dreamy eyes. Ever since stable call, and her father's departure to his never-neglected duty, she had hovered about that shaded nook, again and again searching the northward slopes and ridges. The scouts had been in three hours ago, reporting the squadron only a mile or so behind. It should have dismounted, unsaddled, fed, watered, and groomed by this time, and Rawdon should have been here at her side—

Rawdon, whom she had not seen for three mortal days—Rawdon, whom, for three mortal weeks before the march, she had not missed seeing sometimes several times a day, even when he was on guard—Rawdon, whom she had never set eyes on before the first of April, and whom now she looked upon as the foremost soldier of the regiment, when in point of fact he was but a private trooper, serving the first part of his first enlistment, in the eyes of his elders a mere recruit, and in those of Sergeant Fitzroy an unspeakable thing.

Another long peep through the signal glasses, another sigh, and then she came, this girl of seventeen in her dainty white frock, and plumped herself dejectedly down on the top step, with two very shapely, slender, slippered feet displayed on the second below, two dimpled elbows planted on her knees, two flushed, soft, rounded cheeks buried in two long and slender hands. Away over at the stables she could hear the tap, tap, of curry-comb on brush-back, as the First Squadron groomed its fidgety mounts. Away up the valley the voices of the children in the Arapahoe village rose gleefully on the air. Away up among the barracks and quarters at the fort, the band of the Infantry was playing sweet melody. Peace, content, and harmony were round-about her, but the dark eyes, welling with unshed tears, told of a troubled heart.

And then of a sudden the tears were dashed away and the girl sprang to her feet. A blithe voice hailed her from within.

“Dey ’s comin’, Miss Dora—two on ’em, at least—like enough to be twin brudders.”

The girl ran to the northward corner again and gazed out across the rushing, swollen river. Not so much as a sign of a dust-cloud to tell of marching cavalry, and she turned again, with rebuke ready on her tongue, but again the voice from within:

“Comin’ t’other way, chile. Must ha’ took the lower fohd and rode roun’ back o’ de stables,” and, with the words, a laughing “mammy” came bustling to the front door, a cool white pitcher in one hand, a tray with glasses in the other.

“Ah know well ’nuff what brings de lieutenant round dis way. As for dat—*trash*—wid him”—and here came a chuckle of delight at her own wit—“he just cain’t help hisself.” But Dora was not listening. Light as a bird she had flown to the other end of the porch and was gazing out through the honeysuckles with all her soul in her eyes.

Coming up the slope at easy canter rode a young officer, with broad-brimmed hat and dusty field dress, alert, slender, sinewy, of only medium height and not more than twenty-five years, with a handsome, sun-tanned, smiling face, a picture of healthful, wholesome young manhood, and behind him, at the regulation distance, came what Aunt Chloe, in her “danky” dialect, more than once had declared “the very

spit of him"—a young trooper in similar slouch hat and dusty field dress, younger, probably, by three or four years, but to the full as alert and active, as healthful and wholesome to look at, his face now all aglow with a light that was sweet for girlish eyes to see.

The leader swung his hat and blithely shouted as he curbed his eager horse. "Howdy, Miss Dora. Bless your heart, Aunt Chlo, I knew you 'd have the buttermilk ready! No, Rawdon, I shan't dismount"—this to the young "orderly," who had sprung from saddle and, with his rein over his arm, stood ready to take that of his officer. "Merciful saints! but is n't that good after thirty miles of alkali!" He had swallowed a brimming goblet of the cool, refreshing drink, and Chloe was delightedly refilling. "Father home, Miss Dora?" he went on cheerily.

"Over at stables, Mr. Lanier," was the smiling answer. The face of the girl was sunshine and roses now, yet merely a glance or two had passed, for Trooper Rawdon had instantly swung once more into saddle and was reining back to his place.

"Stables going *yet*? Why, I thought it must be supper time. Colonel sent me ahead to find him. Three of 'E' Troop horses act like they 'd been eating loco-weed. That's what kept us."

"Colonel Button's always findin' some way of sendin' you in ahaid, Marse Lanier," grinned Chloe. "Ah don't wonder dey says *you* can do anything you like an' never get hauled up for it."

"You're a gossip, Auntie," laughed Lanier. "The colonel would cinch me quick as the next man if I happened to rub his fur the wrong way. One more swig now and I'm off. Tastes almost like the South again, does n't it?"

"Lak de *Souf!*" Aunt Chloe bristled, indignant. "Sho! Dat's no more lak de buttermilk *we* makes dan dat ar' hawse is lak de racers at Belle Mead. Cows got to have white clover, Marse Lanier, an' white clover don't grow in dis Gawd fohsaken country."

"It's good all the same. Thank you heartily, Miss Dora. You, too, Auntie. Er—Rawdon, you dismount and wait for Doctor Mayhew in case I miss him. Give him the colonel's message and say the squadron should be in by 7.30." And with that and a wave of his hand and a smiling good-night, he took the rein of the troop horse and away they sped to the stables.

Then Chloe vanished opportunely. The young trooper stood one instant looking gratefully after his officer and those curvetting steeds, eager to reach their home and supper. Dora, with glistening eyes and glowing cheeks, retreated within the shelter of the bowered porch. Then, bounding up the steps and turning with outstretched arms, thither Rawdon followed.

Ten minutes later, at swift trot, came a third horse and rider,

the horse all that a cavalry horse should be in gait and build, the rider well nigh as marked in build and proportions. He, too, was well-made and muscular, though somewhat heavy and stocky; he was as soldierly, if not as young, as the two so recently there in saddle. It was the face that repelled, for it was black with wrath and suspicion. In front of the little cottage of the veterinary surgeon he hurriedly dismounted, threw the reins over the post at the horse-block, and strode, angering, through the gate. The murmur of blissful voices had ceased at first sight of him. Dora, her face paling, met him at the head of the steps.

Hardly noticing her by look or word, he brushed by, turned sharp to his left, and in an instant the two men were face to face.

"Rawdon," spoke the new-comer, his tone curt, domineering, insolent, "what do you mean by letting an officer lead your horse to stables? Go you to yours at once! Take my horse, too, and groom *him*."

Rawdon flushed to his forehead, said not a word, came forth into the light, and then turned squarely.

"My orders were from Lieutenant Lanier, sergeant, and they were distinctly to stop here."

"Go you at once and do as I say," was the instant rejoinder, and the veins in the sergeant's face were swelled almost to bursting. His eyes were fiery, his lips were quivering in his wrath.

"Indeed, Sergeant Fitzroy," began the girl rebukefully, "those were Lieutenant Lanier's orders."

"Hang Lieutenant Lanier's orders! No stripling sub can give such orders in this regiment. How dare you delay there? Go, you townskip, or I'll kick you through the——"

But now with blazing eyes Dora Mayhew threw herself in front of him. Tall, lithe, and slender herself, she seemed just the height of the young trooper she defended. "If you raise hand or foot against Rawdon, Sergeant Fitzroy, it's the last time you come inside our gate. No, I'll *not* stand aside! Before you strike him you'll have to strike me."

And then and there Sergeant Fitzroy realized that the fears and forebodings of the past month were more than grounded. If angered before, he was maddened now. Brushing her light form aside with one sweep of his powerful arm, he sprang forward at the young soldier's throat just as a tall, lean man, with grizzled beard but athletic build, bounded up the steps and caught his wrist.

"None of that in my house, Fitzroy!" came the order, stern and compelling. "In God's name, what does this mean?" And, still grasping the sergeant's arm, the speaker, with his face nearly as white as his stable frock, fairly backed the raging Englishman against the wooden pillar and held him there.

"Let go, Mayhew!" raved the sergeant. "I've ordered that young rip to stables, and he refuses to go."

"He was ordered to stay, papa, until you came," protested Dora, her eyes ablaze. "Lieutenant Lanier—that man's superior officer—gave him the colonel's message to you."

"He was ordered to go by Lieutenant Lanier's superior, the officer-of-the-day, whom I represent," was Fitzroy's answer; "and the longer he stays the worse 't will be for him."

"No officer ever authorized you to come to my quarters and lay violent hands on a man behaving like a gentleman, which *you* are not," was the cutting rejoinder of the older man, and it stung Fitzroy to fresh fury. Was he, the model rider of the regiment, to be braved like this, and in presence of the girl he loved?

"Let go! You *must*, Mayhew!" he hissed through clenched teeth. "You have no authority. You are only a civilian. You can be broke and fired if I report this—outrage—and what I know. Let go!" he shouted, freeing himself by furious effort. "Now, you, Rawdon, come with me. No. Stop! Corporal Watts!" he shouted, to a non-commissioned officer, swinging up the pathway toward the guard-house on the bluff, four men of the guard at his back. "Come this way," he continued, for at first no attention was paid to his hail. "Come here and take charge of this man. It's the order of the officer-of-the-day."

Doubtfully, reluctantly, leaving his patrol disgustedly waiting, Corporal Watts slowly descended the incline, crossed the broad, hard-beaten road, then, obviously embarrassed at the presence of Dora Mayhew, demanded further information before he obeyed.

By this time, Rawdon, pale and silent, was standing at the foot of the steps, indignation, resentment, and trouble all mingling in his face. Too well he and other young soldiers had learned to know the weight of Sergeant Fitzroy's spite. But the trouble in his eyes gave way to sudden relief. Two officers were coming swiftly round the corner of the corral, Lanier foremost.

"I say again, Corporal Watts, this man is to be taken in charge at once. It is Captain Curbit's order as officer-of-the-day. I came direct from him," was Fitzroy's final order. But it failed.

"Do nothing of the kind, Corporal Watts," said a quiet voice, at sound of which Sergeant Fitzroy whirled about and turned, if a possible thing, a full shade redder. There at the gate stood Lieutenant Lanier. There, a dozen yards away, but trudging fast as dignity would permit, came the officer-of-the-day.

A jerk of the head to the corporal, in response to his instant salute, and that young soldier, much relieved, strode away to join his men. Then Captain Curbit turned on Sergeant Fitzroy.

"You told me nothing of the facts in this case, sir. Lieutenant

Lanier says he *directed* this man to wait here, with the colonel's message, while he rode to stables. Pardon me, Miss Dora. Come this way, sergeant."

And there was nothing for it but to obey. Abashed, humiliated, rebuked and in *her* presence, where he had looked but a moment before to humble and humiliate his rival, Fitzroy could only lift his hand in salute, follow the captain out of earshot, and there make his plea as best he could, leaving Lanier and the silent young trooper, Dora and her grave-faced old father, in possession of the field.

For a moment they watched Fitzroy, eagerly gesticulating as he stood at attention before his superior.

"He'll give you no more trouble, I fancy," said Lanier, in low tone, to the veterinarian. "I'll say good-night again, Miss Dora;" and he walked cheerily away, but Mayhew looked after him long and anxiously, then upon the young people before him, then upon the still protesting sergeant across the way.

"Maybe not—maybe not," he muttered, with sorrowing shake of the head; "but few men can give more trouble than—him, when he's minded, and I reckon he's minded now."

II.

NEARLY six long months went the regiment afield on the hardest campaign of its history. Then at last by way of reward it had been ordered in to big Fort Cushing for the winter. It was close to town, close to the railway—things that in those days, thirty years ago, seemed almost heavenly. The new station was blithe and merry with Christmas preparations and pretty girls. All the married officers' families had rejoined. Half a dozen fair visitors had come from the distant East. The band was good; the dancing men were many; the dancing floor was fine, and the dance they were having on Friday night, December 16, was all that even an army dance could be until just after eleven o'clock. Then something happened to cast a spell over everybody.

Bob Lanier was officer-of-the-guard. Bob had asked the colonel to let him turn over his sword to a brother officer, who, being in mourning, could not dance, and the colonel had curtly said no. The colonel's wife was amazed; she did not dream he *could* do such a thing. Six girls were sorrowful, three were incensed, and one was cruelly hurt. She was under parental orders to start for home on the morrow. It was to be her last dance at the fort. She liked Bob Lanier infinitely more than she liked her father's dictum that she must like him not at all. As for Bob Lanier, the garrison knew he loved her devotedly even before she knew it herself.

Of course she came to the dance. As the guest of Captain and Mrs. Sumter she even had to go up and smile on the colonel and his

wife, who were receiving. She and Kate Sumter had been classmates—room-mates—at Vassar, and Kate, born and reared in the army, had never been quite content until her friend could come to visit the regiment—her father's home.

A winsome pair they were, these two "sweet girl graduates" of the June gone by, while the regiment was stirring up the Sioux on the way to the Big Horn and Yellowstone. Everybody had lavish welcome for them, and to Miriam Arnold the month at Fort Cushing had been quite a dream of delight, until there came a strange and sudden missive from her father, bidding her break off a visit that was to have lasted until February, *and* all relations with Lieutenant Robert Ray Lanier.

Up to this moment these relations had been delightful, yet indefinite. For reasons of his own Mr. Lanier had made no avowal of his love to her, even though he had disclosed it to every one else. He was a frank, fearless, out-and-out young soldier, a prime favorite with most of his fellows. Bob had his enemies—frank men generally have. He could hardly believe the evidence of his ears when, just after sunset roll-call, he had confidently approached the colonel with his request and had received the colonel's curt reply. Time and again during the recent campaign the veteran soldier now in command had shown marked liking for this energetic young officer. Then came the march to the settlements, and sudden, unaccountable change. Twice or thrice within the past ten days he had shown singular coldness and disfavor; to-night strong and sudden dislike, and Lanier, amazed and stung, could only salute and turn away.

Everybody by half past ten had heard of it, and most men marvelled. Nobody at eleven o'clock was very much surprised when, in the midst of the lovely Lorelei waltz of Keler Bela, a group of young maids, matrons, and officers near the doorway opened out, as it were, and Bob Lanier, officer-of-the-guard, came gracefully gliding and circling down the room, Miriam Arnold's radiant, happy face looking up into his. It was a joy to watch them dance together, but not to watch the colonel's face when he caught sight of them. Except Lanier, every officer present was in full uniform, without his sabre. Lanier was in the undress uniform of the guard, but with the sabre—not the long, curved, clumsy, steel-scabbarded weapon then used by the cavalry, but a light, Prussian hussar sword that he had evidently borrowed for the occasion, for it belonged to Barker, the adjutant, as everybody knew—as Barker realized to his cost when in less than ten seconds the commander summoned him.

"Mr. Barker, you will at once place Mr. Lanier in arrest for quitting his guard and disobeying my orders."

"I shall have to—get my sabre, sir," stammered the adjutant, meaning the regulation item over at his quarters.

"There it is, sir, before your eyes. Mr. Lanier, at least, can have no further use for it until a court-martial acts on his case."

"Good Lord!" thought Barker, "how can I go up to Bob and tell him to turn over that sword so that I can properly place him in arrest—and here, too—and of all times——"

But the colonel would brook no delay. "Direct Mr. Lanier to report to me in the anteroom," said he, marching thither forthwith, and that message the luckless adjutant had to deliver at once.

Bob saw it coming in Barker's sombre visage. The girl on his arm understood nothing, but noted the hush that had fallen, even though the music went on; saw Barker coming, and something told her it meant trouble, and turned her sweet face white.

"Miss Arnold, may I offer myself as a substitute for the rest of this dance? Bob, the chief wants to see you a second," was the best that Barker could think of. They praised him later for his "mendacity," yet what he said was true to the letter. It took little more than a second for the colonel to say:

"Mr. Lanier, go to your room in arrest," and Bob saluted, turned, and went, unslinging the sword on the way.

Now, that was the first touch to spoil that memorable December night, but it was only a feather to what followed. The waltz soon ceased, but the colonel called for an extra, and led out a lady from town, the wife of a future senator. "Keep this thing going," he cautioned his adjutant and certain of his personal following, which was large, and loyally they tried, but the piteous face of the girl he had left at the door of the ladies' dressing-room and in the hands of Mrs. Sumter was too much for Barker. Moreover, he much liked Lanier and bemoaned his fate.

Colonel Button was "hopping mad," as the quartermaster put it, and as all men could see, yet at what? Lanier's offense, when fairly measured, had not been so grave. It had happened half a dozen times that the officer-of-the-guard, making his rounds and visiting sentries in the course of a dance evening, would casually drop in by one door and out by another, taking a turn or two on the floor, perhaps—"just waltzing in and waltzing out," as they said—and no one the worse for it, even when the colonel happened to be present. Nor could men now see what it was that so angered the commander against Lanier.

"Disobeyed his orders flatly," suggested Captain Snaffle, who stood by the colonel on every occasion when not himself the object of that officer's satire or censure.

"Disobeyed no order," said Sumter, as stoutly. "Simply did what many another has done, and nobody hurt. Nor would Lanier have been noted, perhaps, if he had not first asked to turn over his sword to Trotter."

But even that could not fully account for the colonel's rancor, and, though the music and dance went on, men and women both, with clouded faces, found themselves asking the question: "What could have angered him so at Lanier?" And in a corner of the ladies' dressing-room two pretty girls, with difficulty soothed by Mrs. Sumter, were vainly striving not to cry their eyes out—Kate Sumter dismayed at the almost uncontrollable grief of her friend, who, strange to military measures, imagined that Bob's arrest was but the prelude to his being shot at sunrise, or something well nigh as terrible.

Not ten minutes after Lanier went out, and went silent but in unspeakable wrath, Paymaster Scott came dawdling in, and though but a casual visitor at the post, just back that day from a tour of the northward camps and forts along the Indian border, he saw at a glance that something had gone amiss. The colonel was laboriously waltzing; three or four couples were mechanically following suit, but most of the men were gathered about the buffet, and most of the women huddled at the dressing-room door, and Scott, marching over to pay his respects to the colonel's wife and explain his coming at so late an hour, noted instantly the trouble in her serious face. He had known her long and liked her well, as, despite occasional differences at whist, he did her husband. Captain Snaffle was speaking with her at the moment. Mrs. Snaffle was at her side. "Why did they tell her at all?" Mrs. Snaffle was asking, with much spirit and obvious effort to control a racial tendency to double the final monosyllables. "Sure they might have known 't would sc—frighten the life out of her."

"Sc—frighten *who*?" asked Scott, who was friends with everybody and, for more reasons than his office, a welcome guest wherever he went. Snaffle shot a warning glance at his wife, which fell, as he said, "unaided."

"It's Bobby Lanier, meejor, only you must n't sp—refer—to it." Mrs. Snaffle, when self-controlled, discreetly shunned such vowels as betrayed her origin, a totally useless precaution, since all men knew it and liked her none the less.

"Lanier? Oh, yes, I thought it was Bob I saw a while ago streaking it across the parade. It's bright as day in the moonlight with the snow. What's Bob got to do with frightening folk?" And now he was shaking hands with all three.

"Something very unfortunate has happened, major," said Mrs. Button. "Mr. Lanier was officer-of-the-guard and asked to attend the dance, Mr. Trotter offering to take charge of the guard. Colonel Button felt compelled to decline, and—he came any way. You know, of course, *that* could n't be overlooked."

"H'm," said Scott gravely and reflectively. "And who is so frightened?"

"Miriam Arnold; a very charming girl who is visiting the Sumters. Indeed, it looks as though she cared for him. It's no secret that he's in love with *her*."

"Ah, yes. Well, then, it was she I saw getting into the Fosters' sleigh at the side door."

"Oh, I think not! I *hope* not!" cried Mrs. Button, a flush mounting to her face. "I wanted to say a reassuring word after a little——"

But at the moment Mrs. Sumter was seen coming forth from the dressing-room. Half a dozen women were upon her at once with sympathetic inquiries. To these she spoke briefly, yet courteously, and, escaping on the arm of the regimental quartermaster, came straightway to Mrs. Button.

"You will forgive my girls for not saying good-night," she cordially spoke. "Miriam has been quite upset by a letter from home; and this little—episode—this evening, which she cannot understand as we do, has so unstrung her that Mrs. Foster offered to send them over home in her sleigh. The side door had been barred, but Mr. Horton pried it open for them, so they had no need to come this way, and face everybody—and explain."

"You know how sorry I am," said Mrs. Button. "Of course they are excusable for leaving as they did. Why, where are the others going?"

The music had suddenly stopped. There was a scurry on part of the men at the anteroom. Several had run to the entrance. Others were following. Some one among the women, with startled eyes and paling face, sprang up saying, "It's fire"—always a dread at wind-swept Cushing. Almost at the same instant the colonel and Scott reached the veranda without. A dozen officers were there, intent and listening. "I tell you I heard it plainly," said one of their number, "and the Foster sleigh is n't back."

"Heard what, sir?" demanded the colonel. "What's the trouble?"

"A cry for help—or something, over yonder. Barker and Blake are gone. There was a stir at the guard-house, too."

And as though to confirm this much, at least, there presently appeared round the corner of the building the sergeant-of-the-guard, in his fur cap and overcoat, and with him a burly soldier, bleeding at the nose and bristling with wrath. One hand covered a damaged eye; with the other he saluted Captain Snaffle, who had edged to the front of the group.

"Sir, I have to report Trooper Rawdon assaulting a non-commissioned officer."

For an instant there was silence. Then Major Scott gave tongue.

"Trooper Rawdon!" cried he. "Why, he's been with me nearly a month, and now has a month's furlough from General Crook. He's the best man of the escort."

"Refused to obey my orders to go to his quarters, sir, and assaulted me when I tried to enforce 'em. Sergeant Blunt says he won't confine him unless Captain Snaffle orders it."

"One moment, sergeant," interposed Colonel Button. "Has any disturbance—any cry for help—been heard at the guard-house,—or was this the explanation?" And he looked with disfavor on the battered complainant.

"Number Five, sir, has n't called off half past 'leven. I've sent the corporal to see what's the matter."

"Number Five!" cried two or three men at the instant, and without a word Captain Sumter hurried away, on a bee line across the snow-covered parade, following the tracks of the adjutant.

"Number Five!" repeated the colonel. "That's just back of Sumter's quarters;" and he stepped out into the moonlight for clearer view.

Afar over across the glistening level a few lights glimmered faintly in the row of officers' quarters, bounding the northward side of the garrison, but neither along their front nor that of the westward row was there sign of moving humanity. The moon at its full, in that rare, clear atmosphere, illuminated the post, the frozen slopes beyond, and the dazzling range of the Rockies, with a radiance that rendered objects visible almost as at midday. Only the hurrying form of Captain Sumter could be seen half way across the parade. The Fosters' sleigh, that by this time should have been back at the assembly room, was nowhere in sight. Sumter's quarters were about the middle of the row. Lanier's were at the eastward end. For the moment the complaint of the aggrieved sergeant was ignored. All men stood waiting, watching. Then, on a sudden, two or three black forms darted from the shadow of the middle quarters. One came running out across the parade, hardly slackened speed at the hail of Captain Sumter, pointed back with one hand, shouted something that doubled Sumter's pace, but hurried onward toward the group.

It was Conroy, corporal-of-the-guard. "The adjutant orders me to report Number Five sick, sir," he panted to the colonel. "I found him all doubled up in the coal-shed back of the major's. 'T was n't him hollered. 'T was somebody at Captain Sumter's. They got the steward over from the hospital, but they want the sergeant and some of the guard to search the back buildings."

"Who wants them?" demanded the colonel.

"The adjutant, sir. Lieutenant Blake's with him. There has been some prowlers—and the young ladies were frightened."

"They are safely home?" asked the colonel. "Then where's the sleigh?"

"They're home all right, sir, and the sleigh went on out of the east gate—to the store, I suppose. Number Six did n't stop it——"

"One moment," interposed the colonel. "Sergeant-of-the-guard, take four of your men and report to Captain Sumter; or to the adjutant. Now, corporal, when was this cry heard?"

"Just after the young ladies got home, sir—leastwise that's what I was told. We did n't hear it at the guard-house."

"Was the officer-of-the-guard over there?"

"Not the—new one, sir, but——" And then the corporal suddenly stopped, contrite and troubled.

"But what?" demanded the colonel, instant suspicion in his eyes and tone. "Do you mean that Lieutenant Lanier was there—out of his quarters?"

"Out of his head, if he was," growled the paymaster, who loved him well and was deeply concerned over his trouble.

"I—I did n't see him, sir," answered the young soldier, but in manner so confused that it simply added to the commander's suspicion.

"Come with me, Horton," said the colonel to his quartermaster, and turning back for his cap and overcoat. Then once again the voice of the aggrieved and importunate sergeant was heard, this time with convincing appeal.

"I beg the colonel's pardon, but if he wants to get the truth as to this night's business, it would be well to arrest Trooper Rawdon, or he'll be off for good and all."

"Find him, then, sergeant-of-the-guard, and have it done," said Button. "Report it to the officer-of-the-day as my order."

III.

THAT ended the dance, but not the excitement. Women and girls were seeking their wraps even before the corporal came, and now went twittering homeward, each on the arm of her escort, except in the case of those allied forces, the wives of certain seniors, who long had lived, moved, and ruled in the regiment, and now in eager yet guarded tones were discussing the events of the hour gone by. With these went Mrs. Foster, her husband having joined the searching party, and her sleigh, instead of returning, being still missing and unaccounted for.

Not yet midnight, and in the space of less than one hour all Fort Cushing had been stirred by the news. A most popular and prominent young officer had been placed in close arrest. A prominent, if not most popular, sergeant, had been pummelled. An alarming scene of some kind had occurred at the quarters of Captain Sumter. No one outside of the immediate family knew just what had happened, and

those inside cared not to tell. Mrs. Sumter had hurried away the minute she learned that her husband had gone. The colonel, sternly silent, led his wife to their door, and there left her, saying he had summoned certain officers to join him at once, and she, who ruled him in all matters domestic almost as she managed the children, knew well that when roused he would brook no interference in matters professional, and Bob Lanier, a prime favorite of hers, had in some way managed to fall under the ban of his extreme displeasure.

At the office were presently assembled the colonel, the adjutant, the quartermaster, the post surgeon, and to them came Paymaster Scott. At the "store," the only club-room they had in those days, were gathered half the commissioned officers of the post. At Sumter's there kept coming and going by twos and threes, from all along the officers' line, a succession of sympathetic callers, who left even more mystified than when they arrived. Mrs. Sumter was aloft with Kate and their guest, and, as the captain civilly but positively told all visitors, "had to be excused." One of the girls was "somewhat hysterical." Miriam had had a fright in the dark on their return home and screamed. Something foolish, probably, but none the less effective. No! Sumter thought Mrs. Sumter would need no help, yet he was *so* much obliged to the several who suggested going up just to see if they could n't "do something." Captain Sumter was a devoted husband and father, a capital officer, and a gentleman to the core, but the captain could be just a trifle distant at times, and this was one of them.

Another house was virtually closed to question. To the disappointment of many and the disapprobation of a few, Bob Lanier had closeted himself with his classmate and most intimate friend, "Dad" Ennis; then, after a brief colloquy with Barker, the adjutant, had caused to be tacked a big card on his door whereon was crayoned in bold black letters "BUSY." But at quarter past twelve the assistant surgeon, Doctor Schuchardt, called, as was known, for the second time, and entered without ceremony. When the officer-of-the-day came tramping along the boardwalk at 12.30, and turned in at the gate, he struck the panel with the hilt of his sabre, by way of hint that his call was official and not to be denied. Ennis, therefore, came to the door, but came with gloomy brow.

"I am ordered by Colonel Button to ask certain questions of Lieutenant Lanier," said the official from the depths of his fur cap.

"How's that, Doc?" called Ennis, over his massive shoulder. "Can your patient see the officer-of-the-day?"

"Not yet, with my consent," came the stout answer.

"Shout your questions, captain," sang out the patient, with much too little humility of manner, yet Lanier knew Curbit well and knew his mission to be unwelcome.

Therefore, in Captain Curbit's most official tones, *ab imo pectore*, came question the first:

"Is Trooper Rawdon in hiding anywhere about your quarters?"

To which, truculently, came response in Lanier's unmistakable voice:

"He is not, if I know it."

"Do you know or suspect where he is?"

"Neither. And there is no reason why I should."

"Have you seen him—to-night?"

An instant's pause; then, "I don't know whether I have or not."

"You don't *know*?" exclaimed Curbit, puzzled and beginning to bristle.

"I don't *know*," repeated Lanier, positive and beginning to rejoice.

"Suppose the colonel tells me to explain that," began Curbit, but Doctor Schuchardt set his foot down summarily.

"Here," said he, "this thing's got to stop;" and he came to the door in his shirt sleeves, leaning half way out, with one hand behind him. "Lanier's in a highly nervous and excited state. He has had a fall—and I'm trying to get him to bed and asleep. He does n't know—whom—he has seen since he got home in arrest, and you can say so for me."

"All right, Shoe," was the philosophical answer. "It's none o' my funeral, and personally I don't give a cuss if they *never* find him, but there are just s'teen reasons why the Old Man wants to see that young man Rawdon forthwith, and as many for believing he's skipped."

"Then skip after him. You can track anything but a ghost in this new-fallen snow."

Curbit lowered his voice. "That's exactly the trouble, doctor. Go to the back of the quarters and see for yourself. His trail starts—and ends—*here*."

In all its history Fort Cushing had never known such a day of bewilderment as that which followed. Guard mounting was held as usual at eight A.M., and Colonel Button, awaiting in his office the coming of the old and the new officers-of-the-day, directed his adjutant to drop his own work at their entrance and give attention to what took place. Half a dozen other officers, with little or no business to transact at that hour, made it their business to be present, drawn thither from sheer sympathy, as some declared, and downright curiosity, as owned by others. The office building was large and roomy; the colonel's desk was close to the door; beyond it were tables spread with maps, magazines, and papers; a big stove stood in the middle, and a dozen chairs were scattered about, for it was here the officers met one evening each week in the one "book-schooling" to which they were then subjected—

a recitation in regulations or "Tactics." Across the hall was a smaller office—the adjutant's—and beyond that the room where sat the sergeant-major and his clerks. The windows, snow-battered and frost-bitten, gave abundant light from the skies, but none on the surroundings—the view being limited to scratch-hole surveys. There was nothing to distract attention from what might be going on within, and all eyes were on the two burly captains who entered at 8.30, fur-capped, fur-gloved, in huge overcoats and arctics. The wind had begun, even earlier than usual, to whine and stir as it swept down from the bleak north-west, and the mercury had dropped some ten degrees since the previous evening.

"Blizzard coming," said Scott, as he glanced at the sullen skies, and Scott knew the Rockies as he did the Paymaster's Manual.

"I report as old officer-of-the-day, sir," said Curbit, with brief salute, tendering the guard report book.

The colonel went straight to business, as he glanced over the list of prisoners.

"No sign of Trooper Rawdon?"

"No, sir. The patrol sent to search in town got back at reveille."

"His horse and kit all right?"

"All right, sir. Nothing missing that he was supposed to have."

"Police notified to watch all trains—and stages?"

"Yes, sir, and Sergeant Stowell, who commanded the paymaster's escort, remains in town with a couple of men to help."

There was impressive silence in the office. The colonel sat with troubled brow, looking grimly over the roster of the guard, the written "remarks" of the officer-of-the-day, and the hours of his inspections of sentries, etc. Barker, the adjutant, had dropped into a chair, a few feet back of the fur-capped officers, and, though listening as bidden, was gloomily contemplating the frost-covered panes of the nearest north window.

Eight men had gone with Sergeant Stowell as escort to the paymaster when, nearly four weeks earlier, he had set forth on his trip. Then the little iron safe was full of money. Seven men had come back with him, when, as the safe was well nigh empty, the paymaster said he hardly needed an escort. Of the eight who started, four were "casuals" who belonged to companies stationed at Fort Frayne, well up in the Indian country, and there they remained when the duty was over. Of the seven who came with Stowell, three belonged at Fort Frayne, a corporal and two men of Captain Raymond's troop, and they came fortified with the orders of their post commander, a copy of which was now in Barker's hands.

"What I don't understand," said the colonel, whirling his chair

to the right about and addressing the paymaster, "is how or why those men should be down here."

"It *seems* simple," answered Scott placidly, he being entirely independent of the post commander. "From Frayne I had to go to the cantonments up along the Big Horn, and we doubled the size of the escort accordingly. When we got back there these three were permitted to come all the way, whether to buy Christmas things for the Frayne folk, or for affairs of their own, I did n't inquire."

"To whom did you assign them for rations and quarters?" demanded the colonel, of Barker.

"Captain Snaffle, sir—'C' Troop."

"Are they there?—the others, at least?"

"Corporal Watts and Trooper Ames are there, sir. Trooper Rawdon, as you know, is not. He has not been seen about the quarters since some time last evening. Moreover, the few personal belongings he had are gone."

Again a pause. Then presently: "You arrested Kelly, I see, the man who was on Number Five."

"Yes, sir. Both Doctor Schuchardt and the steward said his sickness was due to drink. The sergeant and corporal-of-the-guard are willing to swear he was perfectly sober when they stationed him. The men say he had n't touched a drop of liquor for a month. He must have drunk after he was posted as sentry, for he vomited whiskey at hospital. I believe he was doped."

"That he could get whiskey anywhere along back of the officers' quarters," said the colonel, reflectively as well as reflecting, "is not improbable. That it should have been doped, judging from the way one or two have misbehaved, is not impossible. Captain Snaffle's cook, it seems, was indulging some of her friends with a surreptitious supper, at his expense. That, very possibly, is how Kelly came to grief. The others seem to have hidden their tracks thus far." Then, as though with sudden resolution, he turned abruptly again.

"The usual orders, for the present, captain," said he, to the new incumbent. "And you are relieved, Captain Curbit"—to the old. "But I shall need to see you later, so do not leave the post."

"The man that leaves the post this day," said Major Scott, with a squint through the upper and unincumbered panes of the nearest window, "may need a seven days' leave."

"And that, colonel," said a quiet voice at the commander's elbow, "is what I applied for earlier. Pardon me, sir, but I need to know your decision, for I should now be going to town."

It was Captain Sumter who spoke, and the colonel flushed promptly at sound of his voice.

"I had intended sending for you, Sumter," said he, "but these

rather engrossing matters had to be taken up first. I—have your application,” he continued, fumbling among the papers on his desk. “It is an awkward time—and these are awkward circumstances. It will leave your troop without an officer.”

“Mr. Lanier will be here, colonel.”

“Here—but in close arrest,” frowned the colonel, “and you have n’t had a first lieutenant since I have been in command.”

“My misfortune, sir, but hardly my fault,” answered Captain Sumter tersely yet respectfully. “General Sheridan selects his aides-de-camp where he will, and last month you thought it a compliment to the regiment and to my troop.”

“You feel that—you *ought* to go?” asked the colonel, dropping the subject like a hot brick, and resuming the previous question.

“Our guest, Miss Arnold, is in no condition to travel alone,” said Captain Sumter gravely. “My wife decides to accompany her, at least to Chicago, and I desire to go with my wife.”

The colonel bit his lip, and bowed. “I see,” said he. “Miss Arnold was very much shaken by what happened—after she got home?”

“Rather by what happened *before* she got home,” was the calm yet suggestive reply, and it stung the commander to the quick.

“Captain Sumter,” said he, flushing angrily, for no one of his officers held he in higher esteem, “your attitude is that of opposition, if not of rebuke, to the official acts of the post commander.”

“Then let me disclaim at once the faintest disrespect, Colonel Button, but—as Mr. Lanier’s troop commander and personal friend, I beg leave to say that so far as I know, his offense is one which his comrades have committed time and again, without rebuke.”

“Which simply goes to show, sir,” responded the colonel, with glittering eyes, “that you do not know the twentieth part of his offense.”

For a moment the silence in the office was painful. Men looked at each other without speaking. Sumter stood before his commander, turning paler with the flitting seconds. At last he spoke:

“If that be true, Colonel Button, of course I cannot think of going. I withdraw my application;” and, turning slowly, left the office.

Between him and the adjutant flashed one quick glance. There was something to come yet. The officers-of-the-day had gone—Curbit to shed furs and sabre at his quarters and say “Thank God!” Snaffle, his junior in rank but senior in years, a veteran of the old dragoons, to plod wearily back towards the guard-house for a conference with Lieutenant Crane, commander-of-the-guard.

In the office of the sergeant-major the clerks were busily at work consolidating the morning reports of the ten companies—six of cavalry, four of infantry—stationed at the post. A note on that of Captain

Snaffle had already caught the eye of the sergeant-major, who had bustled in to impart the tidings to his immediate superior, the adjutant, and was disappointed to find them known already.

Instead of carrying three enlisted men present as "casually at post," the "return" of Troop "C" had but two. Trooper Rawdon, whose horse, horse equipments, and field kit were safely stored in the troop-stables since noon the previous day, was himself accounted for nowhere. In view of the fact that he had not been seen, and could not be found, there was nothing remarkable about that. With the morning report book, however, there was handed in a copy of an order duly submitted by Corporal Watts to Snaffle's first sergeant, and by him to his captain, which read as follows:

FORT FRAYNE, Wyoming,
December 11, 1876.

S. O. }
No. 81. }

(Extract)

3. On arriving with his detachment at Fort Cushing, and in compliance with telegraphic instructions from Department Headquarters, Trooper G. P. Rawdon, Troop "L," —th Cavalry, is granted thirty days' furlough, at the expiration of which he will report to the commanding officer of Fort Cushing for transportation to his proper station.

By order of Lieutenant-Colonel Kent,

DOUGLAS JERBOLD,
Second Lieut. —th Inf.,
Post Adjutant.

IV.

JUST as the paymaster predicted, the wintry storm broke with the early afternoon. A genuine blizzard came shrieking down from the mountain pass to the northwest, charging madly through the post, blinding the eyes and snatching the breath of the few hardy men who had to venture out of doors, driving before it a dense white snow-cloud, sweeping clean the westward roofs and prairie wastes, and banking up to the very eaves on the lee side of every building. Even the sentries had to be severally taken off post and lodged within. (Number Five, so it was reported, had been blown bodily into the Snaffles' kitchen.) Even the commanding officer's "orderly," who had barely managed to make his way back after dinner, was now relieved. Only by hauling himself hand over hand along the picket fence, and turning his back to the gale every ten seconds to catch his breath, had he succeeded in returning to his post. Even stable duty was abandoned, so far as grooming was concerned, for though the men could readily be blown from barracks to their steeds, no power could fetch them back for supper. Veteran first sergeants told off a stout squad in each troop,

and sent them with a sack-load of rations to reinforce the stable sergeant and grooms, there to stay to feed, guard, and water the horses. Unless the roofs blew away, and all were buried in drifts, there was safety, if not comfort, in the sheltered flats below the bluffs.

But the telegraph wires went with the first hour. The stage, of course, could n't be hoped to return from town, and, so far as getting news from the surrounding universe was concerned, Fort Cushing might as well have been in Nova Zembla. And the Sumters, three, with Miriam Arnold, had set forth at noon, intending to intercept the east-bound express, and the colonel's spirit was raging in sympathy with the storm, and in spite of his wife, for some one had started a tale that Sumter and his household had ostentatiously called upon Robert Ray Lanier, in close arrest, in utter disfavor and inferential disgrace.

Now, while an officer in arrest may not quit his quarters under seven days, and may not even thereafter visit his commanding officer unless ordered, or his brother officers unless authorized by that magnate, there is no regulation prohibiting other officers or their households visiting him. Nevertheless, they who publicly do so lay themselves liable to the imputation of sympathizing with the accused at the expense of the accuser, and some commanding officers are so sensitive that they look upon such demonstrations as utterly subversive of discipline, and aimed directly at them.

And of such was Colonel Button, a brave soldier, a gentleman at heart, a kind, if crotchety, commander, and a lenient man rather than a disciplinarian. Much given, himself, to criticism of his own superiors or contemporaries, he could not abide it that he should lack the full and enthusiastic support, much less be made the object of the criticism, of his officers or men. A vain man, was Button, and dearly he loved the adulation of his comrades, high or low. Veteran Irish sergeants knew well how to reach the soft side of "The Old Man." Astute troop commanders, like Snaffle, saved themselves many a deserved wiggling by judicious use of blarney. Sterling, straightforward men like Major Stannard, like Sumter, Raymond, and Truscott, of his captains—men who could not fawn and would not flatter—were never Button's intimates. He admired them; he respected them; but down in his heart he did not like them, because they were, in a word, independent.

And during the long and trying campaign that began early in June and closed only late in November, Button had made more than one error that set men to saying things, and at least one blunder that had called for rebuke. It was supposed at the time that the rebuke would end it, but, to Button's wrath, and indeed that of most of his friends, the story appeared in exaggerated form in many an Eastern paper. What made it worse was that, as told in Boston, Philadelphia, and other far Eastern communities, where the Indian is little known and much

considered, Button's interests were bound to suffer, for he was declared to have butchered defenseless women and children in a surrendered village—a most unjust accusation in spite of the fact that certain squaws and boys had died fighting with their braves by night, when bullets could not well discriminate. Button had but just got his promotion to regimental command, and friends at court were working hard for his further advancement to the grade of brigadier-general—a fact that hurt him in an army so benighted as then was ours, in believing that generalships should be bestowed only upon the seniors and service-trying among the colonels. We have broadened much since then, and, as it was once said that every French soldier carried the baton of a marshal in his knapsack, so now may the silver star be hidden in the pocket of the lieutenants of every staff department as well as those of the Fighting Force. There are none who may not aspire.

So Button believed it of Sumter that he and his, on the way to the railway station, went in and condoled with Bob Lanier, and doubtless vituperated him, the commander, when in point of fact no one of their number had seen, or spoken with, Bob. Sumter merely left a big basket filled with fruit, and a little note with friendliness, from Mrs. Sumter, then sprang into the curtained escort wagon, and was whisked away.

Then came the storm, and then a Sunday and Monday in which no man went either way between the fort and town. And then a third, in which the gale went down, and the garrison first dug itself out, and then tunnelled in to the colonel's, the adjutant's office, and other submerged quarters, and on the morning of that third day Captain Sumter, in snow-covered furs, reported his return in person to his post commander, and explained that he had been storm-bound at the station in the meantime.

It was then barely nine o'clock. Guard mounting, the first held since Saturday, was just over. The morning reports, the first rendered since Saturday, were just in, and the staff and company officers for the first time since Saturday were beginning to gather at headquarters and compare notes. All had much to tell. Stannard's wood-pile, Snaffle's storm-shed, and Barker's cow had blown away. Somebody had just reported Sumter's north dormer window "torn out by the roots," which moved Button to say:

"I hope your quarters sustained no damage in your absence."

"I do not know, sir, I came direct to the office to report."

"Ah, true; your household started before the storm."

"Only started, sir. They went no farther than the surgeon's quarters, where we learned the train was six hours late. I had—business—in town, and went on. They remained."

"Then the ladies have not gone East?"

"Neither they nor any one else, since early Saturday morning. The road is blocked."

"The paymaster, too? He went in right after luncheon."

"I cannot say, sir. I neither saw nor heard of him about the station. It is crowded with people. Three trains are stalled there, unable to go either way, and now—with your permission, colonel——"

"Oh, certainly, certainly, Sumter. I did n't wish to detain you. I hope you'll find the ladies well." Whereat the captain withdrew, giving place to the quartermaster who had hurried in, an anxious look in his eyes. That he should have numerous losses and damages to report was to be expected; that he should appear in the least concerned was not. A faithful and loyal staff officer was Horton, but one of the most philosophic, if not phlegmatic, souls in the service. It took nothing short of a national disaster seriously to disturb his equanimity; therefore at sight of his face the colonel was almost instantly on his feet.

"Can I have a sergeant and twenty men at once, sir, armed and mounted? The ambulance with the paymaster never reached town."

"Order them out at once, Mr. Barker," was Button's instant answer, turning to his adjutant, who went out like a shot. "What time did they start?"

"About two Saturday afternoon. It was blowing a gale then and the snow so thick we lost sight of them within a hundred yards. Major Scott declined an escort; said he and the clerk and the two men inside were more than enough. He had only three thousand dollars left and thought that too little to tempt anybody. Everybody knew he was just back from a long pay trip—not going—yet they have disappeared utterly. I had men ride the length of the creek valley 'twixt here and town, and there is n't a sign of them."

The silence in the office was oppressive. Men looked at each other in dumb consternation.

"How did you learn they had n't reached town?" demanded Button.

"Sergeant Fitzroy just came out. He'd been in there with Sergeant Stowell to help find Rawdon, he said. Major Scott had a section engaged in the Pullman for Omaha, and Fitzroy says he never claimed it—says he searched every stable for the ambulance, but there was no sign of it, and he says there was a gang of half a dozen toughs that had been hanging about town for a week, and they've cleared out. I'd like to go and get into riding rig, sir."

"Go, and I'll have a troop out after you if need be." Then turning to his adjutant: "Barker, have Sergeant Fitzroy sent for at once."

Another moment and a trig, well-groomed soldier, florid-faced, muscular, yet burly in build, stepped briskly in and "stood attention."

His right eye and cheek were still heavily bruised and discolored. His nose was somewhat swollen. The colonel had looked upon him with sombre eyes the night of the dance. It annoyed him that a non-commissioned officer should have taken such a time and place to offer a complaint. He still disapproved. Moreover, he had given Sergeant Fitzroy no authority to go as volunteer aid to Sergeant Stowell.

"How did you happen to be in town, sergeant?" was the abrupt demand.

Fitzroy colored to the brows, but the answer was prompt:

"I understood the colonel to say 'find him,' referring to Trooper Rawdon, Friday night, and I went in Saturday morning thinking to help. Then we could n't get back, sir."

"My order was to the sergeant-of-the-guard, not to you," interposed Button curtly. "Sergeant Stowell was sent and that was enough."

"Sergeant Stowell was looking for a man in uniform, sir, and had never seen Rawdon except in trooper dress, and would never perhaps have known him."

"Then how should you?" was the sharp query.

Fitzroy started. "I—had known him longer, sir, and much better. I—had occasion to reprimand him once or twice, and knew him and his—pals, if the colonel will pardon me—as none of the others knew him. There was that young civilian, Lowndes, that went along with us and got into trouble, and—there were others. In fact, if the colonel will pardon me again, sir, I do not hold a high opinion of Trooper Rawdon, and if the colonel were to investigate, it's my belief he could trace many a disloyal trick—and tale—to that man. What's more," and now the speaker's tone betrayed undue and most unprofessional excitement, and it seemed as though he had quite forgotten himself and his official surroundings, for he finished with voice querulous and upraised, "if Paymaster Scott came to grief he has nobody to blame but his pet and himself——"

"No more of that, sir," broke in the colonel angrily, "unless you are ready to prove your words."

"Give me two days and half a chance, Colonel Button," was the confident answer, "and I'll do it."

V.

As Captain Sumter said, the ladies had gone no further than the surgeon's quarters that memorable Saturday, and with Sumter's full consent they had not gone even that far. Friday afternoon he had wired his protest to the father of Miriam Arnold, and with startling emphasis the reply had come early Saturday morning: "I repeat that I desire my daughter to return at once." It angered this honest gentleman and soldier. The tone was abrupt, if telegrams can be said to

have either tone or manner, but that "wire" settled the matter. Miriam said she must obey, and nothing short of Doctor Larrabee, senior surgeon of the post, had prevailed against her decision. He himself had met the covered vehicle at his gate, and with calm but forceful courtesy had insisted on their alighting. "Your train is half a day late," said he. "You'll be wiser waiting here than at the frowsy station. Besides, I wish to see this young woman again." So saying, he fairly lifted Miss Arnold from the fur-robed depths of the dark interior, and deposited her on the wind-swept path. "Run in," said he, then similarly aided Mrs. and Miss Sumter. Their hand luggage and wraps came next, and Sumter drove away, saying he'd be back to them in abundant time for the train—which he was, though not until Tuesday morning. It was Thursday before the road was open or the telegraph again at work.

Less than half an hour the trio spent under the doctor's hospitable roof. Before two o'clock the wind had increased to a gale. The snow was driving swift and hard. "I checked you just in time," said he. "There'll be no train either way this night." And so by two o'clock, and just as the paymaster was driving away down the front of officers' row, Mrs. and Miss Sumter, with Miss Arnold, escorted by the two medical officers, were struggling across the open space between the surgeons' houses and the rear fence of the long line, and presently entering the back gate at Sumter's.

It was an odd arrangement, somewhat peculiar to frontier stations of the day. The enclosure of Fort Cushing was diamond-shaped. The entrance gate was at the eastern apex. The hospital and surgeons' quarters stood on a line with this gate, their front perpendicular to the long axis of the diamond. Their "rear elevations," therefore, were not far from officers' row. From the front of Sumter's house, around by way of the main gate to the doctor's door—the first to the left (north) of the post trader's—was quite a walk. From back door to back door, however, it was less than two hundred paces. "We are near neighbors," Doctor Larrabee had been saying, "though my wife thinks it a long walk on a windy day. I could reach you day or night, almost in a minute. As for Schuchardt and Bob Lanier, they could talk to each other out of their back windows this morning, but you could n't hear a bugle across there now."

"Is he sitting up?" Mrs. Sumter inquired. "I thought, from what we heard, Doctor Schuchardt was trying to keep him in bed."

"He won't stay," was the brief answer. "I doubt if he slept a wink last night."

But Schuchardt was even less communicative. In answer to Mrs. Sumter's appeal, that young but gifted physician had looked

perturbed, and finally answered: "Mr. Lanier's hurt is more mental than physical, therefore the more difficult for me to reach."

"You've seen him this morning?"

"Twice, Mrs. Sumter, and I'm going again as soon as we've seen you home."

And the moment they reached the rear storm-door, and their fur-hooded, fur-mantled charges were safely within, Schuchardt excused himself, Miriam Arnold's eyes following with a mute message that he felt, if he did not hear.

But Larrabee lingered. Stamping and shaking off the snow, he followed into the warm and cozy army quarters. Cook and housemaid both looked astonished at the unexpected procession through the kitchen. Mrs. Captain Snaffle's "chef"—like her mistress, of Hibernian extraction—sprang up in some confusion from her chair and the cup of "tay" over which the three had been chatting, as is the way of our domestics at such times and places,—she had reason to know the mistress of the house did not too well approve of her, or of these frequent visitations. "We shall probably dine at home," said Mrs. Sumter, somewhat coldly, to her own retainers, and bestowing no notice upon their visitor. "There may be no train till to-morrow;" and with that led the way to the parlor.

Almost immediately, without waiting for the coming of the attendants with their hand-bags, Miss Arnold fled up-stairs, followed, at a glance from her mother, by Kate.

"You see how wretchedly nervous she continues," said Mrs. Sumter. "How could we have let her go alone?"

"How should we let her go at all?" said Larrabee. "Indeed"—with a glance from the clouding window over the storm-swept parade—"I repeat, there will be no going anywhere for anybody just now. Has—has she—told you anything, as yet?"

Mrs. Sumter was gradually emerging from her winter coat of furs. For a moment she hesitated, then closed the door leading back to the dining-room and returned to him as he stood there, warming his hands at the great parlor stove then indispensable in our frontier homes. His fine, intellectual face, in its silver-gray fringe of crisp curling hair, was full of sympathy and interest. It was a face to confide in, and all Fort Cushing swore by its senior surgeon. "Doctor," said she, calling him by the title he best loved, "Miriam says she believes it was all a mere delusion—a dream. She blames herself bitterly and—begs us to think no more of it—to forgive her, but——"

"But?" and the kind dark eyes studied the gentle, matronly face.

"But—oh, why should I attempt to conceal it? You know, and we have reason to know, she *did* see some one—some one right there in her room. Some one who went out like a thief, through the window,

and down the roof to the shed, and away in spite of sentries or—or anybody—some one who was in there when they so unexpectedly got home. *You saw—*”

“Yes, I saw the tracks in the fresh snow on the roof. I could see them when I came hurrying over,” murmured the doctor.

“Captain Sumter had the snow swept off before reveille. What was the use of advertising it further? Mr. Barker and Mr. Blake saw it, too. They hold it was some garrison sneak-thief, looking for jewelry. Yet not so much as a ring, or a pin, was touched—only her desk.”

“Did *she* tell of that?”

“No, Kate was the first to see it. She flew up-stairs when she heard the scream; found Miriam a senseless heap on the floor, the desk open on the little table by the window, the contents scattered, the window up, and somebody bounding and slipping away in the moonlight. Then she heard the challenge and scuffle outside and thought the guard had him, and gave her whole attention to Miriam, until Mr. Barker shouted from the lower hall. Oh, yes, cook and Maggie both declare they were in their room, but—I believe they were next door at the Snaffles’. I believe the back door was left open for—whoever it was.”

“And nothing is missing?”

“Nothing. He was frightened off evidently. But Captain Sumter wished to have it all kept quiet until he could confer with the detectives in town. He has a theory of his own.”

She had lowered her voice, and now walked to the hall door, as though listening for sounds from aloft, whither Kate and Miriam had vanished.

“Miss Kate has a level head,” presently spoke Larrabee. “What does *she* say?”

“Doctor, that is what troubles me! Kate won’t say—anything. It’s the first time she ever kept a secret from me.” And now tears of genuine distress were welling in Mrs. Sumter’s eyes.

It was half after two, and the wind was shrieking through the open space back of the line, when Doctor Larrabee, bending almost double, managed to fight his way homeward. Schuchardt, occupant of the adjoining set to his own, had not yet returned. At Sumter’s gate the senior surgeon encountered the corporal-of-the-guard, nearly blind and well nigh exhausted. He had been sent round to relieve the men on post and bid them make the best of their way to the guard-room. He was even then searching for Number Five, who had most justifiably, in fact, involuntarily, taken refuge as previously explained. Had he not been blown into the Snaffles’ kitchen, he might, like Barker’s cow, have been blown away.

"You will probably find Doctor Schuchardt at Lieutenant Lanier's quarters," shouted Larrabee at the corporal, with kindly intent. "Take Number Five in there and get thawed out. Tell him I think a nip of whiskey advisable under the circumstances."

And thus it happened that two storm-beaten soldiers presently shoved their way through Lanier's back gate and banged at the kitchen door. Nobody answering, they presently entered, passed through that deserted apartment, and, hearing voices further on, the corporal ventured into the dark hallway leading through the little frame house, now fairly quivering in the blast. Here he caught sight of two officers—big, powerful men, in fur caps and canvas overcoats, just pushing forth through the front door into the fierce blast without. One was Doctor Schuchardt, the other Lieutenant Ennis, joint occupant with Lanier of the tiny premises. As Corporal Cassidy later expressed it, he felt "like I'd lost a bulging pot on an ace full." He could n't run after and beg them to come back, yet he and his comrade were stiff from cold and almost breathless from exhaustion. Suddenly Number Five's carbine slipped from his frozen glove and fell with a crash on the kitchen floor. The next instant the voice of Lieutenant Lanier was heard.

"Who the devil's that?"

"Corporal Cassidy, sir. The post surgeon told me to bring Number Five in here and thaw him out. We'd find Doctor Schuchardt. But the doctor's just gone, sir, and——"

But by this time Mr. Lanier himself appeared in the hall, his feet in warm woollen slippers, his hands in bandages. "Well, I should say! Come right in here, you two. Pull off your gloves and get out of those caps and things. Man alive"—this to Number Five—"why did n't you come in before? This is no time to stand on ceremony—or stay on post, either. My striker's stormbound somewhere. I'd help you if I could, but I can't. Help yourselves now, best way you can; rub and kick all you want to; *dance* if it'll warm you." And all the time he was crowding them up about a roaring stove, where presently he made them sit while he bustled about at a buffet in the adjoining room. "You'll have to help me, corporal," presently he cried. "One hand can't mix and pour and lift. There's sugar; there's hot water on the stove; there's glasses and here's whiskey. Mix it hot, and down with it!"

And so hospitably and heartily, after the manner of old frontier days and men, the young officer administered to his humbler comrades; cheered, and warmed, and insisted on their eating with their second tumbler, and when in course of half an hour the two stood before him, glowing, grateful, and resuming their buffalo coats and fur caps and gloves, honest Cassidy tried to say his say:

"'D' Troop's fellers never can brag enough about their lieutenant,

sir, and though we don't belong to 'D' Troop, it has n't taken this to tell us why. If ever the time comes when me or Quinlan here can do the lieutenant a good turn he'll—he'll know it."

After which they were gone, rejoicing in their new-found strength, yet reaching the nearest barracks only after severe struggle, and, later still, the crowded, suffocating guard-room,—where now some thirty men were huddled in a space intended for twenty at most—where Cassidy and Number Five were speedily telling to eager, appreciative ears their unusual and rejoiceful experience.

"Well, ain't he the dandy lieutenant, though?" queried Casey, of "F" Troop. "An' did he give you yer new cap, too, Quinlan? Sure the wan you marched on wid had the mange!"

Cassidy snatched it from his comrade's head. "Mother av Moses! If he has n't lifted the lieutenant's——" But he broke off short. One glance he had given the band within. A sudden cloud swept over his face. There was an instant of indecision, then he whipped his own cap from his head and thrust it on Quinlan.

"I'm a liar," said he; "it's me own he's had."

"Then you wear two sizes, Jim Cassidy, an' both different." Quinlan had pulled the headpiece down, and was staring in at the soft lining. "What's this?" he began, when the corporal's fingers closed like a vise on his arm.

"Shut up, Quinlan. The whiskey's gone to yer noddle. Come here!" And Cassidy led him, wondering, to the barred corridor without and slammed the door behind them. "Not a word do you whisper of this to any man, Pat Quinlan," said he, never relaxing his grasp. "You heard what that Cockney Fitzroy was swearin' to this morning? Sure—you'd never say the word to back that whelp—an' harm the lieutenant!"

VI.

"God helps those who help themselves," quoth Lieutenant Blake, on hearing of the incident at Lanier's quarters, "but God help those who help other fellows, unless 'the Old Man' likes it." Blake was but a "casual" at Fort Cushing at the moment, summoned thither as a witness before a general court-martial then in session, but there was nothing casual in his friendship for Bob Lanier. Two years' campaigning in Arizona and one in Wyoming had made these subalterns fast friends, despite the difference of ten years in their ages and nearly twenty "files" in rank, Blake being one of the senior and Lanier one of the junior lieutenants of the regiment. Blake was no pet of the post commander. Blake had a way of saying satirical things of seniors whom he did not fancy, and Button was one of these. Blake should have returned to his proper station the day after the dance, but, like everybody else, so far as heard from, he had been held by the storm,

and therefore happened to be in the club-room at the store along toward eleven o'clock on Tuesday, watching the distant deployment over the southeastward slopes of the barren upland. Fully half the mounted force of the garrison was on search for the paymaster's "outfit," and with Blake stood half a dozen infantry officers and two or three of the —th. To them, on his way to rejoin his searching troop, had entered big Jim Ennis, Lanier's chum and classmate, and Ennis looked the picture of smothered wrath. Half an hour previous he had been seen trotting up from stables to the adjutant's office, summoned thither by the orderly of the commanding officer. A few moments later that same hard-worked orderly had been seen sprinting to the surgeon's quarters, and Doctor Larrabee, wrapped in furs and meditation, obeyed the summons, stood in the presence of an irate commander not more than fifty seconds, came forth wrapped in gloom, and took the short cut back of the major's house to his own bailiwick at the hospital.

About the only officer not to put in an appearance that morning out of doors, afoot, in saddle, or adrift in snow, was Lieutenant Lanier. About the first officer Button wished to see was Bob, and about the last was Blake. Yet such was the freakishness of Fate that the first man to hail him, with ill-timed jocularly, was Blake, and the last of his officers whom he was destined that day to set eyes on was Bob Lanier, whom Schuchardt, in answer to the commander's summons, had earlier declared unfit to leave his quarters.

If it had not been for the startling announcement about the paymaster, Colonel Button would have fought that matter out with the doctor then and there. First, however, he had to send forth his mounted men by scores in search of the missing officer and party. This done, he had once more summoned Schuchardt. Then he sent for Ennis, and had what they termed a "red hot row."

In his exasperated frame of mind, Button had been ready to believe almost any story at the expense of Lanier, and, such is the perversity of human nature, it added to rather than diminished his wrath that his revered senior surgeon should promptly corroborate the statements of both Schuchardt and Ennis, and further assume personal and entire responsibility for the episode of Saturday afternoon in Lanier's quarters. That episode had started many a tongue, and one of Button's henchmen, thinking to win favor at the fountain-head by mention of new iniquity on part of the culprit, had deftly enlarged upon it. Snaffle, of course, was the fellow at fault, and he justified it on the plea that Lanier was demoralizing two men of his troop. The story he told was that Lanier had been carousing at his quarters with certain enlisted members of the guard. When told of it Button was furious, so much so that for the time he forgot about Sumter and the ladies of the Sumter household,

and the north dormer window of Sumter's quarters, reported "stove in by the storm."

Nor had Sumter himself much time for domestic duties before the order came for him and his troop to turn out to aid in the search. He found the family fairly tranquil under the circumstances. He had sent a messenger galloping out from town, to assure his wife of his safety, when Tuesday's dawn showed the storm sufficiently abated. A devious course the rider took, for the road was blocked in a dozen places, and every ravine and hollow was packed to the brim with snow. But he bore glad tidings and banished all anxiety on account of the husband and father. Their anxieties now were mainly for Miriam, their guest.

Mrs. Sumter had not half finished what she had to say concerning Miriam when the summons came that called the captain forth to join the searching squadron, but he had heard enough to increase the anxiety in his fine, soldierly face. He went up with Mrs. Sumter and looked critically over the damage to the window, in what had been Miriam's room. She had moved, perforce, to the front—to Katherine's—room Saturday night, for toward sunset the storm sash was torn out of the north dormer, and the window blew in with a crash. By dark the room was bank full of snow that Sergeant Kennedy and a brace of loyal troopers had been shovelling out since seven that Tuesday morning, without making any great addition to the huge drifts at the back. Front, flank, and rear, most of the houses along the line were packed solidly to the attic windows. On several the boys and girls were already coasting from the peak of the roof down over the back yards, sheds, and fences and out toward Larrabee's half-submerged hospital.

It was easy to see how and why the storm-sash had failed to withstand the buffeting. In his frantic haste and panicky flight the intruder of Friday night had wrenched a hinge from its fastening. The sash had sagged at the windward end, and the rest was easy for rude Boreas.

"That sash is probably somewhere down in the back yard, sergeant," Sumter quietly remarked to faithful Kennedy. "It's under fifteen feet of snow, but when it comes to tunnelling, look after it, see that it is n't injured, and call me as soon as you find it."

Mrs. Sumter looked quickly at her lord. She well knew the reason of his instructions.

"Did you show that scrap of lining?" she asked, a moment later, as they stood alone before the parlor fire.

"They have it," was the answer. "I expect two of them out any moment."

And then had come the sudden summons to turn out, and with only

brief greeting to his daughter, and a hurried kiss and caress, Captain Sumter had mounted and spurred away.

It must have been after twelve, for orderly call and mess had sounded in front of the adjutant's office, when one of the hospital attendants came floundering up the row from Lanier's, and made his way to Sumter's door, a little note in his hand. He would wait, he said, for an answer, and the maid bade him step inside while she ran up-stairs. Mrs. Sumter answered her knock at the door of Miss Kate's room, into which the damsels were now doubled. To the disappointment of that somewhat volatile domestic, Mrs. Sumter closed the portal before proceeding to open the missive, but her announcement, "From Mr. Lanier," caused Miriam Arnold to sit bolt upright.

DEAR MRS. SUMTER [it read]:

I've been living since Saturday mainly on your kindness and that delicious fruit. It was more than good of you to take such care of your incarcerated sub, and I'm ashamed to have sent no earlier thanks, but we've been banked in until this morning, and that rascal striker of ours is missing. He has n't been about the house since Friday night. Like Barker's cow, he may have blown away. I reckon they'll find him, her, and the paymaster's outfit snowed under somewhere down toward Nebraska, safe, but possibly starving. Schuchardt has gone with the command, so has Ennis, and I'm all alone with nothing to read. If you have anything moral, instructive, and guaranteed to soften the unrepentant sinner's heart—something I could read with profit as well as pleasure—*don't* send it, but tell me how you all stood the storm and how you are. It is so hard to get anything but admonition out of "Shoe," and "Dad" is now more unreliable than ever.

I hope Miss Arnold is entirely recovered.

Yours most sincerely,

R. R. LANIER.

"The last thing a man mentions in a note is the first thing he wants answered," said Mrs. Sumter sagely. "What shall I tell him for you, Miriam?"

"Tell *me* what is to be done to *him*," was the sole reply, as the girl settled back dejectedly upon the pillows.

"I've tried to, child," answered her hostess kindly, patiently. "There is n't a court in the army that would sentence him to more than a brief confinement to limits, and a reprimand." Yet Mrs. Sumter spoke with much less confidence than on Saturday. Had not her husband *had* to tell her his application for leave was withdrawn, and why? Had not Doctor Larrabee admitted to her that the colonel spoke of misdeeds far more serious for which Lanier must suffer? Was there not, indeed, a story in circulation, mainly in the Snaffle set, of a two-days escapade when the regiment camped near Frayne, and then a

financial transaction in which Lanier had been involved—something growing out of an affair up on the Yellowstone—something including that young civilian friend of his, the collegian turned cowboy—Mr. Watson Lowndes?

Even as she strove to assure Miss Arnold, for the twentieth time, that a military arrest was far more portentous in sound than in effect, something in Kate's determined silence and Miriam's insistence added to the effect of these rumors. Could it be that the boy had confided to the daughter, hitherto his stanch friend and ally, that which he dare not confide to her, his captain's wife? Could this account for the fact that, though it was impossible to conceal his love for Miriam, he never yet had owned it to her—to her to whom it was now obvious that the avowal would mean so much—so very much?

Then another thing weighed heavily upon the brave heart of this loving friend and mother. Never had she known her child to be so silent, so strange, as now. Ever since Friday night she seemed to avoid all mention of the affair, to shrink from the subject—she who had ever been frankness itself—she who had never had a thought the mother did not share. She had become fitful and nervous. She seemed oppressed with some secret. In the long hours of their enforced confinement, with the lamps burning on the ground-floor by day as well as by night, Mrs. Sumter had pondered much over the result of her husband's investigations. Although Miriam's desk was open and its contents lay scattered on the table, nothing was missing, even to the packet of ten- and twenty-dollar "greenbacks" in its secret drawer. If robbery had been the object of the intruder, he had neglected his opportunity, or else been frightened off in time. If robbery was not his object, then what could it have been? The house was deserted at the moment of his entrance, that was now settled, for first the cook and then "Maggie" had owned to having run over to Mrs. Snaffle's kitchen for a moment, and the probability was, they stayed the best part of the evening. The lights had been left turned low in the upper and lower halls, in the kitchen and the captain's den. Army doors were seldom locked or bolted. Any one could enter, front or rear. A marauder, if such he was in this instance, might have been there from tattoo at 9.30 until discovered some two hours later, and been there undisturbed.

But why should the situation so strangely affect her daughter? Could it be that she, too, cared for Bob Lanier? The thought for the moment made the mother's heart stand still.

She was writing her reply to his note, when Maggie again appeared. "Two gentlemen to see the captain, mum," and Mrs. Sumter hurriedly closed the note and went below-stairs to meet them. She knew well who they were and why they had come. A branch office of the Rocky

Mountain Detective Agency had been maintained long months at the great and growing railway station. They had been summoned by her husband, and that was enough.

Yet she shrank from meeting them, shrank from the thought of the questioning that must ensue. They might ask to speak with Kate, even with Miriam, but they did not. They asked to be shown the room, with the storm-battered dormer, by this time emptied of its load of snow. They asked to see Miriam's desk. Yes, the lock had been forced and by a big knife. They begged that Mrs. Sumter would not mention that to any one but the captain yet awhile. They were confident he would soon return. They smiled at the idea of the paymaster being held up and robbed in broad daylight by any gang in their neighborhood. They admitted that many questionable characters were in town—there always *were* toward the holidays, and just now, of course, the town was overcrowded—three big trains still stranded there.

While they were yet at their work, there came sounds of stamping feet at the front door, and in came Sumter, stiff from cold, but brimful of energy.

"Found Scott and his clerk, at least," he cried. "'Most dead and half frozen! The driver's gone, I fear. He was blown or pitched off. The mules ran away before the gale. Those inside the ambulance were helpless. Two dropped off behind and are lost. The thing finally capsized and went to pieces, and they managed to reach a little cattle shack, two miles south of town. They've found Lanier's striker, too—what's left of him."

By this time Kate had come stealing down-stairs, and with pallid face was listening dumbly to her father's words. She seemed hardly to heed the presence of the strangers. Not until the captain had emerged from his furs and stood robust and ruddy, yet a little short of breath, did she lay her hand upon his arm and ask her question.

"Have they found Rawdon?"

"Rawdon? No, not a sign of him anywhere!"

"Is that the young fellow that those sergeants have been hunting for?" asked one of the detectives. "We managed to find out about him. He was in town early as three o'clock Friday, and he left on Number Six that night."

"Do you mean to tell me," said Sumter, gazing blankly at the speaker, "that he was n't out here when—this—happened?"

"Not unless he had wings! That train leaves at 11.40." Whereupon Kate Sumter slowly withdrew her hand, then turned away.

VII.

ANOTHER day went by. Major Scott and his clerk, under Larabee's skilful touch, were gradually regaining strength and beginning

to answer questions. At first their senses seemed dulled, as though they could not shake off the frost that benumbed them. At first they could tell little of the cause of the mishap. The ambulance was curtained in, even at the rear, through which the two scared troopers had managed to slip to their doom. Not until the snows melted in the spring, and the contents of the ravines should be revealed, was it likely they would be heard of again. The railway was still blocked. The wires were still down. Fort Cushing stood isolated from the outer world, and no less than five of its garrison were absent and unaccounted for: the two men detailed to drive in with the paymaster, two bacchanalians who, being in town when the storm broke, had dared each other to face the gale and tramp out, and finally a young trooper named Cary, who had arrived with the same recruit squad that brought them Rawdon, and had been on terms of friendship, if not indeed of intimacy, with him. They had been together that very Friday afternoon. In addition, whereabouts unknown, was Sergeant Fitzroy, of Snaffle's Troop. "Absent with leave," said the morning report. "Acting under the verbal instructions of the commanding officer," said his captain.

Along toward dusk on Tuesday, others of the searching squadron, sent afar down the valley, had come back, reporting that the ambulance mules were found, huddled together, half starved and still half harnessed, in a log shack or shelter to which their instinct had guided them after their heels had made chopsticks of the running gear. The ambulance body was snowed under somewhere and nowhere in sight. The driver, a civilian employed in the Quartermaster's Department, had totally disappeared. Scott, the paymaster; Thomas, his clerk; and Rafferty, Lanier's soldier servant, or "striker," as then called, were still half dazed—Rafferty, indeed, so much dazed that no coherent words had yet escaped him.

One more unfortunate, the driver of Foster's sleigh, was in trouble. Not until two hours after the dance had he turned up with the missing equipage, a cock-and-bull story, and a case of what the corporal called "jag." He swore that, having got chilled through, waiting, he just thought to get one hot whiskey at the store. Sentry Number Six said he'd mind the team while the driver went in, and the next thing he knew "they'd run'd away, hell for leather," and he, their driver, had to follow two miles to Flint's Ranch, close to town, where he "might have taken a nip or two more." It was his first offense and Foster forgave. It should be remarked, however, that Number Six declared that it was not he with whom the driver left the sleigh, but two "fellers," *i. e.*, troopers, who happened to be near the store. However, that did not seem much to matter at the time.

And Fort Cushing was in unhappy frame of mind. Colonel Button was in most inhospitable mood, and chafing because he could not com-

municate with the general commanding the department. Mrs. Button was confined to the house and denied to all but one or two intimates. Bob Lanier was still in close arrest. No man could say what might be the result, for Barker, the adjutant, declared he knew no more than they. "The Old Man had something up his sleeve"—several somethings—against him, but was confiding in no one, for he and Stannard were at odds over the matter; he and Sumter were practically estranged because of it, and for the first time in regimental history Button seemed to be giving all his attention to Snaffle and men of his stamp and set. They were not more than three or four in number. They had been rather tolerated than sought in the past, but now the colonel seemed to have use for them alone.

And there was sorrow and estrangement at Sumter's. Never before, as Mrs. Sumter declared, had Katherine ever had a secret from her mother. Now there was a matter upon which it seemed she could not talk. Moreover, Miriam Arnold was affected in precisely the same way. She shrank from all mention of that mysterious affair of Friday night. Not only were they unable to speak of it to Mrs. Sumter; they avoided it among themselves.

It was now Wednesday, and there had been a procession of callers to inquire for Miss Arnold. The girls felt that they *must* dress and come down and face them. "Are you sure you feel equal to it, Miriam?" was Mrs. Sumter's anxious question.

"I am sure I do *not*," was the weary answer, "but all the same I must."

And, being a girl of pluck, and much ashamed of the breakdown of Friday and Saturday, Miss Arnold made her effort, and did remarkably well so long as people refrained from prodding her about her "strange adventure," the alleged details of which, in exaggerated form, were garrison property by this time. There could be no doubt, said nine out of ten of the soldiery, it was the work of some sneak-thief in uniform, in all probability that young swell Rawdon, who was gone. But among a certain select few still another theory obtained, and Wednesday night when Sergeant Fitzroy returned to the post and asked to see the colonel, that officer, who was at dinner, sent answer that he would be at the office at eight o'clock, and further sent word to Captain Snaffle to be there at the same hour.

A spell of sharp cold had followed the blizzard. The skies were dazzling at night with the radiance and sparkle of the stars. The young people of the garrison were out in force, rejoicing in the snow sports, the moonlight, the exhilarating air. The men had made some famous slides over at the bluffs, and the children along the officers' lines were playing hide and seek about the drifts and tunnels at the northward end of the parade. They gathered in force about the office to cheer

the colonel as he came forth from a long conference, which left him so absorbed he hardly noticed their gleeful salute. They pelted two prime favorites who followed, with drooping head and woebegone visage, and never once responded to the fun, and the youngsters asked one another what on earth could have happened to Cassidy and Quinlan, who were always so ready to frolic with them.

Then Captain Sumter had been sent for, and was admitted to a five-minute talk with the colonel at his quarters, and came away with grave and troubled face, to a ten-minute conference with his gentle wife, that left her sorely worried and distressed.

"Ask Kate," he said, as once more he set forth into the night. "I've got to tramp and think this over before I do anything further." And at that moment Kate and Miriam had gone in to talk awhile with Mrs. Stannard. It was best they should not stay home, subject to incessant interview.

It was just about quarter of nine. The lights at the office were still burning, for the colonel had intimated that he might be back. Barker was bending over some of the post papers and reports at his desk, and wondering why on earth the colonel should be colloquing with Snaffle, Crane, Sergeant Fitzroy, and sending for Cassidy and Quinlan. That was a queer "outfit" of Snaffle's at best. It seemed odd that the most pronounced "Britisher" in barracks, outside of the band, should be a sergeant in the troop commanded by the nearest thing to an Irishman among the captains. True, Fitzroy as stable sergeant was quite independent, and, being very ambitious and zealous, had attracted the attention of other captains, to wit, Canker and Curbit, rival troop leaders, who each, at one time or other, had offered to make Fitzroy first sergeant if he would transfer; but Fitzroy preferred to stay where he was in "C," and it was easier to suggest than it was to assert the real reason.

Barker was busy with these reflections when the colonel once more entered and began pacing moodily up and down the room. The adjutant rose, but at a signal resumed his seat and waited. He was, as he whimsically described himself, "a relic of the previous administration." In those days officers might serve long years on the staff and never know an hour of company duty. Barker had been in the adjutant's office under three different regimental commanders, and, as etiquette required, had tendered his resignation to Button on that officer's promotion to the colonelcy. Button as promptly and courteously replied that he hoped Lieutenant Barker would consent to serve as right-hand man until he reached his captaincy, which could not be very far off. But already Button was repenting. "Barker is too much wedded to the old order of things," said he. "Barker has his likes and dislikes" (a weakness the colonel denied to himself), "and Barker's a little

inclined to imagine that nobody can run a regiment as Atherton did"—for which, at least, there was this much foundation, that Barker thought, if he did not say, that Atherton ran it much better than Button ever could hope to, and Button instinctively knew and infinitely resented it. It must be owned of Button that he hated the mere mention of his predecessor's name, methods, and opinions. It was unlucky indeed, perhaps, that the views of one of the former colonels had been recorded in black and white as follows:

"In my opinion Lieutenant Lanier is one of the finest young officers in the Cavalry."

Full fifteen minutes the colonel went striding up and down the long apartment used for office, assembly, and school-room. Once in a while he would turn across the hall and into Barker's smaller room, pause as though half minded to speak, then turn out again. Twice he went to the door, looking over across the glistening heaps and drifts, and letting in a lot of cold air. Twice he muttered something about its taking Snaffle and his sergeant an usually long time to do a simple thing, and at last, as the trumpeters were heard, with much stamping of feet and blowing of hands, gathering for the old-time nightly "walk around" that preceded tattoo roll-call, Button abruptly turned on his adjutant and said:

"Barker, how long have you known Mr. Lanier?"

"Ever since he joined, sir."

"And you knew him in his cadet days?"

"As an instructor knows a cadet, yes, sir."

"And you told me you never heard of his writing to newspapers?"

"Never, sir," answered Barker, rising from his chair and facing his commander. "And I repeat that I believe it impossible for him to have had anything to do with those—inflammatory articles about the campaign."

"You consider him absolutely square—above a lie—or a trick of any kind?"

Barker faltered just one minute. What did the colonel mean by a trick? Mischief there had been, once or twice. Tricks had been played, and one only this last summer during the campaign—a trick, too, that if truth were told, Lanier should have known about. At least, it had been played for his benefit, and had "pulled the wool" over the colonel's eyes.

"I consider him as square a man as I know, and utterly above a lie—of any kind," was the final answer.

"And yet you hesitate. You know, or have heard—rumors," said Button suspiciously.

"I have heard rumors and slanders, Colonel Button," was Barker's

probably injudicious reply, for he closed with, "and so many of them that I disbelieve nine out of ten."

"Well, here!" said Button impulsively, "here are you and Stannard and Sumter—three of the 'old liners,' as you are called in your respective grades—and I see plainly enough you three, and God knows how many more, are tacitly condemning my attitude toward Lanier. You think, if you don't say, that I have treated him with harshness and injustice—have listened solely to his accusers and enemies. Now, I've had enough of this! There is nothing that *requires* a commander to show his hand to his subordinates, but as matters stand in this regiment—Oh come in, Major Stannard. I sent for you purposely, and Sumter as well, to meet me here at tattoo." (And at the moment, as the united force of field musicians began the stirring strains of the old cavalry "curfew call," "The March of the Bear," the two seniors solemnly entered the presence, removing their fur caps as they bowed to the commander.) "As I was saying to Barker, as matters stand in this regiment, some half a dozen at least of the men referred to as its 'representative officers' are apparently resentful of my arrest of Lieutenant Lanier, and attribute my course to pique, because he saw fit to show himself at the hop I declined to permit him as officer-of-the-guard to attend. You think, possibly, that because men like Captain Snaffle, Lieutenant Crane, and one or two of that set have been in consultation with me, the matters at issue are beneath your notice." (Here the three assailed officers exchanged glances, but said not a word in protest, for the colonel went impulsively on.) "They at least are loyal to their commander, and to the best interests of the regiment. Now I mean to show you. Mr. Barker," said he impressively, "go to Lieutenant Lanier and say that I desire his presence here at once."

And Barker took his cap and cape and departure without a word.

Down the line in the moonlight the snow heaps were sparkling as though crusted with brilliants. The black square of the field music was trudging out across an acre of the parade swept clean by the recent gale. The children, in laughing little groups, were returning from their hour at the slide, and here and there from the deep cut or tunnel in front of each officer's doorway dark muffled figures were emerging, and striding away toward the barracks—subalterns en route to the companies to supervise roll-call.

Just as Barker neared Stannard's, at the head of the row, two cloaked and hooded forms hurried forth, and Barker almost collided with them.

"Oh, good evening, Miss Kate! Good evening, Miss Arnold!" was his embarrassed greeting. Then, with attempt at jocularly for which he later could have kicked himself: "I'm just in time to see

you home, and head off hobgoblins and hoboes." No wonder the two walked the faster and gave but perfunctory replies.

"Indeed, I beg pardon," he blundered on. "I'm just bound for Lanier's. Any message?"

"You might say we wish him speedy deliverance," answered Kate Sumter, with unlooked-for spirit and effect, for the adjutant, in dismay at his own awkwardness, darted swiftly ahead, shouting, "Hold on, Steve!" to an officer with whom he would rather not have wasted a moment's time.

Indeed, poor Barker was sore distressed. He could not help hearing scraps of the talk that had passed at the office between the colonel, Snaffle, Crane, and certain summoned enlisted men, Fitzroy, Cassidy, and Quinlan among them. Even that poor devil who had been on duty Friday night as sentry on Number Five had been marched into the awful presence of the commanding officer, and ordered to tell who gave him the whiskey that had been his undoing—even promising immunity from punishment; but he was Irish and true to his faith and his friends, even they who had betrayed him, and he'd die first, he said. Never would he "shplit on the best feller in the foort."

And Barker had heard many things that pointed to Lanier—so many that his heart seemed to stop as he entered the door, and sank at sight of the trouble in the face of the young soldier sitting there in conference with Ennis and Doctor Schuchardt.

Silently Lanier heard the summons. There was no reason why he should not go, said the doctor. "The air will do you good," he added, "and we'll be here when you come back."

Five minutes sufficed to reset the bandages and get him into his furs. Ten minutes more and, for the first time since Friday evening, the accused officer stood in the presence of his colonel, with three tried and trusted comrades near to see him through.

"Mr. Lanier," said Button presently, "I have sent for you in deference to the sentiment in your behalf, entertained by officers of such standing in the army as these gentlemen who are here present. I am free to say that I have had grave reasons for forming a most unfavorable opinion of your conduct, even of your character. It has been my intention to forward charges of a serious nature against you, and to urge your trial by general court-martial. But such is my regard for these gentlemen, and the element they represent, that I stand ready to abandon my views and adopt theirs on your simple word. Can I say more?"

There was a moment of silence. Then Lanier spoke: "It depends, sir, I think, upon what you wish me to answer."

Button colored. Turning to his desk, he took from an envelope several newspaper clippings. "You know what these are, doubtless,

Mr. Lanier. Do you care to say what part you took in their preparation?"

"I am glad to say I took no part," was the answer.

"No part at all? And you do not even know the author?"

Lanier's dark eyes never swerved from their gaze. "I took no part, sir. I did not say—I do not wish to say—that I do not know the author," was the calm reply.

"Then you admit, or permit me to infer, that you know him—a member of this command, for no one else knew the facts—and, moreover, that you shield him?"

"I am shielding no man, Colonel Button. I would not shield a member of this command who wrote such wrong of it."

"Yet you know the author and you will not tell?"

"What little I know came in such a way that I *cannot* tell," was the resolute answer. Button's forehead furrowed deep and his voice trembled with anger.

"Enough said—or refused to be said—on that head. We will go to the next. Who personated you the night you left your troop at Laramie and went, contrary to orders, to that frolic at the post?"

A look of amaze came into the young officer's face. The answer came slowly, painfully:

"I took part in no frolic, sir. I went contrary to an order that had held good while we were out on the campaign, but that we did not suppose was binding there. I went to the post that night to help a fr—a man who—who needed money for an immediate journey. No one personated me to my knowledge."

"I have the written report of the officer-of-the-day, whom I ordered to inspect your tent, that you were there asleep at eleven p.m. Subsequently I learned that you were away from taps until nearly reveille."

"You could have heard that from me, sir, and *why* I was gone, if need be." And now it was plain that Mr. Lanier was growing angry. This was a point gained by the colonel. He tried for another.

"Officers who make comrades and intimates of enlisted men take chances that——"

"Colonel Button!" interposed Lanier, hotly, "I protest——"

"Protest you may, but listen you shall," was the instant rejoinder. "It is well known you interfered with a non-commissioned officer in the proper discharge of his duty. That was last June, and it was in behalf of that young man Rawdon. It is well known that you were hobnobbing with other enlisted men here, and gave them drink and food in your quarters on more than one occasion. It is well known you lent civilian clothing to your protégé for his latest escapade——"

"Colonel Button—gentlemen!" cried Lanier, "this is beyond all right!" Indeed, Stannard and Sumter were on their feet, in expost-

ulation, but the colonel's blood was up. Bang went his bell, and the orderly fairly jumped into the room.

"Call Sergeant Fitzroy," said he, and in another moment Fitzroy stood before them, a civilian coat and waistcoat hanging on his arm.

"Briefly now, sergeant, where did you get those?" demanded Button.

"From the room that Trooper Rawdon occupied in town, sir. It's the suit he wore about town last Friday;" and so saying, he held them forth. Lanier slowly took the coat, astonishment in his eyes; glanced at the tag inside the collar, bearing the name of his own New York tailor; for a moment he searched it within and without, then handed it quietly back.

"It is enough like mine to deceive anybody but—the owner," said he.

"Do you mean to tell me——" began Button indignantly.

"That this is not mine?" interposed Lanier. "Yes, sir, and that one very like it will be found in my closet at home."

"Mr. Barker will go with you, and you will resume your confinement—in arrest;" and Button, in his anger, was lashing himself to language his hearers never forgot, and that some could hardly, even long months after, forgive. "In *my* time, as a young officer, nothing tempted one of our members to violate an arrest, but you——"

Pale as death Lanier faced him.

"Surely, sir, a cry for help—that I thought might mean fire——"

"There was *no* cry for help," interrupted the colonel. "There was no sign of fire. Even if there had been, it should mean nothing to a man of honor when ordered in arrest. That is the only creed of a gentleman."

And then, with the lone trumpet of the musician of the guard wailing its good-night to the garrison—the sweet, solemn strain of "Taps"—the adjutant led his stunned and silent comrade home.

VIII.

ENNIS and Schuchardt were still there, and started at sight of Lanier's white face. Without a word he led on to an inner room, where Ennis sprang to his side. "Help me off with these," he said, "and bring a lamp. Come up-stairs, Barker;" and, wondering, both the others followed. There were but two sleeping rooms aloft in the little bachelor set. Ennis had the one facing the parade. Lanier's looked out upon the hospital and surgeon's quarters at the back. Into this room marched Bob Lanier and threw open the door of the single closet wherein was hanging uniform and civilian garb in some profusion. Ennis held the lamp on high, and with his free hand Lanier began throwing out the contents—a new uniform dress coat, an older

one that had done duty for the three previous years, two sack coats or "blouses," the police officers' overcoat of the day, several pairs of blue trousers, with the broad stripe of the cavalry, and these as they came were flung on the bed by Barker and "Shoe." Then appeared a suit of evening clothes, carefully handled. Then a brown business suit of tweeds, then a light drab overcoat, and then the closet was well nigh empty, and Lanier faced them with the simple words: "It's gone!"

"What's gone?" demanded Ennis.

"Why, that dark gray mixture sack suit I brought from leave last year. It always hung 'way back in here."

"Who wants it now, I'd like to know?" demanded Ennis.

"Our colonel, who accuses me of costuming Rawdon for his get-away." And the three friends looked at each in something like consternation.

Then Barker spoke: "It's only fair to the colonel to tell the rest, Bob. Rawdon's box, that he left for safe keeping with a friend in town, had not only the suit you saw at the office, but a new fur cap with your name in it. There were other things that looked queer. The day of the storm Quinlan came over to the guard-house after his visit here, wearing a new cap instead of his old one, and Cassidy swooped on it, thinking it yours, for it was here he got it, and the name in that cap was Rawdon. It leaked out somehow. Fitzroy hunted the story down."

"The name was burnt out when Cassidy brought it back to me," said Lanier slowly. "He claimed that in lighting his pipe——"

"Poor Cassidy lied every way he could think of to save you," said Barker ruefully. "It's the young cad you befriended and helped along that's tricked you in the end, and you're not the only man, I'm afraid."

"Roped Rafferty in, I suppose," said Schuchardt, while a light of superior wisdom stole slowly over the face of Lieutenant Ennis.

"Rafferty, doubtless, to the extent of bribing or wheedling him out of Bob's new cits——"

"But those were *not* mine that Fitzroy had!" burst in Lanier.

"Of course not. He's left you a worn suit in place of the new. Where'd he steal that one, I wonder? There is n't another officer of your size and build at the post. But, here, I've got to go back and report, and my report will be in these words: 'Mr. Lanier has been robbed, too,'" and Barker made for the stairs.

"One moment," called Ennis. "You said Bob was n't the only man this fellow had tricked. Do you mean——" he paused suggestively.

"I mean, yes—that there's more than one man, and there's at least

one poor girl in the garrison to mourn that fellow's loss, and be d—— to him!" and with that Barker was gone.

Button listened to his adjutant's report with something almost like a sneer. Stannard and Sumter heard it with grave faces, but without a word. Snaffle, who had drifted in, sniggered with obvious triumph.

"Gentlemen," said the colonel, "you have not heard the half of what I know, and every day brings something new. This comes in from Laramie to-day, brought with the mail that lay over at the Chugwater during the storm. Read that, Stannard." And Stannard took the paper and glanced it over, blinked his eyes, sniffed, and said: "I've heard about that case, and I'll take Lanier's story any day against—that fellow's affidavit."

"Major Stannard," said Button severely, "you are speaking contemptuously of your superior officer."

"Colonel Button," answered Stannard, with high held head, but with firm hand on his temper, "I am speaking contemptuously of my superior officer's *informant*, not of the commanding officer of Fort Laramie. If you care to look you will see that he quotes, not asserts, that 'this money was advanced to Mr. Lowndes on Mr. Lanier's statement that the young man was summoned home by the serious illness of his mother, and that he, Mr. Lanier, would be responsible for the transaction. Mr. Lowndes has never repaid it, and Mr. Lanier when appealed to four weeks since not only refused to make it good, but abused and cursed me for simply asking for what was my own.' Now, sir," concluded Stannard, "I have n't sought to learn the facts in the case, but I'll bet ten dollars to ten cents you have yet to hear them."

"Very good, gentlemen," answered Button, rising in obvious chagrin. "It is quite evident in your opinion Mr. Lanier is a persecuted saint and I am an abandoned sinner, but just as soon as I can reach Omaha this case shall be laid before a general court-martial, and meanwhile I waste no more words defending my actions."

Whereupon, with formal "Good-night, sir," from Stannard and Sumter, and a grumpy dismissal from the indignant commander, the ill-starred conference broke up. Snaffle, pouring balm into Button's ready ear, as he saw him home, went in and drank his health at the well-stocked sideboard, and then started straightway across the parade to his troop quarters, and, late as it was, called for his first sergeant.

The men were mostly in bed, as they should be at such an hour, but there had been an informal dance, and many of the sergeants were still at the hop room. Beyond this brightly lighted building, and about in the rear of the infantry barracks at the westward end, was the slide into the creek valley, whereat so many of the officers' children had been coasting early in the evening, and where now—nearly eleven o'clock—half a hundred young people of both sexes, wives and daughters of

quartermaster's employees and of the elder sergeants, attended by their gallants from the garrison, were having a merry time of it. The moon shone in brilliance. The night air, frosty and still, was full of exhilaration. The officer-of-the-guard, merely cautioning the revellers to control their impulse to shout, had gone on his way with implied permission to keep up the fun, and presently other officers appeared upon the brow of the bluff, interested observers. One of them, the junior medical officer of the post, was known to all, for his duty it was to attend the families of the soldiery resident in the little village of their own, just west of the quartermaster's corral, and sheltered by the long line of bluffs from the northerly gale. Deep in snowdrifts lay the snug little cabins, cottages and shacks, wherein dwelt these blithe-hearted folk—many of the girls as pretty, and to the full as coquettish, as their sisters of the official circle in the big "fort" enclosure above. Still farther to the west lay three little houses on the level "bench," by the swift-running stream—the homes of the corral-master, the wagon-master and the veterinarian—civilians all, as then ordained, yet men who had lived their lives with the army on the frontier.

And it was one of these, the veterinary surgeon, a gray-haired man of nearly sixty, who presently came toiling up the hillside, touched his fur cap front in salutation to tall Lieutenant Ennis, and begged leave to speak a moment with Doctor Schuchardt, whom he led slowly away.

Looking gravely after them and pondering many things in mind, Ennis, none the less, had attentive ear for the chatter and gossip of a neighboring group that had suspended their sledding for the moment and were curiously watching the pair.

"There's no more the matter wid Dora Mayhew than there is wid me, 'cept one," said a red-cheeked maid of "laundresses' row," to the eager group about her. "She's been daft about that young dude Rawdon ever since he came last spring to Frayne."

"Yes, an' deaf to Cockney Fitz," laughed another.

And Ennis, turning quickly, noted the group, four young non-commissioned officers and three of the garrison girls, all of them toying with the name of good old Mayhew's bonny daughter, she whom that veteran English horseman had taught and guarded with such jealous care, to the end that jealousy burned in the hearts of a dozen other girls less favored in face or fortune. Well had Ennis known of Sergeant Fitzroy's aspirations. Few in the regiment had not, and few there were who did not know that, in spite of Mayhew's avowed dislike for him, the girl had for a time encouraged. It may have been only to pique the others, for Fitzroy was clever, well-to-do, a rising man in the service; indeed, one who had "money in the bank and men in his toils," said elder women in the quarters.

Then in April, to Fort Frayne, had come this handsome young fellow Rawdon, with better looks, better manners, and even, as it seemed, better money, for Rawdon was lavish where Fitzroy was "near," and the favor of the young girl, who had toyed with the Englishman, turned from him to this unknown. Then the whole command went forth to war and to a summer of sharp work. Then with the late October, headquarters, band, and six troops had been transferred from Frayne to Cushing, close in to civilization. Then had come Fitzroy's new opportunity, with Rawdon left at Frayne. Then had come Rawdon himself; then the night of mystery; then the day of the storm, and when the skies above were clear again Rawdon was gone, no man knew whither, leaving a trail of suspicion, accusation, and a weeping, well-nigh desperate girl behind.

And in this web of intrigue and mystery Bob Lanier had become deeply, even dangerously, involved. Ennis was sorely worried. It was to see Mayhew the two friends had come, and, lo, Mayhew had met them on the way, himself in trouble and perplexity.

"Where did you say she was now?" Ennis heard the doctor ask, as they rejoined him.

"She went to speak with Mrs. Stannard, but said ladies were there, so she came back a while ago. I could hear her crying in her room before she went the second time;" and poor Mayhew's head was drooping.

"And you wish me to see her to-night?"

"If you'd be so good, doctor. She'll soon be home. I was going over in search of her now."

"Wait," said Ennis. "Listen!"

There was a flurry among the revellers a few rods away. Two men had run toward the corner of the nearest barrack, looming black against the northward sky. Others could be seen hurrying after them. Then, *could* it be? Yes, sharp and clear came the sound of a shot from away over toward the hospital. Another nearer; another still nearer, and distant shouts, and then the blare of the trumpet.

"Come on! It's fire!" said Ennis, and sprang in pursuit of the leaders, "Shoe" and Mayhew following. "It's fire!" went up the cry along the hillside. "Fire!" echoed the nearest sentry, letting fly the load in his rifle. "Fire!" shouted the few wakeful fellows in barracks, tumbling instantly every man from his bunk to his boots and into his ready clothes. "Fire!" yelled the sergeant-of-the-guard, as he tore in among his sleeping comrades. "Fire!" echoed the cry from barrack to barrack, as the men poured forth into the night, and then, as Ennis rounded the corner and came in full view of the wide open parade with the long line of quarters beyond, his heart leaped for his throat in wild dismay. "My God, lieutenant, it's *your* house!"

panted a racing trooper. "My God, and Bob's all alone!" sobbed Ennis, as he sped through the snow, for already from the front dormer and from the lower windows the flames were mounting high in the trail of a black volume of smoke, and over the crackle and roar of the fire, the rush and clamor of men, the thrilling alarum of echoing bugle and trumpet, there rose on the night air the scream of a girl, imploring instant aid, and this time at least there could be no doubt, for the cry was, "Save him! Save him!"

Of the minutes that followed no man could give collected account. All Ennis saw as he came staggering round to the rear of the flaming furnace that once was a house, was a wild-eyed girl being led away by a group of sympathetic women, and a little group of men bundling a slender yet vigorously protesting form in a snow drift, where one or two others were being rolled and buffeted; while others still, with a keening Irishman in their grasp, were lugging him back to hospital; while Corporal Cassidy, with his hair singed close to his head, his face and hands seared and his clothing soaked, smoking, and a general wreck, was striving to evade his handlers and stand attention to the colonel, who for his part was bending over Bob Lanier just emerging from his third involuntary plunge in the drifts, and sputtering objurgations on his would-be benefactors.

"In God's name, Lanier," almost wailed the colonel, as at last that young gentleman, likewise singed and scorched and soaked and dripping, yet preternaturally cool for one just out of a blazing hell, found his feet and faced his commander—"in God's name, why did n't you jump when they told you? There was nothing but snowdrifts below——"

"There was a colonel coming," said Bob, with a grin of mingled anguish and satisfaction, "who held *that* sort of thing to be breach of arrest."

IX.

Few men slept the rest of the night for talking over the stirring scenes of that spectacular fire. Indeed, there had been a strenuous fight to keep it from spreading, and the Graysons' quarters next door were badly scorched, and the Graysons woefully scared, before the little bachelor hall had burned itself out. Big Jim Ennis had lost pretty much everything he owned except what he had on. Lanier was not much better off. As to the origin of the fire, Bob merely said that he had turned the lights low in the sitting-room, and, obedient to "Shoe's" orders, had gone up to his roost, too wrathful and amazed over what had occurred even to think of sleep—to think, in fact, of anything but the colonel's words. So absorbed was he, as he slowly undressed, he never noted the sounds from below until his room of a sudden seemed filled with smoke, and, throwing open the door, he

was amazed to find the hallway ablaze, the stairs impassable. Running to his dormer window, he yelled fire at the top of his voice. Sentry No. 5 heard and came running down along the back fence; saw the peril, let drive a shot and gave the yell that roused every one at the hospital—poor Rafferty, half crazed, half dazed, and by no means half dressed, coming leaping along among the first.

And there at his back window, choking with smoke and tossing out clothing and other belongings, stood Mr. Lanier. Some men went searching for ladders up the line of back yards, the post hook and ladder truck being, of course, on the far side of the garrison. There being no extension and sheds to this little box, as to the larger quarters up the line, other men began shouting, and Lieutenant Grayson imploring, Mr. Lanier to jump, for already the flames had burst through the windows below. Then came the episode the regiment laughed over, swore over, talked over, many a long year thereafter. To Grayson's appeal Bob's only answer was a calm and deliberate:

"Give my compliments to the colonel, will you, and tell him that, my quarters being all ablaze, I'd like an extension of arrest?"

Then Sumter and Stannard came in, tumultuous, and *ordered* him down, and Blake and Curbit, and the rest of the card party, came tearing after them, and berated him for an absurdity, and implored him not to be an ass. And then a bright tongue of flame licked in through the transom behind him, and the door panels burst from the heat, and all the room at his back suddenly blazed with fire, and then went up the cry from that agonized girl, at sound of which Lanier started and strove to climb to the little window-sill, with a lurid sheet lapping down about his head, and then a brace of young Irishmen, Cassidy foremost, came scrambling up a human pyramid, smoking and singeing below them. They reached the blazing eaves and burst through the fringe of flame, dragging Bob forth and on to the edge, and then tottered all together into that blessed mound of snow beneath, fast melting in the glare of that fiery furnace.

Then came the commander, and the swift running soldiers, and all the antiquated fire apparatus, and most of the families. Soon the hooks were locked in the blazing framework, and speedily the little bachelor den was torn into hissing and smoking fragments. Meantime Lanier and Cassidy, Blake, Horton, and nearly a dozen daring fellows who had risked their skins to save their lieutenant, had been led over to hospital to be cooled off and lotioned and bandaged and variously put to bed, and when at last not a spark could be found in the black, unsightly ruins, and even they had been buried under bushels of snow, the colonel and his men-at-arms went back to quarters, and many of the officers to the store, to talk it all over, especially what Bobby had said to Button.

And thus were we brought to the morning of Thursday, the sixth since the eventful night when Miriam Arnold's shriek had alarmed the garrison—Miriam, whose voice had now been heard a second time, upraised in frantic dread and appeal, but this time for the young soldier who, on the previous Friday night, forgetful of his arrest, had rushed forth at her cry, but this night had to be dragged—Miriam who now lay sick from maidenly shame that in one wild appeal to save her lover she had so betrayed herself.

With Thursday noon came resumption of telegraphic communication, and the long-stalled railway trains from east and west. With Thursday afternoon came "wires" from Arnold, the father, begging to know had his daughter started, and back went the electric message that she neither had nor could, nor would for a week—"full details by post." With Thursday evening came stacks of belated letters, "with whole bales of newspapers," said the stage driver, to follow, and with Thursday midnight, long after every one had gone to bed, there came a tapping at Major Stannard's storm door, and presently a fumbling at the bell knob, a clanging of the bell.

"What now?" thought the sleepy major, as he scuttled down-stairs in slippers and dressing-gown. "Who's there?" he growled, as he unbolted the door. That fire down the line had made people nervous. There was no saying how it started.

"It is Mayhew, sir," said a solemn voice. "I've come not hoping, only praying, I may find my daughter here."

"Good God!" said Stannard. "Come in," and led forthwith his aged and trembling comrade within doors, seated him by the still glowing stove in the front room, and struck a light. In less than a minute Mrs. Stannard, too, had joined them, her kind blue eyes filled with tender pity and sorrow. She, at least, was not entirely unprepared. Poor motherless Dora had no lack of friendly counsel and fond, womanly sympathy when once she could be brought to lay her burden there. If only she had earlier sought that wise and winsome monitor! But Mrs. Stannard had not been at Frayne in the early summer, not until the major was assigned to station at Cushing had the good wife joined him, and meanwhile there had been no hand to guide, only a fond and passionate young heart. And now, with his gray hairs bowed in sorrow to the dust, poor Mayhew had come to tell his piteous tale. Ever since young Rawdon had gone with the paymaster she had been fitful and nervous. Ever since their coming to Cushing, four weeks ago, she had been watching, waiting, listening, often weeping, and when letters came for her, with the postmark of Fetterman or Laramie, Red Cloud or the cantonment in the Hills, he could not but note her feverish eagerness and her instant escape to her own room to read her treasure alone. Oh, yes, he knew they must be from Rawdon.

He had liked the lad, knew there was good stuff in him, and he could not bear that fellow Fitzroy, who was a military loan shark, a man who fattened on the needs or weaknesses of his comrades. He hated to think of his bonny girl's losing her heart to Fitzroy. He owned he rather welcomed Rawdon's advances and rejoiced that she, too, seemed to prefer him.

But—God! He had never looked for—this! Oh, where had she gone?—and why? He had found her at home and in tears after the fire. All morning long she had been in an agony of nervousness. Then that afternoon, some time, somehow, she got a message or letter, and then, kissing him and saying she would be better in bed, had gone to her room, but not to sleep. At eleven o'clock old Chloe's sobbing aroused him. He found it all deserted. Dora had disappeared, leaving not one word to comfort him.

They lost no time, those men of the field and the frontier. Stannard was dressed and out in twenty minutes; had summoned Ennis, Field, and others among the young officers; had routed out half a troop and could have had the entire garrison, for few were the soldiers who would not search all night or work all day for good old Mayhew and his pretty daughter. Perhaps that was one reason why, until this night, so many maids and mothers among the sergeants' families envied and slandered her. Mayhew had been far from wise, and Dora, indeed, had none to guide. Kindly and cordially treated as he and she had been by the officers and their wives—being, in fact, superior socially to the Snaffle household, if not to certain others—there was yet this bar to hold them back: they dined and danced not with the "commissioned" element of the post whereat Mayhew was stationed. They were of finer clay than the people of the rank and file, and so, with the families of the forage and wagonmaster, the chief packer and old Ordnance Sergeant Shell, they made up a little middle class of their own, when Dora's heart had gone out, ungrudgingly, to handsome, clever, educated George Rawdon, whom all men could see had been reared among gentlefolk, and who, as further fascination, was supplied from some unknown source with money which he spent with lavish hand.

The moon was in the fourth quarter now, yet still bright enough to aid them, and up and down the creek bank went the searchers, probing every pool, searching every shallow. It was odd—or was it odd?—that for half an hour no man, no matter what he thought, went down and banged at the door of "C" Troop's stable—where in cozy quarters and solemn state, guarded by the sentries on either flank, slept that surly magnate among the non-commissioned officers—Fitzroy, the stable sergeant of Snaffle's troop. Whatever had befallen poor Dora Mayhew, it was not to join Cockney Fitzroy she had fled.

Had she fled to join anybody? was the question that racked so many

a heart, for, with the possible exception of gentle Mrs. Stannard, the girl had made no confidant. It was stanch old Chloe who would have it that her pet and pride from childhood, her solemn charge since the poor mother's death eight years before, had never left her father's roof to do harm to herself and break their hearts. If morning came without her, she surely had been lured away, and, if "Marss Rawdon" had really gone, who was there who, through love or fear or threat or artifice of any kind, *could* lure her?

It was this, full fifteen minutes after Lieutenant Field and two of his men had trotted off to town, that started old Stannard and big Jim Ennis down the valley from the veterinarian's, through "Sudstown," where girls and women were huddling and whispering at the news; through the hay and wood-yards, where the sentry challenged sharply, so often had he halted searching parties in the last ten minutes; past the little shack where dwelt the farriers and blacksmiths, many of them alight, for the story had gone sweeping; and so at last they came to the long cavalry stables, standing gable ends to the north, like so many companies in close column, and at the sixth of these, farthest from the bluff whereon stood the barracks and quarters, they stopped and banged at the door. No answer—even when the sentry came to their aid and hammered with the butt of his carbine. They went round and rattled at the window of the sergeant's room. Still no response, and at their beck the sentry yelled for the corporal-of-the-guard, who had followed down, expectant.

"I'll have him out," said he, and ran round to the south end, and presently came back, panting but triumphant. He had roused the two stable orderlies. They would open up in a minute. They did, with much blinking of eyes and some demur, but stood abashed when the burly major strode in, big Jim Ennis at his heels. The latter hesitated not one second. His weight went in with the battering ram of that muscular leg and massive foot, and the sergeant's door flew open before them. The room was empty. Fitzroy and Fitzroy's furs were gone. Nor was that all. Snatching a stable lantern from the hand of one of the shaking grooms, Ennis swung it high aloft. Two empty stalls stood close at hand.

"I thought so," said he, then grabbed the nearest orderly by the coat collar. "Who took Lieutenant Foster's sleigh and team," demanded he, "and how long ago?"

"Sergeant Fitzroy, sir," came the answer, with a doleful whine, "just before the third relief, at half-past eleven."

"No time to see the colonel now!" said Ennis. "Major Stannard, I've got to gallop into town, but a dozen men, if need be, should trail that sleigh."

"Go it, boy," was the instant answer, "and I'm behind you."

X.

ON the principle that disaster ever demands its victim, the sentry of the second relief—the immediate predecessor of the soldier now on post at the north line of the stables—was stirred up at once and ordered to explain. Even as Stannard was hastening the movements of the men detailed to mount and trail the Foster team, even as Ennis was galloping toward on a mission of his own, Captain Langley, of the Infantry, officer-of-the-day, began his stern examination of the luckless guardian.

Orders are orders. Even a stable sergeant could not take or send an animal out at night (except the building stood in danger of destruction by flood, fire, or tornado,) save on written order of a commissioned officer and in presence of the corporal-of-the-guard, and Stoner, the sentry of the second relief, admitted he knew these were the orders, but “the fellers” had never supposed they applied to Sergeant Fitzroy, who did pretty much as he pleased. In fact, Fitzroy hitched up and drove away without so much as a word to him. He, the sentry, was too little surprised to think of ordering “Halt.” Even as Langley drew from him the admission, the word came up that the squad had started hot foot on the trail. It led straight away to town.

And the stable orderlies had sworn that Fitzroy started alone. Therefore, unless Dora Mayhew had circled the fort and joined him on the bleak eastward prairie, it was most unlikely she had gone with him, and, up to one o'clock, there was none to hint with whom, or how, except afoot, she could have gone. Then, however, came revelation. The sentry stationed at the northwest face of the post admitted having seen “a rig from town” making wide circuit clear around behind the fort on the westward “bench,” which was swept almost clean of snow. It had kept well out beyond hailing distance, stood a moment or two up at the edge of the bluff, then whirled about and went the way it came. What hour was this? Just before they called off eleven o'clock. Why had he not mentioned or reported it? Well, he thought it might have been some of the officers. “They sometimes came out late and went in home the back way,” whereat, in some confusion, Captain Langley dropped that phase of the investigation.

By two o'clock that rig also had been trailed back to town, where it was lost in the tangle of wheel tracks. There Ennis and Field and several troopers, with one or two interested citizens, were in quest of tidings. There they were joined by Mayhew himself, who had one more hope. Dora had a friend, a few years older than herself, with whom she had been intimate at Fort Riley. They went daily to school together when children, and wept when parted. Now her friend was married to a conductor of the Union Pacific Railway, and living in town. It might be that Dora had gone to her.

They found the house, and hammered at the door and lower windows, and succeeded only in waking a Chinese servant who said, "All gone; b'long Omaha," and refused further information. They went to the three stables in town, and all had "rigs" out, some of them two or three. None, to the proprietor's knowledge, had been to the fort. Most of them had gone to a dance at Arena, a cattle town six miles east, and it was high time they were returning, for now it was after three. "What's all the row about anyhow?" demanded the night watchman of one of these establishments. "There was that cockney sergeant fellow here along about midnight, asking questions and raising hell. The town marshal had a rumpus with him and went to bed mad." The half-dozen hangers-on about the railway station, and the roisterers at the one, open-all-night saloon were growing inquisitive, if not impudent. The station-master had gone home, but the lone operator to whom, one after another, Field, Ennis, and Mayhew had appealed, declared that no young lady had gone on Number 6, for the reason that Number 6 had n't gone and would n't go till 'long toward daylight. She broke down somewhere about seven o'clock at Medicine Bow.

But Ennis and Mayhew came at him a second time, with a second question: Could he tell them anything of Mr. and Mrs. Osborn, Osborn being a conductor and Mrs. Osborn Dora's friend of whom previous mention is made? Had they gone to Omaha? No, for Mr. Osborn was round here early in the evening, and had to be here at six o'clock A.M. to meet and take Number 5 over the Mountain Division. Then John Chinaman had lied, said poor Mayhew, grieving sore and quite ready to break down, but Ennis was spurred to new energy.

"Keep up your heart, old man," said he. "The more I think of this, the more I'm sure there's light ahead, and I'm going after it. Go to the hotel, lie down, and leave the rest to me."

And still Jim Ennis felt by no means confident he could be in time. He knew the Mayhews only slightly. He had never before been stationed at regimental headquarters, had seen and known Dora only since their coming to Fort Cushing, and therefore had not learned to share Bob's honest admiration for her. She might be all Bob thought her, a loving child and a true-hearted girl in spite of her infatuation for this presentable young trooper whose antecedents nobody knew. Ennis had often marked him during the campaign and noted his regard for Bob, and felt kindly disposed toward him until mid September, when two troops were sent in to Frayne, with the pack train and orders to load up with rations and escort it back. Rawdon was missing from the column when it camped the first night out, on the return, and only caught them by a daring night ride through the Sioux country when they were two days' march beyond. His captain, Raymond, had sternly

rebuked him and promised him further punishment when they reached the regiment, but Lanier had heard of it and interceded, thereby making Rawdon still more his friend. But now the heart of "Dad" Ennis was hot against him, for fear that what Barker said might all be true: that Rawdon had wrecked an old man's heart and home, and ruined an old man's beloved daughter.

With just two troopers at his back, toward four in the morning, big Jim went spurring on through the dim moonlight, town and station far behind, following a meandering sleigh and wagon track across the wide, dreary upland, riding, as a rule, parallel with the railway, while such sleighs as tried the journey had evidently been making many a detour. Snow there was in abundance in the coulees and ravines, snow in sheets in the lee of every little ridge or hummock, but elsewhere the icy sod was swept hard and clean, and the sharp hoofs rang as though they struck macadam. Three miles out two "rigs" were passed, westward bound, filled with town folk who had been to Arena for the dance. Had they seen or heard aught of Mr. and Mrs. Osborn? he asked. No, they knew them well by sight, and would be sure to note them had they come to the dance. Five miles out a stage was encountered, loaded with exuberant revellers who had remained after the dance for a spree, and were now consumed with wrath because certain officers of the law from their own town, too, had hustled them out.

"A hull sleighful of 'em—three or four anyhow—came over there with that cockney sergeant you fellers keep at the fort, lookin' for deserters. You after deserters? Well, here 's—hic—hopin' you don't get 'em."

It was all Jim Ennis wanted to know. "Come on, men," he cried, and spurred ahead, his wondering troopers following.

"Now, what the mischief is that man Fitzroy's game?" thought Ennis, as he pushed on through the bitter cold of the December morning. It had not been difficult to learn that the sergeant, after much search and inquiry in town, had started for Arena, taking with him, as it happened, two of the Rocky Mountain police, who had business there and were tired of waiting for the train. Ennis reasoned it was after Dora that Fitzroy had gone; that in his jealous misery he had kept watch upon her, had followed to town on hearing of her flight, had followed further, and this it was that gave Ennis the hope that she was accompanied by such worthy people as the Osborns. If that were so, it could mean but one thing. It was to join Rawdon, perhaps to be joined to Rawdon. Osborn had sent two messages by wire and received two early in the evening; Ennis had learned this through the operator, though the contents were withheld. Rawdon, probably, dared not come to Cushing City. There he might still be arrested on sight. Yes.

Ennis had it now. Dora Mayhew had fled to Arena to meet and marry George Rawdon; Fitzroy had followed fast in hopes of blocking it.

And just as the twinkling switch-lights of the little prairie station hove in sight ahead, there came a sound that startled him—the whistle of a railway engine not a mile behind—Number 6 at last, and coming full tilt—the very train, perhaps, that they, the young couple, hoped and meant to take, and might have taken on their eastward way had not Fitzroy, keen-eyed, quick-witted, and vengeful, been there in time to bar the move.

And then in the soldier soul of big Jim Ennis was born a strange, sudden, and somewhat unprofessional spirit of opposition. Starting out in the hope of finding and restoring to her father's roof the sorrowing fugitive, Jim Ennis veered right round to the purpose of succoring a maiden in distress. If marriage was Rawdon's motive in bidding her join him, then Rawdon was honest after all, and who was he or who was Fitzroy to stand in the way and stop it? No, by all the Arts of Peace and the Articles of War, Rawdon was right and d—— be the man that sought to check him.

Five minutes later, with the big engine and train coming hissing and grinding to a stop at the platform, Ennis sprang from his panting horse, tossed the reins to one trooper, and, followed by the other, shouldered his way through a little knot of staring townfolk and up to a group at the edge of the platform. A trim-built young fellow in civilian dress was struggling in the grasp of two detectives; a terrified girl was clinging to his arm, tears streaming down her face; a clerical-looking, elderly stranger was expostulating; a man in the cap and dress of a railway conductor was vehemently arguing with a stocky sergeant of cavalry, who seemed master of the situation, and greatly enjoying his own importance. A pale-faced young woman, whom the conductor of Number 6 addressed as Mrs. Osborn, was imploring his aid, when, to the amaze of the sergeant, this big subaltern in boots and spurs bulged in between him and Conductor Osborn and demanded to know the nature of the trouble.

"I've run down this man, at last, sir," gulped Fitzroy, flustered, but making valiant effort at control, "as you see, sir, only in the nick of time."

"Oh, Mr. Ennis," cried Dora, throwing herself upon him and clasping his arm. "Rawdon has done no wrong. We are married. Here are our friends to prove it. *Why* should they arrest him?"

"Colonel's orders, lieutenant. Arrest him wherever found," said Fitz stoutly, "and I've a sl—stage here to take him back."

"On charges of your own invention, Sergeant Fitzroy," said Ennis icily, "no one of which you'll ever prove. Have you any warrant for this man?"—this to the detectives.

"None, sir. The sergeant said he was a deserter, running off with the doctor's daughter."

"He's no deserter. He's on furlough by order of General Crook, travelling, I take it, with his own wife, and unless you want to burn your fingers to the bone, let go."

"Then, lieutenant," burst in Fitzroy, "he's a prisoner by order of Colonel Button——"

"Then as senior officer on the spot I'll take charge of him; also, Sergeant Fitzroy, of you, and the sleigh you feloniously made way with. Stand aside, sir. Now, gentlemen, how about this train?"

"Ordered right on, lieutenant, to meet Number 5 at Beaver Switch."

"Then it's a case of all aboard for those bound eastward. We'll hear the rest when you return from furlough, Rawdon"—for now the young man was trying to speak instead of seeking to speed away. "I did my best to be in time for the ceremony, Mrs. Rawdon," continued Ennis, gallant and impressive, as he swung her suddenly aboard, "but with my usual luck I lost the chance to kiss the bride."

For answer she quickly turned, flung her arms about his neck, and her warm lips swept his cheek. "One for you, Mr. Ennis," she cried, and then again, "and this—for Mr. Lanier!"

XI.

FRIDAY again, and late in the day, and Bob Lanier's arrest lacked but a few hours of its first full week, and Bob was in bandages and bed in a sunny room of the hospital. Ennis, after a long night in saddle and a short "spat" with the colonel, was taking a much needed nap. Stannard and his wife had gone down to Doctor Mayhew's to meet Mrs. Osborn, who had come to spend the afternoon. Paymaster Scott was up and about, and, in his independent way, had been saying unrelishable things to Button, who was in most peppery frame of mind. A wire had come from department headquarters to say an inspector would follow. "Instead of ordering a general court to try Lieutenant Lanier, they have ordered a colonel out to try me, by gad!" said Button. "For that's just what it all amounts to."

• And of all colonels to investigate matters at Cushing, there was n't one in the army Button would not rather have had than the very one who was coming—bluff, blunt, rasping old Riggs, best known to fame and Fort Cushing as "Black Bill."

"Why," said Button, to Scott, "this sending one field officer of cavalry to sit in judgment on the official deeds of another is nothing short of—of infamous, and I'm amazed at Crook's doing it."

"It ain't Crook," said Scott, not without a little malicious delight in Button's disgust. "He's away up at Washakie, and of course his

adjutant general don't want to act or even advise until he knows all about it. You've seen fit to charge Lanier with all manner of things, and I don't wonder headquarters are staggered."

"But—*Bill Riggs*—to come and overhaul *my* regiment, when it's notorious he never could command even a two-company camp without having everybody by the ears! Such men are n't fit to be inspectors!

Indeed, there was much to warrant poor Button's disgust. He had preferred most serious charges against Lanier. He had accused him of quitting camp on campaign, quitting his guard in garrison, quitting his quarters when in arrest, failing to quit himself of a money obligation, drinking and consorting with enlisted men, and in his letter of transmittal he had intimated that there were other misdeeds he might yet have to uncover. All, said Button, on the information of veteran officers and sergeants of the regiment—notably Captains Curbit and Snaffle, Lieutenants Crane and Trotter, Sergeants Whaling and Fitzroy—and now here were both medical officers, both of his majors, two of his best captains, seven of his subalterns, and nine-tenths of the women folk at Fort Cushing taking sides with Lanier and issue with him—their colonel and commander. And here, too, were Lieutenant and Mrs. Foster, highly connected, influential, wealthy, insisting that his most active and important witness, the unimpeachable Sergeant Fitzroy, had corrupted their coachman, run off with their sleigh, and ruined (this was Mrs. Foster) their horses.

Foster, first lieutenant of Snaffle's troop, seldom on speaking terms with his captain, had discovered the deed at morning stables just five minutes before the aggrieved sergeant drove in with the missing property and Lieutenant Ennis as escort. Foster was in a fury over it, the more so because Fitzroy had maintained, respectfully enough but most stubbornly, that the circumstances were such that he felt justified in making immediate use of any property under his care or charge, that he would explain everything to his captain and the colonel, but begged to be excused in the lieutenant's present frame of mind from arguing the matter with him.

And the story Snaffle told Button before Foster could reach him went far to strengthen Fitzroy's position. Snaffle said that so far from Fitzroy's corrupting the coachman, the boot should be on the other foot, were Fitzroy corruptible—that Foster would find his coachman a double-dyed liar when he came to the truth of that runaway the night of the dance—that Foster's sleigh and carriage and driving horses had no right in a Government stable anyhow—were only there on sufferance (which was true, for Foster kept saddlers besides—all the law allowed him)—and that under the circumstances, when, as was well known, at least twenty officers and troopers on Government mounts had gone forth at night in violation of standing orders, without the commanding

officer's knowledge or consent—all on the plea of rescuing Mayhew's daughter, Lieutenant Foster ought to be ashamed of himself for abusing Fitzroy for taking the sleigh in hopes of having a warm nest to fetch the poor girl home in as soon as he'd found her. "Sure, did Mr. Ennis expect her to ride back on his cantle on so bitter a night? Faith, Fitzroy was worth the whole pack of 'em put together, if they'd only let him alone."

And that, at nine o'clock, when Ennis was sent for, was the colonel's way of looking at it. Moreover, he had a rasp up his sleeve for our massive young friend on half a dozen other counts.

"In point of fact, Mr. Ennis, that girl has simply fooled the whole party and is probably laughing at all of you. A girl that will run away without a word or line to her father, and marry an out-and-out adventurer—a mere nobody—has neither heart nor head anyhow. And now you've interfered in a matter of discipline just as Mr. Lanier did, and I gave *you* credit for better sense. You know I had ordered that fellow's arrest."

Ennis took it all, all this and more, in grave silence and subordination. He would have gone without a word, but Button would not so have it. Button demanded his reasons, and began hitting back before Ennis had named even two. This brought on the "spat," as Barker irreverently described it, and left the colonel in no judicial mood in which to see Stannard, Sumter, and others, as see them he had to in course of the day.

But flatly he swore that Sergeant Fitzroy should not go in arrest. It was only too clear they sought to make a victim of him.

And so all Fort Cushing seemed in turmoil and trouble as the sun of the 23d went out and "Black Bill" came in, yet that sun must have been potent, for Mrs. Stannard's face, as homeward she sped, after a long talk with Mrs. Osborn, was radiant with sunshiny smiles. "You're not to know anything yet, Luce, at least until you get it from Doctor Mayhew, for you never could keep it, and for a week at least it's got to be kept."

"Well, one thing you *can* tell," said the major, "that is, if you know, and put a stop to an awful amount of censure that poor girl's getting. Why did she leave no word for her father?"

"Because she expected to be home in two hours;" and the reader can judge just how full and satisfactory must that answer have been.

But were matters mending for Mr. Lanier? was the question still troubling Mrs. Stannard. Neither Kate nor Miriam had she seen since the night of the fire. Miriam Arnold was confined to her room. Kate Sumter would not leave her, and yet over these two devoted friends there still hovered a spell. The mutual trust and faith seemed shaken. The old confidence or intimacy was gone.

Now, whatever Mrs. Osborn had told that so cheered Mrs. Stannard, it is certain the latter could not contain herself long, and that, even as the major was summoned, toward nine of the evening, to join the solemn conclave at the colonel's (where by this time Button had opened proceedings by giving "Black Bill" the best dinner a frontier larder and cellar afforded), she bustled over to the Sumters', was delightedly welcomed by her friend and neighbor, whose husband, too, had been called to council, and presently these two sages were in confidential chat.

To them presently entered the captain, electric, bristling. He wanted the bundle of latest newspapers. They had not half read them, and Colonel Button was all eagerness to see some articles concerning the campaign about which Riggs had been twitting him—asking him whom he had subsidized at this late hour to rescue his reputation, etc. Riggs had seen three long, well-written letters in the great New York *Morning Mail*, obviously the work of a correspondent on the spot, an eye-witness to the scenes he had described, and these letters refuted the calumnies recently heaped on Button and his comrades—gave him, in fact, high praise for soldiership, bravery, energy, even though the writer owned himself by no means one of the colonel's circle, if, indeed, one of his personal friends and admirers. Only the Sumters, at Cushing, subscribed for the *Morning Mail*. Riggs had seen the paper at Omaha. It took a search of some minutes before even the first was found. Then Sumter's eyes danced as he read, and Mrs. Sumter exclaimed over another, and for the first time in a week sounds of cheer arose in that little home. Presently Mrs. Stannard read aloud a spirited, stirring paragraph, describing a dash led by Lieutenant Lanier, and then Sumter made a swoop for all three pages and said, "The quicker Button can see these the sooner he'll come to his senses," and, begging pardon for the rudeness, took the papers and his leave and almost collided with Kate, who at sound of the name and the glad ring of the voices had crept down-stairs for the news.

And so she had to come in and see Mrs. Stannard, and hear some few at least of the details of Dora Mayhew's romantic, runaway marriage, and while they were being told tattoo was sounded, and then Mrs. Stannard asked if she might not creep up-stairs and see Miriam; she thought she might cheer her a bit. This left mother and daughter alone together, and again, and even more painfully, Mrs. Sumter noted how sad and unresponsive was Kate at mention of Lanier.

It must have been nearly an hour later when Sumter came hurriedly in, threw his furs off in the hall, and with troubled face re-entered the parlor. His wife rose instantly, laid her hand upon his arm, and asked, "What has happened?"

"A scene the like of which I never thought to hear of in this regi-

ment. We had adjourned to the office. Snaffle had been drinking a bit and got angered and flustered when Riggs cross-questioned him. One thing led to another, and finally in exasperation he blurted out, 'I'm sick of being called the accuser of Mr. Lanier. By God, I've defended him! I've hidden worse things than ever I told you yet, and now I'll stand it no longer! You twit me with spying and slandering. Then by all that's holy, you shall say here and now who's the better man. 'T was Lieutenant Lanier himself that leapt from the window this night a week ago—the back upper window of Sumter's quarters. That's how his hand was cut and torn, and I've got three men that'll swear to it!'"

He broke off suddenly, for Kate had turned, flung herself from the room and into the arms of Mrs. Stannard. One long look into the sorrowful eyes of his wife, and Sumter quickly followed, and drew the sobbing girl from those kind arms into his own.

"My child, my child," he said, "surely you did not *see* him?"

"No! No! No!" was the instant answer. "No!" again she sobbed.

"Then tell me what it means, Kate, daughter. It is—I demand it!"

"Oh, father, father—it was—it was what I *heard*—when she screamed—and fell!"

"*What* did you hear?"

"The other voice—*his* voice. It said plainly, 'Miriam, hush! Don't you know me?'"

XII.

"Bob," said Mr. Ennis, sauntering in to his comrade's bedside the following morning, "I'm instructed to pay you a kiss."

Lanier's bandaged head spun on the pillow. He had but one girl in his mind.

"Wh—who?" he demanded.

Ennis threw his head back and laughed. "Nine times out of ten when a fellow is asked, 'will you take it now or wait till you get it?' he's wise to take it now. If *I'm* any judge, I should say you'd better wait till you can get it, which may be in less than a week."

"Ennis, if you can quit being an ass long enough to tell me what you mean, and where you've been, I'll thank you. If you can't, I wish you'd get out. *Ugash!*" concluded Bob, with a lapse into Apache and the pillow.

"Well, it probably is n't just the kiss you were thinking of—no more was I when I got it—but, Robert, my son and fellow soldier, it's my recorded conviction that the most enviable member of the regiment this day of our Lord is your twin trooper friend Rawdon. I saw him off on his wedding tour, and he *did n't* have on your clothes."

Lanier's head popped up in an instant—the one visible eye all eager interest. “Where were they married? When did they get off? Was Lowndes there?” were the questions that flew from his lips.

“Arena. On Number 6. Don't know,” was the categorical answer. “Rawdon brought the parson out from Omaha, and the Osborns gave her away. Of Lowndes I've seen nothing since the night you staked him at Laramie, and what I've heard of him you refused to listen to. Of that callow specimen of the effete and ultra-refined Back Bay District you've long since had my opinion. He's too good and gentle for this Western world of ours, Bob, and he and his shuddering kinsfolk suffer too much by contamination——”

“Oh, shut up, Dad! His people *did* wire him that his mother was desperately ill. They merely wanted to get him away from the campaign. He'd been gambling, the pesky little fool, with some of the Rawhide crowd, was all out of cash and dared not tell his guardian. That's all there was to it. Soon's he gets his money he'll square up—thought perhaps he *had*, since Rawdon had enough to marry on. Lowndes owed *him* ten times what he owed me, I reckon.”

To them, thus engrossed in confidential chat, there suddenly entered the two doctors. “Black Bill,” the inspector, it seems, had given notice that he must needs have speech with the culprit, if that bandaged, blistered, and unprincipled young man were in condition to see him. “Black Bill” and his host had been having a night of it. Button was in high fettle over the amazingly truthful and unlooked-for articles in the *Mail*, and as eager to know and reward their author as he had been to apprehend and punish the earlier detractor. Button had begun to “wobble,” as Bill expressed it, in his spleen against Lanier until so suddenly “braced” by the truculent stand of Captain Snaffle, whose half-drunken words the previous night were by this time known all over the post.

The matter was now in the hands of Colonel Riggs, however, and it was his to determine what further action to take. Snaffle had named as his witnesses Sergeant Fitzroy, Private Kelly (who, though drunk on duty, had not been so drunk, said Snaffle and Fitzroy, that he could not recognize an officer when he saw him), and the third witness, to the amaze of Barker and the derision of Ennis, when told of it, was no less a person than poor Tom Rafferty, Lanier's own “striker” and hitherto devoted henchman. And to the consternation of Stannard, Sumter, and others, Captain Snaffle had been able to back his words. Riggs sent for the two availables, Fitzroy and Kelly, and the two had declared they could not be mistaken; that they had heard Miss Arnold's scream, followed instantly by the crash of glass. Fitzroy admitted that he was at the moment at Captain Snaffle's back door; said he ran round to the Sumters' gate; that he distinctly saw the figure of a man

in a soldier's overcoat and fur cap leaping and sliding down the roof, and that a moment later he grappled with it in the dark woodshed, dropping his hold only when angrily ordered to do so, the voice adding instantly, "I'm Lieutenant Lanier." Kelly was ready to swear to practically the same facts, though he "thought there was two of them," which, under the circumstances, was not to be wondered at. Fitzroy declared that a moment later Rafferty rushed to the spot, recognized the lieutenant, and by him was sternly ordered to leave. As yet Rafferty was in no condition to affirm or deny. The excitement of the fire had brought on a relapse, and the wild Irishman was wilder than ever, "raving-like," as the steward said, in the big post hospital.

And these statements, presently, did Colonel Riggs lay before Lieutenant Lanier, in presence of Doctors Larrabee and Schuchardt, as well as Lieutenant Ennis. "I've known you three years, young sir," said he, "and I've believed in you from the first. I have reminded Sergeant Fitzroy of his previous allegations against Trooper Rawdon, as to the scuffle and assault, and, so far from showing confusion, Fitzroy promptly said, 'Certainly, that took place barely half a minute later and within ten yards of the spot.' He says his whole idea first was to drive Rawdon from the scene, and prevent his finding his officer in so humiliating a plight. He says he sought in every way at first to shield the lieutenant, but when all these other facts came out about the cap, the clothing, the lieutenant's absence from his quarters, his lacerated hand, etc., there was no help for it. He finally yielded to the pressure of Captain Snaffle's questions and told the truth. Kelly miserably admitted his knowledge of it, and when Rafferty came to his senses, he, too, was to be catechised.

"Now, Mr. Lanier, there's the situation. Do you care to say anything to me, or would you prefer to take counsel?"

And Bob Lanier, leaning on his elbow, looked quietly up in the colonel's bearded face and answered:

"Colonel Riggs, I reckon both those men think they're telling the truth, and I may have to prove they're not."

"Do you mean—you *were* there?" queried old Riggs, in genuine concern.

"There, sir? Of *course* I was there—quick as I could get there, but not quick enough by any manner of means."

Riggs looked grave indeed.

"You say you may have to prove it was not you. Don't you *know* you'll have to—if these witnesses are further sustained?"

"Fully, sir, and when my need is known there will be witnesses for the defense. The doctors tell me Rafferty may not come round in less than a week. When the time arrives I'll be ready."

And that was the way it had to be left. That was the condition of

affairs when the eighth, and final, day of Lanier's close arrest arrived. Longer than eight, according to law, the colonel could not keep him in. Sooner than eight more, according to Larrabee, the doctors could not let him out. Yet there came a compromise and a change. "The idea of Bob Lanier spending Christmas in hospital!" said Mrs. Stannard. It was not to be thought of. A sunshiny room on the ground floor of the major's big house was duly prepared, and thither just before sunset on Christmas eve our young soldier was piloted by Schuchardt and Ennis, making the trip afoot across the rearward space, yet being remanded to a huge easy chair and partial bandages immediately on his arrival.

"Black Bill," with his incomplete report, had gone back to Omaha to further mystify the adjutant-general and to eat his Christmas dinner. The order for the court-martial hung fire until the preliminary investigation could be concluded. Fort Cushing set itself to enjoy the sweet festival as best it might, while such a problem remained unsolved. Veterinary Surgeon Mayhew had taken seven days' leave, an eastbound train, and at three P.M. the day before Christmas came a telegram from — Arnold, Esq., of Standish Bay, Massachusetts, announcing that he would leave forthwith for the West, bringing his sister with him. The Sumters told Mrs. Stannard, and she told Bob Lanier.

It has been said that this young gentleman was an outspoken fellow, with a hit-or-miss way of saying things when once his mind was made up, and by this time it would seem he had made up his mind.

"Mrs. Stannard, if you think a girl could stand the sight of such a Guy Fawkes as this, I would give much to speak ten minutes to Miss Miriam Arnold."

"You're *not* a Guy Fawkes," said Mrs. Stannard, with fluttering heart. "You've lost something of your mustache and eyebrows, but very little of your good looks. Only——"

"Only what?"

"Why, it's going to be so much harder to see her *now* than it was before—before she——" and Mrs. Stannard faltered.

"Before she saw me playing Saint Somebody or other at the back window, and screamed? Nobody knows I heard it except you, and you won't tell. Moreover, it is n't about *that* that I have to speak."

Mrs. Stannard's bonny face showed instant disappointment.

"There's—there's another matter," said Bob, with trouble in his tones.

"I so hoped——" faltered that arch match-maker.

"So did I, Mrs. Stannard," said downright Bob, "but not with charges hanging over my head. First I've got to meet the enemy."

And yet he wished to see and speak with Miriam, who not once had set foot out of doors since the night of the fire, whose sweet face

flamed at every recurring thought of that incident, whose self-betrayal covered her with shame and confusion indescribable, who would give years of her young life if she could only escape from Fort Cushing and hide herself a thousand miles away. But not until that stern puritanical father should arrive was leaving to be thought of. A week ago and the tidings of his coming would have filled her with dread; now she heard them with relief. Father coming—and Aunt Agnes! Aunt Agnes, who never before had been west of the Hudson. Aunt Agnes, whose forebears had warred against witchcraft and woodcraft, against village crones and forest children, against helpless old women and stealthy young savages—all without mercy when delivered into their hands! Was it in partial reparation for the rapine, the swindling, and stealing dealt out by her Pilgrim forefathers to the Indian of the East that Aunt Agnes had become the vehement champion of the Indian of the West? President of a famous Peace Society was she, and secretary of the Standish Branch of the Friends of the Red Man, a race whom the original and redoubtable Miles had spitted and skewered and shot without stint or discrimination. And now was Aunt Agnes hastening westward with her brother, to reclaim their one ewe lamb from the wolf pack of the wilds, and incidentally to see for herself something of the haunts and habits of the red brother in whose behalf, these last six months, her voice had been uplifted time and again. It was the year of a great Indian war. The blood of hundreds of our soldiery had been shed, without protest from these of Puritan stock, but they shuddered at thought of reprisals. Aunt Agnes coming to Cushing! Aunt Agnes to meet the colonel and his “red-handed horde of ruthless slayers!”

No wonder the Christmas day that dawned for Miriam Arnold in that stirring Centennial year bade fair to be the gloomiest of her life. Yet who can tell what a day may bring forth?

Sumter came in, cheery and laughing, for the late family breakfast. Guard-mounting was long over, but he had been detained by the colonel.

“It is almost comical,” said he, “to see Button’s delight in those letters in the New York papers. He’s as curious now to know the author of those as he was furious at the supposed author of the others.”

“What others?” faltered Miriam Arnold, her eyes filling with strange apprehension, her face visibly paling.

“Some bitter attacks on him that appeared in the Boston and Philadelphia papers about that night surprise of Lone Wolf’s village—the one he accused Mr. Lanier of having started.”

“Accused—Mr. Lanier!” And Miriam Arnold, with consternation in her voice, was half rising from the table.

“I had thought it best to say nothing to you about it, Miriam dear,” said Mrs. Sumter gently. “You had so many worries.”

"But, Mrs. Sumter! Captain!" interrupted Miriam, wild-eyed. "Do you mean Colonel Button accused Mr. *Lanier* of those letters?"

"That was the backbone of his grievance against Lanier," said Sumter gravely, and intently studying her face. "Why?"

"And he did n't—deny it? Did n't—tell what he knew?"

"Denied it, yes, but refused to tell what he knew—said it came in such a way he could not tell. Why, Miriam, what do *you* know?"

For a moment it looked as though she were on the verge of hysterical break-down. Kate sprang to her side and threw an arm around her, but with gallant effort she regained self-control.

"I know *just* who wrote those wicked stories, and I told Mr. Lanier; and I know—and I'm ashamed I ever *had* to know—who first told them."

XIII.

STANNARD had been summoned to Omaha, much to Button's curiosity and disquiet. Mrs. Stannard, left temporarily widowed, was none the less radiant. A romance was unfolding right under her roof, and the heart of the woman was glad. Her patient was sitting up in spick and span uniform and a sunshiny parlor. Plainly furnished as were the frontier quarters of that day and generation, the room looked very bright and cosey this crisp December evening. Christmas had come and gone with but faint celebration, as compared with former years. There had been several callers, masculine and regimental, during the earlier afternoon, but now they were off for stables. There had been an influx of army wives and daughters, to wish Bob Lanier many happy returns, for this was his birthday. Shrewd woman, with all her gentle kindness and tact, was Mrs. Stannard. She had sent word to all her cronies of the interesting event and suggested a call. More significance, therefore, would be attached to a neglect than to an acceptance of the hint. Perhaps this is how it happened that just about four P.M., when most people were gone, Mrs. Sumter came quietly, cheerily, convoying her two girls, and presently Bob Lanier was smiling into the eyes of Miriam Arnold, whose hand he took last and clung to longest of the three.

Not since the night of the fire had he set eyes on her. Not since the night of the dance had he spoken with her, and he was startled to see the change. Bravely though she bore herself, the flush that mantled her cheek was but momentary, and left her pallid and wan. Miriam looked as though she had been seriously ill. Kate Sumter had given him only hurried and almost embarrassed words of greeting. Mrs. Sumter, however, had extended both her hands in an impulse of loyal liking and friendship, and it is doubtful if Bob even saw the daughter's face. Certainly he never noted the lack of heart in her manner. His eyes had flitted almost instantly to Miriam Arnold's, and there they hung. A few minutes of swift, purposeless chat ensued, Mrs. Stannard and

Mrs. Sumter doing most of it. Then, somehow, three women seemed to drift away and become engrossed in matters of their own over by the Navajo-covered lounge, and then Miriam lifted up her eyes and looked one moment into the young soldier's face.

The bandages had been removed, though his left hand was still encased in a huge white kid glove, a discard from the hand of Ennis. Eyebrows and mustache had suffered much, and a red streak ran from the left temple down toward the neck, yet Bob looked fit and debonair and happy in spite of his weight of martial woes.

"It's the first chance I've had to thank you for the dance we—did n't finish," said he, noting with a thrill the tremor of the little hand that fluttered for that moment in his grasp.

"Do you think it a thing to be thankful for? I don't."

"I would n't have lost it for a month's pay, to put it mildly, and it will take more than a month's pay to repair later damages," said he, trying to smile and be unsentimental.

"How very much more than that you *may* lose!" said she. "Do you think I could have danced with you if I had dreamed what—what you were doing?"

"You were dancing like a dream," said he. "Do you mean I was dancing like a nightmare?"

"You were doing what was sure to involve you in grave trouble, and—it was n't kind to me, Mr. Lanier."

"I'm all contrition for the anxiety it caused you, Miss Miriam, and for absolutely nothing else. I wish you to know that I did nothing unusual. Colonel Button was angry with me for a very different matter."

One moment she was silent; then, with lips that quivered in spite of her effort—a quiver that he saw and that set his heart to bounding madly—with lowered voice she hurried on: "And that, too, involves me, or mine. And you"—then uplifting her swimming eyes—"you *would* not tell."

And then the barrier of his pride was swept away.

"Miriam!" he cried, his hands eagerly seeking and seizing hers, only faintly resisting. "There was no *need* to tell." He was standing facing her now, close to the curtained window, his back toward the twittering trio near the dining-room door and imperceptibly edging thither at Mrs. Stannard's suggestion of coffee. Was this prearranged? Bob never saw nor heeded. *She* did, however, and well knew its meaning, and the woman in her, that thrilled and throbbed at sight of the passion in his eyes, the worship in his face, coquetting with her own delight would have torn herself away to follow them, but her little hands were held in a grasp against which she might struggle in vain. He was lifting them to his heart, and as he drew them he was drawing her.

She had to come, her long curling lashes sweeping the soft cheeks, now once more blushing like the dawn. "Oh, Mr. Lanier," he heard her murmur, as though pleading and warning. One swift glance he tossed over his shoulder at the last form vanishing through the doorway, then his dark eyes, glowing and rejoicing, fastened on hers, and quick and fervent came the next words: "There is only one thing that need be told—that *must* be told, because I've just been brimming over with it all these weeks" (ah, how the bonny head was drooping now, but drooping toward him), "and now I can keep it back no longer. Miriam, Miriam, I love you—I love you! Have you nothing to tell me?"

One instant of thrilling suspense, then with a sob welling up from her burdened heart, the barrier of her pride and reserve went as his had gone a moment ago. "Oh, you know—you *know* it! Who *has n't* known it since that awful night?" she cried, and then found herself folded, weeping uncontrollably, almost deliriously, in his arms, his lips raining kisses on the warm, wet cheek. A moment he held her close-wrapped to his heart, then gradually, yet with irresistible power, turned upward the tear-stained, blushing, exquisite face, so that he could feast his eyes upon her beauty, then with joy unutterable his lips sank upon the soft, quivering mouth in the first love kiss she had ever known, and their troubles vanished into heaven at the touch.

Mrs. Stannard, you were a jewel and a general. Now, how about the major?

"For conference with the Judge-Advocate of the Department," read the order that summoned him, and from that conference forth went our doughty dragoon in search of conquest. "It is understood," said the officials, "that you know the circumstances under which Lieutenant Lanier became responsible for the money borrowed at Laramie by or for that young Mr. Lowndes, also that you know him." There were other matters, but that came up first. Stannard knew and was quite willing to set forth with a plain-clothes member of the Omaha force on a mission for and from headquarters.

In a derby hat and civilian suit of the fashion of '72, the latter much too snug for him, our squadron leader of the Sioux campaign looked little like a trooper as he sauntered with his detective companion into the lobby of the Paxton a few minutes later, and listened to his modernized tale of the prodigal son. It was all known to the police. Lowndes had run through the purse and patience of his Eastern kindred some two years before. Lowndes had been transported to a cattle ranch near Fort Cushing in hopes of permanent benefit, but speedily neglected the range for the more congenial society of the fort. He was well born and bred. He was made free at first at the mess, but wore

out his welcome. He went on the campaign for excitement and got much more than he wanted. He took to gambling among the scouts and packers and sergeants, for the officers had soon cold-shouldered him. But he was a college man, a secret society man, as had been Lieutenant Lanier before entering the Point. Since the campaign Lowndes had been going from bad to worse; had gambled away the money sent him by his relatives, and they were now sorely anxious about him. Moreover, he was needed as a material witness for the defense in the case of Lieutenant Lanier, and would answer no letters to his post-office address. He had n't been near the ranch in nearly a month, had n't been seen about Cushing City since the blizzard; was believed to be somewhere in this neighborhood in disguise.

And even as the story was being told, there came bounding down the broad stairway from above, a slender, well-built youth, in whom the civilization of the East was stamped in the stylish, trim-fitting travelling suit with cap to match, in the further items of natty silken scarf and the daintiest of hand and foot covering. It was the erect, jaunty carriage that caught the major's eye. In build, bearing, and gait the approaching stranger was Bob Lanier all over. He came straight toward them, and was tripping lightly, swiftly by when Stannard sprang to his feet.

"Rawdon!" he cried, voice and manner at once betraying the soldier and the habit of authority and command. It was as imperative as the crisp, curt "Halt" of veteran sentry, and effective as though backed by levelled bayonet.

But if Stannard for an instant looked for demur, resistance, attempt to avoid, or even a trace of confusion on part of this transmogrified trooper, the idea as quickly vanished. A wave of color, it is true, swept instantly to the young fellow's temples, but the sudden light of recognition in his handsome eyes was frank and fearless. Quickly he whirled about, courteously he raised his cap, instinctively his heels clicked together as he stood attention to his squadron leader of the summer agone.

"I beg the major's pardon," said he. "I did not expect him here, and had never seen him in civilian dress."

And now the detective, too, was on his feet, and curiously noting the pair.

"You're on furlough, I understand, but I heard—my wife said—you were in Chicago."

"Mrs. Stannard was right, sir. My wife and her father are there now, visiting my sister. Doctor Mayhew told me of the charges against Lieutenant Lanier, and that is what brings me back at once."

"Going back at once?" began the major, mollified, yet mystified. "I presume you know more of these matters than any one else."

"With possibly two exceptions, sir. I hope to nab one of them here."

"Lowndes?" queried Stannard.

"Lowndes," answered Rawdon.

"Then you 're just the man we want."

That afternoon as the Union Pacific express stood ready at the Union station for the start, there boarded one of the sleepers a burly, thick-set, bluff-mannered man in huge fur overcoat, close followed by two younger companions. One of these latter, erect and graceful in bearing, alert and quick in every movement, with clear-cut and handsome features, was dressed with care and taste, evidently a man accustomed to metropolitan scenes and society; the other, a youth of probably his own age, though looking older, was sallow, shabby, with a dejected, down-at-the-heel expression to his entire personality that told infallibly of failure and humiliation. At a sign from their leader he dropped dumbly into a section, settled himself next the frosty window, with his head shrunk down in his worn coat-collar, and his slouch hat pulled over his eyes.

"Better pull off that overcoat and make yourself comfortable, Lowndes," said the younger man. "You 've a long journey ahead."

Whereat a tall, spare, elderly gentleman in the adjoining section slowly lowered his newspaper and turned half round, while a tall, spare, elderly, sharp-featured woman beside him, in prim travelling garb, sprang from her seat and brushing the burly man aside, precipitated herself upon the shrinking object in the corner.

"Mortimer Watson Lowndes!" cried she. "Where on earth have you been?"

For answer Mortimer Watson bowed his flabby face in his hands and wept dismally.

Two days later the colonel's office at Fort Cushing was the scene of a somewhat remarkable trial. It had no force in law, yet was held to be conclusive. There was no array of uniformed judges sitting, by order, as a general court-martial. The tribunal consisted, in point of fact, of a single man, acting as judge, jury, and attorney, to wit, "Black Bill" Riggs, Inspector-General of the Department of the Platte. To the unspeakable disgust of most of the officers, and the outspoken disapprobation of many of their wives, only those closely concerned in or connected with the case were invited to be present. Certain others who had just happened in, thinking to hear the proceedings, were, indeed, invited to leave.

Colonel Button, as post commander and principal accuser, was, of course, at his usual desk. Colonel Riggs, his jealously regarded rival, was seated at a little table, whereon was much stationery and a stack

of memoranda. Lieutenant Lanier, somewhat pale but entirely placid, occupied a chair to the left of that table, with Captain Sumter, as his troop commander and counsel, by his side. Captain Snaffle was in support of the post commander, to cross-question if he saw fit. Barker, the adjutant, was present, as a matter of course. A headquarters clerk sat facing Riggs, prepared to take notes, and the trim orderly stood outside the closed door. Three or four people in civilian garb sat awaiting summons in the adjutant's office across the hall, and Sergeant Fitzroy, with trouble in his eyes and wrath in his heart, was flitting uneasily about in the domain of the sergeant-major.

"If you are ready, Colonel Button," began Riggs, with elaborate courtesy, "I am, and let me briefly say that I have seen Trooper Rafferty at the hospital, also certain other men named by Captain Snaffle; but in order that all parties may be given opportunity to hear and to examine, and at the request of Lieutenant Lanier, who desires the fullest investigation and publicity, I have invited you and the captain to hear what I consider the really valuable evidence. Will you call in Trooper Rawdon?"

Snaffle's face was a sight when the door opened and there entered a very self-possessed young man, in stylish and becoming civilian dress, who nevertheless stood bolt upright, with his hand raised in salute.

"Hwat's he mean by coming here in 'cits'?" said Snaffle, in hoarse whisper, to his commander.

"Yes, Colonel Riggs; if this man's a soldier, why is n't he in uniform?"

With perfect respect, at a nod from Riggs, the newcomer replied: "My uniforms, and other belongings of mine, were taken from my trunk in town during my absence."

"You could have borrowed one," said Snaffle truculently.

"I told him he need not," retorted Riggs. "And now, gentlemen, we'll waste no time trying to worry the witness. Mr. Rawdon, you *were* a duly enlisted trooper, I believe. Take that chair."

"And am still, sir, as far as I know."

"But your discharge is ordered, as I understand it."

"It was applied for and recommended, and General Whipple told me in Chicago a few days ago it was settled; but that would have made no difference, sir. I should have been proud to wear the uniform until officially discharged."

Riggs wheeled in his chair. "Colonel Button, it has been fully explained to this—man, and to the next, that what they tell us here is to be just what they would swear to before a court. You can decide for yourself on hearing it whether you wish them to swear to it or not. Now, Rawdon, tell us how you came to enlist."

"As the representative of three newspapers, in Chicago and the

East. They were anxious to have an Indian campaign, and the life of an enlisted man, described as it really was. I joined a squad of recruits for this regiment right after the news of the Crazy Horse Battle on Powder River."

"Do you still hold that job?"

"No, sir;" and there was a twitch of the muscles about the corners of the mouth suggestive of amusement.

"Why?"

"I failed to—give satisfaction. Only scraps of my letters were published."

"What did they want?"

"Criticism principally, and confirmation of the stories of abuse and ill treatment of soldiers by their officers."

"Were your letters never published?"

"Three of them, eventually, after the campaign—in the New York *Morning Mail*."

Whereupon Riggs spun in his chair and rejoicefully surveyed Button, who sat like a man in a daze, staring, open-eyed, at the witness. For the life of him Sumter could not suppress a chuckle.

"Then, as I understand it, you were favorably impressed with the life—and conditions?"

"In spite of hardship and privation, yes, sir; and because I found complete refutation of the stories about the officers, both as regarded their dealing with the Indians and with their own men."

"Were there any persons with the command who knew you and your mission?"

"Two, sir, as it turned out. Trooper Cary, who enlisted at the same time I did, and a civilian, Mr. Lowndes, who recognized us at Fort Frayne. We were at college together. He and Cary became very intimate toward the last, and yet I think they kept my secret in spite of our falling out."

"Do you care to tell us why you fell out?"

"I prefer that Mr. Lowndes should do that. He and Cary had been chums in college days, and though we were in the same society I did not know them then as I do now."

"You had trouble with Sergeant Fitzroy at first, did you not?"

"Almost from the start, sir."

"We have heard his version. What is yours?"

Rawdon's frank face clouded and colored one moment, but the eyes never flinched.

"It was partly on account of the lady who is now my wife, and partly on account of—money. Fitzroy is an out-and-out usurer, and has a dozen sergeants in the regiment in his debt and under his thumb, Captain Snaffle's first sergeant among them."

"It's a lie!" said Snaffle.

"It's the truth," said Riggs, "and I have other proofs. You will curb your tongue and your temper, Captain Snaffle, if you please. Go on, Rawdon."

"I had reason to believe he was squeezing Doctor Mayhew. I had learned to love Mayhew's daughter. I had a little money laid by, and was getting a good salary. I made Doctor Mayhew take enough to free himself, and won Fitzroy's hate on both accounts."

"You are accused of assaulting him the night of the 16th. What of that?"

"I did not even see him or speak to him that night. I had been in town in the afternoon, arranging for our marriage. Doctor Mayhew would not hear of it until I had got my discharge, but we had decided to be married Saturday morning, and to go East that afternoon, as important business called me. Mr. Lowndes will tell you that he owed me much money. I had lost my position as correspondent, needed the cash, and pressed him for it. He had promised faithfully to have it ready, but ready it was not. I knew of his relatives in Massachusetts and urged him to telegraph, but he said he could get some of it, at least, at the fort. So I drove him and Cary out in a sleigh, left them at the store, and, circling the fort, spent two hours with Miss Mayhew. Then getting uneasy, as they did not come, drove round back to the store just in time to see Lieutenant Foster's sleigh going like the wind to town, and found Rafferty in frantic excitement. He said there was hell to pay. The lieutenant was in arrest. Lowndes and Cary had run away with some of his clothes. There'd been a shindy up the row, and just then a soldier friend came running. 'Skip for your life, Rawdon,' said he. 'There's been robbery at Captain Sumter's, and Sergeant Fitzroy swears it was you, and that you've struck him and assaulted him. The colonel orders you arrested wherever found. The patrols are out now!' There was no time to explain. I lashed my team to town, caught Lowndes in cavalry overcoat and cap, the fool, and with not a cent to his name. I gave Cary a note to Miss Mayhew, which he never delivered, and took Lowndes with me on Number 6 at 11.40."

"Then you were not at Captain Sumter's that night?"

"Nowhere near it, sir."

Snaffle's eyes were fairly popping from their sockets. Had n't he said all along it was Lanier?

"Now, another matter," continued Riggs. "That night at Laramie of which you told me. These gentlemen will be interested."

"There was nothing remarkable in that. I had heard of the same thing being done at West Point. I heard in the nick of time of the order to the officer-of-the-day to inspect for Lieutenant Lanier. I

imagined that something very serious would happen to him. I knew he'd gone to the post with Lowndes, and why. So, with my apologies now to the lieutenant, I slipped round to his tent and into his blankets."

"Did the lieutenant know of it—or of the reason?"

"Never, so far as I know. I doubt if he knows it now. Lowndes told me the lieutenant—before he entered West Point—was a member of our fraternity. That was enough."

"And so far as I am concerned," said Riggs, "that is enough. Have you gentlemen any questions to ask?"

"Not—now," answered Button slowly. "But I desire personally to see—the witness—later."

XIV.

ONE more witness appeared before this informal court that memorable day, and with him, as prearranged, the tall, elderly civilian who had arrived with Stannard and his party from the East. Mr. Arnold came in, hat in hand, bowing gravely and profusely, with a very puzzled look in his face.

"Thank you for coming, Mr. Arnold," said Riggs, with bluff civility. "You have met these gentlemen—Colonel Button, Mr. Barker, Mr. Lanier, Captain Sumter." He pointedly omitted Snaffle, to whom, none the less, Mr. Arnold bowed as ceremoniously as to each of the others who had risen at his entrance. "Pray take this chair, sir. As I have explained to you, Mr. Lowndes, your nephew, could not be compelled to testify before a military court, and need not make public admission here of what he told us at Rawdon's demand during our journey hither. I hope this is fully understood."

Mr. Arnold cleared his throat and beamed benevolently about him. The occasion seemed propitious, and a moral lesson appropriate, and he began:

"My unhappy nephew realizes, with, I trust, genuine contrition, that he has been the cause of grave trouble, not only to us, his kindred in the East, but—er—to you military gentlemen in the West. He has, prompted, as we must admit, by Mr.—Mr. Rawdon, made a clean breast of his lamentable conduct, and has promised Mr. Rawdon to repeat every word of it—er—to Colonel Button, but, as his——"

"Then we'll waste no time," said Riggs impatiently. "We'll have him in, and I can catch the afternoon train. Orderly, call Mr. Lowndes."

"Er—I was about to remark," proceeded Mr. Arnold, "that if any—er—suit for damages, or—er—recovery of money should be in contemplation, we desire——"

"Don't fear, sir. Nobody's going to sue for damages. What we want is the quashing of all charges against this young gentleman, who

has been made to suffer abominably. Ah, come in, Mr. Lowndes. Sit down, sir. You have met everybody here. Now, as speedily as possible, we 'll finish this matter, and in four hours we 'll be off for home."

It was but a dejected specimen of a college-bred man that sank into the chair in front of Riggs and faced him with pallid cheek and somber eyes. One look he gave at Bob Lanier, a furtive, forlorn glance, which met no recognition whatsoever. Lanier looked him over with indifference that bordered closely on contempt, but gave no other sign.

"Mr. Lowndes," said Riggs abruptly, "there is no need of going over the entire story. I 'll ask you to answer certain questions. Who was your earliest friend in this regiment?"

The dreary eyes turned once more toward Bob, and the nervous hands started the slouch hat in swifter revolution.

"Mr. Lanier, sir."

"How came that?"

"I knew he was of my college fraternity before I entered college, and I showed him my pin and certificate."

"That insured a welcome, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. He—he made me at home in his quarters—and tent."

"Shared the best he had with you—home, food, drink, even clothes and money, I 'm told."

The flush deepened in the dejected face.

"It is all true, sir."

"Yet you quarrelled with him during the campaign."

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"I lost money gambling, and he would n't lend me any more."

"Did you ever pay what he had lent you?"

"Not—yet, sir."

"Even after your quarrel did he not aid you?"

"Yes, at Laramie. I did n't seem to have any friend left by that time, and had to go to him for help when they wired me to come home."

"In point of fact, he enabled you to get one hundred dollars at Laramie?"

"Yes. I gave my note and he gave his word."

"What did you do with the money?"

"Tried to win back some that I had lost, at poker, and lost most of what I had raised. I suppose I 'd have lost all of it if Rawdon had n't caught me playing and pulled me out."

"You owed him still more?"

"Nearly two hundred dollars, sir."

"Did you go home?"

"I could n't; I had only enough to bring me into Cushing, and they would n't send me any more. I had to go to the ranch and stay."

"Did you try to earn any money?"

"Yes, sir, writing about the campaign. Rawdon lost his position because he did n't send what they wanted, so I thought I might. The editor did n't know me, and asked for references, so I sent my stories to—Mr. Arnold and my aunt. She often wrote for the papers."

"Is that the way the Boston and other papers came to publish those scandals at the expense of Colonel Button?"

"She dressed them up a good deal and made it worse than I described," faltered Lowndes.

"Er—let me explain, gentlemen," interposed Mr. Arnold, who had been twitching in uneasiness. "My sister is of a very sympathetic nature, and her heart has long been wrung by the injustice meted out to the Indian. When this unhappy boy wrote those—er—descriptive letters she had no reason to doubt their entire truth. Indeed, her conviction was that he was concealing, or glossing over, worse things."

"He seems to have later supplied you with worse things, Mr. Arnold. For instance, I will ask you what was his final explanation of his need for money?"

"He begged me to send him two hundred dollars at once, saying he would be disgraced if he could not pay Lieutenant Lanier, who had won it from him at cards."

"Mr. Lowndes," said Riggs, "did Lieutenant Lanier ever win a dollar from you?"

"Never, sir." And now the miserable head went down into the hot and feverish hands, and the silence in the room became something oppressive.

Riggs let him rest a minute, then went on. "Now, then, in your own way, tell us what happened that night of the 16th."

For a few seconds there was silence. Then, suddenly uplifting his head and looking at no one, Lowndes desperately plunged into his narrative. "I—I—was mad, I suppose, with debt and misery, and I began to drink. Rawdon told me he *must* have the money. My uncle had flatly refused to send me more. I got desperate. There was left me only one way, and that was through my cousin Miriam. I knew she was out here, and she—she had always been my best friend in my troubles at home. We'd almost been brought up together until they sent me out here. She did n't know where I was. They did n't wish her to know. But I knew if I could see her she would help me.

"Rawdon had changed into citizen's clothes in town, and I had pawned my overcoat, so he lent me his cavalry overcoat and a fur cap, drove me and Cary out to the fort, and left us at the store, promising to join him at Doctor Mayhew's in an hour. We were chilled from the ride, and drank more. Rafferty told me Mr. Lanier was officer-

of-the-guard, and everybody else was at the dance. We filled Rafferty up, for Cary 'd made up his mind he was going to Rawdon's wedding in 'cits' instead of soldier clothes, and he was bent on borrowing a suit of Lieutenant Lanier's, even though they would hardly fit him. He swore he'd return them the next day, and Rafferty let him have them, and he put them on in the lieutenant's back room. Then he and I went up the rear fence and caught sight of Number Five—Trooper Kelly. Cary knew him and went ahead to 'fix things' with him, as he said. Kelly had seen us come out of Lieutenant Lanier's back gate, and was suspicious. Cary, to quiet him, told him he was with Lieutenant Lanier—that we were helping Rawdon get ready for his wedding. He made Kelly drink to Rawdon's happiness, and drink three or four times, and finally left him with a half full flask up the row toward Major Stannard's. Then we went to Captain Sumter's. Kelly told Cary the servants were in at Captain Snaffle's. The door was open. Cary watched below, while I hunted for my cousin's room. I found it easily. I knew they had sent her money, and orders to come home—uncle had written me as much. I found her desk. I knew it well of old, and then, to my horror, I heard her voice, and in a second she was in the room. She gave one awful scream, though I tore off my cap and begged her to know me, but she fell in a faint. Others were coming. I broke out of the back window, slid and scrambled down the roof to the shed and so to the ground. I heard men come running, so I dove into the coal-shed, where the sergeant grabbed me in the dark and I—had to make him let go, and—said I was Lieutenant Lanier. Later I crawled through a hole in the fence and started for the store, scared out of my wits. Right at the next gate I crashed into two men, grappled and fighting. We all three fell in a heap. I picked myself and cap up and ran again; caught Cary at the store just jumping into a sleigh, and we lashed those horses every inch of the way, left them at a ranch gate, and ran to the station. The train was a few minutes late. Rawdon presently came, and he took me to Omaha, as I begged him, for I did n't know what could or would be done to me if I was caught. He, too, had to get away or be thrown into the guard-house, and that—that's about all."

"You have that overcoat with you yet, I believe—that cavalry coat."

"It's all I have had to wear, sir," was the rueful answer, as, rising, he took the garment from the arm of his chair and laid it upon the table, with the yellow lining of the cape thrown back, exposing a rent or gash, whereupon Captain Sumter arose, took from an envelope a sliver of yellow cloth, and fitted it into the gap. "This," said he, "I found on the hook of the storm sash, and this," he continued, laying beside it a rusty sheath knife, "was later found under the snow, close

under the dormer window." Then turning the overcoat inside out, he displayed on the back lining in stencil the name "Rawdon."

"And now," said Riggs, "we will hear the accused."

"It is n't necessary," began Button, turning in his chair. "I have heard more than enough——"

"It is necessary, Colonel Button, if you please, for my satisfaction as investigator. Of course Mr. Lanier is not obliged to speak, but a few matters remain to be cleared up. There is yet the time-honored problem of 'who struck Billy Patterson,'" and Button subsided.

"The matter is quite simple," said Lanier. "I went direct from the dancing room to my quarters, not even stopping for my overcoat. I was chilled when I got there. The fire was low, and I went back to call Rafferty. He did n't answer, so I had to lug in some fuel. His overcoat hung in the kitchen and I put that on, and just as I opened the back door there came the scream from up the row. Fire was the only thing I thought of, and I saw others running toward Captain Sumter's as I started from the back gate. Then a man rushed past me, going the other way, and then the next thing somebody sprang out from Captain Snaffle's back yard, tripped me, and I went headlong. I was on my feet in a second, but he had me round the neck, ordering me to surrender. I wrenched loose and let him have two hard ones, right and left, before he clinched again. Somebody else collided with us. We all went down. The last man was up first and away, with the first cap he could reach, and I followed in an effort to overtake him, knowing by that time it was n't fire, but robbery. Then when I realized no life was in danger, I remembered I was in arrest, dropped the chase, and went straight to my quarters the way I came. Both hands were bruised and the left badly cut. I am sorry, of course, to have struck Sergeant Fitzroy, but the language he used was vile, and it seemed to be the only way to convince him I was *not* Trooper Rawdon."

"Colonel Button, have you any questions to ask?" demanded Riggs, as Lanier concluded.

"Why did n't you tell *me* this?" demanded Button.

"I should have been glad to, colonel. Indeed, I tried to the last time I was in the office," was the deferential reply.

"Well, gentlemen," said the colonel, as a parting shot, "between us we seem to have stirred up a pretty kettle of fish." Yet in that culinary maelstrom even Snaffle disowned either responsibility or complicity. He always *had* said Lanier was a perfect gentleman.

And so ended Bob's arrest and most of our story. Riggs went back with his report that very afternoon. Rawdon lingered for a word with Cassidy, Quinlan, and poor remorseful Rafferty; then followed, unhampered even by his arch enemy Fitzroy, who slipped away to the stables

three minutes after the close of the conference. But he was not even there when, along in the spring, Mr. and Mrs. Rawdon came out for a visit to Doctor Mayhew. Like Rawdon, he had received his discharge. Unlike Rawdon, there was serious objection to his reënlistment. Even Snaffle dared not "take him on" again.

The snows lay long and deep in the ravines and hollows. It was not until mid-May that the poor victims of the blast and blinding storm were uncovered, and the bodies of the missing were found, save that of Cary—Cary, who, having been given up for lost, turned up most unexpectedly the very day that Fitzroy, applicant for reënlistment, was summarily turned down. But Cary came not of his own volition. He marched with a file of the guard. Cary's story was simple enough. Rawdon and Lowndes had hardly got away on the train when Sergeant Stowell and his party came searching. Cary hid. He was still half drunk. Some one told him of Kelly's arrest, and charged him with that and with running off the Fosters' sleigh. He dared not face the music. He forgot his precious missive to Dora Mayhew until next day. Then the storm held him. Not until the fire night did he summon up courage to sneak home. He had no money left and could buy no more liquor. He stole into Lanier's back door to return the civilian suit and recover the cavalry blouse and trousers left hanging in Raftery's room. He could hear the lieutenant moving about overhead. He had to strike a light; he struck several matches; found the clothes, slipped out of the "cits" and into his own. He was cold and numb. He knew there was liquor on the sideboard in the middle room. The craze was on him, and he risked it. He struck more matches and threw the burning stumps to the floor, drank his fill, then stumbled away, intending to give himself up to his first sergeant for absence without leave. Back round by way of the store and the east front he went, but before he could reach the barracks came the appalling cry of fire—Lanier's quarters! His doing beyond doubt, and now, in dismay and terror, he fled from the post. Some ranch folk took him in next day, and cared for him awhile, then sent word to the fort. Poor Cary had Lanier to plead for him before his trial, but three months' hard labor was the least the law would allow. He was still "doing time" when his happier friend of college days came back with his sweet young wife.

By which time, too, another wedding was announced as near at hand. Only two days did Mr. Arnold and Aunt Agnes allow Miriam in which to prepare for the homeward journey, but it is safe to say that in that brief time their views of frontier life and people had undergone marked amendment, for they had found an old expounder of their faith in the post chaplain, for one thing, and many surprising facts as to officers, men, and Indians for another. There came a bright

wintry afternoon, at the fag end of the year, when the station platform held a lively little assembly waiting for the eastbound express. The colonel and his wife were there, the former by no means the blood-thirsty warrior of the elder's imagination. The Stannards had come in, and the Sumters, Kate, and "Dad" Ennis, the chaplain, and both doctors, and all these surrounded the brother and sister and held them in cheery converse, while Bob and Miriam sauntered, self-centred, away.

There was a sheltered, sunshiny little nook down the platform, between the baggage and express sheds, with a high, board fence at the back, to keep off the north wind and human intruders. They passed it twice in their stroll, but the third time turned in—it was so good to get out of the piercing wind—as well as out of sight.

What wonders a few days of delight will do for a girl! The pallor and lassitude had gone. The soft eyes were brimming with bliss. The rounded cheeks had regained all their bloom. The sweet, rosebud mouth seemed all smiles and warmth and witchery, and Lanier's eyes were glowing as he drew her to his heart and gazed down into the depths of those uplifted to his.

"That brute of a train has been late for a week," said he, "but to-day it comes on time. It is going to be a long, long wait for May. How does papa seem to take it now?"

"Papa is quick to make amends when he has wronged—any one, and now he *knows*."

"Well, so does Aunt Agnes, Miriam, yet *she* does n't approve."

"Well, Aunt Agnes, don't you know—she's different. She's a good deal like other women I know. When she's placed somebody else in a false position, she thinks that person ought to be very sorry for her, and sympathize with her, for having been deceived and misled. She thinks you ought to say how sorry *you* are."

"How can I say I'm sorry when I'm so glad—*all* glad?"

"Well, then, there's Cousin Watson, don't you know? He was always her pet. He was brought up by a weak mother and a doting aunt, and she knows you don't approve of him."

"Does she expect a man to approve of one who maligned him as Lowndes maligned me?"

"You should see his earlier letters about you! Why, if I'd known anything of them I would never have dared to meet such a paragon."

"And yet, after all, he turned to and painted me black as an imp of Satan. What had I done but good to him? I never took or won a penny of his."

A moment of silence, then the fond eyes looked up.

"You won something he wanted and thought—*was* his—he never had any sense. Won't you try to forgive him—for my sake—Bob?"

His arms went round and folded her closely; his face bowed down to hers. There was a wordless moment, then the sound of a distant whistle, of nearer shouts of "T-r-a-i-n." The dark mustache, the unsinged side, was sweeping very, very near the soft curve of those parted lips.

"What ransom will you pay?" he murmured. "I've not yet felt these arms about my neck. I've kissed you, heaven be praised, but, Miriam, have you ever kissed me?"

"T-r-a-i-n! Train, train! You'll be left!" again came the shrill feminine appeals, and with them, approaching, unwelcome, unheeded footfalls. With sudden, impulsive movement she threw her arms about his neck and upraised her lips to his. One moment of silence, two seconds of bliss, then "Dad" Ennis's voice, barely a dozen yards away: "Come forth into the light, you wanderers!" There was barely time for Bob's fervent words:

"If I could n't forgive him after *that*, I'd deserve a dozen weeks' arrest."



SONG

BY MARY BYERLEY

MY heart and a cloud and a puff of wind
 And a red sail of fine wonder,
 And I'm off into blue space journeying
 On waves of noiseless thunder.

O light-house stars, flash your signals out!
 Be merry, O reef of the moon!
 You little sunbeams, sun-fishes of dreams,
 Scurry home to your Sun-island soon.

And I sail on, on, till the golden dawn
 Mellows into eve's silver west;
 Then I sleep indeed, yet awake to the need
 Of a harbor port of rest.

O love is the cloud and joy is the wind
 And fancy the red sail true,
 And space is the vibrant, vast unknown
 Filled with thunder and stars—and you.

LINCOLN

By George L. Knapp

ONE of the greatest labor-saving devices of a labor-hating world is the scheme for ticketing the great characters of history by a single peculiarity. The plan is simple and requires no thinking, so it may be used by any one; and in a considerable proportion of cases, the peculiarity selected does really shadow forth at least one salient trait of the person under discussion. But while this sort of historical shorthand often tells a part of the truth, it never by any chance tells the whole truth; and it most grievously misrepresents those characters whom we most wish to know. A simple, single-minded fighter like Andrew Jackson can be set before the mind's eye quite fairly by this means; but a complex, many-sided man like Abraham Lincoln is sure to suffer badly.

There are two mental tickets inscribed with Lincoln's name. One is that which sets him forth as a great, sad-eyed Emancipator; "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" an almost supernatural being, who walked with firm but hopeless tread in the way marked out by a cruel destiny. The other ticket labels our war-time President as a droll humorist, with little intellect and less good taste; but with a queer, intuitive perception which stood him in stead of both education and brains. Some of our countrymen pin their faith to one ticket, some to the other, and some—such is the delightful inconsistency of the human mind—accept both. They use one in the Sunday school and the other in the smoking-car.

Yet in my humble judgment both these index cards together give but a partial and unreal view of one of the greatest men in history. He was the Emancipator; and nature and circumstances combined to paint his mind in sombre hues. He was the humorist as well; and but for the friction-saving oil of his kindly wit, he could never have endured the strain of those fearful years in the Presidency. But with it all, and illuminating all, was a keen, incisive, forceful brain. I do not question Lincoln's moral greatness. I do not undervalue his broad humanity, his utter unselfishness, his elemental patience. But had these qualities not been guided by a great and oddly penetrating intellect, our history would have missed some of its most splendid chapters, and our national temple would be the poorer for the figure

of one of its greatest heroes. Lincoln was many men in one, and each is worth a volume. But while libraries have been filled with praises of his moral supremacy, little has been written and less read concerning his mental greatness. To use the ancient and slovenly phrase, his heart has been magnified at the expense of his head.



If we put aside the popular preconceptions of Lincoln, and look instead at the recorded facts, we shall find evidence of his remarkable intellect at every stage of his adult career. In his youth, indeed, he had the misty vagaries proper to youth; and like so many great men, he came to maturity late. But from the time that he entered seriously on his life work, his mental powers were held in high, almost reverent regard by all who were close to him. In one sense, he was not a great lawyer. He lacked the broad education, to begin with; and he lacked even more the soldier-of-fortune conscience that enables a man to fight on one side as well as on another, in a bad cause as well as in a good one. Lincoln's intellect was too keen, too cold, too accurate, to tolerate quibbles or evasions; he hated crooked reasoning quite as virulently as crooked dealing. But when he believed in his case, he could state that case in a way which made argument almost needless; and he had that sure and certain mark of genius, the ability to brush aside non-essentials and seize at once on the central, vital issue.

And in the struggles of politics, the work which he really loved, the same qualities show out in yet higher relief. Seldom if ever was there a more consummate politician than Abraham Lincoln. The aim of his early political life was to curb the growing power of slavery; the aim of his later political life was to save the Union. If Lincoln ever made a wrong move to gain his goal, history has failed to record it. When he put his famous question to Douglas, as to the possibility of excluding slavery from the territories, his friends thought he had thrown away his own future and that of his party. Lincoln knew better. He was trying, not to keep Douglas from the Senate, but to keep him from the White House. He could see already that the crisis of the struggle would come, not in 1858, but in 1860. He offered the gambit, and Douglas accepted it—to find himself checkmated two moves later.



But Lincoln's victory laid on his shoulders the most fearful responsibility an American official has ever been called on to bear; and even the generous aid of his beaten rival scarcely lightened the burden. The new administration was facing a war which proved to be one of

the greatest in all history; and was facing it with forces which a grand duke of Tuscany would have deemed hardly sufficient to protect his palace from a mob. The small army was believed to be rotten with disloyalty; many of its best officers had resigned their commissions, and were actively engaged on the rebel side. The navy was at the ends of the earth. The seceding South was united and aggressive; the loyal North was seamed with factions—and no man could tell how deep the seams might go. The border States were sulking in their tents, vowing to break the head of whichever party called them forth. And the maritime nations of Europe were looking on at our troubles with frank delight, predicting our downfall, and hoping for some excuse to take a hand and make their prophecies come true.



There was nothing on which Lincoln could rely, save the patriotism and latent power of the North. That power was enormous, irresistible; but no one could know that fact until it was proven by the war. And that power was terribly hampered by the nature and training of our government and people. Democracy, representative democracy, is the best of all forms of government for a state of peace; and by consequence, the worst of all forms of government for a state of war. In peace, the mass is served only through service to the separate individuals composing it. In war, the individual is ruthlessly sacrificed to the mass. And the United States of America, save in one section, was the most thoroughly democratic land, in forms and principles and habits of thought, that the round world had known. That exception was the seceding South. There was just one part of the continent where the military spirit was dominant—and that was the South. There was just one section where martial glory was esteemed more highly than peaceful triumphs or material advantages—and that was the South. There was just one place where the aristocratic organization that is second only to despotism in military efficiency had full control—and that was the South. Add to this that the South was already out when Lincoln took the reins, and that the restoration of the Union was essentially a war of conquest, in which it was doubtful if the North would seriously or permanently engage, and you have some slight idea of the difficulties that Lincoln was called on to meet.

But he met them with a quiet sagacity which nothing could disconcert. At any time in the first two years, any bungling of the political administration would have utterly ruined the Union cause. Lincoln made no bungles. He put a quiet but effectual veto on Seward's mad plan for involving the nation in a foreign war as a cure for domestic strife. He manoeuvred with limitless patience till he forced

the South to take the aggressive part in Kentucky, and thus saved that all important State to the Union. He put the war on a basis that commanded the nearly unanimous support of the North. Lincoln was a minority President. He had less than two-fifths of the total vote cast in the election of 1860; and those votes represented little more than hostility to slavery. But Lincoln refused to admit slavery as the issue of the conflict. He made it clear that this was a fight for nationality, in which the federal government was merely exercising the right of self-defense. The importance of this one move in securing the support of the North can hardly be overestimated.



So much for the way in which Lincoln solved the political problems of the war. The solution of the military problems was less directly in his hands, and is usually believed to have been much less ably handled. It is the custom to apologize for Lincoln as a war President, and to remind the reader that he had no real military training. This last is true, and it is true, besides, that the lack of military training led him into one grievous error. It is said that Lincoln lost his head at the time of Stonewall Jackson's raid in the Shenandoah; and one might as well admit the charge. He drew off McDowell's corps of forty thousand men from coöperation with McClellan, and set them at the impossible and barren task of catching Jackson. There are plenty of excuses for that action; but there is and can be no justification. McClellan had forfeited Lincoln's confidence by long inaction, timorous movement, and tales of impossible hosts that were barring his way. He had been permitted to try his Peninsular campaign only on condition of leaving Washington absolutely secure from attack; and it was the opinion of the officers left behind that Washington was anything rather than secure. But these facts are really beside the issue. McClellan had the promise of McDowell's coöperation, and only the most dire emergency should have kept that promise from fulfilment. That emergency did not exist; and McDowell told Lincoln it did not. Jackson's raid was a trick which every professional soldier recognized at once. The truth seems to be as Herndon has said, that Lincoln's mind was as slow moving as it was powerful; and did not work well in a hurry.

But this was Lincoln's one serious military mistake. For the rest, he showed himself a master! The skill with which he divined the proper strategy of the war was as marked as the patience with which he tried general after general till he found at last the man who could do the work. Lincoln saw that the war was strategically a war of conquest, to be settled only by sharp, offensive operations, and

steady, grinding pressure, in which the superior weight of the North would be sure to tell. He urged this view on McClellan in letters which that "military engineer with a special aptitude for a stationary engine" merely ignored. He urged it on Meade and on Pope. He urged it—and caution—on Hooker. He did not need to instruct Grant. It was Lincoln's initiative that created the steam navy of the government and locked the strangling grip of the blockade on the Confederacy's throat. It was his initiative that started the opening of the Mississippi, which cut the Confederacy in two. Had his advice been followed, the Union mountaineers of Tennessee and North Carolina would have received efficient support, instead of being left to the tender mercies of their enemies from the plains. These are facts that seem to me to mark Lincoln as a really great war President; as a man who, though not a soldier, had a pretty fair understanding of the soldier's trade. And to get that understanding in the moments snatched from political duties sufficient to wear out the average man, and with no personal experience worth mentioning, argues an intellect of the highest type.



There are three charges intimated, rather than directly made, against Lincoln's mental superiority. These are his ignorance of financial matters, his poor judgment of men, and his failure at the very first to unite all the Union armies under one field commander. The first charge is true. Lincoln, when a member of the famous "Long Nine" in the Illinois legislature, voted for wildcat financial schemes as cheerfully as any fiat money champion of more recent days. But if unsound views on the money question are proofs of mental inferiority, half our country at any time in the last thirty years would be ready to consign the other half to an imbecile asylum. There is just one clue that will guide a man through the wilderness of financial quarrels, and that is the historical clue. Money is merely a highly specialized and standardized form of weight. All ancient coins were named after earlier weights—shekel, drachma, mina; and we can faintly imagine something of the debasement that currency has undergone when we recall that five dollars' worth of gold in England, and twenty cents' worth of silver in Italy, bear the name of a "pound." But I really do not know how Lincoln could have found this clue in the half-faced camp where he spent his early days; and later, he was too busy with immediate duties to spare time for researches in the history of finance.

And I hold the charge of not knowing men to be flatly untrue. With very rare exceptions, Lincoln found the best men available with little delay. He was obliged to pick most of his political associates from his own party ranks. And the Republican party was then a

new party; long on principle and short on practice, as every new party must be. Lincoln found the best that offered; and if his political advisers made mistakes, at least they helped their chief put through a gigantic and heartbreaking work. To the charge that Lincoln did not immediately unearth some dazzling military genius to rid the land of its woes, I would answer that there was no such genius to discover. We had a number of men who proved themselves good generals; but we had none who stood out so clearly from the common run as to warrant either haste or irregularity in raising him to the chief command. We had in our ranks no second Washington, no Clive, no Moltke, no Napoleon. The generals who finally finished the war were simply sound, capable workmen; who walked round their task, sized it up, and then with unflinching tenacity put it through. Thomas was indeed passed by, and he was the second, if not the first, of the Union generals. But Thomas was a Virginian, whose loyalty was under natural, though most unjust, suspicion—and one must add that when he had a chance to supersede Buell, Thomas declined with a chivalry that showed no basis in common sense. Grant was found early and supported heartily. It took no common courage in Lincoln to turn a deaf ear to the clamor of the generals of the antechamber, and give the silent, iron soldier a chance to work out things in his own stern way. Lastly, it would have been the height of folly to give the supreme command to a general of unknown value, or perhaps known incapacity. When Lincoln found the right man to exercise that command, it was conferred without delay and without reservations.



Here, then, is a man who was put to tests more severe than were asked of almost any other person in our history, tests peculiarly adapted to trying out his brain as well as his character. And he came through practically every test with triumph. How does it happen that so little has been made of this side of a most remarkable life? How is it that his moral qualities have been recognized, if not magnified, while his mental qualities have been all but ignored? Why have special providences been pressed into service to explain the career of this man; when a candid examination shows that he had a brain which made miracles as needless as they would have been impertinent?

The answer, I fancy, is twofold. For one thing, the great public itself has a deal more heart than head, and likes to think of its heroes as similarly endowed. Lincoln's brain was never underestimated by those who were long in close contact with him. Herndon, Seward, Chase, Hay, Schurz, Stewart—even Stanton—knew that behind the homely wit and kindly jest lay an intellect of sweeping range and power,

and a will of flint. But these were not the qualities with which popular fancy had endowed the Emancipator; and too many of the biographies of Lincoln are less historical studies than attractive presentations of what it was thought the public wished to know. Of late, it should be added, this literature is going out of fashion; and there seems both a demand for the truth and a willingness to supply it.

And the misconception, once started, was fostered by Lincoln's utter unpretentiousness, and by the facts of his early life. There was never a man whose genius wore less adornment. He had none of the trappings and the suits of greatness; as greatness was viewed by the generation that read Bulwer-Lytton, strove to realize the feudal fantasies of Scott, and named its sons after the grand, gloomy, and peculiar Byron. Lincoln never posed—he never had the chance. His wit had to saunter forth in homespun or go naked; there were no silks and satins of the academies in which to clothe it. And naked wit, like naked truth, is quite as likely to find its way to the police court as to the hall of fame. We are a clothed people, if you please, and we want that fact remembered. Besides, the poor whites of Kentucky constituted a sort of social Galilee, out of which could come no prophet; and when the prophet *did* come, it was perhaps natural that men should raise the marvel to the rank of a miracle.



I would not be thought to belong to that pestilent breed of hero worshippers who can see no flaws in the great, no spots on the sun; for whom history is a half divine, half diabolical jumble of impossibilities. But I do feel that not even yet has the world taken Lincoln's measure; not yet has it done full justice to the overtopping genius of that strange and lonely man. Still we reason from our preconceived notions of what ought to be, instead of looking with impartial gaze to see what *is*. Still we confuse intelligence with education; still we forget how large a grain of truth there is in Ingersoll's epigram, that "colleges are places where pebbles are polished and diamonds dimmed." Not until our present infirmities of thought are outgrown can we get a just estimate of the man but for whom our national life must have made shipwreck on the rocks of faction. When the time comes that a just biography of Abraham Lincoln can be written—and read—we shall miss nothing of the human heart, the gentle patience, the all embracing sympathy which we see to-day. But with these qualities, guiding them to their appointed tasks, and illuminating the dark places of civil strife by its kindly gleam, we shall see an intellect at once brilliant and profound; a brain that kept its own counsel because it had looked forth with sober gaze, and seen that its own counsel was best.

ELMINA'S LIVING-OUT

By Elsie Singmaster

“ELMINA, hurry yourself. It is five o'clock, already!”

Elmina stirred, then opened her eyes.

“All right, Mom, I'm coming.”

“Remember it is baking-day, Elmina.”

“Yes, yes, I'm coming, Mom.”

“And, Elmina, don't let nothing burn.”

Elmina made a face at her pretty reflection in the glass.

“It is plenty apples fallen from the trees for a couple apple-pies.

Do you hear me, Elmina?”

“Yes, Mom, I hear you.”

Elmina slipped quickly into her clothes and ran down to the kitchen. She knew as well as her mother that there were six pans of rusk, at least half a dozen pies, and a fine cake to be baked that morning. Her mother had made the fire before she started out to weed the garden beds, and the rusk was soon in the oven. Then she ran out to sweep the porches and the pavement. As she came back she heard a shrill call from the garden.

“Elmina! Elmina! Don't let nothing burn.”

Her lip curled angrily as she put the potatoes and ham on to fry. Then she covered the table with a red cloth and put the breakfast dishes on it, and replaced the cakes in the oven with a fresh batch. Presently her mother came in from the garden. A stranger would scarcely have noticed the resemblance between them. Elmina was straight and slender, her mother was stout, and her bent shoulders showed plainly the weight of years of strenuous housekeeping. Elmina's skin was fresh and rosy, her mother's tanned and dark. Elmina's eyes were blue, as were her mother's, but the difference between youth and premature middle age, between high spirits and weariness, made them as unlike as though they were a different shade.

“Did you do as I told you, Elmina?” Mrs. Fatzinger slipped off her overshoes and washed her hands at the pump.

“I don't know what you told me,” answered Elmina sullenly. “I baked the rusk, and swept, and cooked breakfast.”

“Well, you can bake the fine cake while I work some more in the garden. Only, don't burn it.”

Elmina did not respond, and the meal was finished in silence.

"Now, Elmina," began her mother as she took the last bite of a piece of pie, "you must hurry redd off the table."

Elmina, like a naughty child, seized her own plate in one hand and her mother's coffee-cup, still half full, in the other.

"Elmina!" exclaimed her mother, and Elmina set the plate down with a slam.

"Bake first the cake, then you can wash the dishes while it bakes."

"What else am I doing?" demanded Elmina.

"And when the butcher comes you can get a beef-steak for to fry. It is enough money in the purse."

When Mrs. Fatzinger reached the garden gate she turned.

"Elmina! Elmina!"

"What?"

"Don't you let him give you no tough one, and watch him once when he weighs it."

"Shall I tell him it shall come from a cow or a pig?"

Mrs. Fatzinger began her weeding.

"The girls are no longer like they were when I was young," she said to herself. "I would n't dast to sass my Mom."

In the kitchen Elmina plied her egg-beater with an energy which threatened to demolish both beater and bowl.

An hour later Mrs. Fatzinger came in from the garden. Her face was a dull scarlet, even under her sun-bonnet.

"Hand me once a basin water out here, Elmina," she said. "I am too dirty to come on the porch."

Elmina swiftly obeyed.

"Have you baked the pies, Elmina?"

"Yes."

"Did you burn the cake, Elmina?"

Elmina appeared suddenly in the doorway.

"Mom!" she said explosively.

Mrs. Fatzinger looked up from the wash-basin, a huge cake of home-made soap in her hands.

"I have swept the pa'ment and the porches and cooked breakfast and baked rusk and fine-cake and pies, three apple, two latwerk [apple-butter], and four cherry pies, and washed the dishes. I will yet ice the cake and make dinner and redd up the kitchen and make the beds and cook supper and wash the dishes, and to-morrow——"

"Elmina, are you not any more right in your head, that——"

"And to-morrow I will scrub the pa'ment and the porches and the boardwalk and make breakfast and dinner and supper and the beds and wash dishes, and whatever it is yet to do. And Sundays the same. Mondays, I hire out."

"You hire out!" repeated her mother dully.

"I hire out."

"Where, then?"

"I haf a place. Mantana Kemerer has a place for me where she works in Phil'delphy. Mantana gets five dollars. I get three."

"Would you believe such a lie, Elmina?"

"Yes, I believe it, and I am going Mondays."

For a second the two pairs of eyes regarded each other, steadily. Then Mrs. Fatzinger began vigorously to rub her hands.

"You'd better kill the chickens once, Elmina. Don't kill no young hens."

The screen-door closed with a slam.

Mrs. Fatzinger brushed her hair before the little glass on the porch.

"It is her Pop over again," she thought. "He was once crazy to go off when he was a boy. But he had such a bossy Pop. Elmina has no bossy Pop. And she likes to work. But she will go. It won't do no good to talk."

The tears came to Mrs. Fatzinger's eyes. Presently she called across to the chicken yard:

"Elmina, wipe the hatchet off good or it rusts."

The prospective journey was not mentioned between them until Sunday evening, then Mrs. Fatzinger broached the subject.

"You can take some from my aperns. You don't have many dish-washing aperns."

"I ain't going to take no dish-washing aperns."

"Why?"

"I ain't going to wash no dishes. Mantana washes the dishes."

"Elmina Fatzinger! Are you, then, going to work in a hotel?"

"No. It is only four people in the family."

"I have lived many years in this world, and I have never heard from such a place."

Mrs. Fatzinger did not sleep well that night.

"It is something wrong at places where so much money is paid," she said to herself. "But if it is n't everything all right, Elmina will come home pretty quick."

In the morning she would not let Elmina help to get breakfast.

"Suppose you should cut you with the knife or get grease at your dress. You would look fine to go in Phil'delphy!"

Breakfast over, Elmina kissed her mother good-by.

"You write right aways home, Elmina."

"Yes, mom."

Elmina started across the porch, her eyes blinded by tears. She had not even said good-by to her "company girl," Linnie Kurtz. She almost wished that she were not going.

"Elmina! Elmina!" came a loud call from behind. "Mind you do your work right. And don't you go in no se-ater, and go always in the new Baptist Church. Mind you work like I learned you."

"Yes, yes," answered Elmina impatiently.

Mrs. Fatzinger went slowly back to the kitchen. There the first plate which she touched slipped from her hands.

"Now when that was china like some, it would 'a' broke into a thousand pieces," she said to herself as she picked it up. "Ach, I don't know why Elmina had to go to Phil'delphy!"

Elmina found Mantana waiting for her at the train.

"Ach, Mantana!" she cried. "What am I so glad to see you! I did n't know it was so many people in the world like I saw this morning already. And streets and houses and trolleys! It is five times bigger than Allentown!"

"Of course," said Mantana. "Come now, we must hurry."

"Is she a cross one, Mantana?"

"No, not so extra. But you must look a little out."

"Is it any children?"

"Only a little girl. It is a Mister and a Missis and Mister's Mom and the little girl yet. Now"—she conducted Elmina through a narrow alley, across a tiny yard, and into a wide kitchen—"I take you up to her."

Mantana led the way into the upper hall. At the door of her mistress's sitting-room, a soft voice bade them come in.

"Mrs. Alexander, here is the girl what I told you about from Millerstown, Elmina Fatzinger."

Mrs. Alexander looked up from her desk with a smile.

"How do you do, Elmina?" she said.

While her new mistress finished her letter, Elmina looked about the beautiful room. They had a sitting-room at home, which was too fine to use, but it was very different from this. At home there was a Brussels carpet, and a centre table, and vases of dried flowers, and a great family Bible. Here in this room the polished floor was almost bare, and the few rugs deep and soft to the foot. There were books and pictures and plants, and, most astonishing of all, sunshine. Did not these wasteful people know that sunshine faded everything? And what kind of a housekeeper could Mrs. Alexander be that she was here at eleven o'clock on wash-day morning writing letters? At that point Mrs. Alexander laid down her pen.

"Have you lived out before?" she asked.

"No, ma'am."

"Mantana says that you are a capable girl. Can you sweep?"

"Yes, ma'am. I did always the sweeping at home."

"And wait on the table?"

"Yes, ma'am." Who in the world could n't do that?

"You may come down-stairs with me now."

Elmina followed her to the dining-room.

"Ain't they got no table-cloth?" she thought as her eyes fell on the gleaming table. "With all their grand things?"

She paid close attention to Mrs. Alexander's directions.

"Here is the linen, and here is the silver. The glass is in that cupboard and the china in the pantry. Here is the slide opening into the kitchen." She pushed back a little slide, and Elmina saw Mantana stirring something on the stove. "Now, if you need any help, ask Mantana. You will have time to dust the dining-room before you set the table."

Elmina set about her work at once. As she wiped the chairs and tables, she began to feel uneasy. Would any one pay her such high wages for such easy work? Well, if her wages were not forthcoming, she would go straight back to Millerstown. Presently she opened the door into the kitchen.

"Hello, Mantana!"

"Hello! Shall I show you once how to set the table?"

"Well, I guess not!"

"All right," said Mantana, half-offended.

Elmina shut the door and went busily to work.

"Here is nothing but tidies," she said as she opened the first drawer, which contained Mrs. Alexander's luncheon doilies. In the next she found a table-cloth, and, spreading it, laid the first plates that she could find, face downward upon it. "Now knives and forks. Whew! Silver ones. My, but they are dull! Now I hunt the napkins. I wonder if they use, every day, napkins."

She contemplated the table with great satisfaction.

"That is first fine! I guess I call Mantana to see. No, I won't. She acts as when she was mad over me."

Mantana had not enjoyed having her advice declined.

"They think it is easy to hire out in Millerstown," she thought. "Now Elmina can see."

Presently the sliding door opened.

"Is dinner ready?" Elmina demanded.

"Is your table set?"

"Yes. Slide it in."

"You tell them that lunch is ready first."

Elmina shut the slide with a bang. This was a funny place where you called folks before you put dinner on! She went out to the hall.

"Dinner!" she called. "Dinner!"

A sound near her made her turn. There in the parlor sat Mrs. Alexander, the little girl, and an old lady. Elmina smiled at them.

"I did n't know you were already here," she said.

The eyes of the two ladies met. There were some things which the new maid would have to learn.

When she reached the dining-room Mrs. Alexander paused, and her hand went out as though for support. For an instant she was shocked beyond the possibility of speech. Beside her own place, with her elbows on the table, sat Elmina.

"I put my place at this end so I could run easy out," she explained smilingly.

Mrs. Alexander's eyes took in at a glance the turned-down plates, the crossed knives and forks. Then they returned to pretty Elmina.

"I think——" she began. "Will you send Mantana to me?"

"Ain't it right?" demanded Elmina, springing to her feet. Had she put on the best table-cloth? Or, perhaps, they did n't use napkins every day. "You shall come in," she said to Mantana. "They came and looked at the table and they act as when they were crazy."

Mantana glanced into the dining-room.

"Elmina Fatzinger!" she said.

To Elmina it seemed an hour until she returned.

"Perhaps you will not be so saucy again when I say 'Shall I show you how?' Go look once at the table before I call them."

Elmina took a furtive peep.

"Tidies!" she exclaimed. "And no table-cloth! Well, come on." Elmina started toward the table.

"She said I should wait to-day on the table."

"Well, you can. But I dare eat dinner, I guess."

Mantana paused, the bouillon cup shaking in her hand.

"Elmina, do you think we dare eat with them?"

"Aye, of course. Where else should we eat?"

"We dare n't eat with them. We eat afterwards here."

"We dare n't eat with them! Are we, then, not good enough?"

Mantana did not stop to answer, nor did she offer further conversation until lunch was over.

"We shall now eat. Then she wants to see you."

"She need n't think she can send me off. I go so away."

"She ain't going to send you off. She will show you how we do things in Phil'delphy."

"Pooh with Phil'delphy! I am not at all for Phil'delphy. Are we, then, going to eat in the kitchen?"

"Yes, we are going to eat in the kitchen," answered Mantana sharply. "Where do you eat at home? In the parlor?"

Mantana sighed as she washed the dishes.

"I might 'a' known it. The Millerstown folks are too dumb. I will now have to have an Irish one working by me again."

Elmina found Mrs. Alexander in her sitting-room. Mrs. Alexander had concluded that what she at first took for impertinence was merely ignorance. She determined to explain very carefully the reasons for the various domestic rules.

"Sit down, Elmina," she said graciously.

"I think I stand," responded Elmina.

"I was sorry that I had to go out before lunch. I thought Mantana could tell you anything you wanted to know."

"No Fatzinger had ever yet to learn anything from a Kemerer."

"But Mantana knows our ways. Now we will start afresh, and I will tell you about your work. We have breakfast at eight o'clock."

"I don't think you need——" Elmina paused. Breakfast at eight o'clock! She would like to hear more of these remarkable arrangements.

"But first I will show you your room."

"I don't think you need to," said Elmina. "I ain't going to stay in Phil'delphy."

"But Mantana said you were so anxious to come."

"I was once. But it is here too high up."

"Too high up?"

"It is too stylish."

"Are you afraid you will have too much work?"

"Well, I guess not! You ought to see the girls in Millerstown work once, baking, and milking, and cleaning, and butchering, and making soap! And whitewashing and gardening yet! It is much harder work in Millerstown." In the vehemence of her speech Elmina forgot her dignity and sat down in a rocking-chair.

"What is it, then?"

"I don't like to eat in the kitchen. I don't mean because it is the *kitchen*. We eat always in the kitchen at home. But I think I am good enough to eat with anybody."

Mrs. Alexander concealed a smile.

"Of course you are. But then you could n't wait on the table. When your mother employs some one to help her about—about butchering, does not she expect them to do as she says?"

Elmina laughed.

"I guess not. Billy Knerr helps with the butchering. Nobody would dare tell him anything. And he sits always down at the table."

"But here it is different," said Mrs. Alexander helplessly.

Elmina rose and held out her hand.

"I guess no Fatzinger ever *had* to work out. I am now going back to Millerstown. I will now say good-by. Say good-by to Gran'mom and the little girl for me. And when you ever come to Millerstown you must come to see us."

Mantana made no comment when Elmina said she was going home.

"I go along to the cars," she said.

"You need n't," responded Elmina curtly.

"Anybody what comes all the way to Phil'delphy and goes the same day home needs some one to look after them," said Mantana grimly, as she put on her hat.

She hurried Elmina along, dragging her from before trolley-cars, and bidding her "hurry yourself."

"It is easy seen that slow Millerstown is the only place for you," she said pleasantly.

"What do you think the folks will say when I tell them you are living with folks what won't let you eat with them?" asked Elmina.

"I haf four hundred and seventy-five dollars in the bank. Millerstown may say what it likes."

She bought Elmina's ticket, and had her baggage rechecked.

"He will have a fine time this evening!"

"Who?" asked Elmina.

"Mr. Alexander, when she tells him of the crazy one that was to-day here from Millerstown."

The train started, and Elmina was denied the privilege of responding.

Mrs. Fatzinger washed the dishes very slowly that evening.

"I don't think I go this evening out on the front steps," she said to herself. "I go straight in my bed. No, I don't." She paused. "When I don't go out, people will think something is wrong about Elmina's going away."

Linnie Kurtz joined her on the step.

"I think Elmina might 'a' told me she was going away," she said in an aggrieved tone. "I hope she comes soon back."

"Yes," said Mrs. Fatzinger. Then her lips set themselves in a firm line. She saw inquisitive old Maria Kutz approaching.

"Good evening," said Maria. "Is it so that Elmina has gone off?"

"Why, yes."

"It is pretty sudden, this going off."

Linnie Kurtz saw Mrs. Fatzinger's lips tremble.

"Well, Maria," she said, "did n't *you* know she was going? Has something happened for once that you did n't know?" Linnie was conscious of the gratitude in Mrs. Kurtz's eyes. "And"—the color in Linnie's cheeks deepened; she seemed to look through old Maria and down the street—"and Elmina said if she did n't like it she was coming right aways home."

Mrs. Fatzinger sighed. If only Linnie's kind invention were true! If only— Then Mrs. Fatzinger leaned forward, her face brightening to all her daughter's youthful charm.

"Well, Elmina!" she cried. "Did you come home?"

"Hello, Mom," said Elmina cheerfully.

When Maria had gone home Elmina told her story. Linnie Kurtz was there, and "Mom" Fackenthal and Mrs. Billy Knerr.

"Tidies on the table for to eat of off!" repeated Mrs. Billy.

"And no table-cloth!" said Mrs. Fatzinger.

"And Mantana wears a little cap with lace at it."

"That does lots good!" said Elmina's mother. "Give me a sun-bonnet."

"Ach, it is n't for sun. It is for style. And"—Elmina had kept the most astounding news for last—"she dare n't sit down with the folks to eat. She stands and holds a little waiter."

There was a chorus of incredulous exclamations.

"It is for sure true," asseverated Elmina.

"Well, I would n't stay at such a place. I give you right to come home," said Mom Fackenthal, as she rose.

"And I," said Mrs. Billy and Linnie together.

When they had gone Mrs. Fatzinger laughed uneasily.

"I guess you will sink your Mom is a poor housekeeper. My schnitz and knöpf, what I made, I fed to the chickens, and there is a grease spot on the floor like the dish-pan."

"Ach, I guess not quite so big," answered Elmina. "What am I so glad to get back to clean Millerstown! And what am I so tired of travelling round all day doing nothing!"



THE BLESSED BARREN

BY CHARLES L. O'DONNELL

SOMETIMES her arm will bend as if to hold
 A little head against an eager breast;
 Her eyes are deep with dream, when she is old
 How might her children seek her face for rest.

Her head, it leans so slightly to the side
 As if to hear a cricket in the path;
 A heart so full of white content could hide
 A bruised name within the peace it hath.

But she will go her silver, lonely way
 Toward heaven, where is neither man nor wife;
 There God shall bring her little ones and say:
Their mothers grasped, and held, the fire of life.

THE CRUDITY

By *Will Levington Comfort*

THEY had played the game together around the circuit in a one-act comedy which was better than most vaudeville pieces of the kind. The real value of the product was of the woman's giving. When the lines left the high-road of good-humor and probity, it was noticeable that the man mouthed them. It was his voice which arose to the occasional ranting note; his part to strike the intermittent farcical chords. May it be hoped that a lovable delicacy on the part of the unknown author, a male possibly, was responsible for this? Yet only the "Few" were struck with anything about her; the "Many" called him good. It may be that the "Few" were gratified in that she did not arrogantly disappoint them.

How these children of the public met and became professionally one is not to be told, but they made very good, indeed, in the eyes of their brothers and sisters of the "Way," who called it a case of love and work at first glimpse. They were known as "The Lorraines," but, as a local matter of fact, he was Jim Peterboro and she Kitty Quest, types of America's growth. In good time they were called up to the higher, smaller circuit and the higher, prompter wage. They were at supper after one of the first of their performances in the summit sphere, when the woman said:

"Does n't it seem perfectly tremendous, Jim? What strikes me is that the audiences are so different—not so demonstrative, but truer to the emotion of the thing. What I mean is—they *answer back*."

"Answer back!" he repeated. "It's your imagination, Kitty. They don't answer back. They're a lot of blasé muckers in this circuit."

She was slower this time to grant that she was wrong. Jim's word was usually enough for her. Each thought that the rise in fortunes and audiences was due to the impetus he had given the playlet through his irresistible masculinity. Kitty had told him so prettily.

"It is only the difference which bothers us, Jim," she went on now. "Where they used to smoke and drink beer while we were on, there was bound to be more noise and good fellowship. I'm sure when we get more accustomed, you will be glad to see—without the fog—the banks of stage-lit faces, all eager and fixed upon us. . . . And then the pay is higher."

He was watching the various couples at the various round tables of the café. Her constant concessions bored him; her fealty was so concentrated that he chafed under the pressure of it. She made of him a terminal of all her thoughts; and so many of her thoughts were worshipful that he wearied of the conquest, wearied of exploring the interminable distances of her sweetness.

There had been other black instants—as now—in which the woman had sensed it all, but she could not change. To her Jim Peterboro was Man, one hundred per cent. Had they been hard-pressed, she could joyously have forborne her last supper that he might have his bottle of beer; aye, she could have done more than that, daily, nightly, and thrilled at his gusto. Devotion of one-pointedness such as hers makes a brute of a mere man. They were shortly to be married.

His eyes returned to her for an instant from a far table of the room, by the musicians. His was a wide and ardent look. She knew the meaning. And presently his eyes roved back to a piquant, witching face which seemed set in the melodies—with a background of palms.

Her spirit reeled under his attentions after that, though he forced them upon her manfully. It was not the old Jim, but a man of craft and divided purports. . . . At the last matinée of that week, Kitty Quest played to that strange, attractive face, and Jim was kinder than ever after the performance.

Mrs. Devenney, of the tragedies, had finished her season some days and was resting in New York, when she received a note from Vhruebert, requesting her to attend a certain vaudeville act. Vhruebert is the king of theatrical managers, "the man who stands at the gate where the star-stuff passes through." His idea was to procure an "Emily" for the new play, "Woe," in which Mrs. Devenney was to star during the coming season.

This lady was so great that she had reached the "Top" without the preliminary steps of chorus or vaudeville. Indeed, Mrs. Devenney, instead of rising, had seemed to settle upon the summit, equipped with an art sheer and mature, wrung perhaps from agony in other incarnations. The Hindoos would have called her an old soul.

At the vaudeville performance, the tragedienne waited listlessly for the prospect of her "Emily." She was early. The acrobats were enjoyable, but those who came to act their way into the pleasure of the matinée throught hurt her physically. She did not despise them. Mrs. Devenney's art had reached that splendor of evolution in which it did not override her heart-quality, nor feed upon the delicacy of her temperament. Still, the jangle hurt her flesh.

The little comedy of "The Lorraines" began, and the woman watched the woman. The man sickened her. Sub-consciously, the watcher's mind penetrated the drama behind the comedy. She felt

drawn toward the frail, sweet creature through some psychic need. There were intervals in which she forgot what she came for—to find her “Emily.” . . . And then she would react, by throwing wide open the throttle of her criticism. Even in these instants when the greater actress demanded of the other all that she herself knew, the woman of the little comedy did not jar.

“She has the repression of a master. . . . She plays within her limitations. . . . She exemplifies the unerring art of light calibre.” These were the thoughts of Mrs. Devenney. As the playlet drove on, she studied the voice, diction, manner, presence, the culture innate and its degree of polish; and she hearkened for the temperament of the woman which must be behind all to drive Power to the mark. All these things were far above the woman’s company; and then she had an appeal of truth and sweetness. Not until the piece was ending did the watcher become conscious of the weakness. . . . It was the look which Kitty Quest turned into the eyes of Jim Peterboro, as the curtain crept down to cover them. The weakness was the man.

“Yes, she is our ‘Emily,’” the tragedienne told Vhruebert, “a perfect little creature of her sphere—delicate, enticing, natural. I hope she will come.”

“What?” demanded the manager.

“I only hope she will come.”

“What would hold such a woman from stepping up higher?”

“She is in love with a crudity, and I think she must be thirty,” said Mrs. Devenney. “And then, if I know anything about a woman’s eyes, she is in love for the first time.”

Vhruebert scoffed. “Wait until I talk to her,” he said.

The last Saturday in May. “The Lorraines” were to end their regular season with this evening’s performance. They had been approached for midsummer bookings in a garden theatre, but nothing had been closed. After the matinée, Jim Peterboro went abroad in the city somewhere; and it happened that Vhruebert called at this time, making known his errand to a shrinking, delighted woman.

“Mr. Peterboro is not in the hotel just now,” Kitty faltered.

“I came to see you—not Mr. Peterboro,” Vhruebert said concisely. “We have you in mind to support Mrs. Devenney next year in ‘Woe,’ taking the important part of ‘Emily.’ Your leading lady is the greatest artist on the American stage. She has seen you; likes not only your work, but is drawn to you personally. You are the luckiest woman in all Philistia.”

“But what part will Mr. Peterboro take?”

“We have not considered him, Miss Quest. The cast is small, a very carefully chosen one, and practically filled.”

"But, Mr. Vhruebert, I can't be separated from Mr. Peterboro!"

The manager went over the ground again, explaining very patiently—for him—what Mrs. Devenney's friendship and the offer meant to her in dollars and the day's work. He finished with the remark that a season is not an eternity, and that people have been known to marry even while at work on the legitimate stage.

"But don't you see," she questioned huskily, "that I can't play apart from Jim Peterboro?"

"I see you can't," said Vhruebert, and he hastened away, lest he hurt her feelings. . . . "I am beaten," he telephoned to Mrs. Devenney, "and there will never be another 'Emily' like her! She is 'Emily.' But this slap-stick expert known as 'Jim' has the right of way. I am going to the Seashore and brood. Take care of your health and your heart!"

The perfect voice came back to him: "I am going to the Mountains, and I shall beware of 'Jims.'"

Kitty Quest sat down to think. She had worshipped Mrs. Devenney from afar, and a dream of hers had just come true in the call of Vhruebert—and yet he was surely short-sighted in the case of Jim. . . . No, she would not tell Jim. It would hurt his feelings.

This individual came in gay and gorgeously tempered. They must go out to dinner, he said, and nothing should be too good for them! There was something of his old embarrassment about him that night—the man was always shy when tenderest—that made her cheeks burn and her eyes tingle, as in their first hours together. The dinner was perfect. The heart of the woman was replenished and her eyes filled with the old lover. And those joyous eyes of hers told him again and again, "Ah, you are perfect, Jim!"

He left her a moment when it was over, to send a message, and then they walked through the sweet May night to work—the last performance of the year. Their act that night was not work to her, but *playing* in all truth, and the stage-lit faces seemed every one her intimate friends. She did her part with swing and sureness and unbounded vitality. . . . And then at the end, when Jim kissed her—that was not play!

"There's a cab for you, Kitty," he said at the stage-door. "The boys are giving me a little time at 'The Moth.' . . . Good-night."

He put her in the carriage. She felt his pulse as she pressed his hand, and his face was strange in the street-glare. Then she was whirled away. . . . That was the night that Kitty Quest, plucking her fagots by the road, went up into the bleak mountains to raise her pyre. In her hotel, a boy hastened ahead with a key to turn on the lights of her room for her. She moved through the hall joyously, putting aside her wrap as she walked. The boy handed her a note,

saying that it had been thrust under her door. The handwriting on the envelope was Jim Peterboro's. A sob of delight filled her throat. This must be some remembrance to commemorate the close of their triumphal season. And to think that she had forgotten such an amenity—for Jim! . . . The boy was gone. She tore open the envelope under the chandelier.

And then the flame touched her. She groped to the window and with her last strength thrust it higher—higher. Then she fell.

The lights were hurting her eyes. Her first thought was that she had fallen asleep without turning them off. Then came full consciousness, and with it a hate for her vitality because she was not dead. Afterward, she remembered Jim Peterboro pausing in the lobby, while the tides of her joy were full, to send this message—and he had laughed and petted and kissed her afterward!

Standing at the windows, she fiercely rubbed her lips. Her eyes turned below to Broadway, still marvelously lit, but sparsely tenanted. The sight brought back a pang like poison—her old dream—wife of Jim. King of Bohemia. . . . Ill, weakening again, her whole body and heart cried out for a woman's arms.

There was no mother or sister or sufficing friend in her life. All had been Jim. In her extremity, thoughts of Vhruebert came to her and of words Mrs. Devenney had spoken to him about her. This was the woman of women! The whole theatrical world had been thrilled by Mrs. Devenney's deeds and bigness of heart. The inspiration gave her strength to send a message; and then the stricken one sat down rigidly still, waiting, while the flesh of her seemed contracting moment by moment for the healing of this great woman's arms. . . . There was a step in the hall at last. She sprang to meet the messenger at the door. The paper in his hands was not the one she had sent; instead:

I have dispatched a carriage for you, "Emily." Come to me.

MARY DEVENNEY.

It was old Mother Nature, of infinite method, using one of her artifices to save a life, which made this frail woman, bitten of tragedy, leap with a passion of heart-hunger into the arms of her leading lady that night; and it was old Mother Nature, working out a masterpiece, which gave the famous tragedienne health and heart to receive messages at three in the morning. . . . The women came together, and they whispered, while the cool gray crept down over the roofs, and the eternal business of daybreak rumbled up from below. They whispered as the coffee came; and as they drove through the supremacy of another May morning, they were still whispering.

Mrs. Devenney was not striving for the perfect "Emily," but for a human heart, out of love for this striving and for the heart itself.

That darkness and morning, she played the mother with the genius of the actress and the passion of the childless woman. And she took her own to the Mountains; and she taught her own the perfect "Emily."

New York, October, first night of Vhruebert's presentation, "Woe," with Mrs. Devenney, Katherine Quest, and distinguished others. The audience was also distinguished. The critics were there, facing a combination which even they and the cold East could not break. Mrs. Devenney stood in the flies, waiting to make her first appearance. "Emily" was at work, smoothly, sweetly, as her wont—when suddenly her head was thrown back, and her lips became as white rubber bands pulling and closing about her lines.

Mrs. Devenney's eyes turned toward a box at the right of the stage; and there she saw the Crudity and a witching, piquant face. She hastened her entrance just an instant, and in the midst of the acclaim her presence inspired, she was enabled to save her favorite; then in the curtain intervals the leading lady battled with all the fire of reason and emotion to spare the play and her protégée.

Mrs. Devenney had never looked Failure in the face. Her battle now was to hold this heart from the besieging man; she meant to win in the end, if not to-night. In the third and last act it came about that she was alone on the stage with "Emily." The play verged into the stress of the ultimate passion. The great audience sat motionless and silent as stones in the dusk. Katherine Quest was casting her agony over it. For the moment Mrs. Devenney was forgotten. She knew that her "Emily" was playing back the heart of the man who filled her eyes, but the people only knew that "Emily" was wonderful. They responded, as throngs always do when spirit is behind great expression, and many who were there that night carried to their graves an impress of the scene, and pigments of its vivid coloring.

The leading lady wept a little when it was done, and Vhruebert praised much. The critics went their way to write of "Woe" and the tragedienne, and of the consummate work in the third act of Katherine Quest, late of vaudeville rôles, whose stage-fright in the first act for a moment threatened the success of the piece. . . . Watched over by her friend, hours afterward, Kitty Quest, in half-delirium, dreamed that Bohemia was an island in the South Seas and that she was the wife of the King.

"Woe" caught and held New York. The engagement was extended over the holidays and beyond. Almost nightly Jim came, and after the first night invariably alone. Verily, it appeared as if something were mastering the Self of the man; certainly the weeks burned the arrogance out of his face. What was left was not an unclean thing,

but it was haggard and hungry-eyed, like a starving lion, sometimes sullen, sometimes fawning. The mails brought a tithe of his emotions to "Emily"—a mere man's fumbling with words, which are fine tools; but his face told a better story. Both were unanswered. Kitty Quest went her way, which was the way of Mary Devenney. Still, though a woman's heart is a fortress not built by hands—if taken once by a certain host, it must fall again to the master.

Another spring morning; the work of another year done. The women were together, and there was a letter in "Emily's" hand.

"Please, may I go to him to-day?" she pleaded. "I have thought that I must owe him a debt from another life, for I forgave him months ago, and—I love him so!"

"My darling," sighed Mrs. Devenney, "I have given up the fight."

Kitty Quest returned to her in the evening, her lips scarlet, her eyes wonderful. "Long ago—when I used to be with him," she faltered, "I used to have miserable moments, and then I would pray that Jim might become—just as he is now!"

Mrs. Devenney watched her without lifting her head from the lounge. She was bitter toward the man. Much was going out of her life. "Do you not think that there will come a day of monotony in this new existence of yours?" she asked.

"He says he did not love me in the old days," Kitty said simply. "He says that he did not love me—did not know what love is—until that first night, when he came——"

"To scoff," the leading lady finished.

"Ah, no, no!"

"Emily, when the ruts of the years grow deep, there are other faces in the world for the eyes of man."

"But he says that we shall go to Australia—that we shall live together alone until we are old—like the people in De Maupassant's story—'Love.'"

"There are faces, dear, in the back hills of Australia," Mrs. Devenney said, low and sorrowfully, as if her thoughts harked back the years.

Kitty Quest bent over her, whispering: "But I must go with him—it is life to me! And oh, my beautiful friend—if there is another face—may I not come back overseas to you?"

"Always, my little Emily."

The next day Vhruebert called. "I hear she is going away to some island—somewhere," he said softly, for he had divined the attachment of the elder woman.

Mrs. Devenney answered very wearily: "Yes, my little one has gone back into Bohemia."

A FRIEND OF JIMMIE'S

By Eleanor Mercein Kelly

PEOPLE don't realize it, but some of the proudest, best-mannered dogs they see on the streets are only pretending to Belong, as I used to. It does n't harm anybody, and it cheers you up when you are lonesome and hungry. Besides, there's always a chance of being adopted. In my puppy days, I often followed ladies along the street all day long, wagging and capering politely, though my ribs and the lack of a collar must have made it plain to all the world that I was nobody's pet.

Later, after I came to live at the foot of the pasture-lot, I learned to keep up appearances more cleverly. When acquaintances passed at a safe distance, I would rush fiercely out of the weeds, barking very hoarsely and strutting up and down with rigid legs. It generally fooled them. They would shy away respectfully, envying me the fine lawns and pasture, and the great house I guarded.

But one day a big hound came by who was not fooled. When I roared my warning at him and began to strut, instead of shying away he wheeled about and made for me. I could not escape through the pasture-lot behind, because there was my enemy, the Colt. I could not retire upon the house, because there was my enemy, the Cook. There was no retreat open except the road, and at the turn of that I ran straight into my worst enemies of all, the Boys.

"Hi! Head off the cur! Dog-fight! Dog-fight!" they yelled, and would not let me pass.

So I faced about desperately, my hackles on end, and tried to growl. It was only a whine that came, and the hound choked that half-way out. I gave right up, because I thought perhaps he would not care to fight all by himself. But he kept on chewing at me just the same, until it seemed easier just to close my eyes and die than to make another effort to squirm away from those tearing teeth. All the while, I heard faintly what the boys were crying—"Sickum! Get a grip there! Stand up to him, cur!"—and I tried to wag my tail to show that I'd like to be friends.

At last a new one came running up, a thin little puppy of a boy, crying, "Say, that's a shame, fellers! That's cruel!"

"Yah, yah, sissy," jeered the others. "Keep out of it then, girly! The hound's fightin' fine."

"He ain't fightin'—he's just eatin'! I'm goin' to stop this," cried the puppy boy, his voice breaking like mine does when I bark big and feel scared.

"You lay a hand on that hound, Jimmie Smith, and I'll lick the stuffin' out of you!" screamed the biggest boy of all.

But the hound, snarling, was already being pulled off of me; and a rush of hot blood came into my eyes, and I forgot everything.

When I woke up the hound was gone, and so were the Boys—all but the puppy one. We were lying side by side on the grass, both of us whimpering a little. I saw it was the boy who lived in the house I had been pretending to take care of, and I tried to sneak away, for the people in that house don't like dogs. But he put his hand on my neck.

"Don't you run off and leave me, too, pup," he said, with a little grin. Then he broke out blubbering. "I ain't cryin' because I got licked. I'm cryin' because I'm so mad! Those mean old bullies! Just you wait till I grow up—darn 'em! Darn 'em!"

I understood perfectly. That's the way I feel when my tail goes between my legs of its own accord. And oh! how every part of me hurt, and how the trees spun round, and how good that hand felt on my neck!

The boy got up stiffly. "You poor little cuss," he sighed. "Wisht I could have a dog. I'd choose you, sure. But old Sue ain't ever goin' to have any animals clutterin' up her kitchen, she says."

I watched him all the way to the house, and every time he looked back I thumped my tail hard, not caring how much worse it made all the pains in my body.

A wise old lady dog whom I knew had invited me to move in town to her alley, where she said the garbage-pails were more plentiful and not so carefully covered. I had been considering it; but from that moment I knew I should never care to leave the foot of the pasture-lot, where I could watch for Jimmie and pretend to Belong.

Things went pretty hard with me for awhile. I did not dare leave the cover of the weeds to look for food, because none of my legs moved very easily and the left hind one dragged. If I went into the road, Boys or the dogs who Belonged were likely to chase me, and I could n't have got away. If I tried the pasture, there was my enemy the Colt, always on the lookout; and I still dream sometimes, after a heavy dinner, that his wicked iron feet are trampling me as I saw them trample—but that comes later. So I stayed in the weeds, and got thinner than ever, and shivered all the time. Fortunately a rain came up and made a puddle beside me, or I should have died of thirst.

Then at last I heard Jimmie's step passing on the road, and I

wagged my tail so hard that it must have stirred the weeds, for he came in and found me.

"Why, hello, old sport!" he cried. "I've been lookin' for you everywhere. How hot your nose is, and how your ribs stick out!"

He felt me all over, and I had to wince often, though his fingers were as gentle as my mother's tongue.

"Pretty bad, ain't it?" he said. "Say, you're going home with me, pup. When old Sue sees how bad you're hurt, p'r'aps she'll grease you with somethin'. Women are awful kind when a feller's sick."

I knew better, but it is hard to make Boys understand things. It hurt horribly when he got me up in his arms, and it was n't easy for him, either, because I was as big as himself. He took a short cut across the pasture-lot, too, and of course the Colt was ready for us. Jimmie had to put me down several times while he chased the fellow back with sticks, and I could n't do a thing to help. We went slower and slower as we reached the house. Maybe I was not the only one who did n't want to see the Cook. She was at the kitchen door when we got there, bigger and fiercer than ever, with a broom handy, as usual.

"What's that you' totin', boy?" she demanded suspiciously.

Jimmie hung his head. "Just a poor little sick puppy for you to nurse, Suey. You're such a fine nurse."

"Puppy! Humph!" she sniffed. "Dat ole sneak-thief yaller nigger-dawg—reckon I don' know him? Ole as my gran'paw, he is! Allus a-prowlin' roun', skeert of his shadder, opsettin' my gyarbage-pail, trackin' up my po'ch with his muddy foots. Go 'way fum heah, boy! Ain't no dawgs, sick or well, gwine clutter up my house."

Jimmie retired, holding me very tight. "I'm goin' to ask father—just you wait! You ain't the whole thing, smarty!" he cried over his shoulder.

At the front door we met the Master. "What is that unsanitary object, son?" he asked.

Jimmie put me down, and hastily smoothed my roughened coat. "A—a friend of mine, sir," he said.

The Master laughed. "Well, send your friend along home. It's dinner time," and he entered the house.

"But, father," called Jimmie eagerly, "I thought maybe you'd like me to keep him. Old Sue says I shan't, but——"

"That settles it, then," said the Master.

"When you were a boy about my age, did n't you never have a dog?" pleaded Jimmie.

The Master came back to look at him, and then at me. I fawned ingratiatingly, going so far as to roll over on my back and hold up my paws to him.

"Faugh!" said the Master, touching me with his foot. "Do you

call this cringing cur a dog? If a thoroughbred colt is n't pet enough for you, son, I'll get you a decent terrier or collie. But this—shoo!"

I found myself able to run quite fast after all, though the Master did not really throw anything at me.

But after dark Jimmie found me again, shivering in the weeds. He brought a fine, meaty bone and a piece of cake, and his own blanket to cover me. He called me his dog, too, and apologized for his family. I sang myself to sleep that night, with several neighbor dogs joining in the chorus.

For several days we were very busy, Jimmie and I, building me a shelter at the foot of the pasture-lot. The Boys came by and jeered at him, while he sawed and hammered and whistled. "Yah, yah, sissy! Want another lickin'? Dassent keep your old cur at home! Goin' to tell your paw on you! Goin' to tell old Sue! She'll spank you, see if she don't."

Jimmie just whistled louder than ever, but finally I lost my temper and chased them a long way up the road. Strange how brave it makes you to Belong! For instance, the day I met that hound again, I did not feel like running—not at all. We walked round and round each other, bristling, and then the hound suddenly wagged his tail. I let him off, because I was too happy to bear grudges.

My new-found courage began to make me seek adventures. Several times I dashed out into the open pasture to defy the Colt, yapping and snapping him into a mad fury. Ah, it was thrilling to hear his iron feet pounding after me to the very fence, where I would slip out under the wire and leave him just on the inside, snorting and raging and pawing the ground!

But courage easily becomes carelessness. One day when Jimmie was busy nailing the roof onto my fine little private residence, a cocky young rabbit happened along the road. He was just the fellow I had been looking for, so with yelps of joy I gave chase. It was an exciting run, over lawns and garden-beds, up to the front steps of the house, then back again under hedges and fences to the very top of the pasture-lot. There a shout from Jimmie brought me to my senses. I turned just in time to receive a stunning blow in the ribs. It was the Colt. I rolled over with a shriek, and made for the nearest fence. But it looked hopelessly far away, and I was very tired. "Here, pup—here!" yelled Jimmie, with a frantic break in his voice. I veered toward him, and he ran to meet me. The Colt got me again, and I rolled over once—twice—under Jimmie's very feet.

"Run—*please* run!" he gasped.

I struggled up and staggered to the fence, my ribs cutting into my breath like knives. But the Colt was not pounding after me. Jimmie had stopped him. I looked back, gratefully. Jimmie was lying on the grass, and the Colt, raging and snorting, was pawing him instead of me.

The boy did not come back to finish my shelter. Many times a day I went as far as the kitchen gate, hunting for him. My plate was always there, heaped with bones and meat and even cake, so I knew that he had not forgotten me. But I could not see nor smell him, and lonesomeness spoils a fellow's appetite.

At last I nosed open the gate, and walked straight up to the kitchen-porch. The Cook was there, with a broom handy, as usual. But I forgot to be nervous. I just put my head down hard on her knee, and stared at her without winking. The broom clattered to the floor.

"Reckoned you 'd be comin' erlong pretty soon, dawg," she said,

Then she laid her head on the table and began to shake all over, with choking sounds. One of her hands groped toward me, and found an ear, and pulled it.

Presently the Master came, not walking fast as he usually does, but sort of aimlessly, as if he, too, might be hunting for somebody.

"Hello! what's this? What's the matter, old woman?" he asked.

She just pointed to me.

"Oh—a friend of Jimmie's," he said very low; and then he found my other ear and pulled it.

Now I live in the great house itself, in a room full of things that smell of Jimmie; and I clutter up old Sue's kitchen with my bones, and bark protectingly at every sound I hear, day or night. It is a pleasant, dignified life, especially as the Colt is no longer there to annoy me when I stroll through the pasture. I believe I spoiled those fancy legs of his forever, when I ran back that day to take care of Jimmie.

But though I am always hunting and sniffing about, I cannot find anywhere the boy who let me Belong.



SUCH IS LIFE

MANY are called, but few get up.

REVENGE is sweet to the sour.

MAN'S virtue rests on temperament; a woman's, solidly on soul.

To keep friends, treat them kindly; to kill them, treat them often.

THE end of one's ambition becomes merely the means to a greater effort.

MONEY is a real tragedy! Give it and you make paupers; lend it and you create enemies; hoard it and you imperil your soul.

Peter Pry Shevlin

THE SHOEMAKER-POET

A FAIRY STORY FOR GROWN-UPS

By *Fane Ellis Foy*

ONCE upon a time there lived a shoemaker who was a poet. Girt with his leather apron, this clever man worked all day with his lasts and wax threads, but in the evening and on holidays he devoted himself to the muse, inditing verses on every imaginable subject, from teething babies to the President's last message.

It cannot be maintained that all his compositions were of the highest order; but they were usually comprehensible and rhythmic, and to judge by the frequency with which they found their way into print, the average editor must have liked them.

"Why do you write poetry?" the shoemaker's acquaintances would sometimes ask, knowing that his contributions were as free as air to the publications that accepted them.

"Because the sight of my thoughts in print satisfies the cravings of the *ego* in my breast," the shoemaker would answer frankly. "Who knows me as a shoemaker? From Maine to California I am known as a poet."

One night, when the ambitious shoemaker had labored beyond the usual hour at his desk, he fell asleep and was carried away, with his entire family, into Fairyland.

In some important respects this particular domain of Fairyland was much like the land that the shoemaker had left. The fairies—men, women, and children—needed houses to live in, as well as food and raiment; and all these had to be paid for—and in coin of the realm.

"I will set up a shoe-shop, and make foot-wear for the fairies," said the shoemaker; to which his practical wife responded:

"The sooner the better, my dear."

A sign was accordingly painted and placed over the door of the shoemaker's little dwelling, and a pair of neatly-made shoes with the price marked on them were set in the front window to attract customers. But alas, none came to buy shoes.

Time passed, and the shoemaker's family began to suffer for the necessaries of life. What was to be done? Some people smiled as they read the shoemaker's sign, but they all passed on.

Growing desperate, the poor shoemaker peddled his merchandise around from door to door. His lack of success seemed all the more remarkable from the fact that in his wanderings through town and country he never saw a shoe-store. Yet the people all wore shoes of some fashion. Even the most ragged urchins in the poorest alleys in the city were not barefooted.

"Where do the Fairylanders buy their shoes?" asked the mystified shoemaker one day of a man whom he stopped in the street.

"Buy their shoes! Ha, ha! You are a joker, my friend. But mirth is good for the digestion. Ha, ha, ha!" And the man walked on, shaking with laughter.

The shoemaker saw no fun in the matter. To tell the truth, he felt more like weeping than laughing as he thought of the wretched condition of his family. No bread in the house, and an angry landlord clamoring for rent overdue.

The next morning the shoemaker received by mail a substantial-looking package duly stamped. Opening it with some curiosity, he was amazed to behold a pair of men's shoes.

"Some mistake," he thought to himself. But a little note in one of the shoes contradicted this first supposition. The note ran:

DEAR SIR:

Please honor me by accepting the enclosed pair of shoes; or return by mail if not suited to your needs. (Stamps enclosed.) I have had work accepted by the Mayor of the city, and a number of prominent ladies wear shoes of my make in preference to all others offered them.

Yours truly,

ELIHU FRIZZLE.

The shoemaker looked at the present in disgust, and hastened to post it back again, while his wife thought:

"I wish Elihu Frizzle had sent us a peck of potatoes."

This undesirable offering was the forerunner of numerous others of the same kind. Almost every day some one sent the shoemaker a pair of shoes, and one morning no less than six pairs were brought him by the post-wagon.

"That's nothing," said one of his neighbors, to whom he mentioned the matter in confidence. "Scarcely a day passes that I don't have a dozen pairs left in my vestibule. It's really getting to be a nuisance; for one can't possibly make use of them."

"And one can't possibly sell a pair," said the shoemaker forlornly. "Do all Fairylanders wear these amateur shoes?"

"Pretty nearly all," smiled the man. "Of course a few of the notabilities and millionnaires buy of the high-class shoemakers, who are almost worshipped as demigods, receive extravagant pay for their

work, and are immortalized when they die. But the rank and file of people never think of buying shoes."

As will be supposed, much of this gratuitous foot-wear was very badly made. In a box containing one of the worst pairs that ever came to the shoemaker, was the following note:

DEAR SIR:

Ever since I was a little child I have been consumed with an ambition to be a shoemaker. My parents discourage me, because I am now twenty, and it is necessary for me to earn my living. But what is money in comparison with fame? Oh, the thrills that attend the taking of stitches in leather! To know that some one is wearing your handicraft upon his feet! Dear sir, if you accept these shoes of mine and wear them, you will not only win a young maiden's gratitude, but you will inspire her with fresh devotion to the elevating profession of shoemaking.

Yours aspiringly,

EUFAMIA DOUBLEDEE.

A touching little note enclosed in another offering of shoes read as follows:

DEAR SIR:

These shoes that I now take pleasure in offering you are the work of my son, aged twelve. Is it not a wonderful performance for one so young? He inherited the talent from his grandfather, who was a celebrated shoemaker. Please encourage my darling boy by wearing his shoes. He will watch anxiously to see them upon your feet.

Yours truly,

A PROUD MOTHER.

Accompanying another gift was this:

DEAR SIR:

You will confer a favor upon me by accepting the enclosed shoes. My work is much admired by my friends. If love for one's work is any proof of talent, I must be a genius, for of all things I love shoemaking. When unhappy or discouraged about my business, I make a pair of shoes. When I am pleased, I make shoes. Shoemaking is the one passion of my life. But, of course, for entire gratification I need to have my work accepted and used. When I see a man or woman on the street with shoes of my making on their feet, I am transported with delight.

Yours obediently,

I. GORGO DE STANLIS,

President of the Fairyland National Bank.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the shoemaker's wife, to whom he always read the letters aloud, "people here are as proud of being shoemakers as they are at home of being poets. To think of all this shoemaking that is done for honor alone! Why, the young ladies across the street

make shoes; so do the drug clerk, and the young man that plays the violin."

"Confound them all!" exclaimed the shoemaker wrathfully. "That is a ruinous way to win honor. Taking away the bread and butter from a poor fellow who has only shoemaking for a business! No wonder I can't sell my work, with every other man, woman and child in Fairyland making shoes for pastime, and giving them away!"

Here the constable arrived to eject the shoemaker from the house.

"Miserable agent of injustice!" continued the poor shoemaker, turning upon the officer, "I am an honest workingman, and neither lazy nor shiftless."

"Pore feller, I guess ye be harmless enough," said the constable sympathetically. "Why don't ye learn a trade or somethin'?"

"A trade!" roared the shoemaker, losing his temper altogether. "I possess a trade, if only your idiotic fellow-citizens would give me a fair field. I tell you I am the victim of an ambition as cruel as that of many of the weak and vain tyrants of the past."

But the constable was obliged to do his duty. As he was removing the shoemaker's tall clock, the latter fell to the floor with a loud crash. And simultaneously the shoemaker found himself not in Fairyland at all, but seated at his own desk, with a sheet of paper before him on which there was a half-written poem. His rhyming dictionary had fallen off the edge of the desk, and lay at his feet.

Could it have been a dream? Dream, vision, or trip into Fairyland, the shoemaker never finished the poem; nor was he ever known again to furnish a free contribution to the poetic literature of the day.



A THEORY OF DRAGON-FLIES

BY HELEN TALBOT PORTER

INTO employment the devil wheedles
 Everything living that he has found,
 And I think the "devil's darning needles"
 Sow the tares that are in the ground.

SINFUL SMITH

By Adèle Marie Shaw

“**K**IND of reminds me, that boy does, of Josiah Smith.” Mr. Bean looked across Mrs. West’s hammock to the tennis court, where the children were yelling:

“Ki—yi—yi!
Let—’em—fly,
Give the ball a swat,
Give it to ’em hot!
R—A—N—D—Y—dys—RANDY’S!”

Mrs. West turned her becomingly rumpled head on the stiff pillows that propped her into a reading position and viewed the howlers with the benignity of twenty-three.

“Which boy?” she asked.

“That quiet little chap this side—the one that ain’t yellin’.”

“Who was Josiah Smith? Why can’t you sit down and shell those here? I’ll help.”

“Stay where you be.” Mr. Bean ensconced himself where a clump of bushes hid him from the view of Randy’s Camps, whereof the “hotel” was the eating hall and ball-room. “Go right on readin’, Mis’ West,” he said.

“I don’t want to read. Who was Josiah Smith?”

“Sinful Smith, they called him, after he was ’most growed up. One of the summer boarders started it. I s’pose they thought he had n’t life enough to be wicked. Any way, they was makin’ fun of him.”

Mr. Bean buttoned a dazzling beard inside a seersucker jacket, and with a pan between his knees and one at his side began on the peas. He was a spotless old man, the only man in his neighborhood who washed his beard when he scrubbed his person on Saturday nights. He had washed his hands at the pump before he had mounted the hill.

A young man came around the corner of the log cabin, deposited a basket of pine cones on the rough platform in front, and, seeing Mr. Bean, stretched himself on the ground with an anticipatory sigh of joy.

“Josiah never had much of a chance. He was old-lady Bessy’s grandson.” Mr. Bean paused to meditate and the peas ceased to rattle upon the tin. “His father was killed in the woods gittin’ out lumber.

His mother died when he was born. His mother was Saretty Bessy, the smartest girl in this district, but that ain't neither here nor there. She died and old Mis' Bessy took the 'babe.' She was one of them old women that never says *baby*.

"He was bright enough, Josiah was, but he never got any credit for anything he did. Alonzo says—Lon was about his age—that Josiah would set and do examples and the rest of the boys would copy 'em and git up to the board and make a great splurge and like 's not Josiah 'd be off in a day-dream when he was called on and miss the lesson. There wa'n't any show-off *to* him.

"In them days the boy that stood at the head of everything in old Number Four—Number Four? That's the school just this side Streaked Mountain. You passed it when I brought you up from the train. The boy that carried off all the honors was William Henry Ricketts. William Henry got the spellin' prize and the composition prize—I can see him now standin' up there on the last day of school readin' it off. It was on 'Noble Ambition,' and had consider'ble in it about George Washington and Lincoln and Napoleon and P. T. Barnum, and it wound up with 'I appeal to you, my hearers,' and we pounded the floor and called him back to bow again. Of course Josiah come out the small end of the horn and read an ordinary little piece he 'd made up on 'Which Is Better, Wealth or Fame?' He said wealth was, because you could do things with it, but everybody thought that was a dreadful low view, and Sophie Brooks took the other side and beat him all hollow and got clapped almost as much as William Henry Ricketts. She was a round little dumplin' with a blue ribbon round her fat waist and up on top of her hair. Her hair was crimped till it stood out behind her face like a bushel. Josiah watched her real pleased when they clapped her, and I felt kind of sorry for him when William Henry's folks took her home in their team to stay to supper with their niece that was visitin' there.

"'T was just the same in the church and over to the sociables. Josiah was a spraddlin', long-legged thing, and William Henry was as graceful as an antelope and talked easier and prettier all the time. But I was so pig-headed I never really liked him. I 'd caught him tormentin' some frogs one day and he lied out of it.

"Well, William Henry and my Lon and Josiah and Sophie Brooks, they went over to Zoar Academy when they was about fourteen. They come home every Friday night and Josiah boarded himself durin' the week. I guess he had 'bout 's little help from old-lady Bessy as any one can have and live. The old woman was queer. He 'd been better off without her.

"After her husband's funeral some one see her streakin' it across the medder for home. 'Ain't you goin' to the grave, Mis' Bessy?'

they asked. 'An' git this borrered dress wet? No, I ain't,' she said, and she did n't. It did look some like a shower. When we come home from the buryin' ground—I was one of the bearers—we met her scootin' up the common with the black alpaccy in her arms to give it back to Mis' Lunt. I c'n see her cap strings flyin' now!

"Over to the Academy they had a good preceptor that year, the year Lon and the rest started. He was a great hand to make fun. I run into him in a dozen places makin' things lively. He did n't stay but a year. Went into business and done well. Cushman, his name was. He took a shine to Josiah, and it was that feller's influence started the boy for college. After he went away, Josiah lost sight of him. So did we all.

"Wonderful, ain't it, how them squatty children sometimes turn out the best lookin'? Sophie Brooks grew up a perfect beauty. She was engaged to William Henry when he went to college, but by the time he'd been there a few months she broke it off. She would n't never tell why she did it, and of course everybody thought she was pinin' for him and that she married Josiah for spite. But she did n't. I went up to Commencement and she looked at William Henry spoutin' without a blush or quiver, but when Josiah come round to speak to her on the campus she got red as a piny. I see her eyes. She worshipped that boy. He had the same good eyes he'd always had. Some folks know how to use their eyes, but Josiah just shone right out of his.

"The town folks had got hold of Josiah's nickname, and I did n't like the way they used it—*Sinful Smith*—kind of sneerin'. Sophie's folks was mad at her bein' engaged to him. They'd wanted William Henry—he was right on the wave. Everything come easy to William, and he was a great heart-breaker in them days. 'T was said half the girls in the town thought they was engaged to him. But he did n't marry any of 'em. He married a fearful homely woman from down Boston way, and the Lord only knows how she got him.

"Josiah was goin' to be a missionary. He'd been dreamin' of it for years. Old-lady Bessy was dead. Sophie was willin', her folks acted so ugly about the engagement.

"There was a terrible funny streak to William Henry. We'd all supposed he'd go into business and make money, but that requires consider'ble exertion and maybe he balked it. Any way, he could never see any one have anything that he did n't want some of the same and bigger, so when folks found out what Josiah was up to and begun to make a little of him William Henry he decides to be a missionary, too. He was awful cropin'.

"He come out of the seminary the same time Josiah did and got appointed right off. They hemmed and hawed a long time over Josiah.

"In the end both boys was sent to Cy-lon, and for a spell the village fairly lived on William Henry's letters. As for Josiah, we'd never known he was out there if it had n't been for Sophie, and she did n't have much time for writin'.

"I'd clean forgot there was such a place as Cy-lon when all of a sudden both of 'em come home. They'd been gone ten years. William he come to go on a lecture tower and gether money for the Mission Society from the different churches, and Josiah come because his wife had to. All the Brookses was dead but Sophie's mother, and she was too old and feeble and poor to go travellin'. There wa' n't a soul to do anythin' for her, so they come. She lived along a year or more and then she died, scoldin' 'bout Josiah to the last.

"When he first come home Josiah tried to git a charge. What's a *charge*? Why, a church to preach in. We went candidatin' all over the country, but nothin' come of it. He was on the books of three ministers' agencies that get places for ministers out of work, but Josiah wa' n't young enough, and he wa' n't up to date enough, and he could n't play golf, and he looked sick, and his clothes were awful. Sophie went with him once and they almost give him a call there, but a young feller jest out of the seminary got it.

"Of course they had n't saved anything. And the old lady, she had n't anything but the old farm, and that was all run out—even the farm machines was done for. Josiah he worked away mornin' and night, but he did n't make enough to feed 'em well, and their clothes got so bad Mother offered Sophie her second-best black dress, and Sophie took it thankfully. Mother can do things no one else would dast, and git loved for it.

"Then Sophie and the two children come down sick; the change of climate had been too much for the children, and Sophie was wore out with nursin' and worry. And our minister here, he had n't never asked the Rev. Josiah Smith into the pulpit.

"Just that time William Henry got round our way on his lecture tower. The whole town turned out, big and little, wide and narrer, thick and thin, and gave him a big ovation. 'Ovation' is what the *Zoar Item* called it. He had along a stereopticon and a lot of pictures. His homely wife was dead. Died out there. He was kind of baskin' in the sympathy of a good many onmarried females, I judged by what Ezry told me over at the post office. But that ain't neither here nor yender.

"Josiah had driven the old mare down to the store to get the mail and some plasters and things for the sick folks. He was lookin' all beat out and thin as a rail. William Henry was bein' whirled by in style in Deacon Whipple's rig, and of course he has to hail Josiah. Not that he should n't of stopped and spoke to him. What started my

dander was the way he did it. He was awful pompous and patronizin'.

"Mother scolded to me in the wagon behind her muff. 'Ain't he got sense enough to let the man alone,' she says, 'with all the glory comin' his way and all the hard knocks hittin' Josiah?' We was waitin' to the store door for Ezry to get me out a bag of grain.

"William made it look kind of mean for Josiah not to hear him lecture, acted terrible surprised at his not bein' ready to stay to meetin', and Mother she says, 'Josiah, I'll drive right over to your place and take these things to Sophie and you stop.' And she adds under her breath, 'I ain't so crazy as I might be to hear William Henry Ricketts glorifyin' himself on the vestry platform.'

"It ended by Josiah's comin' with me in his team while Mother moked off with ours to the Brooks farm. It was a dretful sacrifice for Mother, and Josiah'd a sight ruther been goin' home to Sophie and the children. Must have been iron in his soul to see the ovation—if he was human. We set well towards the back of the hall, and the Rev. Mr. Picklethwaite, our minister, and William Henry set on the platform. The white sheet was stretched up to the ceilin' behind 'em. We've got a big church, and the vestry room is bigger 'n the church proper, because the vestry entry-way is a good deal smaller. Josiah and I was too fur from the screen, but I was glad for Josiah's sake. He was in an old brown overco't that had been Grandpa Brooks's, and he smelled some of the barn."

Mr. Bean stopped and began his forgotten duty of shelling peas.

"'T was a well-delivered lecture. He had a gift, William Henry. The pictures was all interestin', especially the natyves in their white petticoats and jackets, the most respectable-lookin' lot of natyves we'd had showed us for some time. But I'd been out in the woods all day, and haulin' lumber dooz tend to make a man sleepy. I was pretty nigh over the border when I ketched a glimpse of Josiah's hands out of the tail of my eye. They was kind of gripped on one another, and when I turned round to look at him he was almost startin' out of his seat. First time I ever see him look 's if he wanted to talk.

"There was a picture of a white buildin' fillin' up the entire screen. 'This,' says William Henry, 'is our church. Sunday mornin's from nigh and from fur the brown men and their wives and little ones come getherin' under the wavin' pa'ms and through verdant pathways where the scarlet'—somethin'—'burns and the yellow tu-lee-ooral hangs its bells, and there under that simple roof, Hindoo and Buddhist, snake-worshipper and teedledee, old and young, hum te hum, they kneel to the God of the Christians and rise to join in the same hymns we have sung to-night, my friends, under the sacred roof dear to my childhood, where first I learned'—and so forth, et cetera. Oh, he

could talk, William! Of course I ain't givin' no reel idee of how eloquent he was.

"I'm terrible grieved to say,' he goes on, 'that the picture of the little house built for the missionary from the money left over after the buildin' of the church was lost on the way with a dozen others I perticlerly wanted you to see. Your money was in that sum dedicated to the service of Heaven in the isles of the sea, and I could wish, my dear friends, you might look upon the humble little shack' (maybe he did n't say exactly *shack*, but that was the idee he give) 'where your old neighbor lives and labors in the Vineyard. The comforts of our far-off homes we leave behind, and under the tropical sun beneath the bakin' ruf, bit by the blisterin' fly, pursued by the deadly elephantiasis and the copte dildoc' (I ain't remembered the names)—'how often,' says he, 'do we dream of the cooling drinks of home, of the sweet spring breeze in the maples, and the pure and cold snow of winter under the silver moon. And so,' he goes on, his voice sort of like the tremolo on the organ, 'the thought of them once known and long beloved lingers in our hearts inspirin' our toil, and as we see the sufferin' men and women comin' into the true light we are glad to be where we are, countin' ourselves nort, and less than nort, if thereby we may win souls to God. Let us pray.'

"Old-lady Tubbs wiped her eyes over that prayer. You understand I ain't blaspheming, repeatin' these words as nigh as I can get 'em. I'm only tryin' to tell you how William left us all feelin' 's if our lives was one Sunday-school picnic compared with the thirst and hungers and the bitin's and diseases and loneliness and horrors he'd been through, but was too modest to specify further. And in perticler I got the impression he'd left that house picture somewhere along the route, jest because he did n't want us to know how poor and mean was his accomydations. Buildin' always takes more'n you think it's goin to. You know that, Mr. West."

West cast a glance at the cabin Randy had charged him a round sum for erecting, and his eyes twinkled, but he forbore to interrupt.

"So I s'posed that church cost more'n they'd cal'lated on, and there had n't been nothin' to speak on left for the house. I almost pictured it as one of them natyve contraptions, only with a window and less cow-dung plaster!

"There was the usual admirin' rustle when he got through the prayer, and the meetin' was laid open for discussion and questions—informally. That's Mr. Picklethwaite's custom. 'It is rarely,' says he, 'we have such a privilege. I hope the congregation will use the golden moments while Brother Ricketts is with us.'

"There was dead silence. It's awful business speakin' up before your neighbors.

"Then, sir, if there did n't rise up from down toward the front of the hall a tall feller whose voice sounded kind of familiar. But I could n't place him. The lights was low, to show the pictures.

"'I've jest come from Cy-lon,' he says, speakin' kind of easy and ordinary, so we let down and settled more comfortable to see what was comin'. Old Mis' Tubbs and Mis' Draper was stretchin' and cranin' to get a view of the stranger, and Deacon Whipple, chin up, was grabbin' at his Adam's apple with an awful puzzled air. The feller seemed familiar to him too.

"'I've been very much interested in what Mr. Ricketts has told us,' the stranger ambles on, one hand in his pocket, 'and I took consider'ble interest in Cy-lon missions when I was there, though my bein' there wa' n't concerned with 'em. I'm a tea merchant. To add anything to an address so eloquent would be like paintin' the lily and gildin' gold leaf,' he says, 'and my only excuse for risin' here this evenin' is that I happen to have in my possession the views of Cy-lon I took as I was travellin' round, intendin' to show 'em to my employees in Boston when I got home. By good luck I think I have the missing photograph of Mr. Ricketts's house.' The' was a regular gale of a rustle. 'The slides are in one of my grips over to the hotel, and if any one will ask Mr. Bartlett for the case that's locked, I'll show you anything you care to see while you have the lantern.' The feller spoke like a man used to havin' anything he offered snapped up on the spot, but William Henry was on his feet, refusin', before Mr. Picklethwaite could git in a word.

"'Your kindness is appreciated, sir,' begins William, very polite, 'but the hour is late for this community, and I am sure they can borrow the lantern again from Zoar——'

"'Don't stop for the hour!' shouts Mr. Picklethwaite. 'If the gentleman——'

"'I myself have an early start to make to-morrow,' William Henry was talkin' on.

"'No, you hain't,' sings out Deacon Whipple. 'You're goin' to stay right here with your old neighbors to-morrow, and I guess we go to bed early enough the rest of the year to have a little dissipation this evenin' if the——'

"'I'll git the bag,' whispers young Whipple so't you could hear him all through the place, and everybody clapped.

"'While we wait,' the feller continued, and his voice sounded 's if he was smilin', 'I'd like to tell you a little missionary story I come across while I was roamin' 'round the island. The hero was an American missionary that had gone up where the government was havin' an awful time with native feuds. There'd been some atrocious murders. Out there in Cy-lon you can buy a native witness for a penny, so it

ain't easy to discover a murderer. This missionary quelled the whole disturbance. He converted the quarrellin' families. You'd have to live in Injy or Cy-lon twenty years to understand what that means. What those two families and that missionary went through makes Fox's Martyrs sound like play. Many a night they spent in the jungle, comin' back to find everything they had in ashes. There was cheaters" (by which he appeared to mean wildcats or leopards) "prowlin' round the woods in those days. A pair of 'em pretty nigh made an end of the whole crowd one of the nights of hiding out. The missionary has the scars on him yet. He kept rebuildin' his hut, and finally he converted a barber. The barber up and carried an umbrella to keep himself from bakin' alive, which is against the native religion. The barber caste can't carry umbrellas. A crazy priest from Siam stirred up the village, and they pounded the barber to a jelly, and dragged out the missionary and left him for dead. The next mornin' he crawls up on to his feet and sets to work buildin' him a church.

"Most of the black folks could n't make much of a fist at English. So the missionary and his wife—he had a wife and a plucky woman, too—they used to set up nights toilin' over their word book and grammar so's they could talk to the people. The man was a natural born scholar. One of the heathen tongues they speak out there is the worst you ever see. Two hundred and forty-seven letters in the alphabet—or is it vowels, Mr. Ricketts? Well, they conquered the language and they conquered the village and they begun on other villages. For five years it was fight all the time, for the missionary would n't compromise, but lit right out at 'em when he found 'em carvin' up live turtles to sell piecemeal or cuttin' arabesques in livin' bullocks, so he had to take what was comin'! I ain't makin' much of a story of it, but it got quite a grip on me when the Governor told it,' says the unknown, 'especially as I found out I knew the missionary. I'm afraid I've only wearied you,' says he, reel foxy, and stops.

"Go on!' shouts Deacon Whipple. We all thought 't was William he meant, referrin' to him about the language so, and the part about the *natural scholar*.

"The feller went on: 'Well, I travelled a day's journey to find that man. I wanted to tell him what the Governor'd said about him! When I got there he'd gone. There was a native pastor tryin' to keep things together, and I see the school where children from twenty villages was bein' educated to Christian freedom—all of it that one man's work. Ah, here come the slides!'

"I'd been some surprised; I had n't supposed William Henry had it in him.

"If William's pictures had been interestin', this feller's took the cake. There was a devil dance by flashlight, and a cobry sunnin'

himself on the steps of a heathen temple. Most of 'em was colored. All the time the feller was fishin' 'em over kind of careful and squintin' at 'em in the dark, and finally he fished out the picture of William's church. It did n't look nigh so big as it had in William's view. There was a colored man standin' in the doorway and that showed how little it was. William had come back to the lantern. He was lookin' round as if he wished the feller'd get through.

"Then, sirs—there was a house on the screen. 'Oh!' and 'Ah!' everybody was sayin'. 'This,' says the man, 'is the little lean-to they put up for Mr. Ricketts with the money left over from the church.' You could of heard the meetin' house gaspin' all the way to Zoar. It was a mansion, if ever! And 'lean-to' tickled the boys so they snickered. The way the feller got it off brought him back to me like lightnin'. He was Cushman, the preceptor over to the Academy. Well, sirs, we jest set and gasped, and there on the front piazza of the house was William Henry in some sort of loose white pants and jacket, smokin', with his feet on the rail and a darky bringin' a tray with drinks all set out nice as you please. It was a handsome picture and William looked handsome too. I was dumfounded. If William had worked the way that Cushman said, how in the name of Aunt Ann Peters—and I'd only got that far wonderin' when the house disappeared and Cushman was drawlin' along again.

"'By the way,' he goes on, 'the man I was tellin' you about, the one the Governor praised to me, used to live round here. He was an old pupil of mine over to Zoar Academy. Here he is—it's his graduatin' photograph. I got it out to show my people when I——' But the rustle this time drowned him out. There on the screen was Josiah!

"I'd forgot all about him, but I felt him give the awfulest jerk, and young Whipple sung right out, 'He's here. Josiah Smith's here. I seen him come in with Mr. Bean.' And then there *was* a scrougin' and twistin' and buzzin'! There wa' n't no escapin' for Josiah, and except for a scared and bashful minute I guess he did n't want to escape. I held on to him by his overco't, and the thing come off, which was just as well. He looked more respectable without it. Cushman he come like a shot to grab Josiah's hand.

"'I never dreamed it. I never dreamed you was here,' he yelled. And some one turned up the lamps and everybody got up and explained to once and everybody wrung Josiah's hand, and Mr. Picklethwaite nigh wrung it off. 'How little we know,' he was sayin' over and over kind of remorseful. He's a good man and his withers was wrung. Ministers they git into ruts and judge by the tongue and the outside once in a while like the rest of us.

"Josiah kep' tryin' to tell us that a missionary does most of his

work right on his own piazzas and has to have a big house, but 't wa'n't the size of William's house, but William's givin' a false notion of it, that disgruntled us.

"Well, sirs, we stayed in that vestry wild as hawks, askin' Josiah questions, and once we got him started he made up for all he had n't said all the days of his life before. And Cushman egged him on till we loved the Cy-lon native like a blood brother, and when the Deacon passed his hat, not waitin' for the box, we crammed in everything we could lay hands on.

"And there stood Josiah in the midst of it all, ca'm (outside), with that same eager look and quiet kind of smile and only different because his jaws was workin' on the subject next his heart! All his stories was about what Sophie done.

"'I should like to hear Sophie tell a few anecdotes,' says the Deacon, chucklin'. 'I guess they'd have a hero as well as a hero-yne! I tell ye this whole business is jest because Cushman heerd William Henry kind of persniffin' and runnin' down Josiah over to the store after you druv on. I was there and he made awful little of Josiah.'

"'T ain't much of a story. But 't was a great evenin'. Go back? Oh, yes, Josiah went back. The Mission Board was meanin' to send him all the time. That was why they had n't put anybody in his place. And William he never went back. I've some suspected that call to lecture was a lettin' of him down easy. He's still travellin' collectin' money. He dooz consider'ble good that way.

"Jerushy Jane—they're ringin' that bell at me to come with the peas and they ain't done—not a quarter."

"We'll help. Come, Boy." Mrs. West was on the ground before her husband could attain the right angle.

Down on the court the game was ended.

"Ki—yi—yi!" began the yell.

"There's that chap makes me think of Josiah," said Mr. Bean. "That little one grinnin' all over, but not utterin' a sound."



AFLOAT

BY WILLIAM H. FROST

WHAT a train of weird fancies,
 In the haunting monotone
 Of the water's hissing tumble
 And the wind's foreboding moan.

THE NEMESIS OF THE TICKET OFFICE

By Wilmot Price

MRS. HOWLAND EASTMAN had rung for her breakfast tray to be removed, and, lounging among cushions in her becoming pink wrapper, she composed herself to the pleasing task of opening her morning mail. Her discriminating fingers selected the two most personal-looking envelopes from the surrounding mass of advertisements, invitations, and charitable appeals. The first that she opened was addressed in an evidently masculine handwriting which was by no means unfamiliar to Charlotte Eastman. She ran her eyes hastily over the contents. The brief note had no conventional beginning—a sign of intimacy almost as compromising as the choice of a superlative adjective. It ran as follows:

I have secured two seats for Tannhäuser to-night, on the chance that you will relent and go with me. You know what it means to me, so I will only say that I shall trust you to give me this happiness if you can see your way to do it. Call me up between nine and ten in the morning.

As always, yours,

ARTHUR KIRKLAND.

Mrs. Eastman's face flushed becomingly as she read these few lines, but she bit her lip with a sudden spasm of perplexity.

Her other letter was from an old friend of her mother's, Mrs. John Gresham, a woman of the world who had managed to escape becoming a worldly woman, and who had assumed the rôle of guide and philosopher as well as friend to the impulsive young woman who now tore open her letter with eager curiosity.

DEAREST CHARLOTTE [Mrs. Gresham wrote]:

I have set myself an unpleasant task, and I ask you to believe that it is as distasteful to me to write this note as it will be to you to read it. I wonder if you know, my child, how much and how ill-naturedly people are beginning to talk about you and Mr. Kirkland. It is said that your flirtatiousness has driven your husband to the same foolish course, and that his ostentatious attentions to that vulgar little divorcée, Mrs. Alleyne, are the result of your absorption in your present admirer. You and Mr. Kirkland are together before

the public too much. I do not for a moment suppose that you are playing anything but the most harmless game. Mr. Kirkland likes to be seen with a pretty young married woman, and you are young enough to like to have a man—not your husband—in constant attendance. I know that you love your husband, and that he loves you, but other people do *not* know it, and they are talking in a way that makes me very unhappy, not only for your mother's sake, but for your own. Why don't you and Howland appear in public together a little oftener? Why don't you go to the theatre or the opera with him sometimes instead of with Mr. K.? The sight of you together would have a most quieting effect on the busybodies. Believe me always, dear Charlotte,

Your devoted old friend,

KATHARINE GRESHAM.

Mrs. Eastman sat very quiet, looking from Arthur Kirkland's note to Mrs. Gresham's. Her face was genuinely puzzled and pained, but her small chin had an obstinate curve that contradicted the yielding sweetness of her mouth. Her blue eyes filled with tears.

"It's all Howland's fault," she defended herself. "If he does not care enough about me to prevent people from talking, I shall keep right on as I'm doing. If Howland wanted me to go anywhere with him I'd go in a minute, but he never asks me, so I'll go with some one who enjoys my society."

A knock at her door was followed by her husband's entrance. He glanced at the letters which her hurried clutch endeavored to conceal, and the smile which had begun to soften his rather austere face died abruptly.

"Good-morning, Charlotte. I came to see if there is anything I can do for you down-town," he began formally.

Her melting heart suddenly hardened. If only he had touched her hand, or looked at her with the indulgent affection of his courtship days, how quickly would her head have been on his shoulder, and they would both have been laughing as an outlet to their emotions, and then she would have cried, and no explanations would have been necessary. Her jaw tightened, and she glanced at him with eyes that were coldly bright. "There is nothing you can do, thank you, Howland. Are you dining at home to-night?"

If her voice had carried the faintest cadence of appeal, he would have eagerly jumped at the chance of a little tête-à-tête dinner with her, followed by one of the "sprees" of their early married days. But the glimpse of Arthur Kirkland's characteristic writing which her hasty gesture had not concealed decided him. He fumbled for a cigarette with a false air of ease. "No, I believe I am dining out to-night," he said lightly. "You undoubtedly have an engagement yourself for this evening, so I cannot flatter myself that I shall be missed."

Charlotte felt herself inwardly congealing.

"Yes, I have an engagement," she acquiesced in clear and even tones. "It is very fortunate, is n't it, that neither of us will be left disconsolate? Now I must write some notes. Good-by."

She nodded lightly without looking at him, and rose as a sign of dismissal.

He turned to the door abruptly.

"Good-morning," he said shortly. "I hope you'll have a pleasant evening."

The door closed in a way that suggested a controlled desire to slam it.

"Now I'm going to telephone to Arthur Kirkland before I have time to think of Mrs. Gresham's note or to repent," Charlotte told herself. "I am not going to sit at home moping while my husband is spending the evening with that yellow cat of a Mrs. Alleyne." Giving herself no time for second thoughts—so much of a child was she—Mrs. Eastman murmured a honeyed acceptance into Mr. Kirkland's distant ear.

When she had hung up the receiver the repentant phase of her spoiled-child nature submerged her. "Oh, why do I do things I ought n't to do!" she sobbed remorsefully. "Dear Mrs. Gresham, I *know* you're right, but I can't help it, I can't help it; and I'm bored to death and utterly miserable!" Her eyes fell upon the picture of an old school friend which always stood on her desk. It was the photograph of a perfectly happy looking woman, with a child in her lap and another leaning against her knee. A sudden uncontrolled paroxysm of jealousy shook the little rose-colored figure. "I just hate children!" Charlotte Eastman cried miserably.

That evening the World and his wife—or the World and somebody else's wife—were at the opera *en grande toilette*. There was time for many whispered comments and much interchange of gossip before the wonderful Tannhäuser overture was to begin.

"There's Mrs. Marshall with Jack Hurd as usual. My dear, do you know she wears a complete wig. The hairs of her head are numbered and perfectly gray."

"Do look at Mrs. Grant's rhine-stones pretending to be diamonds and not deceiving a soul!"

"Who under the sun has Billy Stafford picked up? Really, I do think there's a decency to be observed."

"Oh, there's Mr. Eastman and Mrs. Alleyne as usual. That affair's getting pretty serious, but they're nothing to Mrs. Eastman and Arthur Kirkland. They say the Eastmans don't speak to each other now, and that they are really going to get a separation."

“Oh, yes, and I heard that Howland Eastman cut Mr. Kirkland on the street the other day. And—why! Why! My *dear*, do you see that? Mr. Eastman and Mrs. Alleyne and Mrs. Eastman and Mr. Kirkland are all sitting together, and they’re all chatting and laughing. What *can* it mean?”

“It means that there’s nothing in the gossip after all! Well here *is* something to talk about!”

Perhaps foolish women—like drunkards—have a special Providence watching over them. This time its chosen human agent was the unconscious ticket-seller, who put his finger into the pie of Destiny and pulled out four fools. When Howland Eastman took his place beside Mrs. Alleyne he was conscious of a familiar figure following him, which proved to be his wife. The humor of the situation appealed to all four, and with rather shamefaced looks they all laughed together at the picture they presented to the eager eyes turned upon them of a most respectable family party, for their four seats were all in a row.

Mrs. Gresham beamed her approbation from across the aisle, and many friends gazed their surprise.

As the inspired strains of the Pilgrim’s Chorus drowned the nerve-tickling restlessness of the Venus music Charlotte found something of the same emotional transformation taking place in herself. The half-guilty excitement which always possessed her when she was with Kirkland gave place to a rush of deep and genuine affection towards the man on her other side. Involuntarily she leaned in his direction till her arm touched his in the friendly contact of trust and dependence. Instantly his whole nature responded. Under cover of the lowered lights his hand sought hers, and the quick, mutual pressure told each of the other’s forgiveness and love.

At the end of the opera Mr. and Mrs. Eastman’s faces were beaming with happiness as they bowed right and left to their bewildered friends.

“Now let’s all go and get something to eat—I’m starved,” said Eastman cordially to the discomfited Arthur Kirkland. As they all four went down the aisle Mrs. Gresham leaned forward and whispered, “Thank you, my dear. It could n’t have been better done.” And Charlotte laughed more gaily than she had for weeks, and audaciously replied, “Yes, was n’t it clever of me?”





WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

THE WAY WE SAY IT

OPINIONS are a good deal like old shoes: a coat of polish makes considerable difference in them. It matters little what we say, but it matters much how we say it. If the mode of expression is crude and rough, we are apt to reject the sentiment on account of its clothes, even though oftentimes the sentiment is a true one. If, on the other hand, the mode of expression is highly polished, we are in danger of accepting the sentiment on account of its rhetoric, even though it be false. That is to say, in each case we are prone to overlook the substance in the contemplation of the form. It was for this probably that some ancient once said that language was invented to conceal thought.

A remarkable case in point is furnished by two passages in an essay of Emerson's, who was a master of the English language, and whom a large proportion of our people hold dear. They are:

In this national crisis [he was speaking at the time of the Civil War] it is n't argument that we want, but that rare courage which dares commit itself to a principle, believing that Nature is its ally, and will create the instruments it requires, and more than make good any petty and injurious profit it may disturb.

I wish I saw in the people that inspiration which, if Government would not obey the same, would leave the Government behind and create on the moment the means and executors it needed.

These two paragraphs contain a world of meaning. For less radical and incendiary utterances, men have been denounced, shot, and deported as anarchists and enemies to society. They breathe the very spirit of anarchy. What advice could be plainer from the lips of the most rabid and dyspeptic of anarchists? In the first paragraph he advises the sacrifice of certain special interests (vested property in slaves) for the sake of the general welfare. In the second paragraph he advises the people "to create on the moment the means and executors" necessary for such sacrifice. Such advice recognizes neither constitution, convention, nor statute. And he meant it in just that way. He was urging President Lincoln to set the slaves free, although there was no constitution, convention, or statute to support him in such action. Soon after, however, President Lincoln acted on that advice, and a half-century still finds the act generally approved.

Many an agitator would, no doubt, have called Emerson a trimmer for the choiceness of his language. But he was not a trimmer. He had opinions which have stood the test of time, and they were all the better for having been elegantly expressed. Truth is truth, wherever uttered and however distorted, whether it is raved through the bars of a maniac's cell, punctuated by curses in a bar-room, or expressed in faultless diction by a man of letters. Men who prefer the first two to the third do not need argument; they need a club.

ELLIS O. JONES

ANOTHER REVERSION TO TYPE

THE kindergarten is going out. For several years past the decline in attendance on kindergarten classes has been steady.

Can it be that the supply of tissue paper is becoming exhausted, or that the ingenuity of teachers in inventing new picturesque fairy stories is on the wane?

The assertion that the kindergarten idea is a fad which has run its course will of course be received with the usual contempt in highly intellectual circles.

Probably much nearer the truth is that our children are not yet highly developed enough to appreciate it. It is ahead of the age.

Fifty years more or so of nature books, fresh from the printing-press every hour and read aloud from birth, may educate the young mind in time to be enthusiastic over kindergarten games.

But along with this must come (if any real progress is possible) the suppression of a sense of humor among the very young.

To play a game in which slapping the hands on the sides and

jumping up and down from the outside circle to a point in the centre labeled "nest"—thus conveying the idea of flying—is so irresistibly funny to some four-year-olds that they fail to appreciate the dignity of the kindergarten and its true value in the psychology of education.

Thus irreverence creeps in, and an institution that ought to be more or less sacred—coming as it does from the home of the opera—is thrown into undeserved disrepute, and once more we are reverting to primitive conditions.

If the decline of the kindergarten continues, we look forward indeed to the time when very young children will be strolling around once more in the open fields, picking real daisies.

THOMAS L. MASSON

CHANGING THE EARTH

WHEN we were children we were told that the earth was round like an orange, and we were foolish enough to believe it. Moreover, we have been passing this intelligence along to the present generation, in the smug confidence that we were doing the right thing. But now comes Professor E. H. Lowe, of the Royal Society, and makes us ashamed of ourselves. He says that our planet is not round like an orange or like a ball or anything else as homely as that. On the contrary, he declares what in fact everybody ought to have known long ago, that "the litho-sphere is an ellipsoid with three unequal axes, having its surface deformed according to the formula for a certain spherical harmonic of the third degree, and displaced as a whole relatively to the geoid, in the direction toward southeastern Europe."

And so, bang goes another one of our illusions! And shall we be any the more healthy for it? Let us at least hope so, for the sake of accepting the explosion with philosophic politeness. There is no task more difficult of graceful accomplishment than to permit ourselves to be robbed of a cherished illusion. It is far more to our instincts to whack the head of a rising Copernicus or Galileo than to shake his hand. Turning back the leaves of our mortal record, we discover that our happiest years, our happiest moments, have been those in which we basked in the rose-light of illusions. The earth has never again been quite so near to heaven as in the days when we knew that giants and fairies and god-like heroes shared the world with us. And there has been no Christmas—no real Christmas—since the day that some well-meaning Puritan took us kindly by the hand and defined Santa Claus as a slender, black-whiskered gentleman know to the family as "papa."

Nor are we even now any better protected against the robbery of

our maturer beliefs. Scarcely a day passes that some highwayman of science or history or travel does not hold us up and demand some article of faith. Would you rest undisturbed in the possession of your own satisfying wisdom, you must hide in the woods. If you find comfort in the knowledge that the sun is an incandescent body and that you sleep better for taking a glass of milk at bedtime, keep your door tight shut upon these things or somebody will take them from you. If you worship Paul or Pericles or Emerson or Roosevelt, you may not venture forth lest you collide with a Sadducee who will snuff the halo from your saint or kick the pedestal from under your beloved hero.

And what is given us to compensate for our lost illusions? Alas, we do not know! We are told it is Truth; but scarcely do we adjust ourselves to a new truth, when behold! it, too, becomes a myth. Could we have some celestial warranty that the earth will remain for all future time as now defined by Professor Lowe, we might take comfort. But in the history of mankind it has already been square like a checkerboard, circular like a pancake, and round like an orange, and now it is ellipsoidal like nobody knows what. So, also, at one time it was hollow and floated on water; again, it was filled with fire, and spun in a vacuum; while at present it is a solid rock suspended in ether; and probably before our grandchildren die it will be something else. A few centuries past it was composed of four elements; by and by it was composed of sixty or seventy, and now it is whispered that it is composed of only one. Once our primal earthly parents were a pair of respectable mortals; later on they were a pair of disreputable apes, and at present there are signs of another shuffle.

If these changes shall proceed to infinity, why is not one illusion as worthy as another? Perhaps it is. At all events, who shall say that we are any better or any happier or any nearer to God because the earth is now an ellipsoid with three unequal axes, instead of a stationary disk, such as Solomon beheld, with the sun moving across the firmament?

CLIFFORD HOWARD



Bargains in love are always shopworn.

Behind the monocles of the mighty are the eyes of mere men.

Elizabeth Burger Conover

Inherited genius may be actually a fact, but there's no doubt about transmitted stupidity.

A man at sixty begins to realize that his grandfather was not so old when he died at eighty.

Warwick James Price

LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

MARCH, 1909



A KNIGHT ERRANT IN BROADWAY

BY RUPERT SARGENT HOLLAND

Author of "The Pirate of Alastair," "The Count at Harvard," etc.

I.

THERE was nothing prepossessing about the Markheim Building. It seemed to be trying to hide between its right and left hand neighbors on West Street, and failing only because the arch of its front door was unspeakably ornate. This front door opened into a little hall, with an elevator cage on one side and a directory of office-holders on the other. A glance showed the inhabitants to be most nondescript—offices of Friendly Societies with alluring names; the Companions of the Trackless Forest, New York Branch No. 43; the International Wage-Earners' Union, Manhattan District; Daughters of the Desert, Home Caravansary; and such like. Then there were osteopaths, and painless dentists, and collection bureaus, and money loan companies, and one or two attorneys-at-law. It was to see one of the last that Mr. Prinsett entered the Markheim Building that early April afternoon.

The elevator boy was used to mysterious strangers. In fact, he had much the manner of a mystery himself. He was not given to conversation: when he had read enough of the latest night extra to fill his supposititious mind with food for a trip's thought he would consent to carry the passengers skyward, but until then he was as unapproachable as a wooden Indian. As Mr. Prinsett stepped into the car and said, "Sixth floor," the boy gave him one raking glance and resumed his reading. He heeded not the impatient tapping of the stranger's walking-stick, nor the snapping of his watch-case. When he had finished the details of the morning's most picturesque murder the car rose.

Prinsett alighted at the sixth floor, and stood a moment staring at the glass door with the legend "Arthur E. Mears, Attorney-at-law." He was not ordinarily a bashful man, but he confessed now to a slight sinking of the heart. He had not come upon a very pleasant errand.

The door opened with a dismal creak, and Prinsett stepped into the outer office. A young man glanced up from a desk and fixed a pair of bright black eyes upon him.

"Is Mr. Mears in?" asked Prinsett.

"Name?" demanded the young man.

"He would n't know it. Tell him that I was referred to him on a matter of business by Mr. Coles."

"Mr. Coles? All right." The youth rose and knocked on an inner door. He glided in and shortly after returned with the announcement that Mr. Mears would see the gentlemen in a minute. Prinsett sat down with very ill grace, and the young man made a long and searching study of him over the top of a law-book. Every time Prinsett looked directly at him the youth's eyes dropped discreetly, but whenever Prinsett glanced away he was conscious that the scrutiny was at once resumed.

After five minutes' wait the inner door opened and a thickset, heavy-jawed man appeared.

"You wish to see me?" he demanded of Prinsett. "Step right in."

The inner door closed behind them, and Prinsett took a chair facing the lawyer at his desk.

"Mr. Coles recommended me to you," he began. "I know Mr. Coles in a business way, and he told me that you had managed several little matters for him, matters that were—well, rather delicate."

"Yes?" inquired Mears. He produced a box of cigars and pushed them towards Prinsett. "Have one," he said, and, helping himself, lighted one and proceeded to smoke.

Prinsett shook his head. "No, thanks; not now."

"I'm an Englishman," the caller recommenced, "and came here from Nottingham about a year ago. I had a little money and started for myself in business. So far I can't complain. This is n't a business matter, however: it's rather more of a domestic nature. I've met a woman here I want to marry, and I want to marry her right away."

"Well," said Mears, "what's wrong? Why should n't you?"

Prinsett's brick-red face took a deeper flush, but his pale blue eyes never faltered.

"I left a wife behind me in the old country, and a daughter."

"H'm," mused Mears. "Well, do you think the old woman over there is on to you? Is she apt to follow you up and make trouble? Or are you a free man in a free land?"

"I don't think she'll follow me, although she might," answered

Prinsett. "She was pretty fond of me and the child, and she thinks I've come over here to make a fortune and take it back to them." He showed his teeth in a half-hearted attempt at a smile.

Mears swung round in his desk-chair and made a target of a cuspidor. "But meanwhile you've found a little American who suits you better, eh? And you don't see why you should n't marry her while you're sweeping up that pile, eh? Well, I don't blame you: there ain't much comfort in single blessedness."

Prinsett tried to laugh, but did not succeed very well; he preferred to take his pleasantries at another man's expense.

"Why don't you marry the woman here?" asked Mears. "'T ain't likely the news would leak over to Nottingham, and if it did, number one's only a woman 'way across the ocean, and there are forty-eight States in this American Union. I've known more than one foreigner who's tried that game on, and I have n't heard of any who've been pinched. You're practically as safe as if you were an out-and-out bachelor."

Prinsett coughed deprecatingly, and folded his hands more tightly on the head of his walking-stick.

"I would try that," he said slowly, "but the woman here knows about my marriage. She saw the heading to a letter my wife sent me—'dear husband' it began—and she would n't believe the story I made up about it. She says, 'You show me your divorce papers before you marry me.'"

Mears removed his cigar so that he might whistle. "Oho!" he chuckled agreeably; "so that's why you decided to come here to see me, is it?"

"I heard," replied Prinsett, "that you were a very discreet man, and that nothing said here ever went any farther."

Mears nodded his head at least a dozen times, and each time his smile broadened. The more he smiled, the more repulsive the lower part of his clean-shaven face became.

"Well," he broke silence at last, "your second wife does n't appear to like the role of a confiding little fool. She does n't intend to be packed out into the cold when wife number one turns up. I don't think I can blame her very much—a woman has to consider these little tricks and turns. Bigamy means something to the other sex. You ought to have been a Mormon."

Mears laughed at his own brilliant sally, and at the evident disrelish of his caller for this familiar line of conversation. Prinsett gripped his walking-stick and forced himself to have patience.

"Business require you to live in New York instead of in South Dakota?"

"Exactly. I could n't arrange to leave."

"And you've got to marry this over-particular woman? We've a lot of attractive ones here in New York who ain't so particular, as long as their man's able to foot their bills."

"I'm going to marry this particular woman," said Prinsett, with deep determination.

Mears retired to a close contemplation of his cigar. "You've got nerve," he remarked. "I should think you'd ought to get along." He watched his visitor through clouds of tobacco smoke, and finally appeared to decide that the baiting had gone far enough.

"Very well, then, Mr.——"

"Prinsett," said the other.

"Mr. Prinsett, this is how matters stand. You can't get a divorce in New York. You haven't the ghost of a chance. Your wife's in another country, and you haven't any evidence to show that she's unfaithful."

"I know that. I looked up the law."

There was a few moments' silence.

"Well?" said Mears. "What then?"

"'Show me the decree of divorce,' is what she says; that's why I was recommended to you."

"What do you mean?" said Mears, so brusquely that an ordinary man would have experienced a decided chill. Prinsett, however, was not an ordinary man, and he had steeled himself for this particular interview, so he merely blinked and set his eyes firmly at the lawyer's.

"It was hinted to me that you sometimes were able to obtain legal certificates without going through all the legal forms, and that you had a friend in one of the court offices who could supply the paper and seal. All she wants to see is the official decree divorcing me from my wife; if that's regular, she won't inquire into how I got it."

"Ah!" said Mears. "That sounds very pretty, but do you realize what that means? It's an unusual proceeding; in fact, so very unusual that it might land all of us where we would n't care to be."

Prinsett's eyes, strangely eager in so stolid a countenance, were staring at the lawyer.

"There's not one chance in a million it'll ever be known: my wife's a simple creature, and across the Atlantic; this other woman will never suspect, and if she did she won't want to when we've gone through the marriage ceremony, and there's no one else who's interested in any way."

"Nevertheless," said Mears, "it is a tremendous risk. Such a decree, granting that it could be obtained, would cost you a thousand dollars."

Prinsett winced, and his eyes left the lawyer's to travel across

the opposite wall. Mears allowed him due time to consider, while he enjoyed his cigar and the other man's discomfiture. He knew how the debate would end.

"I'll pay it," agreed Prinsett finally.

Mears touched a button under his desk.

"You're not going to call any one else in?" asked Prinsett, with quick alarm.

"Only my clerk." The door opened and the youth with the bright black eyes appeared. "Edward, take down this statement."

The young man prepared to receive the dictation.

"Your full name, Mr. Prinsett?" asked Mears.

Prinsett made a last stand. "I should prefer," he said, "to have this informal. There's no need of writing it down."

"There is need," answered Mears. "I prefer that my clients should be in the same boat with me. I'm not anxious for this business; if you are, it's up to you to meet my terms."

"Well," said the other surlily, "when I came over here I took the name of Joseph Prinsett. That's the one she knows me by, and that'll do in the decree."

"I, Joseph Prinsett," dictated Mears, "agree to pay to whomsoever shall procure for me in any manner a decree of divorce from my wife——"

"Amelia," supplied Prinsett.

"Amelia, the sum of one thousand dollars."

The clerk took the dictation down in long hand, and when it was finished Mears handed Prinsett a pen. "Sign," he said. Prinsett signed. "Call again the day after to-morrow," said Mears, "with the money in bank-notes—no check, mind you—and I'll see if I can fix you up. Good day."

Prinsett rose and without a word disappeared through the doorway. He felt as though even this crooked lawyer was afraid of being contaminated by a longer interview with him.

"You might sign your name there as a witness, Edward," said Mears. "Did you get a good look at him?"

The clerk signed. "I certainly did," he answered. "I'll know the old bird when he turns up as a candidate for the Rogues' Gallery; you can bet on that."

Mears leaned back in his chair and chuckled. "File that paper away under the P's, Edward. There ain't many men in this town I could n't show up if I wanted to, eh, my boy? That old safe has got some documents several millionaires would like to get their paws on. I wonder if we'll ever want to remind this old buck of his call."

The youth chuckled in clever imitation of his master. "He's a sly one—I could see that when he was sitting out there in the office;

but he'd have to be a long sight slyer than he is if he wanted to get the upper hand of you, Mr. Mears."

"That's so, Edward, that's so. Have a cigar. Good Lord, how many fools there be!"

II.

EDWARD CARSON, clerk, office boy, and "ambulance chaser" for Mr. Mears, had a great respect for his chief. This was partly based on the knowledge that his chief knew more about Carson's sudden departure from the small Jersey town he called home than Carson desired any one should know, and partly based on the young fellow's admiration for a successful man. Mears was successful; he did not figure in the city papers as a leading politician, but he was always very busy about election time, and nice mysterious little presents usually dropped his way shortly thereafter. He rarely appeared in court, but that was because his cases were generally of a class that required the cloak of darkness, cases it was better to compromise, cases of a peculiarly unpleasant nature to defendants. This mystery constantly enveloping his chief appealed to Carson, also the size of Mears's bank account, and the brilliant ties he wore, and the tips he had on the stock market and on the races, and the horses he was sometimes seen driving in the country, and the wonderful women who liked his company. There was one of the latter in particular whom Carson admired, a tall, willow blonde, with hair that was like ripe gold, and a complexion that would have made peaches and cream blush for shame. More than anything else Carson envied Mears his acquaintance with this radiant creature and the smiles she bestowed on his master. Taken all in all, he regarded Mears as one of New York's very cleverest men.

On the afternoon of Mr. Prinsett's call Mears left his office early and Carson discreetly followed at five o'clock. He went to a little room he frequented over a saloon, and until seven o'clock indulged in the pleasures of poker with some other youths of his own age and social standing. By that time he had won the equivalent of a week's wages, and was in fine fettle for the evening. He called up a girl he knew and arranged that she should meet him for a little dinner at Ragazzi's restaurant on Broadway. Then he bade his friends good night and sauntered forth.

There was a perpetual thrill for Carson in the Broadway life; the youth—he had just turned twenty—had fallen a ready victim to it two years before, and he loved it now as the very breath of his nostrils. He liked the people, good, bad, and indifferent, he liked the glitter and the noise, the money it meant and the freedom it meant, the continual chance of adventure and of getting on. Especially he liked the town at night and night pleasures; every man-about-town then

became a hero, every woman an adventuress; the better people dressed, the more money they spent, the more wine they drank, the better he liked them; he hoped that some day he might be able to ruffle it with the best of them. In this frame of mind, with a cigarette between his lips, and a light bamboo cane swinging in his hand, he strolled down Broadway, and found the girl waiting—quite as though by chance—on the corner near the restaurant.

“Hello, Milly.” He raised his hat with an air.

“Hello, Ted.” The girl swung round with a little exclamation of surprise. She was pretty, although her natural charm was hidden as much as possible by artifice. Her eyes, with their long black lashes, were too bright and clear, her cheeks were too perfect a rose, her lips too redly lined, even her hair, which was still in its natural warm brown, was so elaborately arranged and waved that it seemed more a purchased ornament than a divine gift. She was well dressed, quite too well dressed, sufficiently overdone so that men turned to stare at her, and women to whisper comments.

“You’re simply stunning to-night, Milly!” commented Carson, taking in the snug tan-colored tailor-made dress, the rakish yellow hat, and the girl’s pert face, over which a bored-with-the-world expression was fast beginning to steal. “I thought you’d be game for a little dinner, and then a look in at a dance-hall somewhere. Feeling pretty good myself to-night, and got a sure tip for my broker in the morning.”

They had several cocktails at their corner table while they awaited dinner. After that came a long, delightful period when Carson could watch the other habitués of the restaurant pass and repass, and could catch men glancing curiously at Milly, and could then lean forward and talk to her in his lowest voice and most devoted manner.

Dinner finished, the bill paid out of his winnings at poker, Milly and Carson joined the throng on Broadway. They floated along with the tide until they reached a music hall where there was dancing. There they stopped, found some friends and a table, and whiled away several hours dancing and listening to the music. Unfortunately, Carson had not yet spent all his money, and it seemed to burn a hole in his pocket. He ordered things to drink, with the result that when Milly decided they had had enough music and started for home, he felt a slight difficulty with his tongue and his legs.

Ably assisted by the girl, however, Carson escorted her to her up-town home, which was fortunately only five blocks from his own boarding-house. He bade her a lengthy farewell, and embarked on his own travels. He found his house, climbed the steep steps with the aid of the hall-rail, and let himself in at the door on his fifth essay with the key. He hung his hat on the hat-rack, and, feeling dis-

inclined to attempt further climbing just then, sat down on the stairs and, leaning comfortably back against the wall, began to hum disconnected snatches of dance music.

Presently he noted vaguely that the door to the general sitting-room opened and some one came into the hall. He was not much concerned until it gradually dawned upon him that this some one was a girl, and that she was standing not very far in front of him, in apparent indecision as to what to do. He stopped singing and tried to focus his eyes upon her.

"Hello, Milly! Thought I left you at home," he managed to say. The stranger said nothing. "Seem 's though I did n't, s'pose you sit down on stairs and be sociable. Le's sing."

Gradually the girl's gray eyes bored into Edward's consciousness.

She was speaking: "Please, sir, would you mind letting me go up-stairs?"

"Mind? Not in 's least." He laughed giddily. "Why rush 'way? I wan' talk to you."

He did not move, and after a minute the girl took a step forward and stood in front of him, appeal plain in her face.

"You are sitting right across the stairs, and I should like to pass."

But he was staring at her, not listening to her.

"Don't remember you. Sure you live in this house?"

"Yes," she said quietly; "I do. I've just come here." She waited a minute. "I might call one of the servants, but I don't like to do that. You look like a gentleman."

"Gen'leman? Yes, so I do. Tha's it, tha's what I am; gen'leman."

"If you 're a gentleman, you 'll let me pass."

The young man raised himself unsteadily by the bannister and stood back against the wall.

"Jus' as you say, of course. Gen'leman never stands in way of lady."

"Thank you." The girl stepped up the stair and passed him. He reached out and caught her dress.

"Hold tight, the stair 's tricky. Don't wan' my help?"

She shook her dress free. "No, thank you. I'm quite able to take care of myself."

"Tha's right," he answered. "Tha's right. See you in the mornin'. Goo' night."

"Good night." She ran on up the stairs and disappeared in the hall above.

Carson stood undecided a moment, then clutched the rail and manfully toiled upward. By great good luck he contrived to climb into his bed by the light of a street-lamp outside the window.

III.

It was a white and weary Carson who sat in Mears's outer office the next day and thought over the entertainment of the previous night. He was not sure whether he had actually met a strange girl on the stairs or had dreamed it, and the uncertainty annoyed him. What made this particularly annoying was the fact that if a new girl had really come to the boarding-house and had met him then and there she must have seen him at a disadvantage and not in the condition calculated to make the most effective introduction. This thought weighed upon him more than the ache of his forehead, the clamminess of his hands, or the swelling of his tongue. He was more or less accustomed to these morning symptoms, and considered them incidental to the early business hours of any man-about-town, but the shock to his vanity was something different.

Mears was called out of the office about eleven o'clock, and that gave Carson a chance to use the telephone. He called up the offices of Goldberg & Haman, brokers, and finally, by means of an ingenious cipher communication, got a particular friend of his on the wire. This friend operated in a bucket-shop that was largely patronized by clerks. Carson gave orders to buy in line with the tip received the previous afternoon. When he was quite sure that his friend understood his directions he hung up the receiver, and went back to his desk to figure out what he ought to make if he had gambled wisely. It totalled a very pretty little sum. That done he strolled into Mears's private room, leaving the door open so that he could command the hall, and casually glanced over the papers on Mears's desk. Several envelopes that lay invitingly open solicited his perusal. "You never can tell what you may stumble across," was his motto, and he did n't intend to avoid meeting any opportunity half-way. There was nothing particularly instructive in the letters, and so he had recourse to a brief flirtation with the girl stenographer in the office across the alley. She was only passably good-looking, but her pompadour reminded him of Milly's, and so he watched her until a warning step in the corridor drew him back to his desk.

Mears sent him up to a hospital to get a paper signed by a man who had just broken his leg in getting off a surface car. This required some skill, because the hospital authorities were not fond of lawyers or their clerks, but by dint of passing himself off as a relative, and by bribing the hall porter, he managed to see the patient and to extract his signature to the agreement to pay Mears half of any recovery from the transit company. Then he entered a broker's office where he knew the clerk and gave a hasty glance at the ticker. The tip had been good, he must be making money, and on the strength of it he bought

some cigars and an amber cigarette-holder that struck his fancy. When he reached the office he found several clients waiting to see Mears, and, propping a law book in front of him, proceeded to examine each client critically. Mears had told him that the first element of success was the ability to read faces, and Carson was rapidly acquiring the knack in the outer office.

At one o'clock Mears, a scowl on his heavy, bull-dog face, and an unlighted cigar gripped between his teeth, went out to lunch. At two he returned and sent Carson for his mid-day sandwich. He bolted his sandwich in five minutes and hurried to a ticker. His tip was still good; he was making money. He went back to the Markheim Building and took dictation from his chief until three. Then the telephone rang, and, his excitement ill-concealed, he answered it and found his broker friend on the other end. The market had closed, and he learned that he had made a "killing." The tip had netted him all of twelve dollars.

On the next opportunity he called up his friend Jimmy Sickle and told him the good news. Jimmy immediately proposed that they make a night of it. Carson replied that he'd left home in a hurry that morning, and would have to go back for a fresh collar. Finally they agreed upon a place of meeting for later in the evening.

Carson returned to his seat; as the afternoon passed the throbbing in his head, instead of lessening, increased. He tried to concentrate his thoughts upon the money he had just made, but they would wander off to the pain in the back of his neck and the sting in his eyes. He concluded that it was difficult to go to bed at four, and be at the office at nine, and feel fit.

The elevator shot him up-town to within a block of his boarding-house. He climbed the stairs wearily to his room and threw himself down on the bed to rest. After a while he got up, shaved, and changed his clothes. He peered at his face in the glass. The result of his observation did not seem to please him.

He went down-stairs and looked in at the sitting-room door. A girl sat on the piano stool, turning sheets of music. She looked around, attracted by the noise, and their eyes met. His fell first.

"Beg pardon," he stammered. "Thought I'd leave word with Mrs. Pidgeon I would n't be in to dinner. Does n't make much difference, though, for I hardly ever am."

He looked up and found that the girl's eyes were still fixed upon him. For some unaccountable reason he felt himself turning red, and fumbled with his hat. "I guess I owe you an apology for last night. I was n't sure, but I think now I met you on the stairs."

"Yes," she said; "you did."

"I——" he began; he had never felt himself so ill at ease—"I

don't know exactly what I said or did, but I hope it was n't very bad."

"No," she answered with a slight smile; "it was n't so very bad. At first I was a bit frightened, but when I went nearer I saw that you were really a gentleman."

Carson flushed a dull red. He had never met a girl exactly like this; she looked him straight in the face and seemed very cool and collected.

"You see——" he commenced; and broke off, for she was smiling at him.

"I'm a stranger here," she said, to tide over his embarrassment. "My mother and I have just come to America from England. We only took rooms in this house yesterday, and I did n't know any one who lived here."

"I thought I had n't seen you before," he answered; then, with a heroic grin, "but I was n't in much shape last night to know."

Her eyes grew more friendly at this frank admission. She hesitated, as though making up her mind to some extraordinary step. "Do you think," she finally contrived to say, "you'll recognize me to-night when you come in?"

Carson was taken off his guard. "Why," he said, "I hope so. But you see"—he tried to fall into his natural nonchalance—"I've had a little luck to-day, and I'm going out to celebrate, and of course when there's a celebration on hand you can't tell how it'll end."

"What sort of luck?" she asked.

"Oh, I had a tip what stocks were going to drop, and it came out right, so I won. It's been a pretty good week for me, between poker and stocks."

"And you're going to spend the money?"

"Yes, I'm going to have a good time."

"You look too tired," she said, "to enjoy it."

"Oh, I'll get over that."

There was a long pause while the girl studied the carpet and Carson studied her.

"Why do you go? Don't you think——" She hesitated, and then looked up at him squarely.

"Why do I go? What is there to do around here?" He was beginning to wonder at the drift of their talk.

"It's pretty forward of me——" she said, and again hesitated.

"No; speak out."

"Well, then, I don't believe you'll really have a good time with your celebration, but you'll try very hard to, and then to-morrow evening you'll have to try harder still."

He gazed at her with a bewildered admiration. The girl, her face

flushed at her own audacity, had dropped her eyes. "Well," he said slowly, "I should n't wonder a bit. It is something like a shoot-the-chutes: you climb a big hill to get a good dip, and to go higher you've got to go lower, too. Where'd you learn that?" he ended suspiciously.

The girl smiled. "It's not very hard to imagine." She laughed, then suddenly quieted. "I think you'd need a good deal of excitement to-night, and I should n't want to meet you in the hall afterwards."

He grinned appreciatively. "You're dead right. I'd prefer to have all the folks here tucked into bed."

He still stood looking at her, as though loath to leave. She began fingering the music sheets again.

"But if I don't go," he broke out at last, "what on earth am I going to do poking around here?" He looked about the room, at the stiff, sombre boarding-house furniture, half in amusement, half in dismay. Then his eyes returned to the girl at the piano.

"Unless——" he began, then broke off. "Are you fond of music? Why should n't we go to a show? There's a bully one at the Park, 'The Pearl and the Prince'; how about taking that in?"

She shook her head. "No, thank you. I could n't. I—that is, we've only just come to New York."

"What's the odds? Skip off before your mother knows anything about it. Just leave her a note with any old fairy tale inside. I've got plenty of cash; this was my lucky day, and I'll show you what we can do here in little old New York."

"No," she said, although her face reflected some of his enthusiasm. "You're very kind, but I could n't possibly do it." His eyes dropped dejectedly, and she noted it. "Are n't there other things we could do? If you'll stay here to dinner, I—I'll take a walk with you afterwards."

He had a quick impulse to laugh, the contrast was so ludicrous, but as he looked at her he choked the impulse down.

"Well," he said slowly, thinking of the pleasure of telling Jimmy Sickle how much money he'd made, and of all the gay people he would miss, "I guess—well, I don't know——" then he caught a glimpse in her eyes that seemed to say she was ashamed to have tried to barter with him—"I—that is—I'd like to take that walk."

She rose from the piano stool and held out her hand. "Thanks," she said. "I think we're going to be good friends."

He took her hand gingerly in his. "Hope you're right." He laughed very frankly. "But would n't Jimmy Sickle have a word to say to you! You see the entertainment was to be on me, and Jimmy's been saving up his appetite."

IV.

To Carson's cultivated taste, the fare of Mrs. Pidgeon's boarding-house was unspeakably poor and the people who gathered about her dinner-table the dullest dummies. There was no flow of sparkling, rippling wit, no comprehension of the larger lookouts on life. He expected the faded Miss Anatole who sat on his right to end her existence in the same position she held now, that of a third-rate milliner, and the fat-faced, watery-eyed Richard Sturm upon his left to climb the same book-keeper's stool each week-day morning for the next quarter-century. They made him mad, these pale, drab people who envied the rich feebly, and took no steps to have their share of the world's good things. He thought them little better than so many cattle; his stay among them was a period of which he hoped soon to be rid. That evening, as he walked into the dingy dining-room, with its three narrow tables, its flaring gas-jets, its odor of stale food, he wondered what foolishness had made him forego the pleasures of his celebration, and how it had come about that he had allowed himself to fall back on this.

Mr. Sturm told his usual pointless stories and laughed timidly at the wrong places, Miss Anatole asked Carson what he had been doing with a manner devoid of interest and with too palpable an effort to be polite. What did these people care about poker or stocks, shows or midnight adventures? Carson consigned them all mentally to perdition, and he sawed through his tough piece of steak and washed it down with gulps of ice-water in haste to get through with the ordeal.

Relief came at last, the other boarders drifted away to their rooms, and Carson stood in the sitting-room, waiting for the new girl. He was just on the point of losing all patience and flying down-town when she appeared. She was dressed to go out, with a quaint little English straw hat on her softly rolled hair, a long walking-coat, and gloves.

"My mother's quite an invalid," she explained. "I'd hoped she'd come down to dinner so I might introduce you to her, but she was n't feeling well enough. She says I may go for a walk." The girl looked up at him suddenly. "You have n't told me your name."

"Edward Carson."

"Thanks. Mine is Rhoda Jennings."

In the girl's presence Carson's spirits quickly revived. He decided that she was pretty, and had a manner which, although very different from that of the New York girls he knew, would not make him feel ill at ease with her in public.

"Let's be off," he exclaimed. "I've got to do something quick to take the taste of that meal out of my mouth."

She laughed at his impetuosity and followed him into the street. Free at last, he lighted a cigarette and inhaled a great breath.

"Holy cats, but that feels good! What would a man do without tobacco!" As his spirits revived he began to expand. He returned to the theme of his day's luck and enlarged upon it. "That's the way money is made, in speculation; there's nothing in drawing your day's pay and putting it in bank. The way to make money is to learn how to beat the other fellow. The millionaires are the chaps who play hardest." He took another eloquent puff at his cigarette.

"You think a great deal about money, don't you?" she said interrogatively.

"Sure; what else is there to think about? If you have money enough, can't you do anything you want?"

"Perhaps. And then again perhaps not."

"There's no perhaps about it. Of course you can. Wait till you've been here a little longer, and you'll see. When a man's made his pile he can have his horses and automobiles, a big house and lots of servants and friends, and down-town he can run the market whenever he's feeling fit. Gee, but would n't I like to have a chance to corner wheat or cotton! Think of the fun and the excitement, and just sitting there in your office with the telegraphs clicking hot in your ears, making other people stand around!"

His face glowed, his eyes sparkled with excitement. "That's life!" he said. "Real, A-number-one, eighteen carat existence! No more boarding-houses or subway cars for mine. I'll live in a gingerbread palace on the Park, have my chauffeur race every other chauffeur between Wall Street and Seventy-second, and pay my fines in gold eagles!"

Again a puff at his cigarette, and a little half-patronizing glance at the girl beside him, as if to say, "Did you ever know such a wonderful being as I?"

"Are all New York——" she hesitated over the word, a sly smile curving her lips—"men like you?"

The youth nodded seriously, unaware of her smile. She, in spite of her amusement, could not help rewarding him with a half admiring glance.

"And every one of you wants to make more money than the rest, and does n't care how he does it?"

Again he nodded.

"And the women," she said, "the girls—don't they tell you anything else?"

Carson chuckled. "The girls? Why, bless you, they're at the root of it all! They can't live without money; they eat it, and drink it, and wear it. They would n't look at a man who had n't got it,

or was n't getting it just as fast as he could. Why, a girl can spend in a day all I make in a month, and that without trying. I've a friend, little Milly O'Brien, who just burns up money so fast you can't see where on earth it's gone to."

"I think you took me for her last night, did n't you?"

"I should n't wonder."

"Won't you tell me something about her?"

Carson glanced at the girl. She looked demure enough, but he had a feeling that she was laughing in some hidden way. He lighted a fresh cigarette, as though preparing for weighty consideration.

"Well, as girls go, Milly's all to the good. She can dress so a millionaire would n't be ashamed to know her. You ought to see how she makes people stand around when she's a mind to; none of your free and easy tricks with her. She knows what's what, and you can't fool her into thinking a gold brick is hard-pan."

"Is she pretty?"

"You bet she is! She's not so very tall or short, snappy gray eyes, and hair that's a cross between red and brown. Then she's got dimples—real ones; there ain't anything of the make-believe in her."

"She sounds very nice," said Rhoda. "I'd like to see her. You seem a good judge of looks."

"So you shall some day soon. I'll get up a little party to go to a show. What do you say to crossing over to Sixth Avenue?"

They walked over to the brightly-lighted street, and Carson, suddenly reminded that his companion was new to his country, plunged into a glowing description. His talk ran something like the prospectus of a new real estate company; it abounded in expressions of the biggest, the richest, the most prodigious terms.

"You don't have anything like this in England, of course," he said. "They tell me New York has London lashed to the mast. We've got more sky-scrapers and millionaires and hotels and business generally than all the rest of the world put together. Talk about going to Paris to have a good time; you can see more and do more in one night on Broadway than in Paris in a year; and that's no idle jest! I'll take you down some night and show you a little. Jupiter Augustus! I tell you what, it's enough to make you dizzy."

"Yes," the girl said quietly; "I fancy it would make me very dizzy. I've seen enough of New York to know that already. I've never heard so much talk about money in my life. Even the waitress at Mrs. Pidgeon's knew how much each person there owned. Only, she said how much each one was worth, as though that was all they represented."

Carson laughed. "Of course she did. That's the easiest way to

value people. But they're a poor, stupid lot at Mrs. Pidgeon's. How did you happen to go there?"

"We're poor," she said simply. "It was all we could afford."

The admission seemed to surprise the young man: most of Mrs. Pidgeon's boarders would have ingeniously explained away their presence there.

"Then why on earth did you come to America?" he asked. "Did they tell you you could pick up gold dollars on the streets over here?"

"No," she answered. "It was n't gold dollars that drew us. It was my father. He left home more than a year ago to come to the States to make his fortune. He had n't had a chance in Nottingham; he had a great many plans for business companies, but people seemed to think his ideas too wild. He told us that England was too conservative, and that he could come to New York and with any one of his plans make a fortune in a year. Mother saw that he would go, so she helped him get enough money for a start over here, and then he sailed. After that he used to write regularly every week for four months, and then all of a sudden his letters stopped coming. Mother did n't say much, but I could see she was worried. We knew America was a very big place and that it was easy for harm to come to a man in a country where there were so many Indians and earthquakes and such great plains and forests. At last, one day, when we had heard nothing from him for months, Mother said to me, 'I'm afraid, Rhoda, something may have happened to him,' and I, knowing what was in her thoughts, said, 'Let's try to find him; perhaps he's in trouble and we can help him out.' So we shut up the house and sold enough things to pay for our passage and have a little something to live on when we reached the States, and came over. The sea-trip was n't very good for Mother, and she's been ill almost ever since we landed, so we've not done much. Besides, America's so much bigger than we thought. Why, I fancy we might hunt for years just here in New York before we ever found a clue."

"You bet you might!" agreed Carson. Then he added contemplatively: "That's a pretty tough proposition you and she are up against. It's like hunting for a needle in a haystack. And you have n't any idea what he's doing here?"

"No; he never said much in his letters except that he could see that there were great opportunities for a man with his business sense in the States, and that we must n't worry if he didn't come back for some time. He was big and strong and good looking. I can't think that anything wrong has happened to him. The only thing we fear is that he was so anxious to make enough money to come back to us quickly some one may have taken advantage of him. That's what continually frightens Mother; she's so afraid that he may have

taken some rash chance in order to justify him in her eyes for coming over here."

"I'm afraid," said Carson, "that you two are up against it good and hard. He might be living in the next block and you'd never know it. I'll keep my eyes peeled for any trail of him, though, and I'll mention it to my friends."

"Thank you," she answered. "I'm afraid two women can't do much by themselves in a place like this. I was n't so very hopeful, but Mother was, and I'd hate to have her altogether disappointed."

Carson looked critically at the girl as she walked beside him. He compared her for a moment with Milly the self-reliant, Milly who could care for herself in any situation he could imagine. He had a feeling that he liked a person he could protect.

"It's funny," he said inconsequentially, "but I can't imagine two people less alike than you and Milly."

"Can't you?" She paused to consider. "I wonder, now, how you'd describe me to her. Won't you try it, just for fun? Pretend that I'm not here."

"I don't think I'd describe you at all. You see, some people are easier to hit off than others," he added as though by way of apology.

He was looking straight ahead. The English girl, glancing sideways up at him, again seemed to see something she liked, for she nodded her head in a little way peculiar to herself.

"I don't believe you mean half the things you say," she remarked, "about money and all that. You're just having fun with me when you talk that way."

"Indeed, I'm not."

"Indeed, you are, Mr. Edward Carson. Now let's go back, please."

As they reached Mrs. Pidgeon's the clock was striking nine. Carson, aghast at the thought of having to amuse himself in the boarding-house, turned appealingly to his companion. "Look here, you're not going to leave me all alone in this place, are you? Won't you sing something in the parlor?"

She agreed, and the old scarred boarding-house piano was made to accompany the girl's fresh voice. She sang her very best, as though to show her thanks to this frank youth who had been so willing to make friends with her.

V.

CARSON awoke next morning undecided whether he had played the part of a fool or a wise man the previous night in cutting out his celebration and spending the evening with the English girl. As he looked in the glass, however, he was glad to observe that he was not quite so pallid as he had imagined the night before. Later he sur-

prised the waitress by taking oatmeal with his coffee, an unusually heavy breakfast for him. Mr. Mears had not reached the office when Carson arrived there. At half after nine he telephoned that he was detained and would not be down-town until noon. As a result of this news, Carson succeeded in passing a most agreeable morning. He called up Jimmy Sickle, and asked why the latter had not kept his appointment to meet him at the Belmont House. Sickle said that the appointment had been for the Empire Café, that he had been there promptly at seven, had waited until eight, and then departed, calling Carson a quitter. Carson swore that Sickle was wrong in his recollection of the meeting place, told him what a fine time he had missed, and how much he, Carson, had spent in celebration of his day's fortune. When Jimmy was thoroughly exasperated and out of temper, Carson whispered, "So long, I hear the old man coming," and hung up the telephone receiver.

Occasional clients dropped in to the office during the morning, and Carson employed his time in making them writhe. He told an actress for whom Mears was trying to obtain a divorce that unfortunately some facts had come to light concerning her own past which made it doubtful if the court would consider her a proper applicant for relief. Having alarmed her to the verge of hysterics, he brought her back to composure by the confident statement that anything could be overlooked for a consideration, and that it was simply a question of how much the man who was waiting to make her his wife would put up for that satisfaction. Then there was a young man who had managed to place himself in a very ugly equivocal position and who had been tracked down by Mears and was being firmly held up for a price for the attorney's silence; him Carson pricked with a score of cunning little darts, watching the young man's furtive eyes widen and contract with each new start of fear.

These clients, however, had all tired of waiting and had left before the outer door opened to Mr. Prinsett. He came in and sat down opposite Carson with the stealth of a man who knows that he is doing wrong. On learning that Mr. Mears would not be in for half an hour, he summoned up a reserve of courage, like a criminal temporarily reprieved, and assumed a patronizingly jocose manner.

"Well, my man, d' ye smoke?"

Carson opined that he did, whereupon Prinsett produced a large, oily cigar and tossed it over to him.

"Where'd you get it?" demanded Carson.

Prinsett laughed. "Don't be afraid of it, my good fellow. I bought it for my own use."

"Thanks, but I'm not smoking now. I'll keep it to give to a friend;" and Carson tucked the cigar in his waistcoat pocket.

"How's business?" resumed Prinsett, after a pause.

"Screaming," rejoined Carson. "Two blackmailers, a forger, and a Chink who tried to poison his mother-in-law, all been in since half past nine."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Prinsett, with a little gasp of horror. "You do have a business, don't you? Mr. Mears must have a very wide reputation."

"With crooks? Yes, he has," agreed Carson reflectively.

"So I hear," said Prinsett, "so I hear; and you—do you expect to be a lawyer?"

"So help me, no!" answered Carson vigorously. "D'ye think I've got time to wade through all those encyclopedias?" He waved his hand towards the shelves of law books that lined the walls. "Not for mine! It's all very well if you're as cute as Mr. Mears and know how to get next to all sorts of people. I'm going to be a broker; I've got a head for that line of work and it suits me to a tee. There's more of the gamble in it than in anything else I know, and I've had gambler's luck ever since I struck town."

"That pays better than steady wages, eh?"

"Sure. There's nothing in wages here, except when I happen to stumble on to an accident case and can hang on to it tight until it's in the old man's hands. Then I get my share of the rake-off."

"I can see," said Prinsett patronizingly, "that you're a young man who's going to rise in the world." He rubbed his hands as though with joy of the prospect. "New York's a wonderful city for a clever man."

"Right you are," agreed Carson, swinging back in his desk-chair and sticking his fingers in the arm-holes of his vest. "I think New York is just about the best proposition on the market."

Prinsett leaned forward abruptly. "See here, my man, how'd you like to earn something on the side?"

Carson eyed him without blinking.

"There's a paper in that safe I'd like to keep in my own pocket—that one I signed here the other day. D'ye think it could be managed—say, for a twenty-five?"

Carson lighted a cigarette with Mears's manner of impressing his clients by the depth and length of his consideration of their words.

"No," he said, "I guess not. Mr. Mears goes through his safe every Friday night, and he'd hold me strictly responsible for anything that was missing. I could n't afford to take the risk, even for ten times your twenty-five."

"Ah, that so?" returned Prinsett. "No, of course I would n't advise you to do anything that might—um—ah—bring you into discredit with your chief. A young man can't take such a risk as that,

of course not, of course not." He allowed a discreet pause to follow. "Now, d'ye think it would be so difficult a matter for you to give me a line or two—just a line or two—on some one of Mr. Mears's deals that was n't quite—well—that belongs to the secret history of the court, so to say? You see, on a matter of business I like to be on the same footing with the other man. That's fair, ain't it? If he's got something on me, I like to have something on him; that's only playin' the game, ain't it?"

Carson nodded and knocked off his cigarette ash delicately with his little finger.

"Sounds perfectly good to me." His manner became reminiscent. "I could tip you off to quite a number of things—witnesses who studied the stories they were to tell back there in the office, just like actors learning their cues. Oh, yes, Mearsy is an out-and-outer when he's started. There's nothing of the faint heart about him."

"Yes?" said Prinsett eagerly. "Well, say just a little memorandum of a couple of cases, names, dates, and figures—enough to jog his memory if anything went wrong."

"It might be done," reflected Carson in Mears's best manner, "but I should have to make a charge for my professional service."

"Well, how much?"

Before Carson could answer they heard the elevator door slide open, a heavy step in the hall, and a hand on the knob. When Mears entered Carson was deep in the perusal of a volume of the Revised Statutes, and Prinsett was unconcernedly studying the ceiling.

"Step right back into my room, Mr. Prinsett," said Mears.

When they were alone, the lawyer unlocked a private drawer in his desk and took out a document bearing a large gilt seal. He unfolded it and read it aloud while a smile was born and grew rapidly on Prinsett's face.

"Exactly what I want, Mr. Mears," said Prinsett, when the lawyer had finished reading. "The law certainly does know how to give the right phrasing to a thing, don't it?"

"I think so," answered Mears. "Just glance that over. With its big print and flourished signatures and official seal it ought to be enough to convince you yourself that you're divorced from Amelia whatever-her-name-was, let alone a little woman who would n't ever read farther than the big printed heading."

Prinsett took the paper from the lawyer eagerly. "She's cute enough, though," he said. "That's why I did n't dare write up a paper for her myself. This 'll do the business and no mistake."

He placed the document carefully in a pocket inside his coat and drew forth a fat wallet. He pulled his chair close to the desk and proceeded to count out a thousand dollars in fifty-dollar bills.

"There," he said, pushing the pile towards Mears. "It's a high price, but I had to have it."

Mears counted the bills and thrust them into his own pocketbook. "Wish you a happy little honeymoon with Mrs. Prinsett number two," he said. "Come round again when you're ready for number three."

Prinsett forced a smile at the pleasantry. "And a receipt?" he asked.

Mears shook his head. "Oh, no, I don't give any receipts. We trust each other here; it's the safer plan."

He rose as though to end the interview.

"One moment, Mr. Mears," said his client. "You know that paper I signed the other day, with the young man outside as a witness. Well, I can trust you, but I'd like to hold some collateral against his acting straight. D'ye think that for, say, a twenty-dollar bill, you could give me something that would make me easy on that score?"

Mears's lips twitched with amusement. He liked to deal with a man who was a coward. "You mean Edward?" he asked. "Well, perhaps you're right. It pays to be on the safe side nowadays." He unlocked the private drawer again and fumbled among some papers. At last he drew one out, glanced it over, and tossed it across to Prinsett. "That'll tell you how he was suspected of robbing the till of a grocery store in Jersey before he came to New York. You can copy it down now if you want to take the trouble."

Prinsett picked up a pen and wrote out what was on the paper. "Just in case of an emergency, you know," he said apologetically. When he had finished Mears replaced the paper in the drawer and locked it. Prinsett handed him a twenty-dollar bill.

With the two papers safe in his pocket Prinsett beat a retreat to the door. Much to his disgust, Mears followed him through the outer office, where Carson sat busily reading, and even saw him safely into the elevator.

Mears came back and steadily regarded his studious clerk. Carson looked innocence itself. Mears burst into a laugh. "That's a rum customer, Eddie," he exclaimed. "He was trying to get me to give him something that he could use against you if you took a fancy to follow him up. Now, I should n't wonder if he'd been sounding you about me before I came in."

Carson looked his surprise.

"Well, how about it? Did he offer you a price for a little statement?"

"Yes," answered Carson.

Mears's smile changed to a threatening frown.

"Well, what did you do?"

"I could n't name a figure that would pay me to turn traitor," came the cool answer. "That's where we split."

"Umph!" said Mears. "That's right, my boy. I should n't wonder if next month I could manage to give you a little raise in your salary."

VI.

FATE was a bit hard on Carson shortly after that. He laid the blame for his next lapse from virtue on the beauty of the Saturday afternoon. The month was May, the weather warm and cajoling, and Milly had blossomed out in a delicious, summery mauve gown and a tilted hat that appealed to Carson's artistic senses. He took her for a walk in the Park, which was innocent enough, but as they came slowly back home he would stop at cafés now and again, which may have been a polite attention on his part, but which was not quite so innocent. Milly had the good judgment to order lemonade, but Carson, his spirits rising with the breath of spring in the air, preferred more stimulating beverages. May, according to his statement, was the month when mint juleps reach their full perfection, and he proceeded to test the statement so fully that by the time they had reached a café on Sixth Avenue, near their homes, Carson had blossomed out into something of a poet. To them, in this café, appeared a mutual acquaintance, one Tom Shallcross. Shallcross was also an admirer of Milly, and, impressed even as Carson had been, by the beauty of her new costume, he proposed a little stroll down the Avenue.

Out of doors Carson found himself cut out conversationally by Shallcross, and to cheer himself began to sing. Almost before he knew it a black-browed policeman ordered him to "quit that noise." Instead he sang louder.

"You quit it or I'll run you in," announced the officer of the law.

Milly started to lay a restraining hand on Carson's arm, but Tom urged her away. "He's tight as a loon," said he. "It'll simply make things ugly for you, Milly. Leave him to get out of it by himself."

She hesitated.

"Come along with me," Tom continued; "he's better off by himself. I've got a scheme for to-night I want to tell you about; don't be a fool, Milly."

He drew her arm through his and led her away.

Carson did not notice the desertion, because he was busily engaged in attempting to fix his eyes on the officer's, and to make a speech to explain why every free-born American citizen was entitled to sing whenever and wherever he pleased.

The officer's brow darkened and he broke into the speech with a "See here, you young feller," when a new-comer stepped up to him.

"Which way is Sixtieth Street?"

Carson stopped trying to talk and turned around. Rhoda Jennings was standing back of him. Slowly her eyes came to his face.

"Oh, is it you, Mr. Carson?" she said, with a smile of recognition. "I've lost my way. Which direction is Mrs. Pidgeon's from here?"

Carson swept off his hat with a bow, and promptly forgot all about the officer.

"S'pose I show you," said he. "I was going myself. Hello! what's become of the others?"

He looked carefully about him, then laughed good-humoredly. "Never mind, two's plenty, three's a crowd. 'Tis n't far now to Mrs. Pidgeon's. Right about face."

Something in the English girl's quiet manner tended to sober Carson. She talked steadily about what she had been doing all day and kept her eyes straight in front of her. She did not tell him that she had seen him walking ahead of her with his two companions, had seen them leave him to his fate, and had herself interfered only when she became certain that the policeman was on the point of arresting him.

It required some little nerve and skill on her part to steer him straight to Mrs. Pidgeon's door; there were several attractions to be passed on the way there. Finally, however, she brought him into the front hall and had the satisfaction of seeing him sit quietly down upon a sofa.

"Now you play the piano for me and I'll sing," he suggested.

"I'll play," she agreed, "but don't you sing. You might bring the other people in to listen."

He laughed as though at a good joke, and walked into the little sitting-room. Rhoda sat down at the piano and played some soft, old-fashioned English melodies Carson had never heard. The warm spring air coming in at the half open window made him sleepy, and when Rhoda finally swung round on the piano stool she found the youth gently slumbering in his chair.

She rose and stood a moment looking down at him, a perplexed frown on her pretty forehead. Then she closed the window softly and tiptoed out of the room, shutting the door behind her.

VII.

MR. MEARS possessed the rare art of keeping people guessing. He could even surprise Carson by his frequent changes of manner, becoming mellow and genial ten minutes after an outrageous loss of

temper. This flexibility of mood gave a spice to life in his office, which was not unlike existence very near the crater of Vesuvius; when the times were propitious no habitation could be so cheerful in the sun, when unpropitious no home be made more uneasy by subterranean murmurs.

The lawyer liked Carson in his way; he detected in him the making of a man after his own heart, one who would look upon human nature as his proper prey, to be held up and forced to disgorge according to the mediæval customs of the highwayman. Mears had spent many days in contemplation of the problem of how most successfully to fleece the public, how to make them exchange something for nothing, and his natural aptitude in that direction had been strengthened and invigorated by what he had learned of the methods of high finance. Whenever he thought of it he made a point of calling Carson's attention to some particularly brilliant coup that a manipulator of great business interests had achieved, and proceeded to dissect the result into its inherent parts of subterfuge, bribery, and temerity. He believed thoroughly in the survival of the fittest, the latter term standing for the most unscrupulous. He had begun by organizing a company to sell books composed of Biblical gems, through the agency of working girls, who had to deposit ten dollars at the time they became canvassers for the gems, and who never sold any copies, and he had risen to the dignity of running an organized office of blackmail on a truly magnificent scale. Carson was right when he considered Mears a man of unusual talent.

"Come into my office, Edward," said Mears one May morning. "I want a few words with you. This is an uncertain world, and in the words of a great author, 'You never can tell.' Therefore there are some things I feel that you should know."

Mears was in one of his most delightful moods, humorous, tinged with a slight restrained sarcasm. Carson closed the inner door and prepared to enjoy the wisdom of the master.

"You may have noticed that we are living in a fitful climate," resumed Mears, "subject to occasional breezes of what the newspapers call investigation and business men call public prudishness. It is conceivable that some day this climate may affect my constitution, and I may feel the need of foreign air. There are certain little business deals in which I am interested that may require the inspection of some of the wise men at Albany. Should that happen, I will leave the office in your care, confident of your ability to represent me worthily."

He bit off the end of a cigar. "The wise man foresees all contingencies. Therefore I am thinking of the possible destination of my safe." He swung around as though to apostrophize the big black

object. "There lie hidden papers that, properly handled, used with delicate skill, would prove invaluable. Corporations, partnerships, men, women, yes, and even little children might be affected by any one who had the knowledge of the ciphers or who could puzzle them out. By the word 'affected' I mean touched, seriously touched."

Carson smiled his appreciation of the jest.

"Every one is n't as easy as that fat Englishman who wanted to fake his divorce. Watch him, Edward; wait till he's made his pile, and brought up a family of respectable young ones. Meantime, if, as I say, I should find myself in need of foreign travel I feel that you could appreciate my sentiments towards that safe better than any one else I know."

He unlocked his private desk drawer and took out the paper concerning Carson's own past history.

"I'm going to make you a little present. Here's the statement of your part in robbing that grocery till in Merchantville. I'm going to tear it up and give you a bit of advice. Send the grocer the amount of the sum you took in a money order from the main post office in New York and keep the receipt. It's an old affair, and he'll never follow it up. Some day, though, it may be just as well if you can show you sent the money back."

"Thanks, Mr. Mears; I will."

Mears tore the paper into tiny pieces and threw them into the waste-basket.

"That's about all, Edward, except that if you keep your head and don't hunger too much after the bucket shops I think you'll do. You're not so dumb as you look."

Mears struck a match and held it to his cigar in token that the audience was ended.

That little interview gave Carson much cause for reflection. Might he not be on the point of stepping into Mears's shoes and running the business virtually as its head. He considered the many lucrative avenues that led away from the centre of Mears's offices, and thought of several by-paths which might be profitably explored. He conceived a close working partnership with the attendants at the various hospitals which might result in a trust in accidents. He imagined the formation of a people's loan company in which the deposits might be used for marginal stock speculation. Truth to tell, he could have given even Mears some points on how to decoy flies into the spider's web on the sixth floor of the Markheim Building; if Mears had talent, Carson had a positive genius for conceiving plots levelled against other people's pocketbooks. It was merely the way his surroundings had trained a naturally ardent imagination.

One thing at that time annoyed him. He could not think with

any pleasure of the end of that previous Saturday afternoon. He realized that after a fashion the new girl at Mrs. Pidgeon's had helped him out of a scrape, and he did not like that feeling of indebtedness. Milly or most of his other friends would have chaffed him about it, and so blown the incident away, but Rhoda Jennings did not mention it to him in any way, and he had the feeling that she was resolutely trying to forget it. The result was that he felt a certain diffidence towards her that piqued even while it interested him. "She does n't know the real me," he thought to himself, and was surprised to find how secretly glad he was that she did not.

During the succeeding week mysterious callers increased in Mears's office, and the lawyer grew more and more petulant and disagreeable. Carson felt that there was something untoward in the air. Then came a day when Mears locked himself in his inner office from nine until five, and when he came out Carson smelt the odor of burnt paper. Next day when Carson let himself into the office he found a note lying on his desk:

Doctor advises an immediate change of air. Use the safe carefully. Combination number 93-3-16-4-27-x.

Edward stuck the note in his pocket and gave vent to a long resounding whistle.

"Cleared out!" he exclaimed. "I'll bet it was pretty bad! He did n't even pay me the week's salary, the old rapscaillon! Never mind, I can do better than that now."

He entered Mears's room and sat down at his desk; he ran through the drawers and helped himself to a pocketful of cigars. He glanced at the safe in the corner. "I'll make somebody pay me that check before many days," he said, and, calling up his friend of the bucket shop, told him to buy fifty Asphodel Common. That done he lighted a cigar and proceeded to consider the situation. "I should n't wonder," he finally concluded, "if this would really be the making of me. Three years in a lawyer's office is just about enough. It's time I took to doing something better."

It gave Carson an unwonted feeling of importance to lock the outer door of the office of Arthur E. Mears, Attorney-at-law, at twelve of the clock, pocket the key, and push the button for the elevator. He bestowed one of the attorney's cigars on the elevator boy, and told him that all people seeking Mr. Mears were to be informed that he was out of town on important business.

The world looked very fair from the doorstep of the Markheim Building, a world full of sport and adventure basking in the May sun. The young man stood for a few moments to watch the stream of people hurrying by, to smile at three girls who came out of the

building next door, to inspect with the eye of a connoisseur a big Mercedes car that stood panting beside the curb. He tilted his hat a trifle to one side, took a deep puff at his cigar, and dived into the throng. He had decided to take a few days' holiday.

On the next block he met "Piggy" Andrews, and invited him to lunch. "Piggy" was fat, and ill-dressed, and always down on his luck, but Carson was in such fine spirits that he expanded with charity. He set "Piggy" up to an excellent repast in a German beer-cellar, soused pig's feet and cabbage, and the Münchener "Piggy" loved so dearly. The guest ate and drank with a noisy, whole-souled ardor, while Carson expounded to him a plan by which he could make his six dollars wages per week quadruple themselves by investing in copper stocks. "Piggy" had no head for figures, no soul for finance, all that he cared about was food and drink, but his little blue eyes looked over at Carson with the admiration due from mediocrity to genius, and so Carson felt himself repaid.

After lunch they returned to Broadway, and Carson walked with "Piggy" to the store where the latter worked. Then, having plenty of time on his hands, it occurred to Carson to hunt up the English girl and invite her to go out to the Park.

Rhoda was at home, and seemed glad of the chance for an outing. Mrs. Jennings, a pale, tired-eyed woman with a gentle voice and manner, assured her daughter she could spare her, and, having looked Carson over with a somewhat critical eye, concluded he was probably neither a brigand nor a thief, but an ordinarily innocent young man. A short time later Mrs. Pidgeon's two youngest boarders were wandering in the glades of Central Park.

The Park was the nearest approach to open country that Rhoda had seen since she left the coast of England, and, filled with her native love of the outdoor world, her spirits rose like those of a skylark freed from a cage. To Carson the country meant simply a contrast to the city, to Rhoda it stood for all that was free and natural in the world; she bloomed in it and stretched her arms out in delight to the trees and flowers. Carson looked on admiringly. "Great, isn't it?" said he, noting the fresh color in her cheeks. "Makes you just glad to be alive, does n't it—Rhoda?" The last word came a bit hesitatingly.

She laughed, a little tremble in her voice. She was glad to be with this much alive boy friend of hers, and she could not find it in her heart to object to his using her name. She felt that they had really known each other a long time, almost as long as she had known the trees and flowers.

"Oh, I'm so glad to be out here!" she exclaimed, and then added, "It was very good of you to think of it, Edward."

He liked his name on her lips; he could not recall that it had ever sounded so well before.

An idea occurred to her. "How did you manage to get away from the office?" she asked.

He made a little motion of dissent. "Wait till we've walked a little farther and come to a bench. It's a shame to mix shop with this gorgeous afternoon. You tell me the names of the flowers. I don't believe I know anything but roses and violets."

She told him her stock of knowledge, gave him a score of secrets she had learned at home, described with the intimate knowledge of one who had always lived with green growing things. He heard her with admiration; he could not help wondering if any New York girl knew as much.

In time they found a bench and took possession of it. It was now Carson's turn to talk, but he had to fortify himself with a cigarette before he could make the sudden change from things natural to things sordid. Then he launched his bark into mid-stream.

"Mears has gone away, maybe for a long time, and I've got to fend for myself. He left me what you might call a little legacy. He's kept in his safe for years notes about different people, shady things they've done that they would n't want other people to know about. He's made a mint of money holding some of that information over their heads. He told me something about it before he left, and said I could use the safe as I thought best. He gave me a slip of paper with the combination. It may turn out a gold mine, or it may not, but it's worth trying. All I have to do is to be careful and study the papers and the people. I should n't wonder if I could turn it to good account. Perhaps it's a start on the road to making money, real money, Rhoda, not little dribblets, but a good big haul."

He put his hand in his pocket and drew out the folded paper, with the combination. "Mears was n't so mean as some people think."

Rhoda's gray eyes were looking into the trees across the path. Carson watched her in silence a minute.

"What do you think of the situation, partner?"

She took time to reply. "I don't know very much about business," she said slowly, "but I can't help feeling that this is n't fair. I may be wrong; what do you think, Edward?"

"Well," he said in a spirit of temporizing, "you see, these people put themselves in the wrong first. They all did things they would n't want to have known. The responsibility's on their own heads. It's a good business proposition to use that hold over them. That's the way business is run; sharp practice is at the bottom of it all."

"Is it fair?" she asked.

"It's business," he answered doggedly. "We all have to live."

"It seems as though men had made a god out of what they call business," she commented, "and that it was different from any other god. I've heard the men at Mrs. Pidgeon's talk about it just as you do, Edward." She was very much afraid of hurting him. "Surely it is n't fair to take advantage of other people's mistakes."

He laughed lightly. "Why, Rhoda, that's what the very biggest men do, the railroad kings and directors of companies."

She turned to him abruptly. "Think of the people whose secrets are hidden in that safe, think of their families, who may know nothing about it. Is n't it fairer to let the old stories lie?"

"Well——" he began, glancing at her; but he could not look her squarely in the eyes, and turned away. "I don't know but what there's something in that. Out here in the Park it does seem so, but down on Wall Street it would n't. People have to play the game, you know."

She had the feeling that perhaps life had not been altogether fair to this boy friend of hers. She thought of the afternoon when she had seen him with his two companions, and the recollection that she must deal very gently with his manifold temptations swept across her. She felt years older than he, much clearer-sighted.

"Are n't we more apt to be right out here than indoors, Edward?" she asked. "If a thing does n't seem fair here, why should it when you're in town? Would n't you feel better if you did n't open that safe?"

He thought over her words for some time. "Perhaps I would now," he said, "but I've got to think of to-morrow."

His words had a ring of finality that seemed to put an end to their argument, and the girl turned again to look into the trees opposite them. She felt that it might be she knew very little concerning this friend of hers.

Five minutes later she rose, saying that they must be going home. Carson rose, too, but instead of turning into the path he stood still.

"See here, Rhoda," he said abruptly, "I'm not a quitter when I'm beaten. Somehow I think you're right, and if I think that, it's up to me to pay my score. Here"—he held out the paper with the combination written on it.

"Oh, please don't do it because I asked you to."

"You did n't ask me to, but I know what you think, and you're right. I'll never open that safe of Mears's. Look here." He tore the paper into a hundred pieces and scattered them on the path. Then he laughed with a suddenly buoyant, very boyish note.

"There's nothing like being reckless. I feel as if I'd bet the limit on two pairs."

Rhoda smiled. She felt that she could trust him to do the right thing after all if he had the chance.

They walked back through the Park, both thrilling to the touch of the May madness, their eyes catching the glow of the sunset through the trees.

VIII.

AFTER the battle comes the cost of struggle. Carson awoke the next morning to lie staring at the monotonous white ceiling and wonder if he had not played the rôle of a thoroughly sentimental jackass. He had the uncomfortable feeling that he was on the road to become quite too good to live, that if he continued to indulge in these moral acts he must inevitably go the way of a Sunday-school-book hero. Worse than that, he foresaw that he would lose the respect of his companions and be forgotten by the younger world of Broadway. They would refer to him as a man who had had great possibilities to make a success, but who was too goody-good to take the chance. All this price he felt that he might have to pay because he had thought of what a girl wished him to do rather than of what was best for him to do. He liked girls, he was n't ashamed to admit that to himself, even as he lay staring at the ceiling, but he abhorred the thought that any woman should warp his business judgment. "I might as well be married," he moaned, and then added reflectively, "only if I were I would n't be so apt to play the fool."

Gradually he summed up the extent of his folly: he had destroyed the memorandum of the combination without having committed its secret to memory; he had shut the door on obtaining papers which might have netted him a tidy profit, which would have offered him a good gambler's chance, to say the least. As a result he was out of his old job, and saw nothing new lying ready to his hand. He might have to begin all over again and work up. He knew he had sufficient brains to get a small position in a store or office, but that was not what he wanted. "If I only had the capital," he said, "I'd turn broker on my own account, but I have n't. What shall I do?"

In time he had to rise and dress. The clock was striking ten when he went down-stairs. He was too late for the boarding-house breakfast, so he went to a lunch stand and drank a cup of coffee, glanced over a morning paper, and finally took the subway down-town. As luck would have it, Mr. Prinsett stepped into the car at the next station.

The sight of Mr. Prinsett started Carson on a new line of thought. Here was a man who was apparently making money; he could afford to pay Mears a thousand dollars for a sham divorce. How was he making so much money? The more Carson thought about it, the

more convinced he became that he was entitled to know something about the source of Prinsett's income, and even to receive a small share of that income in return for what he knew. He had thrown away all the other chances Mears had offered him, but he decided that here was one he would not discard; he would follow this trail for a time.

When Prinsett left the car at City Hall Square Carson did the same. He followed him up the stairs and down Broadway at a discreet distance. When he finally turned in at a large office building Carson entered also and gave a hasty glance at the room directory. Among the P's he found "Prinsett, Joseph," and made a note of the number. Three minutes later he went up in the elevator.

On the sixteenth floor he found the number he sought. The door bore the imposing sign "National Non-Refillable Bottle Company," and below, in the right-hand corner, "Joseph Prinsett, President." Carson opened the door and stepped in. The office was large and well-furnished, an inner door bore the legend "Private," at a typewriter's desk sat a young woman busily clicking the keys.

"Mr. Prinsett in?" inquired Carson.

The young woman looked up. "I'll see. Who shall I say wants to see him?"

"A man from Mr. Mears's office, on a matter of business."

The stenographer knocked at the private door, listened, opened it, and disappeared. Almost immediately she came back and told Carson that Mr. Prinsett would see him.

The President of the National Non-Refillable Bottle Company was seated at his desk, opening a great pile of mail. He glanced at Carson as the latter pulled a chair forward and sat down.

"Oh, to be sure, you're Mr. Mears's young man. Let me see—the name escapes me."

"Edward Carson."

"Right, quite right. Let me see, the last time we met you were considering whether you could get me a few facts about—well, about Mr. Mears, was n't that it?"

Prinsett spoke with the preoccupied air of a man who had innumerable important matters on his mind.

"Mr. Mears has left town for a little while; his office is temporarily closed."

"Dear me, that's too bad," said Prinsett. "What may the matter be?"

"Health," said Carson succinctly. "He'd worked too hard and needed rest. That's why I came to see you."

Prinsett gave his caller more attention. "What can I do for you?"

"Well," began Carson, "you see Mr. Mears's going away has thrown

me out of my job. I'm looking for another, and thought perhaps you might have a place for a clever young man."

"I'm very sorry, but I don't need any one here at present. I can tend to all the work with my present force."

Carson let his eyes roam over the well-furnished room, the heavy mahogany desk, the soft Brussels carpet, and so back to Prinsett's face.

"I'd like to have a try," said he. "You'll find I'm quick enough. I should n't wonder if I could help you considerably."

Prinsett shook his head. "I know you're clever, but I positively don't need any one."

Now Carson's black eyes, keen with a new light, looked full into Prinsett's. "I think you'd better consider it, Mr. Prinsett."

Prinsett rose and shut the door into the outer room.

"Why had I better consider it?" he asked, returning.

"Mrs. Prinsett might prefer that you should."

Prinsett gave a short, ridicule-laden laugh.

"Stuff and nonsense! What possible interest could my wife take in this?"

"Your wife?" echoed Carson. "I thought I only mentioned Mrs. Prinsett."

"Well," gasped the other man, "is n't she one and the same person?"

Carson executed a neat strategic move. "Is she?" he asked.

Prinsett's heavy face turned from red to purple, from purple to a disagreeable blue; he looked dangerously near to apoplexy.

"You young cub!" he exclaimed. "Do you dare to come into my office and insult me to my face? I'll have——"

Carson interrupted. "I'm no coward," he said sharply. "What I intend to do is to make good. I think we understand each other now. You can make a good guess at the sort of hand I hold, but if you think I'm bluffing call me. I don't mind a show-down in the least."

Prinsett gasped and gulped, and his eyes almost popped from his head in the extremity of his indignation. Carson let him take all the time he wanted for physical exercise. After a while Prinsett regained his voice.

"I've never seen such a thorough-going scamp in my life," he said, his voice breaking with emotion.

Carson was tempted to answer, "Then look in the mirror," but he kept his tongue quiet and simply smiled.

"A man who would deliberately come into my office and threaten to blackmail me in regard to my very marriage," continued Prinsett more deliberately, "would be capable of doing anything!"

"That's why I want a position in the National Non-Refillable Bottle Company," answered Carson.

"I could have you put in jail," returned Prinsett, thinking of the paper he had copied in Mears's office.

"The jail's big enough for two," replied Carson lightly. "I studied the terms of prison service in the criminal code when I was a clerk. That for bigamy is n't one of the shortest."

"You——" began Prinsett, turning purple again, but Carson thought that the scene had lasted long enough, and rose abruptly, interrupting Prinsett.

"I don't want to hurry you. Think it over; I'll come back in a day or two." He moved to the door, but Prinsett, with a great gulp that nearly strangled him, conquered his outraged feelings.

"Hold on, come back; we may as well settle this now. If it'll keep your cursed tongue from wagging, I'll find a place for you here, whether I want you or not."

Carson walked back to the desk. "Thank you, sir. I don't think you'll regret it. It's much pleasanter to be friends, and I should n't wonder if I could be of some help."

Prinsett considered. "I'll start you at fifteen dollars a week, and if you increase the business I'll pay you more. I'm too busy now to explain the work to you. Call to-morrow at half after nine." He picked up his letter-cutter and ripped open some envelopes viciously.

Carson understood that he was dismissed and walked jauntily out of the private office. He stopped in the big waiting-room long enough to take a good look at the stenographer, under pretext of helping himself to a glass of water. He decided that although she was totally lacking in style, he might find her passably entertaining company.

Outside he stared at the labelled door for a minute. "The old fellow's business must be good," he murmured, "or he would n't have got into such a stew over that affair. I don't believe he cares to travel for his health like Mears; he'd rather be let stay right here in New York. That means business."

IX.

LIFE flowed smoothly for Carson after he found his new berth with the National Non-Refillable Bottle Company. The building which housed the bottle company's office, the Equity Building, was much more imposing and more centrally located than the Markheim Building had been. Carson felt a distinct satisfaction in entering its lofty portals and in referring to it in conversation with his friends. Naturally sanguine, the youth's spirits soared as spring advanced temperately into summer, and the life of the pavements became

more and more seductive. He spent a considerable portion of his time with Rhoda, finding that she had a quiet sense of humor that was often more entertaining than Milly's exuberant bursts of mirth, and that she could charm him with her naïve frankness as she grew to know him better, in a way essentially different from that of the immense sophistication common to all his former girl friends. The time came when he would hurry home from the office in order to take a short stroll with her in the twilight, and when he would stay at Mrs. Pidgeon's for dinner so that he might admire the back of her pretty head as she sat with her mother at a table beyond him in the dining-room. He also liked to hear her sing "Oh, you'll tak' the high road" and "Annie Laurie" at the old piano, and frequented music stores to buy her old Scotch ballads. About this time the annual fever for verse-making came upon him, and he scribbled poetry in his spare hours down-town and by his open window after the rest of the boarding-house had gone to bed. The verses were beautiful as they flowed from his pen, but although he often planned to show them to Rhoda, he never did. Perhaps he was afraid of the imp of mischief that often looked out from the corners of her gray eyes, or the little laugh that occasionally followed one of his fleeting bursts of eloquence.

Of course a new girl was simply an episode in Carson's life; he knew that as regularly as summer came to Broadway he should fall before a new divinity, and so he calmly assured himself that he was not in love. He did not, however, mention Rhoda to his friends, which was rather strange in a youth as loquacious as he, accustomed to open his soul to romance as naturally as a flower opens its petals to the sun. He somehow put Rhoda away in a little world by herself, and this seclusion, with its ineffable charm of aloofness, served to heighten his eagerness to be with her. He felt that he owned a little Paradise with a private key thereto.

Mrs. Jennings's search for her husband was not succeeding; she studied the directories for men of her name, but all to no avail; Carson followed each clue, only to find that each Jennings he met bore no resemblance to the one wanted. He was secretly convinced that the English woman would never find her husband. It was his opinion that the man had either met with an accident and disappeared or preferred to keep himself out of sight. Meanwhile, however, Carson was not at all loathe to have Mrs. Jennings remain and tend her flame of hope.

So June arrived in New York, and on the first Saturday Rhoda had agreed to meet Carson downtown for lunch and go for a walk in the afternoon. He took her to a quiet little restaurant and found

a table partly screened by palms. There was a high color in her cheeks, an unwonted sparkle in her eyes at the adventure of lunching away from Mrs. Pidgeon's and among a new class of people. Carson was enchanted with her evident delight; he became solicitous that she should lunch on her favorite dishes; he inspected the menu with the care of a connoisseur, and gave the waiter directions as to how each order should be served.

"Bouillon, cold; lobster cutlets with peas and that yellow sauce; pineapple salad, and be careful of the dressing; Roquefort cheese and toasted crackers, the heavy kind; and two demi-tasses." He leaned back and glanced across at Rhoda. "How's that?"

"Oh, Edward," she said beamingly, as the waiter departed, "it is the jolliest little luncheon!"

Carson patted the new black and white striped waistcoat which he was wearing for the first time, and returned the beam of delight. "We'll have to lunch together often this summer, Rhoda," said he. "It would n't be much of a spree if you were n't here to enjoy it."

The lunch was served and duly appreciated; they came to the coffee and paused over it to prolong the sense of satisfaction. Carson glanced about the room and then looked back at Rhoda.

"Over there in the far corner, back of that pink plant, is my boss, old man Prinsett, with his wife. He is n't much to look at, but she's not so bad. Rather sweet-faced, I think. She came down to the office this morning in his new electric runabout and carried him off with her to do some shopping. See the ones I mean?"

Rhoda, screened by the palms, followed Carson's glance across the room. Suddenly she started. "Why," she cried, "that man over there! Why, he's——" She checked herself. "What did you say about the woman?"

"She's his wife, Mrs. Prinsett," said Carson. He glanced at Rhoda and was startled to find her almost as white as the tablecloth. "Why, Rhoda, what's the matter? Seen a ghost?"

The girl still stared at the couple across the room. "No," she said; "not a ghost. That man's my father!"

"What!" Carson was dumfounded, altogether at a loss for words.

"My father," she repeated through dry lips, "my own father, Joseph Jennings."

"Whew!" whistled Carson. "Well, I'll be hanged! The old——"

The girl turned back to their own table, her eyes, as by great force of will, fixing themselves on Carson's. "They're leaving now," she said. "I don't think I'll speak to him. Talk to me quickly about anything."

Carson was equal to the emergency; he bent forward and poured forth a stream of disconnected sentences while Rhoda examined the

coffee cup in front of her. This lasted for two minutes, then she gave a quick glance up, and a sigh of relief followed. "They're gone. Oh, Edward, Edward, what shall I do?"

Carson thought quickly. "Try a little brandy first," he suggested. She shook her head. "Oh, to think that I should find him so! It's too horrible, too awful! Oh, it can't be true! Edward, tell me that it is n't true!"

A great wave of pity flooded the youth; he felt almost sick as he looked at the poor girl, wide-eyed, choking back her tears.

"Wait," he said, "until we've had time to think. Then I'll try and explain everything I know about him. There may be some mistake." In the bottom of his heart he was convinced that there was no mistake.

So they sat in silence until Rhoda was tided over the first rough shock of feeling. When he saw that she was more controlled, he suggested that they go back to Mrs. Pidgeon's.

"No," she said; "I want to hear everything now. I must know how I am to act towards mother."

As gently as he could, Carson told her all that he knew, never looking at her until his account was finished.

When he was through he glanced up and found the girl's eyes looking straight into his. From that moment he worshipped her as the bravest person he had ever seen. His tribute was her due. She was brave when she felt suddenly as though there was nothing good or true left in the world. The youth, looking into her eyes, had seen the dull, stricken anguish of a gentle spirit wounded to the quick and then the resurrection of that spirit braver than before. He had seen a courage of a sort that he had not known existed. He was suddenly reverent before it; he could have bowed his head with a mingling of pity and wild admiration.

"Rhoda!" he exclaimed, and instinctively his hand reached across the table towards hers. She placed her hand in his, without a trace of self-consciousness in the simple act, and let it rest there a moment. Her eyes were shining with tears she would not shed—eyes suddenly new to the youth across from her.

She withdrew her hand, and turned her head slightly towards the window. Carson saw the quiver in her lips that she was trying so hard to hide.

"Never mind, Rhoda," he said; "it sounds pretty bad, but we'll get even with him yet!"

A faint smile shone in her eyes as she turned again towards him. "I was n't thinking of him," she answered, "just then. I was thinking of my mother."

Carson had a vision of the pale-faced, tired-eyed woman at Mrs.

Pidgeon's, who had come so far to find her husband and who must now find that he was worse than dead to her. For the first time life appeared to him as something remarkably complex, difficult beyond conception.

Again he looked at Rhoda, and again his admiration of her leaped high. It was beyond words, it was not even definable thought; it was his nature's tribute to instinctive courage.

In time they left the restaurant and went home. Few words passed between them. Rhoda had too much to think out concerning her mother; Carson felt that anything he could say would be out of place. They parted in silence, with only a shake of the hand.

Later when he contemplated the situation, Carson found himself in two minds, debating whether it would be wiser to advise Mrs. Jennings to have her husband immediately arrested on a charge of bigamy, or, in view of his business position, to effect a quiet understanding, by which he might be made to support his wife and daughter fittingly, living with them or not, as they wished, but giving up the present Mrs. Prinsett. In the one case, he would only get his deserts in the penitentiary, but they might starve during his term there; in the other case, a convenient stick could be held over his head to insure them a good home. To judge from the money Prinsett was spending, the home ought to be very good. After a lengthy consideration, he finally decided that the better course would be quietly to readjust the situation without throwing away all material consolation.

The following day was Sunday, and, contrary to his long-standing custom, Carson appeared at breakfast. Both Miss Anatole and Mr. Sturm indulged in humorous suggestions that his health must be impaired, and that he was preparing to become a saint, but a forced smile was all the reply the young man made to their advances. He was watching the back of Rhoda's head, and wondering how she had broken the news to her mother. He had a word or two with Mrs. Jennings in the hall, as she and Rhoda were about to start to church, and was very much surprised to find her outwardly as calm as ever. He wondered if Rhoda could have postponed telling her, but decided that she was too brave a girl to put off an unpleasant duty.

The day passed slowly for Carson; he did not like to run away from Mrs. Pidgeon's and enjoy himself as he usually did on Sundays, with a few cronies. He felt that his aid might be needed at any moment, and that absence would imply a form of treason to the two women he was protecting. In the afternoon he borrowed a detective story from Mr. Sturm, and sprawled comfortably on the sofa in the sitting-room. He was deep in the mystery when Rhoda came into the room and asked him if he would take a short walk with her. He closed the book with a bang and accepted eagerly.

When they were out of doors he waited for her to open the subject. This she did almost immediately.

"I've been thinking very hard," she said, "all yesterday afternoon, and all last night, and in church this morning."

He noticed that she was very pale and that her eyes were blue-rimmed and tired.

"I've been thinking hard, too," he said.

"What did you decide?" she asked.

"That there are two things to do: give him up, and let him take the consequences, or—and I think this would be the better way—let me reach an understanding with him, by which he'll not lose all the money he's making and will give you and your mother what you're entitled to. He's on the road to a fortune—I've seen enough of him to know that much—and can give you a home of your own, here or in England, and a great many things you've never had before."

Rhoda was silent for a few moments.

"Is the other woman," she asked finally, "bad?"

Carson shook his head. "No, I don't think she is. He told Mears that she knew he was married, and that was why he had to get the fake divorce. She's simply been his dupe."

"Poor soul," said Rhoda, "poor soul; she had a nice face. She doesn't know what sort of a man he is."

"Lots of people are living on volcanoes," commented Carson.

"Poor woman! And to think that he was my own dear father!"

"Yes, it's hard on her, but then it's hard on everybody concerned. It's lucky I'm in a place where I can bring it home to him." He waited a moment. "I'll make him settle for this, trust me, Rhoda; I'll make him care for you and your mother."

They had walked another block before Rhoda spoke again; she was thinking deeply. "I've made up my mind," she announced suddenly: "we'll let him alone."

Carson stared. "What!"

"Let him alone," she repeated tersely.

Carson thought quickly. "You mean that you're thinking of that other woman?"

"No, I'm thinking of my mother. It would break her heart."

The young man drew a deep breath.

"You mean that he shan't know you've found him out; that he can go on living this way and that you two, poor as you are, won't make him give you a cent?"

"I'm not thinking of him. He's gone. I don't care what happens to him. But my mother loves him, she thinks of him as a brave man who is somewhere over here trying to earn something to bring back to her, a sort of knight errant, devoted, true. All the

money in the world would n't make up for that belief; it's the dearest thing she has."

"Yes, I see."

"If she knew the truth, the shock might kill her; she would never be the same again. All her faith would be gone. It's better she should never know."

"And how will you live?"

"She would rather starve than know this about him. We have a little money; I can work."

"And pretend to keep up your search?"

"Yes, pretend. At least, we'll be searching for an honest man."

The decision gave them each food for silent consideration.

"I should never have thought of that," commented Carson, "if I had thought till Doomsday. I should have wanted to get even with him, or, at least, make him pay over what was yours by right. That seems the practical way, but I guess you're right. A woman, I suppose, would rather have her belief than know the truth. It seems queer, but I guess you're right."

"Yes, I am. I'm sure of it now." Her voice sank lower. "Poor mother, I'll have to be very careful with her now."

X.

No upheaval followed in the life at Pidgeon's. For a few hours Carson considered whether he should resign his position with the National Non-Refillable Bottle Company, but he concluded that his retaining his place was not disloyal to Rhoda or to her mother, and that by remaining he could at least assure himself that Joseph Prinsett should feel the pricks of an uneasy conscience. Personally, he considered the bottle company as likely to prove a good business proposition.

In some subtle way the secret that Rhoda and Carson now shared tended to draw them closer together. Perhaps the girl felt the need of a confidant more when she had to keep up pretenses with her mother. Edward was good to her, he was always at hand when she needed company, time and again he showed his admiration for her courage in little ways, and the tribute, coming to her in her loneliness, touched her immeasurably and won her thoughts to him as no words could ever have done.

From a distance, Milly O'Brien watched the career of her former ardent admirer. Stories of Carson and the pink-cheeked English girl came to her ears. She did not intend to give up her fight if she could help it, and she laid her plans to blast this undesirable friendship. According to her standards, all was fair in love and war, and this was war.

Carson was usually clever enough to be reticent, but he had once in an expansive moment related to Milly something of Rhoda's love of the open country. The thought stuck in Milly's brain, and when fine summer Sundays came and brought no Carson to her door she wondered if he were strolling through green fields with her English rival. By bribing one of the servants at Mrs. Pidgeon's, she kept in close touch with Rhoda Jennings's plans, and the day came when she learned that Rhoda had promised to go to Orange with Carson on the next Sunday and spend the day walking in the woods. Milly learned this on Wednesday; on Thursday she had perfected all her plans for a party, composed of the "old crowd," to go to a little inn down at Rockaway Beach and partake of a fish supper that Saturday night. She called Carson up on the telephone and invited him. Without much thought, he accepted.

At half past three o'clock on Saturday Milly and Carson met the rest of the party in the railroad train. There were four girls and four men. The girls were distinctly striking. The men were more than usually ornamental. The expedition started auspiciously.

The supper was to be the climax; before that there was bathing in the ocean, lounging on the beach, liquid refreshment to cool parched throats. Milly looked well in a bathing suit; so did the other girls. They left the swimming to the men and spent their time reclining on the sand and throwing a tennis ball about to the accompaniment of little shrieks.

The inn that Milly had chosen for her feast lived up to its reputation for bountiful hospitality. The eight had a room to themselves, and beguiled the time spent over the different courses with much singing and many pleasant stories. Half way through the supper a waiter placed a bowl of claret punch in the centre of the table, and the cheerful clink of the ice as it swam and ducked in the red sea called loudly to the diners. The punch was not as simple as it looked. Carson drank a great many glasses out of courtesy to his hostess. Once he remembered his engagement for early the next morning, and looked at his watch. It said half past ten.

"You're sure we can get a train back to-night, Milly?" he asked.

The girl beside him pouted. "It's rude to look at your watch in a lady's presence," she said. "Of course we can."

He put his watch away and drank another glass of punch. Jimmy Sickle was singing a new topical song, and Carson broke into the chorus, pounding on the table with a spoon.

Laughter grew louder and of easier cause; every one seemed only able to follow his or her own line of thought. Whenever Carson stopped talking, Milly, wise-eyed alone among her generation, filled his glass and pushed it to his hand. At last one of the men got up on

his feet, and proposed a dance down-stairs. They all struggled up, and again Carson grasped at a lucid thought.

"Where's the train?" he said. "Isn't it time to go back?"

"Train!" echoed one of the men. "Oh, forget the train!"

Carson clutched the arm of a waiter and said, "When's the train go back?"

The waiter looked at his watch.

"Eleven-thirty now, sir. Last one went fifteen minutes ago."

Carson rubbed his hot forehead with the back of his hand.

"That's queer. I've got to be going—I've got a date to keep. S'pose I can walk."

He was almost at the door when Milly threw her arms about him.

"Give me the first dance, Teddy!" she cried. "Then we'll all go home."

The supper party descended to the first floor to dance. One round of the room made Carson so dizzy that he could hardly stand. Jimmy Sickle came to his rescue and led him away to the bar.

"You need a bracer, old boy. It's all nonsense thinking of going home."

"I've got a date," remonstrated Carson.

Jimmy shoved a glass in front of him. "Forget it," he said laconically.

Ten minutes later Carson had forgotten everything, and was sleeping soundly on a window-seat. Evidently some one had foreseen such a contingency, because a little later considerate waiters carried three of the men upstairs to bed. Milly, almost as fresh as when she had left New York, sat with her arm about one of her girl friends.

"Is n't it a shame men will be such fools?" she said reflectively.

"Not one of the crowd will be worth talking to in the morning."

XI.

THE sun shone bright and warm above a summer sea that Sunday morning, but Carson viewed it with a troubled eye. Before any of the others of the party were rising he was trudging to the railroad station, his legs unsteady, his head throbbing with what seemed the incessant beat of piston-rods. But he was game to the core. He had risen as soon as his waking senses had allowed him to consider the situation, and had dressed and swallowed a cup of coffee with the air of a Spartan hero. He was going back to Mrs. Pidgeon's to attempt to brazen out the affair with Rhoda. That took considerable courage when his head ached with every motion he made.

The brightness of the sunshine burned his eyeballs, the jerkiness of the slow accommodation train made him writhe, each person who looked upon him he suspected of wondering at his dishevelled state.

Dressing had been a tragedy; his hair would not lie in place, his necktie would not twist into even a passable knot, his collar and cuffs were soiled. He who prided himself upon his immaculateness had fallen far; he realized how much he should have to dissemble if he were to succeed in carrying the matter off with Rhoda.

New York was oppressively hot. Carson took off his hat on the elevated and had started to fan himself with it before he realized that he was showing the whole world the rumpled state of his hair. He clapped his hat on, and fidgeted in his seat, planning the clever story that should be his excuse. His watch told him the hour was half past ten, and his engagement had been for nine o'clock.

The boarding-house looked reproachfully upon him as he faced it. His nerve was oozing at the thought of keeping up appearances for a whole day out-of-doors, but he crammed the thought away and bravely climbed the steps. He entered the hall, and, taking off his hat, mopped his forehead with his handkerchief. He heard some one playing in the parlor, and decided that it must be Rhoda. He hesitated a moment whether to fly or fight. Then he pushed through the curtains, his mouth drawn tight, to face the situation.

Rhoda sat at the piano; as he entered she turned and looked at him. He flushed and cleared his throat.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said. "I went out of town last night, and when I came to catch my train back I found they'd given me the wrong time-table. But it's not too late to go now—that is, if you'd like to."

He felt so shaky that he dropped into a chair.

"Are you sure that you want to go?" she asked.

He smiled weakly.

"Have n't you been expecting to go?" He pulled himself together. "Of course I want to."

"Yes, I've been looking forward to it," she said, "but I thought perhaps—well, that you might be too tired."

She did not meet his eyes directly, and he was thankful for that.

There followed a moment's pause, during which the girl made no offer to rise and Edward tried to steady his whirling head.

"Go get your hat, Rhoda," he said finally, with an effort. "It'll be pleasanter in the country."

She rose obediently and went up-stairs. Carson sought the dining-room, his throat craving a glass of water. When he returned Rhoda stood in the hall waiting for him, and the sight of her, fresh and radiant, from the pink rose that nodded in her lace hat to her bright tan shoes, gave him a new loathing for himself and his untidy state.

They started down the high front steps, but Carson found that he had overestimated his strength and underestimated the midsummer

heat of the sun. He grew faint and clutched at the hand-rail for support. Rhoda looked at his white face in alarm.

"What's the matter, Edward? Aren't you feeling well?"

He gritted his teeth, and made no answer.

"Come. It's too hot for the country. Come in and sit down." Her hand touched his arm as she turned towards the door. He made a final effort to throw off the growing dizziness and failed. He followed her in and sat down on the hall settee.

"Can I do anything for you?" she asked gently. "You don't look quite yourself. You ought to stay at home and rest."

He smiled wryly. "I guess the lobster last night was too much for me." She said nothing in answer, and he was emboldened to make another effort. It's an awfully mean trick on you, Rhoda. I know you've been counting on the flowers and the country to-day. I oughtn't to have gone last night; I ought to have made surer of that train."

"I know how it was, Edward," she replied. "I'm sure you tried to get here."

His light head made him incautious. "Then we had a big dinner, you see, and—well, we were all talking and laughing, and before I knew it I found it was much later than I thought, and the last train had gone."

The words were out before he realized that his two stories did not agree.

"I understand," she said. "Please don't talk about it any more."

"All right," he answered, but he knew that he had made the matter anything but clear, and he was determined to set it straight. He rose manfully.

"You see, it was——"

"Yes, I see." She made a gesture of protest. "Please, Edward——"

Again the dizziness overcame him, and he sank back on the settee. When he looked up at her later a bitter smile drew his lips apart. "Of course you see," he said. "Anybody could see, so what's the use of my lying any more? You'd better not trust to me again. I'm not worth trusting. Please go away. I'd rather be left alone."

He did not look up, but heard the rustle of her skirts as she slowly moved away. He did not know how much she longed to stay and comfort him, and that she did not only because she feared to hurt his feelings. After a long time he raised his eyes. He was alone in the hall, and felt as though he were entirely alone in the world. Rhoda's freshness appealed to him as the one clean, wholly desirable thing in an arid, wretched universe, and that he considered was now altogether beyond his reach.

XII.

It was at least a week before Carson appreciably lost his sense of shame, and the week marked a distinct epoch in his life. Theretofore he had been used to regard shame itself as an evidence of weakness; now he began to feel that, in a sense, it was the one really decent quality he owned. The idea was revolutionary, but convincing; he could not escape it when he harked back to Rhoda's views contrasted with his own. If he felt that she lived in the sun, he must own that his own life had been among the shadows.

His first desire was to be left alone. He had the feeling that Rhoda must despise him, and so kept out of her way, feeling himself quite sufficiently unhappy without having to see her avert her face from him. Gradually, however, little signs told him that he was not quite an outcast. One evening when he came in late to dinner he found a bunch of sweet-peas beside his plate, and he could only imagine one person who could possibly have placed them there. He asked the waiter, and learned that the flowers were Rhoda's gift. He thanked her for them later, hardly looking at her as he did so, and found her voice as soft and sweet as ever. She seemed to be cherishing no ill-will toward him; on the contrary, to have shown a wish to please him, but he was not yet ready to forego his sense of shame.

Then one evening as he passed her in the sitting-room she told him that she had a new song, and asked if he would care to hear it. He sat near her as she sang, and occasionally let his eyes glance at her. When she had finished she turned to him and asked eagerly if he liked it. He said that he did. "I'm so glad," she answered. "I've been saving it up until I had the chance to sing it to you." He thought the incident over afterwards, and decided that she meant it as an offer of friendship and to show him that she was willing to forget.

The next night he asked her if she would sit on the front steps with him. She agreed, and that evening placed them back on their old footing. He was still ashamed, but she was doing her best to take the sting from his self-contempt.

So he was restored to favor for two weeks, then gradually, without any understanding of the reason on his part, a veil seemed to drop between them, one of those curious barriers that are more real than any words. Day by day he found that Rhoda was growing more distant towards him, that her eyes were colder, her words shorter. This worried him, and he tried to find an explanation, but found none that satisfied him. She told him that her mother was failing and needed more and more of her care, but he felt that this could not account for the strange new way in which she spoke to him. He wondered if she cared because he was still working for her father, and asked her,

but she answered quite simply that she had no father now. Further than that he could draw nothing from her. He brooded for a long time over the mystery of the change, but could not fathom it, and so finally decided to pocket any pride he might have and boldly ask her for an explanation.

The first opportunity that offered was one evening when he found her alone in the sitting-room, reading. She barely glanced up as he entered the room and sat down in a chair near her.

"Rhoda," he began, "do you think it's fair to keep something secret from me that affects us both, something that has made you all of a sudden take a grudge against me? Would n't it be fairer if you told me what it was?"

"I have no grudge against you," she said calmly, her eyes still fastened on her book.

"Then tell me this: when you put those flowers by my plate you wanted to be friends; do you still want that?"

She looked at him over her book. "Why, I don't know that I do now," she said.

There was something in her way of speaking that made Carson pause and consider. Finally, however, he concluded to proceed with his quest.

"What is it you've discovered, then?"

"Discovered?" She echoed the word simply. Then she put the book down on her lap. "Was there something for me to discover?"

The young man's refuge was an uneasy laugh. "I dare say there are things to learn about everybody."

The laugh vanished and his mouth set in straight lines. "Tell me what this thing is, please."

"Wait here." Rhoda rose and left the room for a few minutes. When she came back she held in her hand a letter which she gave to Carson. He opened it and read it through carefully. "It's a lie," he said calmly. "Written by somebody who does n't dare to sign it, too. Any one's likely to have that happen to them. There's no evidence there. Why should you believe such stuff as that? Could n't any enemy write that about any one? It's the easiest thing in the world to make slanderous statements about a man and a girl."

Rhoda had picked up her book, and was studying its cover carefully. "Yes," she said, "that's true, and a letter without a signature is a bad thing. It happened, though, that I'd never thought about you in that way at all, and when the letter came it set me to thinking. Then I thought over some of the things I did know about you, and they made the doubt bigger. The more I thought, the less faith I had."

"Yes," he admitted; "I know what you're thinking about."

"Oh, I was n't thinking of any particular things," she interrupted a little wearily. "It's not particular things; it's taking them all together, it's you, the Edward Carson I know. I've heard you talk about business, and about a man's standards, and I've heard you make all sorts of excuses for people at different times. If you were telling me what you really thought then, why should n't you have done some of these things?"

He could find no words with which to answer her, and sat still, staring at the letter.

"'Other men do this or that,' you've often said. What other people do, you could see no reason why you should n't do."

Still he sat without making any answer.

"Somehow I never thought much about these things until that letter came. My first thought was to tear it up and forget it. Then I read it over again, and little things in it seemed to ring true. The writer seemed to know a good deal about you. Then I went over what I actually did know, and—well, that's about all."

It was some minutes before Carson saw fit to reply.

"It does sound plausible," he said. "Very much so, from what you know of me. But I'd hoped that we were going to be friends and that we could start fresh. I wanted to do that. Now here comes a letter and puts an end to it all." He stopped and considered. "Any one can make charges in such a letter. How can I deny them?"

He looked at her and thought her eyes softened a little.

"What can I do or say to make this right again?"

"It is n't the letter, it's my own thoughts," she said. "That is rather hard for you to overcome."

"Of course," he answered, seizing the first opportunity of relief. "Very hard. The case is built up out of circumstantial evidence. Give me a chance."

"Is it worth while?" she said, half to herself, half to him. She stretched out her hand for the letter, and he gave it to her. She read it through carefully, then looked across at him.

"You're so different at different times," she said. "Why did n't you always tell me the truth? How am I to know what's true and what's false in you?"

"Well," he answered, "I'll tell you; truer than any letter without a name." He drew himself up defiantly and his eyes met hers squarely, but before he could speak she had interrupted.

"Remember I don't ask it of you," she said. "But if you speak I'll take whatever you say as true."

Her gray eyes were on his, and slowly the touch of defiance faded from his face. His head bent, and he sat staring at the floor.

"I guess I had n't principles in any line," he muttered.

She leaned back in her chair, a trifle white and dazed. For a few minutes she watched him as he sat with his face away from her.

"I've lied enough. I've done whatever I've wanted to, been a sort of a free lance in all directions. Since I met you I thought I was turning different, but it seems not. Whatever you hear about me is like enough to be true. That's how matters stand."

A minute later he rose.

"I guess I'd better be going. I might have foreseen how all this would end. People ought to keep to their kind. I'll be leaving the house in the morning."

With that he disappeared into the hall, and Rhoda sat, very white, in her chair for a long time. She was frightened; she had not known how much she cared.

Early the next morning Carson took his leave of Mrs. Pidgeon's boarding-house. He went early in order to avoid saying any good-byes, but not so early that Rhoda did not hear his trunk being placed in a wagon in the street. She opened the window of her fourth-story front room and looked out as Carson went down the steps and headed for the corner. She would have called to him, but the words choked in her throat. He did not look back, and in a moment was out of sight.

XIII.

THERE was one idea in Carson's head after he left his old life at Mrs. Pidgeon's, and that was work. The way to that lay open to him, and he tried to forget everything else in plunging headlong into the interests of the bottle company. For a time he succeeded in his efforts. The company was an undoubted money-maker.

As a man, Carson considered Joseph Prinsett beneath contempt; as a financier, he was compelled to admire him. Prinsett had struck a vein of the purest ore, and was mining it with consummate ability. Carson had not spent a great number of mornings opening the mail that came to the company, unfolding the checks enclosed, and filing them for deposit to the president's account, before he gathered some conception of the scheme. His morning's work consisted in receiving and noting the checks, his afternoon's in mailing certificates of stock in the company to the persons who had provided the morning's mail. It was a beautifully simple process. You sent in one hundred dollars, and you received by the same day's mail an exquisitely engraved document certifying that you were the registered owner of one share of the stock of the National Non-Refillable Bottle Company. What business process could be simpler? You came into possession of a good-looking certificate, bearing a row of charmingly suggestive fancy bottles at the top, all of which bore the Non-Refillable label. The document was excellent for framing.

Edward was not slow to discover that, next to theories for securing perpetual motion, non-refillable bottles are the most alluringly seductive possibilities to country minds. Every farmer knows that a fortune lies in such a discovery; he has often had the fact orally demonstrated to him at the village store. Every farmer's wife knows it without the need of any demonstration, and every aged spinster, with a little money hidden in an old stocking, dreams of the same revolutionary invention. What cannot be done with such an article? What limits can be placed to its use? The bottle cannot be used a second time, and all the manufacturers of fluids are on the market for such a receptacle. Only bring the scintillating fact of the discovery to the rustic mind, and each and every such mind clearly foresees the golden profit. The same is true to a somewhat lesser extent of those dwellers in cities who have descended from country ancestors; in fact, of practically all but those persons whose imaginations are too weak to let them soar on any industrial speculation, or those who have the hard, matter-of-fact brains that teach them that the more tempting a business proposition is, the more firmly it should be shunned.

Joseph Prinsett, therefore, had a very large field of workable material ready to his hand. He flooded that field with circular literature of such a clever design that the reader could see that the secret of the non-refillable bottle had been discovered, but was forced to the conclusion that he or she was just a trifle too dense to see how the discovery worked. You had a dim idea, the sort of idea that would lead you to nod your head, and say, "Oh, yes, I understand it *now*," when you had pored for a time over the carefully detailed drawings, with their multitude of index letters, and their nice drawing to scale. Then you decided to send a check or a money order to the office in the Equity Building, New York City, and become the registered owner of so many shares of stock. After that, your dreams were pleasantly tinged with magic bottles, and your waking hours occupied with the thought that you were personally participating in one of the great discoveries of the century. O marvellous bottle! O wonderful bottle wizard!

As has been said, Carson was not slow to grasp the Napoleonic possibilities of such a scheme. He understood that the company's president was too busily concerned just at present in obtaining sufficient capital for the proper floating of his enterprise to spend much time on the actual bottle. That would come later, very much later, Carson opined. Meanwhile, business was good, and business, not the welfare of the rustic portions of the country, was the main concern of both the president and his clerk.

As a matter of fact, Prinsett, who had started out with a very strong dislike to the young man who had forced himself into his

employ, was gradually coming to hold Carson in considerable esteem as a man of sagacity and judgment. Carson suggested new forms of advertisement for the country districts; he was very clever in discovering new fields to be worked; he had a ready knack in keeping unwelcome callers from interviewing the president in his private office. He had an engaging manner, and looked well perched on a high stool at a cashier's desk in the main room. As a result, when the checks had been coming in plentifully, and Carson hinted that he would be willing to receive a raise in his salary, Prinsett took the hint and made new terms. He was so well satisfied with his assistant's acumen, that he eventually proposed a salary based on a commission of profits received; after that, Carson's ingenuity became positively devilish.

It was only when he could no longer see her, that Carson came clearly to realize how much he had thought of Rhoda. He would have said that it was impossible that any person could have been so nearly indispensable to him, and have made life appear other to him than as he chose to think of it. Once he would have jeered at such an idea with the completest scorn, and so he now tried to jeer at it when he was led to argue with himself. The attempt was useless: the gentle English girl had won her way so securely to him that he could not shut out her image. He realized now, when it was too late, how he coveted the comradeship she had given him.

It was too late to retract, and Carson was game. He had no heart for his old friends; in some way Rhoda had made them seem worse than vicious: they seemed tawdry. Business alone was left him, and he shut himself up in his work with an energy that delighted Mr. Prinsett. He came to the office early and stayed late; he appeared bent on covering the globe with circulars of the Non-Refillable Bottle Company; he had already suggested to the president several subsidiary schemes. Three months passed, and Prinsett raised the amount of Carson's commission.

Then, one morning as Carson opened and read the letters asking for stock, he came upon a little note that made his heart thump furiously and then jump into his throat. He read the note over and over as though he were trying to drive its contents into his brain. Then he glanced cautiously around at the stenographer to assure himself that she was occupied, and climbed down from his high stool to get a drink at the ice-cooler. When he came back to the desk the note was still there, with a thin strip of paper folded carefully inside it. He picked it up and read it over again. It was a simple order, addressed to the Non-Refillable Bottle Company, and stated that the writer had seen one of the company's circulars, and enclosed a check to pay for ten shares of the company's stock. The note was signed "Rhoda Jennings."

Edward turned the check over and read the order to pay one thousand dollars, signed "Amelia Jennings." He rested his head on his hand and considered the situation. This one thousand dollars must represent at least one-half of the two women's capital; they had evidently decided to invest it in what they could see from the circulars was an invention destined to bring great results.

Carson put the note and check away in a drawer, and tried to attend to the rest of the morning's mail. He separated the letters and checks into two piles, and finally took up his regular day's work of dictating letters to accompany the certificates of stock. A very large majority of the letters were to women, and as he read each name and address to the stenographer he wondered how much the money they had forwarded meant to the senders. He hesitated, delayed, appeared so absent-minded that the girl asked him if he were not feeling well. Instead of answering her, he gazed blankly at her as though she had been a piece of furniture. He could see only Rhoda and her pale, hollow-eyed mother.

In time Edward finished the letters and went back to his desk. He closed his eyes so that he might think more clearly. How many women were there scattered over the country who were trading their little fortunes for decorated paper so that Prinsett and he might have plenty of money to spend? How many other mothers and daughters, just like Mrs. Jennings and Rhoda, who were blindly trusting to men's honesty? "I never thought about their side," he said to himself. Rhoda's letter had brought it home to him. She would find her little stock of funds gone, vanished into the air, and her mother and herself possibly starving, and it would be because of his belief that everything belonged to the person who was strong enough to take it. The manhood in him rose and cried aloud, "Fight if you must with men of your own size and strength; don't knock down weak, defenseless women."

Prinsett came into the office, and Carson watched him move about the room. It seemed as though for the first time he noticed the fat, flabby cheeks, the narrow, hard, blue eyes, the heavy, sensuous lips, the whole meanness of the man. He was not even a daring highwayman; he was just a creature who took bread and butter from women in order that he might eat and drink and grow flabbier and fatter. He was Rhoda's father, and he would not only cast her off, but rob her of her savings and earnings and rob hundreds of others such as she. He could stand the sight of the man no longer, and picked up his hat and went out to lunch.

When Carson returned, Prinsett had gone for the day. The stenographer said that his wife had called for him and taken him for a ride in the automobile.

"She's a fine woman," said the girl, "and maybe she don't know how to dress herself. I guess he gives her an awful pile of money for her clothes."

Carson thought of the plain, simple things Mrs. Jennings and Rhoda were wearing, and wondered if the tired-eyed woman had grown stronger or weaker in the past three months.

"What's the matter with you, Edward?" said the girl. "You're terribly quiet to-day."

"I'm thinking," he said; "doing a lot of tall thinking."

"What's it all about?"

"You would n't understand. Tell you what it is—I'm tired of this business. See here, what would you do if somebody sent you some money to buy something you knew was n't worth shucks, and you knew they could n't afford it?"

"I guess I'd send the money back."

"H'm. Well, I guess you're right. I don't see anything else to do."

Nevertheless, Carson thought the matter over all the rest of that day, and sat up with it that night. When he came down to the office the next morning his mind was made up.

XIV.

It was late the next afternoon before Mr. Prinsett came into the office, and Carson got his opportunity to speak with him. Then he walked into the inner office with Rhoda's letter and check in his hand, closed the door, and faced the Englishman.

"I have something to tell you, Mr. Prinsett," he said. "It's about time the company prepared to close its books, for I'm going to send a check back."

The president looked up blankly.

"What do you mean, Edward? What are you talking about?"

"Just what I said. I'm going to write a letter and say that we're not accepting any more subscriptions for stock, and return this check to the woman who sent it."

"You're not going to do any such thing," said Prinsett. "What's the matter with you? Don't be a fool."

"Listen to me," answered Carson, his eyes staring straight at Prinsett's. "Yesterday two women sent in a check for a thousand dollars, which is about all they have in the world, as I happen to know. I'm not going to have them lose that for a piece of waste paper."

Prinsett's eyes ran over Carson with a dangerous gleam. "Who's talking about waste paper? We'll send them ten shares of stock."

"No, we'll not. We've done that often enough before. We'll not do it this time."

Prinsett rose from his chair and leaned on the table that stood between them.

"See here. Who's running this business, you or I? If you don't like the way it's run, you can get out."

"Not now, Mr. Prinsett. Not until that check's returned."

"Let me see it," demanded Prinsett.

"No," said Carson, holding the paper folded in front of him.

Prinsett sat down again in his chair, his face becoming the old dangerously apoplectic hue. He started to speak, but had to loosen his collar by thrusting his finger down between it and his neck before his voice would come.

"Of all the fool cubs I've ever met, of all the nervy, cheeky, insufferable rascals, you're the worst. Do you mean to come into my office and tell me how I'm to manage my own business? Next thing you'll be telling me how much money I may spend."

Carson waited until the apoplectic hue softened, then he spoke low and clear:

"You know as well as I that this is a bunco game, that it's all a lie, from the name of the company to its shares of stock. I knew it long ago, but I didn't care how many fool people there were, nor how they spent their money, so long as I could get a share of it, until this order came. I happen to know these people, and I happen to know their means, and I don't intend that you shall gobble them up."

Prinsett gave utterance to a short, satiric laugh. "Glory, but you've got nerve!" he ejaculated. "You ought n't to be in anything as slow as this; you ought to be asking the President to move out of the White House to let you have his seat." Then his manner changed. "I don't know who these women are who've worked on your sympathies, but if they're friends of yours I take it they're no better than they should be. This I do know: if I give in to you now you'll be whining round here again, and I'll not stand for that. You put that check on this table and take yourself out of the room!"

Carson did not stir.

"Do as I said," thundered Prinsett, his fingers twitching, "or I'll throw you out the door!"

Still Carson did not move, and Prinsett thrust his heavy body threateningly across the table, his purple face ridged with outstanding veins.

"That check goes back," said Carson, "with the statement that the company cannot issue stock for it as the books are closed, or——"

"Well, or——" bellowed Prinsett.

"I shall have a word to say about what took place in Mears's office."

With an almost superhuman effort Prinsett swung his body back

from the table, crossed his arms, and made a brave attempt at a smile.

"Come, come," he said, "let's be reasonable. I would n't so much mind sending that one check back if it were n't for the danger that that one refusal to sell might raise people's curiosity. Is n't there some other way in which it might be fixed? Could n't you manage to see that these particular people fell into a thousand dollars in some other way—well, on the side, in a tip, or something like that?" Prinsett's attempted smile had degenerated into a leer.

"No, I think not," answered Carson.

Prinsett's brow momentarily contracted; then he sat down abruptly in his desk chair.

"See here, Edward, as we're more or less pals in this concern, I don't mind admitting to you that I don't want people to get curious just yet. I've taken some money out of the business, but there's a pile more to be taken. I'm not stingy. What do you say to a new deal? Suppose we go in as partners, share and share alike, eh, old chap?"

There was a short pause, during which Prinsett rubbed his hands and smiled contemplatively.

"How does that strike you? Think of it! All of a sudden become almost a millionaire. An automobile, and a little apartment up-town, all your own. Horses if you want 'em, and plenty of cash to pay for little parties, the best of everything to eat and drink, and then the chance to try flings with the market and make a pile outside. Why, in five years you'd be a power in Wall Street!"

He waited to let his words sink in, meanwhile purring softly at the thought of so much pleasure to be had. "Then," he added, "you could marry this little girl," he nodded towards the check which Carson still held, "if you want to. Any way, you could fix her so she'd never know about the stock."

The offer was fair and tempting; so vivid were the pictures it set before Carson's imagination that he could already almost believe that he was living in them. The things he had coveted ever since he had come to New York, the desires that had filled both his waking and sleeping hours, seemed at last within his grasp. He had only to say "yes" to Mr. Prinsett, and he might have what he had so long wanted. Everything might be his, he thought, and then he glanced down at the letter in his hand and his eyes fell upon the signature of Rhoda Jennings. Everything would be his, but for some reason that everything seemed suddenly very hollow and useless, and any attempt at enjoyment of it a mocking farce. He would be living as well as Prinsett, her own father, was living, and as a result she and her mother would drop from Mrs. Pidgeon's boarding-house to a poorer one, and so on and on indefinitely.

He pulled himself up sharply.

"No."

Prinsett looked startled; he was considering the battle ended.

"Think what it means," he said. "A pile of money. And money buys everything."

"No; this check goes back!"

The other man's eyes gleamed dangerously.

"Good God, man, don't be a fool! Don't let a matter of sentiment stand in your way. Is the check from some woman you love?"

"No."

"You lie. You would n't give a hang for any one else. Let this matter go through, and I'll wager she'll marry you to-morrow."

"She won't," said Carson.

Prinsett chuckled grimly. "Then it is some young woman," he rejoined, "and you care a lot about her. Don't tell me you don't. If she won't have you, you'd better let her go. They're others as good to be had by a man with money. I'll wager she's——"

"Stop, Mr. Prinsett! You don't know who you're talking about. If you did, you'd keep your mouth shut."

They had come back to the point from which they started.

"We're wasting time," said Carson. "Will you send the check back?"

"You'll let one woman rob you of a fortune, will you?" demanded Prinsett.

"Yes," came the answer.

"If that's so, why not protect all the women who buy stock here?"

"I will if you drive me to it."

"You will, eh?" roared Prinsett, leaping from his chair.

"Yes, I will. It's about time some one did. Don't you ever think of women and children at all? Try it now. Think of the people all over the country who've scrimped and saved to send you their cash! I never thought of it before, but I'm doing it now."

Prinsett struggled for words. Carson turned towards the door. "I'll send this back and say that the books are closed."

"Do," cried Prinsett, "and I'll send a letter at the same time and tell them my clerk made a mistake and to send the money back."

Carson faced around. "Then it will be time for the world to know how many wives you have." His rage was overmastering him and he stepped up to the table and thumped upon it. "This office closes to-day or you go to jail!"

Prinsett's eyes, red as a wounded bull's, glared savagely. He reached to a drawer in his desk and drew out the paper Mears had given him.

"Two can play at that game. If I go, you go too."

"I paid that money back long ago," answered Carson.

"You did, eh? Well, every one may not know that you're a thief. This good little girl may not, this girl you love and that you tell me I'd better not name."

Suddenly his arm swept over the table and he seized the letter from Carson's hand.

"I'll send her this news about you, you young fool!" He turned the paper over, and his eyes fell on the name signed at the end. He stared at it, like one seeing a ghost. "Rhoda Jennings!" he murmured aloud. "Rhoda Jennings here!"

"Yes," said Carson; "she's here in New York, and she knows all about you."

Prinsett sat down in his chair, the letter clutched in his right hand, while his eyes seemed to sink deeper into his head. Carson waited silently.

Suddenly Prinsett was on his feet again. "It's not too late even now," he cried. "In three months time you and I can make a fortune and clear out of here so quietly nobody'll ever be the wiser. If the girl knows and has n't peached yet, perhaps she won't a little longer. Rhoda's the sort who'd hate to disgrace her father."

"Rhoda says her father is dead," returned Carson. "There's only one person she's thinking about now, and that's her mother."

"Ha, then we're safe! Three months, Edward, just three months!"

He saw from the youth's set face that he would refuse him that, and his eyes changed to an evil, glittering light.

"I know your secret," he said steadily. "You love my daughter Rhoda, and I know her. She'd hate a thief as she would Satan himself, and she'll know to-night that that's just what you are." He paused for greater effect. "Unless you give me three months."

Carson's face grew very white, and he stared straight at the evil eyes glaring into his.

Prinsett picked up an envelope, placed the slip of paper with Mears's record of Carson in it, sealed it, and scribbled the address given in Rhoda's order to buy. He looked up. "If I go out of this office, that letter goes. A thief, a mean, common thief, a little low-down gutter-snipe who robbed a country till!"

Carson's teeth bit into his lips. Then he took out his watch and looked at it. "It's five o'clock. I give you till six to get out. Take the woman away and bury yourself somewhere. To-night the police shall know all I have to tell, and what's not already been spent goes back to the people you've cheated."

Prinsett looked at the hard, set features that confronted him.

"And this letter?"

"Send it wherever you wish; tell everybody I've been a thief if you want. I don't care; there's only one thing I do care about now: to save those people's money. Do you hear me? Only one hour. Then the police."

Prinsett opened his mouth to swear, but the words would not come. He stared at Carson for five seconds, then wheeled around and seized his hat from the desk.

"This letter I mail," he said, "you poor little dupe of a woman! By God, I tell you she's——"

"Get out!" cried Carson. "Get out, get out!"

Prinsett put on his hat and strode to the door. "One hour," he said. "You've promised me an hour."

He flung open the door. A minute later Carson heard the outer door bang. Then he sat down in the nearest chair, quivering from head to foot.

XV.

IN such manner Carson put an end to the great National Non-Refillable Bottle Company, and to the career of its president in New York, and he did it because chance had brought a certain purchaser to the office and by so doing had thrown a new ray of light across the track of his career. The climax was much greater than he had expected; he had thought to return Rhoda's check, and he had ended by championing the cause of all the dupes and by smashing the concern. When he fully realized this he was not elated. The goose that laid the golden eggs was gone, and the total of his own reward was that Rhoda would receive the information that he had begun his career as a thief before he came to New York. He felt that on the score of damage done Prinsett and he were about quits.

The morning following Prinsett's abrupt departure a police inspector took charge of the well furnished suite of offices in the Equity Building. He and his assistants heard what Carson had to say, learned that the clerk had only recently become aware of the fraudulent nature of the business, and proceeded to discover what available assets were left for the holders of those beautifully engraved certificates of stock. Carson did all that he could to help them; he described Prinsett and the so-called Mrs. Prinsett, and gave their address. He was not surprised to learn that their apartments had been vacated. When he had done all that was possible, and had given the official in charge of the matter sufficient assurance that he would be ready and present to testify whenever he should be needed, he took leave of the company's offices and for the second time within the year found himself without any occupation in New York. This time, however, the world did not look roseate as he stood on the door-step

of the building, wondering what to do; he did not smile at the girls who passed, nor eye the automobiles, nor think of asking "Piggy" Andrews out to lunch; he was feeling that his world was very much awry.

The night before, as he left the office, he had mailed Rhoda's check back to her. As he thought over the matter now, he saw that that marked the end of all communication between them. By this time she would have received the news that he had always been a common thief, and, adding this information to that which she already had concerning him, would wonder that she had ever spoken to such a renegade. His career was now plain before her; she knew his history farther back than that first night when she had found him sitting on Mrs. Pidgeon's stairs.

Carson tried to shake such thoughts from his mind and consider the future. He had been so fertile of schemes before; why should his outlook be so blank now? He was startled to find that for the moment at least he had lost the taste for gambling; he could not think with any relish of money-getting; Mears and Prinsett both appeared to him in the form of thoroughly unenviable scamps. He was alarmed at his own change of view: what had happened to make him suddenly feel dissatisfied with the Broadway life?

The afternoon was dark and chilly, and as he moved up-town along the crowded pavement he noticed how tired and worried every one was looking, the women's faces dull and stupid, the men pale and fagged. He himself felt very tired by the time he reached his new boarding-house. The place was even less inviting than Mrs. Pidgeon's, the people were more stupid, and to-night more frankly drab than usual. He hurried through dinner, concerned only with getting away by himself again. After dinner he sat in the sitting-room and smoked until the other boarders crowded too close about him.

By ten o'clock he was back on Broadway, floating aimlessly with the tide that ebbled and flowed along the great thoroughfare. Now that it was night he saw people smile and laugh, watched pretty girls pass him hanging on to men's arms, caught the echoes of that careless life that had been so dear to him. He wondered what had become of Milly; he had not seen her since that night at Rockaway Beach. He thought that he would like to see her to-night; perhaps she could drive away this dull oppression that hung so dismally upon his spirits.

The theatres were pouring their crowds into the street; he passed block after block of gayly dressed people, and then suddenly he caught sight of Milly as she came from the door of a theatre with Jimmy Sickle by her side. Behind them he saw another girl and man of their old crowd.

As he hesitated whether to join them Milly spied him and beckoned

to him. A minute later he was with them, the lost sheep returned to the fold.

"Oh, Ted," cried Milly, "you've come in the nick of time. We're all going down to the Tivoli for some music and something to drink. What have you been doing with yourself all this time?"

She slipped her arm through his, and with Jimmy Sickle on her other side, led the party down Broadway. Carson felt considerably better.

The night was at its height at the Tivoli; all the old glamour of the place stole over Carson's senses. Why should any one live except in their senses, he wondered, and was annoyed that he should ask himself such a question at such a time. The group secured a table, and Milly devoted herself to caring for her old friend in that inimitably caressing way she had. She made him feel that he was always a person apart and that she alone could thoroughly value him.

The waiter filled their glasses, they sang the words to all the new songs, and laughed and chattered when there was no music. Carson saw that Jimmy Sickle had already had more to drink than was good for him; Jimmy was uproariously happy, and it annoyed Carson that he should stop to consider how Jimmy felt. He turned back to Milly. She was whispering sweet words to him. He told the waiter to take the orders around the table, and when his new glass came drank eagerly. He was trying his best to forget.

"Do you remember, Ted," Milly said close to his ear, "that night we came in here early last spring? Somehow, it seems as if that was a long time ago, and you'd been far away. Well, we're almost back there to-night."

Something suddenly gripped the youth's thoughts. He had been far away! Was he actually going back to it all again? He almost wished that he could, but on the instant knew that he could not. Something had made him different.

"Finish your drink," Milly purred in his ear, and he raised his glass to do so. Instead, he looked hard into it. Slowly he put the glass back on the table.

"I've just remembered something," he said. "I've got to be going home."

"Home!" she exclaimed. "Why, Teddy!"

"Yes," he said; "I've got to. I'm awfully glad I saw you. You've cheered me up a lot, but I've got to go now. Good night." He stood up.

"Sit down, Edward," called out Jimmy Sickle. "It's early; don't be a quitter!"

All of the party spoke up, begging him to stay. He would not; he paid the waiter, and took up his hat.

"Good night, Milly," he said.

"I never thought you'd be a quitter," the girl said bitterly.

"I'm sorry."

He gave his head a little nervous shake and went out into the street. He did not know why he was doing this, and he did not care to know.

The loneliness of the great, teeming city fell full upon him as he went back to his boarding-house. Instead of pleasure in the numbers and gaiety of people, he found pain, a dull, weighing sense that crushed any expectations out of him. He saw no future before him. It was as though his struggle with Prinsett had destroyed all his energy.

The boarding-house was desolate, but not so desolate as the streets; he had a moment's thought of buying enough whiskey to dull sense and so fall to sleep, but dismissed it with the knowledge that it would be physically impossible for him to choke the liquor down. With no thought other than to get away by himself and lock the door on the world, he climbed the three flights of stairs that led to his own small hall bedroom. He lighted the gas, and found that a servant had thoughtfully placed a letter for him on his bureau. He picked it up and sat down on the bed. He opened it slowly, and with the same deliberation unfolded it. When his eyes fell on the first words he sat up with a jerk and read the writing greedily.

DEAR EDWARD [so ran the letter]:

Will you come to see me? There are some things I want to speak to you about. Perhaps you did not know that my mother has died and that I am alone, and planning to go back to England. I think if you had known, you would have come to see me anyhow.

Your friend,

RHODA JENNINGS.

Carson looked at the letter so hard that his eyes grew dim. When he had read it so often that he knew it by heart, he put it in his pocket and looked at his watch. It was a little after midnight, but he realized that he could not go to bed.

As he left the house and sought the nearest Subway station, Carson thought over the news he had just learned. Rhoda's mother had died, still unconscious how near she had come to the goal of her search, and Rhoda was going home. She would use the money he had sent back from the bottle company to pay her passage to England; she would want him to help her in making her last arrangements. He was the only man she knew in New York, and that must be the reason why she had written to him, after she knew what Mr. Prinsett had sent her concerning him.

He left the subway uptown, and sought out Mrs. Pidgeon's house. He wanted to see the house, to know that it was still there; he had no thought of waking it at such an hour. He took his stand in front of it and looked up at the fourth-story front room which he knew had been Rhoda's. There was a light in the window; he imagined that Rhoda also found it difficult to sleep. He watched the light for a few moments and then whistled softly, a call he had taught her and which they had often used. Again and again he repeated it, and finally saw a figure come to the shade. A moment later the window was opened and Rhoda was looking out. She saw him standing on the pavement. "Wait," she called gently.

It was not long before the key turned in the front door and a ray of gas-light shone into the street. Carson, his heart beating a fast staccato, went up the steps and into the hall. Rhoda stood waiting for him; she had stepped back after she had pushed the door open.

In one glance he noticed the changes in her. She was dressed in black, and her face was so pale that it made her eyes unnaturally large. She looked delicate, and so lonely that he had a sudden overwhelming pity for her.

"Edward," she said, with the flicker of a smile; and held out her hand. He took it for a second, then released it.

"Come into the sitting-room," she said in a low voice, and he followed her and lighted the gas.

"I found your letter to-night," he explained. "I meant to call to see you in the morning, but somehow I wandered up here to-night. I didn't know, Rhoda, that you were all alone."

She sat down on the sofa. "Yes, all alone now. That's why I wrote: I wanted to see some friend."

"Tell me, did you get a paper telling about something I once did?"

Again the flickering smile passed over her lips and she nodded her head slightly.

"Well," he said, "it was true; everything you've heard about me has been true."

There was a little pause.

"Now you're going back to England, Rhoda. Do you suppose that some day, when I've changed, you'd mind if I went over there and went to see you, Rhoda? Some time from now, when I'm quite changed?"

"I should love to have you, Edward."

Again he was very ill at ease; he could not think of the sympathetic things he wanted to say.

"I'm so sorry for you, Rhoda. It seems as though your whole trip over here had been horrible. I know how you feel—as though

there were nothing in the world to hold on by. I've been lonely lately, terribly lonely, and I know what it is."

Suddenly the lateness of the hour struck him. "I must n't stay here now. I'll come in the morning, and help you. Good night." They shook hands, and he turned to the door. She followed him as far as the curtains and stood there, holding them in her hands. Again he was struck with her pallor, and something beseeching in her eyes.

"Edward." It was only a whisper, but it thrilled through him like a cry.

"Rhoda, what is it? Oh, Rhoda, tell me!"

Her hands dropped from the curtains and she stood swaying.

"Can't you see? Oh, can't you see? The past is all over between us. I know you, the real you. What do I care for the rest?"

He stood like one stunned for a second, then gave a little cry of joy, and took her in his arms.

"Rhoda, you forgive me?"

He held her off, and looked into her eyes. "Yes," he said; "I see you do. We'll begin all over again. You shall make me now."

"Not all over, dear; and I think you've made yourself."

He gave a sigh of happiness and content. "Well, whichever way, it does n't matter. I've got you, and that's the only thing worth having in the world."



THE NIGHT WORKER

BY CHESTER FIRKINS

I WALK the wastes of Night—the desert Day;
 No hills of Morning ever soothe mine eyes;
 Dimly as souls remember Paradise
 I dream of Evening valleys, gold and gray,
 When Nature, the great Priestess, comes to lay
 On sunset altars flaunting sacrifice.
 Mine are the shoreless reaches of dead skies;
 Gaunt Midnight stalks, and loud Noon blares, my way.

I thirst and famish on Life's bitter lees;
 I long to cool my camels by the Springs
 Of Dream, in Twilight's eerie oases,—
 To wake at leap-o'-morn on robin-wings;—
 The breath of buds,—the smell of dew-sprent lawns:—
 God, give me back my hallowed dusks and dawns!

CAMEOS

By *Ella Wheeler Wilcox*

Author of "Poems of Passion," "A Woman of the World," etc.

THE GARDEN OF FORGOTTEN THINGS

IT was the hour when Day keeps tryst with Dusk, that I found it. A single star glowed like a beacon, above the rim of the earth; and in the still waters of a dreaming Cove, I saw the inverted reflection of midsummer trees.

It was a subtle odor which lured me into the tangled paths of memory; an elusive fragrance, blowing up from the Meadows of The-Used-To-Be; and it led me on, and on, until the House of Reality was lost to sight.

I found myself wandering in strange places; through dim ways, toward a nameless, magnetic goal.

I do not know why I pressed forward; the House of Reality was very beautiful and I had long dwelt there, with Content guarding my portal, and Love abiding within. But when an old perfume calls, Memory obeys.

Having set forth, I proceeded, possessed equally by curiosity and fear; for the road grew lonelier, and an indefinable sadness pervaded the atmosphere.

Presently I came to a bridge, which bore evidences of having once been an enchanting structure; but now it was broken and decayed; and under it lay the arid bed of a vanished stream. Hard by, a creaking sign-board swung from a leaning mile-post; and by the pale light of the increasing stars, I read these half-effaced words, "The Bridge of Dreams, spanning the River of Youth."

Across the bridge I hurried; and just on the other side I saw it—the Garden of Forgotten Things.

The entrance was choked by weeds; for no foot had trodden there in many a year; but, moved with desperate courage and a desire to finish this unpremeditated journey, I forged forward.

A phosphorous light shed a peculiar and awesome radiance over the tangled grasses at my feet.

I leaned low, and gazed at the spot whereon I stood. It was a partially buried head-stone, bearing the name of a friend loved and lost in my first youth.

Once that stone stood erect, amidst carefully tended flowers; and the path leading to it had been kept smooth by the feet of faithful friendship.

But that was long and long ago; and for decades of time the neglected stone had been pressing its sorrowful face against the bosom of earth, lonely and forgotten by the world.

A weird shape flitted beside me as I passed on. So absorbed was I, with suddenly awakened recollections of my lost friend, that I paid little heed to the shape; but it pressed closer, and at last I turned, to see the face of an early Passion, once beautiful with vivid life, but now an empty mask, from which all expression had fled.

"Do not follow me," I cried, accelerating my steps. "There is nothing,—nothing for us to say."

"There is nothing," answered the shape, as it departed into the shadows from whence it came.

The way seemed newly desolate; and a wide-winged bird wheeled above my head, giving utterance to strange cries.

As he cried, that subtle, haunting odor blew up again from the Meadows of The-Used-To-Be; and old raptures, old sorrows, vanished friendships, and ephemeral loves, lost ideals and outlived pleasures, trooped behind me, a shadowy horde, starred with pallid faces of the dead.

The Garden of Forgotten Things, filled with this nebulous host of presences, became insupportable.

I turned, affrighted, and fled back, back to the House of Reality; past the keeper of the portal, whose face had grown troubled over my absence, I sped, straight into the arms of Abiding Love.



INFERENCES

Wine is an adder-up.

All is not Bold that Glitters.

Angels rush in where Fools would fear to wed.

Love never goes far before Fear catches up with him.

Almost any one can keep a stiff upper lip over—the sorrows of others.

The depth between a Wise Man and a Fool may be measured upon three fingers, multiplied by six.

Minna Thomas Antrim

MISS TOOKER'S WEDDING GIFT

By *John Kendrick Bangs*

Author of "A House Boat on the Styx," "The Idiot," etc.

I.

VAN BUREN tossed his gloves impatiently on the table, removed his overcoat, and sat down before the fire. He was apparently deeply concerned about something, for when Niki, his Japanese valet, entered the room and placed the whiskey and soda on the little table at his side, Van Buren paid no more attention to him than he would to a vagrant sun-mote that crossed his path. Long and steadily he gazed into the broad fireplace, watching the dancing flames at play, pausing only to light his pipe, upon which he pulled fiercely. Finally he spoke, leaning forward and to all intents and purposes addressing the andirons.

"Confound the money!" he said impatiently. "I wish to thunder the Governor had left it to some orphan asylum or to found a Chair in Choctaw at some New England University, instead of to me—then I might have made something of myself. Here am I twenty-seven years old and all the fame I ever got came from leading cotillions at Newport, and my sole contribution to the common weal has consisted of the fines I've paid into the public treasury for exceeding the speed limit. Life! I've seen a lot of it—have n't I, in this empty social shell I've been born into!"

He paused for a moment and poured a stiff four fingers of whiskey into a glass at his side.

"Bah!" he shuddered as the odor of it greeted his nostrils. "You're a poor kind of fuel for such an engine as I might have been if I'd been started on the right track. By Jove! Ethel is right. What good am I? What have I ever done to make myself worth while or to show that I have any character in me that is a jot better than that of any of the rest of our poor stencilled, gold-plated society."

He looked at the glass and made a wry face.

"I'll cut *you* out anyhow," he said, pushing the liquor away from him. "That's something. Niki!" he called.

The inscrutable Niki obeyed the summons on the word.

"Take that stuff away and hereafter don't bring it unless I call for it," said Van Buren. "Any letters?"

"One," said Niki. "A messenger brought him at eight o'clock. I get it."

Niki went to the escritoire and picked up the little square blue envelope lying thereon and handed it to Van Buren.

"Thank you, Niki. You may go now—I can get along without you until—well, say noon to-morrow. Good-night."

"Goo'-night," said Niki, and withdrew noiselessly.

"Humph!" ejaculated Van Buren. "Even he is worth more to the world than I am. He does something, even if it is only for me, which is more than I can do. I don't seem to be able to do anything even for myself."

With a sigh of discontent, Van Buren poked the fire for a moment and then settled himself in the arm-chair, holding the letter before his eyes as he did so.

"From Ethel," he said. "Probably my death-warrant. Oh, well—why not? If she won't have me, she won't, that's all. Only one more drop of bitters in my cocktail. I may as well read it anyhow. It's like a cold plunge, and I hate to take it, but—here goes."

He tore open the envelope and, extracting the note, read it:

DEAR HARRY:

I have been thinking things over since you left me this afternoon and I have changed my mind. [Van Buren's eyes lighted with hope.] I *do* care for you, but I cannot see much happiness ahead for either of us unless one or the other of us changes radically. It may be my fault, but I cannot forget that if I married a man I should want always to be proud of him, and ambitious for his success in the world. If I were not ambitious, I could be proud of you just as you are, for I know you for the fine fellow that you are. While you do none of the things that I should love to have my future husband do, you at least do none of those other things that men make a practice of, and that mean so much misery for their womenkind, whether they show it or not. But, dear Harry, why can you not make yourself more of a man than you are? Why be content with just the splendid foundation, and let it lie, gradually disintegrating because you have failed to rear upon it some kind of a superstructure that would be in keeping with what rests beneath? You can—I know you can—and that is why I have decided to withdraw what appeared to be my final answer of this afternoon, and, if you want it, to give you another chance.

"If I want it!" ejaculated Van Buren. "Lord knows how I want it!"

Come to me at the end of a year and show me the record of something accomplished, that lifts you out this awful social rut we have all managed to get into, and my "no" of this afternoon may be

VOL. LXXXIII.—21

turned into a "yes," and the misery of my heart be turned to joy. Of course you will say that it is all very easy for me to write this, and to tell you to go out and do something, but that the hard thing would be to tell you what to go out and do—and you will be perfectly right. General advice is the easiest thing in the world, but the specific, constructive suggestion is very different. So I will give you the specific suggestion, and it is this: Why do you not write a novel? You used in your days at Harvard to write clever skits for the *Lampoon*, and one or two of your little stories in the *Advocate* showed that you at least know how to put words and sentences together in a pleasing way, even if the themes of your stories were slight and the plots not very intricate. Do this, Harry. Surely with your experience in life you can think of something to write about. Apply yourself to this work during the coming year, and when your book is published and has proven a success, come to me again, and maybe I shall have some good news to tell you.

It may be, dear Harry, that you will not think it worth while. For myself, I hardly think the prize is worth the winning, but you seem to feel differently about that, if I may judge from what you said this afternoon, and you *did* seem to mean it all, every word of it, you poor boy.

We shall meet, of course, as frequently as ever, but until the year is up, and that a year of achievement, you must not speak of the matter again, and must regard me as I shall hope in any event always to remain,

Your devoted friend,

ETHEL TOOKER.

Van Buren laughed nervously as he finished the letter, and again lit his pipe, which had gone out while he read.

"Write a novel, eh?" he muttered with a grin. "A nice, easy task that. A hundred and fifty thousand words, all meaning something. Ah me! Why the dickens was n't I born in an age when knighthood was in flower and my Lady Fayre set Sir Hubert some easy task like putting on a tin suit and going out on the highway and swatting another potted Sir Bedivere on the head with an antique axe? The Quest of the Golden Fleece was an easy stunt alongside of writing a novel these times, and I fear I'm more of a Jason than a Henry James!"

He turned to his desk, and the next five minutes were devoted to the writing of an acknowledgment of Miss Tooker's letter.

I thank you for your suggestion [he wrote], and I truly think it will bear thinking over. Any suggestion that makes for the realization of my fondest hopes will bear thinking over, and I am going to do what I can. I wish you had set me an easier task, however, like getting myself appointed Ambassador to England, or Excise Commissioner, for honestly I do not feel the call of the pen. Nevertheless, my dearest Ethel, just to prove to you how honestly devoted to you I am, I shall to-morrow lay in a stock of pads, a brand new pen, and a

new Roosevelt Dictionary to guide me into the short cut to success via the Reformed Spelling Route. I have already got my leading characters—my heroine and my hero. She is the sweetest, fairest, dearest girl in the world, and is to be named Ethel. The hero is to be a miserable, down-and-out young cub of a millionaire who, having been brought up in a hot-house atmosphere, never had a chance when exposed to the chilling blasts of the world. She, of course, will redeem poor Harry—that is to be my hero's name—from the pitfalls of bridge, Newport, and the demon Rum. And, of course, she will marry him in the end.

Ever your devoted

HARRY.

P. S. As expressive of my real feelings, my story will be written in blue ink.

II.

LATE one evening, six months later, Van Buren rose wearily from his desk, but with a light of triumph in his eye.

"There!" he said. "That is done. 'The City of Credit' is at last *un fait accompli*. One hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred and sixty-seven words, and all about Newport, with a bit of the life of its thriving suburbs, New York and Boston, thrown in to relieve the sordidness of it all."

He gazed affectionately at the pile of manuscript before him.

"It has n't been half bad, after all," he said. "The first ten thousand words came like water from a fire hose, the second ten thousand were pure dentistry, tooth-pulling extraordinary, and the rest of it—well, it is queer how when you get interested in shovelling coal how easy it all seems. And now for the hardest end of the job. To find a publisher who is weak-minded enough to print it."

This indeed proved much the hardest part of Van Buren's work, for the reluctance of the large publishing houses of New York and Boston to place their imprint upon the title page of "The City of Credit" became painfully evident to the youthful author. The manuscript came back to Van Buren with a frequency that was more than ominous.

"I think," he remarked ruefully to himself upon the occasion of its sixth rejection, "that I have discovered the principle of perpetual motion. If there were only enough publishers in the world to last through all eternity, I could keep this manuscript going forever."

Days passed and with no glimmer of hope, until one morning at a time when "The City of Credit" was about due for its thirteenth reappearance on his desk Van Buren found in its stead a letter from Hutchins & Waterbury, of Boston, apprising him of the fact that his novel had been read and was so well liked that "our Mr. Waterbury will be pleased to have Mr. Van Buren call to discuss a possible

arrangement under which the firm would be willing to undertake its publication."

"Good Lord!" cried Van Buren as he read the letter over for the third time, even then barely crediting the possibilities of success that now loomed before him. "And Boston people, too! Will I call! Niki, pack my suit-case at once, and engage a seat for me on the Knickerbocker Limited."

The following morning an interview between "our Mr. Waterbury" and Van Buren took place in the firm's private office on Tremont Street, Boston. It appeared that while the readers of the firm of Hutchins & Waterbury had unanimously condemned the book, Mr. Waterbury himself, having read it, rather thought it might have a living chance.

"Some portions of your narrative are brilliant, and some of them are otherwise, Mr. Van Buren," said Mr. Waterbury frankly. "But considering the authorship of the book and that it is a description of Newport life by one who is a part of its innermost circle I am inclined to think it will prove interesting to the public. Your picture of the social wheels within wheels is so intimate, and I judge so accurate, that it would attract attention."

"I am glad you think so," said Van Buren, with a dry throat—the idea that his book might be published after all was really overpowering.

"On the other hand, the judgment of our readers is so unanimously adverse that Mr. Hutchins and I feel the need of proceeding cautiously. Now, what would you say to our publishing the book on—ah—on your account, as it were?"

"You want me to——" began Van Buren.

"To pay for the plates and advertising," said Mr. Waterbury. "We will stand for the paper and the binding, and will act as your agents in the distribution of the book, accounting to you for every copy printed and sold."

"Is—is that quite *en règle*?" asked Van Buren dubiously.

"It is quite customary," replied Mr. Waterbury. "In fact, ninety per cent. of our business is conducted upon that basis."

"I see," said Van Buren.

"You hand us your check for twenty-five hundred dollars to cover the expenses I have specified," continued the astute publisher, "and we will publish your book, allowing you a royalty of fifty per cent. on every copy sold."

"I suppose the first edition would be——" said Van Buren hesitatingly.

"Five hundred copies," said Waterbury. "The smaller your first edition, the sooner you are likely to go into a second, and, as you know, it is a great advantage for a book to go into a second edition

quickly, if only for advertising purposes. Think it over, and let me know this afternoon if you can. I have to leave for Chicago to-night, and if we are to have 'The City of Credit' ready for the autumn trade, we should begin work on it right away."

"I understand," said Van Buren. "Well—I—I guess it's all right. It's only the principle of the thing—but if, as you say, it is quite customary—why, yes. I'll give you my check now. Do you want it certified?"

"That will not be at all necessary, Mr. Van Buren," said Waterbury magnanimously. "We are quite aware that your own signature to a check is a sufficient certification."

The afternoon train for Newport carried Van Buren back to the social capital with a contract in his pocket, signed by Messrs. Hutchins & Waterbury, assuring the early publication of "The City of Credit," but in view of certain of its financial stipulations, jubilant as he was over the success of his first real step toward fame, Van Buren did not show it to Miss Tooker, as he might have done had it contained no reference to a check on the Tenth National Bank of New York calling for the payment of two thousand five hundred dollars to the Boston firm of publishers.

III.

IN September "The City of Credit" was published, and widely advertised by Messrs. Hutchins & Waterbury, and Van Buren took particular pains to secure the first copy from the press and to send it by messenger with a suitable inscription and a note to Miss Tooker.

"I send you my book," he wrote, "not because I think it is worth reading, but for the double purpose of showing you that I have tried my best to fulfil your wishes, and to assure the work of at least the circulation of one copy. It has all of my heart in it."

For one reason or another, doubtless because there were quite five hundred other novels of a similar character put forth about the same time, by the end of October the world had not yet been consumed by any conflagration of Van Buren's lighting.

"The book hangs fire," said Mr. Waterbury when Van Buren called upon him at his Boston office to inquire how things were going. "We printed five hundred copies, and this morning's report shows two hundred and thirty still on hand. A hundred and sixty were sent for review."

"I wish they had n't been," said Van Buren, with a rueful smile. "They have provided just one hundred and sixty separate pieces of fuel for the critics to roast me with. Have there been any favorable reviews of the book?"

"None that I have seen—but don't you worry about that," replied

Mr. Waterbury comfortingly. "It's the counting-room, not the critics, that tell the story. Something may happen yet to pull us out."

"What, for instance?" asked Van Buren.

"Oh, I don't know," said Waterbury. "You might do something sensational and get it in the papers. That would help. It's up to you, Mr. Van Buren."

"I guess I'm all in," said Van Buren to himself as he walked down Tremont Street. "Up to me to do something—by Jove!" he interrupted himself abruptly. He had suddenly espied a copy of "The City of Credit" in a shop window. "Up to me, is it? Well, I think I shall rise to the occasion and not by doing anything sensational either."

He entered the shop.

"I want six copies of 'The City of Credit,'" he said quietly to the salesman. "It's a first class story. Much of a demand for it?"

"No," said the salesman. "We have only the window copy, and we've had that over a month. I can get them for you, however."

"All right," said Van Buren. "Just send them to Charles H. Harney, The Helicon Club, New York. I'll pay for them now."

Van Buren paid his bill, and, returning to the street, hailed a hansom.

"Take me to some good book-shop," he said to the cabby.

Instantly he was whirled around into Winter Street, where stands one of Boston's most famous literary distributing centres.

"Have you 'The City of Credit'?" he asked of the salesman.

"I think we have a copy in stock," replied the latter. "If we have n't, we can get it for you."

"Do so, please," said Van Buren. "I want a dozen copies—send them by express by Charles H. Harney, The Helicon Club, New York. How much?"

"It's a dollar and a half book, I think," said the clerk. "The discount will make it \$1.20—a dozen, did you say? Twenty-five cents expressage—that will make it \$14.65."

Van Buren paid up without a whimper. Once in the hansom again, he called up through the little hole in the top.

"Is n't there any other book-shop in town where I can get what I want?" he demanded.

"There's a dozen of 'em," replied the cabby.

"Then go to them all," said Van Buren.

That night when Van Buren started for New York he had purchased a hundred and fifty copies of "The City of Credit," and had ordered them all to be addressed to the clerk at the Helicon Club, with whom, upon his arrival in town, he arranged for their immediate reshipment to the Harrison Safety Deposit Storage Company on Forty-second Street.

"I'm going to have my happiness, if I have to buy it," Van Buren muttered doggedly, as he crept into bed shortly after midnight. And then, tossing sleeplessly in his bed and at last rejoicing in the possession of his late father's millions to back him in his enterprise, he laid the foundations of a plan comparable only to that of the Wheat King who corners the market, or the man of Cotton who loads himself up with more bales of that useful commodity than all the fertile acres of the South could raise in seven seasons. Orders were despatched by wire and by mail to all the book-sellers in the land whose names and addresses Van Buren could get hold of. Department stores were put under contribution and their stock commandeered, and one of the biggest booms in the whole history of literature set in.

"The City of Credit" went into its second, fifth, twentieth, fiftieth large edition. Hutchins & Waterbury wrote Van Buren stating that a sudden turn in the market had made his book one of the six best sellers not only of this century but of all centuries. Their presses were seething to the point of white heat with the copies of "The City of Credit" needed to supply the demand; their binders were working day and night with a doubled force, and their shipping department was pretty nearly swamped with the strain put upon it. "Your royalty check on January 1st will be the fattest in the land," wrote Waterbury in a moment of enthusiasm. "We are thinking of sending our staff of readers to the lunatic asylum and getting an entirely new set. An order for four thousand has come in from Chicago this morning. St. Louis wants fifteen hundred, and pretty nearly every other able-bodied town in the country is asking for from one to one hundred and fifty." By Christmas time, if the publishers' announcements were to be believed, "The City of Credit" had attained to the enormous sale of three hundred and fifty thousand, and Van Buren was in receipt of a letter from a literary periodical asking for his photograph for publication in its February issue. This brought him a realization of the fact that he might now fairly claim to be considered a literary success. At any rate, he felt that he had now a right to approach Miss Tooker with a fair prospect of receiving from her a favorable answer to the question which she had a year before left an open one.

And events showed that his feeling was justified, for two days later he enjoyed the blissful sensation of finding himself the accepted lover of the woman he had tried so hard to please.

"Is it to be—yes?" he whispered, as they sat together in the conservatory of her father's city house.

"It has—always been—yes," she replied softly, and then what happened is not for your eyes or mine. Suffice it to say that Van Buren moved immediately from sordid old New York to become a dweller in the higher altitudes of Elysium.

Incidentally the boom in "The City of Credit" stopped almost as suddenly as it had begun. There was nobody apparently who felt called upon to throw in the necessary number of dollars to sustain an already overstimulated market, which puzzled Messrs. Hutchins & Waterbury exceedingly. They had hoped to live for the balance of their days upon the profits of their World's Best Seller.

IV.

As the spring approached and the day set for Miss Tooker's wedding to Van Buren came nearer, the latter found himself daily becoming more and more a prey to conscience. There was a decidedly large fly in the amber of his happiness, for as he viewed the part he had played in the forced success of "The City of Credit" he began to see it in its true light. The first of March brought him his royalty check from Hutchins & Waterbury, and it was, as had been predicted, gratifyingly large, and reduced materially what he had called his "campaign expenses." In the same mail, however, was a bill from the Storage Company, in one of whose spacious chambers there reposed more copies of his novel than he liked to think of—over 250,000—the actual sales had been 260,000 in spite of the published announcements of a higher figure. The firm had thirty or forty thousand on hand, printed in a moment of confident enthusiasm when the flurry was at its height. Both communications brought before Van Buren's mind's eye all too vividly the spectre of his duplicity, and he was too much of a man of conscience to be able to put it lightly aside. He tried to console himself with the idea that all is fair in love and war, but he could not, and his remorse caused him many a sleepless night. Finally—it was on the eve of the posting of the wedding invitations—scruple overcame him, and he resolved that he could not honestly lead his bride to the altar with such a record of deceit upon his escutcheon, especially in view of the fact that it was through this deceit that his happiness had been won.

"It is better to lose her before the ceremony than after it," he told himself, and, bitter though the confidence might be, he made up his mind to tell Miss Tooker everything. "Only, I must break it gently," he observed.

With this difficult errand in mind, he called upon his fiancée, and, after the usual greeting, he started in on his confession. He had hardly begun it, however, when his courage failed him, and with the oozing of that his words failed him also. He did have the courage, however, to seek to reveal the exact situation another way.

"Ethel dear," he said, awkwardly fumbling his gloves, "I want to show you something. I have a—a little surprise for you."

The girl eyed him narrowly.

"For me?" she said.

"Yes," he answered. "The fact is, it's—it's a sort of wedding present I have for you, and I think you ought to see it before—well, *now*. Will you go?"

Miss Tooker was interested at once, and, taking a hansom, they were driven to the Harrison Storage Warehouse on Forty-second Street. Arrived there, Van Buren led her to the elevator and thence up to the small room in which lay the corroding and tell-tale packages—an enormous bulk—that were slowly but surely eating up his happiness.

"Why, Harry!" she cried as she gazed in bewilderment at the huge pile of unopened bundles. "Are these all for me?"

"Yes," gulped Van Buren, his face flaming.

"But—what do they contain?" she asked.

"Two hundred and fifty thousand copies of my—my book—'The City of Credit,'" said Van Buren, his eyes cast down.

"You mean that you——" she began.

"Yes, it's exactly that, Ethel. I—I bought 'em all to—well, to boom the sales and to—make a name for myself in the world," he said sheepishly, "or rather for you—but I suppose now that you know——"

"Then all this tremendous sale was arranged between you and your publishers to deceive me?" she asked.

"Not at all," protested the unhappy Van Buren. "On the contrary, I did it all myself. Hutchins & Waterbury don't know any more about it than you did an hour ago. No one knows—except you and I."

Van Buren paused.

"I could not let you marry me without knowing what I had done," he said. "It would not be fair to—to our future."

"Tell me all about it," she said quietly, and Van Buren made his confession complete. He told her of his interview with Waterbury—how the latter had told him his book had fallen flat; how it was "up to him" to do something; how a sight of a single copy of "The City of Credit" in the Tremont Street shop window had tempted him first into a retail fall which had grown ultimately into a wholesale "crime"—as he put it. He did not spare himself in the least degree, humiliating as the narration of his story was to him.

"I suppose it is all up with me now," he said ruefully, when he had finished.

"I don't know," said Ethel quietly. "I don't know, Harry. Perhaps. Take me home, please. I want to show you something."

The drive back to the Tooker mansion was taken in silence. Van Buren despaired himself too strongly to be able to speak, and Miss Tooker had fallen into a deep reverie which the poor fellow at her side feared meant irrevocable ruin to his hopes.

"Come in," said Miss Tooker gravely, as the cab drew up at the

house. "I want to take you up into our attic store-room, and then ask you a plain question, Harry, and then I want you to answer that question simply and truthfully."

Marvelling much, Van Buren permitted himself to be led to the topmost floor of Miss Tooker's house.

"Look in there," said she, opening the door of the store-room. "Do you see those packages?"

"Yes," he said. "They look very much like mine, only they're fewer."

"Do you know what they contain?" she asked.

"Books?" queried Van Buren, entering the room and tapping one of the bundles.

"Yes—yours—your books—five thousand three hundred and ten copies of 'The City of Credit,' Harry," she said, with a rueful smile.

"You——" he ejaculated hoarsely.

"Yes, I bought them all. Some in Newport, some in New York, some at Lenox—oh, everywhere! Now, tell me this," she interrupted. "Do you suppose that I would condemn you for doing on a large scale what I have been doing on a smaller scale ever since last November?"

A ray of hope dawned in Van Buren's eyes.

"Ethel!" he cried, seizing her by the hand. "You bought all those—for me?"

"I certainly did, Harry," she said quietly. "With my pin money and my bride money and all the other kinds of money that I could wheedle out of my dear old daddy. But answer me. Have I the right to sit in judgment on you——"

"Not by a long shot!" cried Van Buren. "It would be an act of the most consummate hypocrisy."

"That is the way I look at it, dear," she whispered, and then—well, all I have to say is that I don't believe anything like what happened at that precise moment ever happened in an attic store-room before.

And the wedding invitations were mailed that very evening.



AS PLAYED BY THE ORCHESTRA

By Marion Hill

Author of "The Pettison Twins," etc.

OWING to his vague quality of "niceness"—a quality hard to define in a companion actor, depending less upon his possession of assertive virtues than upon his complete lack of aggressiveness of any sort—San Vallergera was easily the best-liked man in the company. We also considered San the most invaluable man in the company, even though he could not act. All he could do was to play the piano. But it was enough.

After hearing and seeing San Vallergera play the piano, one semi-consciously lost reverence for vehement virtuosos who pounded to produce harmony celestial, for San could produce the same thing, and better, without the apparent lifting of a finger. When San sat down to an instrument he simply put his lean, big white hands upon the notes and as good as glued them there, for they never flew pseudo-artistically up in the air, or pounced down, or scampered mously from one end of the board to the other, yet they drew such music from the keys as would fill a listener's heart with almost unbearable emotions. No person in trouble, man or woman, could ever hear San play and not break down and cry like a child.

Waiting for trains, usually the most irksome part of the day's work, was made comparatively interesting for us whenever San could find a hotel piano fit to play upon. We *had* to listen, and generally gathered about him, whether or no.

Turning around upon the stool one time, San happened to remark that music, to be music, had to be grief-laden, that "cheerful music" was a meaningless paradox.

"How about Mendelssohn's Spring Song?" gently contradicted Serene Willing, our clever little leading lady, somewhat of a musician herself. "It is as cheerful and sweet as a brook."

"This cheerful?" asked San, his pale, bright face full of amazement. "*This?*"

Slowly turning to the keys, he played it. Every school-girl does too; but not as he. He somehow whispered it. There is no other way

of describing the touch. The song moved with the swift brilliance of a dream, unreal, haunting, wonderful; and the recurrent refrain of it came each time with the lonely, startled cry as of a lost bird calling through the night. After it died away the first time our hearts felt bruised and aching, and we hoped it might not come again, we not feeling any too sure of being able to bear it; then it did come again, and again, and again, disciplining us into endurance, though we shrank, suffering, from the unearthly beauty of it.

When San got through we were storm-shaken.

"That cheerful?" he asked, still palely amazed.

"Not a bit," said Delicia Wright indignantly, as she smeared a tear-stain across her harassed face.

"It is a Spring Song indeed," pondered Serene, sensitively dazed, "but of some lovely spring that is dead, with all its hopes; a spring that will never come again."

"That's it," agreed San, his deeply-set eyes staring into the past. "A spring that will never come again. Never come again."

He had a story back of him somewhere, but we did not know what it was. For one thing, he was parted from his wife—as a result of his niceness. Without sarcasm, it is a peculiar general fact that a man whose wife cannot get on with him is splendidly well-liked by all the rest of the world.

Delicia Wright was watching him. She usually was. "Sa-an," she threw in lazily, making two sing-song syllables of his name.

"Yes, Sloppy?" he countered, politely attentive. We all called her "Sloppy Ann." We quite had to, she always having a button or two off her shoes, a rip in her glove, a hole in her veil, a pin showing under her belt, and an inch or so of underskirt dragging beneath her dress.

"Sa-an, do you take morphine?"

"No, Delicia"—gravely unsurprised—"though when I see you I wish I did. Why?"

"Is my hair out?" she asked, gathering from his retort that there was something especially askew about her at the moment. She felt her mass of hair, poked in projecting strands, knew that they poked right out again, but did not in the least care. "Why, you look so spare and white, your smile fairly creaks, and you have a witch-ridden air generally."

"Have n't slept for weeks," he said easily. "That's all."

"But it means a break-down, San dear," warned Serene.

"I know it," said San in a matter-of-fact way.

"Heavens, San, you must n't," implored Lonny Baker, tugging reprovingly at his wisp of mustache. "Who'd play the accompaniment to my song and dance in the second act?"

"Any orchestra," interpolated Delicia Wright scornfully. She

liked San—indeed, she liked him more warmly than he wished—but she had an aversion to anybody occupying the centre of the stage for too long at a time. She was rather a nagger. All untidy women are, even the young and pretty ones—like Delicia herself.

“But he has no score for that particular music, the slouch; he just plays it out of his own head, like this;” and Lonny, wild-eyed, cramped his fingers and performed a spirited solo on air.

“Oh, it’s a tumpty-tum thing that anybody can play,” soothed San.

“Maybe, but how about the music all through the first scene of the last act? The chip-of-Europe music?” persisted Lonny.

“The ‘Fragment of Italy’?” asked San, with the noticeably stiff diffidence of all modest composers when pronouncing the names of their own pieces. “I admit there is no one who can play *that*, for I have never written it out.”

“Gosh, San! don’t croak, for *my* sake. How I’d hate to play that scene without the Italy-chip!” mused Lonny ruefully.

And we knew exactly how he felt. Once get used to a certain strain of music during a scene and it is really impossible to play it well to any other air. And “The Fragment of Italy,” as San styled his melody, was as divine a bit of music as ever floated tremblingly out of a piano’s minor chords. The scene always called into play every handkerchief in the audience, and none of us was stupid enough not to lay fully half the credit to San.

“I won’t break down without giving you time to work in a substitute,” promised San Vallerga conscientiously.

But he did.

Slightly to explain—we were playing cheap melodrama to wretched houses in New York’s smallest towns. We always carried into an advance town the hotel proprietor of the town we left. He came along to sit all night in the box-office and try to take what was owing him out of the receipts; but as there were seldom any receipts, all he got for his journey was an unlimited exercise of his profanity.

Comrades who are better off invariably ask, “Why do you stay? Why don’t you leave and go home?” Yes; but suppose we have no home, what then? Are we any more comfortable starving in a city? Or, again, they ask: “Why did you ever join such a concern in the first place?” Because, for one thing, the concerns never promised to be so bad as they eventually turned out to be; for another thing, the concerns are generally the last chance of a season, and it would be madness to refuse; thirdly, it sometimes happens that we are sneakingly glad of an opportunity to play leading business—which would never be our portion in a first-class company.

This tour was particularly wretched. Once launched on it, though, we loyally hung together and made the best of things. Our funds

never carried us very far from New York City. We circled around it like buzzards around a bone, and we made the discovery that for sleepy towns and barns of theatres New York State right now is worse than the Middle West ever dreamed of being.

And Gardenville marked the climax. At first we could not even find the theatre. We asked everybody we met. Each person corrected our pronunciation, saying "The-ay-ter?" and then wound up by telling us he did not know just *where* it was. We stumbled by chance upon the owner, and he proudly took us to it, an old paper mill, right down by the water's edge. Entering it, to get to the stage we had to climb over an accumulation of ancient mill-truck, boards, wheels, wires, and what-not, down to a platform before which were arranged benches to seat perhaps two hundred people.

"What are the chances for a full house?" we asked after a silent view.

"Wal," said the mill owner dubiously, chewing his beard, "they's a straw-ride on fer to-night."

"What do folks mean by straw-riding in October?" demanded Lonny disgustedly.

The mill owner chewed his beard for Lonny quite a while and then explained carefully, "Wal, they's a moon."

"And a dance over to Plick's Hall," threw in a sepulchral voice from some Gardenville-ite who had crept in with the party.

Right here our Adam Everly, a dear, cranky old man who gathered ill news as inevitably as a chick grows feathers, hurried in from the outside, bearing to our already distraught manager the tidings that San Vallerga had collapsed.

"Went over like a nine-pin, Mr. Trenk, and came to gibbering like a pet monkey. Hotel doctor strapped him to a cot and gave him a hypodermic. Says San won't move for hours."

"Dangerous?" inquired Trenk.

"No; been living too much on his nerves, doctor says, but will be all right if we feed him well for a few months and keep him from thinking. Easy, eh? Lord! these doctors!"

"I'd change places with Vallerga in one glad minute," muttered Trenk, mopping his brow. He already had his book out of his pocket and was looking over the music cues. Then to the mill owner: "I've got to rehearse the orchestra."

"Huh?"

"Orchestra. Rustle 'em up."

"Huh?" The beard was disappearing inches at a time.

"Have n't you any piano here?—orchestra?—music?"

"Music, sure! Orchestra, sure! I'll rustle her up. I'll have her here by four o'clock."

He went away, and Trenk frantically set to work to evolve some order out of the hodge-podge of scenery wedged at the back of the platform. There was one native stage-hand to help us, a taciturn young fellow who grunted like an octogenarian with every move he made, and who kept on his derby hat through storm and stress. He shed in succession his coat, his vest, his tie, his collar, even one shoe, which doubtless pinched, but never his derby. The mill owner had introduced him as Melk, whether a first name or a last we never found out. Melk was a God-send. His final move was to go out and gather some footlights for us in the shape of different sized and patterned kerosene lamps.

"And see that you turn them down at the right time," instructed Trenk. "We want a dark stage at the cue, 'The night has come and we are far from home.' See?"

Melk grunted interestedly, nodded, and we all felt somehow sure that those lights would go down and at the right time, too.

Lonny Baker kept growing more and more nervous about the music, which was under his general direction. Four o'clock came, with no orchestra, and a few minutes past; then there rattled leisurely up to the open side door of the mill a cart loaded with a small thing like the top of a sewing-machine. The driver picked it up in his arms and brought it into us, setting it on the floor below the kerosene lamps.

"Where's the monkey?" quizzed Trenk, who had reached the limit of anguish and therefore greeted this new calamity as a joke.

"Why, what is it?" demanded Lonny, glowering at the article and refusing to believe his eyes, which told him all too plainly exactly *what* it was.

"Orchestra," said Trenk, affably waving a hand towards it, a farcically small organ of a type that used to be found in the barroom of country stores.

The drayman went his way. Melk sat restfully on top of the ridiculous instrument, settled his derby, and took solid interest in us and our troubles.

Lonny's tension snapped. "Who's to play the fool thing?" he bellowed.

"I play it," said a very shy voice at the front door, and we all pivoted around to find out what we were to get next.

Preceding the mill owner, threading her way daintily down past the mill-truck and the benches, was a little country girl about fifteen years old. Her face was unspeakably fair and pretty, and she was as serious as a judge, but she was dressed in a pink, starched gown, very short and childish; and she wore her chestnut hair braided in a thick rope down her back.

"Oh, preposterous!" exploded Trenk furiously.

"You show 'em what ye kin do, Miss Jinny," championed the mill owner. "Don't leave 'em discombobble ye!"

"I am not—discombobbled," said Miss Jinny, with a demurely charming smile. She came right in among us with a fawn-like audacity. Putting her big hat on a bench, pulling off a skimpy little coat, she then eyed Lonny, who held the music, with a straight-gazed intensity which perfectly well unmasked and rebuked his rampant doubt. "We will begin, if you please," she said; and seated herself at the toy joke.

Melk obligingly lounged off the top of it and leaned against a near wall. Melk was too well entertained to go home.

"Miss Jinny, this is *manuscript music!*" said Lonny, perspiring in his distress. Manuscript music is written practically in Chinese, taking an adept to decipher it; hen-scratches are legible in comparison.

"Yes?" murmured Miss Jinny, perfectly unruffled. Sitting there at the baby organ, her brief skirts puffing out around her like fuchsia petals, her hair swinging to the floor, she did not look reassuringly old, to say the least; but when she unerringly pulled out the proper stops and laid her firm hands on the keys in a capable, quiet style which could not have been outdone by San Vallerga himself, why, Lonny capitulatingly dumped the music on the rack in front of her.

Abstracted but unembarrassed, Miss Jinny bent her serious, lovely face over the stragglingly grotesque notes and played them through. When she finished the overture, Melk grunted hard. He, too, had evidently been under a strain.

"By Jove, Miss Jinny, you are wonderful!" said Lonny faintly. He was experiencing relief so tremendous as to be physically weakening.

If Miss Jinny's cool smile had not been so completely sweet, it might almost have looked contemptuous. Bending her head in grave acceptance of the compliment, she started the curtain music and accomplished it magnificently. Incidental bits and the second act music went as easily.

"But I don't know what to do about my song, Miss Jinny; there's no score for it," began Lonny.

She quietly cut him short, ordering "Hum it," and accompanying him by ear as skilfully as a veteran.

The mill owner beamed with a proprietary air, and Melk let off a second satisfied grunt.

"And the dance?" hazarded Lonny.

"Whistle it, please, and do the steps," gently commanded the starchy, pink little lady.

Lonny obeyed.

She caught the air at once and soon was jiggling it off with a catchy

abandon which set our feet going. Melk did quite a *pas seul*, both hands on his derby.

Finished—"By *Jove*, Miss Jinny!" was all the admiring Lonny could say.

Instead of stupidly disclaiming the deserved compliment, she again gravely accepted it with a pretty little dip of her chestnut head. Miss Jinny had our hearts fast; she was adorable.

"Are we done?" was her demure hint.

"Only one thing more," said Lonny. "You've played perhaps in church, Miss Jinny?"

"I am the organist."

"By *Jove*! Well, we want something rather like an offertory for the first scene in the last act; quiet and sweet; sad as you can make it."

While carefully listening to him she was playing a succession of pianissimo chords—improvising.

"Yes; that sort of thing," commended Lonny. "It has to last for six or eight minutes—you time yourself by the lights; when they go down—that's up to *you*, Melk"—(grunt) "start the music and keep it going till the lights are on again. I think we're done now, Miss Jinny, and I am sure we all thank you."

As half a dozen of us dashed to help her into her flimsy little jacket, a tinge of amused color crept into her fair face, and again she was not "discombobbled." When she had put on her big hat, adjusted the music under her arm, and stood sweetly looking at us for possible last commands, she was certainly the prettiest picture that the dusky old mill had ever framed, and when she left it the swift darkness of October evening seemed hastened by her going.

Getting back to the hotel to snatch a bite of dinner, we had time to think of poor San Vallerga.

"He is doing wonderfully well," said Serene Willing, coming out of his room and closing the door softly behind her. "He is over the effect of the opiate and is now sleeping naturally." Her eyes brimmed with tears.

"Then why *leak*?" exasperatedly demanded Sloppy Ann, out of the middle of whose pompadour a hairpin was sticking, unicorn fashion.

"It was so sad," explained Serene, girlishly wiping away her tears on the back of her hand. "He went all to pieces, like any sick chap on the road; and has been moaning out little sentences about home, calling for his mother, then for his wife, then for his child—"

"The *child*'s a new one on *me*!" jerked Delicia, the hairpin shooting out another full inch.

"Raving or sane, it was sad," said Serene, hiding her face in her hands.

"Brace up, brace up," said Trenk managerially, but patting her

commendingly. "Things are n't so black. The 'op'ry' house is certainly a scream, but the indications are that we shall pack it. All the mill hands at the new mill bought tickets when they came out at five o'clock, this being pay day. We've hardly anything left to sell but standing room."

"Sounds like a new pair of socks," commented Lonny hopefully, with a glance of promise at his feet.

"Sounds as if McGinnis, owner of the Grand Eagle Hotel, where we stopped yesterday, would get his board money," guessed Everly.

"Got it and gone," tersely admitted Trenk.

There was something so supremely new in this situation of paying off a hotel man that we all gave way to riotous laughter, scattering in affright towards the dining-room lest the unusual hilarity should disturb Vallergera.

Reaching the theatre, later, we found out that Trenk's prognostications were quite true and that the mill was packed with people. A stolid, quiet people they were, too; early comers, and apparently oblivious of the incongruities of their "the-ay-ter," of its big stove in the middle of the aisle, of the kerosene footlights, of the candles in wall brackets, of the dwarf organ and child organist.

Miss Jinny was just a white flower. Her short mull dress was ironed creaseless, a touchingly babyish sash was tied around her waist, and a ribbon like a pale butterfly finished off her swinging braid. Neither excitement nor nervousness showed on her star-bright face, just pleased preoccupation, and when the time came she pulled out all her stops, put on the loud pedal, and crashed that overture around the hall as triumphantly as a band of twenty pieces.

"Firsh rate," thickly confided a peaceably drunk mill-hand to his unwilling and unthankful neighbor.

This mild drunkard was one of our many curses during the evening, but we dared not eject him, for the reason that he was never offensive enough. All he did was to repeat speeches which chanced to catch his slumberous attention.

For instance, one of Lonny's impressive cues was, "*I must see my father!*"

"He mush she's father," carefully translated the man to his post-like companion, mercifully falling asleep immediately afterwards.

"*Is this the end?*" wailed Delicia, further on.

He waked at once, inquiring anxiously, "Ish it? End?" And so on all through the performance. It was frightful. But the audience took him without a murmur, as part of the fantasies of the evening. Babies cried and the mothers either fed them into silence or jounced them to sleep; nobody appeared disturbed. That audience was inspiringly attentive, and therefore our melodrama went tremen-

dously well. We acted up to our level best, exactly as to a New York patronage; and the generous mill-hands deserved it.

During one of our pathetic scenes they paid us the inspiring compliment of being deathly silent, and we were doing the finest work of which we were capable when—

“S-s-s-crrack!” Some wretched creature filled up the stove with coal, not in one considerate crash, either, but in torturingly polite dribbles. We who played through it grew maddened, but the audience maintained a restful unawareness.

“*Good-by, the dreariest word there is!*” softly sobbed Serene.

“Drearish wor’ thiz,” explained the inebriate elaborately and kindly to his stoic associate.

Miss Jinny more than made good her promise of the afternoon, and she helped Lonny Baker get a rousing encore for his song and dance.

But if that audience had not been the gentlest-mannered audience in the world, they would have roared with laughter through our sad third act; instead they finely ignored all mishaps.

“*Night has come, and we are far from home,*” spoke Serene.

“Nightsh come!” said the drunkard, surprised unspeakably. “Far ’m home.”

Here the remembering Melk unconcernedly *walked upon the stage*, derby in place, and knelt before each lamp to turn it down, easing each kneel with a good grunt.

And the blessed gentlefolk in front never so much as smiled! Under the encouragement of their perfect, countrified courtesy, we recovered from the shock Melk had given us and acted as truly well as we knew how. The scene went impressively, so impressively that we slowly awakened to a second shock, one almost supernatural; for Miss Jinny was accompanying the scene with the very music wedded to it in our minds—she was playing Vallerga’s “*Fragment of Italy*”!

From here, from there, in the thrilled audience sobs broke out, which sound cheered us splendidly, and we played the thing to a really triumphant finish. Coached, Melk turned up the footlights from the comparative inconspicuousness of the front of the stage. Everything raced properly to a seemly close, and the final curtain fell upon a houseful as satisfied as it was kindly.

By the time that we were out of our make-up and in street attire we found that the thrifty Melk had blown out the lamps and returned them, leaving us in isolated darkness. From the blackly empty mill every soul had gone, even little Miss Jinny.

Returning to the hotel, we were delighted to find that San was well enough to be talked to, so we raided his room, wildly desirous of telling him about the clever little girl and of her extraordinary choice of his own composition for the very scene to which it spiritually belonged.

Glad of company, he lay listening to us in a state of peaceful entertainment until we reached our climax. At that he sat up suddenly in bed and motioned Serene and Delicia to leave the room.

"For I am going to dress and go out," he said, his eyes blazing strangely.

"You are not, dear," Serene said promptly, feeling his wrist and brow for presumable fever. He kissed the hand gratefully as it came near his lips, but brushed it authoritatively aside.

"Never was better," he said; and Serene nodded a startled assent.

"Sa-an, try not to be a three-ply idiot," besought Delicia, as angry as she was worried.

"Among so many, how can I help it?" he parried, swooping determinedly for his garments.

"Humor him, girls, and leave the room," ordered Trenk, sending them away. "*I* can keep him sanely in bed or know the reason why."

But he could not. No one could. There was no dissuading Vallergera, and that maniac got up and dressed and staggered out, to wander around a strange town in the middle of the night. Disgusted, we sought our slumbers and enforcedly left San to hunt for a relapse in his own best way.

Practically we never saw him again—not to get any good of him, that is.

He was at the depot to see us off next morning, little Miss Jinny clinging to his arm, and he was radiant. So was Jinny radiant. From all accounts, so was Mrs. Jinny, too; though *she* was not in evidence.

For Miss Jinny was Virginia Vallergera, San's little daughter, of whom he had lost trace for years, born in Italy and in whose natal honor the "Fragment" had been written. But San could not talk to us very much about it, mostly gripping our hands and shaking them over and over.

To Serene, "The spring is in blossom again—and things are all right—all right for me—at last," he choked.

As our train pulled out and we glanced back at the pair who stood hand in hand and waved God-speed to us, they certainly looked it.

While we—oh, well, the longer we live the surer we are—everything comes all right—for everybody—some time.



THE TREE, THE ROPE, AND THE MAN

By *Will Levington Comfort*

Author of "The Viper," "Lady Thoroughbred, Kentuckian," etc.

THEY had been the only passengers for hours in an Arizona stage-coach, travelling southward from the railroad to the border. The man turned to the woman and said:

"Miss Grather, what are you going to do in Ariosa?"

"I have heard that there is a real Spanish Inn there—one of the few left on this side of the River," she replied. "I mean to take a room, read my books, study the mountains, and possibly get a bit lonesome. I never have been lucky about finding things to do to help other people."

"The town is full of men—miners," said Ellery.

"Oh, I am not at all conventional—not at all afraid," she answered readily. "I have always found people to be more or less considerate of me—especially men."

Ellery looked out of the dust-dimmed window of the stage. The mesa was sterile, golden. Far western mountains looked vague as spirits in the intense glow of the day. The east was less shot with light and the mountains there were realities, huge with silence. Mountains were ahead, too; over the border Ariosa was pocketed in them and the river hid. Behind was the Trail—towns bound with shining threads of steel, men and women bound with laws and fears and habits, shadowed by their buildings, bruised by their pavements—all these at the end of the Trail. The mere thought of such things now lamed the fibres of the woman's mind. She panted for emancipation. There was a breeze of it in the very name. *Ariosa*. So she had come.

"And what are you going to do in Ariosa?" she asked.

"I'm a gambler."

"Umm—that's interesting."

Ellery saw that she was startled. He believed he understood her. She was tired of things that were curtained and roofed and painted. She wanted Nature's men and Nature's things. If she found them, she would falter and turn away, he believed.

Ellery pitied her, too. To him there was nothing more pitiful in the round rough world than a woman trying to be natural, and trusting men to allow her to be. She had declared that men had been more or less considerate of her so far. He said to himself that she did not know men, or she would not have said this. . . . She might have known one man——

The gambler looked at her closely. He decided that she had been hurt in the east, and that the hurt had not healed. He did not like to think of her being hurt again, trying to be natural. . . . She was tall, had fine, steady dark eyes, plenteous hair, a sensitive mouth, and cheeks that were young. The stage crawled like a tired bee over the soundless sand.

“Are gamblers honest?” she asked.

“Not as a rule.”

It may have been the swaying of the coach, but her shoulders bent toward him as she questioned further:

“But you—you are honest?”

“Not as a rule,” he replied.

She did not speak again. The trail sank with the dusk into the valley. Ariosa—a low, sandy, sprawly town; huts of sun-dried brick; shacks of unsmoothed, unpainted timbers; mounds of 'dobe; a sand-strewn street aimless as a vagary. White men with beards and thick red throats and tortured eyes; the Spaniard who kept the Inn, a lie in his voice, a menace in his look, but foliage upon his veranda! Over all, Silence—but a strained, nervous, sick-room Silence.

“Don't be lonesome yet,” Ellery said at supper. The Spaniard had shown them to a little table apart. “A new place always looks ill and alien when you come in the dusk.”

“Oh, no,” she answered, “I'm not lonesome.”

The lamps had not yet been brought. Her words had a forced sound. “Ariosa seems to think of us together,—as related in some way,” she added.

“I'll explain at once that we are just acquaintances of a day's travel, if you wish.”

“Don't mind—I mean, don't hurry about it, unless you prefer,” she hastened to say.

The words warmed him. Ariosa frightened her, and she relied upon him a little. Ellery had long put this sort of thing away. He was living his days in the coldest, cruelest way to himself that he knew—his life now an expiation for some act which has only a shadowy concern here. It is enough that the man had built a monastery about himself, and there was wintry austerity in his laws.

There was something delicious in the woman's influence now. Her presence weakened him; yet Ellery allowed the weakness to encroach a

little—permitted the star-stuff to play with him a moment before he put it away. To feel that his senses, hard-held so long, were only the more splendidly responsive now to all these subtle, poignant, dream-wrapt things, was immense, sensational. It was like, only infinitely keener than, the first fires of wines racing through the thin-walled veins of an ascetic.

“Ariosa is not herself to-night,” he said carefully, his voice possibly a little dulled with the effort. “A new placer was discovered yesterday, after a steady eke of years. It always crazes men a little. The news has n’t really got up north yet, or we should n’t have been the only passengers in the coach to-day. It appears that I am the first vulture to settle down—old luck of mine.”

She shivered. “Why do you always remind me that you are a gambler?” she asked. “I’d forget it—if you did n’t keep telling me.”

Days drew on. Ariosa was utterly abhorrent to her. There was not a tittle of her dreams in the dead-souled, gold-poisoned place. Days dull with labor; nights restless with evil; human beings vibrating between stupor and frenzy. The sudden, crazy yield of gold from the river had destroyed the first charm of crude men—their poverty. . . . Horrible lessons of life were read to her in the days and nights. The miners were inflated with the yellow toxin, the simple elements of their chivalry smothered. She had felt their eyes follow her; she had heard them speak her name. . . . Other women had come.

She never could have remained but for Ellery, yet it was through no word of his that she tarried. She felt something vast and wise and unsoilable in the man. He gave no outward show of these great values, but she sensed them. They steadied her in the tragic gale of things.

That he was a gambler; by his own word the first of the vultures to descend upon the lucky town—this fact by some startling process was changed into an illusion; and her conception of a stately sanctuary hidden in the man became the prime reality of her days. She had moved, bruised and hopeless, in a world that had lost its fineness to her—until Ellery came. Certain words of his, lightly, carelessly uttered, had rung true as a whisper from the Universal Mind. He had been wicked; she felt that she had been wicked, too. She staked all now upon his straight strange eyes. Romance had been dead within her, but he had rolled away the stone from the tomb.

Upon the upper balcony of the little Spanish Inn the woman sat thinking, listening. She had been with Ellery in the afternoon, many afternoons. She was waiting now for a word with him—when he should be through for the night across the street. His faro outfit was there

in the Old Guard saloon. It was the chief place of the kind in town and was crowded as usual. A further stage-load of women, most of them from Tucson, had just arrived. Some of them were in the Old Guard now. Everybody drank. The sound of voices was like a cannibal din on some lost horrid shore.

Suddenly a whining, maudlin voice was raised. Something in the words stilled all others, even as they came home to the woman listening across. She knew the words meant her.

“. . . she lives at the Spaniard's and is a little more particular—that's all the difference. Hell, yes, she'll drift over here with the other girls before she gets shed o' Ariosie——”

Hard and quick out of the silence she heard Ellery's voice then:

“Another word—and I'll kill you!”

“Hell, she's waitin' up for you now—you crooked card-sharp——”

A gun crashed. The place was drowned in dimness and filled with throaty, scurrying sounds—then a new voice roared:

“Don't let him get away! He's murdered Jem Christie—shot him through the mouth for——”

Ellery's voice broke in again:

“Be careful what you say next, Link Cupples, or, sheriff or not, you'll go out hot on Jem's trail!”

There was a moment of utter dark at the Old Guard, and the woman across swooned. When there was light and her senses returned, she was straining over the balcony, her mind clutched in the hideous fear that he had been knifed from behind. It was not so. He stood helplessly bound, but calm, in the pack of men, and Link Cupples, the sheriff, spoke:

“No one goes out hot on Jem Christie's trail but you, Ellery. I run the morals of this town, and no faro-dealin' shark shoots down townsmen of mine for expressin' opinions. You're about five years late in Ariosie for that shootin' truck. . . . We'll take him out to the Tree, men. We don't need him, any way, and we did have use for pore Jem Christie.”

To the Tree! Her first business was to fight for his life. The valves of her heart opened wide, and her veins bounded with red blood. Back into the inn, down the stairway and across the street she sped in the dark. . . . There should be no hanging while she was a living, conscious woman—but his face in the Old Guard light weakened her! They were leading him out of the door—when he saw her!

“For God's sake, go back!” he said roughly. The look of anguish was the first emotion that had ever played upon his features for her eyes. It was like a face seen in the lightning upon dashing waters. His manner changed instantly. “Go back to your room, please,” he pleaded. “It's all right for me, but this is no place for you—to-night!

There was a dispute over the cards. I'm in wrong. I killed a man——”

“I heard the dispute,” she answered. “I can't go back! These men—— My God!—these men surely won't hang you because you defended me! I heard what you said—what that other man said——”

Ellery spoke brokenly: “I ask you now—for me—to go back——”

“Let her come along!” said Cupples. “She won't do no harm. She don't often associate—like this here——”

The words pulled a cry from her, not from the shame of them, but because they made her feel the man who uttered them with some terrible psychic force. Link Cupples was a monster of brute metal. She was hopeless of touching, reaching him. She felt that the men were his—that she could not make them *hers* against the iron of the sheriff. . . . She felt the awful burn of a woman's laugh from the crowd. . . . Another woman—Arizona called her the “Tiger Lily”—a huge woman with mad eyes, yellow hair, and a painted skin, caught her by the shoulder, and peered for an instant into her face. Then this creature stopped the crowd and cried to the men:

“Say, what kind of an outfit is this? Can't you see this woman is not our kind? Can't you see that she loves the man? Can't you see that all he did was to try to keep her name clean from such as you, Link Cupples—and from our kind of women? . . . Holy Mother, you hang a man for that! You ought to hang him if he had n't killed Jem Christie! . . . For the love of God, peel off the beasts you live in for one night and see this thing right! . . . I want to say that with more men in the world like this gambler there would be less women of my kind! I want to say that if I had known a man like that in the beginning, there'd be no Tiger Lily following lucky camps around this hell-smitten end of Arizona. . . . Say, I know this Ellery, and I want to remark—though he would n't light a cigarette in the same house with me now—I want to say that God loves the woman here, if Ellery does, for he's *full-length a man!*”

The dawn rolled up like fire-lit smoke behind the mountains. Miss Grather and the gambler stood together on the upper balcony of the Spanish Inn.

“. . . but it was she who saved your life—not me,” the woman repeated.

Ellery shuddered.

“But don't you want your life—even if I want you to have it?” The words were forced; her voice a whisper.

“I was n't thinking of wanting it or not,” he answered. “I was thinking of you—what would be good for you——”

Her cold fingers fell upon his hand. “Does n't it look peaceful

and friendly over there?" she murmured. "Over there—in old Mexico, with the morning upon the mountains?"

He turned to her quickly, his eyes suddenly and strangely lit. . . . From farther down the street came the loud laugh of a woman—ghastly mockery of the new day! They knew the voice—the Tiger Lily's voice. It stopped the words on Ellery's lips. The woman beside him was in tears.

"Why don't you speak?" she faltered. "I thought we were like two ships, far from travelled-lines, plying a strange, precarious course—met after storms—broken by the storms—but I thought we might help each other to mend and grow bright again—shaping our course——"

"You take me on a chance like this?" he demanded intensely. "Who knows what contraband—what black flag I carry?"

She stepped back from him and questioned slowly: "Are you free to take a woman?"

"Yes."

"Then the chance is mine," she replied softly. "My heart seems to know you. I believe in you because you are slow—slow to forget past years! All the more am I unafraid because I heard what that woman said."

Ellery called in the Spaniard, and paid him. "Hold our baggage until it is sent for. We are going over into Old Mexico," he said.

Rapidly, in the rising day, they walked along the sandy winding street, and down the trail through the tinted wilderness to the River.



HOPE AND DESPAIR

BY CLARENCE URMY

IF the sap is in the tree, it is not dead;
 If the joy is in the heart, Love has not fled.
 But, you say, the sap is gone? Then lay it low.
 Of the wood a coffin make for hapless Woe.

DEDUCTIONS

ONE never solved the secret of the rose's perfume by picking the petals apart.

SOMETIMES a broken heart means a mended conscience.

Walter Pulitzer

A PLEA FOR LESS COAL

By George Ethelbert Walsh

EVERY time the fire is shaken and replenished with coal, or the dusty ashes are removed from the grate, a great cry of human discontent arises in the land, and an old protest is recorded anew against one of those "necessary evils" of which there seems to be no end. Why did nature—so perfect and accommodating in most of her beneficent creations—stumble so lamentably in the fuel problem? Could she not have invented some product of land or water that would yield us light and heat without unlocking all this dust and soot and smoke and ashes? Even the old-fashioned wood-pile, with its clean, sweet pine logs and hickory sticks, was better than the dirty coal-bin, but, as if grudging us this simple solace, nature shortens the wood supply, so that we are forced back upon the refuse of the carboniferous period. And now is sounded among us the tocsin reminding us that it is our duty to plant trees for the next generation. If somebody had only thought of this earlier, what an amount of clean, spicy wood we might burn in place of the black, sooty coal!

But, to return to nature's shortcoming in not providing us with a suitable and accommodating fuel: it is a question that must be considered in the light of present-day discoveries and transitions. The problem is as ancient as the story of Prometheus and his fire stolen from heaven, receiving the attention of each succeeding generation, but in no two countries is it alike. It may mean the growth and extension of peat bogs in Ireland, the general supply of dried bones and mummies in Egypt, the probable depth of the coal-seams in Europe and America, and the growing of corn-cobs and grain in the Western part of our own country. The Eskimo considers the whale and seal fisheries, and counts his fuel problem solved if the one blows and the other bellows on the ice before his hut. The Indians of British Columbia lay up their dried salmon for food and fuel, and give no thought to coal or wood. It is recorded by travellers that on the coast of Scotland the petrels are turned into lamps and stoves

for heating and illuminating purposes, and in the suggestive words of one, "They burn well and diffuse around a delightfully appetizing odor." In the Black Forest the pine-cones provide fuel for a large population; but the benighted inhabitants of India, Peru, and Asia Minor utilize dried offal and manure for heating and lighting purposes.



We have reached the age of reason now, when old superstitious fears can no longer frighten us. Fortified with scientific truths, we do not cringe before the manifestations of Nature. We know—crafty old dame that she is—that she cannot altogether starve, or freeze, or drown us out. Her most violent moods can be rendered ineffective; we may suffer a little from them, but they cannot universally kill and destroy. Moreover, we know that she is bound to support all the population that cares to be born on the globe, and that she has latent forces in her that will add tremendously to our comfort and pleasure. So we do not look the future in the face with dread, and lament the coming of the age when man must starve or freeze to death. People who tell us of the probable failure of the coming crops to support the teeming millions are answered pertinently: "When the time comes, we shall find some new way to increase the food supply." And those who would predict a fuel famine in the near future are answered likewise: "When the coal gives out, we shall not need it any more; we shall have other fuel."

England had her spasm of fear years ago. The alarm was spread broadcast throughout the land that the coal mines would probably be exhausted in the near future. Royal commissions were appointed to investigate, and they variously estimated the duration of the coal supply from two hundred to twelve hundred years. Then what?—well, everybody was congratulating everybody else that they were not born two hundred years later. Mother earth is a good place to live on under present conditions; but without coal it might be a little too chilly and uncomfortable for our blood.

But this first fear of a coal famine in England was before the days of modern steam manufacturing—before ten thousand steam-engines began to consume coal at the rate of millions of tons per annum. The sudden expansion of steam-power manufacturing alarmed the people once more. The consumption of coal leaped upward at a tremendous pace—from 27,000,000 tons in 1816 to over 50,000,000 in 1850, to 84,000,000 in 1860, to 112,000,000 in 1870, to 147,000,000 in 1880, and to 200,000,000 gross tons in 1894. In 1905 the coal mined in Great Britain reached the enormous total of nearly 240,000,000 tons. Once more royal commissions investigated the question, and alarmists

proclaimed loudly that the coal famine was approaching. It looked very much as if such a state of affairs was coming to pass. People looked upon a scuttle of coal with more concern; the black, sooty fuel had assumed an importance in their minds never before attained. The conclusion of the discussion was finally announced, and people turned pale at it: the worst seemed to be at hand. At the same ratio of increase in consumption, it was said, the coal would be exhausted in a few centuries. Here was a definite limit placed upon the fuel, which every living person could grasp; it might not interfere with their comfort—for few would live a century—but their descendants would receive an inheritance of coal more limited than our inheritance of wood. It was not a pleasant outlook for the future of manufacturing England.

True, there were coal seams and mines in other countries—in Australia, the United States, South America, Africa, and Russia; but these were not England. Besides, many of these countries were forging rapidly to the front as users of coal. In order to supply the demand for coal in our own country, the output of the mines kept pace with that of England. In 1880 it was over 71,000,000 net tons; in 1889 it had risen to 141,000,000; in 1893 to over 182,000,000, and in 1905 to over 350,000,000. The demand for coal to supply heat and power increased nearly as much in Germany, Belgium, France, Russia, and Austria. The consumption presented the unpleasant aspect of enlarging rapidly all over the civilized world, while the supply remained fixed—a certain definite quantity.



But why is there less concern and less fear about the coal famine to-day than back in the sixties and seventies? England's coal mines have reached a depth of over 3,400 feet already, and the cost of mining will increase proportionately as the fuel is taken from lower seams and strata. Already the expense of mining has reached a point where it pays American shippers to send some of their surplus coal across the ocean. In the face of such adverse conditions, the wonder is that we hear less fear expressed about the coal famine, especially in manufacturing England, the country that will first feel the pinch.

The reason for this is not far to seek. It is the difference in the teaching of science that has slowly developed among us in the last quarter of a century. It is the optimism of science. We have just learned to take courage at Nature's teachings, and to read her aright. The spirit of the age is to hope and to expect more—not less. Nature provides enough for all, if we can only find it. She may be cunning enough to hide it from us for many decades; but, knowing that it is here somewhere, every one takes courage and pursues the search.

Fuel for light, heat, and power! There will be enough for thousands of generations yet to come. The coal mines may become exhausted, but the fuel will be around us in the form of gas, solar heat, or atmospheric changes. The coal epoch is merely preliminary to another grander, cleaner, and more comfortable period of utilizing Nature's stored-up forces of heat, power, and light. For coal, after all, is merely stored-up energy—the surplus power of the carboniferous period, laid down in the bowels of the earth for us to utilize. And even as we are making use of these vast deposits, Nature is wisely secreting a new power and energy: it may be in the gases of the air or in the invisible electricity of the earth and clouds, but it is here somewhere. When it is finally unlocked we shall have occasion to laugh at our fears of a coal-famine.

This optimism of science is a superb thing! It gives us courage on the very brink of disaster. No one yet knows the truth of the fuel problem; we have only inklings of it; we see flashes of great discoveries that may revolutionize the future. But so far we are dependent upon the coal mines, and for aught we know it may be centuries before we can discard this dirty, clumsy product of the earth for making heat, light, and power. There is even the possibility of its being the one essential for the comfort of the human race, and our teachings of science may be all wrong. But so confident has science made us that it would be difficult to convince anybody of it. We have grown too bold to let fears of this nature trouble us. We believe in the future tenancy of the earth; and, hence, instead of worrying about getting enough out of it for the bare necessities of life, we plunge in and demand pleasures and luxuries that never before seemed possible.



It was feared at one time that the rate of coal consumption would soon outgrow the rate of production, and there was talk of curtailing the use of coal in many industries. But the inventor proceeded to make coal-mining machinery which lessened the labor of extracting the raw product from the earth and increased the output tenfold. England to-day bases her hope of extending the period of her profitable coal-mining upon the invention of machinery that will compensate for the added cost of deeper mining. In America coal-mining machinery has doubled and tripled the output. A coal-digger cuts and extracts the coal from its bed as fast as three or four skilled miners could formerly do; it falls automatically upon cars, which swing upward like elevators to the light of day, and deposit their contents into chutes. Down the sooty mass tumbles to the breakers, where it is pounded and broken into sizes suitable for commerce. Thence it slides on to the washery, and

comes out at the other end to be dumped on cars. The cars quickly cross the country to some river or bay where canal-boats are waiting. The transference from the cars to the boats, and from the boats to the wholesale and retail dealers' coal-yards, is performed automatically. Even when the coal comes into our homes it is shot down chutes into the cellar, and not carried there in buckets and baskets as of old.

And yet for all this simplifying of labor, this invention of machines to reduce the dust and ashes, nobody likes coal, and we all pray for the time to come when its use may be abolished. It is not a popular article of commerce; it is a clumsy and dirty fuel, and in this age of invention and discovery it seems wofully out of date. It is not new machinery to increase the output that we are longing for, but the discovery of some new method of obtaining heat and power.

Over ninety per cent. of the coal that we use goes into smoke and ashes, and less than ten per cent. of its energy is utilized—some say five per cent. At any rate, we are inclined to agree with the figures when we see the smoke rolling up from a factory town, or watch the clouds of dust and ashes that sweep from the basement of our own houses when the wind is at an unfavorable quarter. Surely, so long as we must use coal, something must be done to abate this nuisance. Science has been telling us that much of this waste can be avoided, and that the smoke and dust can be consumed. The waste problem has been attacked seriously and successfully. More perfect combustion has been obtained; improved appliances have been invented for saving and transmuting heat into energy; and machinery has been made that recuperates and utilizes the so-called exhausted energy. These improvements alone are worth millions of dollars to the industrial world, and they reduce the consumption of coal by many millions of tons throughout the world for the performance of a given amount of work.



But the coal dust, the soot, the ashes, and the stifling smoke still remain. In part we have solved the problem by steam-heating and electrical plants, which conduct the heat and energy a long distance under the streets of our homes and public buildings. The amount of the nuisance has been reduced, and its area restricted. Nevertheless, for the majority of humanity there is coal still to be used, and there are ashes to be taken up, much to the detriment of our tempers and of the appearance of our homes.

All these improvements are encouraging; they point to an amelioration of present fuel nuisances. But we belong to an age that demands magical performances. Nobody is satisfied with these attainments. The optimism of our science leads us to believe that greater things

will soon happen. We are bent upon abandoning the dirty coal for some cheaper, cleaner, and more suitable fuel. We believe that Nature gave us the coal mines for a temporary use—merely to carry us over a period when we were learning to harness the tides and the winds, and to unlock the secret of gases. Shall we ever realize that utopian age when a silent, secret agent will enter all our houses and yield us power, heat, and light by the turning of a knob? Very few doubt it. And that agent will not be coal, nor will its power be derived directly or indirectly from coal. When it comes, the vast coal mines will become as useless and valueless as clay pits—more so, for clay will still be made into bricks.

Our optimism should not carry us too far, however; we should halt and consider facts. The time may be far distant when such expectations can be realized. The sources of our power and heat are the same to-day as they always were; but we are gradually learning to utilize them. Water is still the great primitive power; but we change its form and call it electricity. The contraction and expansion of the air were simple enough problems to the ancients; but we use power, derived from coal, to contract it mightily and call the resultant stored-up energy “compressed air.” The winds of the heavens have always played an important part in the commerce of the world, and so eminent an authority as Lord Kelvin predicted that when the coal-fields of England and other parts of Europe were exhausted, large wind engines, driving electrical generators, would be in general use, storing up energy in batteries to be drawn on as needed. We know not what the winds may yet yield in the way of power, energy, heat, and light.



Then there is the great, eternal, widespread solar heat—a power so great and general that we cannot measure it. Can this energy be collected and distributed at will? Can it be harnessed as we have harnessed Niagara, and be made to labor for us like any menial? This leads us to the consideration of the gases of the air and earth and water—tremendous powers for good or evil, temporarily imprisoned in forms that are rendered harmless and ineffective. Once loosen them, and they become our friends or enemies.

It is commonly said that animal power for work and locomotion has had its day, and that the horse is soon doomed to disappear, except for pleasure. May we not with equal cogency predict that coal has also nearly had its day as a fuel, and that it will soon disappear from our mechanical and industrial life, leaving our homes brighter, cleaner, and more cheerful, and our cities purer and healthier, by the absence of our present vitiated and gas-befouled atmosphere?

FOR THE SAKE OF THE KID

A BEGGAR STORY

By Theodore Waters

SOMETHING was doing in Chi Tom McGuckin's. McGuckin's, be it said, is the true capital of Beggardom. A mere Bowery saloon in appearance, its big back room is nevertheless the rendezvous for the professional beggars who operate in and around New York. In spite of its character, however, Chi Tom's usually preserves an unruffled surface. Occasionally, when some yeggmen come in after a successful raid on country post offices, it becomes the people of McGuckin's to make merry at their expense, but as a rule the aspect of the place is placid, and a stranger might think it an ordinary Bowery resort where denizens of the neighborhood gathered for an evening drink. On this night, however, a certain air of expectancy had so plainly fallen upon the place that I remarked it to my friend, the begging-letter writer.

"Oh," said the Scratcher, as he was known to the confraternity. "Don't you know about it? Sol Sparrow finishes his bit on the Island to-day, and we're lookin' for him any minute. Sol's the fellow that got boozed one day and walks into one of them swell Fifth Avenue houses where the door was left open. He walked up-stairs and fell asleep in the best bed in the house. The woman of the house walked in and found him among the laces, and they gave him a month in the work-house for it. You might have seen it in the papers."

At our table sat a young girl beggar, a well-known yeggman, and an elderly woman whose regular occupation was to sit crouched over a tuneless organ on street corners, all of whom laughed immoderately at the state of the Sparrow's feelings when he came to realize how he had fallen asleep in a place which he might have robbed with impunity.

"We'll give him the laugh good when he comes in," continued the Scratcher. "But the fact is, there might be a little business in it, too. The Sparrow must have made a find in a place like that, and you can't tell who he'll need to help him work it."

"It was sure enough wash-day around there next mornin'," laughed the girl on the opposite side of the table. "Can't you just see the Sparrow's black head nestlin' down among the pillows, and the lady of

the house lookin' him over and cryin', 'Goodness me, who's this?' And then Solly openin' his eyes and chirpin', 'It's me, the poor little Sparrow.' And then her takin' it on the run fer a front window and screechin' fer the cops to come and pinch 'im. And then he gets a month for it. Is n't it enough to make you turn honest?"

It was evident that the potential value of the Sparrow's find was being discussed at other tables, for when he walked in, some half-hour later, the hum of voices in the place ceased and he was greeted more or less effusively from a dozen tables at once.

"Hello, Sparrow! Come and have a drink." "Say, old pal, how'd you like your nap?" "Say, Solly, did you make a find?" Etc., etc.

The Sparrow was a bullet-headed denizen of the under world, long past middle age, whose propensity for strong drink had kept him from rising in his profession. And this is not meant to convey a paradox, for there are professionals on the Bowery who take the business of imposing on the public as seriously as any schemer with a suite of offices—men who make more out of the human nature game than they could make out of a trade, and who are in it solely for that reason. Hence their gibes had an effect upon the Sparrow such as would never have been felt by him outside of that particular resort. He paused midway in the room, and, gazing around resentfully, exclaimed:

"But I tell you I was n't soused. I was n't even asleep. If you want to believe what the newspapers say, why, that's up to you. But there never was a minute when I did n't know what I was doin'."

A voiceless sigh of appreciative interest breathed over the assemblage. The spirit of raillery immediately passed out of the room, expressions of admiration for the Sparrow's implied cleverness could be heard on all sides, and a dozen invitations to have a drink were hurled at him from various tables. But the Sparrow waved them all aside peremptorily.

"That's all right. That's all right," he said. "But I want to see Scratchie. Anybody seen Scratchie? Oh, there he is." And he walked over to our table and sat down.

"The bunch is all right," said the Sparrow, when a waiter had been told what he would most like to drink after a month's thirst. "The bunch is all right, but this is a little business which you and me can look after better than any of the others."

"Sure thing, Sparrow. I knew there was something doin'," responded the Scratchie, lying easily, as was his habit. "I said, 'The Sparrow would never let himself fall so easily unless he had made a find,' did n't I, Mame?"

"I made a find all right. But say, first of all—has anybody seen my kid since I was sent over?"

He referred to his motherless little daughter, who was left without a protector when he was sent to prison. We at the table shook our heads negatively.

"I thought she might 'a' been inquirin' for me. I went over to Allen Street, where I had a room, before I came around here, but there was nothing in it. Nobody 'round knew anything about her. God! if anybody did anything to that kid, I'd—I'd—— I wonder if the Gerrys took her! They'll hand her back if they did, or——"

"How did you happen on the place?" interrupted the Scratcher, who was not at all interested in children. The Sparrow responded immediately.

"It was this way," the Sparrow replied. "My old woman died a few days before I was sent over, and I was feelin' bum, because the old woman was all to the good. Take it from me, she was the best ever. Sure we had our run-ins, but that was mostly my fault, and maybe if I had let the booze alone she would n't have—would n't have——"

He faltered a moment. Scratchie made an impatient movement with his feet, and the Sparrow resumed:

"I was up against it hard, see?—and if it had n't been for a young gal from the Settlement House the old woman would n't have had no medicine, and I would n't 'a' had nothin' to bury her with. After the funeral I walked by me lonesome, and pretty soon I was drillin' up the avenue, not thinkin' where I was goin', and when I come to meself it's night, and I was wonderin' if the Kid had any dinner. I made up me mind to throw a fit and maybe collect a few from the crowd, when all of a sudden a swell guy walks up the steps of the very house where I'm startin' to throw me fit, and leaves the door open a little behind him.

"Well, it looked pretty good to me. There's nothin' like takin' a chance, so in I goes after him. It was a swell place all right, but just as I got inside I heard some one comin' up the basement stairs, so there's nothing for me but the next floor. I went up faster than a second-story worker could climb a porch. At the head of the stairs was a room with a big brass bed in it, and I was lookin' it over when of a sudden I heard somebody talkin'. I goes to the other door of the room and listens a bit, and it's then that I made me find."

The Sparrow stopped talking and slowly drained his glass. We looked at him expectantly, all except the Scratcher, who in an elaborate attempt to appear unconcerned flicked the ashes of a half-burnt cigarette into a cuspidor, meanwhile winking surreptitiously at the girl beggar. She, taking her cue from the wink, asked calmly enough:

"And what were they talking about, Sparrow?"

And the Sparrow, ignoring the girl, just as calmly replied:

"Scratchie, what do you figure it would be worth to hold your

tongue about a guy that's goin' to do a rich young girl out of her fortune that's been left to him to take care of for her?"

"It depends on the size of the fortune, and how near right you've got him," answered the Scratcher. "But look here, Sparrow. Where do I get off?"

"That's the point—where?" answered the Sparrow.

"Looks like halves to me," mused Scratchie. "You can't appear in it, because you've been caught with the goods in the house already, and, besides, you could n't write the proper kind of letters. Looks like halves."

"Halves it is," answered the Sparrow. "Well, I'm a-listenin' there at the door. There's two guys talkin'. One of them lived in the house, and the other was the fellow that left the front door open behind him. From what I made out, the one that lives in the house is the guardeen of a girl, and the other wants to marry her. The guardeen don't want it nohow, but the other tells him how he's found out that he's gone and spent a lot of her cash on himself, and if he don't let him marry her, he'll tell her all about it.

"The guardeen calls him some swell names that I don't know a meanin' of except that they is curses, and they don't come to no agreement until he springs a little joker on the guardeen by tellin' him that the girl's dead stuck on a young feller down-town, and if she marries *him*, why, the guardeen will get found out anyhow. That fetched him. The guardeen agreed to help the other feller marry the girl, and when she's married they're to divide the money between them."

"What's the girl's name?" asked the Scratcher sententiously.

"I don't know," answered the Sparrow. "And that's where you come in. You see, just then I heard some one comin' along the hall to the other door, and rather than take a chance on makin' a get-away I hopped into the bed and makes out I'm a drunk hobo. It was the guardeen's wife or housekeeper or somethin', and the holler she made was a peach. The fellers in the other room drug me out of the bed and turns on the burglar alarm, and a cop come and fanned me with his night-stick, and over I goes to the Island."

The Scratcher got out a piece of paper and began to make notes for the forthcoming blackmailing letters.

"What was the name of the guardian?" he asked.

The Sparrow fished a grimy newspaper clipping from his pocket.

"Here it is in the paper, and a picture of me with whiskers on. What do you think of that, and me mug in the Gallery since the days of Byrnes! Here it is—Twombly Carter, 1891 Fifth Avenue."

"Aw, say!" exclaimed the girl. "I know all about that guy. Why, dere's been a whole lot in the papers about him and his niece. He gave it out that she was going to marry one feller, and she says

she ain't, 'cause she is goin' to marry another. Sure thing. I was doin' a little bit up in the House of Good Shepherd, and she was one of the swell visitors. She was readin' to us out of a book one day when in walks a reporter and asks for her picture to put in the paper. 'Why?' says she. "'Cause you 're goin' to marry Mr.'—I forgit the name he said. 'I am not,' she says, right in front of us all. 'But your uncle, Mr. Carter, told me you were.' 'Never mind what my uncle said,' she says. 'I'm not.' And the next day it all come out in the papers how she and her uncle has a quarrel on account of it."

"We'll have to move quick or there won't be any money left for us," said the Scratcher. "What is the niece's name, Mame?"

"Let's see, it's——"

"Hey there, Sparrow," interrupted the bartender, thrusting his head in through the door that opened from the outer barroom. "Here's your kid lookin' for you. There he is, kid, over there."

A little girl ran through the crowd towards our table. The Sparrow was on his feet in an instant.

"Kiddie! Kiddie!" he cried.

"Daddy! Daddy!" she responded, and flung herself sobbing into his arms. He sat down and bent tenderly over her, while the pent-up yearning of a month's separation gave vent against his shoulder. It was not in the Sparrow to cry, but the equivalent in suppressed emotion was much harder to bear. The people at the tables round-about paid not the slightest attention. Not that there were no appreciative souls among them, but those who are adepts in the portrayal of fictitious emotion are apt also to be connoisseurs of the real thing and to accord it the respect that is its due.

"Oh, Daddy! Daddy!" sobbed the child. "Where have you been all the time? Where did you go after Momsey died?"

It would have been a hard question to answer under any circumstances, and in the present situation the Sparrow was utterly unequal to it. He looked from one to another of us helplessly. And then the girl, she of the streets, reached over and, catching the child by the hand, said gently:

"Kiddie, don't you know that when mother died she had to go a long way off? And Daddy—well, Daddy had to see that—that she got there safely."

In the situation, grotesque, and perhaps not very convincing to the child, still it gave the Sparrow time to recover the balance of his self-control.

"And where have you been, Kiddie?" he asked. "Why, you've got on a new dress. Who gave you that?"

"Miss Willard."

"Willard!" He turned to us. "B' Jee, there's a woman for you."

Comes around and gives you medicines when you 're sick, and buries you when you 're dead, and not a d——d word about savin' your soul, 'cept when the old woman was dyin' and then what she said 'd make you cry.

"Where did you go after the funeral, Kiddie?" he resumed presently.

"You went away, Daddy," responded the child plaintively, "and you did n't come back, and I waited and waited, and it got dark, and I was afraid because Momsey was n't there. And then I went to sleep, and I thought I heard Momsey calling me like she used to, and I got up and ran over to the bed, but she was n't there. And then I went down and sat on the front step until a policeman came and told me to go in the house. But I was afraid to go up-stairs, and I waited inside the front door till daytime came again."

The Sparrow turned to us with a muttered curse.

"And me all the time begging the sergeant to send some word to her," he said. "Oh, it'd 'a' gone quick enough if I'd 'a' had the coin to pay for it."

The child resumed:

"And then Miss Willard came, and we got something to eat, and we waited all day for you, but you did n't come, and in the night time Miss Willard took me over to the Settlement House. I've been there all the time, and Miss Willard came every day, and we had lots to eat, but oh, I did n't like it there, and I cried 'most all the time, because I wanted you, Daddy—and—Momsey."

The Sparrow hugged his child to him the while he tried to comfort her, but to us his expression was despairing.

"And oh, Daddy, I got tired waiting for you, and I couldn't wait any longer, and to-night after supper I sneaked out the front door and ran away to find you."

"How did you know I would be here?" asked the father.

"'Cause one time when Momsey and I tried to find you, you was here."

"Well, never mind, Kiddie. Daddy won't make you find him here any—— Hello, what do *you* want?"

The latter to a tall and rather well-set-up young fellow who had stopped at our table. But the young man, instead of replying directly to the Sparrow, said pleasantly to the child:

"Hello, youngster! So you got tired of the Settlement House, eh?"

"Oh!" growled the Sparrow. "You from the Settlement, huh?"

"No, not exactly," said the other. "I came in the interest of Miss Willard. She received word that her young protégée had left the Settlement House, so we started out to find her, and traced her here."

"Oh!" said the Sparrow. "That's different. Any friend of Miss Willard is a friend of mine. Sit down and have a drink with us."

"No, thank you," returned the young man. "You see, Miss Willard is waiting in her motor outside. But—the youngster?"

"That's all right," said the Sparrow. "I'm her father."

"Oh!" The young man considered a moment. "In that case we will leave her to you. Good evening." And he started towards the door. But the Sparrow checked him.

"Do you think"—he asked—"do you think that Miss Willard would mind if I stepped out and told her how I think she's ace high, for the way she's looked after the kid?"

"Well," began the young man diplomatically, "I think she would more than appreciate having it—don't you see—in the form of a letter. You might address her in care of her uncle, Mr. Twombly Carter, 1891 Fifth Avenue, and——"

"What?"

The child slipped out of the Sparrow's arms as he stood up.

"Does yer mean to say that Miss Willard is Twombly Carter's niece?"

"Yes."

"And he's her guardeen?"

"Until she is of age. But I do not see what connection——"

"And are you the young feller that she wants to marry instead of the guy that her uncle——"

"That is not a matter I care to discuss here. Good evening," interrupted the young man shortly, and, turning on his heel, he walked out.

The Sparrow dropped into a chair.

"Well, I'll be d——d!" he said.

"You was right all right, Sparrow," said the girl beggar. "That's her feller. I've seen him call for her at the House of Good Shep. But that uncle of hers will never let him marry her."

"Oh, won't he?" answered the Sparrow, the light of strife in his eye. "Won't he? Well, we'll see whether he won't or not."

"What do you mean?" asked the Scratcher uneasily.

"What do I mean? I mean that the plant don't go through, that's what I mean. Any cash that we'd get from that uncle would come out of the girl's fortune, see? Do you think I'd do it after what she done for the kid? And—and—the old woman?"

He looked challengingly at us all.

"And as for that uncle of hers, I want you to write him a letter, Scratchie, and you tell him that if he tries to get in the road of that young feller that was just in, the tramp what was found in his wife's bed will tend to him."

The Scratcher was a much disgusted man. Such a beautiful chance to make money thrown aside, and all for the sake of gratitude. It was the limit.

"H'm, Sparrow," he sneered. "The next think we know, you'll be turning honest and going to work."

The Sparrow stood up and took his little girl by the hand.

"Well," he said, "the youngster's got to be brought up to this life or I've got to go over to hers. And"—he looked the Scratcher squarely in the eye—"if you had one of your own—what the h—l would you do? Come, Kiddie."



THE FILIPINO SCOUT

(A Squad-Room Ballad)

BY ALFRED DAMON RUNYON

I KNEW him up in North Luzon, when he was mustered in
(Chased him 'round the rice-fields till my nerves had gone to
wreck),

His shirt-tail flappin' freely an' his panties rather thin;
Meek an' lowly critter with his shoes hung 'round his neck.

But now he's me brother in arms,

A-wearin' the same uniform;

But, barrin' the clothes an' barrin' the gun,

He 's the very same feller I kept on the run;

An' I wonder where he would be at—

Not doubtin' his courage, at that;

He might be all right if it came to a fight—

Still, I wonder where he would be at!

I've seen him move to action 'gainst his people, d' ye mind

(Now, I'm no roastin' critic, an' speak for myself alone);

He fought 'em pretty handy—with the white men clost behind—

But I'm a bit suspicious o' the guy who fights his own!

An' now he's me brother in arms,

A-wearin' the same uniform;

But I figger he's fightin' his own family;

Why would n't he turn an' go peltin' at me,

Like he useter do out in the sun,

When his commonest gait was a run?

I'm curious to know, if it came to a show,

Which way he'd be aimin' his gun!

I've known him since he saw the States; his chest expansion wide
 (His photos o' the white girls wot he writes to every boat—
 Your sister or your sweetheart—wore agin his greasy hide),
 His swagger an' his pidgin talk, an' collars 'round his throat.

Oh, yes, he's me brother in arms,
 A-wearin' the same uniform;
 But, barrin' the clothes an' barrin' the gun,
 He's the very same feller I kept on the run;
 Who sniped me by day an' by night;
 Who never stood once for a fight;
 I'm curious to know if it came to a show
 Just where to expect him to light!



TREES

BY THOMAS L. MASSON

TREES grow on mountain-sides, in remote country districts, and in some residential quarters. They furnish shade, Presidential timber, and, when sliced thin, delicious breakfast foods.

Trees are useful for cutting down, and furnish occupation for the otherwise unemployed. In the form of railroad ties, they furnish a basis for bond issues and for stock market panics.

Trees may be oak, beech, chestnut, or elm, but they are always popular. They make excellent fire, especially when made into some novels.

Trees are brown and green, but when made into paper are generally yellow. This is when they bark loudest.

Trees were at one time used for hanging purposes. Now we use Investigating Committees, thus showing the advance in civilization.

Among Rock-a-bye babies the tree-top is a favorite. Later on the Christmas tree is in vogue. At the club, the only tree used is the hat-tree.

American consider themselves superior to all trees. That is why they cut them so.

BEING NICE

By Dorothea Deakin

Author of "The Road to Gretna Green," "Georgie," etc.

THE two albums lay abandoned on the table. Her Uncle MacTavish sat on one side of the French window, and I sat at the other. It was open to the chill October night air, and I know MacTavish was thinking of his rheumatism. We were tired of our stamps for the moment, and both waiting for Hebe, and presently we heard soft hurried steps on the path outside and a panting little creature stepped into the lamplight, a lovely thing to look at with her wicked black eyes and her wheedling smile.

"See here," said Uncle MacTavish, clearing his throat nervously. "What are ye doing oot in the damp without yer plaidie the noo?"

Hebe laughed and said she'd been seeing *Him* to the gate, and had her Uncle MacTavish ever been young himself? For if he had she knew very well he would n't have been such a lunatic as to think of huddling himself up in shawls first, and only engaged a month too!

"Child," I said sternly, "you forget yourself."

She smiled. "Not I," said she shamelessly. "It's other people I forget. You've often told me so."

"Lassie," said MacTavish solemnly, "dinna mock the gray hairs of yer mother's brither. D'ye ken I've brocht ye an investation to a gran' ball, an' Mrs. McCrosty's to call for ye an' take chairge of ye, an' yer going like a gude sonsie lassie to please yer poor auld Uncle MacTavish."

"Oh, am I?" said Hebe. Then she told us firmly and at once that she certainly was n't going anywhere with Mrs. McCrosty, if she could help it, and we were please not to call her "sonsie," for it only meant big and lumpy—and what ball?

"It's the Caledonian Hibernian Bachelors' Ball," said I, "in the Caledonian Hotel. Your Uncle's chief, Mr. Alexander Whaup, is on the committee, and a great many of your uncle's business friends—important business friends—will be there. Mr. Whaup particularly asked that you should be invited. The invitation came by to-night's post."

Hebe opened the envelope gingerly, and examined its gold shamrock and thistle crest with obvious distrust.

"They'll give us haggises and black Scotch bun for supper," said she. "I know. And potatoes in their jackets, and bagpipes to dance to. Father, do you think you ought to have encouraged Uncle to let them invite me? I shan't know any one there, and I shall be bored to death. I don't think you ought to ask me to go to a business dance either. And I shan't be able to do exactly as I like if Mrs. McCrosty chaperons me. *Humphrey* can't come, because he'll be in Paris——"

"There's a vara weel-conducted young man fra Gleska will be there," said MacTavish shortly, "called MacKinnon, an' Mrs. McCrosty will introduce ye releegiously to all the desairable pairtners."

"Oh, Uncle," said Hebe dolefully, "you do make it sound so hopelessly unattractive. You don't really want me to go and make a sacrifice of myself on the altar of your sordid business relations, do you?"

"She'll do any bit thing to please her auld Uncle," said MacTavish complacently, winking at me.

"Hebe," said I persuasively, drawing her to the arm of my chair, "you shall have a new frock—a golden frock—and a crown of little gold stars to wear in your ebony hair, and I promise that you shall stand alone as queen of all that Caledonian Hibernian crowd; you shall take the shine out of every Kirsty or Bridget they can bring to compete with you. You shall reflect infinite glory on your Uncle MacTavish and also on me, and you shall flatter and cajole and please old Alexander Whaup till he does n't know whether he's standing on his sandy-gray head or his patent-leather heels."

"If I'm bored," said Hebe in her spoilt way, "I shall snub everybody, and do more harm than you and Uncle can possibly dream of. You know what I'm like, Father, when I'm not pleased."

"I do indeed," said I with feeling. "But you've wanted that crown of stars for nearly a year, dearest; have n't you? And we're responsible for you, your Uncle MacTavish and I, and we want you to do us credit. You will be as nice as you know how to everybody, just to show what you *can* do when you're put to it, won't you?"

"As nice as I know how?" Hebe asked thoughtfully. "Not really? You can be too nice sometimes, you know."

"Oh, no, you can't," said I, cheerfully unconscious of the meaning her black eyes held, as she asked the question. "Don't snub any one, dear."

"Not any one, Father?"

"Na, na," said MacTavish heartily. "Set yer mind on pleasing, lassie, an' keep a smart grip o' that pert little tongue."

Hebe studied us with thoughtful eyes. "I see," said she. "Am I to understand, then, that you are trying to put me on my mettle, you and Father? You give me a free hand?"

I knew her so well that her words aroused a vague uneasiness in my

breast, and I said hurriedly that we wanted her to be the sweet, modest little creature she really was, and do us both credit for the way we had brought her up. And Hebe kissed us each gravely, somewhere about our ears, as was her habit, and she said she only lived to please us, and were n't we tired of our old stamps, and did we mind if she went to bed? We always minded when she went away, but it was eleven o'clock and time she was gone.

"Aweel," said MacTavish as he rose to go, "it only wants a little management, d'ye ken. The bairn's as docile as a bit lamb if she's taken the richt way. Man, ye've a deal to lairn;" and when I said "yes, we both had," he merely grunted, "H'm, h'm," in his expressive Gaelic way and took his leave. He lived just down the road.

We waited up for her together the night of the ball, and it was nearly three before she appeared, a golden vision crowned with stars. The pupils of her dark eyes were dilated like a cat's with excitement, her dusky cheek glowed. She slipped her cloak off and crouched down on the corner of the hearth-rug, looking from one to the other with a mysterious little smile.

"Aweel," said MacTavish jocularly, "an' had ye any pairtners, lassie?"

Hebe's smile deepened.

"Yes," she said, "a few. I filled my programme three deep."

"Three what?" I cried.

"Three deep," she explained smoothly. "You see, I did n't like to refuse any one, after what you and Uncle had said about being nice, and every man in the room asked me to dance, so what could I do? It was a little awkward when they came to *claim* me, three at a time, but I managed it by explaining that it was entirely by Uncle MacTavish's wish, and did they mind tossing up for it?"

"Lassie!" MacTavish sat up.

"They did n't mind," said Hebe. "I was as nice as I could be to make up for it, and when it was a case of sitting out I could sit out with all three. Such jolly little parties we had. Afterwards I buried my programme in a pot of palms, and trusted to Providence."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I took the first that came, of course," said she softly. "Some of them were amused, some of them only thought I was mad, and a good many were offended. But I took care to sit out with the huffy ones afterwards, and in the end I managed somehow that every one was pleased with me. I was thinking all the time how you and Uncle had asked me to be nice, Father, and so I was nice—tremendously nice. I never snubbed any one, or contradicted any one, the whole evening."

She looked like a little golden witch as she crouched there swaying to and fro.

"Mr. MacKinnon liked me," said she softly, "and so did young Mr. Whaup. Tremendously. And there was a Mr. O'Toole, who was sweet to me in his charming Irish way. He's a regular broth of a boy. He said so, and he ought to know. He's got the Irish way with him, but somehow you can't feel as sure of him as you can of the others. He could coax anything out of you. Cork he comes from—but you'll see him when he calls. They're all coming to call."

"But, Hebe," I began in much agitation, "I hope these young men all know about your engagement to——"

Hebe interrupted me with a little giggling laugh.

"It was awfully hard on the Irish," she said, "because they were mostly Roman Catholics, and the catering had unfortunately been left in the hands of the hotel people, and *they* never thought of it being a Friday, and there was nothing for the poor Irishmen to eat. Not even an oyster patty or a shrimp sandwich; all beef and ham and potted meat and things like that. And every one was frightfully hungry, so that when the Irishmen made a wild rush for the supper tables directly the clock struck twelve you can guess—well, with my own ears I heard one boy murmur in a low despairing tone, 'I knew those dam Protestants would eat all the ham sandwiches!'"

"Hebe!" I cried in horror. "What a word from those lips!"

"It turned out afterwards," she pursued hastily, "that he had had no dinner before he came, and he'd been subsisting up to that on trifle and lemon sponge. You can't wonder that his feelings got too much for him, can you? There's something extraordinarily demoralizing about lemon sponge."

"Child," said her Uncle MacTavish solemnly, "explain yourself more fully about the young man MacKinnon and Sandy Whaup."

"You know," said Hebe, ignoring his question completely, "I did wish once or twice I had n't promised not to snub any one. There was a man, one of the stewards in a shamrock and thistle badge, called McGrath, who would make people dance the lancers, when they preferred to sit out, and you know, Father, it is embarrassing when you are talking distantly, to a perfect stranger, to have a festive creature suddenly rush up and say: 'See here, Sullivan, stop that tale of love and do your duty;' or 'Stop flattering the gurl now, and come and be introduced to Miss McGillicuddy Reeks.' I was embarrassed at first, but I remembered your wishes, and Uncle's, and just smiled."

I said something forcible about those wishes under my breath. MacTavish and I ought to have known better. I was extraordinarily anxious to hear the truth about——

"The really awkward part," Hebe murmured in musing tones, "is about the three young men who are coming to have strictly private interviews with you and Uncle to-morrow morning."

"What!" cried I, starting to my feet.

"Hech!" cried MacTavish, starting to his.

Hebe crouched there, smiling darkly.

"I was afraid you would n't quite like it," said she demurely. "But short of the very plainest speaking and brutally hurting their feelings, what could I do? It would have been simply cruel to tell them about Humphrey, and you did n't want me to be cruel, I knew. You remember what you told me about being nice?"

"Hebe!" I cried wildly. "You said they were coming to see you——"

"Oh, no," said Hebe simply. "To-morrow—I mean to-day's Saturday."

"Saturday?"

"My cookery class," she explained smoothly, "and I ought to be in bed now, if I'm to get up at nine. Mr. MacKinnon's coming at twelve, Mr. Whaup at eleven, Mr. O'Toole at one, but it's possible that *he* was n't serious. I dare say there'll only be the two. I explained to them that they must interview you and Uncle as my joint guardians, and that you were both responsible for me."

"Responseable!" MacTavish ruffled his gray hair wildly.

"You wanted me to be as nice as I knew how," said Hebe softly, as she kissed the top of my head. "You see now, Uncle MacTavish, how your lightest words fall and blossom in my heart. I'll order chickens before I go, in case you think of asking them all to stay for lunch. Young Mr. Whaup is awfully interested in stamps. I told him about Uncle's Ruritanian set, and he said he'd drop in and have a look at it. He knows that Uncle always comes to lunch on Saturday to talk stamps with you. He's got a black English he thought you might like to swap something for. Good-night."

She disappeared.

MacTavish took his album under his arm and laconically bade me good-night.

"Come in early," I said uneasily, as I helped him into his coat.

MacTavish said, "H'm, h'm," and then I told him that I insisted upon it.

Hebe ran singing down to breakfast as fresh as a bird, as bright-eyed as the morning, in spite of her late hours, and she said as she flew off to catch her train with her cookery notes under her arm that she might perhaps be persuaded to stay to lunch with *His* mother if she were asked, for she was lonely while *He* was away, and indeed who would n't be? Hebe was very much in love with her Humphrey. There was no doubt about that, yet how she could reconcile her last night's behavior with——

At eleven o'clock, as I was carefully arranging my peerless page

of Gromboolian perforateds, without the slightest warning Martha Jane opened the door and announced Mr. MacKinnon, tall, fair, flushed, and extremely nervous. I received him with cordial politeness, I hope, for we do a good deal of business with the Glaswegian house which employs him. I waited uneasily for what he had to say. It seemed to be very difficult to him to make a beginning.

"Mr. Carlourie," said he, gripping the arms of his chair as firmly as if he had been at the dentist's, "I had the pleasure of meeting your daughter last night at the Caledonian Ball."

"It was Hibernian, too," said I conversationally. "Yes, she mentioned the fact."

Poor lad, he was getting purple in the face.

"It may seem strange to you," he pursued, "that a man should make up his mind so quickly in these practical modern times——"

"The man who knows at once what he wants," said I, unwisely trying to be agreeable, "very often gets it in the end."

His eyes lit up.

"Then I *may* hope?"

"Hope!" I brought down my chair with a crash and stared at him. I had forgotten my fears.

Young MacKinnon leaned forward and made a plunge. I rather liked him for the total absence of prudence and forethought in his behavior.

"Look here," said he, "I have to go back to Glasgow by the midnight express to-morrow. I love your daughter. I can't help it being so sudden, but when—oh, hang it all, a man knows when he meets his fate, and if I wait a year it won't make any difference to my feelings."

"It 's very un-Scotch," said I thoughtfully.

MacKinnon flushed.

"Will you allow me to come and see your daughter, with a view to——"

"Have you spoken to her?" I asked slowly. "What does she say?"

He smiled a little—not fatuously, but quite cheerfully.

"I don't want to seem conceited," he said; "but I rather think it will be all right there. She referred me to you, in fact, last night. She—well, she was awfully nice to me last night. And I saw when she took her glove off that she was n't engaged, because she wore no ring."

"Oh!" said I quickly. "She wore no ring?"

He looked surprised.

"Look here," said I kindly, rising and giving him my hand, with a few emphatic words under my breath to Hebe's present address. "I like the look of you, my boy. Come and dine with us to-night at seven, and I'll take care that you have an interview with Hebe alone

afterwards. This is an affair which must be settled between you two, and I as an outsider cannot be responsible. You shall have a decided reply to-night. Will that do?"

With a radiant face he took his leave, and only just in time, too, for young Alexander Whaup was shown in as soon as MacKinnon had shaken our dust from his shoes, and once more I said warmly exactly what I thought of Hebe under my breath. "Oh, she shall pay for this, the little hussy," I said to myself. "She shall certainly pay. She has got us into a pretty tangle, and she shall unravel it herself to-night. She little knows what lies in store for her."

Now, I have a great respect for young MacKinnon's firm, and both MacTavish and I find them valuable business friends and allies—important assets, in fact—but Sandy Whaup's father is our chief, and we certainly could n't afford to offend *him*. I knew that his son had always admired Hebe. I had wanted her to accept him instead of Humphrey Dell, and her choice—only a month old, by the way, and not yet officially announced—had been a great blow to MacTavish and me.

He was a lean, cadaverous youth, but not at all nervous. I suppose his father's money gave him the assurance young MacKinnon had lacked. He knew he was a "warm man" and an eligible suitor, and he at once, without beating about the bush, asked me to consent to the engagement.

"Have you spoken to Hebe?" I asked.

He smiled fatuously, and said he was quite sure that *that* was all right.

"To tell the truth," said he, "I was never absolutely certain until last night. There was young Dell, you see. But I saw last night that *he* was quite out of the running. The fact is—well—there can be no mistake about Miss Hebe's attitude to me after last night. She was charmingly encouraging—if I may venture to say so."

"Minx!" said I, under my breath.

"I beg your pardon"—he looked surprised.

"Drinks?" I explained shamelessly. "I was thinking of ringing for whiskey and soda."

"I don't mind if I do," said young Sandy Whaup, with evident relief. So he *did* want a little help, with all his assurance.

"My boy," said I gravely, "I should be very pleased to see my daughter happily married to your father's son, but this is not a matter for parents to settle. You must speak to Hebe yourself. Drop in to-morrow morning after church and ask her yourself. I'll see that she is in. You think she *does* return your affection?"

"Well, what do *you* think?" Mr. Whaup inquired facetiously in his pleasant commercial way.

I kept what *I* thought to myself, and Hebe should shake in her

pretty shoes, I promised her, when I did give utterance to those heartfelt sentiments.

Directly he left me, I rushed across to the study and found MacTavish agitatedly pacing to and fro, with his stamps fluttering about the floor in the draught from a window he had obviously thrown incautiously open in a breathless longing for air and light.

“Man,” cried he, “the lassie’s surely demented!”

“She wants whipping,” I growled, “and feeding on bread and water for a month.”

MacTavish mopped his brow.

“There’s a vara nice laddie from Cork been here the noo. The girl showed him in here because you were engaged.”

“I know,” said I grimly. “I told her to.”

“He asked me if I had the pleasure of being Miss Carlourie’s joint guardian, and I said that I shared that grave responsebeelity with you. He then remarked that posseebly it might seem a little premature to speak after one evening’s acquaintance, and that he’d met my niece at the Hibernian ball the night before and that she had given him permeession to call upon us. I pointed out that it was also the Caledonian ball, but no matter.”

“Well?” said I wearily.

“Man,” said MacTavish, “yon’s an awful lassie. She led him on something shameful. He’s an open-hearted laddie, and he concealed nothing. He asked her if she was angry with him for speaking so soon, and she only said: ‘I can’t be angry with you to-night, Mr. O’Toole.’”

“Good Lord, MacTavish!” said I warmly.

“Aye!” said MacTavish grimly. “Ye’ve only yersel’ to thank for this. ‘Are ye going to be cruel to me?’ the young man O’Toole asked her. Daft young fule! ‘Na, na,’ said she. ‘I’m going to be as nice to you as I posseebly can.’ And what d’ye think of that from yer dochter, man, and she promised to young Dell a month and more.”

“MacTavish,” said I slowly, “the child has been playing a trick on us. This is all her revenge because we sent her to that ball with Mrs. McCrosty, and told her to be nice. She’s laughing in her sleeve at us now. She’s landed us in a nice position, but she’ll repent before I’ve done with her. What did you say to the Irishman?”

MacTavish shuffled his big boots wearily and looked away.

“Aweel,” said he, “I’m takkin’ no responsibeelity in the laddie’s private affairs. I just told the young man O’Toole that I wished him success in his suit, and that perhaps he’d better drop in to-morrow afternoon about four and talk to the lassie himself. He went off vara weel pleased. Sunday afternoon,—I shall be having a bit siesta in ma own hoose, and you’ll be takkin’ yer forty winks as usual on the library couch, I’m thinkin’. Let the lassie reap what she’s sowed.”

I sighed with relief.

"Yes," said I; "she must tell them all the truth. There's Mac-Kinnon this evening, and young Whaup to-morrow after church, and O'Toole in the afternoon. It won't be pleasant for her to have to confess the disgraceful game she has been playing and tell them about her engagement to Humphrey, but it will teach her a lesson. It's quite time some one was firm with Hebe, MacTavish."

"H'm, h'm," said MacTavish, and he stooped with a grunt to pick up a priceless water-marked Patagonian out of the fender.

And there the conversation ended, and I must confess that I was full of triumph, and very pleased that we had both for once had the courage to be so firm with her.

Alas for the plans of mice and men! It was at half past six that the parlor-maid appeared with the telegram. MacTavish had gone home to dress for dinner, and I was quite alone.

I tore it out of its pink envelope apprehensively. Ah, well might I fear the worst.

It was from Hebe, of course.

Humphrey unexpectedly returned from Paris, and I am staying till Monday with Mrs. Dell. So happy. Best love.

HEBE



A LITTLE SONG

BY FLORENCE EARLE COATES

ROSES are but for a day,
 Amaranths endure forever;
 Joys there be that fade away,
 Dreams that perish never;
 But, whate'er the future's holding,—
 Crown of all, all else enfolding,—
 Love lives on!

Well they know, who with content
 Hear his oft-repeated story,
 How to earthly glooms are lent
 Reflexes of glory!
 Rapture's first and final giver,
 Star of Charon's rayless river,—
 Love lives on!

KISS MONEY

By Bolton Hall

“**W**HAT will you give me for these?” he asked, holding the grapes over her head. “I’ll give you a kiss,” she said. He laughed, lifted the child in his arms, received her kiss, and gave her the grapes.

“I wish that everything could be bought that way,” I thought, and out of pure idleness followed him.

He went to a flower-shop, and I saw him talking to the girl—she was showing him the plants, and presently he leaned over a rose-bush and kissed her. She blushed, perhaps because I was by, and gave him some flowers—maybe in exchange for the kiss that he gave her. So I stayed in the door, to see what she would do with the kiss.

A weary-eyed woman entered and bought some roses. “My only friends,” she murmured, as she drank in their perfume. The girl leaned over and kissed her pale cheek. Tears stood in the woman’s eyes.

Then I followed the woman as she hurried along the darkened streets. On a corner stood a young girl who glanced at the passing men. The roses caught her eye. “How beautiful!” she said. The woman drew out the largest rose, kissed it, and gave it to the girl. I waited to see what happened.

The girl trembled as she smelled the rose, then, turning, hastened down an alley. “She kissed it first,” she murmured.

She entered a poor room, and a sick woman’s face brightened. “I was afraid you were not coming,” she said.

“See what I have brought you. A lady gave it to me, and she kissed it first.” The sick woman smiled; the girl kissed her. The perfume of the rose filled the room. Was it only the perfume of the rose?



THE NERVE OF JOE

By *D. C. Lawless*



“WELL, of all the soldiers I ever knew,” growled the Manager of the Acme Wagon Works, as he entered the office from the factory, “that cussed Joe’s the limit!”

“Why, what’s the matter now?” asked the bookkeeper, placing his foot on the checker that had dropped to the floor when his colleagues secreted the board.

“Matter!” exclaimed the Manager, coming inside the railing and drawing out his morning cigar. “That miserable hairpin’s up to his old capers again. I’ve had all kinds and conditions of men working under me in all kinds of jobs, but for unadulterated nerve and pure shiftlessness that fellow heads the pay-roll. I’ve been over to that paint-shop every day this week, and do you suppose I ever found him there? Found him nothing! I suppose he’s over to that Avenue Emporium playing poker. I’ve had that fellow on my hands for twenty years and can’t get rid of him. Been on the point of firing him a hundred times, but always some hard-luck story saved him—or I thought of his poor little slip of a wife taking in washing to support the family.”

The Manager blew out a cloud of smoke and reflected for a moment on the checkered past of the culprit. But the demands of the present were urgent.

“No!” he exclaimed. “He’s got to go now! . . . Daily! Daily! Where’s Daily? . . . No, there’s a limit to charity. Work’s slack this winter, and there’s no excuse for keeping him at all. There’ll be plenty of time before spring to paint the few orders we have on hand. Anyhow, it’s no charity to his wife. She never sees a cent of his money. It’s all dumped into that confounded Emporium. Oh, Daily! Come here!”

The foreman appeared from another room.

“Look here, Daily,” demanded his superior, “how does it come Joe’s not working?”

“Who—the painter?”

“Yes.”

“He was working this morning when I went into the shop.”

“Well, I’ve been in that shop every day this week, and I never found him there. Now, there’s got to be a stop to this. You go

over and tell him he's out of a job this day and date. I guess that'll settle him." The speaker thumped the desk to let it be known that that order was officially signed, sealed, and irrevocable.

As Daily left with these instructions, the Manager picked up the thread of his denunciation, speaking to no one in particular, as if justifying himself to himself for the severity of his decree.

"That's the only just course," he said emphatically. "I can't keep any loafers around this factory. I can't impose on the liberty the directors allow me. The concern would go to smash. It would be a rich find if they learned that I kept a dead one on the pay-roll. They're complaining of the heavy expense for the few orders. I know Joe's the best painter in town, but he don't paint five cents' worth a day now. The booze spoils the best of them. And it's worse when the cards and ponies get a hold. They've made a plain thief of him. When I first brought Joe to the factory he stole the paint and varnish. And he was so slick about it that he thought he'd never get caught and carried it off right under my nose. 'T was the merest accident that I tumbled. One night, some time after I noticed the increase in the varnish bills, I was standing at the door watching the men file out. Along comes Joe with his dinner pail. I thought he carried it rather gingerly for an empty can. 'Did n't you eat any dinner, Joe?' said I, joking. 'No,' says he, coloring up; 'I've had a touch o' stomach trouble to-day and could n't eat anything.' With that he hurried past me. Now, Joe never dodged me or colored up when I spoke to him unless he had a guilty conscience. It flashed across my mind instantly—the secret of the varnish bills—and I reached forward for the pail. 'No, Joe,' I said; 'neither could I. Varnish would n't make a very palatable diet for a delicate stomach.' With that I pulled the lid off the pail and found it nearly filled to the brim with our best grade of varnish. Would n't that jar you?

"But that did n't cure him. After I got the drop on him on the varnish deal, he commenced to steal paint-brushes and cash them in. When he came in one day to get an order for a dozen new brushes, I said: 'What's the matter with the last dozen, Joe? Were n't they any good?' 'Yes,' says he; 'but they're all worn out.' 'All worn out!' said I. 'What are you painting—stone sidewalks or iron boilers? Those brushes ought to last twice as long. This don't look good to me. You've got to show me. You bring in the handles of that last dozen before I give you an order for any more.'

"Well, that flopped Joe. We had every brush in the factory marked and numbered, and he could n't substitute any old handles for the last dozen, so he must have brought them back to the shop. At any rate, I did n't hear any more about brushes till the natural life of these had expired, and then he brought in the handles for proof to get more.

"But stealing the stock is mild alongside the other trouble that fellow has caused me. He's had me stand good for his gas bills when the company threatened to shut off the gas, and then flunk so's I had to pay them in the end. I've gone on his bail when he was arrested for shooting up a saloon. His wife has threatened him with divorce half a dozen times, and I've had to smooth things over. He's got his name in the papers time and again, and I've been called up by the reporters and bothered to death. He's neglected his dues in the Painters' Union and got expelled, and the factory got in bad with the Union till I paid his dues and had him reinstated. He's caused me more trouble than any one I ever knew, and I've done almost as much for him as I have for my own family. But I tell you there's an end to it now. The more you do for a fellow like that, the worse he treats you. He's got to go. He's nothing but a booze-fighter, a gambler, and a bum! We have n't got any room for that kind. He's got to go!"

The Manager rose in disgust and prepared to leave the office.

"Mind you," he said as a parting injunction; "if he comes in here to see me, you tell him it's no use. What Daily says is final."

After the door had been closed a reasonable time, the chief clerk and the timekeeper swung their chairs around to face each other, and drew out a large drawer between them, revealing the outlay of the interrupted game.

"Looks pretty blue for Joe," said the bookkeeper, picking up the checker from the floor. "Where does this belong?"

"Here. Put it here," directed the chief clerk. "I don't think any one was ever in worse than Joe. He's been working his game to the limit. I think it's all off."

"Oh, I don't know. I've seen 'em in tighter boxes in this factory than that and they hold on to their jobs yet," objected Dick.

"Yes, it's hard for the boss to fire anybody," the bookkeeper agreed. "He's got a big heart. When it comes to a show-down, he'll give any one a chance. He's a prince, and it would break him up to see any one turned out in the cold. He likes Joe pretty well any way in spite of his tricks."

"I think I see Joe's finish," insisted the chief clerk. "It's Joe's move, and if he don't take it, I have a picture of the Manager cleaning out that paint-shop in one jump. . . . Jump again. . . . There's Joe's finish," he concluded, taking a triple jump and sewing up Dick in a pocket.

Somewhat crestfallen at his defeat, Dick sought distant relief in a wager. "I'll bet the cigars for the office that Joe wins out," said he, while his opponent arranged the checkers for another game.

"Taken!" answered the chief clerk. "The Manager'll wind his clock just like I'll wind yours now. . . . Come, your move first."

"Pshaw!" said Dick, as he led off; "Joe's the only man in the factory who ain't afraid of the Manager. Old friendship counts, too, and Joe has n't had his say any way. Did you notice the Manager did n't undertake the job himself, but sent Daily to fire him?"

The discussion was interrupted by the entrance of the foreman. He leaned his elbows on the railing and smiled dryly.

"Guess the Manager'll have to get out an injunction to restrain Joe from working," he announced.

"How's that, Daily?" chorused the office force.

"Why, I told him my instructions and he said: 'Oh, never mind. I'll see the Manager,' and got busy. He says there's too much work to do now and it would n't do for him to quit. Those wagons have got to be painted, and he would n't trust any one else with the job. There is n't another painter in town could do it right, and he don't want to see any cheap work going out of this factory. Looks to me like a case for the Manager to handle. I know how he hates the job."

"Guess Joe's got a life-lease on that shop all right," remarked the bookkeeper.

"Make that bet two to one," declared Dick.

"Taken again!" assented the chief clerk.

"Easy, fellows," whispered the bookkeeper, reaching out with his foot and closing the drawer with the checker-board as the Manager re-entered, puffing a cigar, no trace of his recent disgust on his countenance. The sight of Daily recalled his troubles.

"Well, did you fire him?" he inquired.

"Tried to," said the foreman; "but he refuses to quit."

"Refuses to quit!" The Manager's eyes glistened.

"Yes. He says he'll see you," and Daily reported Joe's words in full.

"Does he own the factory?" demanded the Manager, his brow clouding. "Well, we'll see! Too much work, hey! Well, it'll take me just about two minutes' work to dispose of him. I'll show him who's running this factory!"

The Manager started for the paint-shop with iron decision pounded out in every step that reverberated through the office.

"Want to double the stakes again?" asked the chief clerk tauntingly.

"Double 'em up!" retorted the timekeeper.

The next morning, when the chief clerk arrived at the office, he found the Manager sitting within the railing. The anticipation of a painful scene was written on his features.

"Good morning," he said shortly, and relapsed into silence behind the morning paper. If he had anything on his mind that might have

relieved the curiosity of the chief clerk, he kept his counsel. But he was not at ease. He took quick, short little puffs at his cigar, and tapped his foot nervously on the floor. His mood dominated the office, and nothing was heard save the scratching of pens and the rustling of the newspaper. But every man in the office was conjecturing Joe's fate. As far as their knowledge went, it still hung in the balance. In imagination they inhaled the delicious aroma of ten-cent cigars, but the identity of the purchaser was still to be settled.

Finally, after patience had been nearly exhausted, the chief threw down the paper and rose from his chair.

"Well, what do you think of that fellow?" he said, as if introducing a new subject to the busy minds of his assistants.

"Who?" asked the bookkeeper casually.

"That dratted painter. I went over to bounce him yesterday, and luckily found him—he was just returning for his coat to go to dinner. 'What are you doing here?' I asked. 'Working,' says he. 'Working!' said I. 'I thought you were fired?' 'What for?' he asked. 'Because I can never find you here,' I told him. 'I've been in this shop a hundred times and never found you.' 'Oh,' says he; 'I'm working. Whenever you see my coat hanging on that hook, you'll know I'm working.' That made me hot. 'Well, you take your coat and get out of here and stay out,' says I; 'and don't ever let me find you here again, or I'll have you arrested for trespassing. You can call at the office for your time this afternoon, and after that I don't want to see any more of you.'

"I left him and started for the office. When I got half way, I looked back and saw him going out with his coat. Then I went back to lock the shop. But I remembered that I failed to get his key from him; so I got a padlock and fastened the door tight.

"After dinner I came back and stopped at the shop to see if everything was all right. What do you think that fool did? I could have him sent up for breaking into the premises. The door was wide open. I found that the staple had been pried out of the door-post. I went in, and there hung his coat on that hook as nice as you please. If that is n't the nerviest piece of business I ever heard of! But no sign of him except that coat. He said that meant he was working. He was working all right—working me. But I made up my mind to settle him this time. I went in and sat down to wait for him to come back. Well, I waited and waited, but no Joe came. I got up and looked all over the shop, and went out and looked all around outside. Nothing doing. I decided he was over at the Emporium, and went in to wait another spell. I determined to wait if I had to stay until he came for his coat to go home. But that got tiresome after a while, and I gave up. But don't you think I did n't fix him. I fixed him all

right. I'm waiting now for him to come in for his pay. You can figure out what's coming to him, Dick. He'll be in here pretty soon when he gets tired and sees it's no joke. I know he ought n't to get a cent, but we'll pay him for hanging his coat up."

"How'd you get him this time?" asked the bookkeeper.

"I got him all right. I threw his coat out and closed the shop tight this time. I got a handful of spikes and nailed that door so tight that nobody can open it again without tearing it down. I put thirteen spikes in that door. I guess that'll hold him for sure this time. . . . Got that time ready, Dick? Come on, we'll go over and see if he's around there. Maybe he's afraid to come in here now that he sees I mean business."

"Maybe he won't come back at all," suggested the bookkeeper. "He's got his coat now, and I don't think he'd have the nerve to ask for any time."

"Nerve!" exclaimed the Manager. "He's got nerve enough to sue for it if we refuse to pay him for the time his coat served. He'll be sneaking around all right. You could n't drag him away from the place with a pair of Missouri mules as long as he had an excuse for staying. Come on, Dick; we'll go over and have him receipt for his pay."

The timekeeper followed the Manager out of the office for the paint-shop. Dick felt there was something in the air, and enjoyed the anticipation of a dramatic scene with his employer as the chief actor.

When they reached the paint-shop the sight that met their eyes almost stunned the Manager.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" he gasped.

The door was wide open. There was no trace of the spikes except the holes they lately filled. Their extraction had been effected without injury to the door. If he had not seen the holes in the door and the door-post, Dick would have been inclined to suspect that the Manager's story was the rehearsal of a dream.

The latter gazed in silence at the door for a long period.

"Well, what do you think of that!" he repeated several times.

Finally he entered on tiptoe, as if some spirits haunting the room were at the bottom of these doings.

On the hook on the wall hung Joe's coat. The sight of the garment revived the ire of the Manager.

"I'll get him this time!" he exclaimed. "Sit down. We'll wait until he comes for that coat."

He seated himself on a chair and, taking a newspaper from his pocket, buried his face behind it.

Left to his own resources, Dick placed a board on the top of a paint cask and sat down. But he was nervous. Though he awaited with

keen interest the outcome of the adventure, he did not relish the prospect of silence, and also feared that his companion might do Joe some bodily harm. He had never seen him lose his temper, but neither had he ever seen so great a provocation.

As the morning wore away, Dick squirmed and wiggled in his seat. His companion's bearing invited no remarks, and he was forced to turn elsewhere for entertainment. He counted the paint-cans on the shelves, and examined the colors that streaked down their sides until he was color blind. Then he counted the spokes in the wheels of the wagon on the floor. Then he wondered how many times the Manager must have read that paper through, and whether he was reading the advertisements. Perhaps he was scanning the "want column" for a new painter.

Finally a gay whistling was heard out in the factory. It came nearer. Then light footsteps approached. They came nearer. Joe entered the shop.

Dick was breathless with interest, and only looked at the Manager. The latter did n't make a motion or a sound. His face was buried behind the paper. Joe looked at both of them, hesitated, and then walked towards the wall where his coat hung. It was dinner time.

"Good morning," he said easily, addressing each of them in turn.

No reply came from behind the paper, and Dick made no response.

"We better be getting these wagons in shape pretty soon," began Joe, drawing on his coat. "We'll need some more of that green box paint, and some red for the reaches. You'll want to ship them in March, won't you?"

The Manager's fingers tightened on the paper, and Dick trembled.

"Say, what do you think? Daily's trying to lock me out," continued Joe, assuming an offended tone. "He said it was your instructions. But I knew better. I had explained to you. He could n't scare me with that bluff. I knew you would n't do that without coming to me first."

The Manager heard this complaint in silence. His paper did not even rustle. Joe went on.

"No, I knew you would n't do that to Joe, who's stuck to you through thick and thin. I was here painting wagons before Daily ever saw this factory. What's Daily got a grudge against me for, any way? What does he know about running this shop? He'd get the place in bad with the Unions, he would. I knew you would n't stand for it, but I did n't want to be running to you with my troubles. Knew you had enough without mine. I can take care of myself with Daily, all right.

"Just think, he nailed the door shut with spikes to keep me out. That was an outrage. But I did n't want to bother you. I just got

the tools and pulled them out, same as I pulled the staple out when he put that padlock on the door. Think of locking Joe out—locking out a man who's supporting a wife and family. Where'd he get another painter like Joe? Who could paint the wagons like Joe? Why, men would n't know them on the market. They would n't look like Acme wagons. You could n't sell 'em at all. I painted the first decent-looking wagon that went out of this shop—that was when you took a-hold and showed them how to hire men that could work. I put coats on those wagons that made the farmers' eyes glisten like morning dew on the crops. Daily must have some friend he wants to get my job. But he'd better keep his nose out of this shop and leave it to you if you want to fire me—fire Joe after he's been with you for twenty years and stuck by you through thick and thin."

Joe paused to allow his words to sink into the Manager's mind. The latter still remained barricaded in silence behind his paper.

Joe went over towards him and spoke in an entreating tone.

"Say, we can't do much till we get that paint—and I'd like to get off this afternoon—my mother-in-law's visiting my wife, and I'd like to take the ladies out."

The Manager received this entreaty with the silence of a sphinx. Joe turned to the timekeeper.

"Well, you tell Daily, Dick, that I won't be here this afternoon. And tell him to keep out of the shop while I'm gone."

With that Joe turned on his heel and walked out.

The stillness of death, except for the sound of Joe's retreating footsteps, hung over the shop. When that had died out in the distance, the Manager lowered his paper. He looked at the timekeeper inscrutably. Dick sat dumb.

"Well, what do you know about that!" exclaimed the Manager hopelessly. Then he rose from his chair and walked out of the shop with slow, meditative steps.

When he had left the factory Dick hastened over to the office to claim his wager.



OF LAUGHTER

BY MARY BYERLEY

LIGHT laughs the water leaping down the hill,
 Light laughs the world at every other's ill;
 Hearing their laughter, mirthless laughs old Fate,
 Leaning his arms upon Life's window-sill.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC



GET RID OF YOUR ILLUSIONS

THERE have been many strange and wondrous prayers offered up from this world; and a quite noticeable proportion of them have been inspired less by a desire to commune with some higher Power, than from a sneaking fondness for giving that Power advice. But the prayer so often heard, "Spare me my illusions!" is the most conceited, the most monstrous of all.

For it means, if it means anything, that the person so praying believes that he can evolve a better world from his own inner consciousness than the world he sees around him. He believes himself a better Workman than the Power in which he ostensibly puts his trust. He is announcing not merely that a lie stoutly held is as good as the truth, but that he has a private assortment of yarns which are better than any truth whatsoever. And that, I take it, is a rather sizable conceit for any mortal man to hold. It reminds one of that preacher who, according to a sarcastic parishioner, was almost afraid to go to sleep and leave the world alone with God.

What basis is there for this manner of thinking? None, save man's lazy dislike of the trouble of reconstructing his scheme of things. There never yet was an illusion but hid from view some truth a thousandfold more beautiful and poetic than any vain imaginings. The fairy tales of the Younger World are petty and obscene compared to the fairy tales of science; and the jealously held illusions of more recent date are little better than the more ancient ones. Kepler's

notion, for instance, that there was an angel assigned to each planet to keep the thing in place—like a boy guiding a toy boat down a gutter—how puny and cheap a thing that seems compared to the unfathomed majesty of gravitation! Or take that other dictum, gravely launched at the earlier geologists, that Providence had made shells and fossils in the forms of animal life, and scattered them through the rocks, for the express purpose of confounding human understanding, and bringing the speculations of the wise to naught. Compare that silly and blasphemous yarn with the sweeping procession of life revealed by geology, and say for yourself which is the more poetic.

Nor are illusions about our fellow men a whit better than any other misconcepts. You may fancy that a given great man is an angel white, and be shocked to find him a very human gray. But if you look into his life with a little care, you will find a deal more goodness there than you ever put into your imagined ideal; and even the subdued coloring may be an added virtue in a world whose eyesight is so likely to suffer from glare.

So, don't be afraid to part with your illusions. Don't get the notion that without your muddled mistakes and misjudgments, the world would be barren of poetry and charm. Don't announce that you "will" believe this, that, or the other, no matter what the evidence. It shows a mighty large conceit, and an absurdly small sense of values. It is equivalent to saying that the stuff your dreams are made of is better and finer than the enduring material which has stood the wear and tear of unnumbered ages, and from which everything you see—yourself included—has been slowly shaped. The only beautiful and poetic thing in the world, and assuredly the only lasting thing, is truth.

GEORGE L. KNAPP

THE COMIC SUPPLEMENT

IT is Sunday morning, the day of peace and rest. The blatant, bulky newspapers are unfolded. The children pounce upon the colored "comic" supplements. They spread them out upon the floor, and soon their innocent laughter resounds through the rooms. The parents beam upon them; it is a sort of new "children's hour," though it be not Longfellow's. The parents turn to their own sections of the paper. They feast upon Macbethian banquets of the world's assorted horrors. The little ones are engrossed in the mishaps of Happy Hooligan or Alphonse and Gaston or in the demoniacal ingenuity of the Katzenjammer Kids.

Yet while the minds of the adults have been dwelling upon the murder, dishonesty, unhappiness, and vice so entertainingly supplied

by the papers, the impressionable minds of the children have been saturated with a debauchery of fancy, a harmful travesty of Life and Truth as baneful in its effect as the black news of reality. They have been feeding upon a hypnotic moral poison—the clownish crudities of the supplement. But how few parents seem to realize the insidious effect of these coarse and malignant horrors perpetrated as jokes upon their tender children!

It has been said that in America every story or play ends with a marriage, while the European novel or drama usually begins with one. So it appears that in America all serial jokes must end in some one being maltreated, blown to pieces, or battered to a jelly. These silly and pointless creations sink to lower and more fatuous extremes of absurdity week by week. The climax is unvarying and always disastrous—some wretched human being or animal torn to shreds or whirled about like a rag. The older folk are always the victims of the younger; they are always blind, deaf, and dumb imbeciles, the youngsters always marvels of resource and invention, with a sense of the ludicrous tremendously developed.

Years ago a hue and cry was raised against the evil influence of a book called "Peck's Bad Boy." It was wretched stuff, and soon forgotten. Very young children were unable to read it, so its power for tutoring them into disrespect or rebellion against their elders was insignificant. But the wide-reaching evil influence of these cheap and crude pictorial representations of cruelty, cunning, trickery, and brutality is momentous and immediate. It is, in fact, a national peril, and students of juvenile crime can no longer ignore its influence upon the receptive infant mind. It is a well-known biological and psychological law that the mimetic tendency of children is particularly strong in the domain of the reprehensible. To laugh at the discomfiture of an elder person to whom affection is owing, to seek revenge by underhanded means, to betray guileless and trusting confidence, to be selfish, untruthful, brutal, and crafty, these are the qualities of the heroes of the comic supplements.

Were a person to enter a household and induce the young people to indulge in malicious practical jokes, he would soon be shown the door by the irate master of the house. Yet every Sunday morning such a visitor is received by the parents, nay, even welcomed, for it "amuses the children."

Proper pictorial amusement is easily and cheaply obtainable. The child should never be permitted to be merely amused. That which induces his laugh should also impart a lesson, however mild or subtle. The comic supplement is not comic, it is incipiently criminal. It appeals to one of the basest traits in human nature—joy at another's misfortune. It wrecks the conceptions of right and wrong in the

unformed minds of the young. You parents who say these things "amuse" your children, can you afford the price you will hereafter pay for this indulgence? Pause and ponder.

HERMAN SCHEFFAUER

IS PRESENT-DAY FICTION QUITE EPHEMERAL?

AN optimist cannot sympathize with those critics who see no enduring qualities in our present-era fiction. Light and ephemeral in large part it truly is, but some of it is maintaining a place in public interest surprisingly well, and a little of it will doubtless live long into the future.

To discern enduring qualities in the best fiction of the last two decades it is not necessary to compare it favorably with the so-called "standard" fiction of the middle nineteenth century and earlier. The writer of to-day (not taking into account the spinner of diverting yarns) attempts a task different from that essayed by Eliot, Hawthorne, Thackeray, and their compeers. Instead of the large canvas, crowded with the complex figures which, with their background, go to depict a whole epoch, he chooses the smaller canvas, and with minute fidelity paints in the details of some phase of modern life, which was as *terra incognita* to writers of the preceding era. Pictures of the times, not comprehensive and profound studies of human nature, are our present typical product.

Now, there is a patent reason for this choice of canvas, and the reason is not that "there were giants in the earth in those days." In mind-power, in sympathy, in cultivation, in analytical faculties, in minute knowledge, in style, our best writers quite equal and even surpass the fictionists of any other era—though in scope of theme and in breadth of treatment the "standard" authors are still unapproached. No, the choice of canvas and the breadth of treatment are not essentially questions of personal bigness: the real reason lies in the author's environment.

Our modern life is still in the crucible—its fixed form is not yet. For this reason, and because our present-day unrest and haste breed their familiars in the author's spirit, no great inspiration for a universal novel is presently possible. Our modern life as a whole is so seethingly inchoate that no one even dares attempt to crystallize the *zeit geist*. The truth is there are many spirits of the times, each struggling for dominant expression, and no man yet discerns the final issue.

But if it is impossible to produce a really great novel of universal scope in an unformed era like ours, are we by the same token incapable of producing lasting work? I think not. Pending the day when the

world shall have come to so full a solution of its pressing problems as to enjoy a breathing space, our best fiction writers are recording faithfully, sometimes brilliantly, the passing phases of our life. They are doing laboratory work of the utmost value and importance. Surely no period of world-life ever presented such kaleidoscopic phenomena for the literary camera. How multiple and multiform its activities; how scintillating and rapidly dissolving its colors! And these all are being caught, deftly and surely, and passed on as records of a period which is in its very essence ephemeral, not because it is worthless but because it is transitional.

Why, then, is it too much to say that, in its order, the work of our fiction writers is fine and true, and will therefore last? By the world-old law of survival, the fittest of it will stand as the most adequate expression of a difficult period—the contemporary record of our manifold, multicolored life. But fine as it is, and adequate to its purpose, it will never stand in the gallery of epochal masterpieces.

The alchemists looked with rapt ardency upon the changing hues in the seething retort, waiting with undaunted expectation for the appearance of that color which should proclaim the success of their search. In somewhat the same sort, yet often without the similar disappointment, the world of letters has at various times been conscious of the approaching birth of a new great epoch. But I discern no such hush of expectancy now. No star seems to hang over an unknown manger. The world is still busy in tearing down and building up. We have seen that in no such period comes—is evolved, that is—the novelist of universal mind. Later he will come; but when he does appear he will owe a real debt to our present day annalists—word-painters, word-photographers—who are so effective in their sphere. We must be no more contemptuous of our wonderfully busy, wonderfully exact, wonderfully faithful contemporary fictionists than we dare be of our stupendous transitional age.

J. B. E.



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APRIL, 1909



THE CLUE

BY

CAROLYN WELLS

Author of "A Chain of Evidence," "The Emily Emmins Papers," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE VAN NORMANS

THE old Van Norman mansion was the finest house in Mapleton. Well back from the road, it sat proudly among its finely kept lawns and gardens, as if with a dignified sense of its own importance.

And its owner, the beautiful Madeleine Van Norman, was the most envied as well as the most admired young woman in the town.

Magnificent Madeleine, as she was sometimes called, was of the haughty, imperious type which inspires admiration and respect rather than love. An orphan and an heiress, she had lived all of her twenty-two years of life in the old house, and since the death of her uncle, two years before, had continued as mistress of the place, ably assisted by a pleasant, motherly chaperon, a clever social secretary, and a corps of capable servants.

The mansion itself and an income amply sufficient to maintain it were already legally her own, but by the terms of her uncle's will she was soon to come into possession of the bulk of the great fortune he had left.

Madeleine was the only living descendant of old Richard Van Norman, save for one distant cousin, a young man of a scapegrace and ne'er-do-weel sort, who of late years had lived abroad.

This young man's early life had been spent in Mapleton, but his

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fiery temper having brought about a serious quarrel with his uncle, he had wisely concluded to take himself out of the way.

On account, then, of his devotion to Madeleine, and his enmity toward young Tom Willard, Richard Van Norman had willed the old place to his niece, and had further directed that the whole of his large fortune should be unrestrictedly bestowed upon her on her wedding-day, or on her twenty-third birthday, should she reach that age unmarried. In event of her death before her marriage, and also before her twenty-third birthday, the whole estate would go to Tom Willard.

It was with the greatest reluctance that Richard Van Norman decreed this, but a provision had to be made in case of Madeleine's early death, and Willard was the only other natural heir. And now, at twenty-two, Madeleine was on the eve of marriage to Schuyler Carleton, a member of one of the oldest and best families of Mapleton.

The village gossips were pleased to commend this union, as Mr. Carleton was a man of irreproachable habits, and handsome enough to appear well beside the magnificent Madeleine.

He was not a rich man, but as her marriage would bring her inheritance, they could rank among the millionaires of the day. Yet there were those who feared for the future happiness of this apparently ideal couple.

Mrs. Markham, who was both housekeeper and chaperon to her young charge, mourned in secret over the attitude of the betrothed pair.

"He adores her, I'm sure," she said to herself, "but he is too courtly and polished in his manner. I'd rather he would impulsively caress her, or involuntarily call her by some endearing name, than to be always so exquisitely deferential and polite. And Madeleine must love him, or why should she marry him? Yet she is so haughty and formal, she might be a very duchess instead of a young American girl. But that's Madeleine all over. I've never seen her exhibit any real emotion over anything. Ah, well, I'm an old-fashioned fool. Doubtless, they're cooing doves when alone together, but their high-bred notions won't allow any sentiment shown before other people. But I almost wish she was going to marry Tom. He has sentiment and enthusiasm enough for two, and the relationship is so distant it's not worth thinking about. Dear old Tom! He's the only one who ever stirs Madeleine out of that dignified calm of hers."

Madeleine, who always kept in touch with Tom Willard by correspondence, had written him of her approaching marriage, and he had responded by coming at once to America to attend the ceremony.

Relieved from the embarrassment of his uncle's presence, Tom was his jovial self, and showed forth all the reprehensible attractive-

ness which so often belongs to the scapegrace nature. He had a quick temper, and often quarrelled with Madeleine over trifles, then, making up the next minute, he would caress and pet her with the privileged air of a relative.

Tom's attitude toward Madeleine angered Carleton extremely, but when he spoke to her on the subject he was gaily informed that the matter of cousinly affection was outside the jurisdiction of a fiancé.

Tom, on his part, was desperately in love with Madeleine, and had been for years. Repeatedly he had begged her to marry him, and she knew in her heart that his plea was prompted by his love for herself and not by any consideration of her fortune.

And yet, should she marry another, all hope of his uncle's money would be forever lost to Tom Willard.

But prodigal and spendthrift though he was, if Tom felt any regret at his vanishing fortunes, he showed no sign of it. Save for sudden and often easily provoked bursts of temper, he was infectiously gay and merry, and was the life of the house party already gathered under Madeleine's roof.

The day before the wedding the old house was a pleasant scene of bustle and confusion.

Professional decorators were in charge of the great drawing-room, building a canopy of green vines and flowers, beneath which the bridal pair should stand the next day at high noon.

This work was greatly hindered by a bevy of young people who thought they were helping.

At last, noting a look of dumb exasperation on the face of one of the florist's men, Mollie Gardner exclaimed, "I don't believe our help is needed here; come on, Kitty, let's go in the library and wait for tea-time."

It was nearly five o'clock, and the girls found most of the house guests already assembled in the library, awaiting the arrival of the tea-tray.

Tom Willard was jokingly remonstrating with Madeleine, who, he said, was turning him out from the shelter of her roof on the very last night that her hospitality was all her own to offer.

"To-morrow the grand Seigneur will be master here, and my timid little Madeleine can no longer call her soul her own."

This reference to the tall and stately mistress of the house raised a general laugh, but Madeleine did not join in it.

"I'm so sorry, Tom," she said earnestly, as she looked again at a telegram she was holding, "but Miss Morton was an old friend of Uncle Richard's, and as she wants to come here I can't turn her away. And unless you give her your room, there is no other——"

"Nonsense, Madeleine! I'm only joking. Of course I'll go to the hotel. Only too glad to accommodate Miss Morton. Forget it, girl; I assure you I don't mind a bit. I'll pack up a few traps after dinner and skip down to the picturesque, if rather ostentatious Mapleton Inn."

As Tom spoke he put his arm carelessly round Madeleine's shoulders, and though scarcely more than a cousinly caress, it was unfortunate that Schuyler Carleton should enter the room at that moment. A lightning glance flashed between the two men, and as Tom moved away from Madeleine with a slightly embarrassed shrug of his shoulders, Carleton's face grew so stern that an uncomfortable silence fell upon the guests.

However, the arrival of the tea-tray saved the situation, and Madeleine at once busied herself in the pretty occupation of serving tea to her guests.

With an air of jealous proprietorship, Carleton moved toward her and, looking handsome, though sulky, stood by Willard with folded arms, as if on guard.

Urged on by a daredevil spirit of mischief, and perhaps remembering that Madeleine would soon be beyond his reach as Carleton's wife, Tom also moved toward her from the other side. Endeavoring to treat the situation lightly, Madeleine held up a newly-filled teacup.

"Who will have this?" she asked gaily.

"I will!" declared Carleton and Tom at the same time, and each held out a hand.

Madeleine looked at them both smilingly.

Carleton's face was white and set; he was evidently making a serious matter of the trifling episode.

Tom, on the contrary, was smiling broadly, and was quite evidently enjoying his rival's discomfiture.

"I shall give it to you, because you look so pleasant," declared Madeleine, handing the cup to Tom. "Now, Schuyler, smile prettily and you may have one, too."

But Carleton would not fall in with her light mood.

Bending a little, he said in a tense voice, "I will leave you to your cousin now. To-morrow I shall assert my claim."

Though not rude in themselves, the words were accompanied by a harsh and disdainful glance that made several of the onlookers wonder what sort of a life the haughty Madeleine would lead with such a coldly tyrannical husband.

"The brute!" said Tom, under his breath, as Carleton left the room. "Never mind, Maddy, the old Turk has left you to me for this evening, and we'll take him at his word."

Suddenly Madeleine's mood changed to one of utter gaiety. She

smiled impartially on all, she jested with the girls, she bewitched the young men with her merry banter, and she almost seemed to be flirting with Tom Willard. But he was her cousin, after all, and much is forgiven a bride-to-be on her wedding eve.

After tea the callers departed, and those who were house guests went to their rooms to dress for dinner.

Tom Willard, with great show of burlesque regret and tearful farewells, went to the hotel, that the arriving Miss Morton might have the room he had been occupying.

He promised to return for dinner, and gaily blew kisses to Madeleine as with his traps he was driven down the avenue.

At dinner Schuyler Carleton's place was vacant. It had been arranged next to Madeleine's, and when fifteen minutes after the dinner hour he had not arrived, she haughtily accepted Tom Willard's arm and led the way to the dining-room.

But having reached the table, she directed Tom to take his rightful seat, at some distance from her own, and Carleton's chair remained empty at Madeleine's side.

At first this was uncomfortably evident, but Madeleine was in gay spirits, and soon the whole party followed her lead, and the conversation was general and in a merry key. The young hostess had never looked more regally beautiful.

Her dark hair, piled high on her head, was adorned with a dainty ornament which, though only a twisted ribbon, was shaped like a crown, and gave her the effect of an imperious queen. Her low-cut gown of pale yellow satin was severe of line and accented her stately bearing, while her exquisitely modelled neck and shoulders were as white and pure as those of a marble statue. Save for a double row of pearls around her throat, she wore no ornaments, but on the morrow Carleton's gift of magnificent diamonds would grace her bridal costume. The combination of haughty imperial beauty and a dazzling witchery of mood was irresistible, and the men and girls alike realized that never before had Madeleine seemed so wonderful.

After the dessert was placed on the table, Willard could stand it no longer, and, leaving his own place, he calmly appropriated Carleton's vacant chair.

Madeleine did not reprove him, and Kitty French took occasion to whisper to her neighbor:

“‘T were better by far to have matched our fair cousin to brave Lochinvar.’”

Mrs. Markham overheard the quotation, and a look of pain came into her eyes. But it was all too late now, and to-morrow Madeleine would be irrevocably Schuyler Carleton's wife.

After dinner coffee was served in the cozy library. Madeleine

preferred this room to the more elaborately furnished drawing-room, and to-night her word was law.

But suddenly her mood changed. For no apparent reason her gay spirits vanished, her smile faded away, and a pathetic droop curved the corners of her beautiful mouth.

At about ten o'clock she said abruptly, though gently, "I wish you'd all go to bed. Unless you girls get some beauty sleep, you won't look pretty at my wedding to-morrow."

"I'm quite ready to go," declared Kitty French with some tact, for she saw that Madeleine was nervous and strung up to a high tension.

"I too," exclaimed Mollie Gardner, and the two girls, who were to be bridesmaids at the wedding, said good-night and went upstairs.

Two or three young men who had been dinner guests also made their adieux, and Tom Willard said, "Well, I may as well toddle to my comforts of home, as understood by a country innkeeper."

Madeleine said good-night to him kindly enough, but without jest or gaiety. Tom looked at her curiously for a moment, and then, gently kissing her hand, he went away.

Mrs. Markham, having seen Miss Morton comfortably installed in what had been Tom's room, returned to the library to offer her services to Madeleine.

But the girl only thanked her, saying, "There is nothing you can do to-night. I want to be alone for an hour or two. I will stay here in the library for a time, and I'd like to have you send Cicely to me."

A few moments later Cicely Dupuy came in, bringing some letters and papers. She was Miss Van Norman's private secretary, and admirably did she fill the post. Quick-witted, clever, deft of hand and brain, she answered notes, kept accounts, and in many ways made herself invaluable to her employer.

Moreover, Madeleine liked her. Cicely was of a charming personality. Small, fair, with big, childish blue eyes and a rose-leaf skin, she was a pretty picture to look at.

"Sit down," said Madeleine, "and make a little list of some final matters I want you to attend to to-morrow."

Cicely sat down, and, taking pencil and tablet from the library table, made the lists as Madeleine directed. This occupied but a short time, and then Miss Van Norman said wearily:

"You may go now, Cicely. Go to bed at once, dear. You will have much to do to-morrow. And please tell Marie I shall not need her services to-night. She may go to her room. I shall sit here for an hour or more, and I will answer these notes. I wish to be alone."

"Very well, Miss Van Norman," said Cicely, and, taking the lists she had made, she went softly from the room, and went upstairs.

CHAPTER II

A CRY IN THE NIGHT

"HELP!"

The loud cry of a single word was not repeated, but repetition was unnecessary, for the sound rang through the old Van Norman house, and carried its message of fear and horror to all, awake or sleeping, within its walls.

It was about half-past eleven that same night, and Cicely Dupuy, still fully dressed, flew from her bedroom out into the hall.

Seeing a light downstairs, and hearing the servants' bells, one after another, as if rung by a frantic hand, she hesitated a moment only, and then ran downstairs.

In the lower hall Schuyler Carleton, with a dazed expression on his white, drawn face, was uncertainly pushing various electric buttons which, in turn, flashed lights on or off, or rang bells in distant parts of the house.

For a moment Cicely stared straight at the man. Their eyes met, their gaze seemed to concentrate, and they stood motionless, as if spellbound.

This crisis was broken in upon by Marie, Madeleine's French maid, who came running downstairs in a hastily donned negligée.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she cried. "*Ou est Mademoiselle?*"

With a start, Carleton turned from Cicely, and still with that dazed look on his face, he motioned Marie toward the wide doorway of the library. The girl took a step toward the threshold, and then, with a shriek, paused, and ventured no further.

Cicely, as if impelled by an unseen force, slowly turned and followed Marie's movements, and as the girl screamed Cicely grasped her tightly by the arm, and the two stood staring in at the library door.

What they saw was Madeleine Van Norman, seated in a chair at the library table. Her right arm was on the table, and her head, which had fallen to one side, was supported by her right shoulder. Her eyes were partly closed, and her lips were parted, and the position of the rigid figure left no need for further evidence that this was not a natural sleep.

But further evidence there was. Miss Van Norman still wore her yellow satin gown, but the beautiful embroidered bodice was stained a dull red, and a crimson stream was even then spreading its way down the shimmering breadths of the trailing skirt.

On the table, near the outstretched white hand, lay a Venetian dagger. This dagger was well known to the onlookers. It had lain on the library table for many years, and though ostensibly for the

purpose of a paper-cutter, it was rarely used as such. Its edges were too sharp to cut paper satisfactorily, and, moreover, it was a wicked-looking affair, and many people had shuddered as they touched it. It had a history, too, and Richard Van Norman used to tell his guests of dark deeds in which the dagger had taken part while it was still in Italy.

Madeleine herself had had a horror of the weapon, though she had often admitted the fascination of its marvellous workmanship, and had said upon several occasions that the thing fairly hypnotized her, and some day she should kill herself or somebody else with it.

From an instinctive sense of duty, Marie started forward, as if to help her mistress, then with a convulsive shudder she screamed again and clasped her hands before her eyes to shut out the awful sight.

Cicely, too, moved slowly toward the silent figure, then turned and again gazed steadfastly at Schuyler Carleton.

There must have been interrogation in her eyes, for the man pointed toward the table, and Cicely looked again, to notice there a bit of paper with writing on it.

She made no motion toward it, but the expression on her face changed to one of bewildered surprise. Before she had time to speak, however, the other people of the house all at once began to gather in the hall.

Mrs. Markham came first, and though when she saw Madeleine she turned very white and seemed about to faint, she bravely went at once toward the girl, and gently tried to raise the fallen head.

She felt a firm grasp on her shoulder, and turned to see Miss Morton, with a stern, set face, at her side.

"Don't touch her," said Miss Morton, in a whisper. "Telephone for a doctor quickly."

"But she's dead," declared Mrs. Markham, at the same time bursting into violent sobs.

"We do not know; we hope not," went on Miss Morton, and without another word she led Mrs. Markham to a sofa, and sat her down rather suddenly, and then went herself straight to the telephone.

As she reached it she paused only to inquire the name of the family physician.

Harris, the butler, with difficulty articulated the name of Doctor Hills and his telephone number, and without further inquiry Miss Morton called for him.

After requesting him to come at once, Miss Morton hung up the receiver and turned to the frightened group of servants.

"You can do nothing," she said, "and you may as well return to your rooms. Harris may stay, and one of the parlor maids."

Miss Morton was a small lady, with white hair and piercing black eyes. She had an imperious air, and instinctively the servants obeyed her.

But Cicely Dupuy was not so ready to accept the dictum of a stranger. She stepped forward and, facing Miss Morton, said quietly, "Mrs. Markham is housekeeper, as well as Miss Van Norman's chaperon. The servants are accustomed to take their orders from her."

Miss Morton returned Cicely's direct gaze. "You see Mrs. Markham," she said, pointing to the sofa, where that lady had entirely collapsed, and, with her head in a pillow, was shaking with convulsive sobs. "She is for the moment quite incapable of giving orders. As the oldest person present, and as a life-long friend of Mr. Richard Van Norman, I shall take the liberty of directing affairs in the present crisis." Then, in a softer tone and with a glance toward Madeleine, Miss Morton continued, "I trust in view of the awfulness of the occasion you will give me your sympathy and coöperation, that we may work in harmony."

Cicely gave Miss Morton a curious glance that might have meant almost anything, but with a slight inclination of her head she said only, "Yes, madam."

Although it seemed hours to those who awaited him, it was but a few moments before the doctor came.

Doctor Hills was a clean-cut, alert-looking young man, and his quick eyes seemed to take in every detail of the scene at a glance.

He went straight to the girl at the table and bent over her. Only the briefest examination was necessary before he said gently, "She is quite dead. She has been stabbed with this dagger. It entered a large blood vessel just over her heart, and she bled to death. Who killed her?"

Even as he spoke his eye fell on the written paper which lay on the table. With one of his habitually quick gestures he snatched it up and read it to himself, while a look of great surprise dawned on his face. Immediately he read it aloud:

I am wholly miserable, and unless the clouds lift I must end my life. I love S., but he does not love me.

After he finished reading Doctor Hills stood staring at the paper, and looked utterly perplexed.

"I should have said it was not a suicide," he declared, "but this message seems to indicate that it is. Is this written in Miss Van Norman's hand?"

Miss Morton, who stood at the doctor's side, took the paper and scrutinized it.

"It is," she said. "Yes, certainly that is Miss Van Norman's writing. I had a letter from her only a few days ago, and I recognize it perfectly."

"Let me see it," said Mrs. Markham, in a determined, though rather timid way. "I am more familiar with Madeleine's writing than a stranger can possibly be."

Miss Morton handed the paper to the housekeeper without a word, while the doctor, waiting, wondered why these two women seemed so out of sympathy with each other.

"Yes, it is surely Madeleine's writing," agreed Mrs. Markham, her glasses dropping off as her eyes filled with tears.

"Then I suppose she killed herself, poor girl," said the doctor. "She must have been desperate indeed, for it was a strong blow that drove the steel in so deeply. Who first discovered her here?"

"I did," said Schuyler Carleton, stepping forward. His face was almost as white as the dead girl's, and he was scarcely able to make his voice heard. "I came in with a latch-key, and found her here, just as you see her now."

As Carleton spoke Cicely Dupuy stared at him with that curious expression that seemed to show something more than grief and horror. Her emotional bewilderment was not surprising in view of the awful situation, but her look was a strange one, and for some reason it greatly disconcerted the man.

None of this escaped the notice of Doctor Hills. Looking straight at Carleton, but with a kindly expression replacing the stern look on his face, he went on:

"And when you came in was Miss Van Norman just as we see her now?"

"Practically," said Carleton. "I could n't believe her dead. And I tried to rouse her. Then I saw the dagger on the floor at her feet——"

"On the floor?" interrupted Doctor Hills.

"Yes," replied Carleton, whose agitation was increasing, and who had sunk into a chair because of sheer inability to stand. "It was on the floor at her feet—right at her feet. I picked it up, and there was blood on it—there is blood on it—and I laid it on the table. And then I saw the paper—the paper that says she killed herself. And then—and then I turned on the lights and rang the servants' bells, and Cicely—Miss Dupuy—came, and the others, and—that's all."

Schuyler Carleton had with difficulty concluded his narration, and he sat clenching his hands and biting his lips as if at the very limit of his powers of endurance.

Doctor Hills again glanced round the assembly in that quick way of his, and said:

"Did any of you have reason to think Miss Van Norman had any thought of taking her own life?"

For a moment no one spoke, and then Kitty French, who, in a despairing, miserable way, was huddled in the depths of a great arm-chair, said:

"I have heard Madeleine say that some time she would kill herself with that horrid old dagger. I wish I had stolen it and buried it long ago!"

Doctor Hills turned to Mrs. Markham. "Did you have any reason to fear this?" he inquired.

"No," she replied; "and I do not think Madeleine meant she would voluntarily use that dagger. She only meant she had a superstitious dread of the thing."

"Do you understand her reference to her own unhappiness in this bit of writing?" went on the doctor.

"Yes, I think I do," said Mrs. Markham in a low voice.

"That is enough for the present," said the doctor, as if to interrupt further confidences. "Although it is difficult to believe a stab of that nature could be self-inflicted, it is possible, and this communication seems to leave no room for doubt. Now, the law of New Jersey requires that in case of a death not by natural means the county physician shall be summoned, and further proceedings are entirely at his discretion. I shall therefore be obliged to send for Doctor Leonard before disturbing the body in any way. He will probably not arrive in less than an hour or so, and I would advise that you ladies retire. You can of course do nothing to help, and as I shall remain in charge, you may as well get what rest you can during the night."

"I thank you for your consideration, Doctor Hills," said Mrs. Markham, who seemed to have recovered her calmness, "but I prefer to stay here. I could not rest after this awful shock, and I cannot stay away from Madeleine."

"I shall stay too," announced Miss Morton, and as nobody made any response she quietly sat down in a chair and stayed.

Kitty French and Molly Gardner, who, clasped in each other's arms, were shivering with excitement and grief, begged to be allowed to stay, too, but Doctor Hills peremptorily ordered them to go to their rooms. Cicely Dupuy was allowed to stay, as in her position of social secretary she might know much of Madeleine's private affairs. For the same reason Marie was detained, while Doctor Hills asked her a few questions.

Schuyler Carleton sat rigidly in his chair, as immovable as a statue. This man puzzled Doctor Hills. And yet it was surely shock enough almost to unhinge a man's brain thus to find his intended bride the night before his wedding.

Having concluded it was a case for the county physician, Dr. Hills apparently considered that his personal responsibility was at an end, and he sat quietly awaiting the coming of his colleague.

It was a dreadful hour. Only rarely any one spoke, and though glances sometimes shot from the eyes of one to the eyes of another, each felt his gaze oftenest impelled toward that dread, beautiful figure by the table.

At last Schuyler Carleton, with an evident effort, said suddenly, "Ought n't we to send for Tom Willard?"

Mrs. Markham gave a start. "Of course we must," she said. "Poor Tom! He must be told. Who will tell him?"

"I will," volunteered Miss Morton, and Doctor Hills looked up amazed at her calm tone. This woman puzzled him, and he could not understand her continued attempts at authority in a household where she was a comparative stranger. And yet might it not be merely a kind consideration for those who were nearer and dearer to the principals of this awful tragedy?

But even as he thought this over Miss Morton had gone to the telephone, her heavy silk gown rustling as she crossed the room, and her every movement assertive of her own importance.

Calling up the Mapleton Inn, she succeeded, after several attempts, in rousing some of its occupants, and finally was in communication with young Willard himself. She did not tell him of the tragedy, but only asked him to come over to the house at once, as something serious had happened, and returned to her seat with a murmured observation that Tom would arrive as soon as possible.

CHAPTER III

A CASE FOR THE CORONER

TOM WILLARD came. Miss Morton met him at the door and took him into the drawing-room before he could turn toward the library.

Schuyler Carleton's frantic touches on various electric buttons had turned on all the lights in the drawing-room. As no one had noticed this, the great apartment had remained illuminated as if for a festivity, and the soft, bright lights fell on the floral bower and the elaborate decorations that had been arranged for the wedding day.

"What is it?" asked Tom, his own face white with an impending sense of dread as he looked into Miss Morton's eyes.

As gently as possible, but in her own straightforward and inevitably somewhat abrupt way, Miss Morton told him.

"I want to warn you," she said, "to prepare for a shock, and I think it kinder to tell you the truth at once. Your cousin Madeleine—Miss Van Norman—has taken her own life."

"What?" Tom almost shouted the word, and his face showed an absolutely uncomprehending amazement.

"She killed herself to-night," Miss Morton went on, whose efforts were now directed toward making the young man understand, rather than towards sparing his feelings.

But Tom could not seem to grasp it. "What do you mean?" he said, catching her by both arms. "Madeleine? Killed herself?"

"Yes," said Miss Morton, shaken out of her own calm by Tom's excited voice. "In the library, after we had all gone to bed, she stabbed herself with that horrible paper-cutter thing. Did you know she was unhappy?"

"Unhappy? No; why should she be? To-morrow was to have been her wedding day!"

"To-day," corrected Miss Morton. "It is already the day on which our dear Madeleine was to have become a bride. And instead——" Glancing around the brilliant room and at the bridal bower, Miss Morton's composure gave way entirely, and she sobbed hysterically. At this Cicely Dupuy came across from the library. Putting her arm around Miss Morton, she led the sobbing woman away, and without a word to Tom Willard gave him a glance which seemed to say that he must look out for himself, for her duty was to attend Miss Morton.

As the two women left the drawing-room Tom followed them. He walked slowly, and stared about as if uncertain where to go. He paused a moment midway in the room, and, stooping, picked up some small object from the carpet, which he put in his waistcoat pocket.

A moment more and he had crossed the hall and stood at the library door, gazing at the scene which had already shocked and saddened the others.

With a groan, as of utter anguish, Tom involuntarily put up one hand before his eyes.

Then, pulling himself together with an effort, he seemed to dash away a tear, and walked into the room, saying almost harshly, "What does it mean?"

Doctor Hills rose to meet him, and by way of a brief explanation he put into Tom's hand the paper he had found on the table. Tom read the written message, and looked more stupefied than ever. With a sudden gesture he turned towards Schuyler Carleton and said in a low voice, "But you *did* love her, did n't you?"

"I did," replied Carleton simply, "and I do."

"Why should she have thought you did n't?" went on Tom, perplexedly looking at the paper, and seeming to soliloquize rather than to address his question to any one else.

As this was the first time that the "S." in Madeleine's note had

been openly assumed to stand for Schuyler Carleton, there was a stir of excitement all round the room.

But no reply was made, and, dropping into a chair, Tom buried his face in both hands and remained thus for a long time.

Tom Willard was a large, stout man, and possessed of the genial and merry demeanor which so often accompanies avoirdupois. Save for his occasional, though really rare, bursts of temper, Tom was always in joking and laughing mood.

To see him thus in an agonized, speechless despair deeply affected Mrs. Markham. Tom had always been a favorite with her, and not even Madeleine regretted more than she the estrangement between Richard Van Norman and his nephew. And even as Mrs. Markham looked at the bowed head of the great strong man she suddenly be-thought herself for the first time that Tom was now heir to the Van Norman fortune.

She wondered if he had himself yet realized it; and then she scolded herself for letting such thoughts intrude so unfittingly soon. And yet she well knew that it would not be in ordinary human nature long to ignore the fact of such a sudden change of fortunes. As she looked at Tom her glance strayed toward Mr. Carleton, and then the thought struck her that what Tom had gained this man had lost. For had Madeleine lived the Van Norman money would have been, in a way, at the disposal of her husband. The girl's death then would make Tom a rich man, while Schuyler Carleton would remain poor. He had always been poor, or at least far from wealthy, and more than one gossip was of the opinion that he had wooed Miss Van Norman not entirely because of disinterested love for her.

While Mrs. Markham was busy with these fast-following thoughts a voice in the doorway made her look up.

A quiet, unimportant-looking man stood there, and was respectfully addressing Doctor Hills.

"I'm Hunt, sir," he said, "a plain-clothes man from headquarters."

The three men in the room gave a start of surprise, and each turned an inquiring look at the new-comer.

"Who sent you? And what for?" asked Doctor Hills.

"I've been here all night, sir. I'm on guard in the present room upstairs."

"I engaged him," said Mrs. Markham. "Madeleine's presents are very valuable, and although the jewels are still in the bank, the silver and other things upstairs are worth a large amount, and I thought best to have this man remain here during the night."

"A very wise precaution, Mrs. Markham," said Doctor Hills; "and why did you leave your post, my man?"

"The butler told me of what had happened, and I wondered if I might be of any service down here. I left the butler in charge of the room while I came down to inquire."

"Very thoughtful of you," said Doctor Hills, with a nod of appreciation; "and while I hardly think so, we may have use for you before the night is over. I am expecting Doctor Leonard, the county physician, and until he comes I can do nothing. I am sure the room above is sufficiently guarded for the time being, so suppose you sit down here a few minutes and wait."

Mr. Hunt chose to take a seat in the hall, just outside the library door, and thus added one more solemn presence to the quietly waiting group.

Doctor Leonard did not live in Mapleton, but motored over from his home in a nearby village. He was a stranger to all those awaiting him in the Van Norman house, with the exception of Doctor Hills. Unlike that pleasant-mannered young man, Doctor Leonard was middle aged, of a crusty disposition and curt speech.

After Doctor Hills had presented him to the ladies, and before he had time to introduce the two men, Doctor Leonard said crossly, "Put the women out. I cannot conduct this affair with petticoats and hysterics around me."

Though not meant to reach the ears of the ladies, the speech was fairly audible, and with a trace of indignation Miss Morton arose and left the room. Mrs. Markham followed her, and Cicely and Marie went also.

Doctor Leonard closed the library doors, and, turning to Doctor Hills, asked for a concise statement of what had happened.

In his straightforward manner Doctor Hills gave him a brief outline of the case, including all the necessary details.

"Of course it's a suicide," declared Doctor Leonard in his blustering way; "there is no question whatever. That written confession which you all declare to be in her handwriting is ample proof that the girl killed herself. Of course you had to send for me—the stupid old laws of New Jersey make it imperative that I shall be dragged out many miles away from my home for every death that is n't in conventional death-bed fashion; but there is no suspicion of foul play here. The poor girl chose to kill herself, and she has done so with the means which she found near at hand. I will write the burial certificate and leave it with you. There is no occasion for the coroner."

"Thank God for that!" exclaimed Schuyler Carleton, in a fervent tone.

"Amen," said Tom. "It's dreadful enough to think of poor Maddy as she is, but had it been any one else who——"

Unheeding the ejaculations of the two men, Doctor Hills said earnestly, "But, Doctor, if it had not been for the written paper, would you have called it suicide?"

"That has nothing to do with the case," declared Doctor Leonard testily. "The paper is there, and is authentic. No sane man could doubt that it is a suicide after that."

"But, Doctor Leonard, it would seem impossible for a woman to stab herself at that angle, and with such an astonishing degree of force; also to pull the dagger from the wound, cast it on the floor, and then to place her arm in that particular position on the table."

"Why do you say in that particular position?"

"Because the position of her right arm is as if thrown there carelessly, and not as if flung there in a death agony."

"You are imaginative, Doctor Hills. The facts may not seem possible, but since they are the facts you must admit that they are possible."

"Very well, Doctor Leonard, I accept your decision, and I relinquish all professional responsibility in the matter."

"You may do so. There is no occasion for mystery or question. It is a sad affair, indeed, but no crime is indicated beyond that of self-destruction. The written confession hints at the motive for the deed, but that is outside my jurisdiction. Who is the man in the hall? I fancied him a detective."

"He is; that is, he is a man from headquarters who is here to watch over the bridal gifts. He came down-stairs thinking we might require his services in another way."

"Send him back to his post. There is no work for detectives, just because a young girl chose to end her unhappy life."

Doctor Hills opened the library door and directed Hunt to return to his place in the present room.

Doctor Leonard, still with his harsh and disagreeable manner, advised Willard and Carleton to go to their homes, saying he and Doctor Hills would remain in charge of the library for the rest of the night.

Doctor Hills found the women in the drawing-room, awaiting such message as Doctor Leonard might have for them. Doctor Hills told them all that Doctor Leonard had said, and advised them to retire, as the next day would be indeed a difficult and sorrowful one.

It was characteristic of Miss Morton that she went straight to her own room and shut the door. Mrs. Markham, on the other hand, went to the room occupied by Kitty French. Molly Gardner was there, too, and the two girls, robed in kimonas, were sitting, white-faced and tearful-eyed, waiting for some further news from the room whence they had been banished.

Mrs. Markham told them what Doctor Leonard had said, but Kitty French broke out impetuously, "Madeleine never killed herself, never! I know she always said that about the dagger, but she never really meant it, and any way she never would have done it the night before her wedding. I tell you she did n't do it! It was some horrid burglar who came in to steal her presents, who killed her."

"I would almost rather it had been so, Kitty dear," said Mrs. Markham, gently stroking the brow of the excited girl; "but it could not have been, for we have very strong locks and bolts against burglars, and Harris is very careful in his precautions for our safety."

"I don't care! Maddy *never* killed herself. She would n't do it, I know her too well. Oh dear! now there won't be any wedding at all! Is n't it dreadful to think of that decorated room, and the bower we planned for the bride!"

At these thoughts Kitty's tears began to flow afresh, and Molly, who was already limp from weeping, joined her.

Mrs. Markham, herself with overwrought nerves, found she could do nothing to comfort the girls, so left them and went to commune with her grief in her own room.

Meantime the two doctors alone in the library were still in discussion.

"Well, what do you want?" inquired Doctor Leonard angrily. "Do you want to imply, and with no evidence whatever, that the girl died by some hand other than her own? Do you want to involve the family in the expense and unpleasant publicity of a coroner's inquest, when there is not only no reason for such a proceeding, but there is every reason against it?"

"I want nothing but to get at the truth," rejoined Doctor Hills, a little ruffled himself. "I hold that a young woman, unless endowed with unusual strength, or possibly under stress of intense passion, could not inflict upon herself a blow strong enough to drive that dagger to the hilt in her own breast, pull it forth again, and cast it on the floor, and after that place her arm in the position it now occupies."

Doctor Leonard looked thoughtful. "I agree with you," he said slowly; "that is, I agree that it does not seem as if a woman could do that. But, my dear Doctor Hills, Miss Van Norman did do that. We know she did, from her own written confession, and also by the theory of elimination. What else *could* have happened? Have you any suggestion to advance?"

Doctor Hills was somewhat taken aback at Doctor Leonard's suddenness. Up to this moment the county physician had stoutly maintained that the case was a suicide beyond any question, and then, turning, he had put the question to the younger doctor in such a way that Doctor Hills was not quite ready with an answer.

"I have no suggestion to make," he said slowly. "I have no theory to offer, but I am firmly convinced that Madeleine Van Norman did not strike the blow that took away her young life. Perhaps this is more a feeling or an intuition than a logical conviction, but——" he hesitated and looked intently at the dead girl, as if trying to force the secret from her.

With a sudden start he took a step forward, and as he spoke, his voice rang with excitement.

"Doctor Leonard," he said, in a quick, concise voice, "will you look carefully at that dagger?"

"Yes," said the older man, impressed by the other's sudden intensity; and, stepping forward, he scrutinized the dagger as it lay on the table, without, however, touching it.

"There is blood on the handle," went on Doctor Hills.

"Yes, several stains, now dried."

"And do you see any blood on the right hand of Miss Van Norman?"

Startled at the implication, Doctor Leonard bent to examine the cold white hand. Not a trace of blood was on it. Instinctively he looked at the girl's left hand, only to find that also immaculately white.

Doctor Leonard stood upright and pulled himself together.

"I was wrong, Doctor Hills," he said, with a nod which in him betokened an unspoken apology. "It is a case for the coroner."

CHAPTER IV

FESSENDEN COMES

It was about nine o'clock the next morning when Rob Fessenden rang the bell of the Van Norman house. Fessenden had been invited to be best man at the wedding, and, having heard nothing of the events of the night, had called to offer any assistance he might give before the ceremony.

The trailing garland of white flowers with fluttering streamers of white ribbon that hung beside the portal struck a chill to his heart.

"What can have happened?" he thought blankly, and confused ideas of motor accidents were thronging his mind as the door was opened for him. The demeanor of the footman at once told him that he was in a house of mourning. Shown into the drawing-room, he was met by Cicely Dupuy.

"Mr. Fessenden!" she exclaimed as she greeted him. "Then you have not heard?"

"I've heard nothing. What is it?"

Poor Miss Dupuy had bravely taken up the burden of telling the

sad story to callers who did not know of it, and this was not the first time that morning she had enlightened inquiring friends.

In a few words she told Mr. Fessenden of the events of the night before. He was shocked and sincerely grieved. Although his acquaintance with Miss Van Norman was slight, he was Schuyler Carleton's oldest and best friend, and he had come from New York the day before in order to take his part at the wedding.

While they were talking Kitty French came in. As Mr. Fessenden began to converse with her Cicely excused herself and left the room.

"Is n't it awful?" began Kitty, and her tear-filled eyes supplemented the trite sentence.

"It is, indeed," said Rob Fessenden, taking her hand in spontaneous sympathy. "Why should she do it?"

"She did n't do it," declared Kitty earnestly. "Mr. Fessenden, they all say she killed herself, but I know she did n't. Won't you help me to prove that, and to find out who did kill her?"

"What do you mean, Miss French? Miss Dupuy just told me it was a suicide."

"They all say so, but I know better. Oh, I wish somebody would help me! Molly does n't think as I do, and I can't do anything all alone."

Miss French's face was small and flower-like, and when she clasped her little hands and bewailed her inability to prove her belief, young Fessenden thought he had never seen such a perfect picture of beautiful helplessness. Without reserve he instantly resolved to aid and advise her to the best of his own ability.

"I will help you, Miss French," he said gravely. "I know little of the details of the case, but if there is the slightest chance that you may be right, rest assured that you shall be given every chance to prove it."

Kitty French gave a sigh of relief. "Oh, thank you," she said earnestly; "but I'm afraid we cannot do much, however well we intend. Of course I'm merely a guest here, and I have no authority of any sort. And, too, to prove that Maddy did not kill herself would mean having a detective and everything like that."

"I may not be 'everything like that,'" said Fessenden, with a faint smile, "but I am a sort of detective in an amateur way. I've had quite a good deal of experience, and though I would n't take a case officially, I'm sure I could at least discover if your suspicions have any grounds."

"But I have n't any suspicions," said Kitty, agitatedly clasping her little hands against her breast; "I've only a feeling, a deep, positive conviction, that Madeleine did not kill herself, and I'm sure I don't know who did kill her."

Fessenden gave that grave smile of his and only said, "That does n't sound like much to work upon, and yet I would often trust a woman's intuitive knowledge against the most conspicuous clues or evidences."

Kitty thanked him with a smile, but before she could speak Miss Morton came into the room.

"It's perfectly dreadful," that lady began in her impetuous way; "they're going to have the coroner after all! Doctor Leonard has sent for him and he may arrive at any minute. Is n't it awful? There'll be an inquest, and the house will be thronged with all sorts of people!"

"Why are they going to have an inquest?" demanded Kitty, whirling around and grasping Miss Morton by her elbows.

"Because," she said, quite as excited as Kitty herself—"because the doctors think that perhaps Madeleine did n't kill herself; that she was—was——"

"Murdered!" exclaimed Kitty. "I knew it! I knew she was! Who killed her?"

"Mercy! I don't know," exclaimed Miss Morton, a little frightened at Kitty's vehemence. "That's what the coroner is coming to find out."

Feeling interested in getting at the facts in the case, and thinking that he could learn little from these two excited women, Rob Fessenden turned into the hall just in time to meet Doctor Hills, who was coming from the library.

"May I introduce myself?" he said. "I'm Robert Fessenden of New York, a lawyer, and I was to have been best man at the wedding. You, I know, are Doctor Hills, and I want to say to you that if the earnest endeavor of an amateur detective would be of any use to you in this matter, it is at your disposal. Mr. Carleton is my old and dear friend, and I need not tell you how he now calls forth my sympathy."

Instinctively, Doctor Hills liked this young man. His frank manner and pleasant, straightforward ways impressed the doctor favorably, and he shook hands warmly as he said, "This is most kind of you, Mr. Fessenden, and you may prove the very man we need. At first we were all convinced that Miss Van Norman's death was a suicide; and though the evidence still strongly points to that, I am sure that there is a possibility, at least, that it is not true."

"May I learn the details of the case? May I go into the library?" said Fessenden, hesitating to approach the closed door until invited.

"Yes, indeed; I'll take you in at once. Doctor Leonard, who is in there, is the county physician, and, though a bit brusque in his manner, he is an honest old soul, and does unflinchingly what he judges to be his duty."

They entered the library, where everything was much as it had been the night before. At one time the doctors had been about to move the body to a couch, and to remove the disfigured gown, but after Doctor Leonard had been persuaded to agree with Doctor Hills's view of the case, they had left everything untouched until the coroner should come.

The discovery of this was a satisfaction to Robert Fessenden. His detective instinct had begun to assert itself, and he was glad of an opportunity to examine the room before the arrival of the coroner. Though not seeming unduly curious, his eyes darted about in an eager search for possible clues of any sort. Without touching them, he examined the dagger, the written paper, the appointments of the library table, and the body itself, with its sweet, sad face, its drooping posture, and its tragically stained raiment.

In true detective fashion he scrutinized the carpet, glanced at the window fastenings, and noted the appointments of the library table.

The only thing Fessenden touched, however, was a lead pencil which lay on the pen-rack. It was an ordinary pencil, but he gazed intently at the gilt lettering stamped upon it, and then returned it to its place.

With something of a bustling air the coroner came in. Coroner Benson was a fussy sort of man, with a somewhat exaggerated sense of his own importance. He at once requested that everybody except the two doctors should leave the room.

Fessenden and Kitty French were greatly disappointed at this, but the others went out with a feeling of relief, for the strain was beginning to tell upon the nerves of all concerned.

As usual, Miss Morton tried to exercise her powers of generalship, and directed that they should all assemble in the drawing-room until recalled to learn the coroner's opinion.

Mrs. Markham, unheeding Miss Morton's dictum, went away to attend to her household duties, and Cicely went to her own room, but the others waited in the drawing-room. They were joined shortly by Tom Willard and Schuyler Carleton, who arrived at about the same time.

Mr. Carleton, never a robust man, looked like a wreck of his former self. Years had been added to his apparent age; his impassive face wore a look of stony grief, and his dark eyes seemed filled with an unutterable horror.

Tom Willard, on the contrary, being of stout build and rubicund countenance, seemed an ill-fitting figure in the sad and tearful group.

But as Kitty French remarked to Fessenden in a whisper, "Poor Tom probably feels the worst of any of us, and it is n't his fault that he can't make that fat, jolly face of his look more funereal."

"And he's the heir to the estate, too," Fessenden whispered back.

"Now, that's mean of you," declared Kitty. "Tom has n't a greedy hair in his head, and I don't believe he has even thought of his fortune. And, besides, he was desperately in love with Madeleine. A whole heap more in love than Mr. Carleton was."

Fessenden stared at her. "Then why was Carleton marrying her?"

"For her money," said Kitty, with a disdainful air.

"I didn't know that," went on Fessenden, quite seriously. "I thought Carleton was hard hit. She was a magnificent woman."

"Oh, she was, indeed," agreed Kitty enthusiastically. "Mr. Carleton did n't half appreciate her, and Tom did. But then she was always very different with Tom. Somehow she always seemed constrained when with Mr. Carleton."

"Then why was she marrying him?"

"She never told me in so many words, but maybe it was only because her uncle wanted her to. He had quarrelled with Tom, you know."

And then this conversation was dropped, for Tom Willard himself joined the pair and began talking to them.

And soon after the library doors were thrown open, and Coroner Benson invited them all to come into the library.

They filed in slowly, each heart heavy with an impending sense of dread. Doctor Hills ushered them to seats, which had been arranged in rows, and which gave an unpleasantly formal air to the cozy library.

The body of Madeleine Van Norman had been taken upstairs to her own room, and at the library table, where she had last sat, stood Coroner Benson.

After an impressive pause, which he seemed to deem necessary to gain the attention of an already breathlessly listening audience, he began:

"While there is much evidence that seems to prove that Miss Van Norman took her own life, there is very grave reason to doubt this. Both of the eminent physicians here present are inclined to believe that the dagger thrust which killed Miss Van Norman was not inflicted by her own hand, though it may have been so. This conclusion they arrive at from their scientific knowledge of the nature and direction of dagger strokes, which, as may not be generally known, is a science in itself. Indeed, were it not for the conclusive evidence of the written paper, these gentlemen would believe that the stroke was impossible of self-infliction.

"But, aside from this point, we are confronted by this startling

fact. Although the dagger, which you may see still lying on the table, has several blood-stains on its handle, there is absolutely no trace of blood on the right hand of the body of Miss Van Norman. It is inconceivable that she could have removed such a trace, had there been any, and it is highly improbable, if not indeed impossible, that she could have handled the dagger and left it in its present condition, without showing a corresponding stain on her hand."

This speech of Coroner Benson's produced a decided sensation on all his hearers, but it was manifested in various ways. Kitty French exchanged with Fessenden a satisfied nod, for this seemed in line with her own theory.

Schuyler Carleton showed no emotion, but his white face seemed to take on one more degree of horror and misery. Tom Willard looked blankly amazed, and Mrs. Markham began on a new one of her successive crying spells. Miss Morton sat bolt upright and placidly smoothed the gray silk folds of her gown, while her face wore a decided "I told you so" expression, though she had n't told them anything of the sort.

But the behavior of Cicely Dupuy was perhaps the most extraordinary. She flew into a fit of violent hysterics, and had to be taken from the room.

"In view of this state of affairs," went on the coroner, when quiet had been restored after Cicely's departure, "it becomes necessary to make an investigation of the case. We have absolutely no evidence, and no real reason to suspect foul play, yet since there is the merest possibility that the death was not a suicide, it becomes my duty to look further into the matter. I have been told that Miss Van Norman had expressed a sort of general fear that she might some day be impelled to turn this dagger upon herself. But that is a peculiar mental obsession that affects many people at sight of a sharp-pointed or cutting instrument, and is by no means a proof that she did do this thing. But quite aside from the temptation of the glittering steel, we have Miss Van Norman's written confession that she at least contemplated taking her own life, and ascribing a reason therefor. In further consideration, then, of this written paper, of which you all know the contents, can any of you tell me of any fact or quote any words spoken by Miss Van Norman that would corroborate or amplify the statement of this despairing message?"

As Mr. Benson spoke, he held in his hand the written paper that had been found on the library table. It was indeed unnecessary to read it aloud, for every one present knew its contents by heart.

But nobody responded to the coroner's question. Mr. Carleton looked mutely helpless, Tom Willard looked honestly perplexed, and yet many of those present believed that both these men guessed the

secret of Madeleine's heart, and suspected that she was about to wed where she did not love.

Coroner Benson scanned intently the faces of his audience.

"Can no one, then," he said again, "assert or suggest anything that may have any bearing on this written message?"

"I can," said Robert Fessenden.

CHAPTER V

A SOFT LEAD PENCIL

CORONER BENSON looked at the young man curiously. Knowing him to be a stranger in the household, he had not expected information from him.

"Your name?" he said quietly.

"I am Robert Fessenden, of New York City. I am a lawyer by profession, and I came to Mapleton yesterday for the purpose of acting as best man at Mr. Carleton's wedding. I came here this morning, not knowing of what had occurred in the night, and after conversation with some members of the household I felt impelled to investigate some points which seemed to me mysterious. I trust I have shown no intrusive curiosity, but I confess to a natural detective instinct, and I noticed some peculiarities about that paper you hold in your hand to which I should like to call your attention."

Fessenden's words caused a decided stir among his hearers, including the coroner and the two doctors.

Mr. Benson was truly anxious to learn what the young man had to say, but at the same time his professional jealousy was aroused by the implication that there was anything to be learned from the paper itself, outside of his own information concerning it.

"I was told," he said quickly, "that this paper is positively written in Miss Van Norman's own hand."

Robert Fessenden, while not exactly a handsome man, was of a type that impressed every one pleasantly. He was large and blond, and had an air that was unmistakably cultured and exceedingly well-bred. Conventionality sat well upon him, and his courteous self-assurance had in it no trace of egotism or self-importance. In a word, he was what the plain-spoken people of Mapleton called *citified*, and though they sometimes resented this combination of personal traits, in their hearts they admired and envied it.

This was why Coroner Benson felt a slight irritation at the young man's *savoir faire*, and at the same time a sense of satisfaction that there was promise of some worth-while help.

"I was told so, too," said Fessenden, in response to the coroner's remark, "and as I have never seen any of Miss Van Norman's writing,

I have, of course, no reason to doubt this. But this is the point I want to inquire about: is it assumed that Miss Van Norman wrote the words on this paper while sitting here at the table last evening, immediately or shortly before her death?"

Mr. Benson thought a moment, then he said: "Without any evidence to the contrary, and indeed without having given this question any previous thought, I think I may say that it has been tacitly assumed that this is a dying confession of Miss Van Norman's."

"Then," went on Fessenden, "I will undertake to show that it is improbable that this paper was written as has been supposed. The message is, as you see, written in pencil. The pencil here on the table, and which is part of a set of desk-fittings, is a very hard pencil, labeled H. A few marks made by it upon a bit of paper will convince you at once that it is not the pencil which was used to write that message. The letters, as you see, are formed of heavy black marks which were made with a very soft pencil, such as is designated by 2 B or BB. If you please, I will pause for a moment while you satisfy yourself upon this point."

Greatly interested, Mr. Benson took the pencil from the pen-rack and wrote some words upon a pad of paper. Doctor Leonard and Doctor Hills leaned over the table to note results, but no one else stirred.

"You are quite right," said Mr. Benson; "this message was not written with this pencil. But what does that prove?"

"It proves nothing," said Fessenden calmly, "but it is pretty strong evidence that the message was not written at this table last night. For had there been any other pencil on the table, it would doubtless have remained. Assuming, then, that Miss Van Norman wrote this message elsewhere, and with another pencil, it loses the special importance commonly attributed to the words of one about to die."

"It does," said Mr. Benson, impressed by the fact, but at a loss to know whither the argument was leading.

"Believing, then," went on the lawyer, "that this paper had not been written in this room last evening, I began to conjecture where it had been written. For one would scarcely expect a message of that nature to be written in one place and carried to another. I therefore asked permission of Mrs. Markham to examine the appointments of Miss Van Norman's writing-desk in her own room, and I found in her desk no soft pencils whatever. There were several pencils, of gold and of silver and of ordinary wood, but the lead in each was as hard as this one on the library table. Urged on by what seemed to me important developments, I persuaded Mrs. Markham to let me examine all of the writing-desks in the house. I found but

one soft pencil, and that was in the desk of Miss Dupuy, Miss Van Norman's secretary. It is quite conceivable that Miss Van Norman should write at her secretary's desk, but I found myself suddenly confronted by another disclosure. And that is that the handwritings of Miss Van Norman and Miss Dupuy are so similar as to be almost identical. In view of the importance of this written message, should it not be more carefully proved that this writing is really Miss Van Norman's own?"

"It should, indeed," declared Coroner Benson, who was by this time quite ready to agree to any suggestion Mr. Fessenden might make. "Will somebody please ask Miss Dupuy to come here?"

"I will," said Miss Morton, and, rising, she quickly rustled from the room.

"I've often noticed that they wrote alike," said Kitty French impulsively, "but I never thought about it before in this matter. You see"—she involuntarily addressed herself to the coroner, who listened with interest—"you see, Madeleine instructed Cicely to write as nearly as possible like she did, because Cicely was her social secretary and answered all her notes, and wrote letters for her, and sometimes Cicely signed Madeleine's name to the notes, and the people who received them thought Maddy wrote them herself. She didn't mean to deceive, only sometimes people don't like to have their notes answered by a secretary, and so it saved a lot of trouble. I confess," Kitty concluded, "that I can't always tell the difference in their writing myself, though I usually can."

Miss Morton returned, bringing Cicely with her, and Mrs. Markham also accompanied them.

Miss Dupuy's demeanor had greatly changed. No longer weeping, she had assumed an almost defiant attitude, and her thin lips were tightly closed in a way that did not look promising to those who desired information.

With a conspicuous absence of tact or diplomacy, Mr. Benson asked her abruptly, "Did you write this paper?"

"I did," said Cicely, and as soon as the words were uttered her lips closed again with a snap.

Her reply fell like a bombshell upon the breathless group of listeners. Tom Willard was the first to speak.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Maddy didn't write that? You wrote it?"

"Yes," asserted Cicely, looking Tom squarely in the eyes.

"When did you write it?" asked the Coroner.

"A week or more ago."

"Why did you write it?"

"I refuse to tell."

"Who is the S. mentioned on this paper?"

"I refuse to tell."

"You need n't tell. That is outside the case. It is sufficient for us to know that Miss Van Norman did not write this paper. If you wrote it, it has no bearing on the case. Your penmanship is very like hers."

"I practised to make it so," said Cicely. "Miss Van Norman desired me to do so, that I might answer unimportant notes and sign her name to them. They were in no sense forgeries. Ladies frequently have their own names signed by their secretary. Miss Van Norman often received notes like that."

"Why did you not tell before that you wrote this paper supposed to have been written by Miss Van Norman?"

"Nobody asked me." Miss Dupuy's tone was defiant and even pert. Robert Fessenden began to look at the girl with increasing interest. He felt quite sure that she knew more about the tragedy than he had suspected.

"But why did you not volunteer the information? You must have known it was of great importance." The coroner spoke almost petulantly, and indeed Miss Dupuy had suppressed important information.

At his question she became greatly embarrassed. She blushed and looked down, and then, with an effort resuming her air of defiance, she snapped out her answer: "I was afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid that they would think somebody killed Miss Van Norman, instead of that she killed herself, as she did."

"How do you know she did?"

"I don't know it, except that I left her here alone when I went to my room, and the house was all locked up, and soon after that she was found dead. So she must have killed herself."

"Those conclusions," said the coroner pompously, "are for us to arrive at, not for you to declare. The case," he then said, turning toward the doctors and the young detective, "is entirely changed by the hearing of Miss Dupuy's testimony. The fact that the note was not written by Miss Van Norman, will, I'm sure, remove from the minds of the doctors the possibility of suicide."

"It certainly will," said Doctor Leonard. "I quite agree with Doctor Hills that except for the note all evidence is against the theory of suicide."

"Then," went on Mr. Benson, "if it is not a suicide, Miss Van Norman must have been the victim of foul play, and it is our duty to investigate the matter, and attempt to discover whose hand it was that wielded the fatal dagger."

Mr. Benson was fond of high-sounding words and phrases, and, finding himself in charge of what promised to be a mysterious, if not a celebrated, case, he made the most of his authoritative position.

Robert Fessenden paid little attention to the coroner's speech. His brain was working rapidly, and he was trying to piece together such data as he had already accumulated in the way of evidence. It was but little, to be sure, and in lieu of definite clues he allowed himself to speculate a little on the probabilities. He was even ignorant as to who would inherit the fine house he was now in and the presumably fair-sized fortune which must accompany it.

Of these matters he was not destined long to remain ignorant, for just then old Lawyer Peabody came in. This gentleman had had charge of the Van Norman legal matters for many years, and it was known by most of those present that he was bringing with him such wills or other documents as might have a bearing on the present crisis. As the old gentleman came into the room Mr. Benson was saying:

"And therefore, though the formal inquest must be held later, I shall now conduct a preliminary investigation, in order to learn as early as possible any facts that may be of use in the solution of the mystery. But I observe that Lawyer Peabody has just come in, and as he doubtless has important matters to disclose, we will hear from him first."

Mr. Peabody was an old man; moreover, he had for many years been intimately associated with the Van Norman household, and had been a close friend of both Richard Van Norman and Madeleine. Shattered and broken by the sad tragedy in the household, he could scarcely repress his emotion when he undertook to address the little audience.

But the main purport of his business there at that time was to announce the contents of the two wills in his possession.

The first one, the will of Richard Van Norman, was no surprise to any one present, except perhaps those few who did not live in Mapleton. One of these, Robert Fessenden, was extremely interested to learn that because of Madeleine's death before her marriage, and also before she was twenty-three years of age, the large fortune of Richard Van Norman, which would have been hers on her wedding day, passed at once and unrestrictedly to Tom Willard.

But also by the terms of Richard Van Norman's will the fine old mansion and grounds and a sum of money, modest in comparison with the whole fortune, but ample to maintain the estate, were Madeleine's own, and had been from the day of her uncle's death.

Possessed of this property, therefore, Madeleine had made a will which was dated a few months before her death, and which Mr. Peabody now read.

After appropriate and substantial bequests to several intimate friends, to her housekeeper and secretary, and to all the servants, Madeleine devised that her residuary fortune and the Van Norman house and grounds should become the property of Miss Elizabeth Morton.

This was a complete surprise to all, with the possible exception of Miss Morton herself. It was not easy to judge from her haughty and self-satisfied countenance whether she had known of this before or not.

Fessenden, who was watching her closely, was inclined to think she had known of it, and again his busy imagination ran riot. The first point, he thought to himself, in discovering a potential murderer, is to inquire who will be benefited by the victim's death. Apparently the only ones to profit by the passing of Madeleine Van Norman were Tom Willard and Miss Morton. But even the ingenious imagination of the young detective balked at the idea of connecting either of these two with the tragedy. Willard had not been in the house at the time of the murder, and Miss Morton, as he had chanced to discover, had occupied a room on the third floor. Moreover, it was absurd on the face of things to fancy a well-bred, middle-aged lady stealing downstairs at dead of night to kill her charming young hostess!

It was with a sense of satisfaction therefore that Fessenden assured himself that he had formed no suspicions whatever, and could listen with a mind entirely unprejudiced to such evidence as the coroner's inquiry might bring forth.

CHAPTER VI

PRELIMINARY INQUIRY

A SLIGHT delay was occasioned by waiting for Coroner Benson's own stenographer, but when he arrived the inquiry was at once begun.

At the request of Miss Morton, the whole assembly had moved to the drawing-room, it being a much larger and more airy apartment, and withal less haunted by the picture of the tragedy itself.

And yet to hold a coroner's inquiry in a room gay with wedding decorations was almost, if not quite, as ghastly.

But Coroner Benson paid no heed to emotional considerations and conducted himself with the same air of justice and legality as if he had been in a court-room or the town-hall.

He put his first question to Mrs. Markham, as he considered her, in a way at least, the present head of the household. To be sure, the house now legally belonged to Miss Morton, and that lady was quickly assuming an added air of importance which was doubtless the result

of her recent inheritance; but Mrs. Markham was still housekeeper, and by virtue of her long association with the place, Mr. Benson chose to treat her with exceeding courtesy and deference.

But Mrs. Markham, though now quite composed and willing to answer questions, could give no evidence of any importance. She testified that she had seen Madeleine last at about ten o'clock the night before. This was after the guests who had been at dinner had gone away, and the house guests had gone to their rooms. Miss Van Norman was alone in the library, and as Mrs. Markham left her she asked her to send Cicely Dupuy to the library. Mrs. Markham had then gone directly to her own room, which was on the second floor, above the drawing-room. It was at the front of the house, and the room behind it, also over the long drawing-room, was the one now devoted to the exhibition of Madeleine's wedding gifts. Mrs. Markham had retired almost immediately and had heard no unusual sounds. She explained, however, that she was somewhat deaf, and had there been any disturbance downstairs it was by no means probable that she would have heard it.

"What was the first intimation you had that anything had happened?" asked Mr. Benson.

"Kitty French came to my door and called to me. Her excited voice made me think something was wrong, and, dressing hastily, I came downstairs, to find many of the household already assembled."

"Can you tell me if the house is carefully locked at night?"

"It is, I am sure; but it is not in my province to attend to it."

"Whose duty is it?"

"That of Harris, the butler."

"Will you please call Harris at once?" Mr. Benson's tone of finality seemed to dismiss Mrs. Markham as a witness, and she rang the bell for the butler.

On being questioned, Harris testified that he was most punctilious regarding his duty of locking up the house, for during his years of service with Mr. Van Norman he had been trained especially in that respect. The house, being, as it was, in the midst of large grounds and surrounded by trees and shrubbery, presented opportunity for marauders, and it was one of Mr. Van Norman's fads to make it impossible for them to enter. The house, therefore, was provided with complicated locks and strong bolts. The windows had patent fastening devices, and it was one of the butler's most important duties to see that these safeguards were carefully attended to every night.

"You can testify, then, that the house could not have been entered by a burglar last night?" asked Mr. Benson.

"Not by a burglar, nor by nobody else, sir, unless they broke down a door or cut out a pane of glass."

"Yet Mr. Carleton came in."

Harris looked annoyed. "Of course, sir, anybody could come in the front door with a latch-key. I did n't mean that they could n't. But all the other doors and windows were fastened all right, and I found them all right this morning."

"How about the cellar?"

"We never bother much about the cellar, sir, as there's nothing down there to steal, unless they take the furnace or the gas-meter. But the door at the top of the cellar stairs, as opens into the hall, sir, is locked every night with a double lock and a bolt besides."

"Then no burglar could come up through the cellar way?"

"That he could n't, sir. Nor yet down through the skylight, for the skylight is bolted every night same as the windows."

"And the windows on the second floor—are they fastened at night?"

"They are in the halls, sir. But of course in the bedrooms I don't know how they may be. That is, the occupied bedrooms. When the guest rooms are vacant I always fasten those windows."

"Then you can testify, Harris, that there was no way for any one to enter this house last night except at the front door with a latch-key or through the window of some occupied bedroom?"

"I can swear to that, sir."

"That is all, thank you, Harris. You may go."

Harris went away, his honest countenance showing a look of relief that his ordeal was over, and yet betokening a perplexed anxiety also.

Cicely Dupuy was next called upon to give her evidence, or rather to continue the testimony which she had begun in the library. The girl had a pleasanter expression than she had shown at the previous questioning, but a red spot burned in either cheek, and she was clearly trying to be calm, though really under stress of a great excitement.

From her the coroner elicited this testimony: When Mrs. Markham had asked her the night before to go to the library, she went at once. This was soon after ten o'clock. At Miss Van Norman's request, she had made several lists of errands and matters to be attended to the next day. They had also discussed some minor details of the wedding preparations, and then Miss Van Norman had told her secretary she might go to bed, as she wished to be alone for a time. Cicely said that she then went to her own room, and that it was then just half-past ten.

"Did you retire at once?"

"No; I had some notes to write for Miss Van Norman, and also some of my own, and I sat at my desk for some time. I don't know just how long."

"And then what happened?"

At this question Cicely Dupuy became more nervous and embarrassed than ever. She hesitated and then made two or three attempts to speak, each one of which resulted in no intelligible sound.

"There is nothing to fear," said Mr. Benson kindly. "Simply tell us what you heard while sitting there writing, that caused you to leave your room."

Glancing around as if in search of some one, Cicely finally managed to make an audible reply. "I heard a loud cry," she said, "that sounded as if somebody were frightened or in danger. I naturally ran out into the hall, and, looking over the baluster, I saw Mr. Carleton in the hall below. I felt quite sure then that it was he who had cried out, so I came downstairs."

"At what time was this?"

"At half-past eleven exactly."

"How do you know so accurately?"

"Because as I came downstairs the old clock on the middle landing chimed the half-hour. It has a deep soft note, and it struck just as I passed the clock, and it startled me a little, so of course I remember it perfectly."

"And then?"

"And then"—Cicely again hesitated, but with a visible effort resumed her speech—"why, and then I came on down, and found Mr. Carleton nearly distracted. I could not guess what was the matter. He was turning on the lights and ringing the servants' bells and acting like a man beside himself. Then in a moment Marie appeared, and gave one of her French shrieks that completely upset what little nerve I had left. And then Mr. Carleton motioned us toward the library, and I looked in and saw that dreadful sight! Oh, I shall see it all my life!" At the memory Cicely broke down again and sank into her chair, shaking with convulsive sobs.

Mr. Benson did not disturb her further, but proceeded to question the others.

The account of Marie, the maid, merely served to corroborate what Cicely had said. Marie, too, had heard Carleton's cry for help, and, throwing on a dressing-gown, had run down-stairs to Madeleine's room. Not finding her mistress there, she had hurried down to the first floor, reaching the lower hall but a few minutes after Cicely did. She said also that it was just about half-past eleven by the clock in her own room when she heard Mr. Carleton's cry.

Kitty French and Molly Gardner were questioned, but they told nothing that would throw any light on the matter. They had heard the cry, and while hastily dressing had heard the general commotion in the house. They had thought it must be a fire, and not until they reached the library did they know what had really happened.

Miss Morton's testimony came next. Fessenden regarded her with interest, as, composed and calm, she waited the coroner's interrogations.

She was deliberate and careful in making her replies, and it seemed to the young detective as if she knew nothing whatever about the whole affair, but was trying to imply that she knew a great deal.

"You went to your room when the others did, at about ten o'clock?" asked Mr. Benson.

"Yes, but I did not retire at once."

"Did you hear any sounds that caused you alarm?"

"No, not alarm. Curiosity, perhaps, but that is surely pardonable to a naturally timid woman in a strange house."

"Then you did hear sounds. Can you describe them?"

"I do not think they were other than those made by the servants attending to their duties. But the putting on of coal or the fastening of windows are noticeable sounds when one is not accustomed to them."

"You could discern, then, that it was the shovelling of coal or the fastening of windows that you heard?"

"No, I could not. My hearing is extremely acute, but as my room is on the third floor, all the sounds I heard were faint and muffled."

"Did you hear Mr. Carleton's cry for help?"

"I did, but at that distance it did not sound loud. However, I was sufficiently alarmed to open my door and step out into the hall. I had not taken off my evening gown, and, seeing bright lights downstairs, of course I immediately went down. The household was nearly all assembled when I reached the library. I saw at once what had happened, and I saw, too, that Mrs. Markham and the younger women were quite frantic with fright and excitement. I thought it my duty therefore to take up the reins of government, and I took the liberty of telephoning for the doctor. I think there is nothing more of importance that I can tell you."

"I think not, Miss Morton," said the coroner, and Mr. Fessenden barely repressed a smile, for he could not see that Miss Morton had told anything of importance at all.

Tom Willard was called next, and Fessenden wondered what could be the testimony of a man who had not arrived on the scene until more than two hours after the deed was done.

And indeed there was little that Tom could say. Mr. Benson asked him to detail his own movements after he left the house the night before.

"There's little to tell," said Tom, "but I'll try to be exact. I went away from this house about ten o'clock, taking with me a suitcase full of clothes. I went directly to the Mapleton Inn, and though I don't know exactly, I should say I must have reached there in something less than ten minutes. Then I went to the office of the estab-

lishment, registered, and asked for a room. The proprietor gave me a good enough room, a bellboy picked up my bag, and I went to my room at once. Later I rang for some ice water, which the same boy brought to me. Directly after that I turned in. I slept soundly until awakened by a knocking at my door at about two o'clock in the morning. The landlord himself stood there when I opened the door, and told me I was wanted on the telephone. When I went to the telephone I heard Miss Morton's voice, and she asked me to come over here. I came as quickly as possible, and——"

Tom's voice broke at this point, and, feeling that his story was finished, Mr. Benson considerably asked him no further questions.

Schuyler Carleton was questioned next. When Mr. Benson asked him to tell his story, he hesitated and finally said that he would prefer to have the coroner ask direct questions, which he would answer.

"Did you go away from this house with the other guests at about ten o'clock last evening?"

"No, I was not here at dinner. I left at about half-past five in the afternoon."

"Where did you go?"

"I went directly home and remained there until late in the evening."

"And then?"

"I returned here between eleven and twelve o'clock."

"To make a call."

"No, I came upon an errand."

"What was the errand?"

"As it has no bearing upon the case, I think it is my privilege to decline to answer."

"You entered the house with a latch-key."

"I did."

"Is that latch-key your own property?"

"For the time, yes. Mrs. Markham gave it to me a few days ago, for my convenience, because I have occasion to come to the house so frequently."

"Was it your intention when you went away in the afternoon to return later?"

"It was."

"Upon this secret errand."

"Yes."

"Did you expect to see Miss Van Norman when you entered the house with the latch-key?"

"I did not."

"And when you entered you discovered the tragedy in the library?"

Schuyler Carleton hesitated. His dry lips quivered and his whole frame shook with intense emotion. "Y-yes," he stammered.

The mere fact of that hesitation instantly kindled a spark of suspicion in the minds of many of his hearers. Until that moment Carleton's excessive agitation had been attributed entirely to his grief at the awful fate which had come to his fiancée; but now, all at once, the man's demeanor gave an impression of something else.

Could it be guilt?

CHAPTER VII

AN INTERVIEW WITH CIOELY

ENDEAVORING not to exhibit the surprise and dismay which he felt, Coroner Benson continued his questions.

"And then, when you discovered Miss Van Norman, what did you do?"

Carleton passed his hand across his white brow. "I hardly know," he said. "I was stunned—dazed. I went toward her, and, seeing the dagger on the floor, I picked it up mechanically, scarcely knowing what I did. I felt intuitively that the girl was dead, but I did not touch her, and, not knowing what else to do, I cried out for help."

"And turned on the lights?"

"I pushed several electric buttons, not knowing which were lights and which bells; my principal idea was to arouse the inmates of the house at once."

"Who first appeared in answer to your call?"

"Miss Dupuy came running downstairs at once, followed by Miss Van Norman's maid."

"Mr. Carleton," said the coroner, with a new note of gravity in his voice, "I think it my duty to tell you that your own interests require you to state the nature of your errand to this house last night."

"I decline to do so."

"Then, will you state as exactly as you can the hour at which you entered the front door?"

"I don't know precisely. But Miss Dupuy has testified that she came downstairs in response to my call at half-past eleven. I came into the house a—a few moments before."

"That is all," said the coroner abruptly. "Mr. Hunt, if you please."

The man from headquarters, who had guarded the present room through the night, came in from the doorway where he had been standing.

"Will you tell what you know concerning Mr. Carleton's entrance last night?" said the coroner briefly.

"I was on guard in the present room from nine o'clock on," said Mr. Hunt. "Of course I was on the watch-out for anything unusual, and alert to hear any sound. I heard the company go away at ten o'clock, I heard most of the people in the house go to their rooms right after that. I heard and I also saw Miss Dupuy go down to the library after that, and return to her room about half-past ten. I noticed all these things because that is my business, but they made no special impression on me, as they were but the natural proceedings of the people who belonged here. Of course I was only on the lookout for intruders. I heard the sound of a latch-key and I heard the front door open at exactly quarter after eleven. I stepped out into the hall, and, looking downstairs, I saw Mr. Carleton enter. I also saw Miss Dupuy in the upper hall looking over the banister. She, too, must have seen Mr. Carleton. But as all of this was none of my business, and as nobody had entered who had n't a right to, I simply returned to my post. At half-past eleven I heard Mr. Carleton's cry, and saw the lights go up all over the house. Anything more, sir?"

"Not at present, Mr. Hunt. Miss Dupuy, did you hear Mr. Carleton come in?"

Cicely Dupuy turned an angry face toward Mr. Hunt and fairly glared at the mild-mannered man. She waited a moment before answering the coroner's question, and then as if with a sudden resolve she spoke a sharp, quick "Yes."

"And that was at quarter after eleven?"

"It was later," declared Cicely. "For Mr. Carleton told you himself that he went directly into the library as soon as he came into the house, and as I heard his cry at half-past eleven he must have entered only a few moments before."

Schuyler Carleton stared at Cicely, and she returned his gaze. It was quite evident to the onlookers that a mental message was passing between these two.

"You are sure, Mr. Hunt, that your statement as to the time is correct?" said the coroner, turning again to him.

"Perfectly sure, sir. It is my business to be sure of the time."

"Mr. Carleton," said Mr. Benson, "there is an apparent discrepancy here, which it is advisable for you to explain. If you came into this house at quarter after eleven, and rang the bells for help at half-past eleven, what were you doing in the meantime?"

It was out at last. The coroner's question, though quietly put, was equivalent to an accusation. Every eye in the room was turned toward Carleton, and every ear waited in suspense for his reply.

At last the answer came. The dazed, uncertain look had returned to Carleton's face and his voice sounded mechanical, like that of an automaton, as he replied, "I decline to say."

The pause that followed was broken by Coroner Benson's voice. "There is nothing more to be done at present. This has been merely a preliminary investigation. But it has proved to us that there has been a crime committed. There is no doubt that Miss Van Norman was murdered, and that the crime took place between half-past ten and half-past eleven last night. An official inquest must be held, and the necessary steps toward that will be taken immediately. As an audience you are dismissed."

The people rose slowly from their chairs, and most of them looked as if they did not quite comprehend what it all meant. Among these was Carleton himself. He seemed oblivious to the fact that he was an accused man, and stood quietly, as if awaiting any further developments that might come.

"Look at Schuyler," said Kitty French to Fessenden. The two had withdrawn to a quiet corner to discuss the affair. But Kitty was doing most of the talking, while Fessenden was quiet and seemed preoccupied. "Of course I suppose he must have killed Madeleine," went on Kitty, "but it's so hard to believe it, after all. I've tried to think of a reason for it, and this is the only one I can think of. They quarrelled yesterday afternoon, and he went away in a huff. I believe he came back last night to make it up with her, and then they quarrelled again and he stabbed her."

Fessenden looked at her thoughtfully. "I think that Hunt man testified accurately," he said. "And if so Carleton was in the house just fifteen minutes before he gave the alarm. Now, fifteen minutes is an awfully short time to quarrel with anybody so desperately that it leads to a murder."

"That's true; but they both have very quick tempers. At least, Madeleine had. She didn't often do it, but when she did fly into a fury it was as quick as a flash. I've never seen Mr. Carleton angry, but I know he can be, for Maddy told me so."

"Still, a quarter of an hour is too short a time for a fatal quarrel, I think. If Carleton killed her he came here for that purpose, and it was done premeditatedly."

"Why do you say 'if he killed her'? It's been proved she didn't kill herself; it's been proved that no one could enter the house without a latch-key, and it's been proved that the deed was done in that one hour between half-past ten and half-past eleven. So it had to be Mr. Carleton."

"Miss French, you have a logical mind, and I think you'd make a clever little detective. But you have overlooked the possibility that she was killed by some one in the house."

"Some of us?" Kitty's look of amazement almost made Fessenden smile.

"Not you or Miss Gardner," he said. "But a burglar might have been concealed in the house."

"I never thought of that!" exclaimed Kitty, her eyes opening wide at the thought. "Why, he might have killed us all!"

"It is n't a very plausible theory," said Fessenden, unheeding the girl's remark, "and yet I could think of nothing else. Every instinct of my mind denies Carleton's guilt. Why, he is n't that sort of a man!"

"Perhaps he is n't as good as he looks," said Kitty, wagging her head wisely. "I know a lot about him. You know he was n't a bit in love with Maddy."

"You hinted that before. And was he really a mere fortune-hunter? I can't believe that of Carleton. I've known the man for years."

"He must have been, or else why did he marry her? He's in love with another girl."

"He is! Who?"

"I don't know who. But Madeleine hinted it to me only a few days ago. It made her miserable. And that's why everybody thought she wrote that paper that said, 'I love S. but he does n't love me.' Sometimes I still think she did write it. I never can tell her writing from Cicely's."

"That written paper has n't been explained yet," exclaimed the young man. "Now, look here, Miss French, I'm not going to wait to be officially employed on this case, though I am going to offer Carleton my legal services, but I mean to do a little investigating on my own account. The sooner inquiries are made, the more information is usually obtained. Can you arrange that I shall have an interview with Miss Dupuy?"

"I think I can," said Kitty; "but if you let it appear that you're inquisitive she won't tell you a thing. Suppose we just talk to her casually, you and I. I won't bother you."

"Indeed you won't. You'll be of first-class help. When can we see her?"

While they had been talking other things had been happening in the drawing-room. The people who had been gathered there had all disappeared, and, under the active superintendence of Miss Morton, the florist's men who had put up the decorations were now taking them away. The whole room was in confusion, and Kitty and Mr. Fessenden were glad to escape to some more habitable place.

"Wait here," said Kitty, as they passed through the hall, "and I'll be back in a moment."

Kitty flew upstairs, and soon returned, saying that Miss Dupuy would be glad to talk with them both in Madeleine's sitting-room.

This room was on the second floor, directly back of Madeleine's bedroom, the bedroom being directly above the library. Miss Dupuy's own room was back of this sitting-room and communicated with it.

The sitting-room was a pleasant place, with large light windows and easy chairs and couches. A large and well-filled desk seemed to prove the necessity of a social secretary, if Miss Van Norman cared to have any leisure hours.

Surrounded by letters and papers, Cicely sat at the desk as they entered, but immediately rose to greet them.

Kitty's tact in requesting the interview had apparently been successful, for Miss Dupuy was gracious and affable.

But after some desultory conversation which amounted to nothing, Fessenden concluded a direct course would be better.

"Miss Dupuy," he said, "I'm a detective, at least in an amateur way."

Cicely gave a start and a look of fear came into her eyes.

"I have the interests of Schuyler Carleton at heart," the young man continued, "and my efforts shall be primarily directed toward clearing him from any breath of suspicion that may seem to have fallen upon him."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Cicely, clasping her hands and showing such genuine gratitude that Fessenden was startled by a new idea.

"I'm sure," he said, "that you'll give me any help in your power. And first I will ask you to explain that written message which you declared that you yourself wrote."

At this Cicely's manner changed. She became again the obstinate and defiant woman who had answered the coroner's questions.

"Consider a moment," urged Fessenden gently. "When the official inquest is held—and perhaps at a trial—you will be obliged to explain this matter. How much better, then, to confide in us now, and perhaps lead to an immediate solution of the mystery."

Cicely pondered a moment, then she said, "I have nothing to conceal, I will tell you. I did write that paper, and it was the confession of my heart. I am very miserable, and when I wrote it I quite intended to take my own life. When I was called to go to Miss Van Norman in the library, I gathered up some notes and lists from my desk to take to her. In my haste I must have included that paper without knowing it, for when I reached my room I could not find it. And then—then when I saw it—there on the table—I—I——" Cicely had again grown nervous and excited. Her voice trembled, her eyes filled with tears, and, fearing a nervous collapse, Fessenden hurried on to other questions.

"Whom does that S. in your note stand for?"

"That I shall never tell." The determination in her voice con-

vinced both her hearers that it was useless to insist on that point, so Fessenden went on.

"Perhaps we have no right to ask. Now you must tell me some other things, and, believe me, my questions are not prompted by curiosity, but are necessary to the discovery of the truth. Was Miss Van Norman in love with Carleton?"

"She was indeed, desperately so."

"Yet she seemed greatly attached to her cousin, Mr. Willard."

"That was partly a cousinly affection, and partly a sort of coquetry to pique Mr. Carleton."

"And was Carleton devoted to her?"

"Must I answer that?" Cicely's eyes looked honestly troubled.

"Yes, you must." Fessenden's voice was very gentle.

"Then he was not devoted to her; in fact, he loved another."

"Who is this other?"

"Dorothy Burt, his mother's companion, who lives at the Carleton home."

"Did Miss Van Norman know this?"

"Yes, she learned of it lately, and it broke her heart. That is why she was so uncertain and erratic in her moods; that is why she coquetted with Mr. Willard, to arouse Schuyler Carleton's jealousy."

"This throws a new light on it all," said Fessenden gravely. "And now, Miss Dupuy, will you please tell us frankly at what time you saw Mr. Carleton come into the house last night?"

"Just a few moments before half-past eleven." Cicely said this glibly, as if reciting a carefully-conned lesson.

"Wait a moment—you forget that Mr. Hunt fixed the time at quarter after eleven, and that he saw you looking over the baluster at the same time."

With an agonized cry of dismay, Miss Dupuy fainted into utter unconsciousness.

Perplexed and baffled in his inquiries, Fessenden saw that for the moment Miss Dupuy's physical condition was of paramount importance, and at Kitty's request he rang for Marie. Even before she came the others had placed Cicely gently on a couch, and when the maid arrived Fessenden left the room, knowing that the girl was properly cared for.

CHAPTER VIII

FESSENDEN'S DETECTIVE WORK

ALTHOUGH some questions he had wished to ask Cicely were yet unanswered, Rob Fessenden had discovered several important facts, and he looked about him for a quiet spot to sit down and tabulate them in black and white. The florist's men were still in the drawing-

room, so he went into the library. Here he found only Mrs. Markham and Miss Morton, who were apparently discussing a question on which they held opposite opinions.

"Come in, Mr. Fessenden," said Mrs. Markham, as he was about to withdraw. "I should be glad of your advice. Ought I to give over the reins of government at once to Miss Morton?"

"Why not?" interrupted Miss Morton, herself. "The house is mine; why should I not be mistress here?"

Fessenden repressed a smile. It seemed to him absurd that these two middle-aged women should discuss an issue of this sort with such precipitancy.

"It seems to me a matter of good taste," he replied. "The house, Miss Morton, is legally yours, but as its mistress, I think you'd show a more gracious manner if you would wait for a time before making any changes in the domestic arrangements."

Apparently undesirous of pursuing the gracious course he recommended, Miss Morton rose abruptly and flounced out of the room.

"Now she's annoyed again," observed Mrs. Markham placidly. "The least little thing sets her off."

"If not intrusive, Mrs. Markham, won't you tell me how it comes about that Miss Morton inherits this beautiful house? Is she a relative of the Van Normans?"

"Not a bit of it. She was Richard Van Norman's sweetheart, years and years and *years* ago. They had a falling-out, and neither of them ever married. Of course he did n't leave her any of his fortune. But only a short time ago, long after her uncle's death, Madeleine found out about it from some old letters. She determined then to hunt up this Miss Morton, and she did so, and they had quite a correspondence. She came here for the wedding, and Madeleine intended she should make a visit, and intended to give her a present of money when she went away. In the meantime Madeleine had made her will, though I did n't know this until to-day, leaving the place and all her own money to Miss Morton. I'm not surprised at this, for Tom Willard has plenty, and as there was no other heir, I know Madeleine felt that part of her uncle's fortune ought to be used to benefit the woman he had loved in his youth."

"That explains Miss Morton, then," said Fessenden. "But what a peculiar woman she is!"

"Yes, she is," agreed Mrs. Markham, in her serene way. "But I'm used to queer people. Richard Van Norman used to give way to the most violent bursts of temper I ever saw. Maddy and Tom are just like him. They would both fly into furious rages, though I must say they did n't do it often, and never unless for some deep reason."

"And Mr. Carleton—has he a high temper?"

Mrs. Markham's brow clouded. "I don't understand that man," she said slowly. "I don't think he has a quick temper, but there's something deep about him that I can't make out. Oh, Mr. Fessenden, do you think he killed our Madeleine?"

"Do you?" said Fessenden suddenly, looking straight at her.

"I do," she said, taken off her guard. "That is, I could n't believe it, only, what else can I think? Mr. Carleton is a good man, but I know Maddy never killed herself, and I know the way this house is locked up every night. No burglar or evil-doer could possibly get in."

"But the murderer may have been concealed in the house for hours beforehand."

"Nonsense! That would be impossible, with a house so full of people, and the wedding preparations going on, and everything. Besides, Mr. Hunt would have heard any intruder prowling around; and then again, how could he have gone out? Everything was bolted on the inside, except the front door, and had he gone out that way he must surely have been heard."

"Well reasoned, Mrs. Markham! I think, with you, we may dismiss the possibility of a burglar. The time was too short for anything except a definitely premeditated act. And yet I cannot believe the act was that of Schuyler Carleton. I know that man well, and a truer, braver soul never existed."

"I know it," declared Mrs. Markham, "but I think I'm justified in telling you this. Mr. Carleton did n't love Madeleine, and he did love another girl. Madeleine worshipped him, and I think he came last night to ask her to release him, and she refused, and then—and then——"

This was a new theory, and gave a new turn to Fessenden's ideas. Might he, after all, be mistaken in Schuyler Carleton, and could Mrs. Markham's theory be the true one?

They were both silent for a few minutes, and then Mr. Fessenden said, "But you thought it was suicide at first."

"Indeed I did; I looked at the paper through glasses that were dim with tears, and it looked to me like Madeleine's writing. Of course Miss Morton also thought it was, as she was only slightly familiar with Maddy's hand. But now that we know some one else wrote that message, of course we also know the dear girl did not bring about her own death."

Mrs. Markham was called away on some household errands then, and Fessenden remained alone in the library, trying to think of some clue that would point to some one other than Carleton.

"I'm sure that man is not a murderer," he declared to himself. "Carleton is peculiar, but he has a loyal, honest heart. And yet, if

not, who can have done the deed? There must have been some motive of which I know nothing. And perhaps I also know nothing of the murderer. It need not necessarily have been one of these people we have already questioned." His thoughts strayed to the under-servants of the house, to common burglars, or to some powerful unknown villain. But always the thought returned that no one could have entered and left the house unobserved within that fatal hour.

That afternoon he concluded to go for a walk while he tried to classify his mental impressions.

On his way he passed the Mapleton Inn. An impulse came to him to investigate Tom Willard's statements, and he turned back and entered the small hotel.

He thought it wiser to be frank in the matter than to attempt to obtain underhand information. Asking to speak with the proprietor alone, he said plainly:

"I'm a detective from New York City, and my name is Fessenden. I'm interested in investigating the death of Miss Van Norman. I have no suspicions of any one in particular, but I'm trying to collect a few absolute facts by way of making a beginning. I wish you, therefore, to consider this conversation confidential."

Mr. Taylor, the landlord of the inn, was flattered at being a party to a confidential conversation with a real detective, and willingly promised secrecy in the matter.

"Then," went on Fessenden, "will you tell me all you know of the movements of Mr. Willard last evening?"

Mr. Taylor looked a bit disappointed at this request, for he foresaw that his story would be but brief. However, he elaborated the recital and spun it out as long as he possibly could. But after all his circumlocution, Fessenden found that the facts were given precisely as Willard had stated them himself.

The bellboy who had carried up the suitcase was called in, and his story also agreed.

"Yessir," said the boy; "I took up his bag, and he gimme a quarter, just like any nice gent would. 'N'en I come downstairs, and after while the gent's bell rang, and I went up, and he wanted ice water. He was in his shirt sleeves then, jes' gittin' ready for bed. So I took up the water, and he said, 'Thank you,' real pleasant-like, and gimme a dime. He's a awful nice man, he is. He had his shoes off that time, 'most ready for bed. And that's all I know about it."

All this was nothing more nor less than Fessenden had expected. He had asked the questions merely for the satisfaction of having verbal corroboration of Tom's own story.

With thanks to Mr. Taylor, and a more material token of appreciation to the boy, he went away.

As he sauntered through one of the few streets the little village possessed, he was rather pleased than otherwise to see Kitty French walking toward him.

She greeted him with apparent satisfaction, and said chummily, "Let's walk along together and talk it over."

Quite willingly Rob fell into step beside her, and they walked along the street which soon merged itself into a pleasant country road.

Fessenden told Kitty of his conversation at the inn, but it seemed to her unimportant.

"Of course," she said, "I suppose it was a good thing to have some one else say the same as Tom said, but as Tom was n't even in the house, I don't see as he is in the mystery at all. But there's no use of looking further for the criminal. It was Schuyler Carleton, just as sure as I stand here."

Kitty very surely stood there. They had paused beneath an old willow tree by the side of the road, and Kitty, leaning against a rail fence, looked like a very sweet and winsome Portia, determined to mete out justice.

Though he was himself convinced that he was an unprejudiced seeker after truth, at that moment Robert Fessenden found himself very much swayed by the opinions of the pretty, impetuous girl who addressed him.

"I believe I'm going to work all wrong," he declared. "I can't help feeling sure that Carleton did n't do it, and so I'm trying to discover who did."

"Well, why is that wrong?" demanded Kitty wonderingly.

"Why, I think a better way to do would be to assume, if only for sake of argument, as they say, or rather for sake of a starting point—to assume that you are right and that Carleton is the evil-doer, though I swear I don't believe it."

Kitty laughed outright. "You're a nice detective!" she said. "Are you assuming that Schuyler is the villain, merely to be polite to me?"

"I am not, indeed! I feel very politely inclined toward you, I'll admit, but in this matter I'm very much in earnest. And I believe, by assuming that Carleton is the man, and then looking for proof of it, we may run across clues that will lead us to the real villain."

Kitty looked at him admiringly, and for Kitty French to look at any young man admiringly was apt to be a bit disturbing to the young man's peace of mind.

It proved so in this case, and though Fessenden whispered to his own heart that he would attend first to the vindication of his friend Carleton, his own heart whispered back that after that, Miss French must be considered.

"And so," said Rob, as they turned back homeward, "I'm going to work upon this line. I'm going to look for clues; real, material, tangible clues, such as criminals invariably leave behind them."

"Do!" cried Kitty. "And I'll help you. I know we can find something."

"You see," went on Fessenden, his enthusiasm kindling from hers, "the actual stage of the tragedy is so restricted. Whatever we find must be in the Van Norman house."

"Yes, and probably in the library."

"Or the hall," he supplemented.

"What kind of a thing do you expect to find?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. In the Sherlock Holmes stories it's usually cigar ashes or something like that. Oh, pshaw! I don't suppose we'll find anything."

"I don't believe you're much of a detective, any way," said Kitty, so frankly that Fessenden agreed.

"I don't believe I am," he said honestly. "With the time, place, and number of people so limited, it ought to be easy to solve this mystery at once."

"I think it's just those very conditions that make it so hard," said Kitty, sighing.

And so completely under her spell was Fessenden by this time that he emphatically agreed with her.

When they reached the Van Norman house they found it had assumed the hollow, breathless air that invades a house where death is present.

All traces of decoration had been removed from the drawing-room, and it, like the library, had been restored to its usual immaculate order. The scent of flowers, however, was all through the atmosphere, and a feeling of oppression hovered about like a heavy cloud.

Involuntarily Kitty slipped her hand in Rob's as they entered.

Fessenden, too, felt the gloom of the place, but he had made up his mind to do some practical work while yet the daylight lasted, and detaining Harris, who had opened the door for them, he said at once, "I want you to open the blinds for a time in all the rooms downstairs. Miss French and I are about to make a search, and, unless necessary, let no one interrupt us."

"Very good, sir," said the impassive Harris, who was becoming accustomed to sudden and unexpected orders.

They had chosen their time well for the search, and were not interrupted. Most of the members of the household were in their own rooms; Carleton had gone home, and Willard to the hotel; and there happened to be no callers who entered the house.

Fessenden suggested that Kitty should make search in the library

while he did the same in the drawing-room; and that afterward they should change places.

Not half an hour had elapsed when Kitty appeared at the drawing-room door with a discontented face, and said, "There's positively nothing in the library that does n't belong there. It has been thoroughly swept, and though there may have been many clues, they've all been swept and dusted away."

"Same here," said Fessenden dejectedly. "However, let's change rooms, so we can both feel sure." Then Kitty searched the drawing-room, and Rob the library, and they both scrutinized every inch of the hall.

"I did n't find so much as a thread," said Kitty, as they sat down on a great carved seat in the hall to compare notes.

"I did n't either," said Rob, "with one insignificant exception, and that does n't mean a thing."

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a tiny globule of a silver color.

"What is it?" asked Kitty, taking it with her finger-tips from the palm of his hand.

"It's a cachou."

"And what in the world is a cachou? What is it for?"

"Why, it's a little confection filled with a sort of spice. Some men use them after smoking, to eradicate the odor of tobacco."

"Eat them, do you mean? Are they good to eat?" and impulsive Kitty was about to pop the tiny thing into her mouth, when Rob caught her hand.

"Don't!" he cried. "That's my only clue, after all this search, and it may be of importance."

He rescued the cachou from Kitty's fingers, and then, slipping it into his pocket, he continued to hold the hand from which he had taken it.

And then, somehow, detective work seemed for a moment to lose its intense interest, and Rob and Kitty talked of other things.

CHAPTER IX

CARLETON IS FRANK

NEARLY a week had passed.

The funeral of Madeleine Van Norman had been such as befitted the last of the name, and she had been reverently laid away to rest in the old family vault.

But the mystery of her death was not yet cleared up. The coroner's inquest had been held, and the evidence given before a jury was practically no more than had been heard at the preliminary inquiry. No

further witnesses had been found, and no further important fact had been discovered.

Schuyler Carleton had maintained the same inscrutable air, and, though often nervous to the verge of collapse, had reiterated his original story over and over again without deviation. He still refused to state his errand to the Van Norman house on the night of Madeleine's death. He still declined to say what he was doing between the time he entered the house and the time when he cried out for help. He himself asserted there was little, if any, time therein unaccounted for.

Tom Willard, of course, repeated his story, and it was publicly corroborated by witnesses from the hotel. Tom had changed some during these few days. The sudden accession of a large fortune seemed to burden him rather than to bring him joy. But no one wondered at this when they remembered the sad circumstances which gave him his wealth, and remembered, too, what was no secret to anybody, that he had deeply loved his cousin Madeleine. Of the other witnesses, Cicely Dupuy was the only one whose evidence was not entirely in accordance with her earlier statements. She often contradicted herself, and when in the witness chair was subject to sudden fainting attacks, whether real or assumed no one was quite sure.

But after the most exhaustive inquiry and the most diligent sifting of evidence, the jury could return only the time-worn verdict, "Death at the hands of some person or persons unknown."

But in addition to this it was recommended by the jury that Schuyler Carleton be kept under surveillance. There had not been enough evidence to warrant his arrest, but the district attorney was so convinced of the man's guilt that he felt sure proofs of it would sooner or later be brought to light.

Carleton himself seemed apathetic in the matter. He quite realized that his guilt was strongly suspected by most of the community, but instead of breaking down under this, he seemed rather to accept it sadly and without dispute.

But though the inquest itself was over, vigorous investigation was going on. A detective of some reputation had the case in hand officially, and, unlike many celebrated detectives, he was quite willing to confer with or to be advised by young Fessenden.

Spurred by the courtesy and confidence of his superior, Rob devoted himself with energy to the work of unravelling the mystery, but it was baffling work. As he confessed to Kitty French, who was in all things his confidante, every avenue of argument led up against a blank wall.

"Either Carleton did do it or he did n't," he said reflectively. "If he did, there's absolutely no way we can prove it; and if he did n't, who did?"

Kitty agreed that this was a baffling situation.

"What about that cachou, or whatever you call it?" she asked.

"It did n't amount to anything as a clue," returned Rob moodily. "I showed it to some of the servants, and they said they had never seen such a thing before. Harris was quite sure that none of the men who come here ever use them. I asked Carleton, just casually, for one the other day, and he said he did n't have any and never had had any. I asked Willard for one at another time, and he said the same thing. It must have been dropped by some of the decorator's men; they seemed a Frenchy crowd, and I've been told the French are addicted to these things." Rob took the tiny silver sphere from his pocket and looked at it as he talked. "Besides, it would n't mean a thing if it had belonged to anybody. I only picked it up because it was the only thing I could find in the drawing-room that was n't too heavy to lift."

Rob put his useless clue back into his pocket with a sigh. "I'm going to give it up," he said, "and go back to New York. I've stayed here in Mapleton over a week now, hoping I could be of some help to poor old Carleton; but I can't—and yet I *know* he's innocent! Fairbanks, the detective on the case, is pleasant to work with, and I like him; but if he can't find out anything, of course I need n't hope to. I'd stay on, though, if I thought Carleton cared to have me. But I'm not sure he does, so I'm going back home. When are you going to New York, Kitty?"

But the girl did not answer his question. "Rob," she said, for the intimacy between these two young people had reached the stage of first names, "I have an inspiration."

"I wish I had some faith in it, my dear girl; but your inspirations have such an inevitable way of leading up a tree."

"I know it, and this may also. But listen: does n't Schuyler believe that you suspect him?"

"I *don't* suspect him," declared Rob, almost fiercely.

"I know you don't; but does n't Schuyler think you do?"

"Why, I don't know; I never thought about it. I think very likely he does."

"And he's so proud, of course he won't discuss it with you, or justify himself in any way. Now, look here, Rob: you go to Schuyler, and in your nicest, friendliest way tell him you don't believe he did it. Then—don't you see?—if he is innocent, he will expand and confide in you, and you may get a whole lot of useful information. And on the other hand, if he is guilty, you'll probably learn the fact at once from his manner."

Rob thought it over. "Kitty," he said at last, "you're a trump. I believe you have hit upon the only thing there is to try, and I'll

try it before I decide to go to New York. Miss Morton will keep me a day or two longer, and the more I think about it, the more I think I have n't been fair or just to the old boy in not even asking for his confidence."

"It is n't that so much, but you must assure him of your belief in him. Tell him you know he is innocent."

"I do know it."

"Yes, I know that has been your firm conviction all along, though it is n't mine. But don't tell him it is n't mine; just tell him of your own confidence and sympathy and faith in him, and see what happens."

"A woman's intuitions are always ahead of a man's," declared Rob heartily. "I'll do just as you say, Kitty, and I'll do it wholeheartedly, and to the best of my ability."

Kitty was still staying in the Van Norman house, which had not yet been, and probably would not soon be, known by any other name.

Mrs. Markham had gone away temporarily, though it was believed that when she returned it would be merely to arrange for her permanent departure. The good lady had received a generous bequest in Madeleine's will, and, except for the severing of old associations, she had no desire to remain in a house no longer the home of the Van Normans.

Miss Morton was therefore mistress of the establishment, and thoroughly did she enjoy her position. She invited Miss Gardner and Miss French to remain for a time as her visitors, and though Molly had been obliged to go away the day after the funeral, Kitty had stayed on, in hope of learning the truth about the tragedy.

At Miss Morton's invitation Tom Willard had left the hotel and returned to his old room, which he had given up to Miss Morton herself at Madeleine's request.

Willard without doubt sorrowed deeply for his beautiful cousin, but he was a man who rarely gave voice to his grief, and his feelings were evident more from his manner than his words. He seemed pre-occupied and absent-minded, and, quite unlike Miss Morton, he was in no haste to take even preliminary steps toward the actual acquisition of his fortune.

Fessenden was curious to know whether Willard suspected that his cousin's death was the work of Schuyler Carleton. But when he tried to sound Tom on the subject he was met by a rebuff. It was politely worded, but it was nevertheless a plain-spoken rebuff, and conclusively forbade further discussion of the subject.

And so as an outcome of Kitty's suggestion, Fessenden went to call on Schuyler Carleton.

He found him at home, and his greeting of his caller was courteous, though it showed a slight surprise, as at an unexpected visit.

Noting this, Rob plunged at once into the subject.

"I've come," he said, as soon as they were seated alone in the Carleton library, "to offer you my help. I know that sounds presumptuous, but we're old friends, Carleton, and I think I may be allowed a little presumption on that score. And first, though it seems to me absurdly unnecessary, I want to assure you of my belief in your own innocence. Pshaw, belief is a weak word! I know, I am positive, that you no more killed that girl than I did!"

The light that broke over Carleton's countenance was a fine vindication of Kitty's theory. The weary, drawn look disappeared from his face, and, impulsively grasping Rob's hand, he exclaimed, "Do you mean that?"

"Of course I mean it. I never for an instant thought it possible. You're not that sort of a man."

"Not that sort of a man;" Carleton spoke musingly. "That is n't the point, Fessenden. I've thought this thing out pretty thoroughly, and I must say I don't wonder that they suspect me of the deed. You see, it's a case of exclusive opportunity."

"That phrase always makes me tired," declared Rob. "If there's one thing more misleading than 'circumstantial evidence,' it is 'exclusive opportunity.' Now, look here, Carleton, if you'll let me, I'm going to take up this matter. Should you be arrested and tried—and I may as well tell you frankly I'm pretty sure that you will be—I want to act as your lawyer. But in the meantime I want to endeavor to track down the real murderer and so leave no occasion for your trial."

Schuyler Carleton looked like a condemned man who has just been granted a reprieve.

"Do you know, Fessenden," he said, "you're the only one who does believe me innocent?"

"Nonsense, man! Nobody believes you guilty."

"They're so strongly suspicious that it's little short of belief," said Carleton sadly. "And truly, Rob, I can't blame them. Everything is against me."

"I admit there are some things that must be explained away; and, Schuyler, if I'm to be your lawyer, or, rather, since I am your lawyer, I must ask you to be perfectly frank with me."

Carleton looked troubled. He was not of a frank nature, and it was always difficult for him to confide his personal affairs to anybody. Fessenden saw this, and resolved upon strong measures.

"You must tell me everything," he said somewhat sternly. "You must do this at the sacrifice of your own wishes. You must ignore

yourself, and lay your whole heart bare to me, for the sake of your mother, and—for the sake of the woman you love.”

Schuyler Carleton started as if he had been physically struck.

“What do you mean?” he cried.

“You know what I mean,” said Fessenden gently. “You did not love the woman you were about to marry. You do love another. Can you deny it?”

“No,” said Carleton, settling back into his apathy. “And since you know that, I may as well tell you all. I admired and respected Madeleine Van Norman, and when I asked her to marry me I thought I loved her. After that I met some one else. You know this?”

“Yes; Miss Burt.”

“Yes. She came into this house as my mother’s companion, and almost from the first time I saw her I knew that she and not Madeleine was the one woman in the world for me. But, Fessenden, never by word or look did I betray this to Miss Burt. If she guesses it, it is only through her woman’s intuition. I have always been loyal to Madeleine in word and deed, if I could not be in thought.”

“Was it not your duty to tell Madeleine this?”

“I tried several times to do so, but, though I hate to sound egotistical, she loved me very deeply, and I felt that honor bound me to her.”

“I’m not here to preach to you, and that part of it is, of course, not my affair. I know your nature, and I know that you were as loyal to Miss Van Norman as you would have been had you never seen Miss Burt, and I honor and respect you for it. But you were jealous of Willard?”

“My nature is insanely jealous, yes. And though he was her cousin, I knew Willard was desperately in love with her, and somehow it always made me frantic to see him showing affection toward the woman I meant to make my wife.”

“She was not in love with Willard?”

“Not in the least. Madeleine’s heart beat only for me, ungrateful wretch that I am. Her little feints at flirting with Willard were only to pique me. I knew this, and yet to see them together always roused that demon of jealousy which I cannot control. Fessenden, aside from all else, how *can* people think I killed the woman who loved me as she did?”

“Of course that argument appeals to you, and of course it does to me. But you must see how others, not appreciating all this, and even suspecting or surmising that your heart was not entirely with your intended bride—you must see that some appearances, at least, are against you.”

"I do see; and I see it so plainly that even to me those appearances seem conclusive of my guilt."

"Never mind what they seem to you, old man; they don't seem so to me, and now I'm going to get to work. First, as I told you, you are going to be frank with me. What were you doing in the Van Norman house before you went into the library?"

Schuyler Carleton blushed. It was not the shame of a guilty man, but the embarrassment of one detected in some betrayal of sentiment.

"Of course I will tell you," he said after a moment. "I went there on an errand which I wished to keep entirely secret. There is a foolish superstition in our family that has been observed for many generations. An old reliquary which was blessed by some ancient Pope has been handed down from father to son for many generations. The superstition is that unless this ancient trinket hangs over the head of a bridegroom on his wedding day, ill fortune will follow him through life. It is part of the superstition that the reliquary must be put in place secretly, and especially without the knowledge of the bride, else its charm is broken. The whole notion is foolishness, but as my wedding was an ill-starred one, any way, I hoped to gain happiness, if possible, by this means. Of course, I don't think I really had any faith in the thing, but it is such an old tradition in the family that it never occurred to me not to follow it. My mother gave me the reliquary, after my father's death, telling me the history of it. I had it with me when I was at the house in the afternoon, and I hoped to find an opportunity to fasten it up in that floral bower, unobserved. But the workmen were busy there when I came away, and I knew there would be many people about the next morning; so I decided to return late at night to do my errand. I had no thought of seeing Madeleine. There were no bright lights in the house, and the drawing-room itself was dark save for what light came in from the hall. I did go into the house, I suppose, at about quarter after eleven. I did n't note the time, but I dare say Mr. Hunt was correct. Without glancing toward the library then, I went at once to the drawing-room and hid the reliquary among the garlands that formed the top of that bower. As I stood there, I realized what I was about to do the next day. It seemed to me that I was doing right, and I vowed to myself to be a true and loving husband to my chosen wife. I stood there some time, thinking, and then turned to go away. As I left the room I noticed a low light in the library, and thought that if any one should be in there it would be wiser to make my presence known. So I crossed the hall and went into the library. The rest you know. The sudden shock of seeing Madeleine as she was, just as I had come from what was to have been our bridal bower, nearly unhinged my mind. I picked up the dagger, I turned on lights and rang bells, not knowing

what I did. Now I have told you the truth, and if my demeanor has seemed strange, can you wonder at it in a man who experienced what I did, and then is suspected of being the criminal?"

"Indeed, no," said Fessenden, grasping his friend's hand in sincere sympathy. "It was a terrible experience, and the injustice of the suspicion resting on you makes it a hundredfold more horrible."

"When I went back to the house next morning I watched for an opportunity, and managed, unobserved, to remove the reliquary from its floral hiding-place. I shall never use it now. There are some men fated not to know happiness, and I am of those."

"Let us hope not," said Fessenden gently. "But whatever the future may hold, let us now keep to the business in hand, and use every possible means to discover the evil-doer."

CHAPTER X

CIOELY'S FLIGHT

FOR a long time the two men discussed the situation. But the more they talked the less they seemed able to form any plausible theory of the crime. At last Fessenden said, "There is one thing certain: if we are to believe Harris's statement about the locks and bolts, no one could have entered from the outside."

"No," said Carleton; "and so we're forced to turn our attention to some one inside the house. But each one in turn seems so utterly impossible. We cannot even suggest Mrs. Markham or Miss Morton——"

"I don't altogether like that Miss Morton. She acted queerly from the beginning."

"Not exactly queerly; she is not a woman of good breeding or good taste, but she only arrived that afternoon, and it's too absurd to picture her stabbing her hostess that night."

"I don't care how absurd it is; she profited by Miss Van Norman's death, and she was certainly avid to come into her inheritance at once."

"Yes, I know," said Schuyler almost impatiently. "But I saw Miss Morton when she first came downstairs, and though she was shocked, she really did nobly in controlling herself, and even in directing others what to do. You see, I was there, and I saw them all, and I'm sure that Miss Morton had no more to do with that dreadful deed than I had."

"Dismissing Miss Morton, then, let us take the others, one by one. I think we may pass over Miss French and Miss Gardner. We have no reason to think of Mr. Hunt in this connection, and this brings us down to the servants."

"Not quite to the servants," said Carleton, with a peculiar look in his eyes that caught Rob's attention.

"Not quite to the servants? What do you mean?"

Carleton said nothing, but with a troubled gaze he looked intently at Fessenden.

"Cicely!" exclaimed Rob. "You think that?"

"I think nothing," said Carleton slowly, "and as an innocent man who was suspected, I hate to hint a suspicion of one who may be equally innocent. But does it not seem to you there are some questions yet to be answered concerning Miss Dupuy?"

Fessenden sat thinking for a long time. Surely these two men were just and even generous, and unwilling to suspect without cause.

"There are points to be explained," said Rob slowly; "and, Schuyler, since we are talking frankly, I must ask you this: do you know that Miss Dupuy is very much in love with you?"

"How absurd! That cannot be. Why, I've scarcely ever spoken to the girl."

"That does n't matter—the fact remains. Now, you know she wrote that paper which stated that she loved S., but he did not love her. That initial designated yourself, and because of this unfortunate attachment, Cicely was of course jealous, or rather envious, of Madeleine. I have had an interview with Miss Dupuy, in which she gave me much more information about herself than she thought she did, and one of the facts I discovered—from what she did n't say, rather than what she did—was her hopeless infatuation for you."

"It's difficult to believe this, but now that you tell me it is true, I can look back to some episodes which seem to indicate it. But I cannot think it would lead to such desperate results."

"There's one thing certain: when we do find the criminal it will have to be somebody we never would have dreamed of; for if there were any probable person we would suspect him already. Now, merely for the sake of argument, let us see if Cicely did not have 'exclusive opportunity' as well as yourself. Remember she was the last one who saw Miss Van Norman alive. I mean, so far as we have had any witness or evidence. This fact in itself is always a matter for investigation. And granting the fact of two women, both in love with you, one about to marry you, and the other perhaps insanely jealous; a weapon at hand, no one else astir in the house—is there not at least occasion for inquiry?"

Carleton looked aghast. He took up the story, and in a low voice said, "I can add to that. When I came in, as Hunt has testified, Cicely was leaning over the banister, still fully dressed. When I cried out for help fifteen minutes later, Cicely was the first to run downstairs. She asked no questions, she did not look toward the

library, she glared straight at me with an indescribable expression of fear and horror. I cannot explain her attitude at that moment, but if this dreadful thing we have dared to think of could be true, it would perhaps be a reason."

"This is getting beyond us," said Rob, with a quick sigh. "I think it my duty to report this to the coroner and to Detective Fairbanks, who is officially on the case. I thought I liked detective work, but I don't. It leads one toward too dreadful conclusions. Will you go with me, Carleton? I shall go at once to Mr. Benson."

"No, I think it would be better for you to go alone. Remember I am practically an accused man, and my word would be of little weight. Moreover, you are a lawyer, and it is your right and duty to make these things known. But unless forced to do so, I do not wish to testify against Miss Dupuy."

Remembering the girl's attitude toward Carleton, Rob could not wonder at this, and he went off alone to the coroner's.

Mr. Benson was astounded at the turn affairs had taken; but though it had seemed to him that all the evidence had pointed toward Carleton's guilt, he was really relieved to find another outlet for his suspicions. He listened attentively to what Fessenden said, and Rob was careful to express no opinion, but merely to state such facts as he knew in support of this new theory.

Detective Fairbanks was sent for, and he, too, listened eagerly to the latest developments.

It seemed to Rob that Mr. Fairbanks was rather pleased than otherwise to turn the trend of suspicion in another direction. And this was true, for though the detective felt a natural reluctance to suspect a woman, he had dreaded all along lest Carleton should be looked upon as a criminal merely because there was no one else to be considered. And Mr. Fairbanks's quick mind realized that if there were two suspects, there yet might be three, or more, and Schuyler Carleton would at least have a fair chance.

All things concerned seemed to have taken on a new interest, and Mr. Fairbanks proposed to begin investigations at once.

"But I don't see," he complained, "why Mr. Carleton so foolishly concealed that reliquary business. Why didn't he explain that at once?"

"Carleton is a peculiar nature," said Rob. "He is shrinkingly sensitive about his private affairs, and, being innocent, he had no fear at first that even suspicion would rest upon him, so he saw no reason to tell about what would have been looked upon as a silly superstition. Had he been brought to trial, he would doubtless have made a clean breast of the matter. He is a strange man, any way; very self-contained, abnormally sensitive, and not naturally frank. But if freed

from suspicion he will be more approachable, and may yet be of help to us in our search."

Rob Fessenden went back to the Van Norman house, eager to tell Kitty French the developments of the afternoon.

She was more than willing to revise her opinions, and was honestly glad that Mr. Carleton was practically exonerated.

"Of course there's nothing official," said Rob, after he had told his whole story, "but the burden of suspicion has been lifted from Carleton, wherever it may next be placed."

At first Kitty was disinclined to think Cicely could be implicated.

"She's such a slip of a girl!" she said. "I don't believe that little blue-eyed, yellow-haired thing *could* stab anybody."

"But you mustn't reason that way," argued Rob. "Opinions don't count at all. We must try to get at the facts. Now let us go at once and interview Miss Dupuy. Can't we see her in that sitting-room, as we did before? And she mustn't be allowed to faint this time."

"We can't help her fainting," declared Kitty, a little indignantly. "You're just as selfish as all other men. Everything must bow to your will."

"I never pretended to any unmanly degree of unselfishness," said Rob blandly. "But we must have this interview at once. Will you go ahead and prepare the way?"

For answer Kitty ran upstairs and knocked at the door of what had been Madeleine's sitting-room, where Miss Dupuy was usually to be found at this hour of the day.

The door was opened by Marie, who replied to Kitty's question with a frightened air.

"Miss Dupuy? She is gone away. On the train, with luggage."

"Gone! Why, when did she go?"

"But a half-hour since. She went most suddenly."

"She did indeed! Does Miss Morton know of this?"

"That I do not know, but I think so."

Kitty turned to find Fessenden behind her, and as he had overheard the latter part of the conversation he came into the room and closed the door.

"Marie," he said to the maid, "tell us your idea of why Miss Dupuy went away."

"She was in fear," said Marie deliberately.

"In fear of what?"

"In fear of the detectives, and the questions they ask, and the dreadful coroner man. Miss Dupuy is not herself any more; she is so in fear she cannot sleep at night. Always she cries out in her dream."

Fessenden glanced at Kitty. "What does she say, Marie?" he asked.

"Nothing that I can understand, *M'sieu*; but always low cries of fear, and sometimes she murmurs, 'I must go away! I cannot again answer those dreadful questions. I shall betray my secret.' Over and over she mutters that."

Fessenden began to grow excited. Surely this was evidence, and Cicely's departure seemed to emphasize it. Without another word he went in search of Miss Morton.

"Did you know Miss Dupuy was going away?" he said abruptly to her.

"Yes," she replied. "The poor girl is completely worn out. For the last few days she has been looking over Madeleine's letters and papers and accounts, and she is really overworked, besides the fearful nervous strain we are all under."

"Where has she gone?"

"I don't know. I meant to ask her to leave an address, but she said she would write to me as soon as she reached her destination, and I thought no more about it."

"Miss Morton, she has run away. Some evidence has come to light that makes it seem possible she may be implicated in Madeleine's death, and her sudden departure points toward her guilt."

"Guilt! Miss Dupuy? Oh, impossible! She is a strange and emotional little creature, but she could n't kill anybody. She is n't that sort."

"I'm getting a little tired of hearing that this one or that one 'is n't that sort.' Do you suppose anybody in decent society would ever be designated as one who *is* that sort? Unless the murderer was some outside tramp or burglar, it must have been some one probably *not* 'of that sort.' But, Miss Morton, we must find Miss Dupuy, and quickly. When did she go?"

"I don't know; some time ago, I think. I ordered the carriage to take her to the station. Perhaps she has n't gone yet—from the station, I mean."

Rob looked at his watch. "Do you know anything about train times?" he asked.

"No, except that there are not very many trains in the afternoon. I don't even know which way she is going."

Rob thought quickly. It seemed foolish to try to overtake the girl at the railway station, but it was the only chance. He dashed downstairs, and, catching up a cap as he rushed through the hall, he was out on the road in a few seconds, and running at a steady, practised gait toward the railroad. After he had gone a few blocks he saw a motor-car standing in front of a house. He jumped in and said to

the astonished chauffeur, "Whiz me down to the railroad station, and I'll make it all right with your master, and with you, too."

The machine was a doctor's runabout, and the chauffeur knew that the doctor was making a long call, so he was not at all unwilling to obey this impetuous and masterful young man. Away they went, doubtless exceeding the speed limit, and in a short time brought up suddenly at the railroad station.

Rob jumped out, flung a bill to the chauffeur, gave him a card to give to his master, and waved a good-by as the motor-car vanished.

He did not rush madly into the station, but paused a moment, and then walked in quietly, thinking that if his quest should be successful he must not frighten the excitable girl.

Cicely sat on one of the benches in the waiting-room. In her dainty travelling costume of black, and her small hat with its black veil, she looked so fair and young that Rob felt sudden misgivings as to his errand. But it must be done, and, quietly advancing, he took a seat beside her.

"Where are you going, Miss Dupuy?" he asked in a voice which was kinder and more gentle than he himself realized.

She looked up with a start, and said in a low voice, "Why do you follow me? May I not be left alone to go where I choose?"

"You may, Miss Dupuy, if you will tell me where you are going, and give me your word of honor that you will return if sent for."

"To be put through an examination! No, thank you. I'm going away where I hope I shall never see a detective or a coroner again!"

"Are you afraid of them, Miss Dupuy?"

The girl gave him a strange glance; but it showed anxiety rather than fear. However, her only reply was a low spoken "Yes."

"And why are you afraid?"

"I am afraid I may tell things that I don't want to tell." The girl spoke abstractedly and seemed to be thinking aloud rather than addressing her questioner.

It may be that Fessenden was influenced by her beauty or by the exquisite femininity of her dainty contour and apparel, but aside from all this he received a sudden impression that what this girl said did not betoken guilt. He could not have explained it to himself, but he was at the moment convinced that though she knew more than she had yet told, Cicely Dupuy was herself innocent.

"Miss Dupuy," he said very earnestly, "won't you look upon me as a friend instead of a foe? I am quite sure you can tell me more than you have told about the Van Norman tragedy. Am I wrong in thinking you are keeping something back?"

"I have nothing to tell," said Cicely, and the stubborn expression returned to her eyes.

All at once a light broke upon Fessenden. She was shielding somebody. Nor was it hard to guess who it might be!

"Miss Dupuy," began Rob again, eagerly this time, "I have succeeded in establishing, practically, Mr. Carleton's innocence. May I not likewise establish your own?"

"Mr. Carleton's innocence!" repeated the girl, clasping her hands. "Oh, is that true? Then who did do it?"

"We don't know yet," went on Rob, hastening to make the most of the advantage he had gained; "but having assured you that it was not Schuyler Carleton, will you not tell me what it is you have been keeping secret?"

"Why, nothing," exclaimed Cicely, "except that I thought I saw Mr. Carleton come into the house some little time before he cried out for help. I was looking over the baluster when Mr. Hunt said he saw me, and I, too, thought it was Mr. Carleton who came in then."

"It was Mr. Carleton, but he has satisfactorily explained why he came in, and what he was doing until the time when he called out for help. Why did you not tell us about this at first?"

"I was afraid—afraid they might connect Mr. Carleton with the murder, and I was afraid——"

"You were afraid that he really had done the deed?"

"Yes," said Cicely in a very low voice, but with an intonation that left no doubt of her truthfulness.

"Then," said Rob in his kindest way, "you may set your mind at rest. Mr. Carleton is no longer under suspicion, and you may go away, as you intended, for a few days' rest. I should be glad to have your address, though I trust it will not be necessary for me to send for you; and I know you will not be called to witness against Schuyler Carleton."

CHAPTER XI.

FLEMING STONE

WHEN Fessenden returned several people were awaiting him in the library. Miss Morton and Kitty French were there, also Coroner Benson and Detective Fairbanks.

"Were you too late?" asked Kitty, as Rob entered the room.

"No, not too late. I found Miss Dupuy in the station, and I had a talk with her."

"Well?" said Kitty impatiently.

"She is as innocent as you or I."

"How did you find it out so quickly?" inquired Mr. Fairbanks, who had a real liking for the enthusiastic young fellow.

"Why, I found out that she *was* hanging over the baluster, as Hunt said; and she did see Carleton come in at quarter after eleven.

She then went back to her room, and heard Carleton cry out at half-past eleven, and when she discovered what had happened she suspected Carleton of the deed; and, endeavoring to shield him, she refused to give evidence that might incriminate him."

"But," cried Kitty, "of course Mr. Carleton did n't do it if Cicely did."

"But don't you see, Miss French," said the older detective, as Fessenden sat staring in blank surprise at what he deemed Kitty's stupidity—"don't you see that if Miss Dupuy suspected Mr. Carleton she could n't by any possibility be guilty herself."

"Why, of course she could n't!" exclaimed Kitty. "And I'm truly glad, for I can't help liking that girl, if she is queer. But, then, who did do it?"

Suspicion was again at a standstill. There was no evidence to point anywhere; there were no clues to follow, and no one had any suggestion to offer.

It was at this juncture that Tom Willard and Schuyler Carleton came in together.

They were told of Fessenden's interview with Miss Dupuy at the station, and Carleton expressed himself as thoroughly glad that the girl was exonerated. He said little, however, for it was a delicate subject, since it all hinged on Miss Dupuy's affection for himself.

Tom Willard listened to Fessenden's recital, but he only said that nothing would ever have induced him to suspect Miss Dupuy any way, for it could not have been the deed of a fragile young girl.

"The blow that killed Maddy was powerfully dealt," said Tom; "and I can't help thinking it was some tramp or professional burglar who was clever enough to elude Harris's fastenings. Or some window may have been overlooked that night. At any rate, we have no more plausible theory."

"We have not," said Mr. Fairbanks; "but I for one am not content to let the matter rest here. I should like to suggest that we call in some celebrated detective, whose experience and skill would discover what is beyond the powers of Mr. Fessenden and myself."

Rob felt flattered that Mr. Fairbanks classed him with himself, and felt anxious too that the suggestion of employing a more skilful detective should be carried out.

"But," objected Coroner Benson, "to engage a detective of high standing would entail considerable expense, and I'm not sure that I'm authorized to sanction this."

There was a silence, but nearly every one in the room was thinking that surely this was the time for Tom Willard to make use of his lately inherited Van Norman money.

Nor was Willard delinquent. Though showing no overwillingness

in the matter, he said plainly that he would be glad if Coroner Benson or Mr. Fairbanks would engage the services of the best detective they could find, and allow him to defray all expenses attendant thereon.

At this a murmur of approval went round the room. All his hearers were at their wits' end what to do next, and the opportunity of putting a really great detective on the case was welcome indeed.

"But I don't believe," said Willard, "that he will find out anything more than our own men have discovered." The appreciative glance Tom gave Mr. Fairbanks and Rob quite soothed whatever touch of jealousy they may have felt of the new detective.

It was Carleton who suggested Fleming Stone. He did not know the man personally, but he had read and heard of the wonderful work he had done in celebrated cases all over the country.

Of course they had all heard of Fleming Stone, and each felt a thrill of gratitude to Willard, whose wealth made it possible to employ the great detective.

Mr. Benson wasted no time, but wrote to Stone at once, and only a few days later the man arrived.

With her ever-ready hospitality, Miss Morton invited Mr. Stone to make his home at the Van Norman house, and as this quite coincided with his own wishes, Stone took up his quarters there.

The first evening of his arrival he listened to the details of the case.

Fleming Stone was of a most attractive personality. He was nearly fifty years old, with graying hair and a kindly, responsive face.

At dinner he had won the admiration of all by his tact and interesting conversation. At the table the business upon which he had come had not been mentioned, but now the group assembled in the library felt that the time had come to talk of the matter.

It was a strangely assorted household. Tom Willard, though the only relative of the Van Normans present, was in no way the head of the house. That position was ostentatiously held by Miss Morton, who, though kind-hearted and hospitable, never let it be forgotten that she was owner and mistress of the mansion. Kitty French and Rob Fessenden, both New Yorkers, were staying on in Mapleton, partly out of interest in matters there, and partly out of interest in each other. Many business letters called Rob home, and many social letters called Kitty, but they had put off their departure from day to day, and had now determined to stay during Fleming Stone's sojourn there. Schuyler Carleton had been with them at dinner, and Mr. Benson and Mr. Fairbanks had come later, and now the group waited only on Mr. Stone's pleasure to begin the recital of the case.

When Fleming Stone, then, asked Coroner Benson to give him the

main facts, it seemed as if the great detective's work was really about to begin.

"Would you rather see Mr. Benson alone?" asked Schuyler Carleton, actuated, doubtless, by his own shrinking from any publicity.

"Not at all," said Stone briefly. "I prefer that you all should feel free to speak whenever you wish."

Then Mr. Benson set forth in a concise way and in chronological order the facts as far as they were known, the suspicions that had been entertained and given up; and deplored the entire lack of clue or evidence that might lead to investigation in any definite direction.

The others, as Mr. Stone had suggested, made remarks when they chose, and the whole conversation was of an informal and colloquial nature. It seemed dominated by Fleming Stone's mind. He drew opinions from one or another, until before they realized it every one present had taken part in the recital. And to each Fleming Stone listened with deference and courtesy. The coroner's legal phrases, Fessenden's impetuous suggestions, Tom's blunt remarks, Carleton's half-timid utterances, Kitty's volatile sallies, and even Miss Morton's futile observations all were listened to and responded to by Fleming Stone with an air of deep interest and consideration.

As the hour grew late Mr. Stone said that he felt thoroughly acquainted with the facts of the case so far as they could be told to him. He said he could express no opinion nor offer any suggestion that night, but that he hoped to come to some conclusions on the following day; and if they would all meet him in the same place the next evening, he would willingly disclose whatever he might have learned or discovered in the meantime. This put an end to the conversation, and Mr. Benson and Mr. Fairbanks went home. The ladies went to their rooms, and Carleton and Willard sat up for an hour's smoke with Fleming Stone, who entertained them with talk on subjects far removed from murder or sudden death.

The next morning Fleming Stone expressed a desire to be shown all the rooms in the house.

"In a case like this," he said, "with no definite clues to follow, the only thing to do is to examine the premises in hope of happening upon something suggestive."

Kitty was eager to be Mr. Stone's guide, and easily obtained Miss Morton's permission to go into all the rooms of the old mansion.

Fessenden went with them, and though the tour of the sleeping-rooms was quickly made, it was evident that the quick eye of the detective took in every detail that was visible. He stayed longer in Madeleine's sitting-room, but though he picked up a few papers from her desk and glanced at them, he showed no special interest in the room.

Downstairs they went then, and found Mr. Fairbanks in the library, awaiting them. He brought no news or fresh evidence, and had merely called in hope of seeing Mr. Stone.

The great detective was most frank and kindly toward his lesser colleague, and made him welcome with a genial courtesy.

"I'm going to make a thorough examination of these lower rooms," said Fleming Stone, "and I should be glad of the assistance of you two younger men. My eyes are not what they once were."

Mr. Fairbanks and Rob well knew that this statement was merely an idle compliment to themselves; for the eyes of Fleming Stone had never yet missed a clue, however obscurely hidden.

But Kitty, ignorant of the principles of professional etiquette, really thought that Fleming Stone was depending on his two companions for assistance.

Tom Willard had gone out, and Miss Morton was looking after her all-important housekeeping, so the three men and Kitty French were alone in the library.

In his quick, quiet way Fleming Stone went rapidly round the room. He examined the window fixtures and curtains, the mantel and fireplace, the furniture and carpet, and came to a standstill by the library table. The dagger, which was kept in a drawer of the table, was shown to him, but though he examined it a moment, it seemed to have little interest for him.

"There's not a clue in this room," he said almost indignantly. "There probably were several the morning after the murder, but the thorough sweepings and dustings since have obliterated every trace."

Somewhat abruptly he went into the large hall. Here his proceedings in the library were duplicated. "Nothing at all," he said; "but what could be expected after a week in a room which is a general thoroughfare?"

Then he went into the drawing-room. The other three followed, feeling rather depressed at the hopeless outlook, and a little disappointed in the great detective.

Stone glanced around the large apartment.

"Swept, scrubbed, and polished," he declared, as he glanced with disfavor at the immaculate room.

"And indeed it was quite necessary," said Miss Morton, who entered just then. "After all those vines and flowers were taken away, and as a good deal of the furniture was out, I took occasion for a good bit of house-cleaning."

"Well," said Fleming Stone quietly, "there's one clue they did n't sweep away. Here is where the assassin entered."

As he spoke Mr. Stone was leaning against the mantel and looking down at the immaculately brushed hearth.

"Where?" cried Kitty, darting forward, and though the others gave no voice to their curiosity, they waited breathlessly for Stone's next utterance.

The hearth and the whole fireplace were tiled, and in the floor tiling, under the andirons, was a rectangular iron plate with an oval opening closed by an iron cover. This cover was hinged, and could be raised and thrown back to permit ashes to be swept into the chute. The iron plate was sunk flush with the hearth and cemented into the brick-work, and the cover fitted into the rim so closely that scarce a seam showed.

"He came up through this hole in the fireplace," said Stone, almost as if talking to himself, "very soon after Miss Dupuy went upstairs at half-past ten. Before Mr. Carleton arrived at quarter after eleven, the murderer had finished his work, and had departed by this same means."

While the others stood seemingly struck dumb by this revelation, Kitty excitedly flew to the fireplace and tried to raise the iron lid, but the andirons were in the way. Rob set them aside for her, while Stone said quietly, "Those andirons were probably not there that night?"

"No," exclaimed Kitty; "they had been taken away, because we expected to fill the fireplace with flowers the next day."

"But how could anybody get in the cellar?" asked Miss Morton looking bewildered.

"The cellar is never carefully locked," said Fleming Stone. "I came downstairs early this morning, and before breakfast Harris had shown me all through the cellar. He admits that several windows are always left open for the sake of ventilation, and claims that the carefully locked door in the hall at the head of the cellar stairs precludes all danger from that direction."

"But I don't understand," said Mr. Fairbanks perplexedly. "If that opening is an ash-chute, such as I have in my own house, it is all bricked up down below, with the exception of a small opening for the removal of the ashes, and it would be quite impossible for any one to climb up through it."

"But this one is n't bricked up," said Fleming Stone. "It was originally intended to be enclosed; but it seems this fireplace is rarely used. Harris tells me that the late Mr. Van Norman used to talk about having the chute completed, and having a fire here more often. But the library wood fire was more attractive as a family gathering place, and this formal room was used only on state occasions. However, as you see," and Mr. Stone raised the iron lid again, "this opens directly into the cellar, and, I repeat, formed the means of entrance for the murderer of Madeleine Van Norman."

Fleming Stone's voice and manner were far from triumphant or jubilant at his discovery. He seemed rather to state the fact with regret, but as if it must be told.

Mr. Fairbanks looked amazed and thoughtful, but Rob Fessenden was frankly incredulous.

"Mr. Stone," he said respectfully, "I am sure you know what you're talking about, but will you tell me how a man could get up through that hole? It does n't seem to me that a small-sized boy could squeeze through."

Fleming Stone took a silver-cased tape-measure from his pocket, and handed it to Rob without a word.

Eagerly stooping on the hearth, Rob measured the oval opening in the iron plate. Although the rectangular plate was several inches larger each way, the oval opening measured exactly nine and one-half inches by thirteen and one-half inches.

"Who could get through that?" he inquired, as he announced the figures. "I'm sure I could n't."

"And Schuyler Carleton is a larger man than you are," observed Mr. Fairbanks.

"That lets Tom Willard out, too," said Rob, with a slight smile; "for he's nearly six feet tall, and weighs more than two hundred pounds."

"The only man I know of," said Mr. Fairbanks thoughtfully, "who could come up through that hole is Slim Jim."

"Who is Slim Jim?" cried Rob quickly. "Go for him; he is the man!"

"Not so fast," said Mr. Fairbanks. "Slim Jim is a noted burglar and a suspected murderer, but he is safely in prison at present and has been for some months."

"But he may have escaped," exclaimed Rob. "Are you sure he has n't?"

"I have n't heard anything about him of late; but if he is or has been away from the prison, it can be easily found out."

"Is n't it unlikely," said Fleming Stone quietly, "that a noted burglar should enter a house and commit murder, without making any attempt to steal?"

"He may have been frightened away by the sound of Schuyler's latch-key," suggested Rob, and Kitty looked at him with pride in his ingenuity, and thought how much cleverer he was, after all, than the celebrated Fleming Stone.

Fessenden urged Mr. Fairbanks to go at once and look up the whereabouts of Slim Jim, and the detective was strongly inclined to go.

"Go, by all means, if you choose," said Fleming Stone pleasantly.

"There's really nothing further to do here in the way of examination of the premises. I do not mind saying that my own suspicions are not directed toward Slim Jim, but my own suspicions are by no means an infallible guide. I will ask you, though, gentlemen, not to say anything about this ash-chute matter to-day. I consider it is my right to request this. Of course you can find out all about Slim Jim without stating how he entered the house."

The two men promised not to say anything about the ash-chute to anybody, and hot upon the trail of the suspected burglar they went away.

Miss Morton excused herself, and upon Kitty French fell the burden of entertaining Mr. Stone. Nor was this young woman dismayed at the task.

Though not loquacious, the detective was an easy and pleasant talker, and he seemed quite ready to converse with the girl as if he had no other occupation on hand.

"How wonderful you are!" said Kitty, clasping her hands beneath her chin as she looked at the great man. "To think of your spotting that fireplace thing right away! Though of course I never should have thought of anybody squeezing up through there. And Rob and I spent a whole morning searching these rooms for clues, and that was only the day after it happened."

"What an opportunity!" Stone seemed greatly interested. "And did n't you find anything—not *anything*?"

"No, not a thing. We were so disappointed. Oh, yes, Rob did find one little thing, but it was so little and so silly that I guess he forgot all about it."

"What was it?"

"Why, I've almost forgotten the name. Oh, yes, Rob said it was a cachou—a little silver thing, you know, like a tiny pill. Rob says some men eat them after they've been smoking. But he asked all the men that ever came here, and they all said they did n't use them. Maybe the burglar dropped it."

"Maybe he did. Where did you find it?"

"Rob found it. It was right in that corner by the mantel, just near the fireplace."

Fleming Stone stood up. "Miss French," said he, "if it is any satisfaction to you, you may know that you have helped me a great deal in my work. Will you excuse me now, as I find I have important business elsewhere?"

Kitty smiled and bowed politely, but after Mr. Stone had left her she wondered what she could have said or done that helped him; and she wondered, too, what had caused that unspeakably sad look in his eyes as he went away.

CHAPTER XII

A CONFESSION

MR. TAYLOR, the landlord of the Mapleton Inn, showed a pleased surprise when Fleming Stone walked into his hotel and approached the desk. The men had never met, but everybody in Mapleton knew that Fleming Stone was in town, and had heard repeated and accurate descriptions of his appearance.

"Perhaps you can spare half an hour for a smoke and a chat," said Stone affably, and though Mr. Taylor heartily agreed, he did not confess that he could easily have spared half a day or more had the great detective asked him.

In the landlord's private office they sat down for a smoke, and soon the conversation, without effort, drifted around to the Van Norman affair.

Unlike detectives of fiction, Fleming Stone was by no means secretive or close-mouthed. Indeed he was discursive, and Mr. Taylor marvelled that such a great man should indulge in such trivial gossip. They talked of old Richard Van Norman and the earlier days of the Van Norman family.

"You've lived here a long time, then?" inquired Mr. Stone.

"Yes, sir. Boy and man, I've lived here nigh onto sixty years."

"But this fine modern hotel of yours is not as old as that?"

The landlord's face glowed with pride. "Right you are, sir. Some few years ago wife had some money left her, and we built the old place over—pretty near made a whole new house of it."

"You have many guests?"

"Well, not as many as I'd like; but as many as I can expect in a little town like this. Mostly transients, of course; drummers and men of that sort. Young Willard stayed here last week, when the Van Norman house was full of company, but after the—the trouble, he went back there to stay."

"Affable sort of man, Willard, is n't he?" observed Stone.

"Yes, he's all of that, but he's a scapegrace. He used to lead this town a dance when he lived here."

"How long since he lived here?"

"Oh, he's only been away a matter of three years, or that. 'Bout a year before his uncle died they quarrelled. They both had the devil's own temper, and they had quarrelled before, but this time it was for keeps; and so off goes Mr. Tom, and never turns up again until he comes to Miss Madeleine's wedding."

"Was he in any business when he lived here?"

"Yes, he had a good position as engineer in a big factory. He was a good worker, Tom was, and not afraid of anything. Always jolly

and good-natured, except when he'd have one of them fearful fits of temper. Then he was like a raging lion—no, more like a tiger; quiet-like, but deep and desperate.”

Soon after Fleming Stone rose to go. “Thank you very much,” he said politely, “for your half-hour. And, by the way, have you any cachous? I find I have n't any with me, and after smoking, you know, before going back to the ladies——”

“Yes, yes, I know; but I don't happen to have any. But wait a minute, I believe Tripp has some.”

He threw open the door and gave a quick whistle.

A boy appeared so suddenly that he could not have been far away, and, moreover, his sharp black eyes and alert manner betokened the type of boy who would be apt to be listening about.

His hands was already in his pocket when Mr. Taylor said to him, “Tripp, did n't I see you have a small bottle of cachous?—those little silver pellets, you know.”

“Yessir;” and Tripp drew forth a half-filled bottle.

“That's right. Give them to the gentleman.”

“Oh, I only want a couple,” said Fleming Stone, taking the vial which Tripp thrust toward him. “Where did you get these, my boy?”

The boy blushed and looked down, twisting his fingers in embarrassment.

“Speak up, Tripp,” said the landlord sternly. “Answer the gentleman, and see that you tell the truth.”

“I ain't going to tell no lie,” said Tripp doggedly. “I found this here bottle in the bureau-drawer of number fourteen a few days ago.”

“Fourteen? That's the room Mr. Willard had,” said Mr. Taylor reflectively.

“Yessir, but *he* did n't leave them there. They were there before. I seen 'em, and I knew that hatchet-faced hardware man left 'em; then Mr. Willard, he come, but he did n't swipe 'em, so I did. That ain't no harm, is it?”

“Not a bit,” said Fleming Stone, “since you've told the truth about it, and here's a dollar for your honesty. And I'm going to ask you not to say anything more about the matter, for a few days at least. Also I'm going to ask to be allowed to take a look at room number fourteen.”

“Certainly, sir. Tripp, show the gentleman up;” and Mr. Taylor fairly rubbed his hands with satisfaction to think that he and his premises were being made use of by the great detective.

“Yessir. It's at the back of the house, sir. This way, sir.”

Mr. Stone's survey of the room was exceedingly brief. He gave one glance around, looked out of the only window it contained, tried the key in the lock, and then expressed himself satisfied.

Tripp, disappointed at the quickly-finished performance, elaborately pointed out the exact spot where he had found the cachou bottle, but Mr. Stone did not seem greatly interested.

However, the interview was financially successful to Tripp, and after Mr. Stone's departure he turned several hand-springs by way of expressing his satisfaction with the detective gentleman.

After dinner that evening the group of the night before reassembled in the library.

A strange feeling of oppression seemed to hang over all. The very fact that Fleming Stone had as yet said nothing of any discoveries he might have made, and the continued courtesy of his pleasant, affable demeanor, seemed to imply that he had succeeded rather than failed in his mission.

Although genial and quickly responsive, he was, after all, an inscrutable man; and Mr. Fairbanks, for one, had learned that his gentle cordiality often hid deep thoughts in a quickly-working mind.

Without preamble, as soon as they were seated Mr. Stone began:

"Employed by Coroner Benson, I was asked to come here to discover, if might be, the murderer of Miss Madeleine Van Norman. By some unmistakable evidence which I have found, by some reliable witnesses with whom I have talked, and by some proofs which I have discovered, I have learned beyond all doubt who is the criminal, and how the deed was done. Is it the wish of all present that I should now make known what I have discovered, or is it preferred that I should tell Coroner Benson alone?"

For several minutes nobody spoke, and then the coroner said, "Unless any one present states an objection, you may proceed to tell us what you know, here and now, Mr. Stone."

After waiting a moment longer and hearing no objection raised, Fleming Stone proceeded.

"The man who murdered Miss Van Norman entered the house through a cellar window. He climbed up through the ash-chute in the drawing-room fireplace."

Although some of Mr. Stone's hearers had listened to this revelation in the morning, the others had not heard of it, and every face expressed utter astonishment, if not unbelief—with the exception of one. Tom Willard turned white and stared at Fleming Stone as if he had not understood. "What?" he said hoarsely.

As if he had not heard the interruption, Fleming Stone went on:

"Who that man was, I think I need not tell you. Is he not already telling you himself?"

Willard's face grew drawn and stiff, like that of a paralyzed man, but his burning eyes seemed unable to tear themselves away from the

quiet gaze of Fleming Stone. Then with a groan Willard's head sank into his hands and he fell forward on the table—the very table at which Madeleine had sat on that fatal night.

There was a stir, and Schuyler Carleton rushed forward to Willard's assistance, if need be. But the man had not fainted, and, raising his white face, he squared his shoulders, clenched his hands, and, again fixing his eyes on those of Fleming Stone, said in a desperate voice, "Go on."

"I must go on," said Stone gently. "I know each one of you is thinking that it is absurd to imagine a man of Mr. Willard's weight and girth climbing up through the seemingly small opening in the fireplace. But this can be explained. To one who does not know how, such a feat would seem impossible, and, moreover, it would be impossible. It is only one who knows how who can do it. There are men in certain occupations, such as engineers and boiler men, who are continually obliged to squeeze through holes quite as small. The regular boiler man-hole is oval, and measures ten by fifteen inches, but there are many of them in large tanks which measure even less each way. I had occasion some time ago to interview an engineer on this subject. He weighed two hundred and fifteen pounds, and had a chest measure of forty-two inches. He told me that he could go through a much smaller man-hole than another workman who weighed only one hundred and sixty pounds, simply because he knew how. It is done by certain manipulations of the great muscles and by following a certain routine of procedure. But the method is unimportant for the moment. The fact remains, and can be verified by any engineer. I discovered to-day that Mr. Willard is or has been an expert engineer, and for many years held such a position in a large factory right here in Mapleton. In a conversation with Harris—who gave this testimony unwillingly, and only under great pressure—I learned that years ago it had been one of Mr. Willard's boyish pranks to enter or leave the house by this same means. As to Mr. Willard's presence in this house upon that fatal night, a tiny clue discovered by Mr. Fessenden gives us indubitable proof. Mr. Fessenden found next morning on the drawing-room floor a cachou. I have learned that these are by no means in common use in Mapleton, and, moreover, that it is not the custom of any one of the men now present to use them. I further learned that after Mr. Willard left here that night to go to the hotel he found by chance a small bottle of these in the room which was assigned to him. I am assuming that he carelessly put a few in his pocket, and that in his struggle through the ash-chute one fell upon the carpet. The room which Mr. Willard occupied at Mapleton Inn is in the second story, and its window opens upon a veranda roof which has a gentle slope almost to the ground. This provides an

easy means of exit and entrance, and as Mr. Willard has no alibi later than half-past ten on that evening, the time would permit him to come here and go away again before the hour when Mr. Carleton is known to have arrived."

Then turning and meeting Tom's intent gaze, Fleming Stone addressed himself directly to him, and said, "Why you chose to kill your cousin, I don't know; but you *did*."

"I did," said Tom, in a hollow voice, "and I will tell you why." He rose as he spoke, and, standing by the table, he steadied himself by placing one hand upon it.

"It was entirely unpremeditated," he said, "and I'm going to tell you about it, because I owe a confession to Madeleine's memory, though I am responsible for my deed to no one here present."

Though Willard spoke with an attempt at pride or defiance, his tone and look were those of a man hopeless and utterly crushed. He addressed himself principally to Fleming Stone, looking now and then at Carleton, but not so much as glancing at any one else.

"It is no secret, I think, that I loved my cousin Madeleine. Many, many times I have pleaded with her to marry me. But never mind about that. When I came here to attend her wedding, I could n't help seeing that the man she was about to marry did not love and worship her as I did. I besought her to give him up and to marry me, but she would not listen to that for a moment. That day before the wedding they had a little tiff, and Carleton did not return for dinner, though Madeleine expected him. She was all broken up about this, and was not herself during the evening. When I left her, at about ten o'clock, to go to the hotel, her sad face haunted me, and I could not dispel the idea that I must have one more talk with her, and beg her not to marry a man who did not love her."

Without seeming to do so, Fleming Stone stole a glance at Carleton. The man sat quietly, with bowed head, as one who hears himself denounced, but recognizes the truth.

"I was in my room at the hotel," went on Tom, "and was preparing for bed when the irresistible impulse came to me to go and see Maddy once more before her wedding day. I had no thought of wrong-doing. I came out through the window, instead of in the ordinary way, only because I knew the inn was about to be closed for the night, and I knew I could get back the same way. A trellis, that was simply a ladder, reached up to the low roof, and it was quite as easy an exit as through the front door. As to the cachous, I *had* found the stray vial there, and had slipped a couple in my pocket, without really thinking anything about it. I don't usually carry them, but they are by no means unfamiliar to me. I came directly over here, and found the house partially darkened, as if for the night. There

was a low light in the library and hall, but the blinds were drawn, and I could see only a glimpse of Maddy's yellow dress on the floor. I was about to ring the bell, when I suddenly thought that I did n't care to rouse the household, or even the servants, and, remembering the way I often used to get in when I came home at night later than my uncle approved, I went around and entered by a cellar window. I came up through the fireplace, exactly as Mr. Stone has described to you. It is astonishingly easy to any one who knows how, and quite impossible for one who does not. I crossed the drawing-room at once, and entered the library. Naturally, I made very little noise, but still I am surprised that Hunt did not hear me. I did not try to be entirely silent, for I had no thought of evil in my heart. Madeleine looked up as I came into this room, and smiled. She asked me how I got in, and I told her, and we both laughed at some old reminiscences. I did not see that paper that Miss Dupuy wrote. Then I told her frankly that I wanted her to give up Carleton, for he did not love her and I did. When I said that about Carleton, Maddy burst into weeping, and said it was n't true. I said it was, and offered to prove it, and then we quarrelled. To you who do not know our family temper this may sound trivial, but it was not. We had a most intense and fiery quarrel, and though probably our voices were not raised—that was not our way—we were so furious with each other that we were practically beside ourselves. Maddened, too, by jealousy, and by being baffled in my errand, I suddenly resolved to kill both my cousin and myself. I picked up the dagger and told her what I was about to do, being fully determined to stab her and then myself. She did not scream, she simply sat there—in her superb beauty—her arm resting on the table, and said quietly, 'You dare not do it!'

"This threw me into a frenzy, and with one thrust I drove the dagger home to her heart. She died without a sound, and I pulled out the dagger to turn it upon myself. But the sight of Madeleine's blood brought me to my senses. I dropped the dagger and new thoughts came rushing to my mind thick and fast. Madeleine was dead. I could not bring her again to life. The fortune was now mine! Would I not be a fool then to kill myself? I'm not excusing these thoughts; I'm simply telling the thing as it occurred. I turned and softly recrossed the hall, let myself down through the drawing-room fireplace, and was back in my room at the hotel without having met any one going or coming. At two o'clock I was summoned over here by telephone, and I came. Miss Morton met me in the parlor, and as there was a bright light there then, I chanced to see one of those miserable cachous on the carpet. I picked it up and concealed it, but it warned me; and when Mr. Fessenden asked me the next day if I had any, I said no. Now I have told you all. Wait—do not speak! I know you

would say that I was a coward not to take my own life when I intended to. I admit it; I was a coward, but it is not too late for the deed!"

Before any one could move to prevent it, Tom had grasped the dagger from the drawer where it was hidden and plunged it into his own breast. He sank down into the chair—the very chair where Madeleine had died, and, dreadful as the occasion was, those who saw him could not but feel that it was just retribution.

It was Schuyler Carleton who again started forward and put his arm around the wounded man.

"Tom," he cried, "oh, Tom, why did you do that?" Carleton then involuntarily started to pull the dagger away, but Tom stopped him.

"Don't," he said thickly. "To pull that out will finish me. Leave it, and I have a few moments more!"

"That is true," said Fleming Stone. "Some one telephone for a doctor, but do not disturb the weapon. Mr. Willard, if you have any thing to say, say it quickly."

"I will," said Tom quickly; "Fessenden, you are a lawyer, will you draw up my will?"

Without a word, Rob caught up paper and pen, and prepared to take the last words of the dying man.

Though not entirely in legal phrasing, the will was completed, and after a general bequest to Fessenden himself, and directing that all bills should be paid, and other minor matters of the sort, Tom Willard left the bulk of his fortune to Schuyler Carleton.

"That," he said, with almost his last breath, "is only a deed of justice, in the name of Madeleine and myself."

Before the arrival of Doctor Hills, Tom Willard was dead. Self-confessed, self-convicted, self-punished; but his crime was discovered by Fleming Stone, and proved by means of a tiny clue.



TROPIC DAWN

(LAKE LANAO)

BY JOSEPHINE MORRIS ROWAN

DROWSY night, on broken stalk of lotus flower, lies sleeping
 Her last dark hour away;
 Dawn, drenched from bamboo's misty shade, bounds,—rosy
 red, leaping
 To catch the Sun's first ray.

CAMEOS

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Author of "Poems of Passion," "A Woman of the World," etc.

THE APPARITION

THE Mother entered the boudoir of her daughter and closed the door behind her.

Then she seated herself facing the Girl with a Dream in her eyes, and took her hand.

"I want a little talk with you this morning," she began. "Will you listen?"

A faint shadow crossed the face of the Girl, and the Dream in her eyes fled affrighted.

But she answered with a single acquiescing and perhaps appealing monosyllable. "Yes," she said.

"It is about Paul," the Mother continued. "I think he comes here too often; you are so young—too young to have men calling to see you. It is foolish to distract your mind from music and studies, with the nonsense which men talk to girls."

The Girl leaned forward, but her glance reached beyond her Mother's chair, and she seemed to listen to some sound other than her Mother's voice.

"Pardon me, Mother," she said, "but I am sure some one knocked at the door."

The Mother went to the door, opened it, and peered into the corridor.

"There is no one in sight," she said, and resumed her seat. "Paul is a fine fellow, I know," she continued, "but he, too, is wasting time in calling on you so often. He should be thinking of his future, and of the work he is given to do in life, and he should be applying himself seriously to it."

"But, Mother, he often talks to me of just these things; and he says he always goes away stirred with new and noble ambition after he has seen me. I am an encouragement to him."

The Mother frowned. "That is an old platitude," she said. "Men have talked that way to women since the world began; it means nothing, my child. It is a waste of your time to listen to such things."

Again the Girl leaned forward. "Mother, there is surely some one trying to enter the door."

"There is no one, I tell you," repeated the Mother impatiently, "and you must listen to me until I have finished. The time you sacrifice to Paul would make you proficient in French or on the piano; for you not only give him time when he calls, but you read his notes, and you dress for him, and you are growing idle and dreamy when he is not here. I really must insist that you ask Paul to remain away, and that you return to your old habits of study."

The Girl touched her Mother's arm, and her eyes were dilated. "Some one came into the room just then," she said. "Some one is behind you, Mother."

The Mother turned with a start, but saw nothing. "You are trying to distract me, but I shall finish what I came to say;" and her voice grew stern. "Men from the cradle to the grave have always been in the habit of encroaching on woman's time, without apology. They expect her to bestow sympathy, diversion, and amusement, and they never think they are obliged to give anything in return. You must learn to understand them at their real value, and to direct your life accordingly."

"But Paul gives me his society, in return for mine," the Girl replied, "and I enjoy him; he is interesting and attractive."

The Mother's frown deepened; there was asperity in her tone. "That is mere sentimental nonsense. You are too young to know whether a man is interesting or attractive. You should not think of such things; you should be thinking only of your studies at this age."

"Mother, there is, there is some one—some thing—behind you."

The Mother rose. "You need a specialist for nervous disorders," she said. "Your brain has become visionary. Your nerves are affected. I will see the doctor to-day about you. You must be in bed at nine o'clock hereafter, and you must stop all this sentimental folly."

"Mother, turn quickly," the Girl cried, "and you will see what is behind you. A vague, shadowy form, but very, very beautiful; and, Mother, it is trying to whisper in your ear."

And then the Mother turned, and lo! there stood the Spirit of her Lost Youth, and she looked straight in its eyes. "Why, I had quite forgotten you," she said very gently, after a silence.

"I thought so," replied the Phantom; "that is why I came. But I will not detain you. I only wanted to be remembered." And with a smile at the young Girl, the Phantom waved its hand and was gone.

And the Mother smiled, too, and went over and kissed her Daughter, and said, "Well, one can be young but once, and Paul is a good boy, after all." And she went out softly.

And the Dream came back in the Girl's eyes.

THE LITTLE FAT SKELETON

By Augusta Kortrecht

Author of "Big-I and Little-You," etc.



WE were a cynical set at the boarding-house that winter; from the trio that nightly discussed personal devils, empiricism, or the ultimate good of organized charity, and nightly found there was nothing to them—nothing to anything, in fact—down the line to sleek and meek Papa Palmer himself, who would have turned his very bath-tubs into night's lodging for any one able to pay the price. Even the Fairy, five years old and forty years knowing, had outgrown a brief, humiliating interest in Santa Claus, and was not to be beguiled a second time by either God or man. Some of us were rich and some were poor; but we were individualists, each and every one, with a single faith in our neighbor—that he would outdo us if he could; and but one intention toward him—to outdo him first, if that were by any means a possibility.

Into this blasé atmosphere came Dickie.

The church clock around the corner had struck the half-hour between the winter dusk of four and the dark of five, and the big boarding-house parlor was deep in gloom, when the maid showed in a stranger and bade her wait there for Mr. Palmer. Presently that gentleman entered, and with muttered growls as he stumbled over a burnt-wood foot-stool, struck a match and lighted all the jets of the chandelier. Then he approached the pier-glass, and, taking a whisk-broom from some hidden place, brushed free from any possible speck of dust the plaid dressing-gown he wore, gazing earnestly into his reflected eyes the while. Leaning a trifle nearer, he used the broom on his hair and grizzled mustache; and, holding to his face first a lavender and then a delicate green cravat, from a paper parcel he had brought, hesitated as to the more becoming one.

"The Lord is smiling on you, Papa Palmer," he told himself complacently. "Not that I believe there is a Lord, though, come to think of it. But things are booming. Butter's down and board is up. The top-floor closet is made into a skylight, and——"

He halted in speech a moment to turn his head this way and that, regarding the effect of the green tie with unmistakable favor.

"By George!" he said to the gentleman in the mirror; "you have kept your youth! That Turkish bath fellow was right——"

Just then a slight sound caught his ear, something not quite a laugh nor yet a cough. The rapt expression on Papa Palmer's face gave way to its usual one of pleasant sanctity; the cravats were hastily stuffed behind the mirror frame; and he turned to greet the stranger who came forward, as he thought, from the hall outside. He had not noticed her where she sat humbly waiting for his good pleasure.

She was a little person, dressed in travelling cloak and hat of foreign cut, and carrying a suit-case. Her manner was timid.

"Is your name Mr. Palmer, sir?" she inquired, then hurried on: "I'd like to speak to—it must be your father, I think. Does he take in boarders?"

Papa Palmer acknowledged the delicate tribute to his youthful looks by switching on for a flash the joyless smile he maintained for just such purpose. When its radiance had faded, he replied in melancholy tone:

"I have no father. He is long since dead. An epidemic of fever in the early seventies. Meantime I run this house myself, and I give you my word of honor I don't make enough out of it to buy me a pair of pants. Can I do anything for you?"

The girl's eyes fell to where his nether limbs should have been visible but for the dressing-gown, and dwelt there for a thoughtful second. Then she blushed a rosy, embarrassed red, and started to ask a question, but did n't.

"The Society—what do you call it?—Y.W.C.A.?—sent me," she told him when she had regained her composure. "I never boarded before, and they said you would show me how; that is—I am English, you know, and I'm a bit tired, and so far from home." There was a pitiful catch in her voice, but it was quite lost on Papa Palmer; and she tried to brace up under the boring gaze with which he now searched her. He always sized up new arrivals, and mentally ticketed them as Running-Waters, Middle-Bests, or Skylighters. It was a boast of his in his rare moments of self-expression that though he made no claim to know human nature, he did know Boarders. No living Boarder could deceive him; no hard luck story went down his throat, not much; and not the foxiest Boarder that ever boarded could play a game on your Papa Palmer.

This did not strike him as a particularly difficult case; he had seen plenty such; and having put her down as good for six weeks in the new skylight closet, he formally accepted the applicant into the house, and had her forthwith conducted to her room.

The girl was young and rather pretty in a modest way, when she laid off her wraps. She had a plump figure, clothed in clinging black stuff, with white at throat and wrists, in the mode of some two years back. Her eyes were blue and very wide open; her mouth was small

and red, with a wistful droop at the corners. Her voice and enunciation were deliciously English. Her real name was Miss Eleanor Scot-telle, according to the card of reference she brought along; but she looked too small for it, and one of the quaint ways she developed when she knew a person well enough was to clasp her hands together and cry impulsively: "Oh, don't call me that! I must be Dickie to *you!*"

She moved noiselessly in and out among the boarders, never speaking of her own affairs, and yet subtly conveying that she had been lately orphaned, and was on the outlook for work and self-support.

In the evening she appeared at the parlor door and looked hesitatingly in. Then she slipped into a chair, sitting very straight-backed on its extreme edge, and, drawing from a prim work-bag a stocking with a hole the size of an apple-seed, she began to darn.

Now, this hour after dinner was the hour when we of the House disported ourselves according to our several tastes and whims. At the piano a young woman in a net waist, with massive bracelets jingling up and down her wrists as she played, was accompanying a blond youth, who lounged beside her and sang the latest songs. Three girls—nice and fresh from the South, who lived in the House, but were not yet of it—bent their heads together over a book of photographs. The Fairy had seventeen pillows piled in the middle of the floor, and sat on the top of them, teasing her Maltese kitten in good Bowery slang. In a quiet corner Miss Rosamund Ray was starting the inevitable bridge, with Deering, Apperson, and Mrs. Manton. And Papa Palmer, clad now in a dapper suit of brown checks, trousers and all complete, sat at his desk behind a screen, from which he could peep out occasionally to count the heads of his beloved, his Boarders, the only game for which this old sportsman had any zest.

Dickie measured the groups one by one with sidewise glances; and pretty soon the stocking, with the tidy hole unattended, went back into the bag, and she drifted to the card table. There she watched a couple of games in silent admiration. Then Mrs. Manton was summoned away.

"Oh, sugar!" said the disgusted Deering; "that spoils the game. Unless"—with sudden inspiration as his eye fell on the quiet, black-robed figure—"by cats! did you say you could play, Miss—thanks—Dickie? Miss Dickie, can't you take the other hand?"

Dickie demurred as to her fitness. They seemed so solemn about it, she said. She had never played much. Suppose she was stupid and forgot the rules? After some urging, however, she took the empty seat, and, cutting, got the deal and Miss Ray for partner.

None of us had ever been able to win against Miss Rosamund Ray. She was a thin lady in rustling silk petticoats, who had taught school for twenty years, and then, coming into a fortune, meant to spend it

and the next twenty years playing bridge. She belonged to a club and played in matches. We loved to sharpen our card sense against her, and we balanced our purses by a system of pivoting. Papa Palmer valued Miss Ray as his brightest jewel, because she occupied the Cream Room and paid well for that privilege.

This lady regarded Dickie with a cold eye and showed little joy at her election.

"Remember," she warned in a deep voice, "I lead through strength, and discard from weakness. Don't forget."

Dickie looked at her partner with a wistful, flickering smile. "Strength? Weakness?" she inquired gently. "Oh, I'd better not try." Then she winked just the tiniest wink over toward Deering, who was the only one to catch it.

Deering sat up and began to take more interest. "Don't be a quitter," he urged; and Apperson put in kindly:

"Try it once, Miss Scottelle. We will make it as easy as we can. With Ace, King, Queen, lead——"

The youth at the piano left his net-waisted companion and strolled up. "Never finesse your partner's suit," he contributed to the helpful hints for Dickie's aid.

"Tell her how to make the trump, Deary," suggested another.

"Sure," agreed Deering. "You make it No-Trump if you can, and——"

"If you have Chicane you get points for that," interrupted Apperson.

The learner turned from one to the other of her instructors during the process of this lesson, and repeated to herself certain words of their hints, as if getting them by heart.

"Chicane, finesse; finesse, chicane," she murmured softly, shutting her eyes tight and saying the words very fast. "I think I noticed some things looking on, and I make it No-Trump. Is n't that the way, Miss Ray?" And the wistful smile flitted again across Dickie's sensitive mouth.

Miss Ray laid down one Ace and twelve other cards headed by a nine-spot. Then she got up and walked around to look into the girl's hand, and what she saw there made her groan aloud. Deering grinned, but Apperson cast pitying glances at Dickie, and played his winning cards as gingerly as if each trick he was obliged to take hurt his feelings. Dickie went through the hand apparently unconscious of its tragedy until the end. She had taken but one trick, the one with Miss Ray's Ace. Then she gave a laugh of frightened dismay, and said:

"Oh, I'm sorry I'm stupid! I know you're vexed with me, but if you would try me again I might do better than that. I should have made it Spades, of course."

"Try you again!" snapped Miss Ray, with vicious emphasis. "Let Mr. Deering have that pleasure. I prefer to play against you. Pivot, please."

It was not time to pivot, but both men seemed to seize the suggestion with alacrity. Both claimed the task of being responsible for the beginner. One said pivot went from right to left, the other said the other way. When appealed to, Dickie looked hopelessly embarrassed, then smiled faintly in Deering's direction, and next moment found him established opposite her.

Miss Ray roused herself from the scornful lethargy into which she had fallen, and spoke in sepulchral bass:

"I don't believe Miss—what is the name? I don't believe she even knows what we play for. Perhaps money makes no difference to her, though. It's a cent a point. Did you know that?"

Poor Dickie gave a little shriek. "*Money?*" she cried aghast. "Why—why—is n't it wrong to play cards for money?"

"Don't you fret," the buoyant Deering reassured her; and, still protesting, she took up her cards and reluctantly began to play the second round.

"I'm sure I can do better now," she said, half to herself. Then she gently motioned back the lookers-on who would have made kind suggestions, and bent her mind to the business in hand.

By eleven o'clock they had changed partners twice, Dickie playing first with one man and then with the other, for the champion had refused her on any terms. And wherever Dickie had played success had perched upon the banners. Apperson had lost part of the time, and Deering had lost, and Miss Ray—well, she was half beside herself, for she loved each darling little penny of her fortune, not to mention her prestige in the game; but Dickie had been on the winning side in every rubber since that first unlucky hand.

On the seventh rubber the deal came to Miss Ray, the score standing twenty-eight to twenty-six against her and Apperson. On the theory that two sure odd were better than uncertainty she made it Spades in her own hand, with eight trumps to the Jack, four Hearts and the Ace of Clubs. Dickie and Deering declared themselves satisfied. The girl, leading, took four straight Heart tricks, for by one of those rare and mischievous distributions the cards were bunched in her hand to the ruin of her opponents. Dummy showed Chicane; and the maker found the big trumps in Dickie's hand, instead of, as she had confidently hoped, divided. Not being able to ruff until too late, Miss Ray lost both hand and rubber.

Then did she turn and rend Dickie. "Why did n't you double?" she demanded with savage excitement. "Ace, King, Queen, and Lord knows what back there. You're obliged to double. You must double."

Dickie looked to Deering and then to Apperson. Her lip trembled and her blue eyes swam in tears. "Everything I do is wrong," she said. "I thought if she did not know where the big trumps were we might get the odd. And we did. But still I get scolded. Everything I do is wrong."

"Rats!" said Deering. He was a big, rough fellow, and dainty words of comfort did not come to him, but there was no mistaking the balm in his tone. "You played it like a major. We waxed 'em, did n't we?"

"She must read Elwell," said Miss Ray. "She does n't play scientifically. She does n't know the first principle of whist."

"Rats!" said Deering again. This time there was no balm, but only heat. "Let her alone. The hand you had was piano, Miss Ray—pianola. It ought to have played itself, only she did you."

"It was great, that not doubling," put in Apperson. "Come on and pivot, Deary. It's my turn to have Miss Dickie."

But Dickie would not play any more. She hated to be stupid, she insisted. Nothing she did was right. She was sorry she had spoiled their pleasure. No doubt it *was* trying to play with any one who did not know the science of it. *She* had thought the object was only to take the most tricks, but——

The score was cast up and Dickie had won just nine dollars and twenty-one cents. She protested when Deering would have put the money into her hands. Then she took it and shook it hesitatingly up and down in the hollow of her palms two or three times.

We all watched in breathless silence. Dickie walked up to Miss Ray, and made a little timid gesture of overture. The baby face was full of contrition as it lifted itself to the vinegar one above it. Dickie was going to kiss her!

She almost laid her red lips against the sallow cheek. But not quite, for the champion, casting one terrorized look about her and seeing everywhere the enemy—our sympathy was so patent—resorted to the defense of primitive woman. She slapped her! With a flat, hard palm she slapped Dickie!

We all saw it, and the sluggish blood leaped suddenly about our jaded hearts, and we burned with indignation. Dickie walked over to the screen in the corner, and, laying the bills and coin in a heap before Papa Palmer, said brokenly: "Perhaps you know some poor person." Then she gathered up her work-bag and went slowly out and upstairs.

This was the beginning of an epidemic of Dickie which ran through the House. She was so dignified and appealing under Miss Ray's insult. We were quite won by it. We guessed that her search for work was weary and unrewarded, and we suffered with her. Dickie became an obsession, the malady affecting us according to individual tempera-

ment. Some of the younger fellows spent their salaries on presents for her, all of which she twice refused and accepted shyly on the third offering. The Fairy, after a week of jealous disdain, came down with so violent an attack of Dickitis that she could find relief only by removing bonbons, perfumes, and even a garnet ring from her unwary mother's bureau to the skylight room above. The Southern girls sent home for striped gourds and cotton-bolls to lay at Dickie's plate at table.

Deering and Apperson, room-mates from time immemorial, fell upon troublous topics of talk and separated. The latter was a phlegmatic fellow who suffered from dyspepsia and a light purse, but he scoured New York for scones and English muffins, and thought himself well paid when a delighted Dickie clapped her hands and laughed at him for his trouble. He swallowed whole quarts of tea too sweet for him, and so rich with cream that his nights thereafter were horrid torture. But he minded that as little as he did being docked for leaving the office early every day. Indeed, he hardly noticed that his envelope was not as full as usual, for he lived in a heaven above material things these times. Dickie showed a special tenderness for Apperson; and it was to him she talked in homesick moments, of dear old London, and the younger sister there who was all in all to her.

And Papa Palmer! When his heart was sore after one of the periodical skirmishes with his wife, in which that warrior-like lady had never yet won the dollar she was always craving, Dickie accompanied him to the confectioner's on the Avenue, and shared the soothing orgy he found necessary on such occasions. He would have given his soul—nay, even a slice from his bank account, perhaps—to be a very devil of a fellow, but he could n't endure the taste of anything more devilish than strawberry ice, poor Papa Palmer. And his orgies, therefore, never distressed his lady at home. Dickie, however, seemed to think these dissipations very grand, and like the real life she had heard about.

"I never had any childhood," she would tell him plaintively over the marble table. "And do you know, that's the most becoming tie I've seen you wear. There are n't many men who could stand that shade of blue. It's because your skin's so clear."

The day she noticed that his skin was like a baby's Papa Palmer invested the dollar he had denied his liege helpmate, on violets to make Dickie feel that after all some of the grace of girlhood might be hers. It was in such pretty words as these that he presented the huge mass of purple fragrance, adding afterward: "Don't mention it, please. Times are bad and getting worse. It's hard to keep my life insurance for Mrs. P. paid up."

When she observed that his carriage was as erect as an English general's, and his hand shapely enough to be modelled, Papa Palmer made a discovery on his own part. He remembered that the Cream

Room was unoccupied, since Miss Ray had moved in a tantrum to the Woman's Hotel, and that Dickie might as well be using it.

"I'm not making expenses," he told her; "and eggs are high and mostly too bad to soft-boil. The cook wastes an awful lot that could be used for school-teachers' lunches, if she was the saving kind. But you go in the Cream Room and make yourself comfortable. Don't say anything about it, you understand. The pay will be just the same."

Thus Dickie became a Running-Water instead of a Skylighter.

She did not care for cards, she said; and of course if Dickie did not care for cards the House did not care for cards; and the evening rubber was abandoned. Then Dickie took us by the hand, as it were, and led us back to childhood's happy hour, that we might make up to her for that lack in her own life. It was a wonderful spectacle in the House of skepticism and surfeited eyes and ears. Dickie had hypnotized us. The trio of philosophers left their argument; the youth its rag-time and its flirting; Fairy dropped her kitten over the hall banister and advised it to stay down there out of the way; Papa Palmer postponed his accounts until daylight; and we all joined together in glorious games of Spin the Plate, and Hide the Thimble.

It wrung our hearts to see the pretty child, for she was nothing more than that, in her sober weeds. Different ones broached the subject with infinite tact, but it made tears come to Dickie's eyes. Then one day she went for a walk with Mrs. Manton, our widow who had the reputation of staring so long at her money before parting from it that the dollars grew embarrassed—and came back with a blue silk waist and the lace to trim it. "She let *me* be the one to persuade her to leave off mourning," Mrs. Manton boasted afterward. "She said she had found something sympathetic in my nature. I had to plead with her, but she gave in."

When the black was once discarded Dickie blossomed out in great variety of finery. Occasionally she sighed a little, and wondered whether after all it was right to sacrifice her own feelings for those of the people about her. Sentiment about one's dead was a sacred thing, she thought. But she really had not the heart to refuse us anything, and perhaps her mourning did throw a shadow over the place.

She went for another stroll with Mrs. Manton; she walked out for fresh air with Forbes, Apperson, and Papa Palmer in turn; and coincident with these excursions she displayed a jewelled belt, a locket and chain, and a new fur coat. Thereupon arose a subtle uneasiness in the House as to who was first in Dickie's affections, and we brought gifts secretly and bribed her with them.

Deering, lucky dog, discovered her passionate love for music, and had the pleasure of taking her to her first grand opera; but the other fellows claimed the next ones, and Dickie, laughing indulgently at their

jealous clamor, went with each of them in turn, even old Forbes, who was not a lady's man to look at and never could persuade the Southern girls to be seen in his company. Our Dickie had a genius for making people happy.

But even the deepest and dearest experiences which life holds must pass away. It was January when Dickie came; April was to take her from us.

The House had given her reluctantly up over the week-end, because she had to go to Boston to interview a tiresome wealthy woman who needed a governess. It was not the first time she had left us on such missions, but she always came back, her spirits drooping from disappointment, and with sad little reasons why she was unsuccessful. She was too young, she complained, or too English, or both. It hurt us to see her depressed after this fashion, and we meant to prevent it this time if possible. So the House got a party ready, and attended in a body, prepared to dispel whatever gloom seemed to enfold our darling. We had missed her sadly those two days, and we wanted her to come back and live in the House forevermore.

Before she had her wraps fairly off the bell rang and the maid brought up a yellow envelope—for Miss Scottelle. She took it and turned it over helplessly in her hand, too frightened even to tear it open. Then she looked appealingly about the circle, until she came to Apperson. Her little face was white and drawn as she held the dispatch out toward him. She trembled so that the paper fluttered in her fingers. Apperson took it from her. "You must sit down," he said rather huskily, and would not read the message until she did. In a hush of sympathy the pitiful words ran through our ranks. The younger sister at home was ill—she cried for Dickie. That was all, but that was everything.

It never occurred to any one that helpless little Dickie might even be consulted about what to do. The ladies hurried to the Cream Room to pack her trunks. The men scattered to see after the various necessities of a sudden ocean voyage. It was already late at night, but machinery of all kinds was set in motion. Dickie was treated like a beloved one just recovering from long and painful illness. She was implored to taste dainty food; to remember that her sufferings were ours; and not to let despair seize for a single moment on her; all would yet be well, we begged her to believe.

The *Majestic* was to sail next morning; and by some blessed chance there was a stateroom unclaimed and open to purchase. It was a very good room indeed, and Apperson whistled a little to himself as he heard the price. He had Dickie's tiny purse in his pocket, for she had followed him in a dazed way as he left the House, and mutely besought him to take it along. It contained forty-two dollars and a little photo-

graph of herself, which she had doubtless forgotten to remove. Apperson had put the money snugly away inside a book he meant to give her for the voyage; but the dingy purse and the picture he kept for himself. He had not known that ocean travel cost so much; but fortunately, he told himself, he had money enough with him—taken from bank that day for a different and a happier purpose—and he never hesitated. That is, he did waver for one brief moment, but the dream of two passages instead of one was so palpable a madness that he put it from him manfully, and braced up to the business before him.

We took her to the steamer that same night. There were a good many of us and a goodly number of parcels, large and small; so we had three cabs and a couple of four-wheelers. Even the Fairy went along, her mother's gold lorgnette clasped in her hand as a last offering to her idol.

Dickie herself chose to ride with Papa Palmer, and he accepted with complacent sense of his fitness for the honor. In his pocket he carried a long account of her board and extras for the past five weeks; for in the first excitement of her leaving, an old, old habit, stronger than mind or heart or soul, had sent him to his desk and reckoning books. He hoped for an opportunity of presenting it, but Dickie saved him the trouble by bringing it up herself.

"Oh," she said, turning suddenly from her silent gaze at the streets outside; "don't forget my bill, dear Papa Palmer. Fancy its all ending up like this! I've grown so fond of—" She stopped and blushed, then went on impulsively:

"Ever since that first day I saw you—of course, you did n't know I was there, and it was only a minute—but I saw you distinctly, and from the first I felt you were *different*. I had always known such commonplace people. I *knew* you somehow. Was it a blue tie or was it lavender?"

"Green," said Papa Palmer.

"You will forget it all," she went on sadly. "It is nothing in your life—how could it be? But many a time it will come back to me—the strawberry ices and the violets. And the pony coat!"

Her girlish mirth overcame for a moment the cloud that hung about her.

"They all wondered where I got it, but no one has found out—*yet*. It is *our* secret. Is n't it a delicious one?"

The secret did not seem delicious to Papa Palmer. A shade of uncomfortable wonder passed through his mind. But this was lost in the thrill which followed.

Dickie leaned somewhat closer to him. Her eyes were full of tears, but behind the liquid drops there burned a little light. "I'll come back some day," she whispered gently; "and I'll never forget our secret,

I can shut my eyes and see every line of you; the brown suit and the gray tweeds and the blue tie and the plaid dressing-gown."

She was very close to him indeed, and Papa Palmer's stiff old heart cut an unwonted caper. He reached his arm timidly out across the back of the seat, and drew her nearer yet, and then—— The cab stopped with a bump, and the boarders flocked down upon them. Dickie pressed a folded newspaper into his hands, and we took her out from beside him.

With smiles and tears we helped her aboard. And with smiles and tears we looked back at her as she stood, so lovable, so wistful, so little and alone. Then we made our way back to the House.

Papa Palmer sat until daybreak behind his screen, his eyes not on accounts, but on a Boston evening extra, spread out before him. The page bore the picture of a woman—a girl with eyes that were wide and earnest and a mouth that was wistful and small. Though he bent above it for hours he got no further than the pictured face and the headlines beneath it. The staring type told in bold staccato that Hilda Mount, the English actress who had disappeared so curiously a year ago, after a quarrel with her manager-husband, had come to light once more. She was now on her way home, and denied all rumors of divorce. Thus far Papa Palmer's eyes travelled each time, then began at the top once more and slowly made way down again. As the honest old sun came, after his ancient habit, a-peeping in at dawn, Papa Palmer shook off his leaden lethargy, and tore the Boston paper into bits so tiny that they looked like confetti. Then he gathered them and himself up and made the journey down to the kitchen stove, where he kindled a little bonfire all alone and for his own satisfaction.

The next day went in a sort of trance; then the House all of a sudden stretched slightly in its sleep, rubbed its eyes and looked wonderingly about. There was a good deal of lassitude and some nausea in our sensations. Dickie was gone! She had left no address, as we recalled now for the first time. As suddenly and completely as the mesmerism had enveloped us, just so suddenly and completely did it disappear. No person in all the House—that is, no one could speak for poor Apperson—doubted in his heart that he had been deceived. A copy of the Boston paper found its way among us, and crept silently through every hand. But there was no word spoken.

Gradually the House returned to its accustomed habits. New boarders came from time to time, and were accepted and mentally ticketed by Papa Palmer. His was a quiet place, he told them in lugubrious tone; times were hard; he did not make profit enough to buy new trousers, and he thought of giving up the business. The trio of wise men plunged deep into German philosophy; ragtime sounded once more through the echoing halls.

But the human mind is a subtle thing, and despite all care, our thoughts would sometimes wander from the bridge table, the piano, and the reckoning books behind the screen, and dwell with bitterness on Dickie; the skeleton in the House closet, never to be mentioned more, for very shame of how she had done unto us what he had believed could not be done.



THE MOTHER TO HER SON

BY CAROLINE WOOD MORRISON

THY soul is like a little bird
 Beneath thy mother's hand, my boy.
 The song God taught thee must be heard—
 Thou hast a right to free, wild joy;
 Yet must she quaver as she dreams
 Of thy dark flight o'er gorges dark.
 'T is there the rock the ocean creams;
 Those gone before are stiff and stark.

And thy strong wings shall climb the wind,
 Thy voice ring out in freedom's cry;
 The loving hand that now doth blind
 Thine eyes must lift and let thee fly.
 But oh, how sweet the warm bird thrills
 As tenderly the palm is pressed,
 And oh, how hard as o'er the hills
 A cold wind comes to free that breast—

That little, breathing, tender breast,
 Beneath the mother's loving hand;
 Yet must she heed the swelling crest;
 Her shadow shall not hide the land.
 Her fingers strain beneath those wings
 That beat so lusty to be free;
 Her hand is empty when he sings
 A distant speck across the sea.

*Ah, bird, be pitiful and pause
 Ere quite into God's man you grow.
 Fly low, fly low, just once because
 Her hands are empty as you go.*

THE CAPTAIN'S CHARM

By *Anne Warner*

Author of "The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary," "Seeing France with Uncle John," etc.

HE was a captain with a charm. A charm of look and a charm of way, and still another charm.

He saw her come on board. She was a wee, wee thing in a blue cap with a gold band quite like his own, and a blue jacket displaying the flag that was his own embroidered on one sleeve. From under the cap there floated forth a lot of yellow curls—such yellow curls as the captain, who was dark of eyes and hair, had always cared for most; and beneath the inch and a half of frilly white dress that showed below the blue jacket the captain saw two small legs and two little trotty feet all in white socks and patent-leather sandals. It was not often that anything so altogether after his own heart crossed the gang-plank, and from his secret coign of advantage he looked smiling down, rejoicing, that he knew himself possessed of that charm which might be depended upon to win the heart beneath the small blue jacket.

She who came with the baby was all in black and shrouded in a crape veil. The captain knew that she would sit upon his right, because she was one of those who always have that place. He was not vividly interested in her, because the people who have a right to the captain's right are hardly ever the ones whom the owner of the right would choose to have there; but he was used to that and cavilled not.

An hour or so later the bugle sounded, the band struck up, the anchor came on deck, and the ship set forth to sea.

Then for three days the captain, walking up and down or looking forth from his secret coign of advantage, watched much, but never saw the golden curls nor the wee trotty feet again. No one came to occupy the place upon his right at table either. He asked why not after a while, and the doctor told him that both were ill; not so very ill, but too ill to leave their room.

It was the next morning that the sun came out, and the sea monsters who had been humping their backs beneath the keel and spouting whole waves over the decks folded all their paraphernalia of misery and went below—seven miles below—themselves. The sea lost no time in adjusting her naturally kindly disposition to these circumstances, and by noon the whole wide expanse was one smile of sweet sun and air.

Thereupon the captain, walking about the deck for a bit, saw two stewards, each bearing an armful of rugs, come out of the companionway, and go to a certain chair which had been snugly disposed before the window which was his own, and under the stair which ran upwards beside it. The stewards began to arrange the chair, and in a minute it developed that the load which one carried was not entirely rugs, but consisted in part of a very little white girl. They put her down in the middle of the rugs and tucked her up very carefully indeed, and then they went away and left her there, and she stayed quiet, only her wee pale face peeping out above the infinity of wrappings, and with her blue eyes fixed in a sort of innocent awe on the sunshiny ocean beyond.

The captain, who had been talking to a little group of passengers, kept looking again and again at the tiny face, and one of the ladies noticed his interest and spoke of the child.

"We've all been asked not to go near her," she said. "It seems, the little thing is fearfully shy, and her mother assured her that if she would allow herself to be brought up on deck she was so little that no one would notice that she was there."

The captain smiled at this. "She would speak to me," he declared confidently. "The kiddies always do." And thereupon he left the group and—just to prove his power—walked towards the chair.

Something held him back from speaking to her at once—something in her littleness and his bigness, something in her white weakness and his sea-tanned strength. But he walked to the rail near-by and stood for a minute looking off over the waves, and then turned and smiled upon her. Her eyes grew wide and startled and her cheeks flushed, but for a minute she did not move. Then the captain saw in horror two big tears form and roll down the little face, and out from among the rugs came a wee hand and quietly wiped the two big eyes. And then, when he started impulsively forward, saying quickly something—he did n't just know what—the rugs all rose in quick insurrection, the little hand that had dashed away the tears burst bondage, two socked and sandaled feet flew out into the air, and before the big man could finish his phrase a little frightened form was running unsteadily towards the companionway, crying out wildly.

"My mamma, my mamma!" she sobbed to a white-jacketed man who was standing just within, and the white-jacketed man, who had seen nothing of what had just occurred, picked her up in his arms and carried her below to her mother.

The captain did not turn his head to look after her. He went straight into his own room and shut the door. He felt terribly. No thing had ever fled in terror from him before. No child had ever feared him. He sat heavily down and bit his lip. His eyes burnt.

He felt wretchedly that now they would not be able to get her up on deck again. His breath came long and hard. As I said before, he felt terribly.

As he sat there thinking of the two big tears upon the pink fright of the small, quivering face he knew that he would have two tears of his very own if his bigness should not prove itself sufficiently clever to think of a way to adjust matters with her littleness very soon. And just at that second a way opened—a way so simple that he wondered at his own stupidity in having ever been downcast at all; the way that he had thought about with a smile when he had seen her first come fluttering over the gang-plank—his gang-plank. It is a great thing to own a charm—a veritable charm—and I said in the beginning that the captain owned charms. He sent for the doctor—the ship's doctor.

“You were n't on deck to see me frighten that baby to death just now, were you?” he asked.

“No,” said the doctor, smiling; “but I was with her mother when the baby was brought back.”

“It was too bad,” said the captain, looking down. “I never saw a child so shy. I did n't mean to worry her.”

“Oh, her mother has made her that way,” said the doctor easily. “Her mother has had a lot of trouble, I take it, and she has spoiled the baby. There was a nurse that always had the care, and the nurse was taken ill and had to stay behind. I can't see why they did n't stay behind, too. The mother can't take care of the kiddie herself. She's too weak.”

“Is she ill?”

“No, she's been ill, but she's just weak now. She lies still, and the little one sits cuddled up by her and plays paper dolls.”

“I wonder,” said the captain very slowly, “if I might go down there and make my peace. What do you think?”

The doctor looked about him and saw the charm—the most potent of the captain's arsenal. “You count upon that?” he said, smiling.

“Yes,” said the captain, returning the smile.

“I will ask, if you like.”

“When?”

“Now.”

“Very good.”

It was about an hour later that the captain, with his charm in his pocket, went to the stateroom where the baby and her mother stayed. It was quite as the doctor had said. The two were together on the divan, and the captain saw to his astonishment that the mother was only the baby in larger edition. She was white and gold, too,

only the sponge which had wiped nearly everything that counts in life off of her slate had also taken the pink from her face and had put dark shadows around the blue of her big eyes.

The captain was clever now, he had learned his lesson; he did not notice the little one, who shrank within the circle of her mother's arm while she hastily gathered her paper dolls into safety with trembling fingers; but he talked to her mother in a friendly way that showed that he really did not eat people up alive—not at once, at any rate.

Suddenly the paper dolls ceased to seek shelter, the little tot became immobile, her eyes grew absolutely black—almost as black as the captain's own. The captain looked at her, but she did not see him. Her mother looked at her, but she did not see her. All in the world that she could see just then was the captain's charm, which was returning her big-eyed wonder with a little bright-eyed wonder of its own. For the captain's charm was peeping forth from the captain's pocket.

"Would you like to see my little chicken?" the captain said, very, very gently.

Then he put his hand in his pocket and took it out.

It was a little yellow ball with a tiny beak and two shiny beads of eyes.

The baby clasped her hands tightly on her bosom; her mother could feel the throb of emotion in the little form pressed against her.

"Give me your hand," the captain said, still very, very gently, and he took her hand within his own and laid it on the soft down and held it there.

"Don't—the—birdie—mind?" she panted in a whisper.

"No," said the captain; "the birdie knows that I would n't hurt it. It's a brave birdie. It would go anywhere with me."

The child lifted her eyes to his. "It's a brave birdie," she repeated faintly.

"I have two more in my room," said the captain. "I'm taking them home with me. This is the last time that I shall cross the big sea. After this I'm going to live in the country, and have no end of little chickens and little lambs and all sorts of little things. Is n't that nice?"

"She is not old enough to know how nice that is," said the baby's mother with a sigh.

"Will you come with me to my room some day and see the other little chickens?" the captain asked. He felt suddenly timid as he spoke the words—as if his reputation were at stake.

She looked at him, and he felt his fate hanging in the balance. It hung there for a long minute, but when the minute was over she said, "Yes."

"And will you let me carry you to your chair soon again?" asked the captain, become of a sudden tremendously courageous. "You know no one will dare trouble you if I take you there. I will fold your rugs nicely about you, and you will soon be just as comfortable as if you were my little chicken in my pocket."

She looked at him again then, and again he felt terribly anxious. And then again she considered and finally said, "Yes."

He took her up in his arms at that and kissed her. She was a charming little child and unlocked his heart completely, so that he kissed her again.

"I'm *awfully* fond of them," he said in a sort of apology to her mother.

And then—with a shock of fresh misery—he saw the blood rush into the mother's face and the tears storm into *her* eyes, and, turning from him, she said in a tone that was almost a cry, "Oh, I know—I know—and I hope you have many—many; but I have only that one—that one—and I'm so frail and she's so frail—and we're all alone."

The captain, thrown into blind agony of desperation, looked at her, and then, not at all knowing what he was doing, bolted out of the room abruptly, and because he had the baby in his arms, it followed that he carried her with him.

As she had neither wraps nor rugs, he could not take her to her chair, so when he perceived what he had done he carried her to his own room, biting his lips a great deal as he did so.

He put her down in the corner of the big sofa and made himself very busy getting the little chicken established. His heart was all torn and tossed as he did so, and he felt himself to have been as innocently big and brutal for a second time as he had been before. He had never had any passengers like these two. Not that he shared the doctor's view as to the advisability of their not having come.

"You see, this is the little chicken's mother," he said, talking against time to her while he wondered acutely if her mother had stopped crying yet or not. "I made them a mother. All little tots have to have a mother, you know. I cut the wool in little strips and hung them close in the box, and they think it's their very own mother's feathers. Look!"

She was looking all the time, her face pink with excitement. The chickens were running here and there, and peeping softly. The captain brought out a piece of bread and crumbed it in milk and fed them. It interested him very much, but his wondering faculties still wondered. Suppose she was still crying—that other mother there below.

"Do the birdies have a nap?" the little one asked, when the feeding was over.

"Many," he said with a smile. "And you?"

"I have mine now," she said. "Please take me back to my nap and my mamma."

She held her arms out to him. Outstretched arms are always dear, but the outstretched arms of a little child are the dearest of all. The captain—the big, dark captain—gathered her close and carried her away. Her head—already heavy with sleep—lay pressed against his shoulder, her yellow curls nestled against his throat. There was a fullness in his throat because he was so cruel, so unworthy, so altogether abominable in his own eyes. He felt, as he went steadily down the unsteady stair and held the little form so tenderly in his strong arms, what a painful thing it was to be the kind of man that he was—the kind of man that had grown so conceited over the reputation of being a generally all around good fellow, that he had absolutely touched bottom of his own baseness in an experience like this. Frightened a baby and set a woman crying and all inside of twenty-four hours!

As he came along the corridor the stewardess effaced herself against the wall to let him pass.

"She sleeps," she whispered.

And he looked down and saw that it was so.

The stewardess followed him closely.

"Madame is asleep," she told him. "Can I take the little one?"

"See if I can lay her down," he said.

The stewardess slipped by him and ran ahead. She turned at the door and smiled.

The curtain was drawn across the window, and in its reddened shadow the baby's mother slept, her hand under her face, her own yellow curls bound in a wavy knot behind her head. The captain stepped into the room. The stewardess had flattened a pillow ready; he laid the little one down, and she spread a blanket over the small form.

The captain turned quickly and walked swiftly away. He went up on the bridge, established himself in his accustomed corner, and looked with steady eyes out over the wide waves.

It was nearly noon, and every wave had a white crest that broke into golden curls or else wove its foam in one great overflowing knot. Above there was a sky as blue as the bluest eyes into which he had ever looked.

He had never seen the ocean look so fair before. For the nonce life's great mirror had no shadows—nothing—nothing—nothing but blue and gold.

And that is *not* the end of the story.



THE FREIGHT THAT WENT SOUTH

By Caroline Lockhart

“IT’S a horrible sight to see men work like that, that’s what it is—a horrible sight! Wull, vurry wull, if they wants to—let ’em!” “Philadelphia Teddy” took a square package from the pocket of his coat and tore away the newspaper wrapping, to disclose two thin slices of bread and butter, which he eyed with disdain.

“I might have knowed that a woman with a mouth like that woman had would n’t put in no pickles or jell. Wull, vurry wull, I’ll cast me bread upon the waters.” “Philadelphia Teddy” contemptuously threw the “hand-out” into the creek which flowed between him and the hay-field wherein labored the men who had so aroused his compassion.

Teddy produced a similar package from another pocket and eyed it hopefully. It was bulkier, and there was a moisture which suggested pickles. It *was* pickles, and a slice of luscious roast beef lay between the thick slices of bread.

“It’s hefty,” complained Teddy, eying the sandwich critically, “and ain’t done”—rolling a crumb into a pill. “Women can’t make bread like they useter.”

Coffee was boiling in a tomato-can which set on a tiny fire of twigs, and Teddy settled the coffee with water which he scooped from the creek with the brim of his felt hat. He blew into the can before putting the edge to his lips. The sound which followed was like that of a horse drinking with a double bit in its mouth. Between gulps he ate the sandwich and pickles.

At the conclusion of his repast, he wiped his fingers on his trousers and stuffed a short-stemmed clay pipe with black tobacco, skilfully dropping a hot coal into the bowl. Then he pulled his hat over his eyes and squirmed until the small of his back rested comfortably against a log, while an expression of perfect contentment settled upon his face.

Birds twittered in the branches of the elm-tree above his head, droning insects hummed a lullaby about him, the gentle murmur of water soothed him, the fragrance of new mown hay was wafted to

him; "Philadelph' Teddy's" muscles relaxed, and in the cool shade by the water's edge, at peace with himself and all the world, he drowsily watched the men in the hay-field opposite, straining and sweating under the blistering midsummer sun of a Kansas day.

The men were tired—he could tell by the droop of their shoulders; they were hot—frequently they drew their shirt-sleeves across their faces; they were crazy—else why would they work?

"Wull, vurry wull, if they wants to—let 'em!" "Philadelph' Teddy's" words ended in a murmur and his head dropped upon his breast, while the pipe slid from the corner of his mouth and burned another hole in his already much scorched trousers.

The sound of a distant dinner-bell, calling the men from the hay-field, did not awaken him, nor an ant which scurried around his neck as though it were a circular race-course; nor did divers beetles and insects which made tours of inspection across his face and hands disturb him; which was not strange, since he was dreaming that he was King of the World and had nothing to do but lie on his back and command the execution of brakemen.

In the farmhouse at the end of the hay-field, Townsend Bunger sat at a long table, eating boiled pork and cabbage with a vigor which properly placed the function of dining under the head of violent exercise. As he ate and drank, Mr. Bunger continually turned his head to look behind him, like a hen at a watering-trough. It was no trouble for Bunger to look behind him, as his neck rose from the band of his checked gingham shirt like a joint of bamboo. His attention seemed divided between the cabbage in front of him and the cabbage which was visible through the window at his back.

A thin, round-shouldered girl came from the kitchen and slid into the chair beside Bunger.

"Annie," he said sharply, "Spot's in the garden."

"I don't care."

The mound of boiled cabbage which Bunger had arranged with great nicety upon his knife with his forefinger stopped in its hurried trip to his mouth. The little Bungers stared.

"You don't care?"

If eyes may be said to tremble, the girl's eyes trembled as they vainly tried to meet with defiance the awful gaze of Townsend Bunger. There was a second of surprise, and then that person lifted one broad hand to administer a cuff where it would do the most good; but the girl covered her ear with her crooked elbow and sprang from her chair. Mutiny when Bunger was in the hay-field and mutiny when Bunger was less than an arm's length away were two things, so Bunger shortly had the satisfaction of seeing the girl race after the pestiferous calf, belaboring it with a dried cornstalk as she ran.

Instead of returning to the house, Annie followed the barbed wire fence down to the creek, where a few elm trees shaded the bank. She dropped upon the ground with her back against a tree, and, drawing up her knees until her face rested upon them, cried as she had not cried for years.

"Philadelphia Teddy" slowly opened his eyes. He did not move, but lay quietly awaiting developments. It had been a long time since he had seen a woman cry. Temper, unfortunately, was the emotion most commonly met by him in the women whom he encountered in his extensive travels. Temper was nothing—it amused him; but this was different—it made him uneasy to hear a woman cry.

"She's no beaut," he thought to himself as she lifted a distorted face.

He hesitated, then, clearing his throat and in a voice intended to be reassuring, called:

"Ah, there!"

Annie's surprised face froze in the grimace it wore.

"Sick?"

"Sick of livin'!" The corners of the girl's mouth drew down, and she burst out afresh.

"Say, now, don't bawl no more. I'm comin' over if I can git acrost without takin' the shine off me shoes." He grinned as he threw stones into the creek and stepped gingerly upon them.

Teddy's appearance usually terrified solitary females, but this girl did not shrink from him when he carefully dusted a spot of ground with his hat and sat down, facing her. She did not appear to see his soiled and ragged clothes, his shoes through which his bare toes were visible. His ferocious, dun-colored whiskers, springing from his face like a wild gooseberry bush, did not seem to inspire any fear. She only looked into his light blue eyes with the questioning stare of a child. Teddy's were purposeless eyes, there was no force behind them, but there was a peculiar sunny glint in them which had obtained for him many a "hand-out" which he would not otherwise have had. One felt disposed to smile when looking into Teddy's eyes, without knowing exactly why.

"Wull, vurry wull, here I am." Teddy dropped his chin upon the china button of his shirt and rolled his head from side to side in a fashion he had when emphatic. "Looks like you're all broke up. What's your name?"

"Annie Lowden."

"Where do you live at?" Teddy's voice was strangely gentle.

"I live to Bunger's."

"What for?"

"They're raisin' me. I'm an orphlin."

"Oh!" Teddy's tone was comprehensive. Perhaps he, too, had been "raised."

Annie turned up the hem of her skirt and deftly dried her eyes upon it. She found talking of herself to a stranger who wanted to hear, a fascinating experience. She never before had had the opportunity of telling her story, because every one she knew knew it as well as she did herself.

"My folks came out here and took up a quarter section, then they died—starved, I guess, when the drouth came. They left me to a neighbor, and when the neighbor moved away they left me to another neighbor, to work for my board. I've been workin' ever since, and I'm seventeen now. Bunger's is so hard since Mis' Bunger died. There's three boys and Mr. Bunger, and hired men in hayin'. I have to do the chores in the house and out. I run the calf out the garden and run the hogs in their pens when they jump over till I'm just played out. I don't git but a few weeks' school, and I git cuffed an' no clothes an' no fun and nobody cares nothin' a-tall about me!"

Annie's voice rose shrill, and broke.

As she laid her head upon her knees and her scrawny little figure shook with sobs which came from her heart, Teddy looked at her steadfastly and soberly. "That's bum luck," he said slowly, "awful bum luck."

Once more he mentally observed that she was "no beaut." Her lips were cracked by the hot prairie winds, the sun had bleached her lifeless brown hair into streaks of red and ash, her complexion was sallow, her face heavy in its expression, and the narrowness in the chest of her pink calico frock made her look as though she were constantly shrugging her shoulders; but in spite of these things, a new sensation was stirring in Teddy's breast—the glow of it crept all over him. He never analyzed his emotions. In fact, his sensations were almost entirely those which arose from physical comfort or discomfort. No strong mental emotions ever had stirred him. He cherished a mild resentment against brakemen and the keepers of ferocious dogs, but he had no decided liking or dislike for any human being. He was not bad, neither was he good; he was only utterly shiftless. But the despair and helplessness of this homely little creature awakened something new in his nature. He had a strange, chivalrous desire to protect her, to do something practical to help her and to make her happy. He felt that he should like to see her laugh and to hear her sing because she *was* happy. To help her practically, he must work. Work! The word shocked him like an iced bath, but his purpose was warm within him. Yes, he would work.

"Could I git work from Bunger?" The strangeness of his own words almost made him gasp.

"He wants a hay-hand."

Pitching hay! The hardest kind of work. He hesitated, then said resolutely:

"Wull, vurry wull, I'll touch Bunger for a job."

Teddy returned to the house with Annie, and the remainder of the afternoon he pitched hay.

Work? Oh, the awfulness of work! It was all and more than his imagination had pictured. The thought of enduring such torture day after day filled him with dread. When Bunger urged him to work faster he longed to stab the pitchfork defiantly into the stack and hurl taunts in Bunger's teeth before he walked away to lie down in the cool shade of the elm trees so tantalizingly close. His head ached, his arms ached, even his neck ached, and blisters were rising on his soft palms. Death itself seemed preferable to work as he toiled and sweated under the burning sun of an endless afternoon. Then, too, a lurking fear that some one of his kind might see and recognize him kept him watching the road uneasily. A slouching figure in the distance all but stopped the beating of his heart, and he hid behind the hay-rick. It looked like "English Harry." What if "English Harry" should catch him pitching hay? Teddy shuddered. It was only the recollection of Annie's tears which kept him at his post. He had hinted to her that she might look to him for help and freedom, and she had drunk in his words with the believing trustfulness of a child.

At sundown Teddy dragged himself to the house. His shoulders drooped like the shoulders of the men he had so pitied, and the jauntiness was gone from his step. Annie was looking for him eagerly. It was something to have some one look for him eagerly, but the conviction grew, as he ate the salt pork and potatoes placed before him, that his talents did not lie in the hay-field. He wanted to talk further with Annie, to discuss plans, and a future for her, but she seemed never to be alone. As soon as the milking was done, the entire Bunger family ranged themselves along the kitchen wall, on the hind legs of their chairs, and appeared to be settled for the evening. Teddy joined them, his chin resting upon the china button of his shirt, his eyes closed in deep thought.

"It's cur'ous about turkeys," said Teddy suddenly.

The little Bungers, blinking with sleep, opened their eyes.

"What's cur'ous?" inquired Mr. Bunger.

"The way they grind corn in their gizzards."

"T ain't so cur'ous."

"Wull, vurry wull, I say it's cur'ous."

"Chickens grind corn in their gizzards."

"Certainly, av coorse, but they're quiet about it."

"So 's a turkey."

"Wull, vurry wull, I say turkeys is noisy."

"I never heard 'em."

"Av coorse not—youse always make a racket so they know you 're around."

"I don't believe it," declared Mr. Bunger bluntly, though he could not very well afford to quarrel with a hand until haying was over.

"You go out and sit under the trees where they roost, if you can't take me word for a scientific fact. It sounds like a coffee-mill."

Mr. Bunger, scornfully incredulous, took his hat and went out, followed by the little Bungers.

"Annie," said Teddy, "I can't pitch hay no more. I 'm goin' to git."

The light died out of the girl's face, and it looked dull again.

"Annie," he went on, "we orter git hitched."

"Us git married?" Red flamed into her face.

"Sure," answered Teddy easily.

"And would you take me away from Bunger's?"

"Av coorse I'll take you away from Bunger's." Teddy smiled down upon her indulgently.

"Honest, hope to die?" The girl twisted her dish-towel nervously.

"Av coorse," Teddy replied confidently. "Wull, vurry wull, I'll hop a freight and go to K. C. and git a job; then I'll send you some money to come, and we'll git hitched."

"Honest, hope to die?" Annie's shining eyes searched his face for the truth. "You won't forgit me? Honest, you mean it?"

"Sure, sure, little ole gal, I mean it." Teddy looked steadily into her eyes and she was convinced.

"Had n't you ought to have good clothes to go to the city?" she asked with a woman's instinctive pride in the man who is or is to be something to her. "Would n't Mr. Bunger's fit you?"

"Like bees-wax. I'd reely look better in 'em than Bunger." Teddy grinned.

Teddy had retired when Mr. Bunger returned, disgruntled, from his vigil under the turkey roost, but at ten o'clock, when the household slept, he crept down the creaking stairs with his shoes in his hand. Annie was waiting for him, with Bunger's Sunday clothes wrapped in a neat bundle.

"I'll just borry them off him," said Teddy, hefting the package.

"And you'll write to me to Chalk Mound?"

"Av coorse," Teddy replied, breathing more freely as he sniffed the night air and saw the long, lonely road stretching away in the moonlight.

"And you won't forget how bad I want to go away, and that all day and all night I'll be thinkin' of goin' and waitin' and waitin' for you to send for me? You won't forgit that I'm countin' on you, and that I have nobody else to count on but you? Oh, you won't forgit?—you won't forgit?" The girl clutched his coat-sleeve in terror at the thought.

"No, little ole gal, I won't forgit," said Teddy huskily. "And maybe havin' somebody countin' on me will make somethin' of me yet. Wull, vurry wull, we'll see." He kissed her awkwardly on the cheek.

From her bed-room window, Annie watched him walk down the prairie road until the road dropped from sight in a ravine; then she dragged her tired and aching body to bed, but she smiled happily as she crept in, for she was saying to herself:

"He'll git a job in K. C., he will; then us'll git hitched."

Annie had something to which to look forward for the first time in her life. She sang and smiled often as she drudged indoors and out. She could not expect to hear from him in less than a week, but at the end of that time she began to watch the road. On the tenth day the hired man on the next farm stopped on his way from Chalk Mound, and handed her a letter. She ran hither and thither, no spot seeming quite secret enough in which to read it. Locked in the pantry, she tore open the soiled envelope with trembling fingers, and read:

dere anie

i am in jale i met a friend who went to kc with me an we got in a fite with a nigger in the 5 cent mishon about who was to stand next to the stove the niger got his hed cut open an i got ten days I am out friday an will hunt a job yure

TEDDY.

Annie was at first filled with consternation, but as she read and reread the letter, she began to feel that, save for the delay, Teddy regarded the matter as of slight importance. His assurance that he would get work comforted her, and "yure Teddy" meant literally what it said.

In a few days the neighbor's farm-hand stopped again. Said Teddy's note:

dere anie

bungers Cloes got me a plummers job i get up at 6 an work til 6 it is prety Hard you can come Perty soon yure

TEDDY.

"You can come Perty soon"! Annie read the almost illegible words over and over again. "You can come Perty soon"! She dropped upon her bed and hugged her pillow in ecstasy at the nearness of freedom.

In his room on the fourth floor of a lodging-house Teddy dreamed of green grass and sunshine. As he lay on his back, the robins and red-birds hopped in the branches above his head, and the air was soft with the sweetness of a honeysuckle hedge near by. His pipe was in one pocket and the other contained a roast beef sandwich and a pickle. He was casting his eye about for a tomato can in which to make coffee.

"Hit the floor, you! It's six o'clock!"

Teddy opened his eyes at the harsh voice of his landlord.

A north wind was driving sleet against the panes of the one window in his cell-like room. It was still dark. He felt of the end of his nose. It was cold as a dog's. He thought how the ragged oil-cloth was going to feel to his bare feet, and shivered. There was skating in his water pitcher every morning, and his hand stuck to the tin basin. Teddy groaned as he lay in his warm bed and thought of that which was before him. His sluggish imagination became suddenly active. He remembered the sunshine and the soft, green grass of his dreams. If he should "hop" a Southern freight— But no, Annie was waiting for him, and, what was more to the point just then, his boss was waiting for him. He sprang out on the cold oil-cloth by a superhuman effort of will, to find the sensations all that his fancy had led him to expect. A half-hour later he was following his boss over the icy pavements, carrying a charcoal stove and a plumber's kit, through the first big snow-storm of the season. Teddy had no mittens or overcoat, and Bungler's Sunday clothes contained a large percentage of shoddy. His shoes, bought second-hand, leaked as badly as his old ones, though in not such conspicuous places.

"Confound the luck!" growled his boss. "The gate's down."

Teddy, whose thoughts had been upon his aching hands and feet, raised his eyes to see a long, uncoupled freight train grinding through the switch. Even as he gazed, he heard a vicious yell and beheld his ancient enemy, "Biff, the Brakeman," in the act of routing "English Harry" from his comfortable nest in a car of baled hay.

"Whatch yer doin' here?" demanded the "Terror to Tramps."

"Playin' the pianny!" returned the traveller, swinging nimbly from the moving car as he saw the brakeman reach for the black-jack which had dealt him many a headache.

Teddy grinned appreciatively at his old pal's impudence, then sighed. The good old care-free days were over for him. Probably he would never again step on the knuckles of "Biff, the Brakeman," as he had so often in the past to avoid capture on the roof of a freight car. Alas, he no longer had anything in common with his debonair friend of the road. He, "Philadelph' Teddy," was an honest working-man!

The train passed, and with his boss he crossed the tracks to the un-

occupied building on the other side, where the cold had burst the water-pipes. There Teddy fumbled with chilled iron and lead until his aching hands grew numb. He heard the discordant clang of bells, the shriek of whistles, the shrill screech of escaping steam, and it was music to his ears. He heard the rumble of freight trains going south. Clouds of smoke rolled past the windows, and the smell of it came in to torture him. He yearned for the jolt of the bumpers, he was hungry even for the taste of the alkali dust of desert road-beds.

He stepped outside to see a train pass—just one train, he told himself, and just for a moment. "English Harry" was leaning against the building next door.

"If ye can't eat me fer a bloomin' goat!"

"English Harry's" amazement was hard to bear.

"I'm workin'," stammered Teddy bravely, though a deep red rose above his newly trimmed whiskers.

"English Harry" jammed his hands in his sagging pockets, apparently incapable of further speech.

"Goin' South?" There was wistfulness in Teddy's eyes and longing in his voice.

"You bet I am, and I'm goin' just as soon as 'Biff, the Brake-man,' can make up me special train. No bumpers for 'Arry this trip. There's four cars of baled hay on." He added significantly: "She pulls out at seven to-night."

"At seven to-night," Teddy repeated mechanically.

A stream of sulphuric language floated into the outer air.

"Who is that usin' those wicked profanities?" "English Harry's" villainous countenance assumed a shocked expression.

"It's me boss billin' and cooin'," said Teddy grimly, as he moved inside.

"Well, good-by, cully, and will yees give me a chicken 'and-out' if I calls to the bullyvard where yees resides?" "English Harry's" mocking voice followed Teddy down the cold hall.

"Is your brain friz?" demanded the plumber as Teddy bungled his work.

"Annie, Spot's in the garden."

"I don't care." This time the eyes which looked into Townsend Bunger's did not flinch. The source of her courage was in her pocket, in the shape of a fat letter which felt like money. The hired man had left it on his way from Chalk Mound while she was putting dinner on the table. She had no time to read it then, but she knew its contents, and because of what she was sure it contained, she defied Bunger. Bunger raised his hand to strike, and she sprang from him. Safe in the pantry, with the door locked, she tore open the envelope.

Two five-dollar notes dropped from the letter, and Annie, with a cry of triumph, pressed them to her lips. Breathing hard, she smoothed the crumpled paper and read:

dere anie

i kant Work no more i no what you will think but i kant help it
i hav a yelow streak down my back or I wold not give up Now i no i
will always be a Bum i send you all the money i have got. bungers
Cloes makes a good soot to travel in forget Me anie as soon as you
can for i am N. G. .

TEDDY.

"Annie!" called Bunger's angry voice outside the pantry door.
"Yes, sir," a meek voice replied. "I'm coming."



NATURE'S MILLIONAIRE

BY DIXIE WOLCOTT

ME po', honey? Chile alive,
Don't you see dat dar beehive?
See dat cawn-patch by de wood?
'Pone an' honey's pow'ful good!

Pictures? Watch dat sky a while;
Who can beat dat sunset, chile?
See dose pine-trees standin' high,
An' de wil' geese sailin' by?

Music? Listen! Don't you heah
Dem rich notes so sweet an' cleah?
Sho' no singer you could fin'
Could equal Chloe, to my min'.

Tired? Lor', I's tired jes' right
To sleep straight through the lib'-long night.
Yas, my min' from care ez free;
Dere ain't no business troubles me.

Chile, dis l'il cabin hyer,
Wid de childern an' de cheer,
Hol's ez much o' lub an' mirth
Ez any palace on dis earth!

IN THE DAY OF THE CAVE MEN

By Harvey B. Bashore

STRANGE record of a people passed away!

Yet were they to ourselves as men allied,
In God's own image made, though of the earth,
And, though the help of learning's store denied,
Destined with us to an immortal birth.

—VERY.

LONG ago, so long that even a scientist would hardly dare venture a guess as to the date, a man clad with only a wild beast's skin about his loins was sitting at the mouth of a cave in one of the rocky highlands in what is now southern France. He was scratching with a sharp flint on the fragment of an ivory tusk—perhaps picturing for some youthful admirers adventures through which he had passed or animals he had slain. That ivory chip was stored away as a treasure—to be lost and forgotten after the cave man's death.

This was when the world was young. The cave men had their day, and passed out of view. Other races appeared. New men, new animals, new things, and new thoughts came into being. Roman, Gaul, and Frank followed one another. Dark days hung over Europe. But the Star of Bethlehem was rising in the East, and a new hope took hold of the hearts of men.

Stirring times were these, and the centuries that followed, but through it all the old cave remained the same, hiding the relic in its bosom, until one day a man named Lartet, digging in the cavern floor, found it. On it was scratched a very fair representation of the hairy elephant—probably at once the oldest picture and the oldest human record in existence.

We know the cave man was a faithful workman, for the melting ice-fields of Siberia have yielded a perfect specimen of this extinct mammal, and the palæolithic picture is a true copy. Not only has this ancient sculptor given us a sample of the earliest art, but he has left

us—more valuable than all—a historical record of his time, for this rude picture is simply a page from the cave man's history, which, translated into twentieth century English, says: "Men, thinking men, were contemporaneous with the hairy elephant."

No record that any of human kind have ever left is half so ancient as this. The oldest Egyptian papyrus is a thing of yesterday compared to this palæolithic sculpture. While the cave man was living in Europe, the valley of the Nile was yet only a wild waste. Egypt was not yet Egypt, and civilization as we know it had scarcely made a beginning.

What is true of this picture of the mammoth is true of the rest of these palæolithic etchings, most of which have been found in the La Madelaine caves on the Dordogne. Some are scratched on fragments of slate, some on ivory, and some on the walls of the caverns. One picture shows a naked man hurling a spear at an animal which any school-boy would judge to be a horse. In palæolithic times we know that the horse, although much smaller than now, still retained the features of the present, for the bones of the primitive horse have been found in the refuse heaps of the cave man's home—a fact which indicates that the animal was perhaps used for food.



A cave on the borders of Derbyshire in England has yielded a fragment of bone on which are engraved parts of a horse which are similar to the specimens from France, suggesting, as Sir John Evans has said, "some bond of union or identity of descent between the early troglodytes whose habitations were geologically so widely separated the one from the other."

Although the cave men of France could have crossed to Britain on dry land—for England was only a peninsula jutting out from the continent—intercourse over such distances was probably not frequent: man was so poorly armed, and the forest beasts so savage and powerful, that human kind in their travels took much to the tree-tops, and this of necessity made progress slow and arduous.

From these same Madelaine caves there is a picture showing a creeping hunter in the act of throwing his spear at a wild ox—an animal very similar to the ox of our own time, and in fact its ancestor.

In yet another group of prehistoric etchings are the well-known figures of reindeer. Two of them are walking and three are lying down, probably the sculptor's idea of illustrating captured ones. Reindeer now cling to the Arctic Circle, but in the cave man's day the conditions of nature in southern France had changed, and the frozen North had crept slowly southward, driving before it the animals that

loved the snow and ice. Indeed, the southern limit of the boundless ice-fields reached almost to the northern border of France; but our cave men on the banks of the Dordogne had no need to travel so far to come to ice mountains, for the local glaciers of the Auvergne lay about the head-waters of the Dordogne, and caused mighty floods to sweep through that river. Snow and ice were everywhere on the highlands, and in the summer vast, swollen rivers flowed thence to the sea.

In the uplands reindeer were feeding. Droves of small wild horses frequented the meadows and plains, an easy and harmless prey for spear-armed man. The cave man, as his pictured legend tells, had not yet a bow and arrow, and archæology, so far as is known, bears witness to the truth of the record.

Among the smaller animals of the time was the wolverine, or the glutton, as it is commonly called—the queerest animal that has ever existed. In the thousands of centuries since the cave man's time, it has made no change and no progress. The bones found in the refuse-heap before these palæolithic caves are precisely the same in size and form as are the bones of the animal to-day. It is the only living thing which furnishes an exception to the great laws of evolution.



Now and then a troop of mammoth wander into view; but, in spite of their huge size (the mammoth was undoubtedly the greatest mass of flesh that man ever saw), they were as harmless as, perhaps more so than, their prototype, the elephant of the present. The woolly-haired rhinoceros, adapted to a cold climate, visited at times the banks of the greater streams, but, like the huge elephant, it caused little dread to man. Ordinarily it was dull and peaceful, yet when aroused it became a fearful opponent on account of its ponderous strength.

The hippopotamus, though apparently not having the woolly covering fitting it for a cold climate, made its appearance in the rivers where our cave men lived. "Swimming northward in summer from North African rivers, such as the Nile," says Lyell, "they visited the shores and islands all along the Mediterranean. Here and there they may have landed to graze and browse, tarrying awhile, and afterward continuing their course northward. Others may have swum in a few summer days from rivers in the south of Spain or France to the Somme, Thames, or Severn, making timely retreat to the South before the snow and ice set in."

The cave bear and the giant sabre-tooth tiger—whose canine ten inches in length has been found—at times ranged near man's abode, and then death-like stillness settled over the place, for the tiger was king of beasts. Man hid away in his cave, and the great stone was

rolled before its mouth, for man was not yet lord of creation. Such was the wild life of this wild age.

That the climate was mild and equable the cave man has told us in his record by picturing only naked men. Then again there was a mingling of northern and southern plants and animals, which could be accounted for only by a temperate climate. "Southern species—ash, poplar, sycamore, fig, judas-tree, laurel, and the like—overspread all the low ground of France, as far north at least as Paris. It was under such conditions that the elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotami, and the vast herds of temperate cervine and bovine species ranged over Europe, from the shores of the Mediterranean up to the latitude of Yorkshire, and probably even farther north, and from the borders of Asia to the western ocean. Despite the presence of the numerous fierce carnivora—lions, hyenas, tigers, and others—Europe at that time, with its shady forests, its laurel-margined streams, its broad and deep-flowing rivers, a country in every way suited to the needs of a race of hunters and fishers, "must have been no unpleasant habitation for palæolithic man."

The work of these cave folk, with their rude rock pictures and their weapons of stone, has been a large factor in forming the race and making us what we are. There were no more momentous days in the world's history than those early times when stone was the only weapon. Men were few, and individual acts counted more than to-day. Stone weapons shaped the destiny of the world as much, in their order, as do the deadlier weapons of the present.



One would hardly credit the statement that Anglo-Saxon supremacy once rested on the rude weapons of such savage times. Yet such is the tale that archæology tells. A fierce invading tribe from the East once sought the green fields which border the great North Sea. Those who dwelt there, the descendants of an earlier conquest, were strong, but the later invaders were stronger and carried the day. There they lived, on the land they had gained, brave and sturdy and free. Centuries pass, and we recognize them as the hardy Saxons, who have played so great a part in the world's history.

Had those raiders failed in their conquest, how different might have been the course of human life! For these battles on the wild waste of Sleswick and the sand flats of Holstein gave our Saxon forefathers a foothold in the West—a foothold that has made the Saxon the ruler of the world; and the lessons they learned by the bleak shores of the North Sea have brought freedom to men and honor to women for the countless generations that have followed.

“WOMAN DISPOSES”

WHEREIN THE BASIS OF MAN'S RULE ONCE
MORE BECOMES APPARENT

By *George Allan England*

Author of “The Firebrand,” etc.



I.

GIDEON HOLT tossed the reins over his fat mare's back and clambered ponderously down from the Concord wagon. He seemed perturbed at the forgetfulness which had permitted him to start without his nosegay.

“Sho'! That would n't *never* do!” he mumbled as he unlatched the wicket of his flower-garden and passed beneath the tangle of Virginia creepers which festooned the arch above it.

He glanced uncertainly around the little space enclosed by cedar-hedges; eyed the neat buds with perplexity.

“Ain't much left to pick an' choose from, that's a fact,” judged Gideon. “Sweet-willums, petunys, fros'-flowers, an' golden-rod—hmmm!” Painstakingly he culled the best of his scant array, joined thereto some grasses, and by surplus of care added a few scarlet and yellow leaves from the rock-maple which overbent the garden. All these he bound together, clumsily enough, with a tag-end of cotton string.

He turned the bouquet from side to side, picked and patted it into symmetry, viewed the finished work with real admiration.

“Thar!” he opined at length, “I cal'late that ain't *too* bad, considerin' the time o' year.” Then, holding the posy in his thick hand, he came back slowly to the wagon.

“Gideon! *Gid-eon!* Here, you've fergot the umberel! You better take it! Looks like it'd make out to rain 'fore you git back.”

The man, with a patience that long years had ground into him, turned at the summons and gazed mild-eyed at his tart sister in the porch. She was fourteen years his senior, shrivelled and wan, with keen-snapping eyes and a colorless wisp of hair. Bent almost double with rheumatic age, she stood there on the door-rock; one hand gripped the knotty stave on which she hobbled, while the other waved at him the family “umberel.”

At sight of her, his life-tyrant and controlling genius, he sighed resignedly and laid his flowers on the wagon-seat.

“ Comin’! Comin’!” he made answer, a new quiver as almost of defiance in his voice.

When the umbrella lay in his grasp,

“ *Well?* ” snapped the old woman sharply.

“ Well—what? ”

She bent her brows on him in dawning wonder.

“ You gone, Gid? ’Thout tellin’ on me where? ”

Gideon shifted his feet uneasily among the plantain-leaves and passed a hand up over his fresh-combed hair, then stroked his curling and grayish beard.

“ What of it? ” he parried. “ ’Tain’t no gret kill-or-cure if I ride down t’ the village ’thout reportin’ on it, hey? ”

“ Down t’ the village!” she mocked him. “ Village, *humph!* You can’t come no village on *me!* It’s down Pinhook-way you’re goin’—don’t you deny it now, don’t you dare! *I know—*”

“ Now, now, Minervy!” he tried to soothe her; but she would none of his explanations.

“ *I know that’s suthin’ in the wind, Gid Holt! You ain’t slicked up Kit, an’ washed th’ wagon, an’ combed yer hair, put on yer army coat an’ hat an’ G. A. R. medal, jest to go down t’ the village! No, ner picked a hundful o’ flowers, nuther—few as we got left! I know you men from Alphy to Omegy, that’s what—low, deceitful crutters, every one! Thank th’ good Lord I never had one ’round to boss *me!* ”*

Her voice rasped shrill on the golden air of that late September day. Gideon’s eyes twinkled almost into a smile, despite his keen embarrassment.

“ Well,” he interpolated in his sister’s wheezing pause for breath—“ well, I ain’t told no lie, even ef I be headed fer Pinhook. Haf t’ go through the village t’ git thar, don’t I? ”

The old woman glowered malignantly, and tapped the rock with her stave.

“ Ha! So y’ *be* goin’ to Pinhook, be you? To Drusilly Bowker’s—th’ huzzy! ”

“ Minervy! ”

“ Don’t you ‘Minervy’ me, Gid Holt! *I know what’s doin’! I know now th’ meanin’ o’ that ’ar letter you—*”

“ What letter? How’d you know I sent a letter? ” The twinkle had all faded from Gideon’s eyes; his voice had hardened.

“ Oh, I know more’n what you think fer. Trouble enough I had, too, lame as I be, t’ peg ’way out thar to th’ box, arter you’d mailed it an’ had went t’ wuk! Thought y’ was sly, hey, an’ cunnin’? But I got two tricks t’ your one—y’ can’t come it over *me!* ”

Only shortness of breath interrupted the tirade.

"Who wants to come it over you, Minervy?" Gideon essayed to reason with her. "You call it comin' tricks over you ef I——"

"Ef you go gaddin' and courtin', wastin' good time what oughta be put right in on th' place? Yes, I do! You 'd oughta be 'shamed, Gid Holt—would be, too, ef they was any shame *to yuh!* Which thar ain't, not so much 's a single skrid. 'Specially you, at your time o' life, with one good wife buried up yender on th' hill! An' that Drusilly all o' forty, ef she 's a day—an' *her* not a widder these two years back! Shame on yuh, shame!"

"I cal'late I'm old enough t' know my own mind, Minervy!" the man retorted, finally stirred to dull anger. Only under dire provocation had he ever revolted from his sister's domineering; now, he felt, the time was ripe for self-assertion. "I cal'late ef——"

"Stop! You stop right thar! You bring that mizzable pryin' crutter here, t' snoop an' skive 'round into my affairs an' try to run me, an' out o' this house I go, down to th' County Farm—an' *then* mebbe thar won't be some folks a-talkin'! Yer life won't be wuth livin', that 's what—yours an' hers—not ef I ain't fergot my gift o' gab! You jest try it on, Gid Holt, an' see what happens!"

The old woman brandished her stick menacingly as she shambled into the house.

"What 's more, ye mutton-head," her Parthian shot flung at him, "Drusilly won't *hev* ye, no, ner nubuddy as short on fer looks as *you* be!"

The door shivered to. Gideon stood there alone in his perplexity and anger. A moment he remained undecided; then with a sudden out-thrusting of the bearded lip, oddly like a pout, he turned and lagged toward the browsing gray mare.

He climbed into the wagon, reached over and gathered up the reins.

"Gid-dap!"

As the wagon swayed and jounced down into the main road—the road to Pinhook—sister Minerva, glaring out the front window, shook a claw-fist after her wayward brother. But Gideon did not see her. His gaze wandered up at the hazy autumn sky, filmed with delicate cloud, then swept away over the stretches of frost-painted hill, and rested finally on the close-wrapped little bunch of flowers on the 'seat beside him.

II.

HE found Drusilla up to her elbows in a frothy wash-tub, her kindly face flushed with heat and exercise.

"Why, good land o' Goshen! That you, Gid Holt?" she exclaimed at sight of him. "I vowny you 're th' last pusson in th' world I

cal'lated t' see to-day. Go right in th' front room an' set. I'll be in jest as quick's I git this here mess o' clothes on t' bile.”

Gideon, horribly abashed by this matter-of-fact reception which beyond hope shattered his every plan, balanced upon the sill quite at a loss. He had expected to find Drusilla “all togged up” and waiting for him, hoped even she might manifest confusion. Alas, not so; and it was he who now stood there confused. He twiddled the wilting bouquet between his heavy fingers, blinked at Drusilla through the steam, then at last made out to stammer:

“Ye got—did n't ye git my letter? Th' one what said I'd be down Friday aft'noon?”

Drusilla straightened her back and wrung down the soapy water from her arms. Comely and strong she looked at him, a little quizzical smile in her honest eyes which twinkled behind silver-bowed spectacles.

“Dear me suz!” she questioned in turn, “is it Friday a'ready? I was thinkin' all th' time 't was only Thursday—wa'n't expectin' on ye till termorrer! That's where I dulled, ain't it?” She dried the moisture from her brows with a quick dab of her uprolled sleeve. “Well, no harm done,” she pursued. “Go right inside—I'll be thar jest's quick as I possibly kin!”

Gideon sought for words, but none came. Stroking his beard with the hesitant uncertainty which characterized him, he withdrew to the green-shuttered obscurity of the front room.

There presently Drusilla joined him, in that place of crayon enlargements, family albums, and macramé tidies.

“Sakes alive!” she exclaimed, “settin' here in th' dark? Why did n't ye open th' blinds? I cal'late half an hour's sun won't fade th' carpet none t' speak of!”

And she flung the shutters energetically outward, letting in a glory of western light. Gideon winked uneasily as the shafts of level radiance smote his eyes. A team, rattling past the house, flung up a dust-cloud through which the rays beamed redly. In the side yard Drusilla's hens were gossiping with little throaty chirrups as they leisurely decimated the community of grasshoppers. Everything seemed hopelessly unpropitious to Gideon, quite different from his oft-pictured anticipation of the event. Nervously he took up his bouquet from the parlor what-not, as Drusilla sat down comfortably in the squeaky rocker; he opened his mouth to speak, closed it, shifted his feet on the yellow ingrain.

“Well?” said Drusilla, smiling upon him.

“I—I come to—I—it looks some like rain, don't it?” stammered Gideon.

“Hope so,” she assented cheerfully. “Need it bad enough, goodness knows!” She folded her hands, waited, observed him.

Gid felt a certain uncomfortable warmth mounting to the roots of his long, grizzled hair. He had always thought himself rather a sizable man, especially when clad in his army-coat, with the little bronze medal pinned to his breast; but now he was shrinking, dwindling. His heart throbbed painfully and his feet would not be still.

"I—I was thinkin'," he began again, getting his second wind—"thinkin' how—as—if you didn't mind——"

"See here, Gid Holt," Drusilla interrupted him, "did you come here t' *perpose*?"

Gid's brow gemmed itself with dew and his jaws twitched; his beard wobbled unsteadily. He stared appealingly at Drusilla.

"Because ef you *did*, I'd like——"

"T' *hev* me?" he blurted spasmodically, in a supreme effort, dropping the bouquet from nerveless fingers.

Drusilla laughed merrily, an enheartening laugh. Gid cackled, too, with a quick unstringing of nerves. "T' *hev* me?" he repeated.

"Good lan', don't go so fast!" she admonished him. "Thar's more'n a little million o' things t' be considered. Fust place——" She paused judicially.

Gideon waited, his romantic plan and long-reflected speech shattered beyond hope, swept into oblivion; but nevertheless immeasurably relieved now that Rubicon lay behind him. He swabbed his forehead with a large cotton handkerchief. Disappointment blended with a supreme thankfulness that after all Drusilla had not thrown herself upon his medal and sobbed out an inarticulate "Yes!" He felt (now that the matter really was to be discussed) returning strength, and waited eagerly for her analysis. It was not long in coming.

"Fust place," Drusilla resumed, looking him steadily in the eye, "thar's this here farm t' be considered. Good likely farm it is, too—cuts eighteen ton o' hay, wood-lot, runnin' water in th' kitchen, good set o' buildin's, all underpinned with split stun——"

"I know all that," interposed Gideon eagerly, "but you don't git no cash outa it—nubbut produce! An' *my* place——"

"Well? Kinda rocky an' run out, ain't it?"

"Mebbe 't is, but thar ain't no better orchard in th' State o' Maine. Rosberries, too—half an acre. Six cows—two 'll come in nex' May. Then thar's my sheep. Finest stock in th' county, I know! Brung all th' way from Michigan. Nothin' like 'em 'round here."

"Seems like I heerd tell they had n't done over 'n above well?" she questioned.

"Well, 't is a fact I ain't had but a couple o' ewes sence I started with 'em, but I'm hopin'—mebbe nex' spring 'll bring a change."

"Y' ain't done much more 'n break even with th' sheep, have ye?" Drusilla pinned him down.

“ Well, no. However, I got twelve Belgian hares, from genoine pedigree stock—thar’s big money in hares, give ’em time enough—an’ then, too, thar’s my ginseng gardin. Ginseng’s pow’ful good crop, once y’ git it goin’. Five dollars a poun’, er more, an’——”

“ Take it by-an’-large, you’ve put in more money on th’ Belgians an’ ginseng than what ye’ve took out, ain’t ye? ”

“ Mebbe—so fur,” Gideon parried, “ but——”

“ Well, that ain’t *all* that’s t’ be thought of,” she blocked him. “ Thar’s another thing. Suthin’ more serious. I cal’late you know what I mean? It’s yer—yer——”

“ My pension, y’ mean? Oh, that’s all safe an’ sartain, twelve dollars a month, long’s I live, an’——”

“ Lawsee, no! I wa’n’t thinkin’ o’ that, jest now, though Lord knows it’s wuth considerin’. What I was comin’ at is yer sister, Minervy. How ’bout *her*? ”

“ Why, what ’bout Minervy? What’s she got t’ do with it? ” Gid’s voice tried to brazen out the sudden dread in his soul.

“ Lots! ” Drusilla said decisively. “ Everythin’! Ef I accept ye, Gid, an’ go up on Red Hill t’ live, how’s her an’ me to jibe? You know she’s gittin’ putty well ’long in years, an’ folks says she’s almighty sot in her ways, pernickety as all git-out. Mind you, I’d be willin’ t’ make all due an’ proper ’lowances fer Minervy; but you’ve knowed me long enough to un’stand jest how I feel ’bout bein’ bossed ’round from pillar t’ post an’ not call my soul my own. So it looks to me like——”

“ Oh, *she* ’ll be all right—nice as pie, wunst y’ git used t’ her ways an’ all,” pleaded Gideon, sick at heart; but his tone betrayed him.

“ Now, Gid, you an’ me’s ben friends too long fer any deceptions. I would n’t hurt yer feelin’s fer th’ world. Like ye first-rate, Gid—ain’t a better man livin’ than you. Everybody says so—good, kind-hearted man, church-member, an’ in th’ Grange, too. Not a particle o’ trouble about *you*. An’ th’ farm’s prob’ly all right, too. But Minervy—I dunno, I snum, I don’t! Might be some putty hard times an’ feelin’s thar, Gid? What d’ ye say? ”

Gideon made no reply, but cast his eyes carpetward. One would have said unusual moisture trembled there.

“ I tell ye what you do,” Drusilla went on, quite gently, after a little pause. “ You fix things all right with Minervy, so’s there won’t be no rookus, an’ then—well—it’ll be time enough then t’ talk over the rest of it. Und’stand? ”

“ An’ if I can’t make her see it right, what then? ” quavered Gideon.

“ No man that lets his sister run him has any call to s’pose he can run a wife,” she answered, smiling. “ We all needs runnin’ more or less, us women-folks doos. The *how* of it is fer *you* t’ settle.”

" Good-by, Drusy," said Gideon; and there came subtle undertones into his voice. " You need n't be a mite supprised t' see me back here any day. But till I come, good-by!"

She gave him her hand, still warm and moist from the wash-tub, and for a moment in the sunlit old parlor they looked each other full in the eyes. Then Gideon blundered out.

After he was gone, after Drusilla had watched him quite around the leafy bend below the meeting-house, she went back into the parlor to close the blinds. Her housewifely eye caught the bouquet lying where Gideon had dropped it.

She picked it up, held it for a moment in her hand. Then, suddenly, she crushed the wilted posies to her mouth. There were tears on the fading frost-flowers, the golden-rod and autumn leaves.

III.

" IT's all settled," announced Gid to his sister tactfully. " All fixed an' finished, an' there ain't no use a-hollerin'. I cal'late you 've wore the pants long enough—*my* turn now!"

He tramped in from the entry, flung his army-hat on the sofa, and sank heavily into the squeaking rocker.

" Well? Anythin' to offer?"

The old woman did not answer, but her lantern-jaw quivered a mite and one could have suspected just a tinge of color on the sodden cheeks. Her eyes bored right through Gideon—a silent, awful answer to his bravado.

" Reckon no man what lets his sister run him has any call to count on bein' able t' run a wife!" he blustered glibly, albeit in no very resolute voice. " Women folks all needs runnin', more er less."

He pursed his bearded lips into a jerky little whistle, picked up from the table an old copy of the *Farmer's Weekly Friend*, and began reading it—upside down.

Silence.

" *Well?*" he blurted aggressively, after a couple of minutes.

" Well, what?" retorted the old woman, drawn despite her resolution into the tempting fray. " Well—*what?*"

" Goin' to do anythin' about it?"

" 'Bout what?"

" 'Bout Drusilla comin' here!"

" She ain't comin'."

" *I say she is!*"

Another silence—longer this time. The old woman's corded hands twitched nervously in her lap, her fingers picking at the coarse patched apron. Gid's rocker complained as he teetered back and forth.

“ Comin’! Next week!” he clinched the amazing rebellion.

No answer. Minerva simply sat there, across the living-room table from her brother, and looked at him. In the window the canary-bird was flicking bits of bird-seed husk out through the bars of his cage onto the potted plants. From the kitchen bubbled the sound of supper cooking. Everything in the old house bespoke peace, tranquillity—save those searching old black eyes that burned so disconcertingly.

Gideon, his well-planned attack quite upset by this ominous passivity, made great show of getting interested in the inverted newspaper; a faint smile curved his sister’s tight-pressed lips. The tension of the conflict rose, till Gideon snapped it with:

“ You won’t say nothin’ to her—nothin’ ugly, hey?”

“ No.”

“ Ner you won’t——”

“ That ’ll do, now, fer questions! I cal’late what I ’ll do or won’t do ain’t no business o’ yourn. Ner hers, nuther. But you need n’t worry—I won’t bother ye—there ’ll be no jawin’. Jawin’? Huh! Would n’t lower myself t’ jaw with *her!* ”

“ Now, now, that ’ll do!” Gid’s energies waxed again, with the tangible prospect of defending Drusilla—anything save that awful silence and mystery. “ Jest so you don’t git after her, I reckon things will be all right. And one thing more, Minervy, speakin’ about the County Farm——”

“ Who ’s *speakin’* about it?”

“ The County Farm,” he hastened on, rising from the rocker—“ they work a body dretful hard down thar, they say, an’ the livin’ ’s poorer ’n skimmed whey! But o’ course you ’re free t’ go any time. Free.”

“ Don’t you fret none about that—I got too much sense to let th’ like o’ *her* drive me to no County Farm. Would n’t give her th’ satisfaction o’ crowin’ over me; don’t fret.”

“ Cold b’iled potatoes, po’k, and het-over tea, that ’s ’bout all,” Gid irrelevantly concluded. “ An’ she ’s comin’—next week.”

He bungled from the room without another look at his congealed sister, unhooked his old straw hat from its peg, and in passably good order retreated by a forced march to the fortress of the barn, slamming behind him with quite unnecessary force the woodshed door.

“ Reckon I ’ve done it, anyhow!” he jubilated, when the gloomy stronghold sheltered him. He laughed almost a boyish laugh and even flung a clumsy little dance-step. “ Done it, at last, by Gary! Goin’ t’ run things *myself*, arter this! Made her back down—made her promise not t’ raise no rookus, same as Drusilly tole me to. No more petticoat-rule fer mine! Hooray! This beats Gettysburg, durned ef it *don’t!* ”

IV.

So they were married, Drusilla and Gideon, on the strength of Gideon's promise that all would be well. Drusilla wanted to delay; but Gid, fearful lest his upper hand of Minervy might not persist, urged with such tireless cajoleries that Drusy gave in "to git shet o' him," and let him speak to Elder Hanford. The Elder made them one, in the stuffy little best-room of his parsonage—Gid dressed in his bravest soldier-togs, Drusilla clad in her green cotton surah, "most as good's silk, an' so shiny it's a doubt if anybody'd ever reckonize the diff'rence."

Their wedding-journey was a ride in Gideon's newly-washed buggy from the parsonage to the lonely hill-farm, whither the day before Gid had carefully removed all Drusilla's lares and penates. The hazy morning sun painted the woods in vague, soft browns and umbers, picked out by blazing maples here and there. Purple shadows nestled along the hillsides. The air nipped frostily, yet with no unkind touch. And through the funeral splendor of the year drove Romance behind a spavined nag, discussing what to have for dinner.

"Killed two o' my best Belgians yestiddy," remarked Gid, with prime satisfaction, "an' fat uns they was, too. Then there's new pertatoes, cabbage, an' blueberry-pickles an'——"

He rambled on and on, describing with infinite gusto the resources of his larder.

"What does Minervy 'specially hanker for?" inquired the bride. Not all Gid's reassurances had quite calmed her forethought.

"Oh, a good nice cut o' Belgian, with baked pertatoes in th' skin, an' gravy, an' all the other chicken-fixin's, suits her as good's anythin' *kin*—I mean," he floundered, trying to correct himself but only miring deeper—"I mean—it don't reely make no diff'rence 't all. Thar won't be one mite o' trouble, nohow, not even ef you was jest to stodge up bread an' water. You'll see! I ain't fergot *yet* what you tole me 'bout women-folk likin' to be run."

Drusilla asked no more, but an anxious line drew itself in her brow; it lasted only a moment, and cleared with her smile as she glanced at Gideon. He, poor man, seemed very, very nervous, to judge from the twitching of his reins, the frequent stroking of his beard.

His nervousness was not ill-founded. When they drove up into the door-yard of the farm no welcoming sister stood upon the sill with outstretched hands. No, on the porch reposed a little tin trunk, and on the trunk sat a grim, stony figure—a figure clad in antique finery of jet and plush mantilla, a figure with cold, impassive eyes and hard-set face.

Gid's heart turned to water; his legs trembled so that he could

hardly clamber down out of the buggy and help Drusilla alight. What was going to happen? Could it be possible, after all he had said about the hard work, the boiled potatoes and salt pork and “het-over” tea, that Minervy was really starting for the County Farm? After all she had boasted about not being driven out? Impossible! And yet—if not there, then whither? Almost an unreasoning panic seized him in face of this unknown contingency; he turned quite pale under his tan.

“You—you—I guess I better put th’ mare right in the barn,” he stammered feebly. His eyes shifted about more apprehensively than any Belgian hare’s; he licked his dry lips with a tremulous tongue. “You better—go right in, Drusy. Go in an’ git ’quainted—make yerself right to hum! Min—Minervy! Here’s Drusilly—here we both be at last—he! he!—weddin’ couple, spry as kittens—he! he! he!”

The sprightly words jangled in shocking discord with his sepulchral tones.

“Make self—home—mare—barn!” he stuttered, as with all possible haste he led the nag away. How grateful, how infinitely comforting, was the shelter of his barn!

“Oh, Lord,” he breathed with real devoutness, rubbing his deep-lined brow with a hand that shook—“oh, Lord, I thank Thee fer Thy many blessin’s this day—petic’larly, Lord, fer this here barn o’ mine!”

V.

DRUSILLA, thus cravenly deserted by her man, looked puzzled for a moment, then, as Gid disappeared from view, smiled an odd little smile and with a lively glint in her eyes advanced toward the porch.

Minervy stiffened an indignant back-bone, crossed her hands primly in their lisle-thread mitts, and stared straight ahead.

Then a very singular thing happened. For Drusilla came on up the steps, smiling good-humoredly, bent beside the old woman and kissed her on the cheek—none of your little peck-kisses, but a good solid smack that tingled.

“Good-by,” said she regretfully. “I’m mighty sorry t’ have you go. Hope it’ll be so you can visit us reel often—any time you’re a mind to.”

Then she disappeared in the house.

Minervy gasped and choked. Blank astonishment battled with a sudden white rage, a rage that tore and blinded. Her hands clenched till the knuckle-bones all but started through the harsh skin. One moment a frantic impulse gripped her to hobble into the house after this impertinent hussy (oh, she was spry enough for that!) and give her ten good claw-marks as a keepsake; but her obstinate resolve to depart in silence swept this new passion aside, and she settled back on

the tin trunk. Her jaw clamped itself grim as death. Her foot went tap-tap-tapping on the floor-boards of the porch.

Inside the house, Drusilla was doing some swift thinking.

"Ef Minervy's reely goin' away, somebody's got t' take her trunk. Who is it? Nobody ever doos such work but Del Cates an' Freme Morse. Del he's out to Greenwood this week, teamin' for Jowett. That leaves Freme. An' Freme's got a telefoam."

Without even laying aside her hat and coat, she passed through the sitting-room into the kitchen, where she knew the telephone was. Muffling the bell with her hand, she rang Morse's call twice, thrice, then took down the receiver. When she hung it up, five minutes later, a smile of singular satisfaction brightened her comely face.

"Dretful handy things, now, ain't they?" she mused. "Most astonishing' how folks can hear 'way down t' the village, even when you don't much more'n whisper! Now, lemme see. . . I'll jest carry out a cushion fer Minervy to set on, seein' as she's goin' to have the wait of her life, an' *then* I'll get to wuk on dinner!"

The meal was well under way, the comfortable kitchen full of steam and busy cheer and sunlight, when at length Gideon, his every possible task complete, peered hesitantly in.

"What—what's——?" he began, but Drusy with finger to lips cautioned his silence.

"Not a word to her—jest leave *me* manage!" she commanded, flinging open the oven-door to inspect the sizzling Belgians.

The odor of these, her favorite dish, savory, tempting, wafted out to the tired old woman where she sat on her tin trunk, her eyes straining wearily down the road, where still no Freeman Morse appeared. At her feet lay Drusilla's proffered cushion, where she had spurned it with silent vehemence. The sight of it only accentuated the hardness of her trunk—and very, very hard indeed the trunk was getting! It made her lame back ache terrifically. In vain she tried to hold herself primly, as at first; despite every effort she drooped, sagged, crumpled together—and that ache had now become a torment almost unbearable.

The sound of silver jingling, dishes clattering busily, somehow made her feel infinitely lonesome and miserable and neglected. That this house, her home, could go right on without her, suddenly dawned with terrifying clearness to her mental vision. But she—could she go right on without *it*?

"Don't care—won't give in, no matter *what* they do!" she reaffirmed for the twentieth time; and, worst of all, they apparently entertained no idea of doing anything, save eat, drink, and be merry—while she ached and starved and suffered. She tried to fan her anger

into blaze once more, but anger-fires burn low on hunger and pain. Involuntarily she sniffed the cookery within.

"I won't give in! I *won't!* I'll die first! Oh, land o' livin', why don't Freme show up?"

Suddenly she was very much surprised, shocked even, to find hot tears starting to her eyes—eyes that for so very long had felt no tears. They burned her, even as that kiss on her cheek burned, for kisses had been rarer than tears with her.

She fumbled from her black alpaca a coarse cotton handkerchief and fiercely dabbed her eyes, striving to keep back the tears that would not stop, but now flowed only faster, faster, faster.

Then, quite suddenly—the deluge, with sobs, hiccoughs, strange chokings and wails of grief, passion, surrender—years of crying, all suppressed, now bursting every bound.

When Minervy found herself again, she was being mothered in Drusilla's strong arms like a child.

"There, there, there!" Drusy soothed the storm-wracked old body, caressing the crooked back with the maternal pats that no man living can ever imitate. "There, there, it's all right now! Everythin's all right—all over an' fergot! Come right in t' dinner, or it'll be all burnt on. Your place is all set an' waitin'. Gid, you lug that there trunk up-stairs!"

She circled Minervy's waist and drew her gently, strongly, into the house.

Gid, winking pretty hard, nevertheless thrust his thumbs ecstatically into the arm-holes of his waistcoat and wagged his head triumphantly from side to side.

"Ain't that a fact?" exulted he. "Now, *ain't* that percisely what I allus said, that women-folks has jest plumb natchally *got t'* be run?"



FAME'S CROWN

BY FRANCIS MARQUETTE

THE lark before his low-hung nest
 Will shake the star-dust from his wing;
 Love, I lay by this golden thing
 Lest I seem strange unto thy breast.

MISS CLUNY OF CARTMEL

By Will Levington Comfort

Author of "The Viper," "Lady Thoroughbred, Kentuckian," etc.

THERE had n't been the slightest chance to meet her in all the long day riding west from Chicago. She had been sitting for hours in that drowse of fatigue which comes to those who have travelled long, whose end is still far, and for whom passing time has ceased to have any particular emotions. The latest Omaha papers had slipped to the floor, an orange and a box of candy lay untouched upon the window ledge, and an unopened book in her lap. The wide gray eyes, which had hung like burrs to Cadogan's consciousness, since the morning were turned out upon the Nebraskan levels now dimmed in falling dusk.

The last call for dinner was announced by the steward. She arose and Cadogan followed, having awaited the moment. The richest fortune of his life turned up. Passengers from the tourist-section had filled the diner, save one small table for two. The steward caught Cadogan's eye, seated the lady, then pulled out the chair opposite for the man behind her. All was well. She accepted the situation cheerfully, and did n't appear too startled, when he said connectedly:

"It has been a rather long day, but travelling is always long."

"If it were n't ruinous to the eyes to read at any length, I should n't mind," she replied.

Similar gushes from the beds of thought endured until their orders were served. Meanwhile he had offered his card, and she had told him her name—Miss Cluny—and that she was returning from the East to spend the summer at home on her father's ranch, ten miles north of Cartmel, Idaho.

"Certainly this is a pretty ending for a blue day," he remarked abruptly, when the darky had retired.

She glanced out of the window, where Nebraska and Night blended in an impenetrable harmony.

"I mean the privilege of passing salt and mustard to a civilized lady," he added.

The gray eyes regarded him keenly. The words had a trifling sound, but there was something genuine and reliable about Cadogan's face which kept down any tension. Unquestionably their acquaintance

prospered. Between nine and ten there was a twenty-minute stop at a certain little town, wide open to the sky, and the pair strolled up and down the platform together.

The evening passed with heartless speed. The next day they talked and read aloud. The steward held the little table in the diner against any odds. Hours scarcely registered themselves in their passing sweep, and night descended like an avalanche. Cartmel was due to be reached at midnight. Her father would be at the train. To Cadogan, all lightness and humor was gone from the episode. She had been to him a constant unfolding of the dear and the beautiful. She had shown him so far not a single limitation of brain and heart. His whole life panted for more of her and yet more. He was a vessel filled with rising agonies, as the night darkened, and the train sped on. Beyond Cartmel was Chaos.

She had suffered him to wait with her until the last. Cadogan had become breathless, tongue-haunted, a boy in a grappling romance, while the woman mellowed and sweetened. She raised the shade to glance out, as the train slackened for Cartmel. Outside was moonlight and hills. She arose.

"Some time, perhaps, we'll meet again, Mr. Cadogan——"

All the other passengers in the coach were berthed. The porter was forward opening the vestibule. . . . Her face wavered before his enchanted eyes. . . . It was not of his own volition at all. The kiss happened. It left him as one flung into space with a thrill of burning upon his lips. . . . She descended to the platform alone—into the arms of a huge, bearded stranger, who lifted her into a carriage and drove away. Cadogan was back in the dimly-lit smoking compartment. Varied snorings reached him from behind, until the train started and silenced all other sounds. . . . Hours afterwards, in the cool gray light, Cadogan was still sitting there.

Two days later, he gave up the project which had brought him to the coast—that of a voyage to Japan and Beyond—and bought a return ticket to Cartmel, Idaho, the end of the world, in his sight, where east met west. He was going back vaguely "to be near" the woman, which is a fashion of ordinary males extraordinarily bewitched. On the third day following in the town Cadogan stepped up to the bearded man who had met the girl at the train. He asked for work on the ranch. It struck the younger man that the other looked at him for the fraction of a second with a sort of amused, startled expression.

"Why, yes," said Cluny; "I'm short-handed. Everybody is up in this country this time of year. But you don't look nor wear clothes like a man who has ridden herd much."

"I have n't," said Cadogan, "but I can sit a horse." Cadogan was thinking, as he answered, that the girl had got her wide gray eyes from

this huge Westerner. Cluny's were harder, as a man's eyes should be, a trifle deeper-set than the years, but straight and fine, fearless and penetrating—eyes that no one with a clean mind need falter before.

They drove back to the ranch, behind a team of fast bay ponies. The road rolled down into a valley, lit with glorious afternoon light. There was a stir in Cadogan's veins at the sight of the broad one-storied ranch-house in the distance; and yet he could not but feel the calm of the land. . . . She would not laugh at his coming. . . . The tumult that he had known for days subsided into a swinging tide of steady strength. He would win. He could wait—to win.

Events broke differently than he had foreseen. Cadogan was installed in the bunk-house with the men. This building was entirely apart in its social and domestic economy from the ranch-house itself. The boys took him genially. The herd-boss ordered supper for the new one, and showed him a bunk afterward. Cadogan smoked in the dark by the door and watched the ranch-house lights. In the morning he rode out to do his trick and learn the game. He saw her standing on the big veranda, two hundred yards away. For an instant he could n't feel his horse beneath him. He caught himself and sat tight after that. . . . He was asleep one morning several days later when her voice aroused him. She had brought a big jar of marmalade for the men. The door was slightly ajar, and Cadogan glimpsed her face as she turned away. She was utterly unconscious of his nearness.

It was a clean, fine life. The boys accepted him, which is the strongest word so far for the Easterner's character. Cadogan lived to the core, and mellowed in the waiting, brooding upon the time when he should meet her face to face alone.

Afternoon, at the end of the first fortnight. Cadogan's section of the herd was lying down in the lengthening shadow of a range of hills. The ranch-house was five miles away. Bender, the nearest herder, was possibly a mile distant. Miss Cluny appeared over the crest of the hills. He dismounted, dropped his bridle-rein and went to meet her. . . . She had seen him for the first time in the morning, she said. They talked for several moments.

"But why did you come this way?" she asked, meaning as a herder. "If I had known of your returning soon to Cartmel—you might have come to visit us."

"I went to 'Frisco—meant to go on to Japan, but I could n't," he said. "I was glad to come here—even as a herder."

She looked down at him from the saddle, the western glory in her eyes.

"I must hurry back," she said suddenly. "Bender was coming this way. . . . There is much so queer—I can't quite understand. You have been very good to me, but——"

"Will you ride out here again?" he asked.

"Yes—I think I shall."

The second day afterward. She came at the same time of day.

" . . . Would you have returned to Cartmel," she asked falteringly, at length, "if I had not been so weak—that last minute in the sleeping-car?"

"Yes. I don't think I could have gone to Japan—even without that."

Their ponies strolled away together, cropping the tender grass which rimmed the trail. Cadogan and the girl stood alone in the still beauty of the valley.

"I hungered to know you even before we spoke," he was saying. "Then in the diner, I thought we might be just right good friends for the journey. But the first hour changed that. I have been dangling ever since. You are something that means life to me to win—and pitiful nothingness if I lose. Don't think I am flippant—that I go about the country saying these things here and there. It is not so. I have travelled much among men and women and cities, but I never felt before—as you make me feel. That last moment in the coach at Cartmel——"

She turned away hastily, covering her lips.

"If I should live fifty years more," he added, "and if I should win the victories of the Cæsar—only *you* could give me another moment like that."

Many minutes passed. The old Earth Mother of us all had no will to keep them apart. The voice that startled, sundered them, held, too, a tangible pain.

"Bessie!"

Her father was standing on the hill-top. His face was ashen but controlled; his voice hard but not passionate.

"Bessie," he added, descending, "ride back slowly toward the house. I'll overtake you presently—when I thresh out an affair with this young man."

She hesitated, staring into her father's face with frightened, rebellious eyes.

"Run along, little one," he commanded. "It's all right. This is n't a murder case—at least, I don't think it is."

She obeyed quickly now. Cadogan and Cluny stepped together. The latter looked long into the eyes of the younger man.

"This is the second time I have found my daughter in your arms," he observed. "I'm rather absorbed in the subject."

"The second time," Cadogan repeated. "There has been only a first and a second time——"

"It's a wise way to draw the shades—even in a Pullman coach."

"Then you knew me—when I came back and struck you for a job?"

"Exactly. Don't you think it was square of me to give you a chance?"

"I do."

"I like to be square," the elder man resumed. "That's why I'm going to tell you something now. In the first place, I don't claim to be a wise father, but I do claim this—that Bessie Cluny is bred right on her mother's side. She does n't throw herself into the arms of every young stranger. Now, you have a game and decent look to me. I've watched you a good deal in the last two weeks. No matter what I think; no matter what any old man thinks about his daughter taking on a stranger for a husband. That's my girl's business. She may have whom she likes, if I have to maim him to bring him in. About one thing only, Cadogan, I want to set you straight. I have the look of a rich man, have n't I? I mean, with all this land and stock about."

Cadogan nodded wonderingly.

"It's all front," Cluny declared. "What I mean is—Bessie Cluny, on the day of her marriage—gets not a single nickel."

Cadogan felt the gray eyes of the cattleman boring into his brain.

"Since you don't know me, or anything about me," he replied carefully, "I can't take offense, Mr. Cluny, because you mention money in the same sentence with my romance. In fact it is square of you, as you say. However, money does n't signify—only in one way——"

Cadogan halted and the elder man bent forward with a queer, intent expression.

"Just this one way, Mr. Cluny," Cadogan added. "If you need any money, I can give you some. The truth is, there are several hundred thousand dollars in my name, which my father was energetic enough to earn. He's past using it now—God love him!"

Cluny leaped forward with a roar.

"Great!" he exclaimed. "It's all I wanted to find out! God knows, I don't want your money, but I do hate a man who marries a girl for her father's money. I had to try you on the point. All this land and stock is front, but it has the goods behind, and Bessie Cluny gets all of it, if she likes—on the day *before* her marriage! Climb on your pony and we'll ride back. Bessie will be waiting. . . . Cadogan," the father whispered, a little later, as they perceived the girl sitting in the saddle among the hill-shadows, "they don't raise them any finer these days."

"On which subject, sir, you can't quarrel with me," said Cadogan.

Never marry a Fad. That were just as much of a lottery as to wed a fancy.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC



THE WESTERN STORY

TO say that the Western story, as it currently stalks, is *passé* or passing would thrust one into a heated argument wherein it might be charged, and perhaps truthfully, that the wish was father to the thought. But to say that the Western story will pass is perfectly safe. It will pass just as surely as the mythical heroes of the Iliad and the Odyssey have passed into the archives of an effete classicism.

In truth, the Western story belongs properly to the realm of modern mythology, and, leaving out of consideration those who love fiction for fiction's sake, including college students and Languid Lydias, it is the organ of a cult that worships at the shrine of the desert, the ranch, and the Western bagnio.

Almost anything goes in a Western story. Take any old barren spot in the wilderness, cover it with a few rude structures consisting mostly of saloons and dance halls, and you have your setting. "Ah," cries the uncultured cultist, "how picturesque, how romantic, how naïve!" It does not possess the tittle of the picturesqueness, of the romance, of the naïveté, of a half-block on the Bowery, even to the saloon item, but, then, people know more about the Bowery, and therefore you cannot paint in impossible skies and impossible people and impossible dialect.

Take a few perfectly commonplace individuals, put big hats on them, and fringed leather breeches, and a brace of revolvers, and red

bandana handkerchiefs about their necks. Then listen to the cultist rave with delight.

Take a perfectly commonplace girl, call her Rose, paint her and powder her and lean her up against the bar with a glass of forty-rod in one hand and a cigarette in the other. Then have her "pull a gun" on a well-dressed villain from the East. Again will the cultist rave incontinently. If you asked this self-same cultist to spend an evening with the same thing at a ten-twenty-thirty melodrama, he would turn up his nose in disgust and call you common.

Take a perfectly cold-blooded murder, get the murderer drunk, put him on a wild cayuse, and send him howling and swearing through the camp, shooting everything in sight. Hear the sensitive souls cry, "How delightful, how delicate, how picturesque!"

Talk about nature fakers! Mercy on us! The poor old West has certainly got the worst of it. Any kind of plot, any kind of improbable situation, goes, provided it's located somewhere west of the Mississippi. "Don't give us sad endings," say the editors. But some one sends in a Western story where every one and everything get "shot up," and none thinks of being sad about it.

You can take a dime novel, bind it in buckram, print it on linen, and sell it for a dollar fifty, if you please, but it will be a dime novel still.

ELLIS O. JONES

A FRESH CALAMITY

AS though we had not already enough worryment, dodging automobiles and taking orders from the cook, we are now told that a hundred and fifty years hence there will be no more children. Viewed from either pole of the situation, this is indeed a woeful prophecy. If you are a lover of children, it makes your blood run cold to realize that they are so soon to be added to the schedule of extinct animals, along with the dodo and the sabre-toothed tiger; while if you belong to the opposite class, it is equally distressing to know that this promised millennium is so far remote that you will not be here to enjoy the day when Angora cats and bull pups shall hold undisputed place as household pets.

However, 't is useless to bewail the oracle of statistics. A learned college professor has computed the rate at which human births are declining, and when he announces that they will come to an end during the next century and a half we have no alternative but to accept his dictum. It is not a guess; it is a mathematical certainty. To be sure, he might have kept this dismal prediction to himself, but 't is one of the moral duties of a statistician to temper the present joys of life with melancholy auguries. The horrors of the future are calculated with the

same precision as eclipses of the moon. Every twelfth marriage results in a divorce; and yours may be the twelfth. Once a week, with clock-like regularity, some one is murdered in New York, and every ten hours somebody is attacked, every forty-eight minutes a building catches fire, every seven minutes there is a funeral, and every three minutes somebody is arrested; so that if you can remain in New York for a month without getting into trouble you are to be congratulated. But even in your own village home you are not out of danger: Every two minutes somebody in the United States is killed by tuberculosis; and if that fails to daunt you, then you must know that every minute of the day four and a half persons are tagged by the undertaker; and if you are not one of the four you may be the half.

No prophet who conjures with statistics has ever yet predicted anything pleasant. 'T is just as well, perhaps, that this is so; for, as Father Gregory once remarked, "Peradventure this world here is made troublesome unto us, lest we be delighted by the way and forget whither we are going." At all events, we may not plan ahead for a picnic without remembering that the day is coming when there will be no water on the earth, and our Yule-tide levity is checked by the knowledge that a hundred years from now there will be no more Christmas trees; also, no more coal. Indeed, whichever way we turn, the future is black with calamity. There will be no more lumber, no more fuel, no more teeth, and now, latest on the list, no more children. And if our descendants manage to survive these subtractions it will be merely to look forward to the time when a slowly cooling sun will put the ice-man and all his cousins out of business.

Albeit, let us not despair. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." And, moreover, 't is cheering to remember that it is easier to be a prophet than to tell the truth. When Daniel Webster declared that the territory west of the Mississippi would never be aught but a graveyard for adventurers, he believed what he said, but the unseen railroad of the future made a mockery of his forecast. A century ago Thomas Malthus set the race atremble at his undeniable demonstration that the world's population was increasing at a more rapid rate than the means of sustenance, and that it was but a matter of a few generations ere the earth would be over-populated and we would be eating one another to ward off starvation. Yet, lo! here are we to-day bewailing now a future quite inverted.

Let us, therefore, give the college professor his due as a smart man and a good statistician, but let him not disturb our peace of mind with computations calculated to rob us of our children. Providence has not yet seen fit to give to him or any other mortal a knowledge of the factors by which the morrow is determined.

CLIFFORD HOWARD.

OPEN-FACED DIPLOMACY

A WRITER in one of the papers (not avowedly a funny paper) in discussing matters in the Far East (Far East has such a mysterious, uncanny sound, has n't it?) says that our policy toward Japan should be "a diplomacy of perfect openness and sincerity"; that is to say, we should lie by telling the truth, for there is no such thing as a diplomacy of perfect openness and sincerity.

Diplomacy is a faculty brought into play when one man or nation wants to get something or keep something from another man or nation. According to its methods of procedure, it is of two kinds: one kind proceeds by bluff, bluster, and bludgeons, the other by salve, sycophancy, syrup, and sneakers. In both cases, the concoction contains criminal aggression, insatiate covetousness, civilized subjugation, etc., but the label on the bottle spells benevolent assimilation and humanitarianism and various other haloed ingredients of a moral, religious, or sentimental nature.

The open-faced type of diplomacy, or, for that matter, of anything else, is rarely seen nowadays outside of penal institutions where the keepers have their say without ceremony or reserve. And it might be said in conclusion that our policy toward Japan should be a diplomacy that would make us stay at home and mind our own business.

PHIL COLLOM



ADVICE may be too expensive a gift even for Plutocrats.

TELL not all you hear, but hear all you tell.

THINK aloud to none save thine other self.

To a spinster, naught is so discouraging as to be told there are no marriages in Heaven.

To laugh and cry, we use the same set of muscles. It all depends upon who pulls the string.

FOR the language of the still, small voice most of us require an interpreter.

MEMORY is a high Heaven or a fathomless Hell.

YOUTH, indignation, and hope are the first steps on the ladder of fame.

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THE POMEGRANATE SEED

BY

KATHARINE METCALF ROOF

I.

WARING had not chosen to give the little theatre party. It had just happened that the tickets for the box had come in with his morning mail as such favors were wont to accrue to him in his professional character. He did not especially care about going to the thing. Neither did he want to stay away. His emotional difficulty, as he had described it that day at lunch to Newcomb, was in feeling any way at all. Everything was at a colorless level within him. He had symbolically characterized his mental condition as "that two o'clock-in-the-afternoon feeling. You know that hour when every speck of dirt and dinginess in the city just stares in all its naked ugliness, and nothing seems as if it could ever be worth while."

"Sounds like a good definition of disillusion," Newcomb had contrived to reply while actively engaged with a large mutton chop. Newcomb always took his food very seriously, a habit contrasting healthily with the subdued spiritual character of his art.

"No, it is n't a case of lost illusions," Waring analyzed. "Don't you know the feeling I mean? Even ugly old New York is able to put on some kind of a morning freshness. And at night or on a foggy day it even has a strange sort of beauty. But at two o'clock in the afternoon on a clear, cold, brilliant windy day—with papers blowing around in a circle?—well, that is how I have been feeling for the last three weeks."

Newcomb, he realized at that point, was not interested in his analysis. His hunger was obviously unappeased and until that moment had arrived he was apt to be concentrated and monosyllabic. So, disdaining to psychologize into an inattentive ear, Waring concluded his own meal in an introspective silence.

It was not, he reflected, precisely disillusion. It was perhaps the result of being out of love in just the untragic, preposterous way that he had fallen out, if, indeed, he might ever have been said to have fallen in. There had been no slow agony of disillusion, no heartbreak, no painful readjustment. He had for two inexplicable months believed himself to be delicately, agreeably in love. It had not been love as he had theoretically conceived it, nor even as he had imagined himself to have experienced it in his early youth. But apparently he was not one made for a grand passion, for this was practically his first mature venture in love. He had never thought about it before in just that way, but no woman had ever actually taken hold of his imagination except for that very first boyish emotion aroused by a woman he had seen but once, a beautiful woman—at least, he had thought her beautiful then—a married woman older than himself. With the diaphanous, unawakened idealism of youth, he had never thought to seek her out, never thought of her in connection with himself except with remotely worshipping thoughts. A misty springtime mirage of love it had been. But this Angela affair—well, it had come about understandably enough in the summer, the preceding summer. Angela was dainty and charming, a delicate sentiment had sprung up within him in response to those qualities. It had seemed to him that she was the sort of woman he wanted to marry. He remembered distinctly that his emotions had been agreeably agitated at the sight of her in a white muslin touched with turquoise blue ribbons. Then what had happened? Angela had not changed. She had not “destroyed his ideals.” She had not done anything definite that he could complain of, but blandly, relentlessly, his emotion had slipped from him. Something that he had imagined he had seen in Angela melted before his very eyes. He came to realize with a sense of irritation the irresolute softness of her delicately tinted face, her monotonous, slightly nasal voice. He found his mind wandering when she talked. Gradually he had come to dislike—not passionately but implacably—her features, her expression, her mannerisms—everything about her.

Well, fortunately, Angela was not a sentimentalist. He had been an excellent *parti*. He understood now, a little dryly, that she had realized it; but he had wounded her vanity, and Angela was not one who made elaborate distinctions in mankind. Any one of a score of men would be the same to Angela. And so for an affair that had begun with all the hall-marks of well-bred emotion, it had ended with

unforeseen painlessness. The engagement had been broken before it had been announced. But the effect upon Waring had been deplorable. He felt unaccountably let down, ashamed of himself. To have gone all his life so far without having committed any of those emotional errors and then at his first definite move in the matter to get in for such an absurd, bloodless farce as that engagement with Angela! If only the affair could have been invested with the dignity of a few pangs of some kind or degree of suffering!

So these weeks since the final break he had gone about his daily affairs with his sense of life, as it were, stationary at two o'clock in the afternoon. He had accepted invitations or he had refused them at his indifferent whim, always with this strange sense of flatness, emptiness. But as he sat contemplating the tickets for "The Green Flower" with an apathetic eye he remembered that his young cousin Berenice seemed to extract an amazing amount of enjoyment from light opera; so he had telephoned her, received an enthusiastic acceptance, instructed her to invite their aunt, Mrs. Holland, his favorite female relative, for chaperon and any other guests she desired. At first he had not intended to go himself. Then he decided indifferently that he might as well. He had heard that it was a good show. The girls would be equipped with cavaliers, and in his present state of mind he felt that he preferred his Aunt Ellen's society to that of any other lady he could think of. By such indifferent decisions as these do we pick up in the dark the threads that weave into the patterns of our lives.

II.

AND the occasion, as he had foreseen, brought with it no urgent social obligations. Berenice, flowerlike in rose pink, seemed entirely engrossed with the youth she had selected to occupy the chair behind her—an immaculately-groomed young man obviously fresh from college. Patty Dale, Berenice's particular friend, seemed sufficiently entertained with Bobby, Berenice's undergraduate brother. Patty was also pretty, something in the way that Angela was pretty—a beauty that would become faded and sharpened in a few years. His Aunt Ellen was one of those blessed women who only speak when they have something to say. So Waring found himself apathetically at liberty to get what pleasure he might from the evening's entertainment.

The first fifteen or twenty minutes passed and the opera had furnished nothing sufficiently stimulating to penetrate his apathy—just the old familiar horseplay, the characters all the time-worn stock figures of comic opera. That was also as he had foreseen. He turned his attention upon his young guests, studying them dispassionately. What idiotic conversations they were having! Yet Bobby and Berenice had been attractive children. It seemed incredible that they should all

have such a vivacious exaggerated interest in what they were saying. The two girls were like the majority of the young girls of his set, Waring reflected: delicately pretty, exquisitely gowned, yet mysteriously flavorless—like perfect flowers without perfume, or richly-colored fruit with no taste. It was no less true of Berenice, whose beauty was considered exceptional, so that her picture had figured several times in newspapers and illustrated magazines of the class that write of society's doings—a tribute to which Berenice, not altogether sincerely, he cynically imagined, had indignantly objected. But the boys, in spite of the unconscious egoism of their immaturity and their complacently Philistine interests, seemed somehow more genuine and human.

At that point in his reflections some one on the stage made an entrance followed by some welcoming applause. He turned an unhopeful eye upon the recipient. She was so small and young looking that for the first moment he thought it was a half grown girl of fourteen or fifteen. She wore a costume designed to give the effect of rusticity, of the fashion of about forty years ago. The scant white dress, a little shorter than ankle length, disclosed white stockings and black slippers with a strap over the instep. On her head was a wide hat tied under the chin with apple green ribbons. It struck Waring with amused reminiscence that she was like an old colored print in a *Godey's Lady Book* he remembered discovering in his Aunt's garret.

Then he noticed her face. It had an unusual arresting quality that, it occurred to him fancifully, was like a complex bit of modern harmony rather than the characteristic simple melody of youth. The dominant theme, indeed, was a certain quaint childishness, but interweaving across it slipped a varying pattern of melodies—gay, bizarre, alien, pathetic. There was an Oriental suggestion about the eyelids. They were not definitely oblique, and it was not that they looked either Japanese or Egyptian, rather that they gave fleeting reminiscences of both.

The drawing was mysterious, evanescent. It was a face made up of implications, nothing was completely stated. She had therefore that which to the artist is more compelling than explicit beauty—the suggestion of beauty. And with what indescribable art she conveyed things with her hands! Not with the pronounced mannered tricks of the French woman; it was like the best art of the Italian actors, a quaint irresistible comedy. Then some movement made him aware of her feet in their innocent little Alice-in-Wonderland shoes, and it came to him that they were the most extraordinary little feet he had ever seen. He watched them and laughed aloud at the piquant surprise of it; they hesitated, they took alarm, they were reassured, they coquetted, conceded—why, it was genius! Waring was bored no longer. The spicy breath of a summer garden had blown through the dusty two o'clock street of his consciousness!

Who was she? He glanced at his program, finally identifying her in the confused hodge-podge of the cast: Zelda Breslau. It was not an American name—though stage names signified nothing—but she was speaking with a perceptible foreign accent.

He intercepted a glance not intended for him from Berenice's long-lashed eyes as he bent forward to question her.

"What nationality is she, Bee? You are always up on these things?"

Berenice did not know. Her admirer volunteered indifferently, "Dutch, I guess."

"Do you mean German?" inquired Waring, faintly ironical.

The boy stared. Patty leaned forward. She had some native fondness for music, which caused her to acquire more definiteness of impression than her associates. "She is Austrian. She came from grand opera. She sang *Carmen* last winter."

"Then I suppose she can sing," Waring inferred. "What is she doing in musical comedy?"

Berenice looked surprised. She was, Waring divined, upon the verge of enlightening him when a conversational prelude conspicuously lacking in relevancy and spontaneity warned the accustomed that a song was imminent.

Then Zelda Breslau began to sing. It was not a large voice. The transition from serious to light-minded opera was easily understood. But she did not belong here either. He glanced about at the faces in the audience, foolishly agape; empty, bovine—vicious, some of them, alert others—but how few with any spirit, aspiration, or even receptivity! Impervious to art, certainly, one and all. The contrast of the girl's subtle quality with the gross audience made it seem suddenly an ignominious thing that this should be her life—to amuse such people.

Then her voice penetrated his contemptuous musings, and he forgot the uninspiring audience. It was really an exquisite little voice. It reached in and touched the heartstrings like the voice of a child—yet with a difference. There was an emotional undertone in it that did not belong to childhood. The song was an imitation of an old ballad, and between the verses she danced. And that dance! Waring appreciated—and he wondered if there was any one else in that audience who did—that only an artist of motion could have conceived it,—a delicate dramatization of rustic *gaucherie*, translated with subtle and indescribable art into beauty. As at the end she stood there, smiling a gay response to her applause, it occurred to him again that she looked very young—with a certain defenseless look of youth that was somehow almost touching. He pulled himself up with a laugh. Who would have believed that the art of a clever little actress could impose upon one to that extent! He turned his attention deliberately upon one of

the other performers, then in a minute again he found himself watching her. When the curtain fell upon the act he was conscious of a distinct pang at losing sight of her.

Bobby clapped cordially. He was an enthusiastic lad who liked almost anything that came under the label of entertainment. "Quite a jolly little girl. I'm for her."

Patty looked surprised. "Why, she is n't pretty!"

"Such an ugly dress," Berenice objected.

"I remember when little girls wore dresses like that," their aunt recalled with her serene smile.

Berenice's admirer, watching Zelda Breslau with his boyish pouting lips apart, added his comment: "She is too thin."

"How do you like her?" Berenice asked Waring with her young, unceremonious directness. "You certainly can't say she's pretty—though I've heard you admire some pretty freaky ones."

Waring laughed. "I find her very interesting," he said.

"But not pretty," Berenice persisted.

The curtain rose then, disclosing Zelda Breslau and one of the male performers bowing recognition of the applause. Waring watched her until it hid her from sight. "It is an unusual face," he said. "Something is always happening in it." Then as he met Berenice's large-eyed stare he smiled at the absurdity of his making such a comment to her.

A silence followed his speech. The girls exchanged glances. They did not, he realized, consider his opinion of sufficient importance to permit of its modifying theirs. Indeed, all four were at that mental stage which considers every one on a plane of social equality, equally qualified to give an opinion on any subject. They did not pursue the topic further, but Berenice told Patty afterward that Stephen was cynical, and thought it was smart to disagree with people. Patty had already decided that he was hard to talk to. And Berenice's admirer secretly thought him offish. But Mrs. Holland smiled with understanding.

"A question of generation, Stephen," she said. "You see, they still want pink candy while you demand caviare, and my taste is for—roast beef and baked potatoes."

Waring smiled back at her. "Roast beef and baked potatoes standing, I presume, for true moral worth," he translated.

But Patty's sharp ears had overheard. "What *are* you two talking about? I hate those colored candies; so does Berenice."

"What kind do you prefer?" Waring inquired, faintly amused.

Berenice's admirer leaned forward with an expression that plainly portended an approaching witticism. "I know—taffy."

Waring leaned back, the two o'clock feeling again threatening to overtake him. What was the use of trying to talk to the children, any

way? They did not speak the same language, and they were far happier by themselves. Then the curtain rose again, and he realized that he was looking forward to the reappearance of Zelda Breslau. It was not long before she entered in clothes fantastically gorgeous—a semi-Oriental costume of greens and blues, contrasting keenly, yet shimmering into harmony. A bizarre headdress of gold and divers colors crowned her head, and wonderful slippers accented with flame color carried his eye to her inspired little feet. A sentence from the immortal chronicles of Judith and Holofernes slipped into his mind—“And her sandals ravished his eyes.” Yes, they might well have been just such as these—the sandals that so successfully contributed to the undoing of the victorious leader of the Assyrians—the epitome of an innocent yet complex coquetry of adornment! He was sure, for example, that the rotund bald gentleman in the front row agape with fatuous enjoyment had no realization of those little sandals.

With one of those mysterious unmodulated transitions indigenous to the light operatic stage, the young rustic was now revealed in her true character as a princess of some operatic domain rightfully come into her kingdom, seeking to avoid the matrimonial machinations and complicated plots of a pretender to the throne, who, in spite of his evil nature, assisted in all the comedy features, from jests of unmistakable intention to grotesque acrobatic feats and humorous accidents to his person.

Presently after the fashion of princesses in light opera, at the conclusion of a confidential song directed toward the audience, she began to dance again. There was no reminiscence now of that delicate simulation of rustic gaucherie. This was the dance of a riotous, joyous, winged thing—a dragon fly, conceivably—in those blue-green gauzy garments, or the wild flight of a leaf at the sport of the wind. She ceased almost to be a woman in his consciousness. She took possession of his imagination abstractly as the glimpse of beauty can possess the artist.

“I liked that dance better,” Berenice turned around to say to him with the air of one wishing to endorse his opinion in so far as she was able. “She is quite light on her feet.”

He smiled for answer. It was, after all, the most natural answer to give Berenice. Then Zelda Breslau’s voice recalled his eyes to the stage again. A duet had begun between the princess and the pretender. It was certainly an appealing voice—a voice of flowers and springtime. That undertone was like the perfume of flowers. The same thing was in her face, a suggestion that she could feel things. Sometimes child-like, sometimes the face of a prankish Pierrot or an illusive Ariel, it would shift suddenly into an intensity, a flash of passion quite out of character with the improbable performance.

At this point he pulled himself up sardonically. Was he now about to become sentimental about an actress? After the Angelo fiasco he might expect anything of himself. But an actress!

Actresses had interested him but faintly in his callow youth, and his practical experiences with them would have tended to destroy his illusions had he had any. Actresses, he reminded himself, were, for the most part, an unnatural development—crude, unreal, self-centred, hysterical, living in an utterly false relation to life.

He rose abruptly, excusing himself to his feminine guests on the plea of an uncontrollable desire for a smoke. He left before the princess had finished her song, and her appealing voice followed him. It occurred to him that it had a sound as if it were pleading with one.

As he stood in the lobby near the entrance, smoking, he overheard a fragment of the conversation of two men standing behind him. Zelda Breslau's name caught his ear. He turned and glanced at the men. Both had a familiar composite effect of round features and sleek vulgarity—types of that cheap sophistication born of acquaintance with the cruder and coarser phases of prosperous New York life. That was what it came to, Waring reflected with a sense of distaste in the realization, however genuine and serious the artist's sense of her art—that her name should be familiarly, even insinuatingly, bandied about by such men as these! Any one of them had a right to purchase her picture, to have it, if he chose, upon his walls. He could not have said just why the idea was so displeasing. He threw away his cigarette and went back to the box, anxious to be out of earshot of the vulgar twanging voices.

As he entered, Zelda Breslau was dancing again. The music—an interesting bit of imitative composition in itself—was built on themes Slavonic, even Asiatic, in character, which, as if her movements were some integral part of the tone and rhythm, she translated into motion. It began with a slow, swaying movement, growing gradually faster until it became an abandon of innocently Bacchanalian revelry. What a power she had to summon visions, memories! Now suggestions of a life wild, barbaric,—gorgeous colors, gleams of dull gold, the thud and clash of primitive percussion instruments. Now the most insidious subtlety of the east. A moment ago she had been a creature of the wind and air; now she was a flame, sinuous, flickering, fantastic. When it was over he came back to consciousness of his environment with a dazed sense of having come from a long distance.

Waring walked home alone after having seen his guests off in their carriages, in a very different frame of mind from the one in which he had gone to the theatre. Zelda Breslau had sent him away filled with dreams. He had a feeling that he wanted to get at his paints to ex-

press the thing she had set in motion within him. As yet it existed as shifting and more or less formless suggestions of sound and color. She was a strange little creature—not like any one else he had ever seen. That wonderful dancing of hers was only another expression of the music born in her light body. It was music made visible.

It was odd the vivid consciousness he had of her personality—as if he knew her—had known her a long time! That was just the concentrated sense one received of a stage personality. Then it occurred to him that a man might easily lose his head over the girl if he happened to possess that kind of a head. He congratulated himself that his own was not of that variety.

III.

WARING'S work—he was an interior decorator who made something of a specialty of stage settings—brought him more or less in contact with theatrical people,—an association, however, which he had never as yet felt tempted to make personal or social.

As is often the case with men of a strong natural bent, his choice of a profession had been somewhat turned aside by circumstances. He had seemed from his childhood predestined to the career of a painter, but at the end of his second year at the art school his father had died suddenly, leaving little but debts behind him, and he had been glad to take advantage of an opportunity to go into the office of a prominent architect. His success in some interior decoration involved in one of their contracts had decided him to specialize along that line. Then when a few years later he had started out for himself a number of orders for stage settings had come to him. At first these were only for the setting of a single scene or so, but two years ago the chimerical Morely had commissioned him to put on his gorgeous production of "The Tempest"—scenery and color-schemes throughout, including the costumes. The result, although a financial failure, had produced such an impression that Waring found himself almost famous. The next season he had been given the contract for designing the setting of elaborate musical fantasia exploiting a comic opera favorite who had married a millionaire. That had brought financial success and more orders. Since Waring's part of the work consisted merely of the designing of the schemes and some general superintendence of their carrying out, he had found himself within the last few years with spare time to devote to painting again. He had been successful in one or two ventures in mural decoration, and had painted a number of portraits exhibiting a decided individuality of touch.

Outwardly, in his character of artist, Waring was not satisfying to the impressionable. He was one of those who are described as not looking like an artist—a comment, in his social circle, tinged with

approbation, in the analysis of the art student with deprecation. Far from being erratic in dress, manner, or personality, he might at first glance seem almost to lack distinctive individuality, but such an impression would have been lacking in insight. He seemed over-civilized perhaps, for his processes were obscure, well below the surface. Yet it would have been a mistake to infer that there was nothing there. It had happened that his personal life had been largely spent among uninteresting people, people whose opportunities had done little for them, because, dominated by the crude ideals that animate America's aristocracy of wealth, they were able to bring so little to the enjoyment of their opportunities. Had this association been Waring's deliberate choice, it might fairly have constituted a grave criticism of his sincerity, but the fact was that he touched but the barest surface with these people, and that all that was most real in him had gone into his work. He was conscious of the fact that he met few women who interested him, yet failed to realize explicitly that that was because he demanded something that these women did not have to give—neither the exquisitely-gowned and often beautiful woman of society, nor the self-consciously picturesque, sententious feminine studio type. He seemed therefore, from the standpoint of his female relatives, unsusceptible to feminine charm—devoid even of that complex susceptibility in which the æsthetic perceptions are mingled with the simple natural attraction of woman for man,—a psychologic development which so frequently complicates the life of the artist. Perhaps that was due to his having had a New England mother. Yet, in spite of this apparent lack—which the brief Angela episode did not after all disprove—Waring had a way of saying charming things to women. The effect upon them was to attract, baffle, and not infrequently irritate. He had a look in his clean-shaven, unrevealing face that suggested mastery if he cared to exert it. And one woman who had sat next him in a box at the opera had declared after watching him in the self-oblivion of his susceptibility to the music that he would be “interesting” in love. Just how “interesting” he might be in the throes of that universal but far from identical experience, no woman had as yet had opportunity to judge—not even Angela or the interested feminine observer of his potential emotions, who assuredly did not let any opportunity slip to further her naïve study of his psychology.

It happened a few days after the box party, originally tendered in so casual a spirit to his female relatives, that he received a telephone message from the business manager of the Woodruff Company, the organization presenting “The Green Flower”—which was, however, only one of their long list of similar attractions—requesting him to call at the office to discuss the putting on of a large production the following season. The gentleman at the telephone explained further,

with brief colloquialism, that since Mr. Woodruff was shortly to sail for Europe it was "up to" Waring not to lose time in getting there.

As Waring climbed the dingy stairs to Woodruff's office to the accompaniment of "The Palms," rendered in a massively sentimental bass, he met a woman on the landing in the semi-darkness. She was small, slight, and inconspicuously dressed. He received a fleeting impression of youth and delicacy as she passed. The passage was narrow; a bulky man, moving uncouthly, brushed past her whistling without apology. Waring glanced at her, his attention attracted by her eyes, which were unusual even at that incomplete glimpse. The moment after she had passed he realized that it was Zelda Breslau. He had a swift sense of revolt that she should be here among these coarse men—the type of men that make up the "business end" of a Broadway "show."

He went on into the manager's office, frowning. Woodruff, a nervous, spare, hawk-eyed type of American executiveness, in his waistcoat and shirt sleeves, with his hat on the back of his head, was fluently rebuking a sulky underling as he entered. He threw him a hasty "Have a seat, Mr. Waring," and continued his arraignment without pause or punctuation. Waring looked about for a seat and finally acquired one by the displacement of a large pile of newspapers. The floor was also littered with papers. The walls were covered with reproductions of the stars of the Woodruff company, from gaily colored posters to framed photographs and cuts from the pages of the Sunday newspapers. Against the wall stood monotonous pieces of furniture composed of sets of drawers having letter labels for the classification of their contents. The opening bars of a jaunty air, obviously designed for the female voice, started up in another room in a serviceable baritone, vying with the majestic measures of "The Palms" from the floor below. The underling, his lips protruding and apart, received the vigorous analysis of his character and qualifications, and of his mistaken idea of his importance to the firm, with downcast eyes, until an abrupt climax sent him with an effect of forcible ejection from the room. Mr. Woodruff then tipped back his chair until it balanced upon its back legs against the wall, and taking, as it were, fresh wind, began:

"Now, Mr. Waring, about this 'Rose of Seville.' We're expecting to put it on next fall in rather fancy style—probably in September. Miss Breslau is going to open in it, and perhaps go on the road with it. Now, we hope to do the thing rather handsomely. Mr. Brody—who, as you may know, has some business interests in the company—has about decided to put up for it"—Waring's thoughts flew with swift, uncomfortable question to Zelda Breslau—"in a way to cover risks in the way of extra expenses, you understand. Now, will you just glance

over this scenario?" He barely paused to extract a paper with nice precision from the drawer of a roll-top desk apparently in the most hopeless confusion. "See what you think you can do it for, and let us know. Think you can get in the estimate before I sail Tuesday?"

Waring took the paper, rapidly gauging the extent of the detail in its contents. "I think so."

Woodruff glanced at his watch and rose, reaching out for his coat. "I must be off this minute. You can carry on this business with Blagden, just so that you get the estimate through before I leave. Just one more thing"—Mr. Woodruff turned as he captured his hat. "Could you manage to run in and see Breslau about it? I understand she has some ideas of her own that she wants carried out—I've no idea whether they are practical or not. She takes an interest in the whole thing—not just her own part, like most of them. Now, if you can spare the time just write or 'phone her and make an appointment; and, if you think best, work her suggestions into the scheme."

Mr. Woodruff was moving toward the door with his last words. Waring followed him. "I should expect her suggestions to be valuable," he said.

"Oh, she's a good little artist," agreed Woodruff, with the careless patronage of the business office. "But she does n't draw the crowd like Linda Barlow."

Waring had a momentary vision of the heavy features, practised eyes, and thin voice of the favorite in question, and he smiled. "It is easy to understand her popularity," he remarked. "But this little girl, Zelda Breslau, is not in the same class. She is an artist."

Both men were descending the stairs by this time. The last end of Waring's remark had been addressed to Mr. Woodruff's executive back.

Waring caught the word "offish" in Woodruff's reply, but as he talked straight ahead without turning, Waring caught only a sentence here and there. "A little of that sort of thing is a good ad; too much of it's bad business." He had reached the ground floor by this time, and they passed down the outside steps together. "The schoolma'am pose is n't all it's cracked up to be. Does well enough for a Sunday story for the papers. Personal popularity's the thing that counts, every time. Well, good day, Mr. Waring. Let me hear from you to-morrow evening if you can make it."

Waring walked slowly down Broadway with the troubled sense of one having heard of defenseless youth in some menacing situation. His experience assured him that this feeling was absurd. The girl, young as she was, must have had several years of stage experience. It was impossible that she should not be sophisticated. Even if theatrical conditions were different in her own country, she would have had the

training and experience to enable her to cope with the situation. Yet, on the other hand, Woodruff's comment upon her attitude—coming with such welcome contradiction of the ugly yet (to one acquainted with the invisible machinery of the theatrical world) obvious suspicion engendered by Mr. Brody's generosity in backing the new venture—went to prove that she was the sort of woman who would suffer from time to time in her situation. And when he remembered her young eyes and the oblivious gentleman who had knocked against her on the stairs, he felt all the appeal to his instincts of protection that she could have made to him had she been living the life of the conventional woman.

The thought of her came back to him several times during the day with a sense of discomfort that was almost hurt. Finally, late in the afternoon, he wrote her a note asking when he might see her to discuss the subject designated by Mr. Woodruff. Her answer came promptly, making an appointment for the next day but one. In the same mail came a brief communication from the Woodruff office accepting his estimate for the putting on of "The Rose of Seville."

IV.

As he glanced about her reception-room Waring's quick eye noted several small touches of individuality that saved it from the drearily impersonal effect of the temporarily inhabited apartment. There was a great bunch of sweat peas in a green pottery bowl. The piano was open, with scattered sheets of music upon it. There were a number of French, English, and German books upon a table. Even prepared as he was to find her taste well removed from that of the Philistine, their titles surprised him. An unframed print of Sargent's "Carmencita" stood on the frigid mantel, also one of a woman by Goya and a photograph of the Velasquez portrait of Marie of Austria. An Indian basket without its cover upon the table he recognized as a woman's work-basket.

As he glanced about, a handkerchief lying upon the floor caught his eye. He picked it up mechanically. It was a delicate, cobwebby affair. A faint scent as of rose-leaves clung to it. In one corner he discovered a small embroidered "G." So much of personality seemed to cling about the fragile little possession that it occurred to him fancifully that had Desdemona's ill-fated belonging been similar to it, it might well have added a subtle pang to Othello's discovery.

She did not keep him waiting. As she came toward him with her exquisite light movement he experienced something of the inevitable shock of readjustment from the artificial effects of the theatre to day-light actuality. Yet a second glance showed that the differences were slight. She looked even younger, her eyes were more extraordinary.

"You come to speak of the costumes of 'The Rose of Seville,'" she

began at once. "It is most kind of you to give me opportunity to express my ideas."

"On the contrary, I am expecting to steal them for my own glory." He ventured the light form rather than the literal. He waited for her to seat herself, adapting himself to this immediate sense of her, noting the simplicity of her dress and hair. Certainly nothing could be more remote from any suggestion of the theatre or the theatrical than she was. She smiled an impersonal little smile in response to his speech, placing him, Waring felt, but her face revealed nothing of the nature of her impression.

"I have much to say on this subject," she announced precisely.

In spite of her formal intention Waring found himself inclined to smile. He felt very much as if he were addressing himself to an intelligent child whose fancy it was to be treated with dignity. She seemed even smaller than he had remembered her. She had chosen a large chair, offering far too much room for her slight person. He drew his chair nearer, trying not to stare at her, for she had a quality of magnetism that drew the eyes. "I want to hear it all," he said.

She began at once. "Mr. Woodruff disagrees with me about both the costume and the dance. I think the trouble here as in Europe is that the managers have a sort of stage idea of dance and of costume that is too far away from reality. I understand"—she slighted the d—"of course, for the theatre—and especially for light opera—that the costume must be *chic*, not poor and inartistic like that of the real Spanish gypsy most often is—you have been in Spain?" Waring nodded and her face lightened. "Then you will understand. I want the costume more closer as that of the gipsy than Mr. Woodruff desires, and the dance to be altogether the same."

"Of course," Waring agreed, "nothing could be more interesting than the real thing, accuracy aside. But I am afraid you will have hard work getting them to consider realism in a Broadway show. Mr. Woodruff knows his public. They prefer fake."

Zelda Breslau looked puzzled. "They prefer—what you say?" Then as he was about to explain her face lightened. "Oh, yes, I know that word." She was obviously proud of this knowledge. He decided that she was even more adorable in the big chair there than surrounded by the artificially heightened effects of the footlights. He smiled again, then saw that she regarded him suspiciously, with a touch of the apprehensive hauteur of the clever child who cannot bear to make mistakes.

"You laugh at my English. I say something funny?"

"No, no, your English is excellent," he hastened to assure her. He could scarcely explain that he had smiled because she seemed like an enchanting child,—an effect heightened by her foreign manner of

speech and made inexpressibly piquant by its incongruous contrast with her artistically mature point of view.

Then he remembered the feminine handkerchief in his hand. He held it out to her.

"Is this perhaps yours? It seems not to have your initial?"

She appropriated it with a glance and outstretched hand. "It is mine. It is also my initial." Meeting his questioning glance, she added, "For Griselda. It is my whole name. For the theatre in this country they like better *Zelda*."

"Griselda," he repeated, looking at her, fitting the name to her. "What a charming, quaint little name! I have never known a *Griselda* except the patient lady of fiction." He received a sense of having diverged from the object of his visit as he met her eyes, and he hastened to pick up the thread again. "I am sure between us we can strike an average between realism and stage effect acceptable to Mr. Woodruff. But about the dances—I am afraid I have no influence. I will tell him what I think. But surely he will let you do as you choose!"

She nodded. "I hope. But he say it is not pretty. You have seen them, you remember? He don't like this part." She rose, humming a few bars of a Spanish dance, giving with a few steps and swift turns of the body an illustration of her meaning,—a little flash of gipsy fire that fairly took his breath. "But he like," she continued, returning to her chair—the whole thing had been done with professional unconsciousness—"something more as your American theatre dancing—more movement like kicking. And that is so very wrong, don't you think?"

He nodded agreement. "But you can't expect me to be in the proper condition to discuss it after seeing you dance." Then he felt that he had been guilty of paying her a banal compliment. The light on her face changed into coldness—what a transparently reflexive face it was! How utterly unlike the deliberate facial expression of the typical actress.

"Please—we talk of business, do we not?" she said.

"I beg your pardon," Waring returned quickly. His regret indeed was quite out of proportion to his offense. He started to return to the practical object of his call, then suddenly it came to him that he could not endure having her mistake his appreciation for a mere cheap personality, and he broke out with uncharacteristic impulsiveness: "Please don't misunderstand that stupid remark. It may have sounded like a clumsy compliment, but it is quite true that it was difficult just then to turn from you and think about the vulgar dances of those stupid show girls, because—you must know—there is a spell about your dancing. It makes one see pictures and dream dreams. And you must remember that I am a painter and susceptible to all that."

He looked at her when he had finished speaking, but her features seemed to have taken on an inscrutable mask that he afterwards came to know well. Yet he felt somehow that the artist in her understood.

"I seem ungracious of your kind words perhaps," she said at last, "but you must know—or perhaps you do not—that men think always they must pay silly compliments to an actress. They speak to her, I think, as they would not speak to other women."

"It would be a very stupid person indeed who would confuse you in any way with other women of your profession," he said without looking at her. And then her eyes rested upon him for a moment.

"Then you think Mr. Woodruff will not give up those kicks," she concluded.

He laughed. "I am afraid not, so far as the ensemble is concerned. We cannot expect to reform the Broadway show at present. In order to do that we would have to first reform the audience."

"Ja," she agreed; "that is what Wagner also has said of the opera."

He looked up in momentary surprise at her allusion. He had forgotten her legitimate beginnings. "Have you ever sung in a Wagner opera? Surely not unless you were a Rhine maiden—or a shepherd boy."

"Why not?"

"Why—you are too young and too little. Wagner ladies are always large and imposingly mature."

She laughed. "You guess right. I sing both *Hirt* and *Rhein-tochter*. It is true that my voice is too small for a large opera house. I am perhaps also a little too small myself." She made this admission, it occurred to him, as if with some hope of being contradicted.

"Too small to be put at such a distance," he agreed, without giving his words any personal flavor. "I mean, there is so much that is fine and subtle in your play and expression that one can't afford to lose."

She accepted the tribute with a smile that, although reserved, was not chilling. He ventured to pursue this impersonally personal vein. "Yet I should think, in a way—that you must regret the change."

She considered. "In a way, perhaps, because of the music. But not in the end, since my voice is not large—and I like to dance. And for such rôles as are possible to me in grand opera there is less opportunity to act. There is *Carmen*, of course, but there are not so many for a voice like mine."

"Yet a trifle like this 'Green Flower,'" Waring replied, "charming as you make it—is really quite unworthy of your talent."

"It is not important, certainly. But then it is most interesting always to make something out of nothing." She smiled with the radiant flash of a small child disclosing a secret. "Besides," she

added tranquilly, "I make more money." That last remark somehow jarred upon Waring, yet, he reflected, it was a thing he and every one considered. Then she added: "Besides, I shall do yet many things—better things. Now, this 'Rose of Seville' of which we speak has some very nice music. Do you know it?" As Waring shook his head, she continued: "It is by one Arthur Schroeder, who belong, I believe, both to your country and mine. It is quite modern, and very good in its way. I have one little song, a gypsy song, that I like very much—'Though I love you, I cannot stay with you.'" She sang a few bars in half voice, then rose and crossed over to the piano, saying, "It go something like this;" and after playing the prelude of a few measures she sang a verse.

It was a melody of unexpected intervals, modern, as she had said, in its character, more modern than was compatible with popularity, he would have said. There was a faint suggestion of Debussy about it. It had a persistent undertone of unrest running through it that remained in his head afterwards, associated with a too appealing voice and a strange little face that reflected the mood of the music. She turned to him at the conclusion of the short verse, one hand still passing over the concluding chords.

"It have very much the *Zigeune Stimmung*, don't you think? The character of the melody is Oriental—they tell us the gipsies are of Oriental origin—and the song itself express, I think, the soul of the gipsy: 'I love you, yet I cannot stay with you.' You understand the words as I sing them?" She gave him an interrogative glance, then repeated:

"I belong to the earth and sky,
The wind and the open sea.
As the birds are free to fly
I must be free.

"You see, it is the call of the *Wanderlust* that is in the gypsy blood. The second verse has a changed, a quicker, movement." She paused a moment, recalling it.

"The earth is my bed, and over my head
The roof that I choose is blue.
I love you as the wild thing loves,
Yet I cannot stay with you.

"You see, the gypsy feels the walls of a home as a prison. As we other peoples have *Heimweh*, the gypsy has *Wanderlust*. And so this Sylva, the Spanish gypsy, although she love Emmanuel, the call of the wild life come to her and she cannot stay with her lover."

In spite of the fascination of her expressive face, of which Waring

was acutely conscious as she talked, the interest of the thing she was saying held his attention, although he only replied—banally, he again felt—"That is very interesting." Then, as he watched her, his thought took a turn down a by-path that presented itself to his consciousness. With uncharacteristic directness he expressed it:

"I think that is a part you are particularly able to understand."

"How do you mean?"

"The spell of the gypsy life, the instinct to remain unbound, is characteristic of the artist of your profession, is n't it? The life apparently draws a woman more compellingly than the hearthstone."

He noticed that her interest dropped perceptibly. "It is true, no doubt, that actresses are not the best *Hausfrauen*. But is it not a pretty little song?"

"As you sing it," he responded, "it is much more than that. Dare I ask for that second verse?"

For answer she turned back to the keyboard and began improvising upon the theme, saying as she did so, "I don't know if I entirely remember." Then, having precluded to the beginning of the melody, she sang the second verse, and as Waring watched her the identification of her with the idea of the gypsy grew upon him with a sense of discomfort. When she had finished, his formal thanks were in a perceptibly different key from the one in which he had started.

Then she rose with her inexpressible light movement, saying, "I show you my idea for the gypsy costume." She returned almost immediately, carrying a skirt of a peculiar Chinese vermilion. He noticed a needle neatly set in where the unfinished sewing had stopped.

"Did you make this?"

She nodded. "I cut it without pattern." He detected a note of pride in her announcement. "It is just for to show my idea." She frowned concentratedly as she explained. "The skirt stand out so—stiff—like the skirt in the photograph"—she indicated the Sargent picture—"but the shawl hang soft."

"I will take this color for the keynote," Waring replied, "and work out the right background and fixings. It will be most interesting. We can perhaps do it together—or am I imposing upon you?"

"Indeed, you are very good"—her tone became formal again. "But do not if it makes difficult." Then her eyes again grew vivid with her interest. "And for the indoor scene at the palace of the king—the stately dance—it seems to me since the opera is of old times—no particular century—it is nice to make the costumes of the period of Velasquez—it is so beautiful. The skirt not quite so great, perhaps," she reflected. She looked up. "And I like the hair dress, don't you?"

He nodded, again smothering his impulse to smile. Then as she turned to study the skirt, evolving, evidently, some scheme it suggested,

her attitude stirred another response. "I should like to paint you," he said suddenly with the painter's abrupt yet impersonal disregard of modulation or prelude. It was not his characteristic manner.

She held the skirt off, studying it. "You paint also peoples?"

He laughed. "Did you think I was a painter of scenery?"

To his delight, she blushed faintly. "Of course not. But I do not know you are a portrait painter."

"Neither am I precisely. But occasionally I manage to trap some one into posing for me. I dare say I could not get you. But I should like to try."

"Perhaps some time we arrange it," she conceded.

"It would be hard to decide how to do it," he reflected. "You are so full of suggestions. Just now you might have been young Cleopatra—Bernard Shaw's Cleopatra." The lighting of her face and her quick "Oh, yes," showed her recognition of his allusion. "The difficulty would be to get at the real fact of you."

She smiled, and gave an artist's answer: "Is that necessary? Is it not enough to paint what I suggest?"

She looked up, their eyes met an instant—a communication of mental understanding—then hers returned to her vermilion skirt and his glanced aside. "Then—to begin at the beginning of the bewildering series of suggestions," he said; "but you would n't give me time enough I am afraid."

"There must be somewhere a beginning," was her reply to that.

"Well, then, that delectable little thing you are wearing in the first act of 'The Green Flower'—the wide hat with the green ribbons."

Her eyes suddenly crinkled at the corners with delight. "I design that also myself. It is a nice pretty costume, I think." She made a quaint, expressive gesture. "And that is well, for I myself am not pretty. When I am a little girl my father say to me, 'You shall never be beautiful, *Herzchen*, so you must at least be wise.'"

He was silent, marvelling at the impulsive outbreak of young frankness. She had unquestionably spoken with sincerity. She looked up from the skirt, which had again engaged her attention, challenging his opinion with eyes unmistakably practical.

"The color change a little in theatre," she remarked.

He smiled as he rose. "I am sure we are going to accomplish wonders. In fact, I am convinced that you would easily become a dangerous rival."

She smiled again. "I love to think costumes. When I am a little girl my father would take me to the galleries, and always when I go home I try to dress my dolls like the ladies in the pictures."

"That would seem not to have been very long ago," Waring again responded involuntarily to the childish effect of her.

She glanced up with a sparkle in her eyes, holding up her hand with the gesture of a mischievous Pierrot. "You—you are as bad as an Austrian. You make all the time compliments."

He took her outstretched hand, then, following an impulse, afterwards inexplicable to him, he bent and kissed it. As he raised his head, he realized an expression of withdrawal in her eyes. They seemed to have become suddenly cold and veiled, a look that brought the oblique accent to her eyelids.

"It is not your custom in America, I believe," she said.

"But it is yours, in Austria," he defended himself.

"But we are not now in Austria, and you are not Austrian."

"Forgive me if it seemed an impertinence. My feeling, I assure you, was quite remote from that."

She made a formal acknowledgment, smiling yet distant, and he withdrew, wondering if he had offended her.

When he had left her she seemed still to be with him. He was unable to shake off the memory of her. A sensitive little face of quick lights and shadows, yet setting easily into a soft inscrutability. A strange little face! In repose it had something of the inarticulate brooding mystery of the East.

He pulled himself together with a frown then, realizing suddenly that he had let himself be carried several blocks past his corner.

V.

DURING the following week Waring did an inexplicable thing,—he went twice to see "The Green Flower." He did not apologize or attempt to justify his act to himself; the introspective mood temporarily and abnormally developed by the Angela episode had vanished. He had reverted to the normal, self-unconscious male. "The music was n't half bad," he had explained to Newcomb, who met him the second time on his way out. "Rather an amusing show." "Had n't supposed it was your sort," Newcomb had replied in faint surprise. Somewhat to Waring's relief—yet why should he care?—Newcomb had not offered to accompany him. In spite of the unanalyzed nature of his interest, Waring recognized that he went to the theatre to see Zelda Breslau. He was not conscious of any significance in the fact that he had not mentioned that to Newcomb. The girl's art interested him. That was the extent of his self-admission. He had not taken note of the fact that tones of her voice, expressions of her face, images of her as she danced came to him at irrelevant periods during the day. Finally one afternoon about a week after his visit he decided that he needed to consult her again about the Spanish costumes. He decided it quite suddenly as he sat in his studio staring at the terra cotta figure of a Tanagra dancer on a shelf. It was an admirable reproduction in

colored plaster that he had picked up in a shop on the Rue Bonaparte on his last trip to Paris. And for the last few days whenever he had looked at it the drift of the figure had recalled Zelda Breslau. He went directly out without telephoning to find if she was at home. He had a sudden, irrational sense of haste that he did not pause to investigate. It was like the impetus of sudden release from a spring. He fretted at the delay in crossing the street caused by a police parade, yet it was not like Waring to get annoyed at trifles. He gave his card to the hotel clerk, who called his name into the telephone connected with Zelda Breslau's apartment. Then a sudden fear of being refused caused him to add, "Say that it is on business about the costuming of the new opera." Word came back for him to go up.

As he reached the door of her apartment he found it half open. The sound of the band attached to the policemen's parade came through the open window directly opposite the door. He caught sight of a little girl leaning out at what seemed a perilous angle. He rushed into the room and caught her by the arm.

"Look out, little girl; don't you know it is n't safe to lean out so far?"

Then he broke off abruptly, for the little girl had turned an amazed face upon him. "Little girl!" she repeated. Then she began to laugh uncontrollably, a young, infectious laugh. "Do you ever see a 'little girl' in a dress like this, I like to know?" She held out the scant, old-fashioned white skirt and the narrow pink sash ribbons. He noticed then the white stockings and fiat black slippers. "I am, then, a little girl forty years old!" Then she explained. "It is a new costume for the first act. The old one is all worn up." She turned from the window and walked into the room facing him. "Now I explain myself. How do you come here?"

"Why," Waring explained, "I sent up my name, and word came back to come up."

"*Ach, ja,*"—a light broke over her face. "I know. Hedwig she cannot speak much English. She understood the woman from the costumer, who comes this afternoon. I send for her. The dress is a little bit short."

Waring laughed. "To-day I am a dressmaker! Last time you accused me of being a scene-painter."

"*Nein,* no," she protested; "I did not."

"I admit my entrance was abrupt. But you seemed to be falling out of the window."

"I have a very good balance," she remarked gravely.

"I did not know it was you," he apologized.

She laughed again. "And now the procession is all past. And I love a procession!"

"I will get up one especially for you, and you shall choose the costumes. I am sure we can improve upon the policemen."

Her smile responded to his nonsense, but she did not carry the little play farther. "You come again to speak of the costumes for the new opera?"

He nodded absently. The calculating look of the painter had come into his eyes. She was irresistible in that dress.

She regarded him dubiously. "Or of the sceneries, perhaps?"

"On the whole, I believe it was the sceneries," he agreed.

She studied him a moment. "You are laughing at me." Her tone became formal; she turned as if to go. "You will excuse me while I change my costume?"

"No, please," he begged. "You have no idea—or perhaps you have—how charming it is on you. Please keep it on."

She looked at him gravely. "You make your profession excuse," she said.

"For what?"

"To pay me all the time silly compliments."

"I will try not to, if they offend you." He tried to speak with his conventional manner, but the utterly ungrown-up look of her in the quaint dress unconsciously provoked a smile from him. Her manner became instantly cold, but he found himself unable to take that seriously. It amused him like the attempt of a child to maintain dignity.

"Excuse me. I take off my costume. Then, if it is necessary, we talk business."

"If you are really expecting the costumer—the true one, not an unworthy impostor like myself—you will give yourself unnecessary trouble. Please stay as you are. I'll not make any more personal remarks. You see, this is the costume I have wanted to paint you in. You must forgive a painter's informality. It is impossible not to see people—especially certain people—as subjects."

Some little amusement fluttered in her face, passing into gravity. As he met her eyes he was conscious of a baffling quality in them that he had felt at their first meeting. It came to him with the thought that it would take a long time to know her, to get at the depths under the various shimmering suggestions of her surface. Then all at once another thought smote him. Could it be possible that he was in danger of— He thrust the thought back with savage scorn. It would be more preposterous than the Angela aberration. It was impossible. He would do well to remember Angela! Yet the thought of Angela had somehow no power to chill him, as the memory of past follies can sometimes cool and restrain us. He turned sharply away from her. "I am at a disadvantage with you," he said.

She gave him a side glance. "I don't understand you."

"With all your bewildering suggestions of what you may or might be, I know you and I don't know you."

From the way she looked at him he fancied that she had understood him incompletely, for in spite of the facility with which she had acquired English, it must still present an occasional barrier to her. Then he wondered if the unrevealing childish look were not just a mask of her profession.

"You wanted to ask me something about the costumes," she suggested.

He hesitated and looked down at her. "I want to say, since you have objected to my personalities—and no doubt they are in quite as bad taste as they seem to you—that they are n't just bad manners on my part. Can't you see how it comes about? You don't seem very grown up, really. And then I see you in the theatre, and I get a sense of knowing you almost intimately. Of course I don't, and you are probably something quite different from what you seem to me."

She answered unexpectedly: "How, then, do I seem to you?"

He hesitated. She smiled and looked down. The smile seemed to centre about her eyelids. "I know I am not"—she hesitated for the word, then captured it—"consistent. But I do not ask compliments to my voice, my eyes—those things you and all men speak of. I just wonder how I myself seem to you."

She dropped onto the arm of a chair as she spoke, her arm over the back, her attitude full of a young grace, the quaint costume giving an added touch of charm. He looked down at her, again stirred uncomfortably. Her vividness, her self-possession, disconcerted him.

"You only ask to amuse yourself," he said. She shook her head. He answered after a moment indirectly: "What I mean is, that an actress of course reveals something of herself in her interpretation. But it is an incomplete portrait, of course, and therefore misleading. She shows how she feels about certain sorts of things—principally emotional things, they being the natural interest in the theatre——"

"I do not see that you tell me about myself," she put in with a side glance at him.

But he continued his analysis: "It is really only a glimpse of one phase of you that I can divine in that way. Yet I come away from the theatre familiar with your little ways, the sound of your voice, and it leaves me with this false sense of knowing you. Then I come here to you, and I am a stranger, a man you have met twice, and I realize suddenly that you are a woman I do not know after all—a woman, though you look and seem so often like a child—with many reserves and the most subtle and mature perceptions. And—well, it is rather upsetting. So won't you try to make allowances for me if I make blunders?"

She pushed her foot to and fro over a figure in the carpet. It was encased in a dainty slipper that was not new and had taken on the character of her foot. "It interests me—what you say about an actress and her art," she said.

A sudden longing to get at the reality of her seized him. He spoke abruptly. "I wonder how large a place it fills in your life. Is it everything to you—your art?"

He realized that it had a banal sound after he had said it—a feeling that his little habits of speech had given him before in talking with her. She would have an eliminative effect upon his conversation, he could see that. He could not talk with her in serviceable phrases, as had been his way with women.

"It is not everything, of course. I like to live my life, to see other artists, to do all the things that are interesting."

Again her self-possession tended to his discomposure. "What I meant was," he began, "it seems to me that with an actress who is essentially an artist, her art—because it is an emotional, expressive thing, and a thing the essence of which is its power over other people's emotions—it seems as if it might take the place to her of personal relations and emotions—of the thing that a man means in a woman's life. Do you know what I mean?"

"I think so."

"As if—as I said the other day—the call of the life, like the *Wanderlust* instinct in the gypsy, might be stronger than anything else."

It was a moment before she answered. "I think the absorption in her art that you speak of—or the fascination, excitement of the life—may take the place of coquetry to a woman, but not of a real affection." She glanced up at him, adding in a tone entirely unsentimental, "Why, how could it?"

Then an amusing thought seemed to strike her. Again he was conscious of the quaintly humorous standpoint from which she had a disconcerting tendency to view life. Her eyes became twinkling stars of mirth. "How silly if life is like opera! Suppose"—she made a little grandiose dramatization—"we go all the time singing, 'I hate you! I shall kill you! I love you!'" She colored each sentence with light, irresistible caricature. "I tell a man I love him, so"—she began a few bars of Grieg's "I Love You," then, running over to the piano, dropped into the accompaniment and sang through its brief measures with all the passion and longing the melody contains in her peculiarly appealing voice, yet exaggerated, sentimentalized. She looked up with a little laugh at the end, but Waring did not smile. It was one of those parodies verging upon, mingling with, reality, that have in themselves a curious and disturbing effect even without the added emotional complications existing in Waring's case.

"You can caricature with the thing that touches one in your voice," he said gravely. "I wonder how much reality there is in you."

She glanced up at him, her hands still running over the melody.

"In me?"—she seemed to study him a moment, her amused smile lingering. "Well, my art must create the effect of reality. It does not require that I also shall be real."

"I dare say that's it. You suggest all sorts of qualities—even to tragedy—without probably possessing them."

She moved away from him, laughing. "This is the second time you meet me—and you know already my soul!" She delivered the last two words with a mock grandiloquence. "I am then so easy to understand!"

"You make me very conscious of your profession," he answered, still without smiling.

She studied him a moment longer with her inscrutable smile, then, saying merely, "*So*—I know now your opinion of me." She put out her hand. "And now we waste so much time talking, you must go, for I have yet an appointment before my supper. You will come another time?"

He took her hand, conscious of a little thrill at touching it. "I wonder if some time when you are out you could come to my studio instead? I will have the model for the scenes there any time after to-morrow, and you can judge better of the whole effect from that than from the colored sketch. But of course, if you would rather, I can have it sent here."

She replied instantly, "No, I can perfectly well come. Will Friday afternoon after lunch be a good time for you?"

"Any time that you come will be a good time for me," he replied, lightly enough to constitute no further offense of familiarity.

"I come, then, at three o'clock," she said definitely. "You leave your address—or it is in the telephone book?"

He took a card out of his case. "I will give you this so that you won't go to my business place by mistake. I will put my telephone number on it."

While he was writing it she remarked, "Do you know that I sing to-morrow for a benefit—for the crippled children?"

He glanced up. "No. I have n't happened to see the announcement. Thank you for telling me. I shall certainly be there."

"It is at the Knickerbocker Theatre," she said. "I sing some pretty little songs, French and English. Perhaps you like them."

He smiled. "I think we can be reasonably sure of that." Then he handed her the card. He had recovered his usual manner. "I shall telephone Friday morning to remind you," he said.

She gave him one of her impersonal smiles. "It is not necessary. I have a very good memory."

VI.

THE audience assembled for the benefit of the crippled children was not a typical New York audience. Waring came in a few minutes before the curtain rose upon an interesting one-act play presented by the one American actress who consistently aims to reach a mature public. During its performance he missed the inappropriate mirth and naïve comment which such intelligent efforts seem to provoke in the average metropolitan theatre-goer. He cynically noted the occasion as one of the few in his theatre-going experience in his native town when his neighbors were not of the sort who repeat aloud appealing phrases, jokes, and conclusions of sentences, record audibly the actors' movements and slyly anticipate the obvious dénouement. The audience, in short, instead of being the usual New York conglomeration of second-generation Hebrews and Irish immigrants and newly prosperous Americans of crude and simple traditions, was the special matinée audience, inclining to the fashionable, therefore more sophisticated, less attentive.

Immediately after the conclusion of the play Griselda came out to sing a group of French songs, and he realized all over again with the force of a new impression her little incomparable air, her poise. There was nothing about her that suggested the studied effects of the theatre. She was like a wild flower in a milliner's window, in contrast with the other performers. Then again the tormenting doubt born of the nature of her art arose in his mind. Might not that simple, unconscious air she had, like that youthful yet probably sophisticated hat, be only a development of the rare art instinct she possessed? Then he noticed that she carried the bunch of sweet peas he had sent her.

Her first song was one of those typically French trifles of implication, piquant rather than *risqué*, the point lying at the disposal of the art that conveyed it. Her accent, he noted, was perfect, her style full of that quality which we call French, but which is so rarely found in French singers. It was warmly applauded, being, Waring reflected, the kind of thing that that particular audience was qualified to appreciate. Her next was a fantastic Columbine and Pierrot song, a flower and moonbeam tragedy. Glancing at his program he saw that the next was the "*Paimpolaise*," Botrel's sombre Breton fisherman's song:

*J'aime Paimpol et sa falaise,
Son vieux clocher, son grand pardon.
J'aime surtout la Paimpolaise
Qui m'attend au pays breton.*

The sad little refrain seemed to hold all the doom and mystery of the sea and the grim ever-present tragedy of the simple lives dependent upon it. He actually felt a shiver down his spine and a choking in his throat when she came to the last verse:

*Puis, quand la vague le designe,
L'appelant de sa grosse voix,
Le brave Islandais se resigne
En faisant un signe de croix
Et le pauvre gâs, quand vient le trepas,
Serrant une medaille qu' il baise,
Glisse dans l'occean sans fond
En songeant a la Paimpolaise
Qui 'l'attend au pays breton.*

He seemed to see the whole pageant of the tragedy of them that go down to the sea in ships, as she sang it. Yet even through the flippant unrealism of "The Green Flower" he had foreseen that she had this power.

He waited, impatient and inattentive, through several apparently popular intervening numbers, for she was to sing again—Solveg's Song, in an improvised, semi-dramatic presentation of the Peer Gynt suite. He sat through the last act preceding it—a monologue by a self-satisfied young favorite of the season—with an annoyed sense of being surrounded with a disturbing noise. He marvelled at the copious applause that followed the performance. Then he heard the woman behind him tell her companion that the Peer Gynt selection was from an opera by Tolstoi, a fact which her companion was inclined to dispute, contending that it was a play which had been written for Mansfield. While they were still arguing the curtain went up upon Griselda in a gray Norwegian peasant costume, sitting by a spinning-wheel outside the doorway of a hut. Then she sang that most difficult of simple songs as he had never heard it sung by one of the great singers—as Solveg herself might have sung it; he thought—with all the strange, still Northern quality that the songs of that master of Norway contain, dream pictures of its deep waters and snow-topped mountains. It was to have been her last appearance, and Waring had intended to leave after it, but as he bent to reach for his belongings one of those facile individuals provided for emergencies of announcement upon such occasions came out for the evident purpose of revealing some readjustment in the afternoon's plans. He explained first the unavoidable absence of Miss Gladys Balstier, who was to have done Anitara's dance, then disclosed the more than consoling fact that Mademoiselle Breslau had kindly volunteered to dance in her stead.

Waring reseated himself during the commendatory applause that followed this announcement. Then after a due pause the curtain went up upon a background of trees, the stage darkened to a night effect illumined by torches set in the earth. A group of women in Oriental costume squatted in a semicircle upon the ground, holding cymbals. Then the orchestra began the throbbing accent of the opening bars, and she fitted in as if blown across the stage with a twinkling of sandaled

feet. Her scant costume was a blending of tans, reds, and gold, and the rhythm of the music was in her movements. The sense of her as one with it grew upon him. Sometimes her arms and feet moved in different time-beats, like the two parts of the melody. She was a visible embodiment of the picture of the music. How she had taken on the character of it! The appealing child, the naughty Pierrot, the inarticulate tragedy of the peasant—all had disappeared. She was a little pagan brown creature of the east.

It occurred to him as he captured his hat and umbrella from under the seat and painfully made his escape with the reluctant coöperation of his neighbors, to send a card into her dressing-room, and impulsively he did so, waiting in the foyer for his answer. In a few minutes word came back that she would receive him.

She was already in her street costume and had an air of being ready to depart as he entered. She put out her hand cordially, saying at once:

“I thank you for the sweet peas. Do you know I love them more as any other flowers?”

He found himself faintly embarrassed. “I remember noticing them in your room, and they seem like you.”

She glanced up with a smile from fastening her glove. “How do you mean?”

“Their fragrance, their many colors, and their little wings, I suppose. There is always a suggestion of wings about you—as if you might fly up and off if you took it into your head.” She laughed as if entertained at the idea. “But after Anitara I thought that they should have been something different.”

“What then should Anitara have?”

“Some strange flower that would smell like orange blossoms but have color.”

“I don’t know such a flower,” she said with her trivial, childish air that he found so indescribably adorable.

“I don’t know any one like you, so no one flower could express you. You are both ‘Anitara’ and ‘Solveg.’”

She received her wrap from Hedwig, who, Waring realized dimly, had a strange, unrelated effect in her outdoor garments; then turned to him. “Do you go now?”

He nodded. “It would be anti-climax to remain.”

“Is there somewhere I can leave you perhaps? I have a seat in my cab. It is Hedwig’s afternoon out, and I take already too much of her time.”

He accepted with a sense of joy in the arrangement that would have seemed quite disproportionate had he paused to analyze it. His studio, he explained, lay between the theatre and her hotel.

The driver, it seemed to Waring, was inspired by a most unnecessary sense of haste. A curious dumbness had suddenly overtaken him. He wanted to tell her how wonderful she had been, but, as the complete grasp of a subject affects certain sensitively perceptive natures with an inability to express themselves, he could find no words; and the remarks that he made were the most trivial of commonplaces. As he glanced at her seated beside him she seemed more formal, more remote, than he had felt her at their first meeting. Then, a second after they had started, it seemed to him, the cab stopped before the door of his studio building.

She glanced up at it. "Now I do not get lost when I come Friday," she said as she put out her hand to him.

He detained it a moment to say: "You were very wonderful to-day, but I can't seem to express what I feel about it. I am still inside of the picture, and I can't step back to talk about it."

She smiled. "Then when you step out you shall tell me."

VII.

FROM that time until Friday afternoon an inexplicable restlessness possessed Waring. He could not paint, and with difficulty concentrated his mind upon the business problems that presented themselves for solution. Allesandro, his incomparable valet, preparer of his breakfast, washer of his paint brushes, and custodian of his apartment, had his private suspicions. Being an Italian, his scent for affairs of the heart was highly developed. He had followed the course of the Angela affair with the deepest interest, but also—being an Italian—its transient nature had been no shock to him.

One of the two evenings between the benefit for crippled children and the time set for her promised visit to his studio, Waring had spent at "The Green Flower."

A peculiar psychologic condition had overtaken him. In the middle of his work Griselda Breslau would invade his thoughts. Sometimes it was as she danced, elusive, elfin. Sometimes the personal sense of her was as vivid as a perfume. It was as if he could reach out his hand and touch her.

But he had not yet given his condition a name, and until that moment it is possible to preserve at least the theory of emotional independence.

As he sat waiting for her in his studio he glanced constantly at the clock, his ear strained for the sound of foot-steps in the hall. Once a woman's step approached and passed his door, and he realized after she had gone that his heart-beat was far from normal. His eye wandered about his studio over his few well-chosen belongings. He wondered if it would please her. The time of waiting began to seem interminable.

But another glance at the clock assured him that she was only ten minutes late. Then he heard her knock. Her step had been so light it had been imperceptible even to his waiting ear.

Her little figure, standing there, seemed small in his spacious studio. She looked about with a smile. "What a beautiful studio! It is so—uncrowded."

His face lighted. "Do you feel that way about it, too? I hate a lot of stuff about me."

She stood still, her eyes wandering about the room, while he looked at her. He noticed that her simple dress had none of the art of her professional costumes. Such young, unconsidered clothes. They might have been worn by an English school-girl. She did not suggest at that moment anything of her various, illusive, picturesque personality. She was just simply and somehow touchingly a young girl.

Then she discovered the Tanagra dancing figure and went up to it. "Oh, I love that one!" she exclaimed.

He took it down, and after a moment's hesitation held it out to her. "Would you like it?"

"Oh," she laughed, "you are like Spanish gentlemen. I don't dare admire."

"But it is just a little fake thing I picked up in Paris. It has no actual value. It would make me very happy to have you take it if you care for it."

Her manner of receiving it reminded him of a child accepting a toy it has admired without the hope of possession, yet there was the appreciative light of the artist in her eyes. "Thank you so much. May I really keep it? I like so much to have it."

Waring felt absurdly happy. "If I could make a Tanagra of you as you lift your skirts and blow off in that midsummer dance of yours—it would live as many hundred years as this. It would be the most wonderful Tanagra ever modelled."

"Why don't you do it?" she asked with her gay little inconsequence.

"I will try some time, if you will let me."

"Try now," she suggested trivially, walking away from him to examine a Japanese print. Then she caught sight of a large canvas standing against the wall on the other side of the room and moved forward to get the proper angle of light on it. "Oh, what is that? I like it! Is it yours? What beautiful color!"

He nodded, strangely happy in his realization of the genuineness of her tribute, and pulled the canvas into a better light.

"It was a scheme I had for a mural decoration," he explained. "There were to have been six of them—the Quest of Ceres. This is the only one I finished. It is the idea of Persephone and the Pomegranate seed."

She stared at the picture thoughtfully. "I don't just remember—there was some reason why she could not go back——"

Waring explained: "Pluto abducted her—you remember? And when Ceres wanted to get her back, Jupiter said she could return if she had not eaten anything while she was there. But she had taken just one small pomegranate seed, so she had to stay."

She listened with her concentrated young air of interest.

"Poor Persephone! It was n't fair. No one warned her. She did not understand when she ate it." She glanced up at him. "Where do you get that landscape?"

He laughed. "I have not made a personally conducted trip through those regions like our friend Dante. I got it here"—he tapped his forehead—"aided by my recollection of a grim, barren bit of wood in New England, near my mother's home."

Her eyes considered him, then passed on to his picture. "I think it is all yours," she decided. "I don't believe if I go there I see a landscape of Hades."

"Not because you lack imagination, certainly."

Her eyes still studied the picture. "It is because you have the imagination of the painter, which is not mine. Yet you see not only colors, like so many painters. You feel also the idea. How wonderful is that touch of red in the pomegranate in her hand!"

"I am so glad you like it," he repeated.

"I love it—that is what you say in America when you like a thing very much—*nicht?* I love it." Her little intense, foreign reiteration of the significant word had a curious effect upon Waring.

"You can't say that word quite with an English tongue," he said.

"What word?"

"Love." Then, feeling suddenly self-conscious, he added more lightly, "A regular verb in all languages, yet they say no foreigner can pronounce it quite correctly."

She had the idle, amused look of a child listening to a story. "Is that so? It is strange."

"It is also symbolic," he said.

She looked up with a quickly responsive smile. "You mean we love different ways, we of different nations?" A moment later she added, turning again to his picture, "And the pomegranate seed—it is also symbolic—of many things. Of the small thing that has great consequences. There is some one little thing that you do, and always afterwards everything is different and you cannot go back to where you were before."

How she understood everything one said, Waring reflected, seeing the thing from all possible angles, and the delicious incongruity of it with that young exterior! "But not always does it leave us in the world

of shadows," she concluded cheerfully. "Sometimes we would not go back if we could."

"You have grown as wise as your father wished you to be," he said, wondering upon what experience of her brief, unknown past she had founded her little generalization. Then she moved suddenly over to a plaster bas relief in a corner.

"What is this?" she asked in a subdued tone. He glanced at her curiously.

"You like it?"

"It is the work of genius," she said, in the same voice.

"You are right," Waring replied briefly. "It is the work of a young friend of mine who is dead. His life was a failure. He went down into the depths, poor boy—and died there."

She stood looking up at it, her hands loosely clasped before her, a rapt, luminous look upon her face. She seemed to him wrapped in a still atmosphere, like light. Her garment of small coquetties, practicalities, disdains, slipped from her. It was as if for the defenseless moment he saw her young soul bare. A sense of reverence came over him. She turned a little toward him, but with her eyes still upon the strange figure that seemed half released from the cosmos-like background.

"It is his life," she said softly, as a child speaks when it is awed, "the struggle, aspiration, what he tried to be."

Waring was curiously moved. "Yes, that is it," was all he found to say. Then she passed on and stopped to examine a tarnished Buddha on a shelf a trifle higher than her head, so that she had to look up at it. His eyes followed her.

Suddenly, in spite of the vibrations of that deeper note still sounding within him, the artist impulse rose to the surface.

"Oh, now you look like Anitara! Could you stand a moment like that, looking up at the Buddha? It has brought out the oblique look about your eyes. Jove! if I can get that!"

"So?"—she referred her pose to him with an inquiring glance, then became immovable while he swiftly caught up red chalk, paper, and board.

"I can't believe that you are all German, any way," he said. "I think you are a changeling."

"What is that?"

"A child left by the fairies in place of a mortal baby."

"Oh, *ein Wechselbalg*," she translated. "Your word is prettier, I think."

"Or else," he went on, laying in the figure with long, sure sweeps, "you are a reincarnation."

"Of what—of whom?"

"Many people."

She shook her head. "I don't like to believe that."

"But it would explain you so logically—the many things you suggest."

She still seemed to reject the idea. "I like to be just myself."

He laughed. "Well—yourself would be the result of all these lives. Only there would be some trace, some memory, of each in you. You were somebody in Egypt—there are shadows of the desert about your eyelids—and somebody else in Japan, and—oh, many things beside."

She smiled with droll distaste. "I don't like that—I am just one plain, simple person."

He smiled. "Anything but that."

She continued. "And I don't like the people one loves in this world to be lost with it."

He did not respond for a moment. When he did his tone had lost its lightness. "You might keep one lover through all your incarnations. The Japanese believe that."

But the flickering response upon her face was not serious. "I don't think so much of lovers."

He worked for some minutes in silence, but the spirit with which he had started the sketch seemed to be slipping from him. He had come to the face. Then he began to erase and correct. Finally he threw his board and pencil from him with an exclamation.

She spoke without moving—it occurred to him that she was accustomed to posing, and the thought gave him a twinge. "What is it? You spoil it?"

He walked to the opposite side of the room, his face disturbed. "I can't do it."

"Why, then, am I so difficult? I see here some very good portraits."

"You would naturally be hard to get hold of. It is impossible for me."

"Why is that?"

He did not answer. She walked over to the table and picked up the unfinished sketch. "I think it is like me."

But he took it from her and tore it in two. With a little shrug she passed over to a further table, where the model of a stage setting was standing. "Oh, I do not see this before!" she exclaimed. It was a miniature representation of a Spanish interior, the open court showing at the back through the arched doorway.

"This is what you ask me to see?" she asked.

"It was my excuse," Waring replied in an odd tone, as if he were addressing himself. Not noticing—possibly not hearing—his speech she sat down and drew the pasteboard model toward her, looking into

every corner, moving the small doors and bending down so that she could look through the tiny windows. She looked up with a delighted laugh.

"Is n't it—cute!"

He laughed in spite of the disturbed condition of his emotions. "If you say that in England they will know you for an American."

She gave him a glance from over the top of the model. "I don't mind."

"That is kind of you."

She laughed back at him. It was impossible not to respond to her gaiety. "You look just like a child with a toy house," he said.

She sat back then more formally. "You wish to speak of the costumes in this act?"

"It was about the color of the costumes," he said, after a moment. "I had intended to use pearly white with touches of red—did I tell you? But I thought with all this marble it might be more interesting to use a sort of blue-green instead. What do you think?"

She considered. "It sound very nice."

He rummaged about on the table for his water-color design, and handed it to her. "You can get the color effect better from this rough sketch."

Her keen glance took in the design with instant understanding. "It is much better. The touch of red will come in the same for accent, and to repeat the red flowers outside in the court."

"You talk like a painter," he exclaimed. "Have you known many artists?"

"Quite a good many. My father is an artist."

"Ah, that helps to explain you," he said.

She gave him a Pierrot glance. "Do I, then, require so much explanation?"

"A great deal," he responded. "Copious marginal notes. You are very bewildering."

Without commenting upon his answer, she gave way to one of her little outbreaks of confidence. "And my mother was a singer. But not a great, well-known singer, for she lose her voice when I am born."

"Perhaps she gave it to you," he said.

She shook her head. "It was more beautiful than mine, my father say. I was but two years old when she died. I am the youngest except for one brother. We are brought up by my father and my oldest sister."

The simple suggestion of her history touched him, but he did not comment. He had discovered that like a shy child she made her fragmentary confidences inadvertently and became reticent with questioning.

"Your voice has the supreme gift, in any case," he said.

"What is that?"

"It can reach one's heart."

She did not answer. Glancing at her, he saw that she was again frowningly absorbed in the intricacies of the miniature villa. "I see myself in there," she explained with a little gesture.

He smiled. "I also have seen you there."

She dropped her eyes as it were drawing down the curtain. "And was your mother also Austrian?" he pursued.

She rose, pushing the paper model from her. "She was half Hungarian."

"Ah!" he triumphed. "That helps still further to explain you!"

"Another marginal note?"—she lifted her expressive eyebrows. "Why do you say that? I do not usually like Hungarians."

"Well, if you reject the incarnation theory—the strain of Magyar or Oriental must be the thing I feel in you. You have gypsy blood—that is it! That is how you can sing that song the way you do."

She only smiled and walked over to examine an old piece of Italian carved wood, touching it delicately. "Is there another setting you like to show me?"

"Yes, I have the model of the first scene, if you want to see it—the public square with the fountain, where you make your entrance as the gypsy dancer."

Suddenly she gave a little backward and sideways twist to her body, making at the same time the motion with her wrist and hand of slowly opening and waving a fan. "I walk like Spanish gypsy," she said.

He stood with unconsciously folded arms as she came toward him. Her eyelids were drooped with a simulation of Spanish languor, but underneath laughed the naughty eyes of Pierrot. He half turned from her as she stopped before him.

"You don't look at me."

He did not answer, for all at once in that brief moment of her little dramatization he had seen it all clearly, the thing she had done to him.

He looked up and met her eyes. "I am glad it amuses you," he said. She lifted her eyebrows with a shrug.

"But you will have to amuse yourself at the expense of other men's emotions after this. I am going to keep away from you."

She shook her head with a smile. "I think I understand English," she said, "but I don't understand this."

"I think you understand very well," he answered, still without looking at her.

"Why do you wish not to see me any more?"

"You know."

"Because you do not want to be the friend of actresses? You have perhaps an aristocratical prejudice against it."

He could not control a smile at the effect of her adjective so seriously uttered even while she made his heart beat out of time.

She drew back then, aloof and cold. "And I also amuse you—by your smile."

He stood looking down at her, torn by a sudden desire to take her in his arms—an impulse half such as he might have felt toward a child, half as toward a woman. "Don't you understand? I smile for the same reason that I am afraid of breaking my heart over you—because you are so like an adorable child."

"You shall not talk to me like this." She spoke a little breathlessly.

"I don't want to love you." Waring's tone was even, yet it betrayed the restraint he was putting upon himself. "I won't let myself love you. That is why I must keep away from you. It came to me suddenly just then. I did n't realize before where I was drifting. If I let myself love you, I would want you to marry me. I should want you to leave the stage. I could n't share you with the rest of the world. I'd want you all to myself. I should want all those impossible things that you would never give me, because you are, first of all, an artist."

She had turned from him before he had finished. But when she answered he caught an untranslatable smile. "You are very rapid here in America," she said.

He answered a little breathlessly. "It is not the first time, then, that a man has made love to you the fourth time he has met you."

She shrugged. "The fourth time—often the first!"

He bit his lip. "That is what I mean. I am nothing to you—just a man you have met a few times. I have not the faintest claim upon you. But even if I had, I could not help this sort of thing happening. Yet when you tell me that men feel free to make love to you like that—when I think of the kind of men——" He broke off, then went on again. "If you can do this to me now in this short time—well—you see it is quite time for me to stay away from you."

"I don't see why you stay away from me." He thought he caught a recalling look in her eyes after she had spoken.

Involuntarily he stepped nearer to her. "You don't want me to——" he began.

But she met his eyes tranquilly. "If we plan the costumes together," she suggested.

"It is easy enough to arrange that. I can see that I have been making the designs an excuse to myself. And I know now that you are dangerous to me."

She smiled, and perhaps he imagined the suspicion of a childish quiver about her lips. "Not so dangerous as you perhaps think, for apparently you are not impulsive. And all men"—she paused with a little light indication of scorn for the sex—"they change quickly."

The recollection of Angela rose grimly in his mind. It was true he had changed quickly enough once. And, no doubt, he took this passing emotion too seriously. It could be nothing but a superficial infatuation. He did not know the girl's actual self, her soul, as one phrased it. Well, but did he not? Was it not the very indescribable essence of her personality that was the real power of her fascination? And Angela—how was one to compare that incomparable piece of idiocy on his part with this experience? Angela had never once moved him as keenly as this girl had that very first evening in the theatre. It was absurd even to think of Angela in comparison with this woman who could reach out and touch him through a thousand avenues of allurements.

"Oh, these men!" she characterized with an indescribable mocking gesture. "One day they kill themselves for you—the next you hear they marry. It is not necessary to take them seriously. It is not necessary for them to take themselves seriously."

He shook his head. "My instinct warns me against you," he said.

"Instinct!" she repeated, questioning the idea or the word, he did not know which.

"The instinct of self-preservation," he said. "The thing that warns us against the person or thing that has power to hurt us."

"And you expect to know love without hurt?" The look on her face, momentarily serious, stirred him to deeper agitation.

"There are degrees and ways of being hurt. To love a woman who is an artist, especially a woman whose profession is the stage, would be little else but hurt. It would be madness."

He fancied that he heard her draw a little breath as if she sighed. "It is always the same. There is no way to escape. To love is to suffer."

"You speak as if you knew." He turned upon her suddenly.

"And you have not discovered that fact also?" was her oblique answer.

"I have never really been in love, strange as it may seem at my age——"

"But you have thought that you loved."

"Yes."

"It is what I said," she triumphed. "It seems always so afterwards—that you have not loved. But at the time!" Her pantomime was expressive.

"You do know, then."

After a moment she looked up and nodded. "Yes, Mr. Waring, I also have thought that I loved—afterwards to find my mistake."

"I wonder what he was like." His brows contracted with the thought.

"Oh,"—she moved off with a light disclaiming movement—"he was a man like others."

"I don't believe any man that you thought you loved for even a moment could withstand you—against his reason, his will, and his conscience."

"You think so? In any case, I do not have all those things against me."

"They are bound to be," he replied, mistaking her construction, "with a man who takes his life seriously."

"I mean, I do not choose to have them against me. What kind of a woman do you think want the love of a man against his will, his reason, and his conscience! And now"—she came toward him—"if we have talked all about the costumes I go."

He started. "Don't go yet. Allesandro will make us some tea."

"I thank you, but I do not lead the life of you and your friends. I have some little thing before the theatre and take neither tea nor coffee."

"Of course you will have coffee. How stupid of me! We can have coffee."

"I thank you, but I speak the fact. In the afternoon I do not take either. Good-by."

She put out her hand, but he said, "I am going down with you."

"I keep my cab."

"But you are going to let me put you into it." He affected not to see her hand.

She flashed a smile at him. "The first time you see me you kiss my hand. The fourth time you do not take it at all! You have strange ways, you Americans!"

His eyes were drawn to the little rejected hand. She gave it a glance of commiseration. He caught it up, then dropped it again. "You are flirting with me."

"I don't know that word," she said.

He laughed without mirth. "You at least know its meaning." As she stood in an attitude of waiting at his door he opened it, then paused as a thought struck him.

"Haven't you forgotten your Tanagra lady?"

She gave him a glance. "If we are no longer acquaintances, how is it possible that I take a gift from you?"

"Nonsense!" He went back and, picking up the Tanagra figure, wrapped it hastily in a sheet of drawing paper and handed it to her. She accepted it after a brief hesitation, her inscrutable eyes smiling at him.

"I take it for souvenir of a lost friend," she said with a little instantaneous simulation of pathos.

"I see you appreciate the situation most sympathetically," he remarked shortly. He stood aside, waiting for her to pass through the door, then escorted her to the elevator and down to her cab.

"You do not come to see me again?" she questioned, seated in her cab. She looked absurdly young under her large hat as she waited, leaning forward, for his answer.

He shook his head.

"I am sorry," she said as if she meant it. But she smiled as she nodded good-by to him.

Going back to his studio, he picked up his hat and went out for a long walk, from which he returned moody and taciturn. Allesandro, coming in for instructions for the evening, then attached his suspicions to the small Signorina with the extraordinary eyes. With Italian tact he withheld his characteristic flood of anecdote usually encouraged by Waring, and walked about with the careful tread of one tending the sick.

Also Hedwig, who enjoyed in her position the happiest relations possible between employer and employed, found her mistress uncommonly silent when she came in for her early supper.

"The *gnädiges Fraulein* has been to the studio of the *Herr Gemahler*?" she observed, in German.

Griselda only nodded.

"And saw there the costumes for the new opera?"

"The pictures, Hedwig, not the costumes."

"If the *Herr Gemahler* had a grand beard and a fine mustache he would be altogether handsome."

"I like men who wear neither beard nor mustache," replied Griselda, and Hedwig lifted her eyebrows disapprovingly.

"The *gnädiges Fraulein* becomes altogether American," she said.

"That is not true," Griselda contradicted sharply. "I hate the men of America."

Then Hedwig was wisely silent.

VIII.

FOR the next few days Waring kept away from the theatre, applying himself severely to his tasks. But the third day after Griselda's visit to his studio he found a note from her in his morning mail.

MY DEAR MR. WARING [it read]:

I like once again to consult you about the costume of the third act which we do not discuss already in your studio. Will you come in this Sunday evening? If this time is not convenient to you, call me and we change it.

Sincerely yours,

GRISELDA BRESLAU.

Waring's brows contracted as he read it. A sudden impulse swept him to kiss the signature, half dashing, half childish, with the quaint suggestions of German letters in its formation. He folded it severely and thrust it into his pocket, finding himself unable to destroy it. Then he went to his desk at once and wrote:

MY DEAR M^{lle}. BRESLAU:

I am sorry that it will be impossible for me to call Sunday evening, as I have an engagement out of town. Miss Graham, who is one of the practical designers of the firm that has the contract for the costumes, can call to talk the matter over with you at any time that suits your convenience. You will find her far more intelligent than I am on the subject.

Faithfully yours,

STEPHEN WARING.

When he went out to post the letter, following a sudden, illogical impulse, he stopped in a florist's and ordered a box of sweet peas sent to her address.

Griselda was receiving a call from Mr. Blagden, one of the business managers of the Woodruff Company, when this note was brought to her. Hedwig's watchful eyes detected an unusual gravity in her face, and she frowned forbiddingly at Mr. Blagden as she passed out. He was not a prepossessing person, thick-necked, half bald, with calculating, hard, little eyes peering from a fat, red face—eyes that were wont to rest with a peculiarly disconcerting insolence upon women. A familiar type of the theatrical business man, who believed that every one had his price, and who characterized all honorable sentiments as "bluff." He had expressed his desire informally but peremptorily that morning over the telephone for a business talk with Mademoiselle Breslau—known to Mr. Blagden and the rest of the office either by her last name or her first.

"It's all very well, this high and mighty business"—Mr. Blagden continued his peroration disregarding the fact that Hedwig had not yet left the room. "It sounds fine, but I can tell you, too much of it don't go down in your job. A little friendliness goes a sight further. You can catch more flies with molasses than you can with vinegar."

"I don't understand you," Griselda replied with her foreign formality that Mr. Blagden and the other gentlemen of the office found so confusing.

Mr. Blagden's small, restless eyes glanced sharply in her direction. He lolled back in the unadaptable hotel chair and crossed his legs. "No? Then I will make myself clearer. It is n't just this question of Brody's backing. In this business, no matter how much of a good looker she is, a woman is supposed to be a winner with the men—the men who are going to ante up at the box office. Now, you know your-

self it's men that fill up the house at this kind of a show. It ain't any *matinée* girl business. Now, I ain't butting into your affairs, and I don't say we have any kick coming about the box office receipts, but if you want these fancy ideas of yours carried out about this 'Rose of Seville' and other shows in the future, it's up to you not to turn down gentlemen like Mr. Brody quite so hard. I think it's been explained to you before that he's one of our backers—not just down in black and white, but he puts up for the shows when he takes a fancy to a girl or when you can make him see a good, square business proposition. Now, if you are going to refuse to know him, refuse to have anything to do with him, what inducement do you imagine there is for him to put up for your show?"

Mr. Blagden's English, although she had had several opportunities to familiarize herself with it, still presented linguistic difficulties to Griselda. That may have been the reason that she frowned.

"I am not sure that I entirely understand. I think perhaps you do not manage things as I have been accustomed. In any case I do as I choose outside the theatre. I do not see that the business of the office with this Mr. Brody concerns me."

"All right." Mr. Blagden laughed unpleasantly. "First thing you know you will find other girls busy on your job."

Griselda repeated even more coldly, "I do not understand you."

Mr. Blagden elaborated further. "I don't say you'll be out of a job. You've got enough stock in trade to land something somewhere. But you won't get the soft side. In short, you're extremely likely to find yourself doing one-night stands if you hang on to this pose of being too good to pass around a few smiles to men that has the cash and is ready to hand it out."

Griselda turned Waring's letter absently about in her hands. When she looked up there was an expression that Mr. Blagden could not have translated in her eyes.

"I have no more to say, Mr. Blagden. My personal affairs are my own. They do not concern a business office."

"Just as you say"—Mr. Blagden rose with a flourishing gesture that disclaimed responsibility, but there was an antagonistic light in his eyes. "Brody is ready to put up for your show. If he does n't, you have yourself to thank for it. And when a girl takes the tack you do—why, they just think one thing—that she's no winner. And that's mighty bad business for the girl."

"They may think what they will."

"Just as you say. But I don't say it's good policy for a woman whose business it is to please the public—and that's what you're there for. There's no side-stepping that fact."

"I please the public with my art." It was a tone that might have

reached a man of other traditions than Mr. Blagden's. Its only effect upon him was to anger him.

"Art-rot!" was his answer. "In this kind of a show a woman goes on her looks and her drawing power. You can shy at the facts if you like—but there they are. And I can tell you, the boys are sheep. They all run one way. I give it to you right straight—this bunch of talk has a fine sound. It would read well in the Sunday press, or The Ladies' Cozy Corner, but it ain't good business."

Griselda rose. "I discuss my business with Mr. Woodruff."

"Well—Mr. Woodruff or me—it's all one. We pull together." Mr. Blagden disliked Griselda Breslau. What some men saw in her "beat" him, as he expressed it at the office.

"I cannot see that this of which you speak is business. You will excuse me now, please? I have an appointment."

Mr. Blagden, several shades redder in the face, took a few steps in the direction of the door. "Just as you say. But you'll come to taking my advice yet. This Mr. Brody's a good solid business proposition and not mean with his cash. It won't hurt you to accept an invitation now and then. If you treat him right, he'll back any show you want to try out, and I can tell you right flat, the managers of a Broadway show are in the business for cash. They ain't doing much for love and——"

Griselda, suddenly frozen, made a formal inclination. "I ask you to excuse me, Mr. Blagden;" and, leaving him standing there, she left the room.

Alone in her room, she sat down by the window and stared out, Waring's letter, temporarily forgotten, in her hand. After a time she became conscious of it, and with some relaxation of the tension in her face she opened and read it.

When she had read it twice she did a strange thing. She went into the other room and gathered up in her hands the great bunch of fragrant sweet peas Waring had sent her that morning, and, walking over to the open fire, threw them in. From her earliest childhood Griselda had loved flowers passionately. Once sent to a disciplinary bed upon her return from a childish quest for spring flowers, she had left her few trophies in her little basket and had found them the next morning dead, and she had cried bitterly, although she was not a child given to tears. She stood a moment watching the flames curl about the delicate petals, then suddenly, with a sound like a sob, she knelt and snatched them back, regardless of the flames that burned her fingers. Then as she looked down at the pathetic little flowers scorched and charred in her hands the tears rushed to her eyes and she buried her face in them. Hearing an approaching step, she crushed them hurriedly into the wastebasket and sat down at her desk and reached out for paper and envelopes.

"Yet more flowers," Hedwig announced, entering. "The room becomes a flower garden."

Griselda barely turned to glance at the large box bearing the label of a fashionable florist. "More flowers! Take them away. I don't want them!" Then, seeing Hedwig's bewildered look, she added impatiently, "Take them to the German hospital you have spoken of. Send them to the sick children."

Hedwig hesitated. "It is at least better that I should open them. Without doubt, there is a letter or a card within."

"I don't care who sent them." Griselda hunted frowningly for a pen while Hedwig, busying himself with the process of opening the box, discovered a note, which she handed to her mistress.

Without even glancing at the flowers, Griselda opened the note and glanced through its contents. After a moment she scratched a few words, folded the paper and directed it, and handed it to Hedwig.

"Post it yourself, Hedwig. Down-stairs they are so careless. It is of an invitation to dinner for to-morrow evening."

"Dines the *gnädiges Fraulein* with the *Herr Gemahler*?" asked Hedwig, whose affectionate curiosity Griselda had never seen fit to discourage.

She shook her head. "I dine with one Mr. Brody. It is a matter of business. Go quickly, Hedwig, and do not ask stupid questions."

IX.

WARING recognized that in the last ten days he had spoiled everything he had set his hand to, and that nothing, in fact, had gone well for some time except the schemes for "The Rose of Seville." At four o'clock he painted out his morning's work upon the accessories of a portrait and went out, deciding to drop in upon his aunt for tea.

Mrs. Holland still lived in the large red brick house which had been his grandfather's home in Gramercy Park. As Waring waited in the large drawing-room with its mahogany doors, his eyes wandered over the familiar objects it contained,—the tall Sevres urns with Ormolu handles on the mantel, the poor copies of old masters brought in earlier days from Italy, the dignified, purposeless bric-a-brac that marked the taste of another period, and the feeling of home came restfully over him.

Berenice might laugh at the drawing-room. Waring was glad that Aunt Ellen had never changed it. The maid brought back word that his aunt would see him in the library, and he went up the wide winding stairs. Her face lighted as always at the sight of him.

"My dear boy, it is an age since I have seen you! Young men seem not to have as much time as they used." Then as Waring would have answered she held up her hand. "But one never expects young men to

have time for old women. The world has never been any different in that respect."

"You an old woman!" Waring protested. "You are the youngest woman I know. Years younger than Berenice, for instance."

Mrs. Holland smiled. "One is never so old as at Berenice's age. She will grow younger with time." Then she gave him a keen glance. "But aren't you looking rather tired, Stephen?"

An impulse to confess assailed Waring. It had been his childish habit with his Aunt Ellen. It had always been easier to tell things to her than to other people. He stared out at the bare trees in the park as he answered, "I am rather upset about something."

"Is it work or a woman—or would you rather not talk about it?"

Waring smiled. "My psychologist aunt! It is a woman."

There was a brief pause in which their eyes met, then Mrs. Holland spoke a little hesitatingly, as if she feared seeming to force his confidence: "Well—and are you really in love this time?"

"I—I hope not," Waring answered; "but I am more than half afraid I am. That's the trouble."

"Then it is some one that you do not want to be in love with," his aunt inferred quickly. For a moment she looked grave. She dreaded having her boy, as she always thought of Stephen—for she had no boys of her own—involved in some unhappy entanglement with a married woman.

"I hope it is not some woman who is not free," she said.

He shook his head. "No, she is free enough; too free—that is the trouble. I mean——" Then he came out with it bluntly. "She is on the stage. I believe her to be a good woman—a good girl, for she is scarcely a woman—but I don't believe a man has any fair show for happiness if he marries an actress."

It was a moment before his aunt answered, "Of course I have an old-fashioned prejudice against it—although people seem to feel rather differently about the stage in these days. But it seems to me it would be easy for a man to idealize a woman he sees in that unreal sort of atmosphere. How well do you know her, Stephen?"

"If you reckon it by time and the number of meetings—I have seen her to talk with exactly four times."

"You can hardly know her then in any real sense. Yet I know—in spite of the Angela mistake—that you are a pretty well balanced young man."

"I am afraid I am no longer deserving of that compliment. But, you understand, it is n't the kind of infatuation that one expects an actress to inspire—I am scarcely impressionable enough to fall a prey to that kind of folly—at least, I hope I'm not. What I mean is, that she appeals to what is known as 'the best' in one. She seems to me,"

he added, permitting some of his real feeling to show in his voice, "quite the most exquisite, illusive thing I have ever come across in art or life. She is a sort of fusion of the two somehow. She is an artist's dream come true."

Mrs. Holland smiled. "I believe you are really in love this time, Stephen."

Waring looked up. "It is n't just the way I see her with the illusion of my feeling about her. She is art for the artist, you understand. Most of the people that go to see her just see that she can dance, that she can sing, that she has gaiety and sparkle. But beyond that simple spectrum of colors there are all the shimmering, impalpable colors that common eyes can't see. They stretch out endlessly. Often I get a feeling that there is more than I can see." He paused. "So I have decided to stay away from her, for she is essentially an artist. I feel in her that underneath aloofness that seems to me the real artist type. I don't believe any man could make up to her for the loss of her profession. Her gift of expression is something that has to come out." A recollection of the gypsy song came disturbingly back to him. "I think really she would be wretched bound to any one. Yet sometimes—quite unconsciously, I think—she makes the appeal to one of a helpless child at the mercy of things." Waring found it a relief to talk about it, now that he had begun. "I can't see any way out of it all but just to cut it out," he concluded.

Mrs. Holland considered. "Or to see more of her perhaps."

Waring shook his head. "Dangerous advice, Aunt Ellen. It would n't disillusionize—which is what you mean of course. You don't know what she is like. It is n't only her art and the appeal she makes to one's imagination. She has the mind of an artist. Her father is a painter. No, if I were to see more of her I should simply get in deeper and deeper until—" He broke off. "And then, if she would have me, there would probably be a little dash of heaven, a large dose of hell, and—the divorce court."

Mrs. Holland looked grave. It was a moment before she spoke: "Generally—unlike the conservative old woman I ought to be—I would advise you to follow your inclinations. The psychologic chemistry of marriage is a strange thing. One never knows what result the combination will make. Marriages that seem to start out with everything in their favor end in shipwreck, and I have lived long enough to see some most unlikely ventures turn out successfully. Nevertheless, in this case I must say the chances seem to me to be all against your happiness. Could n't you manage a little trip off somewhere, or are you too busy?"

Waring smiled. "I think I shall try to see what my will will do for me before I take to flight. If I can't conquer it here, I am afraid

running away won't do it for me." Then, after a moment, he added, "I want to tell you who she is—I am sure you care to know and you have seen her with me. It is Zelda Breslau—you remember, in 'The Green Flower'?"

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Holland recollected. "It was a good little face, I thought, as well as charming. I understand what you mean when you say she is not like an actress. I am glad you told me, Stephen. I feel more sure now that she won't do you any harm."

Waring smiled at that. "Dear Aunt Ellen, it is rather late in the day for any woman to injure my eternal soul!"

But Mrs. Holland shook her head with her wise smile. "No one is ever too old to be hurt by being disappointed in some one they love, dear Stephen. Disillusion always leaves a scar."

"I dare say," he replied, grave again; "but sometimes I feel as if I would be thankful to be disillusioned."

"You feel that she would n't want to give up the stage," his aunt stated rather than questioned.

"I have n't the slightest assurance that she would have me, to begin with," Waring said. "But if she would—it is n't a possible situation."

Mrs. Holland picked up her knitting. "I suppose the sense of possession is an ineradicable part of love," she reflected. "We all want to absorb the thing we love. It is natural, but I am not sure that it is right. Isn't it, after all, just selfishness? And an artist, we are taught to believe, belongs to the world. I suppose that is just as true when the art is only that of amusing the world."

"Aunt Ellen, you are not advising me to try it?" he exclaimed.

She shook her head. "On the contrary, I should be very much troubled to have it come to that—charming as the girl seems to be, and as I am sure she must be, to have stirred you so deeply; for the chances for your happiness seem to me, as they do to you, more than precarious. It seems to me especially dangerous when the wife is the artist."

"Thank you," Waring put in, smiling faintly; "at last I know your opinion of my alleged genius."

His aunt smiled. "In this case it would be the wife's art that would be the apple of discord."

Waring arose, unendurably stirred by her hypothetical use of that intimate word. His aunt continued. "Just remember if the current should carry you away—as it frequently does when the obstacle is purely psychologic—remember the advice of an old woman who has lived a long time in this world and seen a good deal: don't expect to own all of any one, any more than you expect to find any one person who can be everything to you."

At that moment there was the sound of a light step in the hall and

a faint silken swish of skirts, and Berenice entered. She was radiant in a becoming new hat and adorned with a large bunch of violets.

"What are you two talking about? You look as solemn as tombstones? Am I *de trop*?"

"Can you conceive of that possibility?" Waring rose to his feet with the affectation of devotion he usually assumed for his young cousin.

"Well, you seem to be going."

"Must," Waring prevaricated, for Berenice's insistent crispness jarred upon him at that moment.

"Where are you going?" Berenice sat down, fixing her clear, unmysterious eyes upon him.

"I refuse to be trapped into damaging admissions," Waring smiled back at her. Then he went up to his aunt and kissed her hand—an affectionate little formality that he had long indulged in with her—and took his leave.

"Oh, he ran away so soon I forgot a piece of news I have for him." Berenice pouted.

"Tell it to me," her aunt suggested.

"Angela Upton is engaged—to that fat Tommy Griswold. And she talks about him just the way she used to talk about Stephen."

"I am glad of that"—Aunt Ellen smiled with kind amusement. "Now tell me what you are up to."

Which sufficed to set Berenice upon a long recitation of her doings not greatly differentiated in character or in the vocabulary employed in their relation.

X.

A FEW blocks up the Avenue, Waring met Newcomb walking in the direction, he explained, of his club. The result of their brief greeting and exchange of plans—or rather of their lack—was an agreement to dine together.

"Where shall we go?" Newcomb propounded with the air of concentration with which he always contemplated the question of food.

"I leave that to you," Waring answered indifferently.

"How about Victor's?" Newcomb frowned anxiously. "They have just caught the trick with canvasback. Let's walk up."

As they turned about and walked on together Newcomb embarked upon a long grievance connected with himself, some brother artists and a hanging committee. Newcomb usually had some recital of this kind to pour into his ear, and Waring listened with the necessary fraction of that organ while his thoughts returned to the subject of his conversation with his aunt.

When they had "rounded up," as Newcomb expressed it, at Victor's,

he steered the way toward the extreme back of the room—Newcomb always took matters into his own hands if his companions failed to protest—and selected a corner table with the observation, “We are not so near the alleged music here, so we can at least hear ourselves eat.”

“You speak as if we were Frenchmen,” replied Waring, accepting the arrangement without discussion. He took the place facing the back of the room, which, instead of being a concluding wall, was divided up into three or four smaller rooms containing single tables, affording a greater seclusion than the main room. The moment after he was seated Waring caught sight of a woman at a table for four in one of these inner rooms. Her piquant profile was directly in his line of vision. At her right sat a man with a heavy face, who looked familiar to him. Either he had seen the man before, or his type, shrewd yet gross, was so homogeneous that it gave the impression of acquaintance, for the most unpenetrating might easily have constructed his psychology from his physiology. He saw vaguely that there were two other people at the table—an indefinite man and a well-dressed, inconspicuous-looking woman, who was, however, unmistakably not what is still characterized as “a lady.” While Waring’s unhappy attention focussed upon the group, Griselda, who had seen him enter, permitted him to catch her eye and bowed gravely.

“Found some one you know?” inquired Newcomb, finally observant of Waring’s abstraction.

Waring nodded. Fortunately Newcomb’s attention becoming at that moment concentrated upon the bill of fare, he was not moved to inspect the table toward which his back was turned, for which fact Waring was grateful, for it was becoming only too apparent that Mr. Brody had had more champagne than was good for him. The dinner ordered, Waring strove to keep his attention from the table, for every moment, whatever reserve he might have had at the beginning of the meal, Mr. Brody’s true self was rising more and more visibly to the surface. Once Griselda, glancing about, had caught Waring’s eye, and he fancied, in spite of her trained and temperamental self-control, that she suffered—from Mr. Brody and also, perhaps, from his presence as onlooker.

Waring’s cocktail had arrived and his oysters. He tried to keep his eyes from the other room and maintain his conversation with Newcomb, who was fortunately still voluble. But when his plate was removed, his eyes again were irresistibly drawn in that direction. As he looked, he caught sight of Mr. Brody laying a heavy hand upon her arm, caught her precipitate withdrawal and her swift glance in his direction. He set his teeth and fastened his gaze upon the table-cloth. What could she expect, coming out with a man of that type? Why

was she with him? He had been mistaken in her. She was like the rest. They were all alike. He had been "easy," as Bobby called it, to be deceived by her delicate charm, her outward effect of youthfulness and inexperience. She was merely a more civilized type than the average, more sophisticated, perhaps, instead of less. He realized Newcomb's voice.

"What's the matter, old man? Are you in a trance? I have asked you three times—what will you have to drink?"

"Nothing."

"Water wagon?" inquired Newcomb sympathetically. "You took a cocktail."

"Don't feel like it," replied Waring irritably. "A man does n't always feel like pouring stuff into himself, does he?"

"No offense intended," returned Newcomb, after scrutinizing him briefly. "But your steering gear certainly seems a bit out of order to-day."

"I dare say," returned Waring shortly. He was almost at the end of his self-control. He had caught sight of Mr. Brody again making the same demonstration. His dinner arrived. He accepted his food blindly and began to eat, not knowing what he was about. He grasped what he supposed to be a salt cellar.

"Look out, I think that's powdered sugar," he heard Newcomb saying.

He set the receptacle down mechanically. Mr. Brody had raised his voice so that he caught a sentence. "Come now—you can't throw that kind of a bluff with me——"

He saw Griselda move back in her chair, saw the ugly light in the man's eyes, saw him put out his hand again, saw that Griselda, involuntarily perhaps, glanced in his direction. He laid down his napkin, rose from his chair, and, to Newcomb's astonishment, went over to the table in the inner room and spoke to her without looking at the others.

"I see that you are not feeling well. May I see you to your carriage?"

There was no mistaking the almost passionate gratitude in her eyes. "If you will be so good. Mr. Brody will have the kindness to excuse me. I am a little faint."

"Well, I say, come now——" began Brody, half rising from his seat in inarticulate protest. But his head, only quick along certain familiar lines of business, was thick with wine, and before he had realized what had happened Waring had escorted Griselda Breslau half way through the crowded dining-room, where some eyes of recognition followed her.

Outside, he secured his overcoat and hat from the attendant, scribbled a hasty line of explanation on his card and sent it back to Newcomb; then he guided her quickly out the door past the danger which

he half feared of being overtaken by Brody, with the probable result of a scene before the restaurant attendants.

She spoke then for the first time. "I take you away from your dinner."

"It is of no consequence," he said. "Have you a carriage check, or did you come with him?"

She shook her head. "We came all together."

He picked out a cab at random, gave the driver the address of her hotel, and seated himself beside her. "Had you nearly finished your dinner?" he asked. "But of course you can get anything you want at your own hotel."

"Yes—no—I want nothing," she said. Then she shivered. "It is so long, so long, that dinner. It seem to me all my life I sit there at that table!"

He glanced at her, then looked away again.

"I have been very foolish to go with him," she said.

"It was a mistake, I should say," returned Waring dryly.

"It is one Mr. Brody," she began, "who——" But Waring interrupted her almost violently.

"Was that Brody who is to back the new show—the——" He was too agitated to finish his sentence.

She nodded, continuing with a sound in her voice that made him wince: "Mr. Blagden has objected that I am always so cold to him, when he is interested in the operas——"

Waring interrupted her. "And you thought you would be less cold—is that it?"

"Do not speak to me like that," she broke out with sudden agitation. "You don't understand. Do you think I like to go with that man? Always—all times I refuse. But Mr. Blagden say that if I refuse all the time so his invitations I offend him then, and he will not give the money to pay for——"

"To pay *me!*" exclaimed Waring passionately. "Good God! If I had only known it before! I might have known—I will make them a present of it——"

As she looked at him he realized through his own excitement that she was seriously troubled. "It is for everything, not especially your part—what they call to back it. You must understand. I do not understand myself very well. With us theatres are not managed so. But he say all the time that I—that my manner is what he call bad business."

"So you were trying to be good business," he answered with an unhappy laugh.

She turned and looked out the cab window. "Yes," she answered quietly. "I try to be good business. But I don't try again that way."

I don't wish to be foolish. I have two sisters, and a brother who wish to go in the army, and my father is poor"—she broke off there, adding merely, "I like to make as much money as possible. I hear always that here in America the men are different. But I don't see that they are so different—the men I have met."

"You poor child!" Waring exclaimed. He turned and looked out of the window.

"I see that you are not out of town," she said next.

"I intended to go."

"Was that really the reason you do not come to see me?"

"No. I made the engagement after I received your note."

She laughed. "Now I know that you speak the truth. Why, then, do you not come?"

"I have told you. Because I intend to keep away from you."

There was a brief silence, then she said softly, "If you had accept my invitation then I had not gone with Mr. Brody to-night."

"Ah, that is not fair—to make it hard for me like that!"

"I do not mean to make anything hard for you," she said in a subdued little voice. The perfume of the gardenia she wore came to him. Again he turned from her and looked out of the cab window.

"I think you can hardly be unconscious of your effect upon me," he said. "It is your *métier*, is it not, to work upon people's emotions? It is a little play that it seems to me you probably know by heart by this time. Can you tell me how it will end for me? Do they always give in? Or do some escape?"

She did not answer. After a time he turned reluctantly toward her, and as they chanced to be passing under a light he saw that she was struggling with tears. This unforeseen sight filled him with agitation. "Forgive me. I am a brute. I should n't speak to you like this after that nasty experience."

"It is just that I am tired," she said hastily.

Remorse complicated with other emotions began to unnerve Waring. "It must have been hideous, although—thank heaven!—he could n't do much in a crowded dining-room."

"He could say," replied Griselda unsteadily in her childish voice. "And the look in his face—and his ugly hand!"

Waring set his teeth. "I'd like to break his head." Then suddenly again the doubt seized him. Was it real, her apparent unhappiness, her tears? How could one know if any emotion were not feigned in a woman possessing her genius for simulation? She could bring those tears, that little quiver in her voice, acting her part behind the footlights. He strained his eyes to search her face in the tricky light.

"Is it real?"—the words broke from him almost fiercely. Then he realized as he met her surprised eyes in the passing illumination of

a street light the utterly unexplained elimination of his question. "You look as if you thought I had taken leave of my senses." He tried to adjust the thing more naturally. "I was just thinking that with such an actress as you are one might reasonably doubt anything you seemed to feel."

She had turned away before he finished. "Why should I wish to make you think I am unhappy?" she asked simply. Then, after a moment, she added, "You think perhaps I like to excite your sympathy? And why?"

The effect of her pronunciation combined with the unnatural precision of her phrase provoked a smile from him in the midst of his agitation, which, fortunately, she did not perceive—for her pardonable pride in her swiftly acquired English was sensitive. No doubt he had been an ass to imagine that she cared to work upon him. And if she did, was n't it a part of the world-old game between men and women? Such acting was not confined to the professional actress.

"It is just that the fact of your being an actress adds to the difficulty that a man always has in understanding a woman," he said.

She answered with her face turned toward the street. "I think that those difficulties are in the mind of the person who feel them. Such things are 'most always simple."

"Simple in a simple nature," he said. "I would hardly call yours that."

She did not answer, and again the riddle of her swept him tormentingly. He caught her arm, moving her so that her face was in the light. "Can you really feel things?"

He saw in the strong light of Broadway which they crossed at that moment a quick flash of something—some strong feeling—over her face, then it passed into her inscrutable smile, and, freeing herself from his arm, she answered, "Oh, yes," in a cool little voice. He turned from her and again looked steadily out of the window. It seemed the only way to retain his hold upon himself at that moment.

They rode on in silence for a block. Then she said, "You do not see the difference to go upon the stage and act a part, all your mind on that part, and to act something you do not feel in your life every day?" He felt her eyes upon him, but in the dark side street he could not read their expression. "Actors are not different from other peoples. They hate, they love, they are tired, they are ill, they are bored, they are unhappy, as you are. Only more often they must laugh and act as they do not feel. Do you think, then, they like also to act all the day?"

"I dare say I was talking like an ass," he replied, and then with a jerk the hansom stopped at her door.

"You will come in with me?" she said, and Waring accepted.

When they were in her reception room she turned to him with sudden self-reproach. "But I take you away from your dinner."

"Oh, I had something," he replied carelessly. "I will have some supper later if I want it."

"You have some here with me."

"Not unless you want it. I don't care for anything more now."

He was conscious of the perfume of the gardenia as she loosed her wrap. Again it wound into his emotional consciousness of her.

"Are you fond of them—gardenias?" he asked, feeling a sudden necessity to keep up the conversation.

She nodded. "I love them." She dwelt upon the word with a little intonation almost passionate that made his heart beat. "I love all flowers that have perfume," she added.

It occurred to him again that she was like fragrant flowers, just as Berenice, Angela, and Patty were like crisp pink and white flowers that were scentless. "You are like one when your eyelids get oblique and you have your Oriental look. But most often you seem like the sweet peas you are so fond of."

An expression as if something hurt her crossed her face at his last words. He noticed it, wondering a little. "Yes, I love them most. I thank you for the beautiful ones you send yesterday." She busied herself in removing her wrap as she spoke, and he moved to assist her. Then she sat down as if she were tired upon the stiff hotel divan. In her simple light gown she had an almost fragile look of youth that sent a pang through him. The longing for her swept him fiercely. He took a seat as far from her as he could without making the fact conspicuous. He did not want to love her, but in her presence it was difficult to hold this fact in mind. There was a slight darkness under her eyes. Whatever her point of view or her experience, she had evidently suffered something in this wretched evening's business. With a savage, inarticulate throb of rage against Brody and the whole theatrical world, his tenderness for her rose treacherously within him.

"I don't see what is the end of it for you," he broke out.

She looked across at him inscrutably. "A moment ago you did not see the end for you."

"I cannot see the end of it for either of us. I know I have a certain portion of misery coming to me in any case."

She leaned toward him. "You tell the end for me and I tell the end for you." She smiled, but her characteristic gaiety still seemed subdued. She made one of her little indescribable movements with her expressive hand. "Now we are both fortune tellers."

He felt his hold on himself slipping. "You tell me first," he said, turning his eyes away from her.

"Well, then—you succeed all the time more in your work. Then

some day you marry a girl out of your own life—very pretty, very *chic*, who cares for no one but you. And you are happy, as they say in the fairy stories—ever after.”

“A pretty picture,” he replied grimly.

She leaned forward. “Now tell about me,” she said.

He glanced at her, frowned, and looked away. “I am afraid the threads are too many and too complex. I can’t see what is ahead of you—except fame and fortune.”

She raised an admonishing hand. “Now you do not play fair!”

He bent his eyes upon the floor. “I don’t believe you want me to talk about the thing that—that troubles me in your life. Your profession does n’t seem to me an easy one for a good woman. I mean, it is a life where a good woman is at a disadvantage.”

She did not answer that, and he grew white under her silence. “Especially in the kind of work you are in now,” he added.

Her answer when it came seemed indirect to his strained sense: “I have not been in it long, of course. I have seen that it may be difficult for the girl who must what you call work up. But I come here with already some experience and reputation.”

He strove to regain his emotional balance and dismiss the subject with a platitude. “I expect you are prepared to face difficulties for the sake of your art, for, after all, you are all artist.”

She shook her head. “Not all. If I were all artist I should never be lonely.”

Something clutched at his heart with that little speech and the reflection her voice took on in uttering it. “And are you sometimes lonely?”

She nodded. He fixed his eyes resolutely upon the floor again. “I suppose every one has lonely moments. But if you had had very much human feeling you could not have come here—at your age all alone—to a foreign country, away from all your friends and relatives.”

She smiled. “You think so!”

“That is a perfectly obvious inference, is n’t it? It would n’t be possible for a woman dependent upon affection or people to do that.”

She met his eyes with her inscrutable look. “There is a time when your work is most to you. And there may come a time when it does not seem to matter at all. The scales tip”—her dramatic little hands illustrated delicately—“one time one way, one time another.”

“Then if you are pulled both ways, it may be that some day when you are lonely, and some man that appeals to you comes along—you will think that you are in love with him, and—well—perhaps you may get something out of it—but the man—the poor man—I pity him.”

“Why do you pity him?”

“Because—like your gypsy Sylva, though you loved him, you would

not stay with him. And the experience—very possibly—might break his heart.”

She laughed with a little grimace. “The hearts of men—they do not break!”

“Occasionally they do. And you would not be willing to give up your work and just live the life of the average married woman.”

“Perhaps not.”

“Why should you? The woman on the stage, if she is successful, must realize the intoxication of her success more than any other artist. She gets all her tribute—everything that is coming to her—all at once. But a man who is in love with an actress—a woman whose name is familiarly in every man’s mouth, whose picture any man can buy in a shop, and whom any man can, in a sense, appreciate intimately—why, a man who loves a woman like that is bound to suffer—endlessly.”

“I do not see that he must suffer if he love me and I love him.” She raised her vivid eyes to his. She had the impersonal air of one discussing an abstract question, but all at once Waring felt the thing that he had crushed back and beaten down rising uncontrollably within him. He made a sound like a laugh.

“If he kept on loving you—that would be the end of him,” he said.

A little quiver passed over her face, ending in a half-smile. “You speak cruel words to me,” she said.

Then everything but the one uncontrollable impulse slipped from him. He rose and took her in his arms and kissed her.

He did not forget the look in her face when she drew back from him. “You, too!” she said. “And I had thought that you were different.”

He spoke wildly. “I don’t doubt there have been many others.”

“And afterwards you can say that——”

“Child—I don’t know what I am saying.”

“You are not so different from Mr. Brody—only you are a gentleman. It is your way that is different—that is all.”

“Forgive me! Don’t say things like that. You ought to know the difference. Can’t you see that I am mad about you?” He moved nearer to her, but she drew back in a way that cut him even more than her words.

“One does not love so all at once—not a man like you. It is not love.”

“You ought to understand that it is,” he said.

“You do not need to stay away of yourself now. I ask you not to come again.” He heard her draw a breath like a sob and the sound went through him like a stab.

“I can’t leave you like this——”

“Will you go please?” And there was nothing for him to do but go, without another word or glance from her.

But through the tumult of his passion and his remorse after he had left her one wild thought returned to him over and over, destroying his power to reason or think. That one moment before she had struggled from his arms, had she not permitted, returned, his kiss? He could not have dreamed it. It was all madness, madness. If she could love him, a longer, a more protracted madness. He must stay away. But he must see her once more. It was unbearable that she should misunderstand like this—that he should have seemed to show disrespect in the hour that he would have most wished to show her chivalry and consideration.

XI.

THE next morning he sent Allesandro with a note pleading permission to call that day at any convenient hour. Allesandro was instructed to wait, but he came back saying that the lady's maid had said there was no answer. His manner conveyed no embarrassing commiseration, but Waring was subtly aware that Allesandro understood and unobtrusively sympathized. A few weeks ago he would have suffered from realization of this fact, but in his present condition he was indifferent to it. He set to work on a design for an interior for "The Merchant of Venice," a recent commission, but he only succeeded in spoiling his sketch for Portia's chamber, and after depositing it in the waste-basket went out for a walk.

Late in the afternoon, at an hour when he knew she would be at home, he called her up on the telephone. Anticipating that she might refuse to speak to him when Hedwig carried his name to her, he actually turned hot and cold when, the hotel telephone clerk having with unexpected swiftness connected him with her apartment, he heard her voice at the other end.

He stammered the mechanical question, "Is this Mademoiselle Breslau?" and in reply her voice asked a little imperiously, "Who is this, please?"

He explained his identity, and repeated his request that she would see him. A cool, collected voice answered without hesitation: she was specially engaged this week. It would be impossible for her to set any hour. Then, with the most formally frigid of good-byes she hung up the receiver. He heard it click with a sinking of the heart. It had a desolate sound of finality. It was like the turn of a lock in his face.

He walked blindly down the noisy, crowded street, feeling a bewildered sense of inability to adjust himself. Well, he did not want to love her; now it was not necessary to trust to the precarious strength of his will. She was making it easy for him—and he was more wretched than ever. He wanted to stay away, but not with this mis-

understanding between them. But how could he manage to see her? In proportion as she was easily seen in her professional character across the footlights, she would be difficult of access in her individual life if she chose to deny herself to him. Then the sensation of her in his arms suddenly caught him, leaving him breathless. If he had never done that mad thing it would have been easier to dispel her. At that moment an advertisement of a steamship company in a window caught his eye, and with an impulsiveness that he seemed to have developed in the last few weeks he walked in the door and inquired about steamers sailing that week. When he went out he had engaged a passage for the following Thursday.

The day before he sailed he received a communication from the office of the Woodruff company.

"Lay off work on 'Rose of Seville' settings for the present," it read. "Production now doubtful. Financial obligation will be made good per agreement."

It was signed "J. F. Blagden, for the Woodruff Company."

Waring sat for some time staring at Mr. Blagden's brief sentences. They were significant—unquestionably. Mr. Brody had lost interest in backing the venture. And Griselda—Griselda, then, was the good child she so often resembled. Poor little Griselda! At the price, it would seem, of her opportunities! His heart contracted with a pang that for the moment almost upset his determination to leave New York. Blagden, Brody, the whole theatrical machine—it was an ugly business.

XII.

THE gray six days of the passage seemed endless to Waring. The comfortable condition of somnolence that seemed to envelop the majority of the passengers did not come to bring him oblivion. The greater part of the day he paced the deck, where the awning sheets rattled incessantly in the strong cold wind.

Usually he was alone, but sometimes a German professor of philosophy with a square beard and owlish spectacles joined him. Waring caught himself wondering if this gentleman, so absorbed in abstractions, had ever known any such emotional tumult as this that had sent him upon this quest of oblivion. He sat up late in the smoking-room, or read in his cabin. But his mood revolted from novels, and his attention would not remain fixed upon informing works, and so, although his object in going away had been to forget her, he found himself turning the riddle of her about endlessly. She was good, he believed, in the sense one used that word about women. Her eyes met one frankly; they had no lurking depths of concealment. Yet the ugly side of her life had certainly not disenchanted her with it. Therein lay the tormenting seed of doubt. Well—she turned perhaps an opaque surface

toward that phase of it, while on her art side she was full of those reflections, shining through, that gave that sensitiveness and transparency to her face. Perhaps he was mistaking a highly-tuned artistic sensibility for other things. Was he, after all, under the influence of his infatuation, one of that class of beings he had always scorned, who mistake their senses for their souls? Then he remembered the transfigured look in her face when she had looked at poor Langdon's bas relief. "It is his life," she had said. Surely that was not just the expression of a superfine artistic sense. It had been a glimpse into her soul. Ah, well, it must not be upon such memories that his thoughts were to dwell if he had come away to forget her.

Arrived in Paris, he put up at a small hotel where he had stopped before and which he had recalled pleasantly. Now it seemed strangely cheerless. The effusive welcome of the slim, bearded landlord and his wife failed to give him the pleasure he had formerly felt in these graceful French courtesies. He seemed to realize all at once, in spite of their smiling lips, the small, hard souls made of francs and centimes looking out from their shrewd eyes. The guests of the house assembled at dinner seemed to him harassed rather than gay in their pleasure-seeking. Nevertheless, he started in the next morning upon a round of deliberate gaieties such as Paris affords, arranging something for each hour of the day. But the theatres held an unconquerable pang of association for him. The *cafés chantants* bored him, and even the Louvre held his interest but incompletely. He walked about in the wintry Bois and made a chilly expedition to Versailles, where he wandered along the devious deserted paths among the frozen-looking statues. It all seemed indescribably desolate. There was no hint as yet of the awakening touch of spring. He wondered that he had ever thought Paris gay or charming. It was, he decided, a place in which one must be happy. If one were not, the misery of it pressed too heavily upon one—the tragic painted women, the wretched horses, the hard faces and pushing elbows of the *ouvrières*, the sickly, neglected children! Yes, Paris could augment one's gaiety if it were gaiety one had come in pursuit of, but it could not bring oblivion of a heart-ache; it had no power to blot out a compelling memory.

One day, lunching at a fashionable place sufficiently decorous to satisfy the social scruples of unescorted yet conventional American ladies, he ran across some acquaintances from home—a Mrs. Hoyt and her two daughters. They captured him as he was passing down the aisle between the tables in the wake of the alert head waiter and urged him into a seat at their table. He accepted it perforce, outwardly smiling, inwardly inexpressibly bored. The contrast between the bleached whiteness of Mrs. Hoyt's wrinkled skin and the vivid colors of her Paris hat offended his eye. The girls, with their incessant empty chatter, their

constant use of meaningless superlatives, affected him like unattractive, insistent children. Yet they were considered charming girls in their own circle—familiar types, with their inexpressive regular features and the characteristic American daintiness of their pretty clothes. The sallow Frenchwomen at the tables about, with their pronounced picture hats, their pencilled eyes and heavily powdered faces, their exaggerated dramatization of gaiety, were no doubt also attractive to many men. It was true that neither of these types had ever appealed to him, Waring reflected, but why did they seem suddenly so inexpressibly tiresome? Did all men in love feel like this? It could not be quite the same, surely, for Griselda Breslau was not like other women. A little flame of genius burned within her. Such a personality as hers in itself was genius. To love her must be a wider experience than ordinary loving.

He escaped from the Hoyts late in the afternoon with a sigh of relief, but not before he had involved himself in an engagement to take them to the "true" Robinson's to have lunch in a tree the following day. With what mechanical, high-voiced sprightliness Helen Hoyt had exclaimed, "What a lark to eat in a tree!" It was strange, he reflected, that Griselda, although an actress, should seem to possess all the young spontaneousness that was so curiously lacking in these presumably less sophisticated girls of his own set. He put them in a cab and strolled along the Rue de Rivoli in the early Paris twilight, then turned down the street leading into the Place Vendôme and from there into the Avenue de l'Opéra. His ultimate destination was the Rue Scribe. There he entered a steamship office and engaged a home passage for the third day following. By that time he would have been in Paris exactly one week.

He returned to his hotel more able, after his decision, to endure the withered blonde French woman with the powdered face, pink eyelids, and the odious little dog, who dined at the next table to him. The dog was always present at meals, and taken in connection with a discontented American family with strong lungs, and a British mother and her two lank daughters with projecting upper teeth, had inspired Waring with a distaste to taking his meals in the hotel. He dined that night by himself at Foyot's, on the other side of the river, indifferent to the delicate art of its *cuisine*, indifferently reminiscent of past celebrations in that small but famous resort. Afterwards he went to one of the cafés of the quarter, where the music was good, and smoked innumerable cigarettes. He bought some fragrant red roses from a depressing old woman who was offering them at the various tables, but the color and scent of them only drew to the surface his underconsciousness of Griselda. Then the picturesque young German violinist, whose music was for the moment the feature of the place, rose and began

to play. It chanced to be Grieg's "I love you." The passionate little melody brought back the memory of that taunting little performance of hers. How she had sung it—with that simulated emotion that had the thrill of reality while it mocked it!

He rose suddenly, leaving the red roses to die on the table, leaving his wine untouched. But the waiter did not even stare after him. It takes a great deal to attract the attention of a waiter in a Paris restaurant.

Three weeks to a day from the date of his departure he was again walking in the direction of Gramercy Park to inform his aunt of his return. It was a mild March day of blue sky and vivid sunshine, with a misleading promise of spring in the air. The grass in the park was quite green behind its high iron railing. It gave him a sudden foretaste of the accenting pang that spring can add to such maladies as his.

He found Berenice making one of her dutiful calls. She was looking radiantly pretty in a blue-gray costume that matched her eyes. His aunt gave a little exclamation of joy at the sight of him that went to his heart. Things seemed indeed to go there more easily of late. What was it that had happened to him? Sights hurt him that he used to pass with the callousness of the comfortable,—a wistful child, a lost dog, a worn-out horse. His eyes seemed to have been suddenly opened to the drama of life going on under the surface.

Berenice met him with vivacious greeting and a flood of questions without, however, attending his answers. Then suddenly—the idea evidently suggested by the somewhat involved social incident she was relating—she demanded that he take her to Claremont some night, because her mother would n't let her go with any one else, of course, and it would be such fun to dine with a man alone, as if you were married. Waring, unsettled, planless, impulsively offered to take her that evening, and Berenice went joyfully off to telephone for her mother's consent.

When they were alone his aunt put the tactfully vague question, "Well, how are things, my dear boy?"

Waring shook his head. "No different. But—I am going to buck up and work now—*hard*." After a moment he added, "And I suppose nothing lasts forever. There is that comfort, at least."

Mrs. Holland smiled as the old smile at the young. "There speaks youth. To me that is the most tragic thing in life—that nothing lasts, our joy or our heartbreaks."

Then Berenice returned full of jubilant excitement which, unlike many of her young associates, she never sought to suppress—wherein lay the secret of what charm she possessed. Her mother had given her permission to go with Stephen.

She chattered without cessation all the way up in the cab. Waring was silent, which was all that Berenice demanded—and thought his thoughts.

At the steps of the restaurant, as he was assisting Berenice from the hansom, he suddenly found himself face to face with the object of his thoughts. She was with Mitchell Osborne—he had not known that she knew him, but then what did he really know of her life or her friends? She had recognized him first, although he did not know that. He only saw that she bowed formally and composedly, as to a slight acquaintance, while his heart was beating against his sides like a hammer with the shock of it.

Berenice also recognized Griselda and turned to him with the excitement that identification of stage celebrities induces in the young.

“Was n't that Zelda Breslau?”

He nodded, striving to achieve an unrevealing exterior. Fortunately Berenice was not observant and did not perceive the signs of his agitation. He steered her in the direction of a table on the glass side of the restaurant facing the river, accepted the bill of fare from the waiter, and tried to focus his attention upon it. But his thoughts returned to her uncontrollably. He had never cared for Osborne. . . . There was something sinister about his dark face. His eyes were too close together. Unwelcome tales of his successes with women and of his subsequent relation of them came back to him. Well, at least he was more civilized than Mr. Brody of Pittsburg. If he made love to her, it would be because she permitted it—an ugly grip at his heart came with this thought. He handed the menu to Berenice, the waiter meantime showing the ostentatious impatience of the New York attendant in restaurants of heterogeneous patronage.

“See anything you like?” he inquired of Berenice.

“May I order?” she asked eagerly.

He nodded, smiling mechanically. . . . No, he knew absolutely nothing of the psychology of Griselda Breslau. A woman might object to the love making of one man and not to that of another. Her resentment of Mr. Brody's attentions, her attitude toward his own uncontrolled act, did not prove anything. She was an actress schooled in a life that must inevitably dull certain perceptions and finenesses. There was no reason why she should discriminate against Osborne. He became aware of Berenice's voice. He had to ask her to repeat her question.

“I am going to have clams. Would you rather have oysters?”

He shook his head. “No, clams.” . . . No, it was hardly a life to make a woman squeamish or hypocritical of moral standards. Yet those childlike ways—they did not suggest over-sophistication certainly. . . . They were hardly a thing that could be assumed—

were they? The old problem. She was an actress trained in simulation. She was not, after all, a child, but a woman, a woman subtly perfumed, as it were, with the incense of emotions. A woman designed to inspire love, a woman whose whole personality implied, whether falsely or not, that she could love—all that he felt. Beyond that he knew—nothing. Well—what was it to him any way? What had he to do with her life—or she with his?

Then he realized that Berenice was speaking again. "Frogs' legs, sauce tartare; squab, escarole salad, cold asparagus with iced Hollandaise,—is that all right to begin with? It is actually hot to-day. I feel like cool things, don't you?"

He nodded. . . . What if she were in love with Osborne? Involuntarily the muscles of his hands contracted. Then he became conscious of Berenice's voice. The ordering concluded, she had been taking stock of the other visitors to the restaurant.

"Who do you suppose that foreign-looking man with the little turned-up mustache is? Over there with the woman in the green Directoire gown."

"I am afraid I can't identify the gown," Waring replied.

"He looks like an Austrian officer. There were some of the most adorable creatures of Innsbrück. I was crazy to meet them. But mother would n't let us. Who was that good-looking man with Zelda Breslau? I am sure I have seen him somewhere."

"You find him good-looking?" Waring looked across the room, not caring to meet even Berenice's undivining eye at that moment. "He is a rum painter with an income, who runs after actresses."

"Is he fast?" asked Berenice, pleasurably awe-struck.

"Oh, there are worse," replied Waring carelessly. "But little girls have n't any business to know about such things. Here are your clams."

Then Berenice wanted paprika and lost the conversational thread, being possessed of a healthy appetite. But the clams disposed of, she made a startling proposition.

"Take me to 'The Green Flower' again. Come on, there's a duck. I want to see that adorable Dixon again. I am simply crazy about him."

"In that case I think you had better stay away." Waring's face had changed perceptibly at her suggestion. "I don't want any crazy girls on my hands. I will take you to something else."

"Oh, now, Stephen, don't be tiresome! I have seen everything else. At least twice. But nobody has given another party to see that, and you know mother won't let me go to matinées with the girls. I think it's mean, too. Patty goes all the time." She gave him a glance calculated to melt any undergraduate heart and said again plead-

ingly, "Please! Mother will let me go anywhere with you. She thinks you are safe."

"She flatters me," Waring replied, with mock grimness. "Don't you know men like to be thought dangerous?"

"But they are n't," Berenice replied ruthlessly, "when they are as old as you are."

Waring laughed. "Am I as old as that? Too old to be dangerous? Too old to fall in love, I suppose."

Berenice stared blankly. At the sight of her face Waring laughed, then gave an amused glance toward the mirror on the opposite side of the room. "And yet I have all my hair, and it is not even gray yet."

Berenice regarded him critically. "Yes, you have too much. It does n't look like every one else's."

"Unpardonable offense," Waring laughed.

"Well, you will take me, then. It is settled," Berenice for once returned to her point.

"Well, I suppose I am trapped," Waring admitted. "'The Green Flower' it is, then."

The performance had begun when they slipped into their seats in a box near the stage. Waring would not have chosen that position, but Berenice had competently overseen the selection of seats, explaining, "I can't bear having the man in the next seat scrunch my gown, and you can't be really comfortable anywhere but in a box, any way."

So there he found himself, perilously close to Griselda, near enough to meet her eyes. He feared lest even unobservant Berenice might read the signs in his face. At the end of her song Berenice turned to him, speaking with her cool little air of decisiveness: "I sort of see what you like about her. She is n't pretty, but she is rather fascinating."

It was absurd to be annoyed with a child like Berenice for her limitations, but as he glanced at her tinted, shallow prettiness he felt a sudden irritation at her patronizing unperceptiveness. He was unworthily tempted to a snubbing response, but Berenice was already off on another tack. "That man has the most fascinating legs. Stephen, why are actors so much more fascinating than the men one meets?"

"I doubt if you would find them so if you transplanted them to your drawing-room," he replied.

Berenice replied promptly, "Then, why are men always getting crazy about actresses?"

Waring moved restlessly. "What do you know about it, you absurd baby?"

"I read the papers," Berenice retorted resentfully. "Besides, one is always hearing about it. What makes you think I would n't like actors off the stage, when men fall in love with actresses and even marry them?"

"Well, for one thing—stage life does n't seem to do quite the same thing to a woman that it does to a man."

"What do you mean?" Berenice frowned impatiently.

"Well"—he paused, driven to explanation by her insistence, yet knowing she could not comprehend—"it is more or less a woman's nature to act, to be admired, to be on dress parade, as it were. But with a man—why—it does n't seem to agree with him to have the lime-light concentrated all the time upon his person in just the way that it is in theatrical life. Unless he is really a great artist, it distorts him, effeminates him, exaggerates his personal vanity."

Berenice stared, then lifted her glass to look at the opposite box. "Pooh! Men are just as conceited as girls, if that's what you mean."

Waring did not attempt to expound further, and Berenice had already changed the subject. "What frights most women look with those bands in their hair!" was the result of her scrutiny of the box. "Why is it that the very women who ought to be most careful about their clothes never know what not to wear?"

"A problem worthy of the sphinx," Waring answered. The curtain was rising, and he knew that he half longed, half dreaded, to see her again. Toward the end of the act the moment that he had feared and anticipated came. Griselda was standing apart, others for the moment occupying the centre of the stage, and as he sat staring at her, their eyes met. He had an odd sense of going toward her. He fancied that her expression changed faintly. It was all in a second, then she dropped her eyes, but it left him vibrating like a touched instrument. There had been something in her look—perhaps a mere recollection of discomfort called up at the sight of him, the memory of his offense. Then, as the action progressed, she came forward into the centre of the stage again to dance; and suddenly, fiercely, he resented her power to move him with all her manifold arts. He looked away, read his program, then, against his will, his eyes returned to her. It was useless to fight against the spell of her. It was like attempting to deny the blue of the sky or the gladness of the sunshine. It came to him then in a flash—a momentary vision of detachment from the restless hurt of it—that the experience of loving her was a beautiful thing. Whatever else she might or might not be, she was a piper of dreams, whether she sang or danced. Now, as he watched her there came to him the tinkle of bells down a twilight street, nymphs flitting through dim woods, a Venetian night filled with music, Egyptian faces carved on century-worn monuments, the glow of Japanese lanterns among the trees and geishas dancing, a procession of muffled figures across the desert under a vast sky. . . . She had stopped dancing, but the suggestion of it all still was about her, a flicker across her subtle eyelids and her eyes.

XIII.

THE next evening he made no attempt to resist his impulse to go to the theatre. Encountering Mr. Blagden as he was leaving the ticket office, he received—and after a moment's hesitation accepted—an expansive invitation to make use of a vacant box. Seated back in its shadow, watching her, he had almost the sense of being alone with her, so remotely did the other performers exist for him. Then it came over him—as one is mysteriously able to judge the wisdom or folly of one's acts at the same time that the will seems powerless to control them—that he had made a mistake in coming. The presence of a companion compelled him to a certain conventional response. Now, without that restraint, he felt his self-control slipping from him.

At the end of the second act he scribbled on his card a request that she would see him in her dressing-room, dispatched it by an usher and waited in indescribable impatience for her answer. It came in a brief verbal affirmative, and he hurried down the circuitous path to her dressing-room in a state of mind the farthest possible remove from calmness.

Inside the room he found himself wordless. She held out her hand, and he took it, barely touching it. She still wore her fantastic blue and green costume of the last act, and the slight make-up she used did not disturb the natural effect of her face. As always, nearness, instead of destroying the illusion, only intensified her vividness.

"You can remain but a moment," she began composedly. "Soon I change for the next act. You have something important to say that you ask to see me now? Usually I do not receive visitors here."

"Important—to me," Waring answered. "I wanted to see you—that was all."

She turned to the mirror, beginning some mysterious process of unfastening the headdress. "You are content for some time already without seeing me. Was there, then, such haste?"

"You had refused to see me. Have you forgotten? But your life is so full of things, no doubt you have forgotten all about it by this time."

"I see very few peoples," was her answer to that.

"Evidently Osborne is one of the few," he retorted quickly.

She gave him a little haughty look that chilled him. "How is that your affair, Mr. Waring?" She had not quite acquired the English *w* yet. The characteristic pronunciation sent a pang through him.

"It is n't, of course. Forgive my bad manners. I came to ask you—to ask you to let me see you again."

"You expect to see me at once when you ask?"

"I have been away—I went to Paris."

A change passed over her face. "You make short trip."

"Short, yes." He laughed unsteadily. "I went to get away from you. But I could n't. I took you with me. I thought of you every minute."

Her answer was certainly not direct. "Don't I see you in the theatre last evening with a most pretty young girl? She who was also with you at Claremont?"

"Yes, it was my cousin."

"She is beautiful, is she not?"

"Berenice? Why, yes, after a fashion. She's an uninteresting child. But I did n't come here to speak of Berenice. When can I see you?"

She smiled then. "You speak very commanding."

He took a step in her direction. "Let me take you home this evening."

"It is not possible."

"Some one else is going with you?"

She did not answer. She seemed to be searching for some missing object on her dressing table.

"It is because you are going with some one else?"

It was still a moment before she replied, "Yes."

"Is it Osborne?"

"I do not answer your questions."

"Please——"

She glanced at him, then dropped her eyes. "Yes. He paints my portrait," she added.

Waring drew in his breath and frowned. "If he can paint you—he is n't in love with you," he said. He was afraid that she would be offended—and justly so—after he had said it, but she smiled with seemingly tranquil amusement as she still searched her dressing-table.

"I don't say that he is," she remarked.

"Are you going to supper with him?" Waring asked, after a moment's silence.

"I do not answer any more of your questions."

With an effort he recovered something of his conventional manner. "I beg your pardon." He turned, with the intention of leaving. She stole a glance at him. He looked up and caught the Pierrot smile, teasing, yet a little wistful. She had removed the headdress and held it in her hand. Her hair was slightly disordered. He turned away, not trusting himself to look at her any longer.

"It is rather difficult for a man in my state of mind to preserve a drawing-room manner. I think you know perfectly well what you have done to me."

"I do not do anything to you."

"You may not have any desire to do it, but you are perfectly aware

of your power over me. I can't forget you. That is my punishment for having kissed you."

She laid the glittering headdress carefully upon the table. "You talk foolishly. Men forget many women that they kiss."

"Not when the woman has first filled them with dreams," he replied in a low voice. "Then it fixes the dream forever—and makes it real. I can't blot out that memory now. I can't put you back in the world of illusion. I have stepped over the boundary"—he broke off, trying to steady himself. "It is like the pomegranate seed, as you said that day in my studio. I can't go back. Apparently I must live in Hades forever for one act."

She moved back toward her dressing-table, nearer to him, and he saw that she smiled. "You do not flatter me with your comparison."

"It is a true one. To have a woman take possession of one without possessing her is hell—nothing less."

She sat down in the chair before her dressing-table. "You must go this minute. My maid comes now. I have to change my costume."

He came nearer to her; his eyes were caught by her small feet crossed under her short skirt like those of a good child. They were clad in the Oriental sandals with the touch of flame color, and seemed to have a separate little individuality of their own, naughty yet innocent, accenting, as it were, the teasing smile that hovered about her mouth and eyes. He smiled in spite of his agitation as he looked at them, and she asked the familiar question,

"Why do you smile?"

"I was thinking of Holofernes," he said.

"Of whom?" She frowned with her childish effect of trying intensely to understand.

"Don't you remember Judith's unfortunate victim? I was thinking of a sentence in the story. It came to me the first time I saw these little shoes—'And her sandals ravished his eyes.'"

She regarded her footgear critically. "They are pretty shoes, I think."

"They are indeed," he agreed gravely. "And I am sure they would be equally fatal. Your victim would lose his head as surely as if you cut it off."

She leaned forward and touched the bell. "Don't talk so silly."

"When can I see you again—I must see you to-morrow."

"Must?"

"Don't torture me——"

A knock came at the door. "Please," he whispered. She met his eyes a brief moment, a moment that left him breathless, then she answered quickly, "To-morrow then, at four o'clock." Then she called "*Herein*," and Hedwig entered.

XIV.

HE remembered afterwards with curious distinctness the smell of the oil paints in the room, the whiff of perfume from the full-blown roses in the bowl on the table. He could see the exact disorder of Osborne's palette on the chair, with the long, irregular splash of vermilion—yet he could have stood there but a second. He had heard his name announced and word had come for him to go up. He had found the door standing ajar, and he had fancied an answer to his knock, so he had pushed it open. Then he had seen her. He realized in that infinitesimal moment that they had become aware of his presence. He saw that she struggled to release herself, and that a second after they started apart. He thought he heard her call his name as he turned and fled.

He hurried down the hall, and he heard her call after him. She must have come out in the hall and followed him a few steps. There was a sound in her voice that almost made him pause—embarrassment, apprehension. Evidently, for some reason, she did not want him to understand the situation. He plunged down the stairs without waiting for the elevator, hurrying on until he could feel that he had left the hurting sight far behind.

Why was he so stunned by his discovery? After all, she had not denied interest in Osborne. She had merely refused to answer his questions. Why should n't she fall in love with him? Women had. Why should n't she marry him if he wanted to marry her? Osborne was not of the stuff to be cut up when the day came for the inevitable break. It would be an excellent arrangement. It was a relief. He was glad.

He did not recall clearly afterwards how the hideous hours had passed. He had walked half the night, he had drunk more than was good for him. When he awoke, it was to find Allesandro, apologetic of disturbing him, with a pile of letters, one of which required an immediate answer, and the announcement that his bath was ready. Glancing at his watch he saw that it was half-past eleven. He took up the letter, glancing through it hurriedly, and gave Allesandro a verbal answer for the messenger.

"Lady call on the 'phone," observed Allesandro, returning. "I tell her you sleep."

Waring did not answer. Turning his letters over heavily, he had come upon a note from Griselda, evidently left by a messenger that morning, asking him to call in the afternoon. He wrote an immediate refusal, giving an unexplained excuse of engagements, and dispatched Allesandro with it at once. He had a feeling that he could not convey his rejection to her too swiftly.

But when he came in from lunch, his telephone bell was ringing, and Allesandro, on his way to answer it, resigned in his favor, discreetly closing the door behind him. The sound of the voice at the other end went through him with a quick thrill and shock.

"I like to speak with Mr. Waring."

"This is Mr. Waring," he replied in his most uncommunicative tone.

"This is Mademoiselle Breslau," the voice superfluously informed him.

"Yes, I recognized your voice," he replied coldly.

"I telephone you this morning while you are still asleep." She sounded like a timid child fearing a rebuff.

"Yes, I overslept." He felt a momentary satisfaction in thus seeming to indicate indifference to the episode of the afternoon.

"I receive your letter," the voice continued, then hesitated. "Is it not possible that you come to-day—just for a few minutes?" The pleading note started again that inner trembling. Waring's voice became more cold as he strove to still it.

"As I wrote you, I simply have n't a minute to-day."

"I am so sorry."

Waring frowned. She should not work upon him this time. "If you could come only a few minutes——" The voice usually so composed broke and hesitated. "It is partly a little matter of business."

"Can't you tell me now?" Waring maintained his hard tone successfully.

"Not very well." The voice had the inflection of a helpless child now,—almost as if the child might cry if one were harsh to it. Waring frowned more deeply. That was just the effect of her imperfect English and the way her art enabled her to use her voice to move people. Then it came again propitiatingly—as if the child were apprehensive: "Can't you come just for a *little* time? I want very much to see you." That appealing rising inflection! Waring's head swam. He stumbled over his answer: "If I may come for five minutes just before six——" Then he frowned at the changed sound of the voice with its disturbing sweetness, its effect of being comforted: "Any time. At five minutes of six I expect you! Thank you."

Waring left the telephone torn by a whirl of conflicting emotions. He could not think. Still less was he in condition to work, yet he set himself sternly to a mechanical task. At five o'clock he again destroyed his day's work, recognizing it as quite worthless. Well, things could not go on like this. This should be the last time, the very last, that he would go near her. And after she had straightened out this Osborne matter to her satisfaction she would undoubtedly leave him alone. She had left him pretty well alone before. He would then set

about to tear this madness out of his imagination, out of his blood. It had become a positive obsession. He would crush it down, stamp it out of existence. He discovered that he had walked half a block past her hotel door.

XV.

SHE held out her hand to him almost shyly. In her white house gown—made with a quaint youthful simplicity—she dangerously embodied the effect of the voice at the telephone that had been his undoing.

“I speak of the business at once, because you are in haste,” she began in a subdued manner.

He sat down when she had seated herself, at a distance from her. “I have time enough not to hurry you.” His manner conveyed what was unmistakably a mere formality of courtesy.

She looked down and began turning a ring about on her hand. It was an old-fashioned German ring. His eyes followed the design of it mechanically, then he saw that the hand it ornamented was tremulous, and the sight went through him sharply. “It is about a portrait,” she began. He wished she would n’t have that air as if she were afraid of him. He had never seen her like this, her gay, insouciant, tormenting self seemed to have utterly vanished. He looked away from her, then back again and caught her stealing a shy glance at him. “You say once you like to paint my portrait,” she said softly.

He moved uneasily. “Yes, I said so once—but your portrait is being painted now, is n’t it, by Osborne?”

She looked away obviously nervous. “He has begun. But I don’t like him to finish it.”

“You are not satisfied with it?” His inquiry expressed the bare civility of attention.

She did not answer directly. “Mr. Woodruff want one for the lobby.”

Waring’s laugh was not mirthful. “Really, I’m afraid I don’t crave the privilege of reproducing your face for the gratification of Broadway. When I spoke—if I painted you—well—that was scarcely the destination I had in mind for it. My feeling about it—but I’m afraid you would n’t understand.”

“All portraits are seen,” she ventured.

He smiled. “There is a difference. But I beg your pardon if I seemed discourteous. An actress is of course the property of the world, and of course you can’t understand why I should mind your little”—he hesitated—“business proposition.”

Her nostrils quivered. “I am not the property of the world.” Again Waring frowned. If only she would not make that unfair appeal of apparent defenselessness, with her child voice and her child eyes.

“In any case, I could n’t paint you now,” he concluded briefly.

"Why not?"

"I am too busy."

"Is that your real reason?"

He glanced at her, then looked quickly away again. "No, that is not my real reason. I can't paint you, for the same reason that I could n't make a sketch of you that day in my studio. It is n't possible to paint a woman one feels about as I do about you. Besides, I want to avoid any necessity to see you any more."

She smiled down at her ring. "You change your mind again."

"Yes," he spoke intensely; "I have changed my mind again."

She was silent for a moment, her eyes upon the floor, then she raised them and looked straight at him

"I don't care about the portrait. Mr. Woodruff ask me, but I only use it as excuse."

"Excuse?" he repeated, paling. Was she playing with him?

"Excuse to see you." She still looked at him as she said it; but at the end of her sentence she dropped her eyes. He waited, speechless, for her to go on. "You come here yesterday and you see somesing." Her agitation affected her enunciation appealingly, but Waring still frowned. "I want to explain——"

He interrupted her. "You may spare yourself the trouble. I saw it all quite plainly."

"You saw Mr. Osborne kiss me."

He flinched at the definite expression of it. "There was no room for doubt about that," he said icily.

"You think perhaps I permit him——"

"Have you brought me here to torture me further?" he exclaimed with sudden violence. "I don't want to discuss it."

She rose, half putting out her hands to him. "He kiss me as you did once—without my will."

The silence seemed to Waring to beat after those words. He went over to her and caught her arm. "Is that the truth? Look at me!"

Again she looked straight into his eyes. "I tell only the truth," she said simply.

"You did n't want him to kiss you?"

"No—no."

"And when I did it—you felt the same way?"

She tried to turn from him then. "I was angry then also."

"In the same way, because you did n't like it?"

She drew her arm from his grasp. "You have no right to ask that."

"Why not, when you know how I love you?"

"But you love me against your will—if you call it love. I do not call it so, for will cannot hold back love. You do not ask me to love you. You say you stay away from me. You do not want me."

"Child! Child!"—his emotion rose uncontrollably, choking him. "Can't you see that I want you so I am half mad with it?"

"Do not talk to me like this," she whispered, "if you don't——" Then it seemed difficult for her to finish.

"Griselda!" he cried under his breath. "Griselda—I am afraid——"

She shook her head. "Love does not fear."

"It is because I love you so that I am afraid."

"Love fears only to lose—not to take."

He struggled with the whirlwind. "Both, both! Your work will have such power to hurt me always. It must separate us in the end. I could n't live my life sanely. I want you all to myself."

"You shall have me so," she said softly. And to Waring the world seemed to slip loose from its moorings with those words.

Still for another moment he struggled against the temptation. "It is madness—madness."

"I give up the theatre," she said.

"No, that would be a sacrifice. I know you well enough for that." She shook her head.

"You are like the gypsy. I remember how you looked when you sang it. I could not hold you——"

"Try," she whispered.

"Then some day you would want to go back."

"I cannot tell. But if I did——"

"If you did, I should never have another happy moment."

"I think," she said slowly, "that a great love can solve all problems."

He started to speak again, but she put up her hand with a gesture half childish, half passionate. "Do not let us talk of it more. No one knows what comes to them. Just now I want but one thing." He waited speechless. "That you put your arms around me and kiss me as you did that night."

When the time came that he had to leave her, she detained him a moment at the door with a softened reminiscence of the Pierrot smile. "You quote always wrong about Persephone. I read it myself the other day."

"How wrong?" he asked, half attending.

"She spent not all the time in Hades. Half of it she was in heaven with the gods. Jupiter arrange it so for her. That is better, is it not?"

His smile was like a ripple on the surface of waters deep enough for tragedy. "That is more than I have a right to expect—half of my time in heaven—that is, with you. Five minutes of you would make up for the rest of life in the world of shadows."

“Then you are no longer sorry?”

He shook his head. “I was a fool. I may be sorry afterwards—but not now.”

“Do not say always that.”

He looked down at her grave, not with apprehension but with the depth she had stirred in him. “I will not say it again. This moment is worth anything that life or you can do to hurt me afterwards.”

She put up her arms about him with a little suggestion of protection. “We shall not hurt you afterwards—either life nor I.”



THE SPRING SONG

BY ROSCOE GILMORE STOTT

I

WITH a ring
 And a swing
 Comes the song of Spring;
 Comes the Song of Spring, when the world is new.
 And the heart,
 With a start,
 Seems to leap apart
 From its low abode to the skies of blue.

II

With a glee
 That is free
 As the rolling sea—
 As the rolling sea and the winds above!—
 It awakes
 And it breaks
 O'er the hills and lakes,
 And carols to Youth all its tales of love.

THE WOMAN PROBLEM

I. SHALL WOMEN VOTE?

A STUDY OF FEMININE UNREST—ITS CAUSES AND ITS REMEDIES

*By Ouida**

Author of "Under Two Flags," "A Dog of Flanders," etc.



FEW things can appear more curious to a dispassionate observer than the foam of discontent seething up amongst women at the present day. Any discontent, if it be strong enough, will produce revolution; but a not uncommon result of revolution is a recoil into a more despotic absolutism than any that existed before the rebellion. It is possible that such a result will follow on the present revolt of womankind; meantime, coupled with another equally prominent feature of their sex in the present time, it is certainly one of the most curious of our social phenomena. We have studied it as such with some degree of attention, and we have come to the conclusion that, despite the prominence of its school, it is not altogether so original as it believes, and it does not very clearly know what it actually aims at and requires.

"Equality with men," we are answered. But this is exceedingly difficult to define. Of course it is perfectly easy to pass jests upon, and concoct witticisms out of, such a subject; they suggest themselves by the million. The harder effort is to avoid the attractively and facetiously ludicrous side of the subject and write upon it seriously. All jests apart, it is something difficult to define—this equality with men that is the female cry of the hour. If equality in privileges be taken, equality in

* Mlle. Louise de la Ramée, better known as Ouida, the brilliant novelist, wrote these two papers more than twenty-five years ago and sold them to this magazine with the stipulation that they should be withheld from the public until after her death. She passed away in Viareggio, Italy, January 25, 1908, and we are now free to give to the public these extraordinary documents which, in her characteristic chirography, have remained in the editor's safe so many years—passing uninjured through the great fire of 1899. The first paper is quite prophetic of the world-wide interest now obtaining in the question of woman's suffrage. The second presents a serious and startling philosophy of an evil as wide-spread as it is appalling. On both these grave questions, it will be understood, Ouida spoke for herself, and not as a mouthpiece for this magazine.

THE EDITOR.

liabilities must be enforced also. Are women to go to this extreme?—to become soldiers if they become surgeons; to become sailors if they become statesmen? We doubt if they are prepared to reach this length; but unless they are, the desire for “equality with men” is only another phase of the desire for every privilege and the exemption from every penalty.

We can thoroughly sympathize with the impatience of a clever woman at seeing herself excluded from an arena of public life in which some masculine fools and many masculine mediocrities succeed. We are fully prepared to admit that here and there may arise a woman of such brilliant abilities that she would be fully capable of governing an empire or manœuvring an army. But such women come once in five centuries; and this question is not of exceptional, but of all, women. The equality demanded is not for the few, but for the many. It is of the admission of the many to its rights and exercises that we have to treat; not of the admission of the two or three great women who may adorn a century, and who, be it noted, generally contrive to do well for themselves and rarely are participants in the cry of which we have heard so much in late years. Where real genius appears it levels sex: but this is at all times rare, in women rarest, and it is of the vast mass of “the general” that we speak. Maria Theresa, Catherine, Manon, Roland, Hypatia, Corinna, Sappho, will always make their own mark on the world’s history; but the plea now raised is for the admission of all women—on the simple score of womanhood—to the possession of the paths and thrones of men.



Now, if sex be the pure physical accident that some psychologists affirm, it is certainly hard that it alone should confer such oft-unmerited superiority on those who, happily for themselves, chance to be males. Yet, if the “accident of sex” has not thus bestowed superiority, how comes it that the world has had no female Phidias, Tacitus, Plato, Cicero, Euripides, Plautus, or Thucydides? Women reply: “Because we have not been educated.” There is some truth in this; a long succession of such emasculating education as the female sex has received generation after generation must tend greatly to debilitate and enervate the intelligence. But again the very fact that they have not insisted on better education, have not obtained it for themselves, is a proof of integral difference if we avoid the needlessly offensive term of inferiority.

In the prehistoric ages, in the times of the lake-cities and the dwellers in caves, we know that men were markedly inferior to the beasts of the desert and the saurians of the swamps. Against the enormous animals and serpents then existing men did wage continual and

most unequal war, continually being vanquished and eaten up by these fearful creatures against which they possessed neither weapons nor armor commensurate with the huge tusks of the mastodon, the impenetrable hide of the rhinoceros, the jaws of the crocodile, the talons of the tiger and the bear. Yet the issue was that in the end the originally weaker but integrally superior race ultimately conquered, subjugated, and from many parts extirpated the stronger; and by force of reason reigned alone. In the same manner we conceive that women—had they been superior to their males as were their males to the beasts, by mind that overcame matter—would have conquered for themselves some sort of supremacy, or at any rate that equal position from which they now complain they have been perforce kept out, in the many hundreds and thousands of years that have seen them upon the earth. If they had, of a truth, been possessed with a thirst for that learning and attainment which they assert has been so long denied them, could anything have drawn them back from its gratification? If they had been born with a passionate craving for pure knowledge, could the schools have barred them out through all these centuries? We cannot think so.

That women should, however tardily, awaken to a desire for greater intellectual light is of the utmost promise. Education cannot confer genius, but it can do an infinite work in the refinement, the strengthening, and the enlightening of the mind; in the banishment of prejudice and in the correction of illogical judgment. In view of the manifold superstitions, intolerances, and ignorances that prevail in the female intelligence, and of the fearful influence which these in turn bring to bear upon the children committed in such numbers to their charge, no crusade that can find favor with them, towards a New Jerusalem of Culture, can be too eagerly encouraged.



When we reflect on the enormous weight which the woman's influence has on the growing child; when we consider the incurable superstitions, the unreasonable fables, the illogical deductions, the warped and stifled prejudgments, which millions of young boys learn in education and religion at their mother's knee in infancy—it is impossible to overrate the invaluable consequences of any introduction of *geist* into the minds of women. But for the backward pressure of woman—woman ever conservative, ever *réculante*, ever wedded to form and to precedent and to tradition—the world of men would have forsaken many a *cultus* built on fable, many a dominion of priestcraft, many a limbo of worn-out and oppressive credulity. The evil mental influence of women is fully as great as can be the good moral influence of the best of their sex. Wars hounded on; fetters freshly riveted; the withes of dead beliefs

binding down the free action of living limbs; the pressure of narrow ties, and of egotisms deified to virtue, forcing men aside from paths of greatness or of justice—all these, and much more, are due to the baneful intellectual influence of women.

It is from his mother's hands—she meanwhile believing that she holds to his lips the waters of life—that the awakening reason of the young boy drinks in the poisons of priestcraft, of religious fear, of illogical belief, of credulous bias; poisons that cramp and numb the mind which thus receives them; and which, if ever they be expelled in after years by wiser thought, still will not quit the soul in which they have sunk without pangs and throes of pain and reluctance. The poet writes with facile and fluent beauty of the benignant influence on later life of the early teachings of the mother, of the purifying and elevating effect that the memories of these early impregnations of the spirit exercise in after-time: doubtless there is truth as well as sentiment in this; but we believe that a considerably greater truth may be traced on the opposite view of the same question, and that in countless instances the evil done unconsciously to budding minds by the weak and superstitious lessons, given in all good faith by women to the offspring who take their dictum as a law divine, is incalculable and retards in an immeasurable ratio the progress and the liberties of the world. Therefore, we repeat, everything that can be done for the extension and the fortification of female intelligence is invaluable. We fully agree that women cannot too thoroughly receive the same intellectual culture as men, but we doubt if the manner in which they now agitate the subject will produce this result, and we also doubt if they have at all fairly considered the issue and the consequences of this movement.



The cry for "equality with men" is much the same thing as the roughs' cry for equality in government. In both instances the rights of citizenship are demanded; but the responsibilities of citizenship are shirked. The woman demands the exercise of political power, the rough does the same, but as the rough will not relinquish his enjoyment of lawlessness and license, so the woman will not relinquish her claim on social deference and social precedence. He is to remain a rough in his privileges of drinking, stone-throwing, and slang,—she is to remain a woman in her privileges of etiquette, homage, chivalry, and beauty; but both, surrendering nothing, are to receive a full and free grant of all electoral and representative rights; both are to be able to reverse the decree and invade the domain of those who, exercising political power, do also bear the burden of political responsibilities. Now as the vast body of educated and respectable men do resist this monopoly

as proposed by the rough, so it is scarcely wonderful do they also resist the monopoly as proposed by woman. Briefly the case stands thus: an enlightened and honorable man must submit to be jostled and trampled by the one, and must stand aside deferentially with hat in hand for the other, and is only in return to have invaded and snatched away the few civil superiorities to both that he has hitherto enjoyed. Who can say that this is just?

If roughs and women be henceforth to rule (as rule they must through their overwhelming numbers if admitted to any share in governmental power), both should be prepared to make the sacrifices required; the one to surrender the vice and ignorance and dishonesties of their careers, the other to surrender the courtesies and suavities and securities of their position. The question of the former we leave to politicians; it is with the latter alone that we are concerned. And it is precisely this sacrifice that women will not make: we have known many vehement upholders of "women's rights" who claim for their sex the title to be politicians, physicians, anything that they choose, but we never knew one of them who would endure the suggestion of waiving in consequence the feminine demand for deference, homage, and all the graceful amenities that men have paid to women through the generous concession of the stronger to the feebler being. Yet what can be more absurd or more unjust than that women should bully their way into their national parliaments, share in the public administrations, fight in the rough and tumble of public contests, and take the place of men in every profession and pursuit, yet all the while claim the *pas* by virtue of their sex and exact that abdication in their favor which has been conceded to them out of reverence for the very inequality they so scornfully repudiate.



Herein, we conceive, lies the whole radical weakness of the present hue and cry raised by women: *i.e.*, the demand for everything with the resolve to concede nothing; the desire for admission into public life combined with total ignorance of all that public life exacts so heavily from its disciples. Women are prepared to rant loudly of their wrongs, and to agitate for an equal share in the government of their nations; but they are in no sense prepared to relinquish the pleasant privileges conferred on them by the present position of their sex, and to lay down the silver sceptre of their present social station. They desire to keep their feet still standing on the dais of their old womanly royalty, whilst they reach their hands upward to pluck down the iron crowns of public and political honors.

It is not astonishing that in such an effort they overbalance themselves. If they are to fight at all, they must fight fairly, but this they

show no inclination whatsoever to do. They are to be throned on the stone throne of the Acropolis, but all the while they are not to quit the rose aisles of their Armida's garden—such at least is all we can infer from their present attitude and outcry. Nor does it seem to occur to them that there is anything anomalous in the demand. And it is a little ludicrous to observe that in America, where the clamor for female rights is raised most loudly, there also are courtesy and obedience and subserviency to women, *as women*, exacted in the most ridiculously exaggerated manner. For a woman to state that she has the right to knock you out of your seat in Congress or Parliament and occupy your place herself, yet that she has also the right to expect you to give up your seat in a railway carriage and stand for her accommodation throughout a journey of hours, is a form of oppression as absurd as it is illogical. The strength that can achieve the political conquest and the weakness that can exact the social courtesy cannot possibly be leashed together. A woman must choose between the two: either she must "leave the one and obey the other, or she must forsake the one and cleave to the other." It is impossible that the two forms of right, so totally and irreconcilably distinct, can ever be conceded to her.

We wish that this absolute necessity of choice could be enforced upon the sex at large, for it were idle to deny that women are becoming extremely ill-contented with the position that they occupy, and the best thing for them and for mankind would be that they should be led to consider the subject impersonally and rationally if possible.



It will be conjectured that we do not ourselves apprehend that women have so very much of which to complain, or that their position is in any sense so intolerable as they regard it. We avow that it is so: we think that women are on the whole very fairly placed, and that the remedy for all that is vexatious lies chiefly in their own hands. The influence of women is already very great, and, although indirect, can be almost infinitely extended. We have no sort of prejudice on this subject: we know well that there are women who make splendid financiers, scholars, authors, and even mathematicians. We doubt not that the numbers of these would increase largely were the crucial test of examination by male examiners more generally brought as the criterion and the incitement of female studies, were the abilities and aspirations of brilliant women not so continually crushed out by the foolish fear of publicity in which they are brought up, and by the endless monotony of either domestic commonplace or fashionable frivolity. We are certain that if women were in early youth led to take keen interest in some one study, science, or pursuit, their lives would be infinitely happier, and

the man who brought daughters into the world would not be guilty as he is now of mercilessly adding to the already overgrown numbers of the most useless animal in all creation. We cannot picture to ourselves a creature more deeply to be pitied than the father of grown up and growing girls who has to spend all his income on the brainless heads and the countless dresses of a tribe of young women who, at their best, can only be got rid of in marriage, exacting as their dower what cripples him no less than did their maintenance. With all these beliefs, therefore, it can scarcely be doubted that we earnestly desire to see women of more use and more capable of self-support than they are now (although we confess to a keen dread of the increase of mediocrity and commonplace that will probably attend the first deluge of women into any art or profession); and we are perfectly convinced that the world will be infinitely benefited if other means of livelihood are opened to them. But it is precisely because we attach so much vital and widespread import to the mental improvement of womankind that we do infinitely regret to see a cause so good and unassailable mixed up with cries so vague and often so preposterous as those we hear so often anent "female rights."

We cannot see what there is to prevent women attaining to the highest mental elevation if they are personally capable of doing so. True, the foolish and almost useless system of female education does all it can to retard the growth of female talent. The whole mode of instruction is vitally and utterly wrong. Still, it is almost as wrong in masculine schools; and we cannot think that if women genuinely desired high culture and fine attainment they would find any difficulty in obtaining both. Wherever a woman has genius enough to "dare greatly" she invariably finds the means to do greatly also. We know of an English princess—mother of a great English statesman—whom Arago declared to be as consummate a calculator as he himself, yet here the eminence was won simply from pure love of science, and the study pursued against many temptations of high rank and worldly honors. There is nothing to prevent women from being great painters, greater composers, great poets, great students, even great architects, great astronomers, or great classicists, if they develop the genius, the patience, and the unwavering purpose needed for all greatness. When they have more largely shown greatness in these forms of intellectual splendor, it will surely be time enough to claim a place wherein to display the additional intellectual capabilities that are developed in legislation and in all forms of political life. We are not denying that it may ultimately prove possible for women to attain all the eminence that we have mentioned: we only say that it is unwise and unreasonable to raise a clamor for the one arena denied them whilst there are still so many gladiatorial contests open in which they are free, but decline to engage.

LADY GODIVA AT THE SPRINGS

By Mary Roberts Rinehart

Author of "Seven Days," "The Circular Staircase," etc.

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I.

"DARNED funny, isn't it?" Robson exploded, after a silence which marked a crescendo of emotions on the part of the kidnapped youth, beginning with mental confusion and ending with almost speechless rage.

"Funny? It's delirious!" choked his abductor, feeling for his handkerchief to wipe away the tears. "Ten miles! Oh, my Aunt!"

The chorus of triumphant yowls from the half-dozen fellows on the station platform had faded now; the bumping of the heavy train over the switches in the yard, and an occasional snort from Carter, alone broke the stillness. Robson waited until the girl in blue had passed beyond earshot—she had been unconsciously responsible for the whole thing, having been the cause of an abstraction on Robson's part that had helped the conspirators vastly.

When she had gone Robson turned almost wearily on Carter.

"I take it, from all this, that this train will not take us to Helmhurst—to see your cousins?"

"Cousins!" Carter's glee threatened to inundate him again.

"Would it be too much trouble to tell me where I *am* going?"

To one familiar with Robson, his repression was ominous. Carter glanced up quickly.

"This is the Washington special," he said. "Change cars in the morning for Richmond Springs." He chortled again, but there was a touch of affectation now in his mirth.

"Who put you up to it, Bobby? You're not original enough to have thought it out yourself."

Carter had up-ended his suit-case and was sitting on it, swaying to the motion of the train. He was looking a bit uncomfortable; this was not the attitude he had expected Robson to take. Rage would have been funny, but there was something in his victim's face that made him uneasy.

"It was a bet," he conceded sullenly. "Pratt and some of the others bet I could n't get you away from that Daisy Vasey girl at the Empire for forty-eight hours. I said I could. That's all."

Robson drew his breath in sharply.

"Thanks—for your interest," he said slowly. "I hardly expected it, seeing it was my own private affair. But since you've taken all this trouble, I'll just say this: first, as far as I know, Miss Vasey is a blamed sight better than that pack of Apaches we left back there. Second, your sacrifice in my interest is unnecessary. Miss Vasey is to be married to-morrow to the young gentleman who holds the pink sash in the rainbow chorus. You have merely saved me the pain of being present at the obsequies. Last of all, I have just seven dollars and twenty cents in my pocket, and I decline to draw any checks to pay for this delirious joy of yours."

Carter got up and picked up his suit-case. He was aggrieved: in some indefinable way the tables had turned. The joke was on him—not with him.

"I expect to stand for it," he said stiffly. "I've got mileage and a section. We can stay until Tuesday or so at the Springs, and——"

"Oh, I don't know," Robson interrupted him, growing cheerful as Carter became gloomy. "Why come back Tuesday? Let's stay a week. I hope you're not going to be piffing, Bobby."

Carter stalked into the car and flung his suit-case into the lower berth of his section. The snap had gone out of the affair: the gloom of the sleeper was reflected in his soul, and he failed to cheer up when, on shaking for the upper berth, Robson got it. That young gentleman was rapidly becoming cheerful, and he appropriated Carter's pajamas with an easy air of proprietorship that maddened their owner.

"What am I going to sleep in?" demanded Carter savagely.

"Wrap the drapery of your couch about you," Robson retorted, and, climbing aloft, proceeded to sit on the disputed garments until such time as he might be ready to don them.

Toward morning Robson wakened. It took him a minute or two to account for the swaying and general uncertainty of his couch. Then he remembered, and resentment against Carter was as fresh as the morning. Hazy plans for revenge flitted through his mind, leaving one absolute resolve—to make Carter as wretchedly unhappy as the circumstances justified; to make him wish he had never been born, or that he had passed away in early life; that he had done anything, in fact, but abduct his best friend and take him five hundred miles from home.

He opened the curtains and peered out. It was very dark, and divers sounds showed that his neighbors slept. With infinite caution, lying flat, Robson reached one long arm into the berth below and

clawed at what, for a while, was empty air. After a time he was rewarded. A starched cuff and the sleeve it belonged to met his fingers, and with a long breath of joy he drew in his prize.

In the next five blissful minutes he tied two knots in each sleeve, pulled and jerked them until they were mere knobs of cloth, and then, in the absence of water, he soaked them with the contents of his pocket flask. When at last, sated with revenge, he tossed the wreck of what had been Carter's shirt into the berth below, he lay back with a long breath of satisfaction and dropped into the easy sleep of the pure in heart.

When morning came at last, Robson dressed hastily. Not for worlds would he miss Carter's face when he saw that shirt. Once in the aisle, however, he had a shock. Carter was reading a time-table in a seat near-by, and looked almost as serene as a man may who expected a lark and finds a white elephant.

"Your hair looks like quills on the fretful porcupine," said that worthy easily. "Better cut to the wash-room. She'll be up soon, and I'll present you."

Robson stared.

"The girl in the blue suit," Carter explained cautiously. "She had an upper, and I gave her my lower——"

But Robson had gone. Alone in the privacy of the lavatory, he doused his head with cold water and tried to forget knots in the sleeves and the generally dissipated condition of that unlucky waist. There was only one thing to do—hide in the smoking-room until she had gone. She had looked like a nice girl, too. Maybe she had another waist with her—almost certainly she would have. But suppose she had not! He folded up his six feet of misery in a corner of the smoker and moped, resenting Carter's attempts at cheerfulness with a few pointed remarks.

When the train finally stopped he waited wretchedly until every one had left the car. Then he stepped out and faced—her. Evidently she had waited, too. She wore her blue jacket in spite of the heat, and her state of mind was quite plain, even through her veil. As Robson stepped back to let her pass, her outraged eyes burned through the indifference that he wore as a mask, and he knew she *knew*.

As he followed her out of the car the unmistakable odor of stale whisky clung to her like an aureola, and Robson groaned.

It was not a surprise, considering the general fiendishness of things, to find her, a walking, tangible conscience, on the train for the Springs. Robson watched her covertly from the back of the car, and decided that the back of her neck and the way her hair curled around her ears was not unforgiving. But her profile looked very set indeed, and she held her chin well up.

It was forty-eight endless hours before Robson achieved a presentation, having certain knowledge that the lady in question had three times refused to meet him. At the end of that time he shamelessly offered her a glove he had seen another girl drop, and proceeded at once with his little prayer of forgiveness. She listened patiently.

"Really, what is it all about, Mr. Robson?" she asked when he had finished. "Have we—did we ever meet before?"

"No, strictly speaking, we did not meet, but we—almost met."

"How very curious!" she said, and went out to a waiting run-about that was occupied by a young man also evidently waiting—for her.

They did not leave the Springs on Tuesday. Carter was more than ready to go, but his guest steadily refused to depart—for two reasons. The first and most important was that he had registered a mental vow that he would not move two miles from the hotel until Lois Collier had ceased tilting her chin in the air whenever she saw him. The other reason was psychological, and dependent somewhat on the first. He was driven into mischief as some men are driven to drink—by his lady's coolness—and, having put the responsibility for the whole thing on the unlucky Carter, he gathered around him a band of a dozen followers and proceeded to treat the Springs to a livening up in the way of original sin that did credit to his invention, if nothing else.

At the end of four days Carter was at his wit's end. He came to Robson's room one morning when that young gentleman was rising late, after a ball given the night before to the colored waiters and chambermaids of the entire summer colony. Carter strode in furiously.

"Look here, Phelps," he stormed, "there's the deuce of a row downstairs. Where did you get that bisque figure you gave as a prize in the cakewalk last night?"

"On the mantel in one of the parlors. Why?"

"Why?" Carter was almost inarticulate. "Why? The management want it back, that's all. And that mud-colored octoroon won't give it up."

"And why should she give it up?" Robson asked innocently. "She won it, did n't she?"

Carter groaned helplessly.

"Then there's another fuss about your taking that pony into the ball-room," he persisted. "Half the old women in the hotel are there now, looking at the scratches. What possessed you anyhow?"

"That's impossible," Robson said gravely. "I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that I used every sock you possessed to pad that creature's feet. As for the old women, they're having the time of their lives. They ought to rise up and call me blessed."

Carter gave up then, throwing back from the door a final entreaty.

"I wish you'd be more careful about letting your generosity run off with the hotel property," he said. "Old Baldwin wanted twenty-two dollars for that figure, and if Lois Collier——"

"What about Lois Collier?" Robson asked abruptly.

"Well, she got the thing from Tillie—that's the lady's name—by offering her a bracelet, or something like that. Honestly, Phelps, I'm all in. I wish to thunder I'd let you stay in town. Look at me. I'm a wreck. Every time there's something devilish on hand, you wear my clothes, and I get the credit."

He slammed out, and left Robson staring at the door. He had heard nothing of the latter half of the tirade. So Lois Collier had bartered a bracelet for that atrocious Dresden lady with a pet lamb! Why had she done it?

After a search he found Lois in the dining-room, alone at her table, with a book propped in front of her and her luncheon untouched. She watched his approach with an unsmiling face.

"I'm not going to ask if I may sit down," said the culprit, drawing out a chair, "because you are sure to say 'no.'"

"I would indeed," the young lady said severely.

"And yet—it is your fault that I am here, Miss Collier." He picked up the menu and glanced at it while he spoke, for forty eyes of half as many dowagers were focused on them.

"My fault!" she repeated incredulously. "Why, I have n't spoken ten words to you in three days!"

"To be exact, three and a third words a day. It is a low average, is n't it? But what I meant is this: if you are still—er—unforgiving, why did you secure the Dresden lady and the lamb from Tillie? Not on Tillie's account, surely. Hardly for the management. Then—why?"

Miss Collier looked uncomfortable. She chose her words with care, and without looking at Robson.

"I am sorry for Mr. Carter," she said coldly. "He seems to have his hands full."

Robson stared at her. Then he put down the card and leaned over to her.

"I think it's time to clear up this whole thing, Miss—Lois," he said slowly. "Carter's idea of humor is to kidnap a man—without extra clothes, without money—to be exact, seven dollars and twenty cents—and carry him several hundred miles from home and mother. I made up my mind then that he'd change his idea of what's funny. I think he has. You were the first victim——"

"I? When?"

"Never mind when. You were. And I want to tell you this. I'm

not a natural idiot—I've had to work to acquire it. If you had been as—as forgiving as the back of your neck—I beg your pardon! I mean, if you had only forgiven that wretched waist——”

“I gave it to Tillie, in exchange for the Dresden lady—and the lamb,” she said severely.

“Because—you were sorry for Carter?”

“Yes.” But the “yes” was not so firm. She even smiled a little, albeit frostily, and Robson left the room feeling that he had gained ten yards for the goal.

All of which makes the sequel only more tragic. For as Robson left the dining-room and, treading on air, made his way along the hall, he met Carnahan the elder carrying a bundle and wearing a grin.

“They've come,” he said in a stage whisper. “The greatest ever—and the wig! You'll have your notorious predecessor put on the blink, that's all.”

Robson dug his hands in his pockets. “I'm out of it,” he said shortly. “I—I'm a reformed character. You can have your midnight revels without me.”

“The deuce we can!” Carnahan dropped his bundle on the floor, and backed Robson against the wall. “Who got this up anyhow? Who's going to wear those togs? They won't fit any one but you or Carter.” Then, with a change of tone, “Oh, say, Phelps, for heaven's sake, don't go back on us now! We've got the horse and the banners and everything.”

Robson was visibly weakening, but he made one last clutch at his departing resolve.

“Get Carter,” he suggested.

“Carter's borrowed the Rodgers bubble and is taking Miss Collier to the dance at the Country Club.”

“So it has been on Carter's account, after all.” Robson stooped and picked up the bundle recklessly.

“Come and try 'em on,” he threw back at the relieved Carnahan.

II.

THE largest spring, perhaps a quarter of a mile from the hotel, had been roofed over, walled in, and fitted with chairs and benches into a rest-house. From its portals, dignified during the day by the presence of crocheting dowagers and rheumatic elderly gentlemen, came that midnight a strange procession. It made its way quietly enough to the edge of the woods, where a halt was called and the torches were lighted.

Thus revealed were a dozen masked gentlemen, doubleted, breeched, and hosed in the modern conception of mediæval dress. By twos they

marched, heralded by trumpeters, and each bearing a flambeau that smelled modernly of kerosene. And in the full glare of the shameless lights, mounted on a white palfrey and sitting side-fashion, was a Lady Godiva of pink fleshings, mask, and blonde wig—a wig which hung over its wearer's broad shoulders as their only mantle. The rest of the party were in high spirits, but the Lady Godiva was sulky.

"It's darned cold," she said, in a heavy, masculine voice. "Why don't you hurry and get it over?"

"That's not the spirit for a revel," one of the Burghers put in, with a slight Irish accent. "You're a pretty warm proposition, Phelps; you ought n't to be cold. Where's Peeping Tom?"

From somewhere in the rear a wretched darky was hustled forward, labelled with a large card, and blinded with a bandage. When he had been securely tied to the palfrey's tail the pageant moved forward. At the foot of the drive up to the hotel the Lady Godiva balked again.

"I'm not going up there without a blanket," she snarled, giving the reins a jerk. "I'm not going to be paraded about that hotel like this. Suppose they recognize me?"

"But prove me what it is I would not do," quoted Carnahan under the beard of the Chief Burgher of Coventry. "Your own mother would n't own you, Robson. She would call you 'that creature.'"

The procession moved on with dignity, preceded out of the night by ambitious and mournful trumpeting, heralded by the light of a dozen torches. The hotel turned out of bed to see it in force and a remarkable variety of costume, and the Lady Godiva shrank in her fleshings and found the blonde wig anything but reliable as a covering.

Past the hotel—down the drive—through the town, where the horrified villagers watched them through modest shutters—past a hay wagon filled with young people, and at such unexpectedly close quarters that the Lady Godiva begged her escort piteously for an umbrella, an overcoat, anything. And then at last into the woods again, where the friendly shades of night covered the Lady, and where, secure from discovery, she doffed the mask and damned her escort, the whole affair, and her particular part in it especially.

"What's wrong with you, anyhow?" Carnahan asked, aggrieved. "It's been the biggest thing ever. I'll bet some of those old ladies won't make their hair lie flat for a week. You were a dream. You've got Lady Griselda and Godiva and the whole bunch of antiquities beat to a finish."

Like the lamps of the seven foolish virgins, the torches had not been freshly filled. Now in the gloom, they began to die away, in an odor that was not of sanctity. The excitement over, some of the ardor died too, and it was a footsore and generally disgusted party

that drew up at the rest house and turned the white horse over to Peeping Tom.

Two lamps were still burning. The Lady Godiva, holding her yellow hair in her hand, walked stiffly into the building and stamped to get up her circulation. All around was a bustle of removing wigs and beards, of long ulsters being sorted out and put on, and a running series of comments. Robson sauntered over to the corner where he had left his clothes, and stood there for a moment, gazing at an empty bench. The night air came through the window above it and made him shiver, and on the sill, in the half light, was one of his shoes. That was all.

"What sort of a joke do you fellows call this?" he growled, glaring around the room. There was an instant silence; then Carnahan came over and took in the situation at a glance.

"Joke!" he said. "Fellows, did any one hide Robson's clothes? Speak up: he'll catch his death here."

There was a chorus of negatives, and the conclusion was inevitable. Some one had stolen the clothes through the open window, leaving one shoe, and, on the ground outside, a pathetically inadequate necktie. Robson's gloom deepened.

"I don't care about the clothes," he said; "they were Carter's anyhow. But if there's anything cooler at three in the morning than silk tights and the tinkle of that infernal spring, I don't know it."

A hurried inventory showed that there was not an article of modern apparel to spare. In most cases a single ulster covered a multitude of omissions.

It was finally arranged that the party get to the hotel as quietly as possible and send back one of their number with the necessary sops to the proprietors and a glass of hot toddy for Robson's chilled frame. At a quarter past three the Lady Godiva settled herself in a chair, with a doublet or two over her knees, and a torch on either side for warmth, and tried to forget that he was a young ass who deserved all he had got—and more.

Robson hardly knew it was raining. It began gently, with a tap-tap on the wooden roof. Then suddenly, with a burst of fury that swept it in through the open windows and beat him back when he tried to close them. And then, above the turmoil, he heard voices.

"I can't run—another step," a girl's voice panted. And a masculine one encouraged her.

"We're right there. Be careful of the step. Now!"

Robson hurled himself against the door just in time. It gave a little, enough to send a bit of yellow light through the opening. Then it shut with a bang.

"There's some one in there," the feminine voice quavered. "Oh,

don't go in." But Carter—of course it was Carter—only put his shoulder against the door and pushed with all his might. The door gave a little—and shut.

"Let us in!" he shouted above the storm. "What do you mean in there? It's—raining!"

"Can't," came a frantic, familiar voice. "For heaven's sake, go away."

"There's a girl out here," bawled Carter. "If that's you, Robson, open the door. Miss Collier is getting drenched."

"Have you got a blanket?" came the voice, very close.

"No! If you don't open the door, I'll come through the window."

"Look here, in the interests of decency, have you got anything on you can spare? I—my clothes have been stolen."

In answer Carter stripped off his long road ulster.

"Open the door," he called. "Here's something. And for heaven's sake, don't wait to primp. We're soaked."

Then the door opened and Lois stepped in. Robson stood in the midst of a litter of scattered papers and overturned chairs in the smoky light of two kerosene torches. He was clad in one shoe and a dripping automobile coat, and below the coat was a foot and a half of pink silk tights. Trailing behind him, where he had dropped it, was a golden wig of luxuriant tresses. The girl gasped; then she leaned against the door and laughed, laughed until she ached, until pure fatigue made her drop breathless onto the bench.

Carter's face was a study. As for Robson, he had thrust his hands deep into the ulster pockets and was trying to look as if he did not realize the deficiencies of his costume.

"Hard rain, is n't it?" he said, as a fresh downpour struck the roof. "I—I hope you are not wet, Miss Lois."

"Wet!" Carter snapped. "No. We're not wet. That crazy car broke down and we've walked about a mile. Look here, Phelps, what devilry have you fellows been up to to-night?"

"It was a historical pageant," Robson justified himself. "We're away behind the old world in those things—no traditions; and—and all that," he trailed off, avoiding the girl's eyes. It was so evident that she was trying not to see the pink tights.

"What historical pageant?" demanded Carter. "The Garden of Eden?"

"No!" Robson was scandalized. "What do you think I am? It was—Godiva, Lady Godiva. I would have been all right if some one had n't stolen my clothes."

Carter glared helplessly.

"It's a wonder they were not *my* clothes," he said bitterly. "You usually wear mine when you're bent on trouble."

"They were—yours," Robson admitted meekly.

Carter was speechless. Then, as if he needed air, he went to the door and jerked it open.

"I'm going to the hotel for an umbrella and a mackintosh for you, Lois," he snapped, and fled.

"Lois?" Robson repeated. "Are you 'Lois' to him?"

The girl looked uncomfortable.

"Just in times of stress. You see, I am sorry for him—he seems——"

"To have his hands full," finished Robson. "Well, he has. He deserves to. I'm not going to defend myself—'Lois'—this is a time of stress"—as she attempted to protest. "I—tried to get out of this thing to-night, and if you had n't gone to the club with Carter, I would have been virtuously asleep. But—when you went away I didn't care——"

"That's a very slender thread to hang an excuse to," she said severely. "I can't be around all the time, you know."

"Oh, yes, you can, if you want to. Lois, if—if you would only take me in hand for better or worse! I know this is n't the conventional time or place, but I——"

Lois had dropped back into her chair.

"You are not—proposing to me!" she gasped.

"That's the way I meant it"—humbly. He dropped his long length into a chair beside her. "But perhaps I'd better put it off——"

"Until you grow up," she supplemented promptly.

"That's right—laugh," he said gloomily. "No matter what I do, I'll always be a clown to you. The first time I saw you I—I had to make you unhappy, and now I choose a time when, by every instinct of a gentleman, I ought to be hiding behind a rain-barrel, to tell you I love you. I'm a ghastly failure, that's all. I'm going away to join a circus."

The rain was coming down more gently now. Some one was striding briskly down the wet boardwalk, slipping now and then with a muttered ejaculation. The girl listened, then she turned to the dejected mummer beside her.

"Don't join the circus," she said gently, "and don't wait until you grow up. Come—and tell me—no, not now—come and tell me—in the morning."

Carnahan stopped in the doorway and stared. He had a nondescript bundle of garments in one hand and a glass of something hot in the other.

Inside the spring house Robson stood looking into Lois Collier's eyes. Something in the girl's face made Carnahan gasp; then he absently raised the glass to his lips and drained its steaming contents.

MRS. MARSHAM

By Maarten Maartens

Author of "God's Fool," "My Lady Nobody," etc.



SO they were married, then. There was no more to be said. It's the sort of thing you have to do altogether, if you can't let it alone. 'T is no use being half-married. Every one knows that's worse in many ways than not being married at all.

And people were beginning to say that Walter Larcombe was half-married to Mrs. Kaye. She soon put a stop to that.

"No, you may n't," she said abruptly, when he asked whether he might come again in the evening. She said, "No, I won't"—he wanted her to ride with him once more—and "No, I don't"—he had asked whether she did n't think he might—

"But you can't even know what I am going to ask!" he exclaimed in surprise.

"I can see by the tone of your voice and the look in your eyes that it's something I won't allow."

"But you don't allow anything nowadays!"—he spoke with much irritation and a little spite.

"I don't. I wish I had been as strict at the first. Somehow a thing has happened to me in this dreadful little place" (it was Algiers) "which has never happened to me before and which I have always especially and peculiarly dreaded. I have got myself talked about. Oh, I don't blame you. Quite the reverse. But it's the very worst thing for a young widow, almost worse than for a young girl. The other women are so much more pitiless. I could cry about it. I have always been so quiet. Like my name, you know—'Violet.' And now people say things. 'T is a shame. I shall never feel happy again."

So, after this, what could they do but marry? People said they never would have expected it of Walter Larcombe.

He would never have expected it of himself. He was a confirmed and professed bachelor—all his friends had known for years that he was not the sort of man who marries. Even his mother had stopped worrying him long ago. He was fairly well-off, and he went his way through life with much decency and more comfort. Invidious matrons called him selfish. His ideas about women and the marriage-state were certainly not paradisaical, but he never aired them unless compelled.



And, after all, we cannot be offended at some few Adams for wanting to keep out of the wholesale scrapes of Eve.

But the upshot of all this was that Walter Larcombe led the pretty American widow to the altar, amidst a flutter and giggle of sympathetic semi-approval. 'T is the not unusual wind-up of such a cheerful bachelorhood. That the two had got talked about was a mere prank of Fortune—a lame horse and twilight and the wrong person to see them come home.

So, then, they were married, and away for their honeymoon, at Hammam R'irha. He wanted to do some painting (he was a more than endurable amateur), and she wanted, for the first weeks, at any rate, to avoid a sea-voyage. Therefore they withdrew to the hotel in the Atlas, which was bright at this season and full of smart people, for they did n't know each other well enough for a persistent tête-à-tête.

"It is odd," said the bride, flicking her cigarette, "the way people marry. The merest accident of meeting! A toss up."

"Heads I win; tails you lose!" answered Larcombe, watching the blue curls from his cigar and faintly wishing his wife would n't smoke.

On the whole, he was satisfied, even rather pleased. It was astonishing to him to consider how fond he had grown of her in these ten days of their closer union. It might just as well have been the other way, when, at the age of forty, you bind down the rest of your life to a woman you have only met in hotel life through half a Mediterranean season. He knew hardly anything of her, or she of him. Of course all the required information had been quite correct. She was a widow from Albany, where her people had as good a position as she herself, a cultured woman of considerable means, barely five and twenty. And everybody who cared could know about him, a younger son of a sufficiently honored county family, luckier than many another with his poor dead uncle's eight hundred a year.

"These people at the dinner-table set me thinking," continued the fair American. "Every one could see that they bore one another. Yet they're not much more than thirty. Heavens! to think how long they can go on boring!"

He laughed. "Do you know, that's a hobby of yours," he expostulated. "I had almost said a craze. You're always watching couples and concluding that they bore one another."

She laughed also, but not so spontaneously as he.

"Well, don't you think they very likely are?" she said.

"I don't know. I have such small experience of marriage."

That was said in his old bachelor style. Suddenly he realized how discourteous it was to her, the quondam widow.

"And a honeymoon is n't the right time to get *such* experience in," he added gallantly.

"Oh, don't say that," she replied quickly. "If people began at all, they would certainly begin in the honeymoon. I feel sure——" she stopped.

"How can you say such things?"

"Because they are true. Fancy starting on your wedding journey, and then finding out that—the other person bored you. Your partner for life! Have you any conception what that means?"

"No," he answered. "Have you?"

She did not respond. A few moments later she said, taking another cigarette, "If you were n't an Englishman, I should say you had been rude."

He waited, a little annoyed.

"Englishmen very seldom are rude," she went on, "because, you see, they very seldom intend to be."

"Oh, I say, that 's too bad. How about Americans?"

"Well, the American woman is n't, because, you see, she may say whatever she likes."

"Then I pity the American man."

She reflected before she replied.

"I agree with you. I, too, pity the American man." They were up on the balcony of their rooms, overlooking the splendid, soft, far-reaching valley and mountains beyond, in the brief gloaming and broad after-glow—the silver and purple African eve.

"Since we started," he declared, "you have pointed out at least half a dozen couples to me and maintained that they bored each other."

"Do not let us insist," she answered meekly. "I promise never to allude to the subject again."

"One would think you had had experience already," he protested. And again, suddenly, it occurred to him that she might have had experience *before*. He realized that honeymoon conversations with a widow are full of pitfalls for a sensitive Number Two. She was very quiet: he wondered what she was remembering. A young girl's souvenirs are harmless, but a young widow's? He was beginning to harp on the word till it drove him into fidgets. He got up and leaned over the balustrade, looking out towards the far-away opposite glimmer, on the mountain-side, of Vésoul. Considerations come to you of a sudden, sometimes, when it's all over, in a flash, and you stand amazed that they had n't come ere you began. If he ever married again, he resolved that he would n't marry some one who 'd been married before.

"A penny for your thoughts," said she, shaking off her own.

"I was thinking how lovely the warm air is," he answered, but she did n't believe *that*.

"It will soon be too hot even here," she replied. "We shall have to make plans for the summer."

"Oh, London in June," he opined.

"London!"—her voice sounded unreasonably distressed. "I thought you said the climate of England disagreed with you!"

"So it does disagree with me. But one has to accept a lot of disagreeable things. I can stand a couple of months of it in summer."

"The loveliest month of the year in—London! Oh, I know people do it. Now, I should have suggested Fiesole."

"The Americans come in shoals."

"The Americans are the most imitative snobs in the world. I don't want to go to London. I hate it. I have n't bargained on going to England, Walter. I hate England. I won't go. My husband——" again she checked herself.

"Oh, by all means, don't do what you don't want to," he retorted, for it was a retort. He thought her vehemence in bad taste: before marriage he had never noticed that she was vehement, only lively. He did n't want to hear about her "husband." But to say you "hated England" was surely absurd.

"It would kill me to live in England. The last time I was there the gloom got on my nerves. I—I thought I should go out of my mind."

He half-turned, controlling his voice, afraid of that hateful thing, a sneer. "What a contingency!" he said. "But you know we decided to live in Paris. I always go home for a couple of months."

"Not this year," she replied. "Next year you can go alone."

"Next year you'll be glad of a holiday," he said, laughing.

"So will you. We shall have had time to bore one another." He let the word pass. The air was full of sweet African noises: chirrupings and croakings. He stood listening to those.

"But just now I feel I could n't miss you, Walter. We are very fond of each other, are we not?"

"Do you doubt it, dearest?"

"No," she said simply. "You would n't have married me if you had n't been fond of me. I carefully explained that this afternoon to the chaplain's wife."

"Our marriage needed explanation?"

"Marriages always do, to chaplains' wives. She had the oddest idea about American marriages. She seemed to think they were an incident in the story of our divorce."

"Well, you do have a lot of divorce!"

"Do we? More than other nations? For myself, I loathe the idea. Fancy walking about the world and meeting your wife on another husband's arm."

"You fancy such uncomfortable things," he objected stiffly. "I prefer not to. I'm not at all fanciful."

"So I have noticed. And I'm very glad of it. For your own sake especially. I *am* fanciful. I get ideas in my head. All women do, I suppose. I mean the idle ones like me. The chaplain's wife does. You remember Mrs. Marsham?"

"I can't say I do. Did we meet her at Algiers?"

She laughed, a little hysterically. "No, no! Mrs. Marsham, the American lady, who was accused of murdering her husband—in England."

"Oh! Yes, I remember there was such a case."

"Was such a case! Why, Walter, it filled the whole world for weeks! People talked of nothing else."

"I think I did," said Larcombe—and that was provoking.

"The chaplain's wife has n't the slightest doubt she was guilty. Not the slightest. She was as certain as if she'd done it herself."

Larcombe laughed at the picture.

"It's no laughing matter," protested his wife energetically. "It drives me wild to see the pig-headed persistency of people. She knows nothing about it. She has n't even got the simplest facts of the case. But she's quite sure of the poor thing's guilt—oh, quite sure!"

"My dear Violet, you must n't let yourself be driven wild! 'Tis the duty of all parsons' wives to believe in guilt—the parsons themselves may have a leaning to mercy."

"Don't talk like that: I can't stand them," she hurried on, excitedly. "The whole pack of them hounding one poor soul, like a hunted deer! Those two heavy spinsters also—you know, with the cherry ribbons—came along and joined in. Great, fat, complacent creatures with their 'our cousin, Lord Chesbury,' and their four hundred a year each, as they tell you, to waste upon themselves. 'That woman!' That's all they can say."

"My dearest, you are too generous! Do you always feel so much for unknown unfortunates? Or did you happen to know this Mrs. What's-her-name?"

"I know her? No; how should I know Mrs. Marsham?" She spoke in a half-frightened way: he began to fear that she really possessed "nerves."

"I only thought she had lots of friends in America."

"She had lots of friends—lots who did n't know her. We are a warm-hearted people: we can't endure the thought of injustice!"

"But I don't understand what excites you so. I suppose the woman had a fair trial."

"A fair trial! No, indeed, 'the woman' did n't have a fair trial. What's a fair trial? You've married into a lawyer's family. My father was a great New York advocate, so are both my brothers. My uncle was Judge Tonson. Talk to them of a fair trial! There has n't

been a fair trial since the first one in Paradise. There can't be such a thing among ignorant, prejudiced, and, for the most part, dishonest men. What makes the fair trial, do you think? The cross-examination? Or the summing up?"

"I don't know, and, honestly—as I don't expect ever to be mixed up in criminal proceedings—I don't much care."

"Walter, don't trifle with me. I *do* care about this, immensely. You must have read the proceedings: everybody did. You must have formed an opinion: everybody had one. Do you think Mrs. Marsham was guilty?"

"I certainly do."

"But why? The proof——"

"Because a British judge and jury condemned her. I can't give you a better reason."

"You can't give a worse"—there were tears in her voice, tears of spite and vexation. He came back to her in amazed distress. "My dear Violet—dear darling, are you crying? What on earth—I'll say anything, believe anything you like! I had no idea you *cared*. I'll read up the whole case: there's sure to be some book about it."

She wiped her eyes. "Books," she said. "A whole literature. I've got them all. If you like—no, I won't."

"I'm glad you believe in her," he said with some warmth. "I'm glad you're the champion of a woman like that. Nine-tenths of you turn against her, and the best tenth fights her cause."

"I *do* hate injustice," she said.

"Injustice is an ugly word."

"And an uglier thing. If she did kill her husband, I dare say he bored her!"

"Whew!" he said, drawing back a bit.

"I don't want you to read the accounts. They are all incomplete. I am sure the real truth did n't transpire."

He was silent: the subject could n't interest him. "The post's later than ever to-night," he said at last.

"I pity her from the bottom of my heart."

"It's a big heart, Violet. It can hold a lot down to the bottom."

"Well, it does. But this is a hobby-horse of mine. I see you don't know what they called me in Algiers."

"No, what?" he said anxiously.

"I had tried—it was before you came—to get signatures for a fresh Anglo-American petition to the Home Secretary. I tried a good deal. I understand you did n't hear of it. But I did, accidentally."

"But what did they call you?"

"They called me 'Mrs. Marsham,'" she said softly.

"It seems to me quite inane," he exploded, in anger.

"So it was. It was one of the things people do because they have no meaning at all."

"Well, it had some vague sort of connection. You had got your name coupled with hers."

"I am not ashamed of that."

"I suppose not. Still, I advise you to avoid the subject in the future."

"I don't know whether I can do that," she said meditatively. "It fascinates me."

But he was as much annoyed as a honeymoon-bridegroom can be. "Now again—the chaplain's wife," he said. "The worst woman to start that nickname all over the place!"

"Well, I'll only talk about it to you," she said. "I'll persuade you of her innocence yet."

He sighed frankly. "So you may," he said. "I don't really believe a refined woman of to-day kills her husband. The thing's manifestly extravagant."

"That's what I always say," she cried eagerly. "We're in greater sympathy than I thought. I always maintain the thing is n't true because it could n't be."

"That post has come up from Bou Medfa," he remarked. "They're unconsciously long bringing it in."

"But you never care about the post!"

"I do when I expect something. These last three days I have been looking out for a reply."

"Business?" She took a cigarette.

"Business."

She struck a match. "I don't care about business," she said.

"Why should you? Your business consists in drawing on your bankers."

"And what is yours?"

He blew out the match for her. "It's a secret," he said.

"What—a secret? I hate secrets."

He seized his opportunity. "Do you mean to say you have n't got a single secret from me?"

"What nonsense! Why should I have a secret?" she said lightly.

"I am heartily glad. I have had an idea lately, Violet, for some time, that there was something you were keeping back from me."

"What non——" She did not finish her sentence, hiding her face in her hands.

"I know: you must forgive me for wronging you. It was something in your manner I have n't yet got accustomed to. The constant starting of a sentence you don't finish, I suppose."

"I don't do that constantly?" she inquired, alarmed.

"More than you think. Why, you did it just now. It's only a habit. Here's the post." He took his letters from the waiter: after a glance at the superscriptions he retired into his own room to read them.

It was he who seemed preoccupied during their late dinner. She, lively, with a red spot on each cheek, joked about the food and the rest of the company. She "made conversation" for him, but that is no unusual phase of a honeymoon.

At last she twitted him with his inattention; then she boldly asked what was wrong. He told her out in the grounds, in the dark.

"I can't keep anything from you—not a couple of hours," he said. "I feel I could n't. Husbands and wives must have their prepossessions in common. My marriage has called for explanations at home which are not satisfactorily forthcoming. In fact, it appears I am ruined."

"Well, I'm not," she hastened to say.

"My banker—his name is Lawson—has absconded with my money. I'm afraid I have n't a penny left."

"Dollars must replace them," she said.

"My dearest, you take it too sweetly. How can I thank you? But you must realize that it is n't pleasant for me to contemplate living on your money!"

"It would be far more unpleasant to contemplate living on nobody's."

"I can only assure you that when I married the other day, I had n't the faintest suspicion——"

She put her hand on his mouth. "Only mercenary people think others mercenary," she said. "Now, the chaplain's wife, who is always pestering one about their small stipend, said she felt sure Mrs. Marsham wanted her husband's money. I told her I knew Mrs. Marsham had ample means of her own."

"But that is n't my case. Well, I'm glad I told you."

"You should have told me before dinner. It would have been far better for your digestion. I'll give you a powder——" she broke off, and, very nervously, "No, I won't give you a sleeping-draught," she said. "You must get those for yourself."

"Why? Are yours too strong?"

"It's not that, but you remember Mrs. Marsham——"

"I won't have any other than yours," he interrupted violently. She did not press the subject, but allowed him to talk of his own affairs, with an occasional aside about the beauty of the night or the cries of the jackals. It was late when they withdrew to their adjoining rooms; it was much later—the night was half spent—when he at last fell into troubled slumber—more dreams of ruin and matrimony and Mrs.

Marsham—with his wife's powder lying beside his bed. He fought shy of opiates.

He awoke to the thought that Mrs. Marsham kept watch by his side. And, indeed, a female figure stood there, motionless. "Ah, you are awake!" said his wife.

He sat up. "Violet! What's wrong?"

"I want to say something to you, Walter."

Her tone startled him. "You're sure you want to say it to-night?"

"Yes; sure. Because you've guessed it already."

He turned the shade of the electric lamp.

"You said I was keeping something from you." She trembled from head to foot. "Don't protest, Walter," she continued. "Of course I know you'll apologize again and make it sound all right. But you've said it at last, and you've thought it for long. And you know it as well as I."

"Violet!"

"Why didn't you take my powder?" She opened it, spilling it feverishly, with shaky hands.

"I distrust sedatives."

"Distrust! Distrust!" She almost screamed the words. Then she added quite softly: "Yes, I killed my first husband. You are quite right."

"My dear child," he said, but his tone was by no means as indifferent as he wanted it to be, "you are n't well. Let me see you to bed, and we'll talk about it to-morrow."

"No, we'll talk about it to-night," she said. "This very, black, gruesome night. Everything's listening to-night. I followed Mrs. Marsham's example. But I did the thing better than she."

He wanted to say something; but she sat down by his bedside, close, and put her arm along it.

"He caught cold," she said, "on our arrival at Southampton. It settled on his lungs. The doctor said it was touch and go. And, at the critical moment, I let him lie in the draught."

"You could n't help that. An innocent inadvertence——"

"You know better. I can see in your eyes that you know better. I intentionally left things as I found them. The hotel maid had n't closed the door. He lay between it and the window. So I sat there beside him, in the draught."

She added: "As I am sitting here."

He shuddered, and looked at her white hand on the coverlet.

"So he died," she said. "I knew that it would kill him."

She added: "I wanted him to die."

A long silence fell between them.

"Your money is your first husband's?" he said at last.

She cried out like an animal in pain. "You don't think I did it for that?" she exclaimed.

"No, no. I don't think anything. I don't know what to think."

"He bored me so dreadfully. You can't think how he bored me—I was so young. I thought how he would go on boring me forever."

"How can you expect me to live on his money?" cried Larcombe miserably.

"I don't expect anything. I expect you to go to London in June and give me up. I mean, I should give myself up, in London. Mrs. Marsham betrayed herself, of course: we all do. Did n't I make them call me 'Mrs. Marsham' in Algiers? I call myself 'Mrs. Marsham' often at night, under the bedclothes, a dozen times. And I think of her, poor woman, in jail, on her wretched pallet, all these years, martyred, tortured, as they do in your jails—not like Elmira! You ought to judge your own Britishers only, with your monstrous system of ill-treatment in your prisons. Does Mrs. Marsham have to do the tread-mill?" Her glance sank along her own slim figure in its white laces and pink bows. "Anything's better than thus living together and your knowing all the time," she said.

"I did n't know," he cried. "I had n't the slightest idea! I don't know what I know *now!*"

"Well, perhaps, not know—to know," she answered impatiently. "Not know to give evidence. I don't care about that. You do now. So be it. We'll go to London. We can start at once."

"Violet, what rash talk is this?"

"Or we can go to America, and get you a divorce. That would be reasonable. Oh, Walter, he bored me so! If he had beaten me, I think I could have stood it. But I could n't stand the hourly boring. I'm not even sorry he's dead."

"Poor, unhappy——"

"Don't talk of me as the good women talk of Mrs. Marsham. I can't endure that."

He sighed, a laborious sigh. "I don't believe you did it," he said, in an unconvincing voice. "He would have died in any case. Yes, I *will* go to England, and I'll find the doctor and prove it to you."

She shook her head. "I wanted it," she said. "And I was glad. And I am glad."

"What does that matter? What does anything matter that's so long ago? We can forget about it to-morrow, as I should like, or talk about it, if you wish. I should say, forget altogether, and for good."

"Yes," she said, rising. "Now I've told you, I feel better. I shall sleep."

"So shall I," he answered, and, coolly, intently gazing at her the while, he swallowed her sleeping powder.

When he awoke from heavy slumber the sun already stood high in the heavens. About the rooms hung an atmosphere of oppressive silence. He hurriedly threw on some clothes and flung open the door. His wife's chamber was empty of all but the hotel furniture. On the central table lay a letter; a torn telegram lay on the floor.

He caught at her letter.

By taking the early train I can just catch the midday steamer to France. Do not follow me. I will send you your divorce from America, where I can easily procure it. As I shall not return to Europe, I shall be spared the vexation of meeting another woman on my late husband's arm. Now I have told you, we could not live together. Whatever I said or did, you would always think of Mrs. Marsham. The telegram decided me. That made everything plain.

He snatched up the telegram.

LARCOMBE, Hammam R'Irha. LAWSON arrested on liner *Carpathia*. Money largely recoverable.—LARCOMBE.

The paper dropped from his hand. He stood looking at the last page of the note:

said or did, you would always think of Mrs. Marsham.



THE SPRING OF THE YEAR

BY ALICE E. ALLEN

O H, the spring so cold and nipping
 Came a-tripping down the hills,
 Found her lilac-boughs all budded,
 Heard the laughter of the rills,
 Woke the sleepy pussy-willows
 With her whisper gay and arch,
 Set the whole world swinging, ringing,
 To the gleesome airs of March.

Then the spring, grown warm and winning,
 Went a-spinning up the hills;
 Ran swift races with the violets,
 Danced along with daffodils;
 Sent glad dreams of summer stealing
 Through the golden afternoon;
 Left the whole world swinging, singing,
 To the winsome tune of June.

CAMEOS

By *Ella Wheeler Wilcox*

Author of "Poems of Passion," "A Woman of the World," etc.

THE DEPARTURE

SHE had heard no echo of a footstep down the hall, no opening or closing of a door, no sound of a vehicle on the gravel driveway.

Yet she became suddenly conscious that a departure had taken place.

It was after she had risen from her perfumed bath, and, swathed in filmy, rose-colored draperies, passed between the mirrors which lined her boudoir on either side, that she paused, struck with the sudden sense of desolation.

How could this thing have happened so silently, and with no warning?

Why had no one told her that it was so soon to occur? Did others of her household know of the departure, and had she alone been kept in ignorance of the fact?

The thought was intolerable.

She swept across the spacious dressing-room, and knocked imperiously upon the door which led into the apartment of Love.

"I will ask him," she said, "and he must tell me if he knew of this departure, and when it took place."

But Love swung wide the portal, and met her with smiling eyes. "You have slept well," he said. "You are radiant as the dawn." And he kissed her full upon the mouth.

"He does not know," she whispered to her heart; "not yet. But he will know it soon, too soon."

Still, the vastness of her desolation seemed lessened by Love's smile and kiss.

While the maid arranged her beautiful hair, and selected the pretty frock from a bewildering array of delicate garments, she secretly watched the girl's face to see if any consciousness of the departure could be surprised thereon.

"Madame will choose the pink bows for her hair this morning? They suit her fine color so well."

It was at once a question and a decision, as the light hands held the velvet knots against the shell-tinted cheeks.

"Fanchette does not know," she said to her heart again. "But she will know soon; all the world will know. It cannot be hidden."

Her own knowledge of the departure bore more and more heavily upon her mind as the day passed.

Friends came, with pleasant words and sweet flatteries; she drove in the afternoon, and met throngs who craned their necks to see her pass in her carriage; at High Tea she heard many compliments; and she dined with admiring friends, and spent a gay evening afterward, but always she kept the thought of the departure uppermost in her consciousness. And always she was saying to herself: "They do not know yet, for they would not dare laugh and jest in face of my despair if they knew; but by and by——"

It was a long day; and she was glad when at last she was again in her boudoir.

Divested by deft hands of all her finery, her maid dismissed, she stood alone before the long triple mirrors and turned on a blaze of pitiless light.

Yes, it was quite true; that which she had discovered in the early morning for the first time was painfully evident now.

The perfect curve of her exquisite chin was broken; and between her brows the elusive line which had come and gone always like a passing shadow, indicating her changing moods, was clearly discernible now. It was permanent.

Youth, radiant, fearless, adorable, first youth, had taken its departure.

But while she stood with her face hidden in both hands, overwhelmed with the magnitude of her despair, there was a quick step, and a light knock on the door, and Love entered with outstretched arms.

"Why, my darling one, my beautiful one," he said, "what is the matter? Has any one hurt you or grieved you?" And he kissed her once, twice, thrice, and a score of times, on her hair, and brow, and cheeks, and throat, and mouth.

Then she flung her arms about his neck and buried her face on his breast.

"Oh, it does not matter, it does not matter, after all!" she cried. And she laughed and sobbed all in one as she clung to him.

But when he questioned her about the cause of her tears, and asked her why she wept, she answered only:

"Just because."

For though she knew the departure had taken place, she would not be the first to mention it to Love, so wise was she, remembering that Love is blind.

“THOUSAND DOLLAR” DAGGETT

By Elsie Singmaster

Author of “Elmina’s Living-Out,” etc.

IT was nine o’clock on the eve of Memorial Day, and pandemonium reigned on the platform of the little railroad station at Gettysburg. A heavy thunder-storm, which had brought down a score of fine trees on the battlefield, and had put entirely out of service the electric light plant of the town, was just over. In five minutes the evening train from Harrisburg would be due, and with it the last delegation to the convention of the Grand Army of the Republic.

A spectator might have thought it doubtful whether the arriving delegation would be able to set foot upon the crowded platform. In the dim light, representatives from the hotels and boarding-houses, both white and colored, fought each other for places on the steps beyond which the town council had forbidden them to go. Back of them, along the pavement, their unwatched horses stood patiently, too tired to make even the slight movement which would have inextricably tangled the wheels of the omnibuses and tourist wagons. On the platform were a hundred old soldiers, some of them still hale, others crippled and disabled, and as many women, the “Ladies of the Relief Corps,” come to assist in welcoming the strangers. The railroad employees elbowed the crowd good-naturedly, as their duties took them from one part of the station to another, small boys chased each other, racing up the track to catch the first glimpse of the headlight of the train, and presently all joined in a wild and joyous singing of “My Country, ’tis of Thee.”

High above the turmoil, on a baggage truck which had been pushed against the wall, stood “Old Man Daggett,” whistling. He was apparently unaware of the contrast between the whiteness of his beard, and the abandoned gaiety of his tune, which was “We won’t go home until morning”; he was equally unaware or indifferent to the care with which the crowd avoided his neighborhood. The pleasant aroma usually hovering around a gathering of old soldiers was, near old Daggett, so concentrated as to be repellent. But though he had been drinking, he was not drunk. He looked down upon the crowd, upon his former companions

in the Grand Army post, who had long since repudiated him because of the depths to which he had fallen; he thought of the days when he had struggled with the other guides for a place at the edge of the platform, and, wretched as was his present condition, he continued to whistle.

When, presently, the small boys shouted, “There she comes!” the old man added his cheer to the rest, purely for the joy of hearing his own voice. The crowd lurched forward, the station agent ordered them back, the engine whistled, her bell rang, the old soldiers called wildly, “Hello, comrades!” “Hurrah, comrades!” and the train stopped. Then ensued a wilder pandemonium. There were multitudinous cries:

“Here you are, the Keystone House!”

“Here you are, the Palace, the official hotel of Gettysburg!”

“The Battle Hotel, the best in the city!”

There were shouts also from the visitors.

“Hello, comrades! Hurrah! Hurrah!”

“Did you ever see such a storm?”

“A fine railroad you’ve got here! Took us two hours to——”

“Hurrah! Hurrah!”

At first it seemed impossible to bring order out of the chaos. The human particles would go on forever, wearing themselves into nothingness by futile contact with one another. Presently, however, one of the carriages drove away and then another, and the crowd began to thin. Old Daggett watched them with cheerful interest, rejoicing when Jackie Barsinger of the Palace, or Bert Taylor of the Keystone, lost his place on the steps. By and by his eyes wandered to the other end of the dim platform. Three men stood there, watching the crowd. The sight of three prosperous visitors, unclaimed and unsolicited by the guides, seemed to rouse some latent energy in old Daggett. It was almost ten years since he had guided any one over the field. He scrambled down from the truck and approached the visitors.

“Have you gentlemen engaged rooms?” he asked. “Or a guide?”

The tallest of the three men answered. He was Ellison Brant, former Congressman, of great wealth and vast physical dimensions. His manner was genial and there was a frank cordiality in his voice which his friends admired and his enemies disliked. His companions, both younger than himself, were two faithful henchmen, Albert Davis and Peter Hayes. They had not heard of the convention in Gettysburg, which they were visiting for the first time, and, irritated by having to travel in the same coach with the noisy veterans, they were now further annoyed by the discovery that all the hotels in the town were crowded. Brant’s voice had lost entirely its cordial tone.

“Have you any rooms to recommend?”

"You can't get places at the hotels any more," answered Daggett.
 "But I could get you rooms."

"Where is your best hotel?"

"Right up here. We'll pass it."

"All right. Take us there first."

Brant's irritation found expression in an oath as they went up the narrow, uneven pavement. He was accustomed to obsequious porters, and his bag was heavy. It was not their guide's age which prevented Brant from giving him the burden, but the fear that he might steal off with it, down a dark alley or side street.

"There's the Keystone," said Daggett. "You can't get in there."

The hotel was brilliantly lighted, a band played in its lobby, and out to the street extended the cheerful, hurraing crowd. General Davenport, who was to be the orator at the Memorial Day celebration, had come out on a balcony to speak to them. Brant swore again in his disgust.

"I can take you to a fine place," insisted old Daggett.

"Go on, then," said Brant. "What are you waiting for?"

A square further on, Daggett rapped at the door of a little house. The woman who opened it, lamp in hand, seemed at first unwilling to listen.

"You can't get in here, you old rascal."

But Daggett had put his foot inside the door.

"I've got three fine boarders for you," he whispered. "You can take 'em or leave 'em. I can take them anywhere and get a quarter apiece for them."

The woman opened the door a little wider and peered out at the three men. Their appearance seemed to satisfy her.

"Come in, comrades," she said cordially. She had not meant to take boarders during this convention, but these men looked as though they could pay well. "I have fine rooms and good board."

Daggett stepped back to allow the strangers to go into the house.

"I'll be here at eight o'clock sharp to take you over the field, gentlemen," he said. There was a briskness about his speech and an alertness in his step, which, coupled with the woman's gratitude, kept her from telling her guests what a reprobate old Daggett was.

By some miracle of persuasion or threat, he secured a two-seated carriage and an ancient horse for the next day's sight-seeing. A great roar of laughter went up from the drivers of the long line of carriages before the Keystone House, as he drove by.

"Where you going to get your passengers, Daggett?"

"Daggett's been to the bone-yard for a horse."

"He ain't as old as your joke," called Daggett cheerfully. The prospect of having work to do gave him for the moment greater satis-

faction than the thought of what he meant to buy with his wages, which was saying a great deal. He began to repeat to himself fragments of his old speech.

“Yonder is the Seminary cupilo objecting above the trees,” he said to himself. “From that spot, ladies and gentlemen—from that spot, ladies and gentlemen——” He shook his head and went back to the beginning. “Yonder is the Seminary cupilo. From that spot——” He was a little frightened when he found that he could not remember. “But when I’m there it’ll come back,” he said to himself.

His three passengers were waiting for him on the steps, while from behind them peered the face of their hostess, curious to see whether old Daggett would keep his word. Brant looked at the ancient horse with disapproval.

“Is everything in this town worn out, like you and your horse?” he asked roughly.

Daggett straightened his shoulders, which had not been straightened with pride or resentment for many days.

“You can take me and my horse or you can leave us,” he said.

Brant had already clambered into the carriage. Early in the morning Davis and Hayes had tried to find another guide, but had failed.

As they drove down the street, the strangers were aware that every passer-by stopped to look at them. People glanced casually at the horse and carriage, as one among a multitude which had started over the field that morning, then, at sight of the driver, their eyes widened, and sometimes they grinned. Daggett did not see—he was too much occupied in trying to remember his speech. The three men had lighted long black cigars, and were talking among themselves. The cool morning air which blew into their faces from the west seemed to restore Brant’s equanimity, and he offered Daggett a cigar, which Daggett took and put into his pocket. Daggett’s lips were moving, he struggled desperately to remember. And presently his eyes brightened.

“Ah!” he said softly. Then he began his speech:

“Yonder is the Seminary cupilo objecting above the trees. From there Buford observed the enemy, from there the eagle eye of Reynolds took in the situation at a glance, from there he decided that the heights of Gettysburg was the place to fight. You will see that it is an important strategic point, an important strategic point”—his lips delighted in the long-forgotten words. “And here——” The old horse had climbed the hill, and they were upon the Confederate battle-line of the third day’s fight. Old Daggett’s voice was lost for an instant in a recollection of his ancient oratorical glories. His speech had been learned from a guide-book, but there was a time when it had been part of his soul.

“Here two hundred cannons opened fire, ladies and gentlemen.

From the Union side nearly a hundred guns replied, not because we had no more guns, ladies and gentlemen, but, owing to the contour of the ground, we could only get that many in position at one time. Then came the greatest artillery duel of the war—nearly three hundred cannons bleaching forth their deadly measles, shells bursting and screaming everywhere. The shrieks of the dying and wounded were mingled with the roar of the iron storm. The earth trembled for hours. It was fearful, ladies and gentlemen, fearful."

The visitors had been too much occupied with what they were saying to hear.

"You said we were on the Confederate battle-line?" asked Brant absently.

"The Confederate battle-line," answered Daggett. He had turned the horse's head toward Round Top, and he did not care whether they heard or not.

"Yonder in the distance is Round Top; to the left is Little Round Top. They are important strategic points. There the Unionists were attacked in force by the enemy. There—but here as we go by, notice the breech-loading guns to our right. They were rare. Most of the guns was muzzle-loaders."

Presently the visitors began to look about them. They said the field was larger than they expected; they asked whether the avenues had been there at the time of the battle; they asked whether Sherman fought at Gettysburg.

"Sherman!" said Daggett. "Here? No." He looked at them in scorn. "But here"—the old horse had stopped without a signal—"here is where Pickett's charge started." He stepped down from the carriage into the dusty road. This story he could not tell as he sat at ease. He must have room to wave his arms, to point his whip.

"They aimed toward that clump of trees, a mile away. They marched with steady step, as though they were on dress parade. When they were half way across the Union guns began to fire. They was torn apart; the Rebel comrades stepped over the dead and went on through the storm of deadly measles as though it was rain and wind. When they started they was fifteen thousand; when they got back they was eight. They was almost annihilated. You could walk from the stone wall to beyond the Emmitsburg road without treading on the ground, the bodies lay so thick. Pickett and his men had done their best."

"Well done!" cried Brant, when he was through. "Now, that'll do. We want to talk. Just tell us when we get to the next important place."

They drove on down the wide avenue. Spring had been late, and there were lingering clusters of dog-wood and Judas tree. Here and there a scarlet tanager flashed among the leaves; rabbits looked brightly

at them from the wayside, and deep in the woods resounded the limpid note of a wood-robin.

Disobedient to Brant's command, Daggett was still talking, repeating to himself all the true and false statements of his old speeches.

“ There 's only one Confederate monument on the field,” he said. “ You can tell it when we get there. It says ‘ C. S. A. ’ on it—‘ Secesh Soldiers of America. ’

“ There was great fightin' around Spangler's Spring,” he went on soberly. “ There those that had no legs gave water to those that had no arms, and those that had no arms carried off those that had no legs.”

At the summit of Little Round Top the old horse stopped again.

“ You see before you the important strategic points of the second day's fight—Devil's Den, the Wheat Field, the Valley of Death. Yonder——” Suddenly the old man's memory seemed to fail. He whispered incoherently for a few minutes, then he asked them if they wanted to get out.

“ No,” said Brant.

“ But everybody gets out here,” said Daggett peevishly. “ You can't see Devil's Den unless you do. You *must* get out.”

“ All right,” acquiesced Brant. “ Perhaps we are not getting our money's worth.” He lifted himself ponderously down, and Davis followed him.

“ I 'll stay here,” said Hayes. “ I 'll see that our driver don't run off. Were you a soldier?” he asked the old man.

“ Yes,” said Daggett. “ I was wounded in this battle. I was n't old enough to go, but they took me as a substitute for another man. And I never ”—an insane anger flared in the old man's eyes—“ I never got my bounty. He was to have paid me a thousand dollars. A thousand dollars!” He repeated it as though the sum were beyond his computation. “ After I came out I was going to set up in business. But the skunk never paid me.”

“ What did you do afterwards?”

“ Nothing,” said Daggett. “ I was wounded here, and I stayed here after I got well, and hauled people round. Hauled people round!” He spoke as though the work were valueless, degrading.

“ Why did n't you go into business?”

“ I did n't have my thousand dollars,” replied Daggett petulantly. “ Did n't I tell you I did n't have my thousand dollars? The skunk cheated me.”

The thought of the thousand dollars of which he had been cheated seemed to silence the old man. He told them no more stories; he drove silently past Stannard, high on his great shaft, Meade on his noble horse, fronting the west. He did not mention stubborn Smith or gallant Armistead. Brant, now that he had settled with his friends

some legislative appointments which he still controlled, was ready to listen, and was angry at the old man's silence.

"When you take us back to town, you take us to that hotel we saw last night," he ordered. "We're not going back to your lady friend."

Old Daggett laughed. Lady friend! How she would scold. He would tell her that the gentlemen thought she was his lady friend.

"And we'll have to have a better horse and driver after dinner, if we're going to see this field."

"All right," said Daggett. His morning's work would buy him drink for a week, and beyond the week he had no interest.

He drove the ancient horse to the hotel, and his passengers got out. He waited, expecting to be sent for their baggage. The porch and pavement were as crowded as they had been the night before. The soldiers embraced each other, hawkers cried their picture post-cards and their manufactured souvenirs, at the edge of the pavement a band was playing.

Brant pushed his way to the clerk's desk. The clerk remembered him at once as the triumphantly vindicated defendant in a Congressional scandal, and welcomed him obsequiously. Brant's picture had been in all the papers, and his face was not easily forgotten.

"Well, sir, did you just get in?" he asked politely.

"No, I've been here all night," answered Brant. "I was told you had no rooms."

Meanwhile old Daggett had become tired of waiting. He wanted his money; the Keystone people might send for the baggage. He tied his old horse, unheeding the grins of his former companions in the army post or of the colored porters or the smiles of the fine ladies. He followed Brant into the hotel.

"Who said we had n't rooms?" he heard the clerk say to Brant, and then he heard Brant's reply:

"An old drunk."

"Old Daggett?" said the clerk.

A frown crossed Brant's handsome face.

"Daggett?" he said sharply. "Frederick Daggett?" Then he looked back over his shoulder.

"Yes, Frederick Daggett," said the old man himself. "What of it?"

"Nothing," answered Brant nervously. He pulled out his purse and began to pay the old man, aware that the crowd had turned to listen.

But the old man did not see the extended hand. He was staring at Brant's smooth face as though he saw it for the first time.

"You pay me my money," he said thickly.

"I am paying you your money," answered Brant.

The clerk looked up, meaning to order old Daggett out. Then his pen dropped from his hand as he saw Brant's face.

“You give me my thousand dollars,” said Daggett. “I want my thousand dollars.”

Some one in the crowd laughed. Every one in Gettysburg had heard of Daggett’s thousand dollars.

“Put him out! He’s crazy.”

“Shut up,” said some one, who was watching Brant.

“I want my thousand dollars,” said old Daggett, again. He looked as though, even in his age and weakness, he were going to spring upon Brant. “I want my thousand dollars.”

Brant thrust a trembling hand into his pocket and drew out his check-book. If he had had a moment to think, if the face before him had not been so ferocious, if General Davenport, whom he knew, and who knew him, had not been looking with stern inquiry over old Daggett’s shoulder, he might have laughed, or pretended that he had tried to find Daggett after the war, or denied that he had ever seen him. But before he thought of it, it was too late. He had committed the fatal blunder of drawing out his check-book.

“Be quiet and I’ll give it to you,” he said, beginning to write.

Daggett almost tore the slip of blue paper from his hand.

“I won’t be quiet!” he shouted, in his weak voice, hoarse from his long speech in the morning. “This is the man that got me to substitute for him and cheated me out of my thousand dollars. I won’t be quiet!” He looked down at the slip of paper in his hand. Perhaps it was the ease with which Brant paid out such a vast sum that moved him, perhaps it was the uselessness of the thousand dollars, now that he was old. He tore the blue strip across and threw it on the floor. “There is your thousand dollars!”

He had never looked so wretchedly miserable as he did now. He was ragged and dusty, and the copious tears of age were running down his cheeks. His were not the only tears in the crowd. A member of his old post, which had repudiated him, seized him by the arm.

“Come with me, Daggett. We’ll fix you up. We’ll make it up to you, Daggett.”

But Daggett jerked away.

“Get out. I’ll fix myself up if there’s any fixing.” He walked past Brant, not deigning to look at him, he stepped upon the fragments of paper on the floor, and shambled to the door. There he saw the faces of Jakie Barsinger and Bert Taylor and the other guides who had laughed at him, who had called him “Thousand-Dollar” Daggett, now gaping at him. Old Daggett’s cheerfulness returned.

“You blame’ fools could n’t earn a thousand dollars if you worked a thousand years. And I”—he waved a scornful hand over his shoulder—“I can throw a thousand dollars away.”

THE TRICKS OF MEMORY

By William Trowbridge Larned

HOW to remember and how to forget! Two sciences for which no professor can show a degree. Mnemonics, to be sure, is no new thing, and memory systems are numerous and ancient. About twenty-four hundred years ago, when the roof had fallen on the guests at a dinner Simonides was able to identify the bodies by remembering where each man had sat. It was presumably a memory system, practised with a confederate, which enabled the prestidigitateur Heller to mystify his audiences by feats of so-called mind-reading, and some of the extraordinary performances credited to the Italians of the fifteenth century were doubtless achieved by the same means. Yet Nature will give freely when unsolicited and deny her gifts to those who crave them; so we have, on the one hand, the "prodigy" who, with little effort, retains entire books from the Bible, and, on the other, the student who hastens to his examiner before the lesson patiently learned shall have passed like water through a sieve.

Rules for remembering which go beyond the obvious advantages comprised in distinctness of the original impression and observing the connection between related ideas are not of much practical value. Mnemonics may easily be made ridiculous. It is a German wit who makes a professor remark, "Would you believe it, my dear colleague, I actually do not know the ages of my children." To which the other makes answer, "Such a thing could never happen with me. I was born 2,300 years after Socrates; my wife 1,800 years after the death of Tiberius; our son, Leo, 2,000 years after the promulgation of the Licinian laws by Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, and our Amanda 1,500 years after the commencement of the great Migration. Very simple, is it not?"

It is the common experience that memory is a merry trickster, treacherous and wanton, refusing to yield up the things we have stored in our minds with great care, yet lavish in affording us the most vivid images of trivial incidents in our lives. The late Thomas Bailey Aldrich set this forth with much metrical grace:

My mind lets go a thousand things,
Like dates of wars and deaths of kings,
And yet recalls the very hour—
'T was noon by yonder village tower,
And on the last blue moon in May—

The wind came briskly up this way,
Crisping the brook beside the road;
Then, pausing here, set down its load
Of pine-scents, and shook listlessly
Two petals from that wild-rose tree.

Now, such caprices of memory may not be embarrassing to a poet, who is supposed to be much occupied with just such things as wild-rose petals and the wind in May,—but many of us who are not poets have little patience when we ourselves are the victims of like vagaries. The writer of plain prose, for example, can perhaps afford in these days of encyclopædias to forget the “dates of wars and deaths of kings,” but there are innumerable other things which he must remember and draw upon, else his work will be colorless indeed. In fact, the memory which almost unconsciously, rather than deliberately, absorbs special information and scraps of knowledge, yet does not take up things in bulk, is a very useful kind. It may be incapable of readily committing whole cantos, and there even may be things which, like Rowley in Stevenson’s “St. Ives,” its possessor will hear twenty times “with profound refreshment and forget again with magical celerity.” Yet, given for treatment a subject hitherto unharbored, but in harmony with the mind, and somehow, from the nooks and corners of the brain, all the odds and ends relating to the theme, which have been tucked away haphazard, come trooping forth for duty. This may be called the literary memory, and some of the great men of letters have possessed it in superlative degree. Dumas was a striking instance. Andrew Lang, whose aptness at quotation reveals a well-managed memory, writes of him: “His rapidity in reading must have been as remarkable as his pace with the pen. As M. Blaze de Bury says, ‘He forgets nothing that he has read.’ The past and present are photographed imperishably on his brains; he knows the manners of all ages and all countries, the names of all the arms that men have used, all the garments they have worn, all the dishes they have tasted, all the terms of all professions, from swordsmanship to coach-building. Other authors have to wait, and hunt for facts; nothing stops Dumas; he knows and remembers everything.”

The literary memory has its pitfalls, and one of these is quotation. It is always well to verify the line or sentence which lingers in the mind before sending it to the printer. Edmund Gosse once neglected to do this when he quoted Keats as saying that poetry “makes great music for a little class,” whereas Keats really wrote something very

different: "Leaving great verse unto a little clan." It has been said of Lord Byron that he could repeat all the verses he had ever written; but some other poets have had treacherous memories. It is on record that Whittier applauded the public recitation of a poem by himself; and that Sir Walter Scott, hearing Mrs. Arkwright sing some of his verses, whispered his praise of them to Lockhart, saying he supposed they were Byron's. It is also true that Scott, having fallen sick after completing "The Bride of Lammermoor," did not recognize the tale when it appeared in book form. This, however, seems to belong to the category of memory lapses, either partial or complete, due to disease or accident—cases which, though amazing, are so frequent that a history of the authenticated and more remarkable ones would fill a volume. Every now and then some newspaper publishes an account of a man, otherwise rational, who has forgotten his family, his friends, the nature of his former occupation, even his name; and the Society of Psychical Research in England has published several interesting accounts of this kind. Scholars sick of a fever have lost their recollection of Latin and Greek, musicians their memory of music. The hospitals afford numerous instances of patients who have forgotten foreign languages. The English medical annals supply examples of a clergyman who suddenly forgot all the incidents of his life during the twenty years preceding, and who insisted that instead of being threescore, he was but forty years old.



Modifications of memory failure, where there has been no shock or sickness, may take the form of mild aphasia or of absent-mindedness; and these lapses are of familiar occurrence. You will lose the name of a person or thing, perhaps for a month; and then, presto! it will suddenly pop into your recollection without an effort on your part. An acquaintance of the writer, after ringing the door-bell of a private house, has been tempted to flee ignominiously upon hearing the approaching steps of the servant and finding that the name of the person he wished to see has completely escaped him.

The average person does not use more than three thousand words in writing and speaking, and the professional writer's supply seldom exceeds five thousand, yet Victor Hugo commanded eight thousand at will. Cuvier, the French naturalist, and Louis Agassiz, the Swiss zoölogist, could promptly give the names, according to careful estimates, of over five thousand animals, in addition to the ordinary words they knew. Dr. Asa Gray, the great botanist of Harvard, knew eight thousand plants by name and at sight; and the late Dr. Joseph Leidy, for many years president of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, was able to use at will twenty-five thousand words—this vocabu-

lary embracing what he knew of four languages, including English, medicine, geography, geology and a general science, together with a large number of technical words.

If we investigate and compare certain feats of memory, we are tempted to believe what has often been averred, that while memory may be, as Dr. Johnson puts it, "the primary and fundamental power without which there could be no other intellectual operation," yet it does not belong to the higher mental processes, is a faculty rather than a function of the mind, and may be abnormally developed in a brain which gives no other indication of strength. The famous Antonio Magliabechi, of Florence, knew at sight every book in his great collection; and it is further related that a gentleman, to test his memory, lent him a manuscript and, after its return, pretended it was lost, whereupon Magliabechi repeated its entire contents. A modern instance in kind is that of Mr. Spofford, for so many years the librarian of Congress, whose familiarity with the contents of the great library is startling. Yet we should also keep in mind the negro boy, William Ash, who was employed in a New York book-store. It was claimed for him that, having grown up among the books there, he could indicate the place of every volume in stock, though the classification is complicated and the books numbered by the thousand.



Leibnitz knew the *Æneid* by heart; the Duke of Sermoneta could recite the whole of Dante's *Divine Comedy*; Dr. Leyden could repeat a long public document after reading it once; Daguesan once startled Boileau by reciting a satire read to him for the first time. But such gifts are not alone the property of the learned. If the Rev. William Cullen Hicks, a revivalist well known in Kentucky, does nothing else to perpetuate his name, he may be rescued from oblivion by his extraordinary memory, which he has exercised with Holy Writ. Those who have heard him claim that, excepting the Psalms, he can recite the Bible verbatim, beginning at any passage in any chapter. Dr. Adam Clark had from boyhood a memory so retentive that after listening to a sermon for an hour, he could not only repeat it word for word, but accompany the delivery with the gestures used by the preacher, imitating his voice and manner. One is inclined to associate such a performance with decided mental development; yet we have it on the authority of a missionary named Moffatt that after preaching a sermon to savages in Africa on the subject of "Eternity," he was astonished to hear a young man repeat it to another group of natives, word for word—something which Moffatt could not have done himself.

The story that Themistocles knew the names of the twenty thousand

citizens of Athens always seemed incredible to me until I was assured that the negro who formerly cared for the hats of guests at the Southern Hotel dining-room, in St. Louis, on one occasion received, and returned to the wearers without mistake, the helmets worn by a large party of Knights Templar, there being no distinction in the helmets excepting that of size.

It was accounted remarkable that Mrs. Hemans could repeat long pieces of prose and poetry after twice glancing them over, and that she once learned perfectly by heart, in one hour and twenty minutes, the whole of Heber's "Europe," a poem of four hundred and twenty-four lines; yet a little girl of Mount Vernon, Illinois, was able, when four years and three months old, to answer correctly and instantly any one of one hundred Biblical questions, to name the capitals of the forty-eight States in thirty-six seconds, and even to repeat a newspaper article of several hundred words after hearing it read once.

Lest some of these instances may seem lacking in the stamp of authoritative confirmation, it is worth noting here that they are paralleled, perhaps surpassed, in the scientific records of a quarter of a century ago, which contain the elaborate report of W. D. Henkle, who was the State Commissioner of Public Schools in Ohio. He gives, with minute detail, the result of his investigations in the case of Daniel McCartney, of Salem, Columbiana County, Ohio. McCartney, whose eyesight was defective, claimed that he could remember the day of the week of any given date since January 1, 1827, or since he was nine years and four months old, a period of forty-two and a half years, and that he also remembered the nature of the weather where he was on each of the more than fifteen thousand days. With the aid of a newspaper file, Mr. Henkle made the test, and McCartney not only gave elaborate answers respecting the weather, but reproduced the mental diary of his own insignificant doings during that long period.



The hurry of the life we live nowadays, its infinite distractions and mental dissipations, the devouring of newspapers, novels, and magazines, the American habit of "picking up" things rather than learning them, are not conducive to the cultivation of memory. The recollection of newspaper men, engaged much of the time in work which when done may be entirely dismissed and forgotten, is apt to be unreliable; and as for the "constant reader," his amiable fidelity might well wane under the strictures of Max Müller, who is quoted as saying—with the recitations of the Brahmins in view—that "the daily perusal of the *Times* for ten years would have sufficed to impair the strongest memory ever Brahmin possessed."

The mind, however, which is not led astray by the habits of the multitude and is able to preserve its independence of action is to-day capable of rivalling those feats of memory in which the Italians of the Renaissance delighted. While not, perhaps, fairly equal to performances in which the matter retained was the product of other minds, yet it has been noted that James G. Blaine and Roscoe Conkling were adepts in committing to memory long speeches which when delivered were accepted as extemporaneous utterances, and that John G. Carlisle, in an address at Chicago on the currency question, bristling with statistics, spoke without manuscript, though the speech as reported in full occupied a whole page in the newspapers. Finally comes the astonishing feat performed a few years ago by Signor Edoë, professor in the Istituto di San Lorenzo at Sondrio, Italy. As the outcome of a wager, he committed to memory Dante's Divine Comedy, entire, and before a committee who followed him word for word, he faithfully repeated the poem. The delivery occupied twenty consecutive hours, and was accomplished without any prompting whatever.

The average understanding is appalled by such an achievement, and the common mortal can but feebly ask, How much of this will Signor Edoë's mind retain, say, five years hence? Will the impression be wiped out, as in the case of boys who "cram" several hundred Latin lines for examination, and afterwards wholly forget them? The answer would be interesting. That mysterious receptacle called memory surely has limit and dimension; and the time must come when the drawers, stuffed full, shall overflow and admit new matter, or Signor Edoë shall rest content with what he has absorbed. In the interval we may seriously apply the playful couplet of Goldsmith:

And still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew.



THE TRAIL OF THE SILENT LAND

BY J. B. E.

CLOUDS on the nearing hill-crest rifted with sunset gold,
Dim winds the trail behind me, day of my life grown old.
Barter and toil and conflict, little my spirit heeds;
Only the upward pathway out of the twilight leads.

Into the voiceless evening, over the Last Divide,
Go I content and quiet, trusting that soon my Guide
Out of the thickening shadow firmly may clasp my hand;
So shall I tread beside Him the Trail of the Silent Land.

THE EAVESDROPPER

A SERIOUS COMEDY

By Minna Thomas Antrim

AS Lorraine Butler followed the maid up the velvety stairway, she noted with an appreciative thrill the carefully chosen pictures that lined the walls, and the gem-like Persian rug that hung from the balcony. Some day they would all be hers. A tender flush softened her face. Would Herbert be at home, she wondered. She touched the large, silky rug as she passed it, lovingly. How exquisitely it was wrought, and—— The maid pulled aside a velvet curtain, and Lorraine entered the bedroom of her future mother-in-law. Such a young woman to have a son of thirty years, she thought as they embraced affectionately.

“You poor dear!” cried Lorraine.

The invalid’s eyes grew dim. “It seems my fate to be laid up when I wish to be up and doing something particularly alluring,” she said hoarsely. “It is good of you to come——”

“Herbert ’phoned that you were ill and asked me to stop this morning, and now,” said Lorraine cheerfully, “what can I do for you? Surely there is something? Any regrets, shopping, or——”

“Nothing, dear, thanks. Sara attends to my social correspondence religiously, and——”

“Sara? And who, pray, may Sara be?” Lorraine’s eyes widened. “Your social secretary? I’ve never seen such a personage, have I?”

“It is not probable. Miss Sanderson is a very self-effacing young woman. Few of my friends have seen her—she is in mourning and avoids strangers. There, on the dresser, is a new photograph of her: rather an uncommon-looking girl, is n’t she?” Mrs. Willing smiled a bit slyly as her son’s fiancée caught up the silver frame and studied the likeness.

Lorraine turned, her eyes aglow. “She is—magnificent!” she breathed, in an awed tone. Then, almost aggressively, “But tell me who is this Sara Sanderson?”

“She is Betty Sanderson’s girl. Betty was one of my oldest friends, one of those radiant Southern beauties over whom even women go wild. Sara came to me immediately after her mother’s death six weeks ago. I insisted upon her spending the winter with us. A girl like that could

scarcely face the world, penniless, so although she calls herself my 'social secretary,' and fulfils her duties ably, I regard her as a very precious legacy."

"Bert has never spoken of her," Lorraine said softly.

The older woman's face flushed. "Herbert's genius for silence increases, apparently. When you are my boy's wife, I will tell you a little episode concerning Sara and Herbert, but don't let us discuss the dear girl now. She is down in the library, I believe."

To have seen this glorious creature, to have heard the episode, Lorraine would have sacrificed an entire day. In her heart she marvelled how any man with eyes to see could pass such beauty by and choose herself. Womanlike, Lorraine deified personal loveliness. That Mrs. Willing was unusually fond of her "secretary," Lorraine's intuition told her. A pang of jealousy assailed her, for she and Mrs. Willing had become great chums. Having spent fully an hour chatting nonsense, but in reality waiting in hope of seeing this disquieting Sara Sanderson, Lorraine rose to make her adieux. Somehow from her heart joy had departed, leaving instead an inexplicable unrest.

"I do not think Bert has gone yet," said Mrs. Willing. "Touch that button, dear."

Lorraine shook her head. "No, if you don't mind, I've a little shopping to do and Herbert would be distinctly in the way. I'll steal down-stairs and get me hence," she laughed.

Her mother-to-be drew the dainty face down and kissed it lightly. "My boy's sweetheart shall do exactly as she wishes in my house—and his," she said smilingly. Lorraine colored vividly, murmured her appreciation, and left the room.

As she passed the library, she paused suddenly.

"Love you! I have but one regret, dear heart—that there will not be hours enough in one man's lifetime in which to prove it."

She recognized the voice of her lover.

There was a pause, then a low voice broke the stillness.

"My beloved," it murmured tenderly.

Then with the blood beating hotly in her temples, Lorraine rushed from the house. How she got home she did not remember. She lived with a spinster aunt whose fads were too many to allow much time for domesticity. Happily, therefore, Miss Van Coster was out; so, after having declined luncheon, the girl whose engagement to young Willing had caused such a flutter crept up to her room heartbroken.

When Herbert Willing learned that Lorraine had called and departed, he was both angry and surprised. Why, he asked himself, had he not been informed of her arrival? A man cannot empty his mind wrathfully against one who is suffering, especially his mother; nor

can he reproach one who is not available. That Lorraine was booked for a morning's shopping tour, he knew—otherwise he would have telephoned his righteous indignation immediately, for he was hungry for the sight of her.

He called up the garage that housed his French car, and in a few moments was chugging at a stiff clip toward the Country Club. Golf was Willing's panacea for all ills, as well as his chosen method of clipping Time's wings. He and his car were usually upon enviable terms. To-day he motored recklessly, for he was astonishingly down in the mouth. That God was in His heaven he realized, but all was not well with the world. Lorraine had come to see his mother especially at his request; indisposition had prevented his visiting his sweetheart the night previous, therefore Lorraine should have asked for him frankly. When one is ill one cannot be expected to think of everything. "Still," he fumed, "the Mater might have—but no!" he chivalrously swept away all blame from the mother whose devotion he knew to be absolute. Plainly Lorraine had not cared to see him, and their wedding day but a few months off. She might at least have asked Nanette to find him as she was leaving. Savagely, he bit off the end of a fresh cigar, and put on speed that would have filled his fond Mater with terror. Humph! Girls were a queer lot. He knew but one whose ways were as direct as a man's. Sara Sanderson was never afraid to assert herself.

His face took on a ruddier tinge as he gradually thought of his mother's beautiful companion. He recalled his first glimpse of Sara. Like a dolt he had stood speechless before her. Such eyes! Such hair! Such presence! In all his globe-trotting never had he seen so imposing a creature. Why he had never spoken of Sara to Lorraine, to have saved his soul he could have given no adequate reason. Possibly it was because when he was with Lorraine all other women faded into a misty background. From the first his admiration for his mother's amazingly beautiful guest had grown. He used to imagine her in marble; he spoke of her classic beauty confidentially to a young sculptor, a college mate of his own. He had heartily echoed his mother's enthusiasm over Sara's rich voice and superb carriage. All had gone well until in a burst of maternal misunderstanding (for the feminine understanding stops at a son) the Mater had intimated how proud she would be to become the "mother" of Betty Sanderson's matchless daughter.

As he drove his machine within an inch of a fleeing pup, with shame Willing recalled how angrily he had exclaimed, "I marry Sara Sanderson? You must be mad!" Mrs. Willing had not replied; her glance was focused upon a figure standing in the doorway. Instinctively Willing had wheeled, and there with resentful blazing eyes stood "Betty Sanderson's girl." That she had heard his contemptuous

words it needed no seer to discover. Precipitately he had left the room. Hours later, having assured himself that his mother was alone, he had sought her and confided loyally his love for, and week old engagement to, Lorraine Butler.

There had ensued a long pause. Then,

"Not the eccentric Miss Van Coster's niece?" his mother had asked coldly. Then mother-love conquered the deathlike sickness that comes with "supplanting." Her charming face lighted. "No matter, your happiness, dear lad, is mine. Even if she were of the 'common' people——"

"Which she is not," hastily put in her son.

"No, dear, happily, but if she were, yet made you happy, I would love her next to your dear self."

Herbert's eyes were half blinded with dust, but they stung as he recalled these words and his mother's wet lashes. Ah, well, he was glad that Lorraine and she got on so well.

As he lived again these scenes, he tore along up hill and through valleys without realization of time or distance. In a moment, it seemed, he had arrived, his car having far outdistanced his thoughts.

Willing played listlessly about the links for an hour, then, gathering up some friends, started for home.

Half a mile from town an enormous tonneau, full speed on, crashed into Willing's car. Though his guests were unhurt, Herbert had met with a dangerous accident, the newspapers told their readers in screaming headlines the next morning. It was true: he was seriously injured. At the Willings' the telephone was put out of commission, and two women to whom his life meant more than all the treasures of the earth sat hand in hand trying to reassure and comfort each other. For two hours thus they had remained awaiting news from the doctors.

As the tiny gold clock beside Mrs. Willing's bed tinkled four a white coiffed nurse entered the room. "He has spoken," she said gently, "and asked for——" A moment she looked almost pityingly into the face of the mother.

"For me?" she breathed anxiously.

"No, madam; for—this young lady."

An exquisite flush glorified Lorraine's grief-drawn face. Instantly she rose, casting the while a half-shamed look into the face of the older woman, whom she felt loath to leave and yet——

"Come," said the nurse softly. They hastened across the corridor toward Herbert's apartment.

"Miss Sanderson, I wish to warn——"

Lorraine stopped, and with a frozen look grasped the white clad arm of the woman.

"Did—did he ask for Miss Sanderson? Are you sure?"

"Whom," blundered the nurse. "if not the girl he loves? You see," she smiled, "the sick babble, and—Mr. Willing is only partially conscious, but——"

"But—I am not the woman that Mr. Willing loves," interrupted Lorraine coldly. "You will find Miss Sanderson in the library."

The nurse flushed painfully. Then, with a murmured apology, hurried down the broad staircase.

A few weeks later, a certain "society paper" in veiled phrases intimated that the engagement between Miss Lorraine Butler and the wealthy Mr. Herbert Willing had been broken off. In another paragraph there was an allusion to Mr. Willing's contemplated Mediterranean trip.

Lorraine read both screeds with eyes in which tears of grief and fires of anger alternated. Since the day after his accident she had not been near Herbert's home. She had been informed that his mother's sister, Mrs. Tony Vaux, had come over from Philadelphia; besides, that Sara Sanderson was with Mrs. Willing. "Sara is like an own daughter to my sister," babbled Mrs. Vaux to Lorraine's aunt, who in turn babbled the remark to her niece.

The afternoon upon which the latest *Social Scimitar* appeared, Lorraine's aunt poked a quaintly bonneted head in the doorway.

"Some one is in the drawing-room. No card came up. It's a book-agent, I suppose. I wish you'd go down and see him. He asked for you, but he wants me, of course. If it's about the new Cat Home, subscribe ten dollars. If it's books, say no!"

Listlessly Lorraine left the room. She felt wholly at odds with the world, yet she smoothed the disgruntled puckers from her face before entering the old-fashioned drawing-room. She pulled the heavy portière aside, then caught dizzily at it for support. Her visitor had risen, and was coming very slowly toward her, his eyes anxiously searching her face.

"Have you no welcome for me—dearest?"

Lorraine advanced into the room and sat down stiffly aloof. Although the sight of his obvious weakness, and a long red scar perilously near his temple, made her long to throw herself into his arms and weep over him in a divided agony of pity and thankfulness, her self-respect held her back.

"I am glad that you are able to be out again," she said formally. Even to herself her voice sounded unfamiliar.

Although wounded to the quick, Willing approached her.

"Dear heart," he said tenderly, "I have seen the lie in the *Scimitar*, and that brought me here, against my doctor's orders. I—what does it mean?" He tried to take her hand, but she repulsed him.

"The *Scimitar* means, I suppose, that the world shall know, as do I, that you love another woman."

Willing stood like one dazed. Then, "Pardon me if I sit down," he gasped; "I find myself weaker than I thought." Great beads of sweat stood out upon his forehead.

"Do, please," Lorraine faltered. "Let me ring for a glass of wine for you. Please—Bert!" The man's face was ghastly.

Willing shook his head. "Explain," he said, his breath coming sharply through his nostrils. "I know it sounds banal, trite, but I have loved no woman—save yourself—in all my life."

The girl's eyes flashed angrily. What a traitor he was!

"Surely you have forgotten——"

"Forgotten whom?" demanded Willing sternly. His strength seemed to rush back, his eyes challenged hers.

"The beautiful Sara Sanderson," answered Lorraine. "No, do not protest," she cried. "*I know*, remember. Did I not hear you making ardent love to her the morning I called, when your mother was ill? Ah, don't stare as though I were mad. Did I not hear you say these very words—you two being in the library together?" and Lorraine repeated word for word Willing's passionate declaration to the lady in the library.

"Did she not answer, 'My Beloved'?" blazed Lorraine. "I shall never forget that strange, low voice, never! Did you not call for her in your semi-delirium? And yet you dare to come to me and prate of—love."

For a tense moment Willing's face worked convulsively; then throwing back his head, he burst into such hilarious laughter that the servants in the basement heard and laughed merrily aloud in unwitting sympathy.

"My blessed little sweetheart! If I 'called' for her I pledge you my honor I did not know it. As to the rest, you did indeed hear exactly all that you say, but the beautiful Sara was assuredly not 'among those present.' You did not know, perhaps, that I was practising a Silly-Billy Love Stunt in ventriloquism. Had you forgotten that I do these things at stag affairs, or that I was booked for Jimmy Powell's big blowout?" Again Willing roared, while Lorraine hid her eyes in shamed silence.

"And so you thought I was in love with the queenly Sara? My dear, I——" Here laughter again vanquished speech. "Sara's engaged; has been for a year. It is almost unbelievable, but she's actually engaged to, and madly in love with, a poor little parson in Virginia. The Mater says he scarcely comes to her divine shoulders. To be accurate, the duffer was desperately poor, but has fallen heir to nearly ten thousand a year. Only yesterday Sara told the Mater her

romance, and they are to be married at once. I—in love with the haughty Sara!” The happy convalescent chuckled merrily. “Why, I’m deadly scared of her, that’s a fact. And now,” said he, after certain delayed matters, concerning which lovers prefer a limited publicity, had been satisfactorily attended to, “the Mater says her eyes are just aching for the sight of you, and that you are to come back with me to dinner. She’s furious with Sara—for throwing herself away upon the Pigmy—hence your star hangs correspondingly high.”

“I’ll come—conditionally,” said Lorraine.

“Which means?”

“That you send a denial at once to the *Scimitar*.”

“’T is done!” said Willing blithely.

Whereupon, extorting delinquent toll, he let her pass through the gateway of his adoring arms.



RASTUS'S BABY

BY CORA WALKER HAYES

BYE-LO-BYE, bye-lo-bye, bye-lo, meh lammie;
 Snuggle yo' woolly haid close ter yo' mammy.
 Shet up dem shiny eyes.

Law! but yo' sho' is wise.

Shoo! Shoo! Dem pesky flies!

Go 'way f'om Sammy.

So hi-ish-a-bye, bye-lo-bye, bye.

Bye-lo-bye, bye-lo-bye—want some mo' dinnah?

Yo's hongry ag'in? Yo li'l brack sinnah!

Open dat mouf ob yone,

Chaw on dat col' cawn-pone;

Reckon you'll neber hone

Fo' wittles wid mammy!

So hi-ish-a-bye, bye-lo-bye, bye.

Bye-lo-bye, bye-lo-bye, bye-lo, meh lammie,

Snuggle yo' woolly haid close ter yo' mammy.

Now den, he gawn at las',

Hol'in' dat hoe-cake fas'—

Ain' he de spit o' Ras?

Po' li'l lammie!

Den hi-ish-a-bye, bye-lo-bye, bye.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC



LITERATURE AND THE MAN OF STATE

UPON returning from a hunting-trip, President Roosevelt informed one of the ambassadors at Washington that he had spent his evenings in camp over the seven volumes of Pierre de la Gorce's "History of the Second Empire." "It is very interesting," he remarked, when he inquired about the eighth volume. This incident is apropos to some one's recent observation: "It has yet to be said that Mr. Roosevelt, who in leaving the White House becomes once more a man of letters, has cut a second-rate figure as a statesman."

In America, where, notwithstanding the influence of statesmen-litterateurs like Senators Lodge and Beveridge, the standard of intellectual attainments has been low in politics, it is perhaps a temptation to regard Mr. Roosevelt's dabbling with history—as reader and as author—in the light of an eccentric exhibition. Yet men of state who have really distinguished themselves have often enough, in both past and present, had their literary titles to fame. At this moment, a journalist is at the helm in France—Clemenceau; in Cabinet-minister Morley England has a critical essayist of rare discrimination; Ambassador Bryce is an expert on the science of government, and a trained historian, as his colleague of France and the "Tennis cabinet," Ambassador Jusserand, is a qualified critic of both French and English literature.

Nor is it only the analytical faculties that the literary statesman has developed. In the Italian Senate, no figure commands more respect

than Fogazzaro,—writer of novels read in every state of Europe, and in these United States as well. Earlier, England honored Macaulay in Parliament, on the Supreme Council of India, and as a member of the Government. Of England's best-remembered premiers in the nineteenth century, Gladstone and Disraeli, the one was a Hellenist, the other a writer of novels. Pondering such names, there is no need to reflect upon the eighteenth century, with its Bolingbrokes and Temples; or the seventeenth, with John Milton serving as Cromwell's Latin secretary. It is only in modern America that the idea has been held that literature exists for women and children rather than for the administrators of the world's affairs. Mr. Roosevelt, in pursuing the pleasures and profits of both statecraft and letters, is not the forger of a tradition new even for our own country. He may cite, if he would, the precedent of those earlier American humorists and essayists and historians who, in Oscar Wilde's malicious phrase, seemed "to desire nothing better than to become the diplomatic representatives of their country."

W. B. BLAKE

OUR WASTEFUL POLITENESS

NOT very long ago the manager of a telephone company in one of our larger cities issued instructions to the exchange girls that they must no longer use the word "please" in conversation with patrons. It consumed too much time. "What number, please?" was shorn of its embroidery and reduced to "What number?" 'To be sure, it was less courteous, but, on the other hand, it was infinitely more profitable. By actual count it was found that the girls had been saying "please" nine hundred thousand times a day. Allowing half a second to its utterance, here was an awful daily waste of one hundred and twenty-five hours. Five days going to waste every round of the clock; a sheer loss of sixty months out of every year! Is it any wonder the manager was concerned and put a stop to the drain? Why, the time it took to say "please" in one day was more than enough to allow him and his whole family to go to Europe.

True, this is but a local circumstance; but to those of us who are not asleep it portends the beginning of a world-wide reform. If the elimination of a single word of politeness in a telephone exchange can insure such a remarkable saving of precious time, our duty lies clear before us. "Hello," "Dear sir," "Yours truly," "Beg pardon," "Thank you," and a score of other little pleasantries left over from our unprogressive days must inevitably follow the fate of the telephone "please" and the kitchen coffee-grinder. It would not be surprising

to learn that the people of the United States say "Good morning" at least a hundred million times a day. The loss of time that this represents, allowing a second to each greeting, is enough to befuddle the most reckless spendthrift. It means that as a nation we stand still more than three years every day. There are not figures enough to calculate where the world would have been in its history by this time if we had been free of just this one encumbering formality of speech.

A generation or two ago a certain alarmist disturbed our peace of mind by showing us what an enormous percentage of our life was sacrificed to shaving and dressing and eating and sleeping. It was found upon experiment, however, that most of these things were necessary, and consequently we decided to submit to them and do the best we could with the little time that was left to us. But it is not so with the courtesies of life; we can get along without them, and we must get along without them if we are to have anything like a proper regard for the value of time. Time is becoming daily more expensive and more exacting. The printing press, the steam engine, the telegraph, the dynamo, and a host of other devices which were designed to save time and to be our servants have turned upon us and made of us their slaves, holding us tight in their greedy power and spurring us to ever greater effort and sacrifice, to meet their remorseless demands. And so it is, that, having already given up one custom after another, including children and horses, we must now cut out our manners if we would meet the taxes on our lives.

For those of us who would preserve a remnant of our heritage, there will soon be little choice but to go to Tahiti or to Kashmir, away from the tyranny of bell and whistle and minute-hand, and seek their communion with the spirit of Pericles, of Cæsar, of Shakespeare, of Washington—brothers of earth who found existence rich enough for the accomplishment of immortal work without the need of engine or of typewriter or the sacrifice of life's amenities.

CLIFFORD HOWARD

THE IGNORANT FOREIGNER

DENYING, of course, that we have any misery to speak of, always denying this for policy's and politics' sake, the ignorant foreigner is responsible for whatever there is. Why? The ignorant foreigner—mind you, I say ignorant foreigner, therefore if some intelligent foreigner reads this he will not become angry—is ignorant of the fact that we are the appointed and anointed of God as proved by the motto on our coins and, accordingly, that it is our divine right to manufacture goods and sell them to all the world, price

no object. If Japan and China and India, to say nothing of the more backward nations, like Germany and France and England, only realized this, they would at once cease building their own cotton-mills and other engines of up-to-date commerce and leave the field free for the diamonds, anecdotes, and sample-cases of the American drummer. We could then keep on making and selling our goods, near-goods, and not-goods indefinitely, and both the dinner-pails of the poor and the country houses of the rich would perennially remain full as the proverbial tick.

The problem is, how to educate the foreigner and make him understand that "blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." If they would only be good, it would not be so long before we could easily cover their lands, after we got hold of them, with libraries, provided, of course, that they raised half the money. If, however, they continue to insist on making their own goods and keeping their own men at work, they cannot expect us to do anything for them.

ELLIS O. JONES



THE UNDERGROUND TROLLEY

BY CHARLES L. O'DONNELL

I N starless shadow and alone,
 I labor, still as stone.
 Through me, the lightning's fatal darts
 Make live a million hearts.

A tireless-throbbing nerve of fire,
 I yoke the dock and spire.
 To dusty streets green hills I chain
 Where dim eyes laugh again.

And I have power, though mute of voice,
 To make dull ears rejoice,—
 A thousand ripples, lapping warm,
 Call in my quivering arm.

I lead the cramped and time-worn heart
 To solitudes apart:—
 I am to every satyr man
 The timeless pipes of Pan.

LIPPINCOTT'S
LIBRARY
MONTHLY MAGAZINE

JUNE, 1909



THE ROYAL LINE

BY

GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE

Author of "Return," "The Flight of Robert Sevier," etc.

CHAPTER I

A QUEEN

"It's spring time, and ring time, and time to choose a love."

—WALDAVIAN FOLK SONG.

THE long room was as nobly proportioned, as magnificently adorned, as any you would find at St. James or Versailles. Indeed, architects and artists from the countries of both these palaces had contributed to its beauty. Through the wide windows the air came with a scent of tree blossoms on its wings; for it was a delicious spring morning, spring in the mountains. Men and women lounging about the walls of the room, bored, expectant, clad in the latest folly from Paris, began to glance uneasily at the great door through which relief might come. They broke into little groups at one window or another, and indulged in low-toned conversation.

"If it is a trying thing to be mistress of the robes," murmured a fat, elderly man with painfully small patent leather boots, to a woman with a face like a horse, but the most beautiful gown in the room, "how much harder is it to be the queen herself?"

"Is that a riddle?" asked Madame Bovard crisply. "Because, if it is, I know the answer."

"A riddle by all means, then—it is one to me," returned the chamberlain suavely.

"And the answer is," supplied she of the gown, shrugging a

perfectly fitted shoulder, "that when it is spring in Waldavia and one is young, it is no trouble whatever to be a queen. We can always pretend we are a shepherdess, you know, and go strolling with—with whom we choose—while the audience cools its heels and waits."

Herr Scharff raised his brows, pursed his lips, and played with the ribbon of his eyeglass.

"You will see," the mistress of the robes persisted. "Look. Listen."

The great valves in the archway at the further end of the room swung apart. Everybody came to his feet. But instead of revealing the figure of Elfrida, maiden queen of Waldavia, the opening showed a slender woman in black, a tall functionary behind her.

Great sombre eyes with the passion and pathos of vassalage looked out at the world from under a brow whose delicate modelling should have been madonna-like, yet whose lines somehow carried out a hint of jealous twisting in the over-slender contours of the lower face. A touching aspect to the thoughtful, yet a countenance of great, if hidden, power.

"Her Majesty begs your indulgence this morning," said the newcomer in a soft, monotonous voice. "The queen is indisposed for audience. The north garden and the wood are reserved exclusively for royal use."

She bowed humbly, this woman born a slave, bought in the markets of Constantinople. Countess Lenkoran they had made of the Greek child Kassandra. She had no high official status, but her position about the person of the queen more than one in Waldavia envied. The doors closed. The mistress of the robes turned with sparkling eyes to her companion.

"What did I tell you? We are not to intrude on the north garden because—well, Adam and Eve met in a garden, by the way."

"And there was a serpent, if I remember rightly. Let me lead you down."

The two joined the stream that was hurrying from the room, released for the day, each now intent upon his or her own pleasures.

CHAPTER II

FIND-BIRDIE

"If you will never forsake me, then I will never forsake you."

—WALDAVIAN FOLK TALE.

"MARK, I'll race you to the big oak yonder—for any forfeit you care to name."

The girl caught up her linen skirts in a firm, shapely hand, revealing lightly poised feet in small white oxfords. She looked over her

shoulder at the big man, Prince Marcus Odena of Draven, her chief of ordnance.

"Any forfeit you choose," she repeated, with a tremble of laughter in her voice.

"Your Majesty is jesting," said the young officer heavily. "It is not my place to excel my queen in anything—even a foot-race."

Yet who would not have run for such an Atalanta? She had eyes colored like the night sky where the blue is not blotted out by darkness, but only intensified. Her hair was fine and black and curling. Unbound, it hung to her waist; and when the discreet coiffeur had left it her delicate head was diademmed with nature's coronet, a fitting, dusky background for the crown of Waldavia. The daring young Irish adventurer, Bernadotte of this small kingdom, who left his forceful impression on the royal line two hundred years before, had given her, too, the ready tongue and wit, the unconventional, the saliently personal note which made her at once the haughtiest and most accessible of sovereigns. Just now those eyes glowed, half with mischief, half with anger; little dark curls loosened themselves about her white forehead. She pursed her red lips mutinously.

"Majesty, queen!" she repeated. "We shall be Frida and Mark, or I am going back to the palace and sulk. One might as well be out walking with Herr Scharff!"

"You are my queen," asserted the young fellow doggedly. "It's time for childish things to be put away between you and me. We are man and woman now. We must forget the days when we played under these oaks together."

Elfrida of Waldavia seated herself on the grassy bank and motioned her companion to sit beside her. It was an abrupt gesture, unconsciously that of a ruler.

"With your majesty's permission," he murmured, drawing to salute, bowing, and gravely taking the appointed seat. One could guess that he pulled the cumbrous etiquette of a court about him for armor.

"We played in this garden when we were children," the girl began swiftly, "and you were generally king in our plays. The strongest always rules. Now we are children of an older growth, and you throw my position in my teeth when I would keep my friend."

"Frida," began the man in a low, troubled voice, and she smiled covertly to see that he used the name she had demanded, "let us not sit here. Let us go out on the rock there, where we may see a great part of your kingdom. It will help us both to remember."

For a moment the queen debated. Then she rose lithely to her feet. What she had to say might well be uttered in the face of every objection which could be brought to bear.

"You go first," she said brusksly, answered his protests with a haughty nod, and looked at his broad shoulders triumphantly as he preceded her down the little path to the bluff.

They came out on a rocky promontory. Behind them rose, like a rich tapestry, the blue mountains and nearer slopes covered with spring's first verdure. From where they stood they caught a glimpse of the dome and north wing of Elfrida's summer palace, white, many-columned among its centuried oaks. Below them the mountain fell away abruptly to a broad valley that contained the capital city of Luxen.

It was a progressive, enlightened, prosperous little kingdom that this girl ruled. There were telegraph and telephone systems of the most modern equipment, railways that had taxed the best engineering skill to bore through and climb over the mountains from the eyrie of Waldavia. The smoke of factories rose in the valley. Twin lines of steel that told of mines far off in the hills wound away into the greenery. The latest inventions in agricultural machinery tilled great fields which they could see being seeded or growing green with that crop of winter wheat for which the mountain kingdom was famous.

"Well," said the young queen, smiling a little, "it is a pretty view—don't you think? Shall we go back and sit under the oak—or here?"

"Here," said the prince, with a sudden deep note which showed the command that was in him. "This is the place for you and me to stand when I ask you—as a man may ask a woman, not as a subject asks his sovereign—is this kind? Is this right? You know how it is with me—poor moth with both wings burned off! I still seek to measure a distance from the candle—and you will not let me!"

He turned his back upon her, unmindful of court etiquette now, and stared gloomily across the valley. He did not see the delicious color which flooded up over his queen's sweet, pale little face.

"Mark," she said softly, laying her hand upon his arm, "anything worth having is worth asking for."

He turned and looked at her incredulously.

"You know that the council is sitting to-morrow?" he hazarded.

She nodded, with half smiling, expectant lips, but very serious eyes.

"That's what I wanted to talk to you about," she said.

"Good God!" burst out the man, at the end of his patience. "You want to tell me that they'll marry you to Ludwig—as though I did n't know that—as though it did n't break the heart in my bosom!"

"They will if you—if you let them," the young queen said with steadfast eyes on his face, and adding a second hand to the one which already trembled upon his arm. "If you let them, Mark—they will."

"If I let them!" he echoed dully. "What influence have I with

the council? It is you who might sway them—though I doubt it now. They are in earnest this time, Frida. And Ludwig has a strong following here in your own country. What”—it came out almost with a groan—“what have I to do with it?”

The young soldier straightened himself, half drew away, then turned swiftly back and caught the two small hands that rested on his arm. He parted them, lifted and placed them upon his own shoulders, then dropped his arms round the slim waist of the girl and held her strongly.

“Listen,” he said hoarsely: “people in your position seldom hear the truth, and, hearing it, they don’t believe it. But you know I love you—only, you could never know how much—no woman could. I told you we were done with childish things, Frida; yet into my very fibres is built the boyish love I had for my baby queen. Me—I shall be done with it when this heart stops beating. If you had been born in my own rank, I would have had you for my wife—oh, you would have loved me, Frida! It could not have been but you would have loved me. If Ludwig were other than he is, I could resign you to him and serve you loyally, glad to have given all my heart to such a woman, though it were given hopelessly. But when I think of the gray wolf in human shape that they would fling you to—mine—my Frida——”

He drew her close, and held her so that she could scarcely pant. The two little hands he had raised to his shoulders slipped softly around his neck. Elfrida’s imperial head drooped gently to his breast.

A moment they stood so, his eyes dwelling on her down-bent face, as though they would print forever upon his memory the expression of exquisite tenderness which curved her lips. Then with a quick breath he abruptly released her and stepped back from her.

“There,” he said bitterly, “you have heard it. It is said. I am your slave—always; but never Ludwig’s loyal subject. You would better give me a post out of the country somewhere when he reigns in Waldavia.”

Elfrida stood and regarded her lover with knitted brow and earnest eyes. She was no longer the love-impassioned girl listening with rapture to the man who could command her heart; she was a queen fighting for her country, a woman struggling for her life—her very soul.

“Mark,” she began, and at the note of authority in her tones the prince lifted his eyes quickly—“Mark”—she struck with her small clenched hand against the trunk of the ancient oak beneath which they stood—“those who reign in Waldavia have taken pains to preserve this bit of forest as God made it, to keep it natural. Not a king or queen of them all but held that nothing could be more beautiful.

It was a relief to them, wearied with the fretful pomp of a little state, to walk here with the peace and harmony of simple nature. It is like that with the true feelings of the heart. Do you believe an oak would gain majesty from a gold crown? Will"—she hesitated, and her voice softened—"will love seem different to a queen?"

The man stretched forward an unconscious hand that took hers within its strong, warm grasp. It was not a lover's gesture; it was the act of an equal, one who would become an ally.

"God knows, Frida," he began half sternly, "that I ought to put aside my own feelings and think of you only as one most dear to me—woman and queen, for I love both—about to be sacrificed to a man unworthy of either."

Elfrida nodded silently, her compelling eyes on her lover's face. She offered no further suggestion. She believed that he would speak, and desired that he should do so.

"But, Frida, even when I put those feelings away I still find myself an ill servant to my queen in this matter. The very terms of the treaty by which Ludwig of Czegland becomes heir to the throne of Waldavia should you die unwedded—without heirs—provides that none of my name shall ever sit upon that throne. Interference from me would seem to him undue insolence, a going back to the old days when the Odensas of Draven were king-makers in Waldavia."

The girl acknowledged this with a slight bend of her head.

"That is all for the queen and the country, Mark," she said gently, "and right well spoken. Now for the woman—is there to be nothing for her heart?" She raised a hand for silence when he would have interrupted her. "King-makers you were, you Odensas," she went on. "We Trostans are parvenus beside you barons of the soil, ruling here in Waldavia before kings were thought of. Old Ekra, your ancestor, who seated my fathers on the throne, is all of greatness that our history shows. Mark"—she shook her head and looked at him—"it is just because you are a power in my kingdom, just because of that clause in the treaty, that you are the one to be flung in Ludwig's face. So much for statecraft; must your queen humble herself further to plead?"

The man slighted those beseeching eyes; he rose abruptly and paced up and down the narrow confines of their rocky outlook.

"If we failed, it might bring trouble to you," he said brokenly. "I can't be a dagger at your throat, Frida. I must n't let my love for you blind me to the fact that now—now—the council might be persuaded to give up Ludwig—but never after I had tried and failed."

"The council——" began Elfrida, and hesitated.

"They are old men, Frida," said Mark slowly. "With them, the

state will count for everything. Ludwig's standing army, ten times the need of any peaceful state, allures Hagedorn. Thought of enlarged borders, of making two kingdoms one, so that we may hold some sort of position in European politics, tempts Scharff."

"They're only men—greybeards," smiled the queen; "but they were young once. I find it when I seek to handle them. And my people—you are adored there, Mark."

Her eyes followed the moving figure. She listened to what he said. She liked it well that he considered every step by which they two must advance. Things which came easily did not appeal to Elfrida of Waldavia. She turned and seated herself on the grass-grown roots of the great tree.

"Come," she said, "sit beside me again. I want to remind you of something." Her hands were playing with the green fringe of the grass. "Mark," she asked with apparent irrelevance, "do you recollect old Hadwig's *märschen*?"

The man's look was half inquiring, half daunted, as he seated himself beside her.

"The old nurse and her tales—yes. Such stories are all the literature of a country like ours. I remember Hadwig and her tales. What then?"

"There was one about 'Find-Birdie'—do you remember that?—the little boy some huntsman up in the Wald Mountains was supposed to have found in an eagle's nest in a tree. You know he carried the child home to bring it up with his own little girl."

The man's self-control slipped a bit. He regarded the narrator intently.

"As I was brought to your court, my queen, that you might have one more playmate," he supplied softly.

Elfrida leaned back against the tree-trunk, her hands clasped lightly about one knee, her eyes on the far blue rim of the mountains that bounded her kingdom. The pose had the abandon of that shepherdess whom Madame Bovard had cited. The old trees whispered above their heads of a scented garden but a stone's throw away, of a court at its summer pleasures among the mountains, of cool, wide rooms in the white palace on the hill. Birds came down to bathe in the basin of a little spring that fed a rivulet which dropped over the bluff. It seemed to the man very still, as though all the universe had ceased the noise of life to listen for one sweet, earnest young voice that spoke in the wood.

"He grew up with the girl," the voice went on. "One day her nurse, the Authority of her house, brought many pails of water to fill a caldron. There was trouble brewing. 'When the caldron boils,' said Authority, 'I shall throw Find-Birdie into it.' The girl took

the boy by the hand and fled with him from danger. They went"—her face turned to his for a fleeting instant—"through a wood together. They heard the noise of pursuit. They transformed themselves into a bush with a single rose upon it—he her strength and life, and she the blossom of his days. That was sweet, was n't it, Mark?"

"Very sweet," returned the man, in a choked whisper. "Young love is always sweet. But it is the girl who is in danger now, Frida. Your story is not a true illustration."

"Wait—you will see," said the girl queen. "Besides, what matter which is in danger, when two are one? The men Authority had sent to pursue them went back that time, you remember, and left them to love a little longer. But Authority said her servants should have picked the rose and rooted up the bush; so they came once more after the little fugitives; and then the children turned themselves into a church and a candle. A church and a candle, Mark—he was her sanctuary——"

"And she was the light of his eyes," supplied the man, half unwilling.

Again her glance came fleetingly to rest upon his downcast face. "The girl said to the boy each time, you know, 'Find-Birdie, if you will never forsake me, then I will never forsake you.' And he always answered——"

"'Never, never will I forsake you, Frida.'" The man's hand closed upon the fingers toying with the grass.

"When this ruse threw their pursuers off," said the young queen, "they went on hand in hand. They were happy." She looked at him now fully. "They could be happy even when they heard their enemies coming fast and furious, for they were together. The feet of the children could fly no more then; but they had a magic all this time, for they had love. So at last they changed themselves into a pond and a water-fowl—he was her home, and she the burden upon his breast. This time the wicked witch herself came, great with the power of Authority and hatred. She crouched upon the bank to drink up the pond. Then passed the whisper across the water, 'Find-Birdie, if you will never forsake me, then I will never forsake you.'"

"Let me take up the parable," said the man's deep voice. "The answer was, as always, 'Never, never will I forsake thee, Frida.' But the small white thing that had trusted herself to the helpless water upon whose breast she rested so unsafely, flew at the powers of evil and gave her life to defend that which should have been her defense."

"No, no!" cried Elfrida, coming to her feet. "You know well enough that is not how the story goes. She had the magic of love, and she caught the cruel witch of Authority and drowned her, so

that the two lived happily ever afterward. Mark—Mark, there *could n't* be a fairy story that did not end so!"

Her face took on added color as, with an abrupt access of resolution, she said:

"We must go to the council hand in hand. It was the rose and rosebush when you and I wandered here in this wood a year ago, with court and council angry and averse. We have come to the church and candle place now. We must remember the story, and cling together. You know the witch said, 'Burn the church and we have the candle.' Foolish! The candle must have melted with the church, died in the embrace of the charred and fallen walls. Say it, Mark, say it—it will be our true betrothal—'If you will never forsake me, then I will never forsake you.'"

He had risen and stood facing her, very pale. He bent his tall head and looked at her with serious eyes. "Never, never will I forsake thee, Elfrida," he murmured, and their lips met in a long, clinging kiss.

CHAPTER III

LOVE'S WAY

"Pen the maid in the valley of the Luxen,
Chain the youth on the highest peak of the Walds,
Love will find its way between them."

—WALDAVIAN PROVERB.

LIKE a dark brooding bird in a sunny garden, the old Abbey of Xenia crouched in the great public square of Luxen, pleasant, wide-streeted capital of Waldavia. It was as old as the civilization of that land, and had once no doubt been a fortified castle, if not a fortress. Many-towered, peppered with loopholes where ancient cannon had once spoken, the majesty of its simple lines, the splendid sweep of its bulk, the historic associations connected with it, suggested to the council the adapting of it to state and municipal uses.

It was built of the black granite that comes down from the Walds, its front decorated with wooden wreaths and clusters of grapes carved and imposed upon the stone some time in the fifteenth century. These, with the tiny pointed windows which spoke of a time before glass was, the heavy oaken doors black with age, the ancient devices of the barons who once ruled the land carven on its great beams, the fag of swinging rope still left in the vestibule, memento of a time when it was fair tactics to hang the spy or unwelcome messenger within the gates, betokened antiquity.

Grave debates were always held in the Abbey of Xenia. In no other spot had affairs of state such dignity. To say to the people, "The council sits in the Abbey to-day," was to invoke the reply, "God will send his blessing upon their deliberations."

On the afternoon following that day when Prince Marcus Odensa of Draven and Elfrida of Waldavia had made their pact and joined hands, two young people with very grave faces rode horseback down the excellent mountain highway which led from the summer palace to the city of Luxen. Both were mounted on the wiry, spirited native horses. They rode with the grace and command of those used to the saddle from infancy; yet with a touch of fire and abandon which sorted well with the wildness of the steeds and the free spirit of the rugged mountains. Both were dressed for riding in the English fashion, and a single equerry followed them, for the queen was supposed to be travelling incognita, as the Countess Laren, according to court fiction. Little was said between the pair as they rode; yet when the towers of Luxen came well in sight the queen drew a long breath and put out her gloved hand to her companion.

"If you will never forsake me, then I will never forsake you," she whispered.

"Never, never will I forsake you, Frida," returned Marcus of Draven solemnly, as they entered the streets.

Meantime, in what had once been the refectory of the Abbey ten old men sat around a long table in deep deliberation. The premier, as was his right, directly faced the empty throne chair, which occupied a raised station at the head of the table. Krudner's white hair, long upon his bent shoulders, mingled with a flowing beard like one of the cascades of his own mountains, about his rough-hewn granite face. His great voice, though he strove to moderate it, echoed along the vaulted ceiling.

"The succession must be settled here—now—to-day," he said.

Sir Julian Scharff, court chamberlain, more politic and less frank, looked down at his narrow nails, tapping them against each other.

"Why such haste?" he asked softly, with a keen glance at the faces of the others. "To-day—there are many to-days in the future; and always we have Ludwig and his boys—an inexhaustible royal line there, my friends." Once more he looked about upon the expectant faces, and added, "It might be called the royal line of Waldavia as well as of Czegland. Ludwig is her majesty's cousin in the third degree."

A slender, bald little man with a nervous manner—he was minister of public instruction, a department recently devised by the queen—started so violently in his chair at this as to attract all eyes. With a sudden movement he got upon his feet.

"Would you pass our country over to the hands of another, Herr Scharff?" he asked rather breathlessly.

"What else does one do when one marries the queen to Ludwig?" inquired the chamberlain suavely. "And yet I believe we have been considering that step without undue emotion."

"There is all the difference in life," maintained Konks, secretary of agriculture. "We should annex Czegland by such a marriage, ours being the larger area, and with ten times the tillable land and mineral wealth. I understand you to be speaking, Herr Scharff, of that clause in the treaty which makes Ludwig heir to the crown direct, failing issue from the present sovereign. Am I right?"

Nine old faces turned to the chamberlain, who gave his nails a thorough looking over before he began in a subdued key,

"If the queen, whom God defend"—all ten bent their heads—"should be removed from us by Providence, King Ludwig would dwell in Luxen and rule from this city both Waldavia and Czegland. He would be our king first, and put us in every way before that hungry fag-end over which he now presides."

"Have you, Herr Chamberlain, been discussing the matter with him?" broke in the deep, grave voice of the aged prime minister. "In talking to that prince, my friend, let not your valor run away with your discretion. After all, till we have laid some proposition before her Majesty we have none of us the right to approach Ludwig."

Scharff pursed his lips and looked wise.

"Her gracious Majesty is young," he began pompously. "She speaks her mind with the freedom of youth; yet when it comes to acting, she lets herself be guided by the wisdom of the council. At the worst, she has never for long opposed you, Herr Krudner."

It was evident that the chamberlain, fighting almost openly on Ludwig's side, desired strongly to make an ally of the prime minister.

"She is a good child," nodded the old man. "She has never forgotten that she cried herself to sleep in my arms when her royal widowed mother died. A queen at the age of seven—ah, there have been many years of confidence between us. But, gentlemen—gentlemen—gentlemen! In the question of marriage I could not control my own daughter, as you well know; how, then, shall I——"

He broke off and sat in silence, his eyes upon the table.

"Such sentiments are all very well, and very pretty, and a great credit to you, I am sure," began a big man with a bristling gray mustache. "But here is a question that must be settled; here is an issue that must be met. Ludwig has the kind of army that Waldavia ought to have, the kind that her Majesty fails to see the necessity of. Czegland united with us, we should have the strength of that army; opposed to us, we may be made to feel that strength. If we come to blows with Czegland it gives an excuse for larger nations to interfere, and they are very ready to eat up the small powers about them. It is in peace that we should guard our liberties. My Lord of Konks, here, calls our attention to the fact that Ludwig has ruined his country to produce this great army. Well, he would sacrifice that bank-

rupt kingdom for mere revenge. If we fall into his hands unwillingly or as a legacy, then God have mercy on us and our people. As I see it, the only safety for Waldavia lies in a marriage between her Majesty and this man."

So spoke Hagedorn, minister of war, with soldierly directness and sincerity.

Scharff nodded. "We must come to it," he said. "The open door is God's door. Our royal line has ever been prolific; but accident has narrowed it to one fountain—the dear and lovely young queen. Her heir is her Cousin Ludwig of Czegland, so named in the treaty of Luxen; every day that she remains without any other we are endangered in a hundred ways."

"For God's sake!" burst out Konks irritably. "The king of Czegland is a drunkard and a butcher. He has put two wives underground. They say that he came to the queen's apartments drunk and struck the last one not long before Prince Carl was born, and she——"

Hagedorn was on his feet, livid with rage.

"Is this the council of Waldavia," he thundered, "or is it a servants' hall, for the retailing of back-stairs gossip? Herr Konks, you forget yourself—you forget——"

"I forget nothing," said the secretary of agriculture, unmoved. "Do you want to give your queen into the keeping of a man like that? Why, I would not match him with a dairy wench from my farm. From such a union can you hope for issue that will agreeably rule this land?"

The last words ended in a sort of growl, and Scharff, taking stock first of his speckless nails and then of the alienated council, decided to appeal to that very blind side of humanity—the sentimental.

"My lords," he began gently, "I think you have accused me of having talked too freely to Ludwig of Czegland. The king of Czegland is my friend. I should make an ill return for his condescension were I ashamed of that friendship. We have touched upon this matter as friends may, nothing official, words spoken over our wine. He is eager to serve Waldavia on any terms. He would become prince consort only, his rights limited in any way we might see fit, her Majesty's children to inherit this land, and the issue of his former marriage—marriages—to keep their small kingdom. But that which touches my heart and makes me his warm adherent is that he—he loves the queen."

A sigh of relief went around the board.

"That makes it more simple," said Eichert, minister of commerce. "Now if we knew her Majesty's temper toward her illustrious cousin we might be at ease. Perhaps Herr Krudner"—looking appealingly

at the prime minister—"would sound the throne informally on this subject, and convey to us what he learns."

"Let us, rather, formally request the queen to consider a proposal from King Ludwig," said Scharff. "It will be forthcoming whenever her Majesty is ready to entertain it."

The aged premier had raised his leonine head to decline this mission when there came a sudden interruption. Into the dark and solemn hall, their light feet waking echoes on the ancient flagstones, stepped two young and happy people—a man, tall, blond, good to look upon, and a slender girl in a riding habit. The council rose as one man; those who were seated with their backs to the entrance faced about.

"The queen is here to speak for herself," said Krudner doggedly.

The young queen looked at her council with swimming eyes, then dropped them a child's curtsy. She was like a daughter with ten fathers, each with his peculiar crotchet, each with his lovable qualities, and all dear to her.

The august body whose deliberations she had interrupted looked, it must be admitted, with disapproval upon her costume; that this disapproval extended to her companion, last heir of the most illustrious native family of his country, was inevitable. The Odensas of Draven had been banished because they were too powerful; and this same council, or some portions of it, had brought Prince Mark and his widowed mother home to Luxen and the court when Elfrida was a babe, because the queen regent, looking back upon a lonely childhood of her own, declared that the little princess should have suitable playmates. Now it suddenly came to the old men that the two who stood before them were no longer children—age is so slow to reckon with such things.

Old Krudner was limping forward, offering his hand to lead Elfrida to the throne chair. His glance roved furtively to Mark. It was unheard of that an outsider should be present at an Abbey council. Herr Vibert, minister of public instruction, gathered his beard in his hand as though, in a mild way, he had intentions of tearing it.

"I have not come to sit upon my throne and preside at the deliberations of my beloved council," said the queen's clear young voice. "I am here to present a petition to the true wisdom of Waldavia."

"In the Abbey of Xenia," said the premier, with tears in his eyes—he guessed what was coming—"the queen can be heard only from the chair of Ekra. And none outside the sovereign and her ten ministers may be present in this room where the council only sits in secret session and to consider grave questions."

He looked openly at Marcus of Draven, who saluted and backed toward the door.

"No," said Elfrida, laying a detaining hand upon his arm. The intimate gesture sent a silent shock through the listening and watching old men. "There is no deliberation while we are here—Prince Mark and I," she said bruskiy. She was the queen now, with traces of all the kings her fathers, and not the girl who had entered to them. "Come, Herr Krudner, you shall seat the queen in the chair of Ekra, and Prince Marcus Odensa of Draven shall stand beside her while she sends from that seat the first petition the crown of this country has ever laid before its council."

She glowed like a flower against the black background of rough-hewn, iron-bound oak, fashioned by clumsy hands that were dust these centuries. Mark gravely ascended the steps and stood beside the chair, looking with steadfast eyes at the men in whose hands lay the welfare not only of himself but of her who was dearer. And now Vibert caught his beard indeed and wrung it like an Israelitish prophet. There are kings made by God, they say, and kings made by men. Mark Odensa's royalty was not of the human manufacture—a big, blond young fellow in his quiet, modern riding wear, yet such fire of command in his deep eyes, such rhythm and poise of the whole kingly body, as seemed to set the deliberations of the council at naught.

Vibert fidgeted in his chair when the council were seated again. It was plain that he longed, good soul, to rise up and cry out upon his colleagues that God had sent them a man, if not a king. Konks looked down inscrutably; no doubt he was interrogating heaven as to why the unblemished man and the desirable crown of Czegland had not in its Providence been united in one person. Scharff tugged at his waxed mustache a few moments vainly, then, unreconciled, reviewed his nails with attention and anxiety.

The old, old roof sent its shadows down to listen. Death had been pronounced upon a king in this room. Marriages had been arranged with Bluebeards who tore with teeth the ears of unfaithful wives from their heads. Here great victories had been acted upon, and honors given to the victors, great defeats retold, and punishment meted out to unsuccessful generals. These blackened old walls had heard sentences of death, of pardon, of advancement, of ruin. And the centuries blew over them, and what had been was not—and what of it all? Only a tradition that held firm the sweet lips of a smiling girl, and bade her follow the voice of God in her heart rather than the voice of man.

Elfrida regarded her prime minister fixedly; he was the real power in the land, and he was a good man.

"I did not desire to speak to you, my friends, from the throne this day," she began in a low, penetrating voice. "I come to you as a woman—not as a queen. When a marriage of state occurs, it is

a woman must be wedded; and, oh, you who are old and were once young—you must listen to the woman as well as the queen.”

“God be praised!” Vibert half swallowed the exclamation before it got clean away, but the chamberlain frowned upon him portentously.

“Am I permitted, Majesty—your Lordship?” Scharff began, turning from the queen to Herr Krudner. “We are to understand, then, that our queen knows that her devoted council was even now debating the advisement of a suitable *parti*?”

“Suited to the queen or the woman?” asked Elfrida, with her usual abrupt directness, her head up, and her eyes beginning to glow.

“Majesty, I need not remind you that it is not of a woman of the people we speak. You address us from the chair of Ekra——”

“Where I did not choose to sit to utter these words which I must say to you as a woman—the child whom you have fostered and brought up among you.”

Each speaker rose to address the throne; it was laughably like a class of children with the mistress at its head. Hagedorn now solicited permission to speak, rose to his great height, and began halting like a schoolboy,

“If—if the Prince of Draven might withdraw, Majesty—this promises, after all, to develop into a meeting of the council. Things may be said which—said—as you know, that will be unpleasant for— for him, and for all.”

White and trembling, Elfrida forced a smile to reply to this.

“Perhaps it will be as well for the prince to become accustomed to such scenes. You all know I—I am sometimes troublesome and difficult to deal with.”

“You are the queen,” said the old premier, rising to his gouty feet. “No faithful subject—member of the council or peasant—can find ill in what you do or think. Yet, Majesty, your country is at your mercy. You know the alliance which seems wise to many of us who have grown old in statecraft.”

He looked down and his lips twitched. He did not hint then, as he had not told the council, of the long, stormy interviews with Elfrida in which he had explained to her the reasons the state had for her marriage to Ludwig.

“Proceed, my lord,” said the queen’s voice clearly.

“You know that your Cousin Ludwig of Czegland hangs like a shadow on our borders. He desires this land. He has spent many years and used much influence in procuring treaties with the greater powers. These alliances are dangerous to us only if we quarrel with him. To decline marriage with Ludwig is one thing; the union which your present attitude hints to us is quite another. The treaty of Luxen seventy-five years ago exiled the house of Draven, and provided

that no Odensa should ever sit upon the Waldavian throne. So much our fathers found necessary to placate the power of Czegland. Will you not plunge your people into a second Epoch of Blood if you pass over the advances of Ludwig, to make choice where the hatred of his house has always fastened itself?"

Elfrida's level gaze had never left the old man's face.

"I desired to speak to you as a woman, as a daughter," she retorted; "but I can answer that as your sovereign should. To conciliate Ludwig of Czegland is a paltry policy which can bring at best but a paltry success, and may spell disaster. You dread the man—I see it in all your faces—and my people, my peasants, dread him more. Yet you would bring him into the country as the husband of your queen, as your king—he will never consent to that which you hope—Ludwig will never accept for long the position of prince consort. Oh, he will promise"—as Scharff showed a desire to be heard. "What have the promises of Czegland ever been worth? The hair of your beard, my Lord Chamberlain, is stronger. Why, my lords," she burst out, as the pale sneer back of Scharff's courtier smile stung her to it, "you gave me this man who stands beside me for a playmate when we both were children. His house is older than mine in Waldavia, and stronger with the people. There was my Greek slave girl whom you made a countess that it might be no loss of dignity for royalty to romp with her; the young Count of Fordheim, my equerry and court poet; the four of us frolicked together like the children of any peasant—and you never cautioned me then not to love the prince—not to give my whole heart into his keeping. What could you think, brought so close to all that could command a young girl's fancy, a woman's love? And in the end you offer me my Cousin Ludwig—for reasons of state, which are no reasons at all. What could you think?"

"We thought, Majesty," said Scharff, "that you were the queen." It was the sudden outfling of a cautious man, angered beyond reason.

A flush passed over the prince's features—a flash of intolerable anger. His fingers went mechanically to his hip, where the sword of an officer should have swung. But Elfrida's hand stayed him.

"My Lord Chamberlain," she returned in a quiet voice, "the queen of heaven loved a mortal man. She wedded Joseph and bore him James the Just and other children. They dwelt in simplicity and happiness."

Old Konks raised his head to listen. He smiled in his beard. In truth, he was considering the kingly figure presented by his queen's chosen mate. The craven Ludwig had a hangdog air that was repeated in his sons. After all, the old farmer questioned whether they wanted to add the blood of a poltroon to the royal line of Waldavia. And Elfrida's cause gained a warm adherent.

"Majesty," the old man said, rising, "you came to us with a petition. You have presented none. What is it that you would ask of this council which is but convened to serve you—and your people?"

Elfrida looked down, very pale. Then she rose slowly to her feet—a thing beyond all precedent—she could not speak the words seated upon her throne. She laid a hand trustfully in that which Mark instinctively stretched forth to take it.

"Your blessing on my marriage with this man whose hand I hold," she burst out finally, in a voice that was like a sob. "I would be fatherless—an orphan—if you were not father and mother to me. Oh, for God's sake, bless me upon this happy day of my life! Do not withhold from me that crowning happiness of knowing that you think I do well—that my choice is your choice; for I tell you it cannot be well with the state when it goes so ill with the woman."

As the queen came to her feet the council of ten rose like automata. Tears were openly streaming down Vibert's thin little face; the premier was much shaken and evidently won over; Hagedorn and Eichert, who had answered so quickly to the sentimental suggestion of Sir Julian Scharff, began to see that it was more important whom the queen loved than who loved the queen. Only the chamberlain himself held out, stayed by recollection of that premiership which was promised him when Ludwig had the throne.

"And his Majesty of Czegland?" he inquired. "Since he is to be denied, and in a way which he may construe as adding insult to injury, have we not done ill to lead him on—to entertain his propositions?"

For a moment Scharff did not observe that in his rage he had revealed to the council how far he himself had gone with the king of Czegland. Then immediate notice of his indiscretion was pushed aside by Elfrida herself. Stepping free of the throne chair, as though she renounced the queen for the modest freehold of womanhood that was hers, "I will never marry Ludwig of Czegland," she said slowly, looking full in the Chamberlain's crimsoning face. "I say it. I will die unwed, should my people demand of me the sacrifice; but rather than marry that man I would descend from my throne, forsake the chair of Ekra. I would rather die in the cells under this floor"—she stamped upon the oaken boards her small foot in its riding boot—"the old cells where my grandfather was born while the wars with Czegland were raging, where Queen Inna ate her fingers as she starved—I would rather die there slowly, and with the ghosts around me of those that have perished there, than become the wife of Ludwig of Czegland. Bless the choice of my heart or take it from me—into that marriage you shall not force me."

She laid her hand once more in that of her chosen and began to descend the steps toward the table.

"Majesty," said the old premier in a shaken voice, "my blessing you have with each beat of my heart. If the council does not bless you as a council, be sure as men each one of us prays for your welfare."

"I know you all love me," said the girl pathetically, stopping at the table's edge and leaning upon it. "But—but queens, who have so many people to love them, get lonely sometimes in the crowd."

She caught her breath a little. "We long for something special," she concluded, and her great eyes sought her lover's steadfast ones.

The Chamberlain had presented his nails to his own view for apparently the last time.

"We are to understand, then," he broke in upon the silence that followed the queen's speech—"we are to understand that Prince Marcus Odensa of Draven is to be prince consort."

"With the sanction of the council—not otherwise," spoke Mark quietly.

"But you also understand," put in the queen swiftly, "that upon their refusal to sanction this marriage I entertain no other proposals."

A sudden light leaped into Scharff's eye, and was quickly subdued. This one frail girl unwedded offered hopes for Ludwig's succession. She hunted and took wild chances in that broken mountain country. She was an enthusiastic swimmer in the deep, treacherous lakes of her land. She went about incognita, like a woman of the people, and trusted her peasantry as a child its mother. How easily an accident might——! "But the prince consort would inherit in case of your deplored removal, Majesty," he brought out suddenly, when he came to this point of his reflections.

"I ask no such large grant of freedom as to settle arbitrarily my own succession," said Elfrida of Waldavia, half turning to go.

"You shall be obeyed, my queen," said the premier gently. "We whom you have called your friends give you already our blessings. As we are named your council, and that of Waldavia, we will sit in solemn session upon this question of your marriage and the settling of the succession beyond it, paying due regard to your royal wishes, and glad to be told them, now as always."

The ten bowed deeply; again those whose backs were to the door faced about slowly as the queen and her companion passed them. Out through the echoing, flagged vestibule, where sentries at intervals saluted, past the swinging tassel of rope where the last enemy had been hanged within the Abbey, out into the sweet summer afternoon they came. An enterprising moon had risen early and made the houses look small before such eagerness of the high powers.

"Scharff means mischief," said Mark.

"But he will consent with the others," returned the queen quickly.

"He will insist that the succession remain as it is, though. Ludwig will still be heir to the throne of Waldavia."

Elfrida nodded joyously as he usurped the groom's place and helped her to her horse. They looked long and fondly into each other's eyes. What a little cloud that was in the sky of two happy lovers, that a man she hated would be heir to her kingdom, should she die childless.

And back in the Abbey the diplomatic battle raged around the old oak table.

"The queen has chosen well," said blunt old Konks. "The kingdom needs another heir than Ludwig. She would relinquish her lover, but she would not marry another without long and tedious delays. As for the mating with Ludwig, I have no stomach for it. Her Majesty hates the man. We could hope for but poor kings from such a marriage."

"And the succession remains as it is?" hinted Scharff. He could secure something from Ludwig on the representation that he had insisted upon this point.

"The succession remains as it is," agreed Krudner. "I see no reason further to inflame Ludwig and his party by interfering with that. We are about to be done with that menace."

Scharff nodded.

"Supposing this marriage to be without issue?" he suggested suavely. "The country then lies indefinitely under what you call 'that menace'?"

The ten old men looked at each other.

"It should be considered," said Krudner finally.

Even Vibert bent his head in agreement.

"It is a hundredth chance; and yet the part of statesmen is to prepare for just such chances," he said in his thin little musing voice.

"The secret agreement in the case of the duchy of Vrandburg," said Scharff, "provided that, should the marriage of the duchess prove unfruitful, it could be annulled at the expiration of three years."

At the end of three years Ludwig would still be waiting; matters might be in better train, so far as questions of state policy were concerned; and though indeed it was a remote chance, Scharff felt that for suggesting it his royal patron stood to reward him well.

"Will the queen agree to it?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes—oh, yes," returned the premier absently—he was always authority upon what Elfrida would do or would not do—"her Majesty will agree to any wise regulation. She is one—God defend her," he added with a smile—"who fights to-day's battle to-day, and meets the fight of to-morrow with to-morrow's strength."

CHAPTER IV

A POET

"The swineherd may see that the queen is fair."

—WALDAVIAN PROVERB.

"I AM what I am, *Kassandra*. Could the good advice of a woman make me more, to you then would be the credit."

The young fellow muffled in a great cloak, lounging on the balcony outside one of the smaller dancing halls of Queen *Elfrida's* city palace, threw back his graceful head and laughed softly.

The woman standing before him in a ball gown shivered slightly, but her eyes were hot enough.

"I hate that trivial tone in you, and you know it, *Wilhelm*. Is there nothing about which you can be serious?" came her low, intense tones.

"You are cold," said her companion, leaning at ease upon the balustrade, and preparing to light a cigarette. "If I were half a man I should offer you my coat—insist upon wrapping you in it, with various pretty speeches which I will not now pause to elaborate, as I shall have no use for them. But, *Kassandra*, you know me as I am, a poor maker of mediocre verse which the people read because I am court poet and have a title in front of my name, and the court reads—or probably does not read at all—because it is idle and has nothing better to do. I wish, passingly, when you talk to me in this fiery fashion, that I could accomplish something epic, something you would think worth while; but——" and he laughed again, with that backward toss of the head which was evidently characteristic.

The woman shifted her position, bringing her face into the light. It was the Greek girl, reputed daughter of a mountain chief, yet bought as a slave and brought to Queen *Elfrida's* service, to receive later a title and estates that she might become the little queen's playmate.

Her companion was the only son of the Duke of *Fordheim*. Thirty years before, *Augusta* of *Czegland*, then growing mature, had fallen in love and made a *mésalliance*. She was the oldest sister of *Ludwig*, the reigning prince of her country; the duke was ambassador to that petty court, a man of grace and charm; and the spinster so urged his suit with her brother that a marriage was brought about. Perhaps *Ludwig* was not unwilling to have a competent and thoroughly enlisted spy at the *Waldavian* court, and *Augusta* had never ceased to uphold there the claims of her house. Yet *Wilhelm* was brought up with the children of the *Trostan* line, his mother eagerly grasping for him every recognition of his royal descent.

"What do you do with your abilities and your birth?" demanded

the countess. "If I had your chance I would——" she broke off and stood looking down moodily.

"You would, my dear monitress, be everything you should be, and put into effect every moral maxim in the copy-books; while I am nothing that I ought to have been, and the tiresome texts"—he tapped her arm, his brown eyes brimming with laughter—"I have used—or abused—a dozen of them in the dance favors for to-night. Have you seen them? I assure you they are amusing. I may be as dull as ditch-water, and set people to lecturing me; but my rhymes would make you laugh."

"They would not make me laugh," she retorted angrily, looking through the lighted windows to where couples whirled in the mazes of a cotillion. "You think out new figures for their diversion," she went on bitterly. "It is n't quite so bad when you plan the big pageants and devices for beautifying the palace grounds, or invent a musical instrument like the allolia—but what does it all come to in the end? Your mother's people are far above these Waldavian upstarts. You are the last of the Fordheims. The men of your house did things that counted in times past. And you are willing to be——"

"Court fool for Elfrida of Waldavia," broke in the poet, flinging away the butt of his cigarette. "My dear girl, we are not such wonderful people, we Fordheims. My immediate progenitor gives his entire attention nowadays to baths and nostrums. He enjoys a new drug as an epicure does caviare. By Jove! the duke woos symptoms as some men woo women. Yet he is not an old man—why do you not go and lecture him?"

At mention of Fordheim's father, a very beautiful change swept over the Greek's sombre features. It was the Duke of Fordheim, in those days quite a traveller, who had bought the child for her appealing beauty, and afterward made secure her future at the Waldavian court. Her devotion to the son might have been accepted as but the sequel of that gratitude she felt for her father.

"Let us go in," said the man abruptly. "The queen is not visible to-night, I believe."

"No, this is the third ball that she and the prince have slighted. I have never seen either of them so depressed since their marriage."

If the Greek had been looking at Fordheim now she would have seen that there was one subject upon which he could be earnest.

"I meant to ask you if you know what the trouble is," he said, straightening himself, tossing his long cloak over one arm, and offering the other to his companion.

"There are many reasons for the great to sigh," said the Greek girl evasively.

"There is nothing to cloud the happiness of the queen," returned Fordheim doggedly, "if she really loves her husband."

The woman on his arm drew back, halting them both, and, with a jarring little laugh, stared right into his face.

"So much you know, Master Poet," she sneered. "All you men are looking to see if her Majesty wearies of Prince Mark and one of you might perhaps beguile a tedious hour that he failed to fill. I tell you it is because Elfrida loves like a woman and a queen that her heart is being torn, racked, now. Do you know—have you any guess at—the provisions of the secret settlement the council made at the time of the marriage? Of course you don't—you have n't."

"But you have; you know," said the man, with sudden deep gravity, "and you're going to tell me. You never kept anything from me yet that I wanted to know—and I always want to know everything that concerns Elfrida."

The two had dropped into the familiar speech of their childhood: it was Mark and Elfrida, not the prince, the queen.

Countess Kassandra stood looking with a sort of still fury at the man she so evidently loved. The slim white hand came up, clenched itself, and was laid above her heart.

"I don't know why I answer you at all," she said finally. "And yet"—a sort of fierce joy lightened across her tragic eyes—"I should like to tell you this and see what you will do for your queen now. Oh, you've given a life that might have amounted to something to picking posies and making them into nosegays to lay at her feet—much your nosegays can help her at this pass!"

"What is it?" demanded Fordheim again sternly. "Has Mark—is it possible that any man having her love could forget——"

The Greek girl pushed aside his arm and faced him.

"Oh, leave all that!" she said scornfully. "It goes so dreadfully wide."

"Well, what, then?" he demanded.

"I don't know—exactly," she hesitated evasively, with sudden recollection that she spoke to the nephew of Ludwig; "but there is some sort of secret clause in the succession, and the council are acting on it, or are about to act."

"The council!" echoed her companion. "Why, after they agreed to the marriage they were all for it, hands up. Even Scharff had to keep a civil tongue in his head, and my uncle of Czegland has been too busy with the famine in his low country and civil war in the hills to resent the matter. I thought all Waldavia was mad about the prince consort."

Again the Greek girl's face softened with a passing tenderness. Poor stormy soul, she hated and loved with passionate insistent energy,

and Mark had been like a brother to her, a rock of refuge to one in her equivocal position, such a refuge as Fordheim could scarce have been by nature, even had not her own infatuation precluded the thought.

"Prince Mark is well beloved by queen and country," she said with a certain formality. "But their situation is somewhat desperate. Remember that Ludwig is still heir to the Waldavian throne. And I think the queen guesses he knows the secret clause of the act of succession—through Sir Julian Scharff perhaps."

"Poor Mark!" burst from the poet's lips.

And, "Poor Elfrida!" echoed the girl softly.

"But what can this secret clause——" Fordheim was beginning, when the music within doors sprang to a greater strain, the wild, fitful air which was the national hymn of Waldavia; the tall doors at the end of the ballroom swung wide, and a goodly couple came stepping down the long vista, bowing to right and left. Fordheim looked through the window, and his eyes melted with a tenderness rare to them.

"Look, Kassandra, at the curve of her shoulder, the line from nape to arm," he murmured. "She is the only woman in the world who grows more beautiful year by year. New graces——"

"Make haste indoors and write that down," broke in the countess mockingly. "Maybe it will do for a ballad, when you have stuck in a handful of rhymes here and there. Or perhaps it is one you've already written, with the rhymes pulled out."

But Fordheim was not listening to her. It was a relief to him that with Kassandra he made no concealment. His friends and associates would have told you that nothing so prudent as the instinct to conceal was included in the poet's make-up; but his adoration for the queen was so grave a matter that he was fain to lay it before all men as a poet's homage, and let only the Greek girl share the truth of the matter. Otherwise, he was in no sense a squire of dames. When the court went a-hunting, Fordham was always for leaving the ladies out.

"What! You, a poet, to be so ungallant. Where is the passion you express so prettily in your rhymes?" the prince consort would inquire in gay reproach.

"There—in my rhymes," Fordham would reply with mock gravity. "It's one thing to make love on paper, where one can lay the pen down at will; quite another thing to have a mob of women about who expect a man to be always on his knees and thinking up something pretty to say while his dinner is digesting."

Then if the prince, dropping to realities, suggested, "I think her Majesty——" the poet was ever ready to interrupt,

"The queen? Oh, I mentioned women—not goddesses. If one could love a queen, Highness"—and he would pucker his beautiful lips drolly—"the height would bring its own inspiration, its own wings. Therefore, for me the paper, the pen, the midnight oil; since with them I may woo every goddess from the muses up."

Now as he gazed at the queen, Countess Cassandra stood watching his face, reading it like an open book, wrung with the anguish which its revelations gave her, yet hungrily determined to know the last word of her own sorrow.

"You dare not say it—you dare not!" she breathed.

"I dare say anything to you, Cassandra," said the man gently. "You love me like a sister. These other women that play at loving would betray me for a caprice. You really care."

She looked up at him with drowned eyes. How cruel an overmastering passion makes one to everybody else in the world! Well, she did love him—she would defend him, even from himself, if she might.

"Come," prompted Fordheim impatiently, "they will be going in to supper, and you and I are seated at the royal table to-night. I want to talk to the queen about the play to be given in the court theatre on her birthday. I believe I have an idea for it that will please her."

They sought a window which gave upon a corridor, opened the glass portal, and entered an upper hallway. The Greek was looking her best in a gown of dull, soft white that flowed long and full to flatter the almost attenuated slenderness of her figure. Poor soul, she glanced at her companion, secure in the selfishness of his infatuation, and realized that her attachment to him was almost as bootless as his adoration of the queen.

"Kassandra—Kassandra," smiled the poet. "Never look so grim and reproving—you are far too young and pretty for that sort of thing. Leave it to the old woman with her bundle of switches. There are philosophers in this world who believe that the concentrating of the human mind upon an event must finally bring that thing to pass. In other words, a fellow stranded on a desert island, dying for food, if he flings his whole soul into the longing for it, will find bread floating on the waste of waters for him. That's why I loose the desires of my soul—slip the leash and send them questing after what quarry they will."

"Do you believe it? Oh, Wilhelm, do you believe that?"

Such hungry eyes on his face, such strength in the grasp of the thin fingers set upon his sleeve, such strange fire and energy in the voice and mien of his questioner, that the poet could but wonder at her and answer laughingly:

"I said that philosophers believed so. Am I a philosopher? Are you one?"

"It is worth trying," said the countess, half sullenly. She pushed down her long glove to show him how the sinews stood out in her white arm at the elbow joint. "We none of us choose our crosses," she said quietly. "It is just because I am one who has gazed at the sun and is blind to all the earth; but I don't want to get any thinner or I shall be hideous."

"Rub your eyes, then, child, and look about you. Of course you'll see little green suns for awhile floating around like soap-bubbles; but, after all, there are worse things than playing the eagle, and staring the god of day out of countenance. And—did you say a s-u-n or a s-o-n?"

The girl pulled her hand from his arm under pretense of rearranging her glove. He was too indifferent for her to fear that he might guess on whom she had set her heart. Perhaps he thought she hinted at the prince consort. Then laying that slender member on his coat sleeve, "They are going in," she said, in a dry tone. "We shall be just in time to bring up the tail of the procession."

Seated at the board on the queen's left, Fordheim began his eager suggestions for the play. He was like another being with Elfrida's strong, bright personality to guide and hold his nimble fancy.

"I imagined you might like one of our own folk-tales done into a ballet and music-play, Majesty," he began, when he had opened the subject.

"That would be fine, would n't it, Mark?" the queen said, looking across the board into her husband's eyes.

"I should think it ought to work out well," agreed the prince. "Your scene painter can take local scenery, and the actors can wear peasant costumes. Will the action be in the country—in the forest—or is it a fairy play?"

"It is the story of Find-Birdie, Majesties," said the poet. "Neither of you will remember it, of course, but it gives a chance for three transformation scenes, that I have lain awake now seven nights planning for, and just got the trick of."

"The story is familiar to us both," came the prince's quiet answer.

"But I—I should n't care for a play made of it, I think," put in the queen hastily.

"Not, your Majesty?" asked Fordheim in a disappointed tone. "I'm sure you can never resist the transformation scenes of the rose-bush and the rose, the church and the candle, the water-fowl and the lake. Besides, the ballet will be so attractive, all costumed as little fairies in the latest styles from the *Comédie*. Do you dislike it, then, Majesty?"

"No," said the queen, her eyes seeking those of her husband once more, with a pathetic intensity in their gaze. "I love it too well to share it with the world that way."

"A thousand thanks, my queen, for the intimation that all the world would hear of my poor little play. Yet all the world—for its author—would be there to listen to it when your royal self and the prince approved."

"My lord," said Elfrida gently, fancying a hurt vanity in the poet's tone, "write me something to make me laugh on my birthday. I am all too ready to weep these times, and you can be so deliciously funny."

"The clown is sent back to his antics," agreed Fordheim placidly. "The queen has said I am to be funny, and funny I will be, if I am obliged to cut my throat in some ridiculous fashion to accomplish it."

CHAPTER V

THE CHAMBERLAIN SPEAKS

"The people rule, for, after all, the power that makes a king can unmake him."

—EKKA'S ORATION BEFORE THE CORONATION OF HALFORD OF WALDAVIA.

MARK and Elfrida lived together in a happy intimacy which was called by their court *bourgeois*. His position made the prince consort head of the Waldavian army, which he had thoroughly reorganized, modernizing its equipment and putting it upon a footing that drew forth Hagedorn's deepest gratitude and admiration. His inches, his beauty, the old, old name that belonged to the soil, made him the idol of his soldiery, and he had developed a military policy at once bold and well suited to the small state with whose defense he was entrusted. Among the peasantry he was adored, and a native bard had given him the name of the Young Lion of Waldavia.

Two years and more of wedded bliss had left the royal pair lovers. The prince's game-bag was always carried to the queen's cabinet, where he tallied over the day's shooting like a boy, laying the fruit of his efforts at her feet as though otherwise there might not have been meat for the royal table. Questions of state, too, were discussed in that little room, for Elfrida of Waldavia had summoned to her aid the keenest and most progressive intellect of her little kingdom. They thought alike, these two, on all basic questions, and labored happily together for the building up of a new Waldavia.

Two years of it, and half of another, and now the cloud in the sky, the day of reckoning, when the clause in the act of succession must be met and faced.

The girl queen stood clinging to her tall husband's arm, reaching

up to lay a soft cheek against his shoulder, to strengthen him for an interview with Scharff, who was down in the prince's own cabinet.

"The man is in constant communication with Ludwig—you must always remember that, Mark. Be careful what you say or even feel in his presence," repeated Elfrida, trying fondly to school him.

Prince Marcus bent his head and kissed her gently.

"I'm not afraid of Scharff—now," he returned quietly. "He keeps Ludwig on hand only as a second string to his bow. He would rather stay with you and me so long as victory perches on our banner. You are not usually apprehensive, girl—what's the matter this morning?"

"They let him in by Ekra's door," breathed the young queen, drawing away for a moment. "Hadwig told me of it. That entrance is scarcely used now, and it was mere chance. But, Mark—Mark—all my bitter misfortunes have come to me through Ekra's door."

The tall, blond fellow caught his slim wife about the waist and lifted her lightly from her feet.

"Such a baby!" he whispered. "An old man walking in through a foolish door! If your peace of mind is to be assailed through that portal, we'll have it nailed up."

"It's Ekra's door, Mark," insisted Elfrida seriously, "taken from his last castle when it fell: and your great ancestor was hanged in the gaping archway that it left when it went down. Then my people—a treacherous lot—brought it and put it in my palace. It always scares me to look at it. There must be a drop of black blood in a line that is founded on a crime like that. Why, Ekra had made the Trostans—and they put him to death!"

"Most royal lines are founded on treachery," said Mark, fondling her hair. "It was the fashion three or four hundred years ago. The race had got just far enough to know that it could lie, and not far enough to become aware that it paid better to speak the truth. Old Ekra would be comforted if he could see us to-day, Elfrida. After all, no doubt it was what he strove for. Perhaps if he had n't been hanged in the doorway of his last castle, he would have pushed your great-great-grandfather off the throne after having put him upon it. It is the way of king-makers."

"You need n't laugh. It is built into my flesh and bones," returned the young queen, "to be afraid of that which comes in by Ekra's door. Hadwig used to point to it if I dared be naughty in sight of it and say, 'Great Ekra, who made this kingdom and put you on your throne, is looking at you.' And my tutor taught me to say, 'Ekra of Draven plucked the baronies that go to make the kingdom of Waldavia, like so many handkerchiefs, out of the pockets of Russia and Austria while those two countries wrestled together, and gave

the land to the Trostans to rule?' You who have Ekra's blood may defy it; but I am afraid."

For some reason which neither could understand, both young faces had gone very pale. They stood confronted a moment, looking deep into each other's eyes.

"We have been very happy, Mark," breathed Elfrida, half unconsciously.

"Have been?" countered the prince, with a sudden flash of laughter in his eyes, and the old high-hearted lift of his proud yellow head. "Have been? How dare you put our happiness in the past tense, you young rebel? We have been happy, we are happy, we shall be happy—who is to gainsay that?"

And, leaving a lover's kiss upon her lips, he turned to descend the great stairway and meet the chamberlain.

Scharff stood beside a straight-backed, gilt-and-scarlet fauteuil, holding the wood gripped hard in one of his fat, pinky white hands. He looked uncomfortable, but determined. Mark had come down the stairs with a light heart, but something in his wife's warning or in the face of the chamberlain chilled him. A shiver of apprehension went over him as he passed the lackeys in the antechamber and met the old man alone in the inner cabinet.

"Be seated, Herr Scharff," he said gravely, after formal greetings had been exchanged.

For two years this man had been the very obsequious supporter of the wishes of the crown, yet never trusted by either queen or prince. Now the chamberlain looked down at his narrow nails, perfect in their polish and trimming.

Bidden to speak, "I have sought an interview alone with you, Highness," he began smoothly, "upon my own responsibility. I do not come as the mouthpiece of the council, nor even as a humble friend of the throne, but as your own well-wisher."

The prince bowed with a creeping repulsion at the man's servility.

"I am unaware, Highness, as to whether you are fully informed of the terms of the act of succession. I think you should be. You may be called upon shortly to make a great sacrifice for your country. You have the courage to face the worst—that we all know of you," and a sudden heat of admiration leaped into the cold old face and warmed the words beyond their speaker's intention. "If your Highness will permit me, I know you to be truly what the people name you—the Young Lion of Waldavia. But you should be warned of this approaching crisis, and I fear you have not been."

His words added a touch of stony calm to the prince's manner.

"Ekra of Draven was hanged for the sake of his country—or so the throne has claimed ever since—hanged like a sheep-stealing peasant—

and the men of his blood are not less ready to-day to give all for queen and country."

"Death—physical pain—yes, you would not be found wanting there, Highness. We moderns have invented subtler torments for ourselves. We have emotions—*nuances* of feeling that great Ekra knew not of. I thought perhaps her Majesty would have mentioned that clause in the succession, now. No? It is left for me, then. I do not deprecate what was done at the time; I will not pay you the sorry compliment of apologizing for the acts of the throne or council; but I sympathize, Highness. If you will permit me the liberty—I sympathize."

"Speak out," prompted the prince hoarsely.

"The—ah—question of succession," began Scharff, choosing his words like a man crossing a brook upon uneven stepping-stones. "Ludwig of Czegland is, as you know of course, the only heir to the Waldavian throne. That the kingdom should now fall into his hands—a prince rejected as the queen's suitor, infuriated, insulted, with a grudge to pay upon us all—is plainly a calamity. That his succession must come about through a greater calamity—the loss of our beloved queen, whom God preserve—does not keep us from considering this second disaster; and we——"

"All this is ancient history, Herr Scharff," said the prince sharply. "What is the real issue of this meeting between you and me?"

The chamberlain glanced fleetingly up from his nails, then came back to their study with more apparent interest than ever.

"Surely you will hold me clear of offense, Highness, for you are well aware the reasons were not personal which made necessary the provision. The council was loath to drop the consideration of Ludwig of Czegland as a candidate for her Majesty's hand and accept yourself."

Mark acknowledged this with a quiet bend of the head.

"So averse was her Majesty to her cousin Ludwig, so favorable to yourself, that she made no objection to the fifth clause in the act of succession."

"And that clause?" prompted the prince.

"That," said Scharff, looking attentively at the floor now, "stipulated that the marriage might be annulled in three years if it proved to be without issue." A moment later, in a soft, half fearful voice, he added, "The queen signed that."

There was silence in the little room, so that the steps of an attendant moving in the outer chamber became distinctly audible. Prince Marcus got suddenly to his feet, Scharff coming up with him as though they were moved by one spring. The younger man was aware only of a desperate anxiety to guard from the chamberlain knowledge of the fact that Elfrida had not told him of this condition. Three

years—it had seemed a lifetime to the girl of twenty. She had not fought this clause as he would have done could he have known.

“It—the action is not unheard of in such cases. It has been done before, Highness,” hurried the chamberlain in anxious tones. “I could cite you the instances by name (though such matters are, of course, court secrets) where the throne has divorced a consort—the marriage being without issue—to make a more politic marriage, one that would leave the country less at the mercy of its enemies in case of the sovereign’s death.”

“Great God!”—the words burst out like a groan.

“Her Majesty was but a girl—pray pardon me for speaking so freely—she was fearful lest the marriage upon which her heart was set be refused her entirely. The council could do that, Highness.”

“Are you excusing my wife—to me?” Marcus of Draven fairly roared.

And the chamberlain looked over his shoulder toward the curtains in the archway. After a pause of evident trepidation, Scharff bent forward and whispered, as though to hint to his royal companion how conversation of this nature should be conducted,

“Your union, Highness, has lasted to within six months of the specified three years.”

The prince put a steady hand before his eyes for a moment.

“She—she told me at the time, Herr Scharff,” he said finally, in a low tone. “Her Majesty is always right. She—it is the country first—with both of us. If I could be sure the council would not bring forward Ludwig of Czegland. That would be a nightmare too awful for a daylight reality.”

Elfrida would have said that Mark had forgotten he spoke to the secret emissary of the king whom he miscalled.

Scharff’s face reddened. He was becoming angry, and by that same token forgetting his diplomacy. In such a humor he was liable to let out something of advantage to the man who addressed him.

“The queen owes her country—a successor,” he said sharply.

“And God—as it would seem—for the present—having denied her one, the council having put me outside the succession, you think it prudent she should espouse the man who is heir to the throne?”

“We do,” said Scharff. “We think it better to come into Ludwig’s hands willingly than with apparent reluctance. The council is unanimous for Ludwig,” repeated the old man in a monotonous voice. A dull red had risen under his wrinkles at the closing words of the prince consort. “The marriage will be annulled at the end of three years. I came as a friend to consult with you about this matter and to—to—if I might be—to offer my sympathy.”

“Oh—your sympathy!” Mark turned and walked swiftly to and

fro in the small apartment, so that Scharff had much ado, standing with a shaking hand upon the chair back, watching warily, to keep his face to his royal companion at all times. It would have been comical had it not been so deadly.

"Poor princes," groaned the young fellow, "that have not the rights of the meanest peasant! To have the council invading the privacy of a marriage with its—sympathy. Oh, it is intolerable!"

"Highness—I pray—softly!" almost whimpered the chamberlain, still agonizedly mindful of the lackeys in the antechamber.

"You have come with your sympathy to me," Marcus of Draven went on, unheeding. "But remember that the cruel punishment falls in this case upon the woman. My wife must not only be torn away, but I have surprised from you, Herr Scharff, the secret that the council is resolute now to marry the crown to Ludwig. My God!"—he wheeled suddenly upon the other. "How can you men excuse to yourselves a crime like that?"

"Highness," began the chamberlain, with more dignity than had yet been his, "a kingdom is an express train. Its progress cannot always be stopped to defend that which chances to be upon the track, or posterity, plunging through the fogs behind us, will run into wreck and ruin. There are big virtues, like great caravansaries, so large that they house murderers and thieves, with kings and courtiers. Such a virtue is patriotism; and to its making may go most of the actions men call vicious. If this were not so, if stern patriots stopped to consult the heart, and blenched for personal preference, the woman washing by the river, the little child, school satchel in hand, creeping through the morning streets, must lie bleeding under the knives of tyrants, and the smoke that greets the returning reaper rise not from the chimney but from the charred ruins of small homes. Your position and her Majesty's may shift from that of being raised upon a throne to being raised upon a cross. God bids us set the tower in the sea that its burning heart may light the mariner home."

Prince Marcus put up a protesting hand as he came to station opposite his visitor.

"Keep your eloquence for the council—for the parliament," he said sternly. "You'll need it all when you have done this thing. If her people will not protect a young and loving wife—why, then God defend us, for we have no refuge."

"There are many young and loving wives in Waldavia," said Scharff, pale with anxious apprehension, but persisting. "There is but one queen. In the name of these others, she is called upon to keep a peaceful country for us, not to plunge us into war that her own heart may be spared."

"War!" echoed the prince suddenly. "It could be settled that way."

"The council do not agree with you, Highness," returned Scharff coldly. "War has ever brought down on us the blundering interference of other nations. We are in the condition of the man and wife who lived in the house with a policeman—we cannot enjoy our family rows in peace. In establishing our royal line, the stronger powers are also to be reckoned with. Too many of them have younger sons out of a job who would fall in agreeably for the Waldavian throne. Let us not call the attention of outsiders to our predicament."

Mark had sunk into his chair again, but without bidding his visitor be seated.

"Is this all?" he inquired. "I am notified—that is, I am formally reminded—of my doom, that I may not fail to prepare myself. Is that it, Herr Scharff?"

The chamberlain bowed low, actually aware that in this interview which he had sought—lest perchance the queen begin planning to undermine the council and have the act of succession set aside—Mark had turned the veteran diplomat inside out and learned details he never meant to tell concerning Ludwig.

"Then I may bid you good morning," said the young man, rising and going again to the window.

Scharff backed out, bowing, regarding with curious eyes which held their trace of pity that tall, stark figure at the window.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE QUEEN'S CABINET

"What man does n't know won't hurt him."

—WALDAVIAN SAYING.

MEANTIME, upstairs in the queen's cabinet, a dainty little apartment like a jewel-box, finished in the wonderful red cedar of the mountain country, Elfrida walked to and fro and wrung her hands.

"What is it, Majesty?"

The inquiry came, deep-throated, from an old woman in peasant garb, who stood within the heavy rose-colored hangings and curtsied.

"Oh, it's you, Hadwig?" ejaculated the queen, turning with a shuddering start.

The old nurse looked down and smoothed her great white linen apron with tremulous, knotted fingers.

"Yes," she returned; "yes, Majesty, it's old Hadwig. Who else should it be when her baby is in trouble? Does the brow ache, little one? Let me unbind the hair and rub that head as I have often done before. A crown is poor wearing for a girl like you. Come to Hadwig. Hadwig will make it right."

She seated herself with simple dignity, and held out loving arms

to the distraught young figure that flitted from casement to casement of the room. Elfrida turned and threw herself on her knees beside her nurse.

"Oh, not my head, but my heart—Hadwig—Hadwig, they are breaking my heart!" she cried as she buried her face against the apron where so many childish griefs had been wept out.

"Will thy man be taken from thee?" asked the peasant. "Will they divorce him and force another upon thee? Is that it?"

The impending calamity was in the air. All Waldavia, from highest to lowest, felt it.

The queen raised her head to look into the old eyes bent so fondly upon her.

"That is what they will do," she moaned. "I myself signed the act of succession which gives them the right to do it!"

"It is because thou hast no child—not so?" the old woman inquired finally.

The queen nodded, slow tears dripping down her cheeks.

"I thought nothing of it when I signed the act," she said brokenly. "I was frantic with fear that they would deny me the man I love—would force me into a marriage with Ludwig. It seemed a little thing to promise. Oh, Hadwig, what shall I do? *What shall I do?*"

The old nurse patted the slim white hands that lay in her lap. She pressed her lips hard together and drew the shaggy white brows over her old eyes.

"Men," she began musingly. "What fools they are! Ever thinking to serve their ends through the mysteries of birth and death. God knows, I who am a woman, and old, would have counselled you never to sign such a paper as that, little one. Why, you and Prince Marcus, whom God defend, might have ten sons; but we must not set times for Providence, and promise those babes to Waldavia as though they were bales of goods to be delivered at a merchant's warehouse. I was married five years before Heaven sent me any children—yet I have been the mother of eight."

"Yes—yes—yes!" said the queen feverishly. "All that would comfort me, Hadwig, but for this movement of the council. They have warned me, and will warn the prince, that action must be taken immediately for the annulment of the marriage upon the date set. In some way that no one knows of, Ludwig has been made aware of the secret clause in the succession, and we are watched."

"Watched!" echoed the old woman, sucking in her lips. "Still, the thing might be managed."

"If you are thinking of having an infant smuggled into the apartment," said the young queen very low, and glancing fearfully about her before she spoke, "I've been over all that ground in my

mind already, and there's no chance, Hadwig—no chance. Ludwig, as heir to the crown, has a right to send a representative to the birth chamber. He would send his sister. If you think that Augusta of Czegland could be deceived, why, you think more than I do. My mistress of the robes has married Sir Julian Scharff. She would know anything that was done in the palace—and she has married Scharff, Hadwig. Scharff belongs to Ludwig of Czegland much more than he does to me. Oh, no; we should only make a failure of that."

The peasant did not state whether the idea had been her own or not; she merely dropped the subject as settled.

"Well—well—well," she whispered gently, "and the dear man must be given up. We all have our sorrows. Death might have taken him—he is a soldier."

"No!" cried Queen Elfrida, springing to her feet and beginning to pace the small apartment. "That is not all. They could not dare force this upon me but as the prologue to a marriage with Ludwig. That is what it means. That is all it can mean. But they shall not! I will not. I will appeal to my people."

The old woman murmured a prompt assent. She believed that the people of the land would see her darling safe.

"We are a civilized country," went on the young queen bitterly. "The merchant's wife—the stone-cutter's daughter—the very crossing-sweeper's beggar consort—may sleep in peace and safety and purity beside her lord. But the queen—oh, a queen is not a wife! What she is to her consort, let who will or who can say—but certainly she is not a wife. She is the council's instrument, and glory—and slave."

"Na, na, little one—I will not have it so—nor thy people will not have it so. Go, then, to this council who set themselves up to be so wise and tell them that thou art queen of Waldavia—"

"And that I have signed an act whereby my husband can be arbitrarily divorced from me in a few months!" cried Elfrida, with burning eyes. "They will uphold me in that. They will say that the queen's command must be carried out."

"Pardon, then, Majesty," murmured the old woman, after a thoughtful silence; "the great have their own way of living, and we who are the cobble-stones in the street can only say of them, 'It is well.' Perhaps you will be very angry at what I have to suggest; but it is not wicked."

She was bending forward to whisper, the stiffly starched white linen of her head-gear rattling as she trembled a bit at her own temerity.

"Well?"

The old nurse looked sideways at her royal mistress. The devotion of Wilhelm of Fordheim to the queen was notorious throughout

the land. Some had even hinted at an answering predilection on Elfrida's part. "Her—her son," faltered the nurse, "the son of Augusta of Czegland."

The queen drew back coldly and flung old Hadwig's hand from her. "Are you suggesting that I should ask my council to marry the crown to Wilhelm of Fordheim?" she asked bitterly. "I think they might do it. His mother is go-between for Scharff and Ludwig. Her ambition for her son would lead her to use for that son all the machinery she has in her hands for her brother's enterprise. Oh, no doubt they'd do it—but how would that save me my prince?"

The bleared old eyes looked fondly, anxiously, into the flashing young ones. "But if the Lord of Fordheim loved you well enough to let you live as you pleased, Majesty? How if you ruled him so that while he bore the name of husband—he was no husband? Oh, are you angry? I should not have said such words!"

"Hush!"

For one tense moment Elfrida stared fiercely into the wrinkled face that looked meekly back at her. Then her hot eyes were quenched in tears, she drooped forward upon the broad breast that had cradled her baby griefs and sobbed out a heart of woe.

"Divorce Mark," she moaned. "Put another to wearing his honors? Oh, have I come to this—to this—to this! And you—Hadwig—to propose such a step to me!"

After a time the shaken young form grew calmer. Elfrida raised her head from her nurse's shoulder, dried her eyes, and said in an emptied, toneless voice:

"It could not answer, after all. But our case is desperate. I'll talk it over with Mark."

"My God!—no—not now! That would be to spoil all," cried the nurse, flinging up her hands in horror.

"Oh, yes, I shall," asserted the queen nervelessly. "He is all I have—father, mother, brothers, and sisters; all the relatives and intimates that happier people have are just Mark, to me. When there is anything hard or dreadful in my life I must have him to help me through it."

"But, little one," protested the peasant woman, "this is not a matter for him to plan. This is women's business. Prince Mark must be told nothing while your marriage is a-making. When it's done you save his happiness; but while it's doing you tell him nothing—nothing. That is the way. He would never believe nor understand. He will be jealous and spoil all."

"Leave me, Hadwig," said the queen, sinking into a chair by the window. "I must think."

The old woman backed to the door, the slow, difficult tears of

age dropping over her withered cheeks. Elfrida looked up when the last curtsy was being made in the archway, and cried out sharply:

“What is it, nurse?”

At the words the old peasant ran to cast herself down at the royal knees, crying out:

“Have I offended, Majesty? Are you angry with old Hadwig? Before God, I meant no ill! I should not have presumed, but—I cannot bear to see you weep. It would be right. In the eyes of God the Lord of Fordheim would be no husband to you. I meant no ill.”

“No, no, my dear old nurse,” said the young queen, putting down an absent hand which was instantly seized and covered with kisses. “I am not angry—only in trouble. You have the dear-bought wisdom of years, and it is that which those in trouble need. But I must think. I must be alone to think, and my—the prince will soon return from talking to Herr Scharff. Leave me now, Hadwig.”

And the old soul, not much comforted, backed slowly from the room, leaving her enigmatic foster child sunk in her chair, her head gripped hard between both hands, deep in her desperate problem.

CHAPTER VII

MARCUS AND ELFRIDA

“Never, never will I forsake thee.”

—WALDAVIAN FOLK TALE.

ALONE in her cabinet the queen of Waldavia counted the moments till her consort should come, as a sick man counts the watches of the night. Hers was a fiery spirit, salient, aggressive, lacking the ponderous poise, the reserve power, which she found in Mark, and upon which she rested as a child upon the breast of its mother.

When that steady tread was heard in the outer chamber she first cowered in her chair, trembling. But when the hangings were brushed aside and the prince came in, she flew to him with a strangled cry, clutched both small hands upon the shoulders of his coat and clung so, sobbing, burying her face against his breast, shaking him with the vehemence of her grief.

“Forgive—forgive—forgive! Oh, Mark, forgive me for signing that horrible paper! How could I guess? I never thought—I was so afraid they would refuse you to me. Ludwig had become a nightmare,” she sobbed.

“Dearest”—his tones had a note of gentle reproof—“must I forgive you for the exquisite happiness you have conferred upon me? For loving me but too well? Oh, Elfrida, between you and me the word forgive should never be used.”

For a moment the queen lay passive, the first transport of her

grief exhausted; then she whispered hoarsely, lifting her head a little to glance about her.

"But what shall we do, Mark? Oh, Mark, *what shall we do?*"

"We are in the hands of God," said the prince gravely. "We"—his voice failed him for an instant—"we must be glad to remember that such happiness as ours was. We must face the future bravely, my heart's heart. There is no way out for us."

Across the woman's mind, torn as she was by a grief so acute that she ached physically with its torture, swept the breath of a spring morning in the Walda. Again she saw this man who had become part of her very life resigning her because fate willed it. After its brief respite of despair, in which strength was gathered, her spirit mounted again to the militant.

"No, no!" she cried sharply. "I am the queen. I will not have it so."

"You are the queen," echoed her husband gently, "and as such more in the power of your council than a woman of the people. You and I must face the facts, Elfrida. There is no way out. I know from Scharff that Ludwig has been approached."

The queen drew back and stared at him with a wild look in which horror and anger mingled equally.

"Yes—they have offered me to that man," she whispered finally, "me—a wife! They have talked to that beast of my union with him—my union—your wife, Mark! Oh, the shame—the profanation—the degradation of it!"

"They are only men, Elfrida, with mistaken ideas of their duty to their country," said the prince wearily. "If you and I were dead to-morrow, they would still be tinkering petty schemes for the forwarding of Waldavia. You love your country, too. I would have said yesterday that I could make any sacrifice for it."

"Anything—anything—but to lose you!" The young queen struck her hands hard together, and began to weep bitterly and aloud. "And I'm not even permitted to die in peace. I could n't lay my honors and burdens down when the cross was too heavy to be borne. My people—my poor peasants! I'd remember in the grave how Ludwig would harry them. Beside yours, my ancestors are new-comers in this land, but nobody can say we have n't been a devoted line. If it were not for that, Mark, you and I would leave all this and go away somewhere that we could be happy together. But we could n't build true content on forsaking a trust, could we? It would mean far worse than war to my poor country, would n't it?"

The man shook his head. This swift outcropping of the statesman's thought in her moments of most passionate feeling was peculiar to the girlish queen, and to him infinitely appealing.

"No, no," he agreed; "you can't do that, Frida; even if I would permit—and I never would—your own heart would not let you. Somewhere in my arms you would be pining to remember that the clock of civilization had been turned back a whole century in Waldavia, that you and I might be happy. You could but feel in our selfish security that such action meant serfdom—peonage—slavery in the fields along with beasts of burden—flogged backs, cowed hearts, numbed minds, for children yet unborn."

He looked at her gently, considerately, as a father might look at a child in terror and trouble. He knew the passionate, imperious nature with which he had to deal, the revolt which this coercion would evoke from her; but he was well aware, too, of the big brain this girl possessed; he imagined how, when the hot human feeling of the event had quieted down, she would return to her attitude of queen and ruler; how she would, if she had sacrificed any jot of it, pine for the authority which made it possible for her to work out the future of her kingdom as an expert works out a chess problem. No, no—she was a woman, his wife; he loved her as she loved him, passionately, absorbingly; but there was more in the matter than that. If the heart of the woman was ground to powder, he must save the queen her authority untouched—he must for his soul's sake and the sake of the future.

Elfrida pushed her kneeling body back from him with a hand laid flat against his breast. She stared curiously into his face with tearless eyes.

"Mark," she said suddenly, "you are thinking of giving me up. You are meditating treachery to your wife, that you may be faithful, as you would say, to queen and country."

She leaped suddenly to her feet and began walking up and down the room again.

"I will not have it!" she panted, her voice rising as she went on. "I am the queen. I rule in Waldavia. I will appeal from the council to my people. I will put on the dress of a peasant and go afoot out among them, telling them what shameful alternative my council offers a decent woman, a pure wife, and their queen. I will beg every loving spouse, every happy husband—yes, every son or daughter of such a union—to stand to my cause."

Mark rose and attempted to walk with her, supporting her slender, shaking figure.

"Dearest—dearest, they all know what war with Czegland means. They have been terrorized by Ludwig's army so long that they will never doubt the event of such a war. Poor, pitiful yokels—their dull, scratched polls could only hold the one idea that defying Ludwig meant becoming subjects to Ludwig."

"I brought them trial by jury," whispered Elfrida, repressed by her husband's calm, if not soothed by it. "They can't forget the many improvements in their condition since I have been old enough to have things in my own hands. Why, Mark, I freed the last of the serfs—I did that. And I would be asking only the right of a wife to be true to her husband!"

She was like a sleep walker who moves about in a nightmare and cannot waken.

"If my own people deny me," she said finally, "there is England. If one could trust the foreigners! If one could trust anybody. Even you had treacherous thoughts of failing me a moment ago, Mark."

"I will never fail you—but in this I cannot help you, and there is the bitterness of death," said the husband in a low tone. "You do not want outside interference from other powers, Frida. A man is head of his own house—possibly; no man is head of a thousand houses. Can you ask whom you will to dinner in any peasant's hut and feel sure of their good will to the visitor? In point of fact, the land belongs to the man living on it. It is so with a country. No ruler can invite another nation into his domain, and guard them as his guests, without the full consent of all the people. Your foreign powers would come into a house divided; and perhaps when the difficulty was settled, we and your people should be worse off."

They had paused at a window overlooking the terrace that led down to the main street. Within sight was the square where trolleys hummed and passed, and electric lights were beginning to wink like fireflies. The movement of the people, the flashing by of quick equipages, brought a soothing sense of human kinship.

"It can't be so bad, Mark," whispered Elfrida, drooping against his shoulder. "There must be a way."

"Yes," returned the man steadily; "there is a way. I have thought it out while you were talking of these other things." He smoothed her hair with fingers grown suddenly firm. "As a widow, your grief might—it surely would—prove a protection from the instant urging of a marriage with Ludwig. Dearest, I would seem to forsake you if I laid down my life here; but I believe you know that this would not be so. You must not think of it as pitiable, nor grieve for me because it seems the only way. We have had years of exquisite happiness together—you gave them to me. It was more to be your lover—your husband—than to have lived a long, successful life without that divine joy in it. I am thirty; but I can go now, feeling that I have lived."

The dignified finality of his speech froze her with terror. He seemed already a world away from her hot resentment, her tumult of revolt. She turned and gripped him with cold, tense fingers.

"No, no! Not that! You dare not leave me so, Mark! Have you forgotten our bond? 'If you will never forsake me, then I will never forsake you.' And I'll never give you up, Mark—never. You think I care more for my position than I do. I can't live without you. I might try. I know what you see in me that makes you think I should regret the crown if ever I surrendered it. I might make the attempt to feed my woman's heart on duty and ambition; but I'd die—I'd die, dear heart. They would kill me, among them."

He drew the half frantic young creature to a seat beside him on a couch.

"Love," he began tenderly, "my life is yours to do with as you will. I thought the giving of it up would serve you best. I can see no other way."

"There is—there is another—well, perhaps not a way, but at least a chance."

She held him a moment, looking in his face with passionate intensity, as though she would read his very soul.

"I can say anything to you, Mark, can't I?" she asked, finally. "I must be able to, for you are all I have—father and mother to me, and part of my own soul. You'll never be shocked and recoil from me, will you, Mark?"

For answer he drew closer the arm he had laid about her, his kind eyes upon hers.

"Bend down your face, then." She lifted her hands and took the close-cropped blond head between the palms. "Listen," she whispered. "Hadwig put the idea into my head. She is old, and has known so many of the tragic things of life. Listen."

Mark sat like a rock while the whispering voice went on; but the last vestige of color ebbed from his cheeks till, when she made an end and looked with agony into his eyes, he was able to return that gaze without averting his own.

"It would be better—than Ludwig," he said finally. "Wilhelm is a good fellow. I wonder I had n't thought of that. The horror of seeing you sacrificed to that brute was what shook me so; and yet I never considered—it—it never came to my mind—that a marriage less repulsive might be arranged."

The red ran up over Frida's pale face. "It is n't that," she protested. "Did n't I make you understand? Hadwig says that if I marry some one who is devoted enough to me, I can have my freedom."

The prince appeared not to have heard the concluding words, or possibly he did not sense their meaning. "Wilhelm loves you, certainly," he began thoughtfully.

"And you," she countered swiftly, jealously. "He loves us both. He's devoted to you, Mark. I should n't consider him except for that. He is weak-willed and effeminate—but devoted to you."

"Give it up, Frida. Don't try it, dearest. Trust me—it can't be done. You will entangle yourself in something repulsive. Better just look on the man you marry as a husband—leave me out of the question."

"No—no," broke in the queen imperiously. "There shall be no marriage except in this way—a mere blind. I will not consider anything else. I cannot, Mark."

She looked from her shelter on his broad breast into the kind, strong face above her. "You open the question to him, Mark," she whispered coaxingly. "I—I mean to go through with it, and I think it can be made to answer our desperate purpose; but just now I—I'm—you open the question to him, dear."

He gazed down at her, so storm-beaten yet so dauntless, and wondered if she knew her power upon men. He saw the folly of such a woman hoping that any man, her wedded husband, could be forced or cajoled into resigning her. Almost a smile twitched his lips as he fancied what tow to the fire of passion would be the ante-nuptial vows she meant to exact—poor child. Wilhelm, whom they both loved, could never stand such a strain; and his connection with Ludwig would bring about complications that must engulf them all in ruin. But could he utter these things to her, racked with anxiety concerning a worse fate, trying only in her simplicity to cling to him and save, if it might be, their daily bread of happiness? He could not.

A shudder went through his big frame, his head drooped. "Frida," came from him finally in a stricken whisper, "Frida—I can't. I can't."

The woman slipped down and knelt once more before him, embracing his knees with sudden desperate energy.

"Oh, Mark—Mark—Mark!" she cried. "Don't fail me. Don't abandon me to *them*. You are all I have. Say it, dear—promise once more—'If you will never forsake me, then I will never forsake you'!"

What could he answer her? Just what he did answer in a voice of anguish. "Yes, yes, dear"—drawing her up once more to the haven of his arms. "I will—anything you ask me. But I must have time. I must sound Fordheim. If he took it wrong, I should feel like killing him. Give me a little time. I will do my best."

And Elfrida, queen of Waldavia, spent at last, and taking refuge in his strength, murmured, "I know you think me unwomanly. You must almost hate me. But it's for you, Mark—for us."

CHAPTER VIII

THE REVIEW

"The soldiers are the right and left hand of the throne."

—WALDAVIAN SAYING.

Two figures, a man's and a woman's, clad in uniforms so alike that, but for her riding skirt and side-saddle, one would have said they belonged to the same regiment, rode down a long lane of cheering, shouting people. It was the queen of Waldavia and her consort returning from their annual review of the troops. The day had been a perfect one, full of the sunshine and crisp air of early autumn in that mountain land. The royal pair rode close enough to speak together in lowered tones.

"I thought there seemed less enthusiasm than last year," said the queen, playing with her riding-crop and looking down.

"You are over-apprehensive," rejoined the prince. "You look for the blow everywhere, because we have been shown the stick. The people are very fond of you, Frida."

"And of you, Mark," the young queen cut in jealously. "Did n't you hear the old men back there? They were saying to each other as you passed that it was Frederick IV of Germany as he rode through the streets of London, a young man. You know those old Germans we brought over to train the young soldiers—that is their highest compliment."

The sun took every bit of burnished metal on arms and accoutrements and turned it to gold. The troops on either side and behind them moved in orderly procession. The people beyond shouted loyal delight; yet Queen Elfrida was right; underneath it all was a feeling of uneasiness, unrest. The country was felt to be at a parting of the ways, and too much loyalty to Prince Marcus to-day might mean disloyalty to King Ludwig to-morrow. On the balconies the women whispered together.

"A handsome pair," said Madame Vibert to Lady Scharff—the erstwhile Madame Bovard—as the riders passed.

"Beautiful is the pudding that tastes good," returned that dame sententiously. "Heaven was against that union from the first. The curse of Czegland was certainly upon it—but the queen would have him. Ah, well—he is a handsome boy."

"A wilful woman is like a wailing child—we give it anything to hush it," put in Madame Konks softly. "After all, a queen is but a woman. I remember so well when her Majesty was a little girl and sat on my knee. She was a headstrong child then."

"If what one hears is to be believed, there is discipline in store for that beloved one," suggested Madame Vibert sighingly.

"Ludwig of Czegland, do you mean?" asked some one bluntly.

"Is n't it rather indecent—rather more indecent than usual, I mean—to talk about the queen's marriage, while she is still a wife?" asked the chamberlain's lady, shrugging her shoulders in her usual half-cynical fashion.

"As to that, royalty is above decency; it's only the nobility and gentry that have to behave themselves; kings and peasants do as they please," laughed a slender, bright-eyed little Frenchwoman from the window behind the balcony.

"Look! Look! You people are missing everything with your gossip," admonished a stout dame from within. The procession had turned into the square and the huzzars were saluting the queen. "Oh, beautiful!" cried the same voice. "I love to see that done."

The party on the balcony looked at each other guiltily, for the speaker was none other than Augusta of Czegland.

Meantime, the queen's own regiment having passed in single file and saluted her, the royal pair proceeded with a lesser escort toward the palace.

"It is the last thing that keeps us in Luxen," said the queen in a weary voice.

"The last thing," echoed the prince, looking anywhere but in her dear face. "I have made all arrangements with Fordheim for our stay at the hunting-lodge in Ueberwald. It is a plain thing to the people and the court that you and I, facing a possible separation, would choose to retire a little from the world."

She listened in aching silence. Her heart bled pity as he labored out sentence after sentence.

"Mark—Mark—oh, who could be like you!" she breathed.

"You must n't commend me too much," the prince went on. "I could n't open up that question to him, Frida—I could n't. It's like asking a man to cut his own throat—and cut it slowly. I told him that when we were up at Ueberwald you had something to propose to him, and that I would see he had the opportunity to discuss it with you. We will live very intimately there. Wilhelm is to be in the suite with me, and take the place of my secretary."

Elfrida had gone a little white, but she held bravely to her purpose. "It's all I ask of you, dear," she said softly. "I will manage for us both. I know I'm handling dynamite. I don't forget that Wilhelm is Ludwig's nephew. I know what I shall ask of him will be a test of his loyalty to me individually. I feel that for me to beg you to enter such an arrangement is a bitter test of your love for me—"

"We're past any such personal considerations," asserted the prince firmly. "I will do what you ask, from now on—when I can."

"I must have some opportunities—many—to meet Fordheim alone, in a familiar way, not as I would here," the queen pursued feverishly. "I want to reëstablish the relations there were between us as children. Don't you remember the summers at Kragenwald, when we four played together? If Wilhelm and I were talking quietly as we used to then sometimes, I believe I could sound him. I think I might be able to find what he would feel, what he would do, without disclosing our plan."

The prince sighed heavily. It was evident to his more direct masculine understanding that his wife contemplated laying a sort of siege to young Fordheim. He doubted that the emotions such a course must arouse would tend to produce the state of mind she desired. Yet he knew that Elfrida, in her despair, might open many an enterprise that womanly and queenly dignity would hold her from carrying to its conclusion. So much he trusted, and like a wise man held his peace.

The proud head drooped a bit, and she forgot to raise it and bow to the cheering people on every side. She forbore to look at her husband. More patient of pain, more submissive to fate, as women are, she yet writhed, and strove to hide her writhing from love's eyes, which are so terribly keen.

They lunched alone, or as near alone as royalty can ever be, in the queen's cabinet. Here Elfrida took up the interrupted conversation at the point where it had dropped.

"We will play at being peasants, up there in Ueberwald," she said musingly. "I shall wear nothing but the peasant costume, and I will make you a potage as I did last year."

The dessert was placed, the servants sent away.

"Oh, God, if only we *were* peasants!" she broke out suddenly, looking across the board with desolate eyes. "If we might eat our bread safely—together! If the rest of the world would but leave us our little bit of happiness!"

The prince's only answer was a look of pitiful tenderness.

"We stand frightfully alone," sighed the queen.

"You know best about Cassandra," said Mark gently. "I have been fancying that Fordheim's melancholy was due to a hopeless attachment in that quarter. I taxed him with it once, and he did not deny it. If it were so, your plan——"

The queen looked oddly at her husband. Her surer feminine instinct had divined for years the true attitude of matters between these two near friends of the throne.

"I would let match-making alone," she said finally, with a half-sad little smile. "You are much more likely to be a success planning a military campaign, Mark."

"So I think, and so I shall in the future," returned the prince,

glad to see her interested in anything outside their own domestic affairs.

"In the future? Why, you have n't moved in the matter, surely?" asked Elfrida. "And without consulting me, too?"

"You must pardon me, dear." Mark smiled deprecatingly. "We have had much else to think of. No, I have not moved in the affair; some time ago I promised Fordheim my good offices, and talked the greater part of an evening to the countess, getting the strangest answers a man ever had. But you are right—I was never meant for the business. That night as we were leaving the ball-room she put a bit a paper with writing on it in my hand. I have it here somewhere. She would not mind your reading it;" and he produced the torn end of a musical programme, smoothed it out, and laid it in the queen's lap.

On it she read, in the crabbed, angular handwriting which was familiar to her,

The Duke of Fordheim bought me like so much merchandise. Therefore I am his property and his son's property if either choose to claim me. Slaves are not wives. I thank your Highness humbly, but I beg that your Highness will say no more of this matter to me or to another.

"That is so like *Kassandra*," said the queen, "always giving a tragic twist to everything. Well, well, we all have our troubles. The girl is very faithful to me—and she loves you even better. There could be nobody more trusty than *Kassandra*."

A dark red surged over the prince's face.

"But—but you have not confided in her?" he demanded in a low, anxious tone. "The thing must be secret. Maybe it will never come to pass."

She shuddered and drew away from him.

"No, no," she said, with the breaking note of misery in her voice. "There is only one person to be told—and—and I must have time and opportunity to tell him."

She brooded a moment; then: "A drowning man must not fling away the life-line because the rope is not clean, Mark. Yet, when I saw my soldiers, rank behind rank, I longed to take the sword and cut this knot instead of——"

She broke off and once more sat brooding.

"I shall feel better when we are up in the mountains," she said finally. "Sometimes I can scarcely get my breath down here. Don't you think it's very oppressive, Mark?"

And Queen Elfrida's pale little face, with its great, dark-circled eyes, was lifted to confront her husband's gaze, that was so full of love and pain and pity.

CHAPTER IX

AT THE HUNTING LODGE

"You are dying for me, and I am dying for another."

—BULGARIAN FOLK SAYING.

THE royal party came, on an October morning gay with moving air and flutter of red and yellow leaves, to the bench, or table-land which stretched below the peak of Kragenwald in the heart of the Walds. Hawks were flying high in the blue above the summit. The small, dark castle which served for royal shooting-box perched like one of them upon the very edge of the cliff, and looked down the steep wooded gorge to the valley. Behind it and against the very slope of the peak clustered the barracks where the soldiers of the queen's guard were quartered, the pavilion which housed the officers that commanded them. No other sign of life was there, for this was not a farming country, but the inner fastness of the forest region.

"My heart is lighter with every step that takes us upward," murmured the queen to her husband as they rode a little in advance of their party.

"We have seen happy days here," said Prince Marcus, looking about him, unconscious of the sombre note in his voice.

"And shall again, please God," returned Elfrida stoutly. "I don't want to die, I know. You are all German, Mark—at least, all the civilized part of you—and the Germans, when dismayed or wounded, fly to the thought of death—of suicide. But you dare not kill my man. You have promised not to forsake me."

Somewhere he found a smile to answer the brave eyes that looked in his.

The lodge was in order, with its peasant servants drawn up in line to welcome the royal master and mistress. Elfrida, as she had said, wore the costume of the country, and vastly becoming its primitive red and blue, boldly contrasted with black and white, was to her piquant beauty. The countess of Lenkoran fared less well. Bleached of all color, her dark face would have suited well the scarlet shawl of a gipsy; and the great blue cloak she had pulled about her shoulders made her look ghastly.

The new-comers made short work of form in dismounting. The queen was tired and went at once to her own suite, which connected with that of the prince by a corridor and a little chamber that might have been said to be common to both.

The fittings of the royal lodge were, like the costumes that its royal mistress chose during its occupancy, of the country or of near-by countries. There were carved furniture of oak, ebonized by age; crude Bulgarian pottery; primitive embroideries from Roumania, and drap-

eries of native Waldavian weave, and everywhere on floor and couches were magnificent skins.

"We shall be at peace here, *Kassandra*—is it not so?" *Elfrida* asked the Greek when they were alone and the countess usurped the function of lady's maid that she might dress the queen's hair. "Why do you look so curious? Why do you smile in that mysterious way? Life goes back to its simplicities here in the wilderness. We ought to be happy. Why do you appear as though you thought we should not be?"

The tiring woman's expression was sad.

"You forget my name, Majesty," she prompted gently. "If I prophesied, you would not believe me; so why should you care to have me say that the queen will be happy here as she deserves to be everywhere."

The royal pair had brought but a handful of a military escort from the queen's guards, and as small a household as might by any means be.

The four—queen, prince, the Countess *Lenkoran*, and Count *Fordheim*—dined in a small apartment, waited on by few servants; it was a relief from the formalities of the court. *Fordheim*, curious, complex, winning creature, was in a strange mood—one of wild high spirits ill held in leash. His yellow-brown, protean eyes glowed like gems. Smiles came to his lips without his own volition. *Elfrida* and *Mark* were too preoccupied with their own sorrow to note this much, but the Greek girl looked at that mobile, mutable, expressive face and wondered.

And now came a week of strange days. These four, brought up together in such intimacy as a court may offer, with certainly all the knowledge of each other's motives that brothers and sisters could have had, were playing a blind game in the dark. Of the three so singularly placed, not one knew the heart, the mind, of either of the other two—the fourth was everywhere at a loss.

Fordheim's mood would have been hard to fathom as he rode all day at his prince's side, if they hunted, or made himself a wonder of charm and amusing grace of an evening. The lambent light had never died out of his changeful eyes, and his lips still wreathed themselves in innocent smiles.

Kassandra knew nothing, and watched everything. The slave in her apprehended hurt to her beloved from these two royal personages whose desperate plight she knew, and who seemed either at odds with each other or with life. And she had the slave's gift of silence, the servile vice of hatred for that which was above. She was aware that in their present informal life *Fordheim* acted as first gentleman of the bedchamber to the prince, the two of them being waited upon by a couple of valets; and she had a jealous notion that the poet was called upon to serve the prince somewhat as she did the queen. She

had been a slave; but he—he was of royal blood—a freeborn noble of Waldavia, and her idol. Her rebellious blood boiled at thought of any menial position thrust upon him. Suspicious by nature, she was not willing to believe that all this informality came from weariness of court etiquette, but held the breath of her spirit to listen for the soft step of the secret which she was sure walked hidden underneath.

After a sleepless night, spent brooding on these matters, she carried such a haggard face that Elfrida asked her if she were ill, and finally recommended a quiet nap, or a long walk alone, as the best medicine for the headache which the countess finally acknowledged.

Taking advantage of the permission, *Kassandra* wrapped herself in the long blue cloak and set out up the slope above the castle. Looking down from a small bluff, she found herself directly over the quarters of the care-takers who attended to the castle when it was unoccupied. Her attention was caught by a small boy sitting on the roof of a stable, plucking a goose.

She peered down with languid interest. The child's relatives were consulting excitedly about the base of the building, busily engaged meantime in puffing away the down which attacked eyes, mouth, ears, and nose as they clamored,

"Come down from there, *Biela*. What will the Herr Gardener say when he sees the grass so littered? The feathers must be saved—here you are scattering them all over God's green earth. And who that the good Lord made with only two hands could gather them again?"

"I got up here to make it snow like the old witch in the tale you told me," the urchin shouted back sturdily. "Ki! see 'em come down!" and he plunged a fistful of feathers in the faces of his kindred.

"He'll fall!" wailed the woman. "He'll be killed!"

Looking up, they caught sight of *Kassandra* above them.

"Oh, gracious lady," shouted the mother of the rebel, "could you let down a rope to my son? He is my eldest, and I shall see him killed before my eyes unless you can help."

The Countess *Lenkoran* smiled mockingly.

"I have no rope, as you know," she called back, half derisively. "Let the boy get down as he got up. A boy of that age can climb like a monkey."

Then as the shouts broke out afresh, and even young *Biela*, infected by the terror of the women, began to snifle, she looked with a considering eye at a great loop of wild grape which swung down over the cliff to within a few feet of the roof where the boy sat weeping. *Kassandra* was proud of her strength; she was light, swift, and supple, and free as a wild thing in this environment. Now, with a quick, half-whimsical impulse, she lowered herself by the creeper and dropped beside him before any one had guessed her intention. Taking the

boy by the shoulders, she handed him down to his mother as though he had been an inanimate parcel.

And then she forgot him, forgot the noisy women on the sward below, volleying blessings on her and proceeding instantly to the chastisement of the boy. She stood amid the cloud of feathers on the roof, and stared. She had chanced on the one place that commanded a view of the queen's private balcony. There stood Elfrida of Waldavia, a quiet, drooping figure, gazing pensively down on the black teeth of the mountain gorge. To her, from the window behind, came a man. He took her in his arms almost roughly, and the spy staring at them divined the little cry with which she turned and met his kiss. It seemed to the watcher that he was bidding her farewell, and also that the queen knew this, for she clung to her husband, apparently shaken with acute grief.

As the Greek gazed upon a scene which held significance only for such eyes as hers, she was startled by an exclamation from the ledge above, and, wheeling, saw Fordheim, staring as she stared, his features working, his brown eyes dilated with pain. As she looked, he turned and struck once more into the forest path and was lost to her.

She grasped the swinging grape-vine. It was one thing to come down, and quite another to mount hand over hand; but the path was too slow for her; she felt an instant need to be with Fordheim, to comfort him if she could, to fathom what the mystery was that surrounded them all.

"Nobody shall hurt him," she panted to herself, struggling up, "unless they first kill me."

She had a warm affection for the prince; in her better moods she loved the queen; but this hungry passion for Fordheim swept away all kindly, human considerations. She believed that the dearest object on earth to her was endangered somehow from the royal pair. In this mood she was the unloaded gun in the corner where the children are at play—the unloaded gun to which chance always gives a bullet!

Once up, she followed the path for a few steps, then by instinct turned off into the woods as he whom she sought had done. She found him, as she had expected, lying on a smother of gay leaves, weeping out his heart. Without a word she sat down on the ground and lifted his head to her lap. She smoothed the curls that were silken as those of childhood. He yielded pitifully to her ministrations. Memories of their youth came to them both. Thus it was that they, the lesser pair, had sometimes comforted each other when the two young eagles of the group flew too high for them, or left a mark of talons on their childish hearts.

She was wise in her silence, for by and by the poet began to speak, his own thoughts too painful for self-containment.

"Oh, *Kassandra*," he said brokenly, "it is heaven's own counsel which bids us put not our trust in princes. Those who would go near the fire should be salamanders—or devils. I—you see, I have been burned."

"God is n't fair!" burst out the Greek. "He gave you everything that a king should have—except the station. I—Heaven knows, if I could get it for you—if my life would bring what you want——"

"It is n't ambition only," said the man, drawing her hand slowly across his cheek. "There are things which wound more than disappointed ambition."

"Who has hurt you?—tell me!" the girl asked bluntly, fiercely.

"Nothing. Nobody. I have hurt myself. It's the old pain—with a new edge of agony on it."

The Countess *Lenkoran* drew away, as *Fordheim* leaned against her shoulder, and pushed him back to stare into his face.

"It's a new phase of that folly, is it?" she asked. "I never thought much of that. It's a common thing for poets to set up a deathless sorrow. I fancied it kept you out of mischief, and did you no harm. But this is different."

"No," objected *Fordheim* gently, sitting erect and wiping his tear-disfigured face as naively as a child; "no, this is n't different, *Kassandra*, except in degree. You are wrong. Such emotion as mine is not a common thing. A great passion is as rare as a rose among thistles. Small affections that hold a reserve for self in them, marital tenderness—one sees plenty of these—but a devotion that spends all its life in sighs and dreams——"

"Is folly!" supplied the Greek bitterly. "Most men could love so if they would. *Wilhelm*, it is a point of wisdom—with poor, thwarted human creatures—to control the heart as one controls the hands. Could not most men hit out strongly, instead of touching a thing? They are restrained by considerations of prudence, of necessity. So it should be—so it must be—with the heart. We prefer one person to another in this world"—her sombre eyes burned upon him strangely—"but the preference must be ruled. Otherwise, we should revert to barbarism."

"To barbarism—yes," echoed the poet; "and to strength and freedom and joy! Do you think the savage primitive man in his cave contemplated suicide, as I did just now? Did he regard life with such indifference as most of us do at all times? If he had, the race would not have survived. He loved his life, and he fought for it—it was worth fighting for. A few of us, now, may live through—such men as I—tormented, suppressed, telling our days on a rosary of pain, and looking to the peace of the under-world as a solace."

Kassandra regarded him darkly, broodingly. "Did the queen give

you audience last night?" she inquired abruptly, moved by what impulse she could not have told.

Fordheim nodded and his face cleared somewhat. "She saw me alone in the little cabinet between the suites," he whispered, "after all the attendants were gone; and oh, *Kassandra*, she spoke so strangely! I need you to tell me what it means. What she said was sweet; she looked sad—but—I need a woman's wit to interpret."

Memory of *Elfrida's* air in dismissing her; recollection that she *had* been dismissed before this interview with Fordheim; that the prince must have been absent, blazed up suddenly in the Greek's smoldering eyes. But she struggled mightily for calmness, and replied in her usual half-jeering fashion, "Am I seer enough to interpret what you don't lay before me?"

"No, I'm going to tell you," Fordheim replied. "It can do no harm. Later there may be things I ought not to repeat; she said she wanted to talk to me again; but now——" He paused and took counsel with himself. "There isn't much to tell, after all," he said in a soft, self-communing voice, while a slow smile dawned in his darkened eyes.

The countess watched him, a thing tormented; but hear she must, and she restrained her impatience.

"She had me sit by her," he began at length. "She spoke of our childhood. God knows there is no day I can remember when I did not love her. She seemed timid and diffident about something she wished to tell me—she who is always so forthright and imperious."

"And then?" prompted the girl, as he came to a musing pause.

"Well, she—she asked me if I were devoted enough to her to make a great sacrifice for her happiness. I hoped—and then to see her there with *Mark!*"

Yet the speaking had done him good, as she knew it would. His eye was brighter; he raised his head with a freer motion. That mutable, variable nature of his was already on the up-swell of the wave.

"Let us talk of something else," he said suddenly. "I did n't sleep at all last night. My head aches."

"Put it down in my lap again," said the Greek, almost inaudibly. "I used to be able to cure your father's headaches by passes. Perhaps I can help yours."

And the prince, coming upon them from the path, looked, and was glad.

"*Frida* is wrong, after all," he thought to himself. "Those two love each other. It will be a match yet. Her plan"—he shuddered—"must come to naught. Something else must be thought of. I will tell my poor girl of this. Some way must be found—some way. But what?"

CHAPTER X

THE EVENT

"When hell-fire burns, what matter who set it alight?"

—WALDAVIAN SAYING.

FOR a week the royal party lived at the hunting-lodge. Under that gray old roof the nerves of every one vibrated responsive to the intense strain which all showed in varying degrees, according to their intelligence and their nearness to the protagonists. Even the servants and attendants felt the ominous presage.

Of the four closely concerned, none ate or slept or conducted the affairs of life in ordinary fashion. Most trying to the two men were the long hunting trips which formed their excuse for being in this region. The queen had refused to join them, though formerly she enjoyed a boar hunt as well as any one, and used the short spear of Waldavia with strength and skill.

All day at first the prince and Fordheim rode with the peasant huntsmen and foresters, side by side, thrown utterly upon each other. Mark was become silent, almost morose; yet he roused himself from these seemingly sullen fits of abstraction to an unusual geniality and kindness. In one of these, as a preliminary to telling the queen, he confessed to his companion what he had seen in the grove above the castle, and again hinted at a marriage between Fordheim and the Countess Lenkoran. Draven said to himself that this must be exploited whether Elfrida would or no.

"Your Highness is most kind," replied the poet, looking fixedly at his bridle hand, and trying hard to call back the mood evoked by *Kassandra's* advice that he speak out to *Marcus*. "I believe she loves me. Real devotion is a very rare thing. I thank you, Highness."

"Come, come," said the prince kindly. "You 'believe she loves you'—and not a word about your sentiments toward the lady? But then I suppose all that is reserved for her ear, and you poets do it so exceedingly well that no doubt she will be won."

"No doubt," echoed the Lord of Fordheim, glancing curiously at his royal master, striving to pierce that dignified exterior which covered, he was sure, volcanic fires as well as abysses of despair. It was certain that, interrogating every possibility, the son of *Augusta of Czegland* should sometimes suspect one phase of the proposition which his queen was to make to him.

Then suddenly *Elfrida* interested herself in a volume of folk-lore poems which *Fordheim* had taken up at one time and dropped with that whimsical inconsequence that served him for a life purpose. The volume was to have been dedicated to the queen. Now she announced a desire to become collaborator. *Elfrida of Waldavia* writ-

ing verse was a spectacle to move the gods to laughter. The masculine forthrightness of her mind was shown here, and she cobbled a bald statement into verse as a shoemaker would make a pair of shoes, achieving some rhymed remarks which were further from poetry than "Thirty days hath September" or the versified recipe for a salad.

"It is not necessary that you *write* poetry, Majesty," Fordheim would flatter, his adoring eyes upon the fine, pure profile bent over the manuscript beside him. "You *are* poetry. Happy I, who can have a muse to work with me!"

The young queen took her husband's avoidance of her as she took everything else in those days, dreamily, bearing it as a thing ordained. Mark managed always to have others present when they two were together, and never obtruded himself upon the literary labors which went forward in the little chamber between the suites.

Yet at the end of the first week, as the party was leaving the dining-hall after a slow and stately meal, and the prince bent to kiss his wife's hand in formal good night ere they separated, she looked suddenly up into his eyes and seemed to realize that he was suffering.

"Mark," she said sharply, "I—you must n't give up. I think you and I are to be happy yet."

The words were uttered in a whisper, with others standing close about. The prince bent his head.

"We have been happy," he said gently, "and so long as I can be of use to you, Elfrida, I am glad to be alive."

"I must keep you near me, or you lose courage," she murmured tenderly. "To-morrow I'm going to ride with you, if you please, and—well—till then adieu;" and she was gone with her women about her, while he retired with Fordheim in his own suite.

The prince told his valet almost immediately that he would not be needed, and seated himself at a table with some mathematical instruments and papers. With that imperishable personal dignity which clung to him in the most adverse circumstances, he sorted the papers in steady fingers, and never looked up as Fordheim passed through to an inner chamber, where he made a noisy change of dress, swearing fretfully at his valet, and raising now and again a voice that was plainly beyond his control.

Even when the attendant had been somewhat explosively dismissed, and the two men were alone in the suite together, the prince bent over his work with an air of absorption which evidently deceived the slighter man.

Fordheim came into the room, looked uncertainly about him, and cleared his throat a time or two. Still no sign from the prince. In that one interview between them in Luxen Draven had said to him that Elfrida wanted a chance to detail to her poet some plan that

concerned the future of the three of them. He had added, with a sudden, warm grasp of the hand and a deep look into the other's eyes, "You'll know whatever she says, Wilhelm, that I agree. Poor girl—she thinks she has a plan. I could n't trust her to broach it so to any man in the world but you. Perhaps she feels as I do that you are the only one to whom she could mention it. You—you'll understand. We were all children together, and I think we all love each other."

Fordheim had turned these uncertain utterances in his mind till they took as many meanings as a disputed passage of Scripture. Yet always he sucked a sense of elation from them. He was to come, as it were, between the royal pair. Elfrida had turned to him when in need; if not away from Draven, at least there was something to be discussed with him and not with the prince.

He put from him derisively the idea that it was a literary career his queen wanted him to help her to. Always and always he anticipated more from the interviews with Elfrida than ever came. He went to them warm, elate, full of expectancy, and he came from them chilled, depressed, certain for the moment that whatever Elfrida wanted of him, it was not the response he so eagerly desired to give.

He was to go now into the connecting cabinet between the suites to work on the verses and wait for the queen, who could there see him without attendants and converse with him privately if she desired.

It cannot be denied that the arrangement, smacking so broadly of intrigue, wrought upon the poet's mood. He was half confident, and half in terror. He hurried to a window, jerked back the curtain, and stared unseeingly out into the black night. The son of Augusta of Czegland had a grace and charm all his own, though the poise of the prince in tense moments always fretted him to a sort of insolence. Now he stood still as long as his racked nerves permitted, then, "Mark," he flung over his shoulder, returning to the accost of their boyhood, "what is it Frida wants of me? How long am I to be held off and on in this way? Are *you* interfering?"

The man at the table answered evenly and without raising his eyes, "I prefer that you should not address me."

The words came slowly, as though he dragged each breath of sound that framed each syllable with difficulty from a pit of deadly despair. "I can sit here quietly—now—for this moment," the monotonous voice went on. "But you must not speak to me. You should know that."

The lithe, graceful figure at the window turned and looked with curious, pain-bright eyes toward the other. Then the glance involuntarily travelled to the curtains which hid the portal he was to pass when he went to his interview with the queen.

"What is this thing that Elfrida has to propose—and I must not even hint at?" he asked. "Does it—does it concern the—political divorce?"

It was out at last—he had said it. He looked at Draven's back, then at the curtained archway. As he gazed with a gaze of longing and despair, a great shuddering took Fordheim. A volcanic pity for all human woe welled suddenly in his torn heart. He saw himself going to his prince, laying a loving arm across those broad, bowed shoulders, an arm that had often gone fondly around the neck of a little boy whose name was Marcus Odensa, and saying:

"No, Highness, let this bitterness come to you through another. I loved the queen—but I love and am loyal to you both, so that I will do no part to come between you. Mark—Mark, I'm to you—I'm with you always. Let's fight this thing out in the open, with your people. Accursed be the crown of Waldavia, if your heart must be crushed to preserve it!"

No, he could n't say that. Hope still counselled him that Elfrida had a hidden weakness for himself, that the thing which was to be told him in that room, over the telling of which Draven writhed, was really the confession of a woman's heart. Oh, if he could only hate the quiet man at the table as he loved the woman beyond the door! To have one's heart's desire thrust upon one in this bleak fashion—it was a recondite cruelty of which his butterfly soul, used to voyaging warm gales of pleasure, had never conceived life capable.

Marcus of Draven got suddenly to his feet and walked unsteadily from the room. He would not go out on the terrace again. Last night when he did that he had come back to find the poet sitting in the antechamber, glowering with burning eyes, and to hear him jerk out, in a voice whose madness excused its insolence:

"Curse you, Draven! three attendants saw you leave. You knew they saw you. You knew I had no chance to talk to Elfrida, unless you were here in the rooms to defend the situation!"

In the inner chamber Mark busied himself searching for a book. Time passed. He forgot, between breaths, the title of the volume he wanted, but dragged his mind resolutely back to the facts so soon as he found it straying, to listen for movement in the apartment he had just left. It might have been a half-hour that he labored thus. His head reeled. For three days he had neither eaten nor slept. Always he had walked—and walked—and walked, after those hours of hunting on the mountain-side. He was scarcely sane.

Suddenly he found himself back by the table, some book in his hand, bending to listen, with his soul in his ears, for sound from beyond the curtains. Was there a murmur of voices behind that portal? Did they plan the manner of his torture? Fordheim was

gone. He was in there—listening to a mad plan which included the making of him consort. This cut no figure in Mark's undoing; but that she—his wife—should propose a marriage to Fordheim—this it was that maddened. What man could resist so adorable a pleader? Yet, once her husband, could Fordheim remember in what spirit, what sense, the espousals were planned? He thought with longing of that bullet he had suggested to end all for himself—the agony would have been so much briefer.

How long he remained so, a thing wrenched from sanity, from all the traditions of his life and his upbringing, he did not know. It seemed to him long.

He tried to remember by what steps he had come to this dreadful pass. He reminded himself that he was not the husband of a wife, but the consort of a queen; he brought up before the eye of memory Elfrida's pale little face, drenched with tears, swollen with weeping, but resolute, and, as he had often done before, fancied that dearest of women given over to such a beast as Ludwig of Czeoland.

All to no purpose. The inward tremor continued. He could get no hold upon that Marcus Odena who had been willing to crucify his own heart that he might in some measure protect her he loved more than life. To that mood of high self-immolation, to the anguished revolt of the last three days and nights, had succeeded the fury of a trapped and dying animal in the wood—the teeth of his spirit were locked in that soul itself. He stood a moment struggling with these wild emotions, as men of old fought with devils.

Then he found himself leaping toward the curtained archway like a jealous peasant—an angry innkeeper. He shuddered through all his stalwart bulk with mere primitive rage at the naked facts of the situation. He swept aside the draperies and stood trembling, the cold sweat upon him. The door was not locked, of course, he knew that; yet he forbore to open it. Then in his wife's voice he heard his own name, and after it a breath of laughter. With the hand of pure frenzy he grasped the knob and shook it. In a terrible whisper he called:

“Elfrida!”

There was sound of a quickly suppressed exclamation. The door opened, and Fordheim, a man in hell, torn between hope and despair, love and hatred, pride and humiliation, faced his prince.

Mark's eyes looked past the inferior to where, beside the table, he saw Elfrida stand.

“Go!” he cried in an anguished voice.

She turned a startled gaze upon him, yet not till he had noted that she was smiling, happy-looking, as he had not seen her for months.

“Go—go quickly!” he repeated. “I—leave Wilhelm and me alone.”

"But, Mark," she protested, her white hand rising to her throat where a sob choked utterance, "I want you. You'll come to me afterward?"

"Yes—yes. Only, go now," urged the prince.

And the queen withdrew, looking back wistfully to the last over her shoulder, evidently uneasy at the attitude of affairs between the two men.

"For God's sake, why did you do that?" moaned the poet.

The self-control which seemed easy to this man, because it was ever lightly worn, had snapped. His agony leaped on him and tore away the garments in which civilization swaddles souls. He turned back into the chamber he was leaving, put his hand to his head, and burst out, as he saw the room was untenanted:

"She—she's gone!"

He rushed on unsteady feet through the apartment, flinging wide its doors, pushing back its draperies, till it stood revealed, quite vacant.

"She is gone," Fordheim repeated stupidly. "My God! She came to me with both hands outstretched, she was standing there a moment ago, and—she's gone."

His fluency was checked for an instant by remembrance that Elfrida had only put out her hands and smiled divinely to ask that he go and send the prince to her. And yet might it not be that she wished at last to break with Mark—and to tell him so? That was as clear a reading of her look as any.

He followed the prince into the outer chamber.

"I could kill you for that," he said in tones thick with passion. "You——" He hesitated, choked, then burst out in mad recklessness: "What right had you—when you know Elfrida longs for me, as I for her?"

"Hush!" commanded Draven in a voice of authority, suddenly calmed by the instant illumination of the situation. "Nothing has been said to warrant such a speech as that, Fordheim. You are treacherous to me and treasonable to your queen. You are insulting. You will not say that again."

"I will say it again—and again—and yet again!" almost screamed the poet, stung, burning, maddened, beside himself. "I'll say it, because it's true," he added hardily. "Princes have little enough chance to learn the truth. Take it this once, from me. I have loved her as long as you have—why should she not give me some caring in return? What else could it mean that she came to me out of all the world when she wearied of you?"

Still the prince held himself in hand, looking at that distraught face, and spoke with marvelous gentleness.

"She never came to you," he said. "It was I."

"At her suggestion," muttered Fordheim under his breath, looking up, plucking at his lip. "At her suggestion," he whispered insolently, for *Kassandra's* words came back to him again.

"I came to you," went on the prince, unhearing, unheeding, "and I trusted you as man never was trusted before——"

"Nor should be," broke in the other fiercely. "You've got yourself to thank for this, Draven. If a man fixes up such a devil's broth, he may expect——"

Livid with fury, Mark took a step forward and raised his arm. But the man before him was not only slighter and shorter, he was an inferior in station, entirely in his prince's power, and Mark was to the core a generous soul. Even in such a moment he remembered that it was he had bidden Fordheim to stand where he did.

"I can't strike you, Wilhelm," he said finally. "Your queen had a plan—mad enough, God knows, because it depended on the self-sacrifice of two men—yourself and me. I gave up to her pleadings, and told her she might try what she would, that I would never forsake her. She was to sound you as to your part in it. Mine—she had my word for that. I never expected good to come—but it was a last desperate hope with her. And you have dragged the thing down to the level of a low *amour*. I have n't even the right of an ordinary gentleman. I can't fight you and avenge her honor—poor girl—and mine."

Fordheim sprang forward like a thing galvanized. His open hand flung out and sent a stinging slap against the prince's cheek.

For the space in which a man might draw ten breaths the two stood confronted, red rising in the finger-marks upon Draven's pale face.

"Why did you strike me?" the prince asked finally in a whisper. It seemed to him at the instant that he felt only curiosity. This was his friend—the brother of his boyhood. In their wild hunts and youthful adventures he had saved Wilhelm's life more than once, and Wilhelm had more than once stood between him and death. Just now he had trusted Fordheim with more than his life. "Why, Wilhelm?" he persisted. "Why—why?"

"So that you would fight me!" gasped the other. "I will have it. As a man, you owe me that."

"A prince is not a man," said Mark drearily. "I have shown you that in this matter. I have not acted a man's part. Less or more—a prince is not a man."

"Your pride!" breathed the other, drawing back a little.

"A prince has no pride," said Marcus bitterly. "He is—he must be—the most craven creature alive. He has not a man's portion in anything. He is denied a man's weariness, or danger, or love, or

hate. A ruling prince—a monarch—why, the very deer he slays is driven up before him that his miserable life be not endangered in the chase of it. And love——” His steady voice broke suddenly, and he stood looking down.

After a long time he resumed in his usual even tones:

“We’ve made a terrible mess of this business, Fördheim; but I’m going to fight you. I—there is one who will say that it was treachery to a trust. Yet a man must have something for himself—if it’s only a grave. I know now how the thing can be done. You will meet me on the top of Kragenwald at sunrise. We will set up the target as for pistol practice. Whichever one of us survives can drag the other to a place where a chance shot will account for the bullet. If we are both killed, it will not matter. Get some sleep if you can”—for the other had fallen, limp and white, into a chair. “I’m going to walk until the hour.”

He was hurrying on a great-coat as he spoke.

“If I live through the night, you will find me on Kragenwald at dawn. Don’t fail me.”

He flung out of the room, clanging the heavy doors behind him, glad at that moment that the valets who slept in the outer apartments had been dismissed.

On the rocky terrace he paused, having given the countersign to a sentry that passed there. He looked up at the queen’s balcony. The windows beyond it were lighted; a figure passed one of them, tall and stately, wrapped in a blue peasant cloak, gay with red and white and black embroideries. It was Elfrida. How fared it with her—how did she feel, what think, what desire? They had come to the place of the pond and the waterfowl, and he had failed her and himself. He glanced again to where she stood upon the balcony. Did an unquiet heart drive her to watch the stars? What was the message she had meant to give him on that to-morrow which might never dawn for his eyes?

As he paused, some instinct seemed to warn her of his presence; for she bent down and called softly:

“Mark—Mark! Is it you, Mark? I want you. I want to tell you——”

In all his life he had never refused instant response to that bidding—the voice of his queen and his love.

But now thought of the scene through which he had just passed took him by the throat.

“To-morrow!” he gasped hoarsely. “Forgive me—not to-night.” And turning with an abrupt gesture of farewell, he skirted the precipice, plunged at the steep path toward Kragenwald, and climbed with the desperate energy of a man at whose heels floods snarl.

CHAPTER XI

ON KRAGENWALD

“The person of the king is sacred—but after all it is the man who dies.”

—POPULAR SAYING IN CZEGLAND.

ON the very top of Kragenwald, highest peak of the Walds, a single lonely pine holds communion with the clouds. Sometimes they sweep around him like eagle wings and fan the fine resinous scents of his heart's secrets to the moon's high throne. But always in the end they desert him, as the consolers of earth desert the lonely spirit that must yet look but to itself for comfort and companionship. The king pine has its payment to render for dwelling with the feather-footed who run above the earth. The raging of lower winds, the hurtling of the gale, untempered by any fellow tree, have torn his noble branches and rendered his pride a sad spectacle to the thoughtful.

It would seem that the pine of the peak might have spoken understandingly to the royal, tempest-torn soul that waited the dawn beneath it that night. Some time in the hour of presage when shapes begin to flit, a denser darkness, before the watching eye, the prince thought he saw far down among the sleeping trees a peasant cloak following him. Once he cried her name—Elfrida. Then shadow and silence closed in on him, and he turned burning eyes to the first pallid streaks that whispered of dawn above the trees. He looked no more down the gorge till a golden red burned on the king pine's topmost tassel—a living jewel on the brow of mountain royalty. Then the fingers of morning began to lace the sky with scarlet threads behind the greenery; the feet of tremulous ashen clouds stumbled, and they were submerged in the oncoming glory.

The prince drew out his watch. It was fifteen minutes past the hour upon which he and Fordheim had agreed. Putting the time-piece back in his pocket, he set his hands to his lips and sent down toward the sleeping lodge the old time yodel which used to call to boyish sports or escapades.

Was there an answer? No, the dark, many-windowed bulk of stone lay silent; but Mark's tortured eyes, brooding upon the prospect, fancied a flutter of scarlet and blue at a turn in the mountain path. He knew this must be a delusion. He chided his sick fancy that it played him an unmanly trick—giving him dreams of Omphale's gown when the club of Hercules should be swung.

Nay—something stirred down there; the other man came upward, climbing hard, breathless, the sweat thick on his brow. He had suffered horribly. He showed it in his uncertain, jerky gait and movements, as well as the haggard gaze he set upon the summit.

"Is that you, Fordheim?" called the prince harshly. "Be quick. We are late already."

The lithe figure came on at but a laggard pace. The poet wore no cap, and he tossed the curling dark hair distressfully back from his brow. His clothing had evidently been carelessly flung on at the last moment and without assistance. His hunting tunic was unbuttoned, his loose gaiters unlaced. He tripped on the long strings as he reached the upper ledge.

"I slept," he panted. "It is the first time in many nights, Highness. When you left me I slept—God knows how or why! Forgive me. The shame of it reproaches me enough."

"And I have watched here all night."

There was a ridiculous resemblance in the colloquy to that accompanying many a boyish expedition, when these two had evaded tutors and guardians and sought some such spot as this for an adventure. Then it had always been Fordheim who was the sleepy-head. How often had he come climbing the hill, protesting his shame and penitence that slumber had overcome him at the last hour. But he had always come. Mark suddenly realized that, after this morning, there would be no distraught figure to toil breathless up the mountain after him, with coat unbuttoned, trailing shoestrings, and the old plea,

"Mine the shame—forgive me—I overslept."

This was the one man to whom he ever spoke on equal terms—had dared to trust; he knew it would be a lonely world when Wilhelm of Fordheim was gone. Flinching from these unwelcome thoughts, he hastily began to set up the target, that later comers might read from it a lying history of the morning's work. He was bending at his task when a light touch on his shoulder checked him.

"Highness," began Fordheim brokenly, "will you take your pistols, practise for a dozen or so shots at the target, and then send a bullet into this more unworthy mark? It is the last kindness you can do me. It is the last favor I shall ever ask of you."

The tortured prince flung round upon him.

"Call me Marcus Odensa!" he burst out. "There shall be no cloaking forms between you and me. After what you have said—after the blow you struck me—we cannot both live. I will be shot at like a man—and you are to do the shooting."

"Mark," groaned the other, "even if I could raise a weapon against my prince, I can't—I can't fire at the man. Don't ask it of me."

Mark looked at the working face, the slender hands wrung together and then flung apart, and he was moved.

"This world's a devil of a place," he said heavily. "But you need n't take it so much to heart, Fordheim. If you should chance to kill me, it would perhaps be the most fortunate thing that could

happen to me, and—to her. I don't see anything else that promises her as much peace. Take your pistol, boy, and we'll both practise a while. They must hear plenty of shots down at the lodge, and see plenty of bullet marks in the target when they come up."

The weapon he thrust into Fordheim's cold fingers hung loose at the end of the relaxed arm.

"I wish I could hate you," said the poet nervelessly. "But I can't. I love you almost as much as I do—her. Poor Mark—poor Elfrida—and poor me! We are three puppets, with a monstrous fate jerking the strings. Why couldn't I be allowed to keep on playing court buffoon, arranging processions and fêtes for her—and loving her till I was an old man pottering about from spa to spa like my father? Why should you and she be tortured like this?"

The prince looked at him attentively.

"Are you going to begin that sort of thing again this morning?" he said in the quiet tone of rising passion. "Because I can't stand it. Now you've got to die—and I've got to kill you. Yes—I'd shoot you for it if you were my own born brother. In the name of God, why did n't you tell me all this a week ago, when I"—the strong voice choked—"when I had beaten down all natural pride of man and husband—when I came to you, bleeding, to tell you what I did—to admit you to our pitiful plans?"

Fordheim would have spoken, but the prince went on passionately:

"Oh, you pretended to feel—to comprehend—then. You did n't talk any trivial, insolent banalities about cherishing a hopeless passion for the poor hunted queen and woman whom I—whom our course—was but trying to shield."

Fordheim looked down and fumbled with the buttons of his tunic.

"But she knew it," he whispered half doggedly. "Everybody has always known it." He glanced fleetingly at the stern, sad face that confronted him, "I thought that was why she sent you—why you—came—to me."

Up over the prince's pale, haggard countenance rushed at last the red rage of the natural man, jealous for his mate. He strode forward and grasped the collar of Fordheim's tunic, shaking its wearer as one would a recalcitrant child.

"You will!" he cried. "You will persist in that strain? And you refuse to fight me! Take your place over yonder. You are no longer the man I loved. Take your place. And if you have one grain of honor in you, give me my chance."

Much must be forgiven a soul tortured as that of Mark had been. Perhaps in that moment Fordheim saw and knew the root of these cruel words. With a pathetic dignity he placed himself as his prince had demanded, choking out the words:

"You count—I cannot!"

For a moment they stood confronted thus, and Mark read, in every line of the figure opposite, a purpose that maddened him.

"Wilhelm!" he called sharply. "You shan't fire in the air. If you ever loved me, aim at me."

"One!" Both weapons were raised.

"Two!" The men looked across the shining barrels at each other.

"Three!"

Mark heard a cry far below. It sounded to his ears like his own name, and pierced him with a resemblance to the voice of Elfrida. Was that a gleam of scarlet in the thicket there?

"Fire!"

But his own shot went wild. His attention was called away by a female figure, not climbing the path Fordheim had trod, but flitting from clump to clump of bushes.

"Why the devil did n't you shoot?" he demanded fiercely. "Somebody's coming up. There won't be time for the one that's left to drag the other into the proper position. What's the matter with you?"

For Fordheim had flung his pistol down in the crimson-and-gold leaves at his feet, covered his face with his hands, and stood shaking from head to foot. Exasperated, desperate, Mark strode forward, snatched down the shielding hands, and glared furiously into the face they had hidden.

"For God's sake! will nothing make you act a man's part?" he groaned.

He thrust the poet from him with a gesture of the arm, flinging him toward his station, and paced doggedly back toward his own, counting as he went,

"One—two—three!"

As he wheeled with raised weapon, the word "Fire!" on his lips, he saw that Fordheim was gone. Apparently, Mark's push had sent the slighter man over the small bluff and out of sight. Then his startled eyes were aware of a woman in the poet's place—a woman in a blue-and-scarlet cloak, the great hood pulled far over her face, who bent and searched among the bright leaves for a fallen weapon, found it, raised it in steady hand, and fired at him.

"Frida! Frida!" he cried out ere her bullet found its mark.

For an instant he saw the lonely pine crowned in full light, every spike green fire in the morning glow. Then the scarlet on the woman's cloak, the red leaves at her feet, the hurrying clouds above her head, seemed changed to goutts of blood—and it was his blood! He could not see; darkness was rushing in upon him while some one bent above. Yet he forced back death to whisper as he guessed the presence:

"Never, never will I forsake thee, Elfrida!"

CHAPTER XII

KASSANDRA

"Happy are the dead and the mad, for they know not the troubles of life."

—WALDAVIAN SAYING.

MORNING dawned fully on Kragenwald. Great lances of light smote on the branches of the king pine. They sought out a quiet face beneath, whose pallor they could not warm.

Over by the target somebody was singing. A woman sat on the ground with a man's head in her lap, and smoothed back the hair, the dark, curling hair above that white brow, noting the length and beauty of the lashes closed down upon those wonderful, changeful yellow-brown eyes which would look on the scenes of earth no more.

By ten o'clock the search swarmed up the steep; three members of the royal household were missing, and since early morning peasant beaters and huntsmen, with the soldiers of the Queen's Guard, guided and directed by mounted officers, had raked the valleys and glens, calling, shouting, blowing their bugles, combing every copse and thicket. Fordheim's cigarette-case, dropped as he came up, was found in the pathway. Shreds of gay fringe from the long peasant cloak the woman wore had caught in many places upon the bushes. And then the little group of peasants—this was but a finger of the great, eager, searching hand that was interrogating every hill and ravine—came to the foot of the bluff and saw the Countess Lenkoran sitting flat upon the ground, her great cloak flung down beside her, the long hair wild about her face, the head of the dead poet in her lap, while she apparently hushed his slumbers.

"Be still," she cautioned them as a half-dozen gathered about her. "He is asleep at last. He has not been sleeping well. He looked too long at the sun, and saw little green suns like bubbles floating everywhere. But I have sung to him, and now he sleeps."

"The dear God defend us!" exclaimed the leader, making the sign of the cross as he bent down to ascertain that the young poet was quite dead. Fordheim's neck had been broken by the fall over the bluff.

A boy touched Makart on the shoulder, pointing to his own forehead and then to the countess, whispering:

"She's gone mad, poor thing. We must humor her, Josef, or she will not let us take the Herr's body away from her, I'm thinking. Crazy people are like that. You know my sister Marta that lost her mind; sometimes she would fight us like a fury for a roll of clothing in her arms that she said was her baby."

"You make too much noise," murmured the Greek querulously.

"You must go away. The sun is up there on the top of the hill. I will keep it out of his eyes, so that he shall never see the green floating bubbles again;" and she fell to crooning over the still form.

Makart looked at her, anxious and nonplussed.

"I—I guess you're right, Hans," he hesitated. "See, then, if you can get her to give us the Lord of Fordheim's body. Tell her what you will."

He turned to the others.

"Some of you make a litter out of boughs and lift the nobleman. You'll have stiff work getting him down the path. Oh, and, Eitel, do you blow the signals agreed upon—the one for Lord Fordheim and for the countess. We still have the prince to search for."

But on the instant came an outcry from the plateau above.

"No need to search—the Lion of Waldavia is here—fallen," sounded the wailing voice of an old peasant who had climbed the path around the bluff, and stood now at the foot of the king pine.

"I told you the sun was up there," said the countess. "Go away, and leave me my love."

But the men were already gone, choking the path, swarming up the rocks, grasping at bushes, crying out as they clambered:

"Dead?"

"Are there wounds?"

"Is it treason?"

"Is he shot—have these done it?"

Under the king pine they gathered in a hushed, panic-stricken circle about their prince.

"You touch him, Gaffer," sobbed Makart. "Lift him over. Look—see where this blood comes from."

The terrified peasants huddled against each other like sheep. None remembered—not even Eitel or Makart, who had been sharply instructed—that message the bugle should have sent down to the waiting queen, to tell her her consort was found, nor the notes to be added, saying whether he were dead or alive.

Despite their terror and awe, they finally lifted the prince upon a hastily made wattled stretcher, and carried him reverently down the steep path. At the bluff's foot they were brought to sudden recollection of the two others apparently involved in the tragedy, and several of their number stayed behind to attend to the dead man and the mad woman.

Among these was the boy Hans; but his coaxings were all in vain; and they had finally to bind the countess's arms with their handkerchiefs before they could take her dead from her and carry him down the mountain.

As those who bore the prince struck the bottom of the descent Eitel

suddenly remembered his office, and sent the tardy message forth. It was taken up and passed on by the searchers within hearing.

"The prince is found. The prince is dead," cried the bugles up and down the steeps; and those who sought him came pouring back to crowd upon the little party of scared peasants with the stretcher of green boughs in their midst.

Prince Marcus went into his castle on the shoulders of his weeping peasants who adored him, between lines of soldiers whose chief and idol he was, and was laid upon his bed, where he was immediately attended by his physician.

Elfrida of Waldavia neither fainted nor screamed when her husband was brought home to her in this wise. So soon as the prince was among others than the excited men who found him, it was discovered that he still breathed. The queen hung at his bedside, watching every movement made to relieve the unconscious man. She lost sight of all wonder at how the tragedy had come about, in the desperate concern for its results—for Mark's life. Such consternation was upon the household, such complete preoccupation with the griefs of the royal pair, that the other two wrecks left by the spiritual storm which had whirled over Kragenwald came in almost unnoted.

For long the prince lay in a strange coma. Physicians were promptly summoned from Luxen; his condition relaxed into delirium. When, after three days, he sank once more into that curious unconsciousness, Elfrida goaded her doctors into the advice that he be moved down to the capital city, where she must now go.

Before that time Fordheim's body had been carried to Luxen and the funeral of the poet held there in state. No one thought strange of it that the young queen wore deep mourning on the occasion of a solemn requiem mass to his memory, walking beside the bereaved father in the short procession through the church. The people knew she was as good as widowed, and her grief for the death of her poet, the madness of her lady-in-waiting, must be merged in the premonitory pangs of that great sorrow which was to come to her with widowhood.

CHAPTER XIII

EKRA THE FIRST

"Men are born—God sends the king."

—WALDAVIAN SAYING.

THE date for the annulment of the royal marriage arrived—and passed. This was no time for even Ludwig of Czegland to intrude himself upon people or queen.

Then came months of anxious waiting, when the little mountain kingdom put on its white samite of winter splendor, when the passes

and gorges of the Walds drifted deep in snow; and still the prince consort lay as one whom death would not accept, though life rejected him. Twice they had operated, each time with favorable results, yet each time recovery, actual consciousness, was apparently defeated by some deep-seated despair that grappled the man's soul within his injured body. Elfrida had gathered the best medical skill of her own capital to tend upon the prince; but week followed week, month was merged in month, in those strange, mysterious alternations of delirium and unconsciousness, with never a rational word from the stricken man's lips, never a sane look in his eyes. Yet in these months the queen seemed to rise grandly above her terror and all personal griefs and anxieties. To Krudner, who waited upon her early, she said:

"I am at peace. The prince will recover. We shall be happy yet."

"Majesty!" cried the premier, reddening to the roots of his white beard at the intimation, "you make me young again! Then the throne is saved to the Trostan line!"

"Ah," said the queen under her breath, her mind going back to the grave of Fordheim, to the lonely room where a mad woman babbled of one who had looked the sun in the face till he saw green bubbles everywhere, "ah, Herr Krudner, if souls were as easily saved as thrones!"

"And the news from the prince is favorable to-day," said Krudner, with satisfaction. "When this great Frenchman himself recovers and is able to travel so far, he will put all right, no doubt."

"Yes, he has delayed us," said the queen. "But there will be no trouble about his staying, once he is over my borders. And it is his great operation, Krudner—he has never failed in it. I feel that at last, in this man's skill, we shall find success. Oh, I have been in the prince's sick chamber every day, despite the restraints they strive to put on me. It does n't daunt me that he recognizes nobody—not even me; that there's never a rational word or look from him. I can see that his bodily health maintains wonderfully. There is only the injury on the head to be reckoned with. This Frenchman's operation must relieve that. And I have something to say to my husband—I must talk with him—he must hear me. Certainly love like mine can find a way to call him back from that strange country where he has been held so long."

The old man almost smiled at the imperious tone of this royal child whose haughty, unbroken will was, after all, as he well knew, the best bulwark of the liberties of the small state she ruled.

"Under Heaven, dear child, under heaven," he said half reprovingly. "I too think the prince will recover. I have known, when I was a soldier, cases of this kind, where a concussion of the brain held men strangely for months, yet they did recover. But, my daugh-

ter, if this should not be, remember that many women are widows—few are queens, mothers of kings. Even in your grief, I beg you to have always at heart the welfare of the royal line.”

During the earlier months the people hung upon the bulletins from the sick-room; Waldavia was uplifted or depressed as the news ran.

Finally the great French surgeon, after many heartbreaking delays, came, operated with but partial success, returned a month later to operate once more, only to go back to Paris after weeks of watching and waiting, leaving the results of his last operation yet unsettled. Indeed, it seemed as though the great man might have met his first defeat.

And after a time the prince was relegated to those things which are in God's hands, and the kingdom went wild over the birth of an heir, a boy, who was to be christened Ekra.

It was blossomtime in Waldavia, that precious season of an austere climate, when the grass is green under cold airs, and the flowers bloom between frosts. Old Hadwig sat often at the prince's bedside, and was the queen's intelligencer, watching with the eye of love for the return of reason. Elfrida felt that trained nurses and doctors might be deceived, but when she herself must be absent from the sick chamber Hadwig's report satisfied her.

Marcus of Draven, prince consort to the queen of Waldavia, lay staring at an old woman who sat beside his bed knitting. Her peasant garb was of silk and fine linen; the mahogany-colored face was seamed with a myriad tiny wrinkles. He studied the cryptogram attentively. From the harsh experience of this woman's seventy years had come the seed of that tree upon which his joy of life was crucified.

Many a time when he had neared the shores of consciousness, of rational thought, he had been flung back into the dim world of shadow by jumbled memory of the tragedy which had stretched his tall form upon its present couch.

Elfrida's plan; Fordheim's unbearable words; the blow, and, most deadly of all, the memory of the tall woman on the mountain-top whose face he could not see, and who had shot him with Wilhelm's pistol—these came torturingly back to him. But he could not blame her—he could never blame her. Existence was written in hard lines for a woman who must also be a queen. He had offered her his life. It was hers to use as she saw fit, or to take away—only he sometimes wished, a little fretfully in the confusion of his aching head, that she had let him lay it down himself, like a soldier and a prince—or made

a better job of the killing. It was hideous to hang for so long between two worlds like this. Had he lain here a week—a month—a year—or years?

The sick man stretched out a thin hand and looked at it. It seemed to him the withered member of an old man. He began to believe that all his tragedy had chanced years ago, that he was divorced, in a mad-house, and that, living or dead, Elfrida was his no more.

Attendants moved in and out of the sick chamber, backing always from the prone figure on the bed, as they had backed grotesquely when it had lain there like a dead thing or writhed in the throes of delirium. How often he had come almost this near to the old life and, dreading unspeakably, had relinquished his hold and dropped back!

The click of the woman's knitting-needles soothed his ear. The picture of her capped head against a lancet-shaped, many-paned window pleased his fancy. Suddenly he realized that he was in one of his own rooms in the palace at Luxen. His changing eyes showed that he might speak. The old woman looked up breathlessly.

"Hadwig," he said in a perfectly natural tone, "what time is it?"

At sound of the quiet, collected voice, in that chamber where for months there had been only ravings or silence, an astonished lackey let fall a clattering spoon from the tray he was carrying, and was withered by a glance from the old woman.

She rose and stood before the sick man stiffly. Who was she to be surprised that her prince had recovered his wisdom? Was he not lord of her life? Why not, then, lord of his own?

"It is ten of the morning, Highness," she said gently. "And for the time of the year, this is the month——"

A single motion of the prince's hand stayed her speech midway.

"Don't tell me," said the low voice briefly. "The queen?"

Hadwig curtsied with a smile upon her quiet face.

"The queen will be returning now from chapel, where the prince royal, Ekra, who should be the first, was christened," the peasant said. "She will bring the child if I hang our signal from the window—and I have already put it in place."

The old woman was looking down as she spoke. Now on her startled ear came a strangled, gurgling whisper:

"Turn these people out. Bar the door. She must not come in—till I know whose wife—— Hadwig! clear the room for me."

In her extremity of terror the old nurse fairly turned her back upon the prince, to push and threaten attendant and physician from the apartment.

Then should have come the barring of the door. But Elfrida of Waldavia stood in it, carrying her son upon her breast like a peasant mother, and cried out:

"Leave us alone together, Hadwig—he will know me at last!" for her eyes were on the prince's conscious face.

"Such a shock—such a shock!" fumed the court physician. "It may be the death of him, or dethrone his reason."

But old Hadwig swept past him rustling in glorious state.

"Ah—the dear man!" she quavered. "He has been away long. His wife must be the first to welcome him home."

Elfrida of Waldavia came across the chamber, a woman transformed, a queen indeed. She laid the babe upon the couch between Mark and herself, then knelt down to look into his eyes.

"Mark!" she cried, startled at what she read there, "my poor darling that I almost killed—don't look at me like that. You have lain here like a dead man, or raved like a madman, for eight bitter months," she hurried on. "That night when I saw you go to what I later feared was your death, I called after you—I tried to stop you, Mark—indeed I did. I wanted to tell you then that the necessity for the cruel sacrifice I had demanded was removed by the gods—that we were reprieved—that we were to be happy. And you failed me. Oh, Mark—the only time in your life that was when you denied me—when I called on you, and you would not come to me!"

The prince lay back upon his pillows, plunged, as the physician had feared, well-nigh into that unconsciousness which had locked his spirit so long. He came to life again with his wife's arm under his head, her warm cheek against his cold one, her little hand striving to hold both his own.

"Forgive—forgive—oh, Elfrida!" he murmured brokenly.

"I do," whispered the queen to him. "I have forgiven all—even that last treachery when you would have forsaken me indeed."

"Is the duel known of? Has Fordheim——"

"No," said Elfrida; "no duel is known of among us; but I guessed that your injury was no accident."

The sick man drew away from her to look into her eyes.

"Yes," he said gravely; "you know it." And the thing which had maddened and driven his soul, desperate, to flee from life, looked out of his eyes.

"I forgive you," repeated the queen. "It was my fault. I had laid a burden upon you which humanity cannot carry. If you turned your pistol against this breast where my head lies, oh, so happily, Mark, still you must be forgiven."

"If I did," echoed the prince in wonder. "Listen, Elfrida: I was indeed mad that night. I—there were things—things said and done you do not know of—impossible things: I challenged Fordheim to fight, and took my pistols up to the top of Kragenwald. He came, and would not fight me. I—when he would not—would not—I pushed

him back into place. And when I looked again—from my place—he was gone—he had fallen over the bluff, and a woman—a tall woman in—in your cloak—picked up his pistol and fired it. I could not see her face.”

“Kassandra!” ejaculated the queen. “I was praying in the chapel, and I sent her to summon you to me. I felt that I must not wait for morning to tell you. She came back wildly distraught; and I finally understood from her frantic words that she had heard raised voices in your chamber—that she had not entered it, but she feared you and Wilhelm were quarrelling. When I saw you from the window, and failed to call you back, I gave her my cloak and sent her after you. They found her on the Kragenwald, raving mad. She will never be sane again.”

Then Draven knew whose hand had struck him down upon the mountain-top.

“And Fordheim?” asked the prince. “There were things”—he closed his eyes a moment, and his face darkened; “but—it is a long time ago, dearest—and——”

He broke off and looked at her apprehensively.

“Wilhelm has been in his grave this eight months,” said the queen gently. “He was killed by the fall over the bluff.”

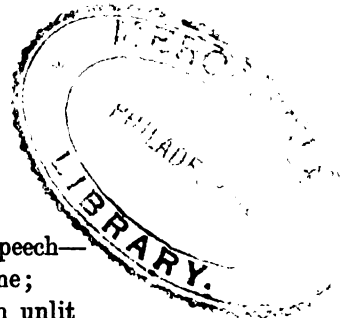
“Death and madness,” said the prince consort, raising himself upon his pillows. “Are the steps of a throne always red like that, even to-day?”

The mother bent to take up her child, which fretted, and hush it against her breast; then placed the baby prince in the feeble arms the father held out for him. “A throne,” she repeated meditatively. “After all, Mark, we are only a man and a woman, and this is our child. It is an accident of birth that he will be Ekra the first of Waldavia, and carry on the royal line.”

A TOAST

BY JANE BELFIELD

TO lips that move immortal tongues to speech—
 Else mute as Shelley till his Mary came;
 To hands but for whose touch the torch unlit
 Had never brightened into deathless flame!



THE WOMAN PROBLEM

II. LOVE VERSUS AVARICE

A FRANK ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES WHICH MAKE FOR SOCIAL EVIL

*By Ouida**

Author of "Under Two Flags," "A Dog of Flanders," etc.

WHETHER men and women will become any happier if they ever engage in competition on absolutely even terms is a point often rabidly discussed, but scarcely worthy of disputation. Happiness is not the only aim of human life, and, if it were, discontent is not a likely atmosphere to generate it. And that there is not considerable discontent seething up amongst women it were impossible to hope; the general languor, impatience, restlessness, and cynicism, characteristic of modern thought, have communicated themselves even to those women who are unconscious of what they feel. It is clearly seen in all their writings; it is traceable alike in their ennui and their effort; it is even at the root of their mad extravagancies of costume and expenditure. The recklessness, the listlessness, the bursts of passion in their literary works, the eccentricities of their follies, their religions, their pleasures, and their crusades, all proceed from the interminable unrest of minds ill at ease, though scarcely conscious of their malady. It is simply ridiculous to apply to such a temperament the old herb-and-simple panacea of "domestic interests"; in the first place, every tendency of modern times is to loosen and alter the old patriarchal or "domestic" life; in

* Mlle. Louise de la Ramée, better known as Ouida, the brilliant novelist, wrote these two papers more than twenty-five years ago and sold them to this magazine with the stipulation that they should be withheld from the public until after her death. She passed away in Viareggio, Italy, January 25, 1908, and we are now free to give to the public these extraordinary documents which, in her characteristic chirography, have remained in the editor's safe so many years—passing uninjured through the great fire of 1899. The first paper was quite prophetic of the world-wide interest now obtaining in the question of woman's suffrage. The second presents a serious and startling philosophy of an evil as wide-spread as it is appalling. On both these grave questions, it will be understood, Ouida spoke for herself, and not as a mouthpiece for this magazine.

THE EDITOR

the second, these threadbare commonplaces will avail nothing with the women whose impress is strongest on this generation. To tell a brilliant, dissatisfied, keen-sighted, contemptuous yet earnest-minded woman to make herself content knitting stockings and nursing her offspring is about as absurd as to tell her to go back to the cup-and-ball and the daisy-chains of her childhood. "Emancipation!" is their cry. From what? From just this limbo of domestic triviality, just this bondage of domestic monotony. Moreover, the women who make the strongest impress upon modern thought are, as we have said, women not to be touched by such a retort—women who live in a totally different atmosphere and who know life and its phases as thoroughly as men. It is these who lead: it is with these we have to do in any consideration of the present tendencies and future prospects of their sex. And it is also these who recoil as much from the hard, exaggerated, vanity-inflated conceits of the crusaders of "woman's rights" as they do from the obscurity and captivity of the ordinary career of ordinary women.



To secure the peace of the world it will be needful to find some golden mean between these two extremes. Such a mean the Moors of Spain found when their women obtained an intellectual eminence unknown to the European women of that period, or indeed of any subsequent; pleading publicity in combats of learning and of rhetoric, and infusing the most splendid and magnanimous chivalry, the most graceful and spiritual poetry, into the habits and the minds of the Moresco knights. But we suppose it would be useless to refer any modern Celtic or Teutonic nation to one Arabic and Islamite for example; though it is a noteworthy fact that the impulsion of women towards mental freedom and political influence is accompanied with a marked inclination towards those peculiar forms of amatory and marital relations which were characteristic of polygamous races.

We remarked, in the preceding paper, that this intellectual revolt of women is of a great singularity and importance taken in conjunction with another phase of modern female life. This other phase is that known in familiar colloquialism as the Demi-Monde. We are perfectly aware that the champions of the sex's right to effect an entrance into the (so-called) learned professions and the domain of political influence will feel sorely aggrieved at the association with them of the ranks of the adventuresses. We fully admit that there is an immense distance between them, and that the endeavors of the one to ameliorate the status of their sex are the precise reverse of the other's effort to debase it. But for all that, we must risk their wrath by the declaration that the two totally opposite features do arise from the same original source,

i.e., the rebellion of women against the imprisonment of a domestic and monotonous career. The two streams diverge widely: the one flows towards sin, the other towards study; the one becomes a Pactolus of selfish wealth, the other a Nile of fertilizing use, but the two take their rise from the same watershed.

The question of the too-abundant immorality of women is never fairly discussed; is always more or less begged and shirked. Its responsibility is always thrown upon men, which is as illogical as it is unjust. Sentimentalists of the purist schools pen endless-flowing diatribes against the selfish passions of men, which, say they, are solely productive of the vices of women. If it were possible to induce the world to look at the subject, abandoning all the old cant formulas dispassionately and without recourse to either platitude or prejudice, it might plainly be shown that this is a rank untruth. Nothing can be more ludicrously incorrect than to trace the abandonment of every licentious woman back to some betrayal in her youth! The favorite hypothesis of some lordly lover wooing the village maiden and then flinging her off to a life that she detests is an imaginative instance that may occur once in ten thousand times, but certainly not more. The idea that the pursuit of the vilest form of depravity is always originated by woman's own self-sacrifice to a generous and too tender love is about the most absurd anomaly with which sentimentalists ever caught the clap-trap tickled ear of the world. We may be guilty of a fearful form of heresy, but nevertheless we assert that nine-tenths of the dissolute women of the world never once knew what love was. Discontent with poverty and monotony; desire for the gaieties of an unknown world; the passion for sumptuous attire which seems born in all women in utter contradistinction of the female of every other race, which submits to see gracious shape or gorgeous plumage go to the male beast or bird; the innate avarice, vanity, frivolity, greed of wealth, and impatience of routine which are strong in so many uneducated and in not a few educated women—it is all these that send them to the haunts and the habits of vice. A maudlin and vitiated pity prevails in the general tone of all discussions regarding this large class: the evil that has befallen them is traced to masculine temptation and to a tenderness they never possessed the souls to feel; the "fallen woman" is always an angelic Marguerite and the debasement to which she has sunk is always laid upon the shoulders of some imaginary Faust. Now, we maintain, first, that this conclusion is entirely erroneous; secondly, if it were even much nearer the truth than it is, it would be an equally pernicious doctrine to teach. It is untrue, because the vast majority of the women who make vice their trade are led to do so by the various vain instincts and greeds that we have spoken of above: the females of the lower classes, out of patience with the dullness of domestic service or the poverty of their homes, fly

to what they deem will give them pleasures with scant penalties; the women of somewhat higher grades in life detest none the less the colorless travail of existence as governesses, milliners, and housekeepers, and adopt a career where every extravagance of costume, of equipage, of wines, of food, of festival, can be made their own through the purses of others. We do not say that this is unnatural; we only affirm that these are the reasons, and that there is no greater outrage to the word "love" than to suggest it as the mainspring of license.

Victor Hugo was guilty of a gross poetical opticism when he depicted the wretched young mother or *Cossette* as the type of all women who go astray: but an exaggeration may be perhaps permissible in fiction that is absolutely intolerable in professed "social philosophers" who affect to trace the root of a social evil.

Attracted by the pathetic picture of *Marguerite* stretched on the Cathedral steps, or *Fanny* desolate in the French streets, the public are bidden to regard these exceptions as the representatives of the majority, and to forget that the majority consists of hard, mercenary, vain, audacious, unblushing brigands who make a science of the arts that capture, and who pillage without mercy the men who fall into their nets. Poverty often awaits them at the close of their careers, because such natures are commonly as extravagant as they are avaricious, and, like all brigands, they live without thought for the morrow; but often, too, they die in the odor of sanctity: nay, of late years we have seen them make as their last stroke an advantageous marriage, and find in the enormity of their careers a sorcery that does not lie in "the lilies and languors of virtue."



It is unwise, unreasonable, to shirk this fact so prominent and so undeniable. It is easier and more tempting, no doubt, to represent *Phryne* as always changing into *Magdalen*; to warn off the female votaries of dissipation by assurance that they will fall into the wretched ways of shame and of starvation; to assure them that *Marguerite* of the garden is always, in the issue, *Marguerite* of the cell. But it is not the truth; and we do not believe that any social good is ever effected by the maintenance of a lie. It may be urged that this is nothing new; that it is many centuries "since first the Devil threw dice with God for you, *Faustina*;" and we admit it. But *Faustina* has entered on a new phase these later years; and we are weary of the sickly fallacy that will never cite her, never study her, but ever will turn aside to weep for *Marguerite*. *Marguerite* exists—here and there—in shady old-world places; and very tender and pitiful is the sorrowful love story; but it is *Faustina* that rules the world and that leaves everywhere the impress of her cruel hand. It is women who furnish her forth by the thousands:

a thing all senses and no soul, with insatiate greed, with unappeasable avarice, with continual content in honeyed evil, with unremitting hatred of all that is pure and at peace, with words that breathe poison, with passions that crave only gold. Faustina is a fact; Faustina is the deliberate result of civilization, luxury, and the modern *culte* of wealth; Faustina is the voluntary production of that sex which is decreed scarce lower than the angels. And Faustina neither knows repentance, nor ends in poverty. Hence she forms a feature of modern civilization no less disquieting than prominent; and must disclose to every keen thinker the enormous power of danger, rapacity, and devilish cruelty that are in the nature of the womanhood that it is too much the habit to legislate for, and to prate about as incapable of anything except sacrifice and sanctity.



We know well that the customary reply to this unpalatable fact is that "there are many pure and tender women left"! Whoever doubted it? What on earth can such a fact do towards disproving that Faustina is a voluntarily begotten result of womanhood all the same? It is most idle to attempt the discussion of the present aspect and future probabilities of the sex without taking into account the phase of it which is born of their lusts, levities, and desires for wealth. If, indeed, Faustina were a rare exception, she might be put aside as also an abortion and anomaly. But in view of her wide prevalence, her daily increasing numbers, her recruits from every grade of the social scale, it is madness to close our eyes to the innate capabilities for evil she and her multitude of sisters display as lying within the soul and the scope of womankind.

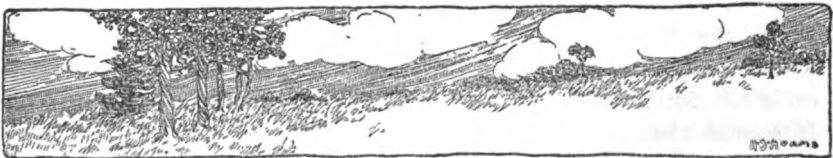
Sentimental social-reformers lament over the "incurability of vice," which they attribute to the brutal vices of men who change every Marguerite into a wretched wanderer of the streets and the gin-palaces. They would be nearer the root of the matter if they would attribute it—or at least one-half of it—to the fact that there is a vast mass of female life born into the world with a nature incapable of love for anything save gold, and instinctive in it a feverish revolt against the bonds of penury and of privacy. Marguerite flinging herself into a river after a long course of degradation in the hideous haunts of cities is a mournful and grievous sight indeed: but a thing infinitely commoner, infinitely more ominous and terrible, is Faustina in the full flush of her insolent youth deliberately selecting a career of license and of plunder because by it alone can she gratify her lust for dominion, her greed for wealth, and all her cold and pitiless sensualities.

We have declared that the shifting of all this burden to the shoulders of men is untrue to justice; and that, even were it much truer, it would

be exceedingly pernicious. We mean for this reason that the only possible floodgates against the overflow of immorality consist in the purity and the dignity of women. When ignorant young girls are told, as the social-sentimentalists tell them, that they are the deeply-to-be-pitied martyrs of a temptation to which it is almost an amiability in them to succumb, of course they will do so, and rely for their defense on the infamy of their tempters. Nothing on the face of the globe can be so ruinous to morality as these well-meaning enthusiasts, these dealers in piety and platitude who invent a thousand and one cut-and-dried excuses for the frailty of the one sex by the most exaggerated fury on the wrongdoings of the other; and who hold up every miserable, gin-soaked, foul-mouthed creature as the helpless heroine of a tender love-tale and an overweening attachment! In their eyes the man is always a huge wolf of mature age and merciless fangs, and the woman is always an innocent lamb led unconscious to the slaughter! Unfortunately for this pretty poetry, mothers of sons know that the relations are oftentimes just exactly reversed, that the female wolf seizes with brute-rage the yearling male whom she can fleece first and then devour!

No one who gazes wholly on Marguerite, and wholly forgets Faustina, can in any way do justice to the status of women in our day.

It will be inferred that we see imminent peril in all this. We certainly do—peril in the rabid desire for riches that is characteristic of it; peril in the hard, loveless sensuality abounding in it; peril even in the offenses to good taste perpetrated by it; peril in the feminine cry for political voice and place. The same desires in womanhood which abhor privacy and domesticity lead on the one hand to the suffragist, and on the other to Faustina and all her infamous sisterhood. We have traced the effect back to its cause: the cure for it will lie in such education of the women of the future as shall ennoble their thoughts, enlighten their reason, elevate their tastes, give them pursuits of intellectual purpose, and arm them against that lust for gold which is at once the paradise and the hell of modern civilization. The whole human race is involved in the results of the present revolt and reaction amongst women: if turned back upon itself by mockery it will burn and bite on unseen, and find its issue in mad sins, wild frivolity, and all the anarchy of voluptuous abandonment; if rightly met, if wisely guided, it may become the noblest and the highest revolution that has ever broken the chains of effete prejudices, and led out human souls from the darkness of ignorance into the light and glory of a day of liberty.



THE MOLLYCODDLE

By Augusta Kortrecht

Author of "The Little Fat Skeleton," "Big-I and Little-You," etc.

"**B**UT," cried mother, looking up from her needlework with a pretty air of triumph, "Charce dances better than any other boy in all the class, and that's manly enough, you know. And Miss Sallie Joy says——"

Father took both her hands into his, as he always did when he meant there was no use saying another word about it.

"Alice," he said, "my mind is made up, dear. The boy is strong and well now, and it's time he grew out of baby clothes. We don't want our only son to be a moon-struck angel-child, do we?"

"No;" mother's acquiescence was faint; then she asked slowly, 'as if almost afraid to hear the answer, "What do you think of doing with him, Mr. Abercrombie?"

"I don't know yet," said father. "You ought to see Billy Dunscomb's Tom! And Billy tells me he is sending him off to camp this summer. That young teacher fellow starts with a party of boys some time soon; and I was wondering if Charles——"

He got no further, for mother gave a cry and caught him by the arm.

"Oh, no!" she begged. "A big, rough camp! Why, Charce has always been delicate, and he's only seven! Please don't say such things even in jest."

"I am quite serious," father assured her gravely. "I have had something of the sort in mind for a long time, and the camp idea seems just what I wanted. If the boy only gave some sign of being a man at bottom, I would n't mind; but—heavens, Alice!—pardon me, my dear—he is growing into a mollycoddle, and something must be done."

Mother tried to smile, but did not succeed very well; and the conversation was postponed for father's evening leisure.

We lived on Shelby Street, where the houses were either brown stone or Colonial red brick, with magnolia trees in the deep front yards, and fragrant flower gardens to the side; and here, although it was nearly August, we still lingered in the city, because my parents could not decide when and where to go for our summer trip this year. It seemed that father preferred the North, while mother was quite

set upon the South. I was nine years old, and I knew all about the North and South. I wanted to see both places, regretting to hear they were so far apart. One was where you wore your combination flannels and carried a muff the whole year through, while the other, on the contrary, was so hot that you dressed yourself in aprons—pretty white ones, I pictured, with embroidered frills across the shoulders; in the North you ate whale blubber, and slept six months without once getting out of bed; and in the South you fed on cocoanuts, and sucked the poison from your faithful comrades' wounds every time the reptiles bit them.

That same night Charce and I lay in our little beds, he fast asleep, as befitted the hour and place—for my brother always did the proper thing at just the proper time; and I, fat Ellen of turbulent nature, entirely alive to all that happened round about. Our nurse, old Aunt Mandy, was putting away some things and getting out others in their place, moving very quietly, considering her great size and weight; and our parents were engaged in earnest conversation, while taking a good-night look at us. From their talk I gathered that something serious had come to pass since morning. There was a terrible sickness in a small town not far away, and it might reach our city next; almost any minute it might come—to Shelby Street—right into our very house. It was a fever.

Father had hurried up and completed all his plans. We were to leave to-morrow, and we were going to the North. The teacher with the camping party would be on the same train, and they would consult together and decide what was best to do with Charce. And wonder of wonders! We were not to go alone, as we usually did when hot weather drove us off a-travelling. Father meant to invite some one from the Orphum-House to join us. He said so.

"I must n't complain, of course," sighed mother; "the sisters out there will have more than they can manage at a time like this, and we ought to do what we can to help. But I hope it won't be Charley, Mr. Abercrombie. He teaches the children rough ways, I'm afraid."

"I want the boy roughened," persisted father; "and as for Ellen——"

He lifted the misty folds of my mosquito bar, and bent down for a moment.

"Look at her, Alice," he said tenderly, lowering his voice so as not to waken me. "She's like a little Botticelli."

Now, it was very soothing to hear my only father call me sweet names, especially as I was acknowledged an extremely difficult person by daylight hours; but my joy was short-lived, for Aunt Mandy came closer to the bed just then, and sniffed contemptuously at his words.

"Huh! A little pot o' jelly!" she repeated; and then added with

the easy familiarity my parents allowed her as a much-valued servant: "Is it a pot o' jelly what you done promulgate, Mr. Abercrombie? Dat chile lyin' dar? She's a heap mo' like snips an' snails an' puppy-dog tails, lemme tell you, sir."

"And what is Charles like?" inquired father.

"Lawsy, lawsy," responded the old woman promptly; "he's sweet as sugar—dess 'zackly like a girl. Dey ain't needer one ner t' other like what dey ought to be, an' dat's de good Gawd's truth. An' now you an' Miss Alice better git outer my nursery lickety-split, 'case I 'm goin' to bed right dis very minute."

Next morning all was excitement and hurry about the place. Mother had a dressmaker, and a strange tendency to weep whenever her eyes fell upon my brother Charce; Aunt Mandy had a toothache and a conviction that all the Abercrombie belongings needed sprinkling with evil-smelling disinfectant. Father came in looking worried and a trifle sheepish. *Two* Orphums had accepted his invitation to go away with us, instead of only one. But what could he do about it—poor little monkeys? And there was sure to be trouble getting off. Something was holding up the trains outside the city; something that had not been seen in our part of the world for twenty years; "quarantines," they called them, and men had taken shotguns and gone out in bands to see what they could do. Travelling would become more dangerous every day. I was thankful there was only one quarantine, and I hoped the brave men would catch it and shoot its head off before we started on our way.

A half-hour later father brought new tidings. The very last train out of town would leave at one-fifteen, and we must catch it, though the skies fell. *Everybody* was going then. The Austins and Miss Sallie Joy and the Billy Dunscombs—and even the *Buckinghams* would make the journey with us. Oh, yes, and they had offered to call at our house to take us to the station in their new automobile—the only one in town. When mother heard this she cried: "Oh, Mr. Abercrombie! With *four* children, and two of them——" and several little plans were straightway changed on this account. The second-prettiest linens, already laid out for travelling raiment, gave way to the very-prettiest, and plain black shoes to bronze ones. There were thousands and thousands and thousands of things to do, but we must get the train that left at one-fifteen.

At ten o'clock our guests arrived, accompanied by two stout valises; and we children were confined to the nursery that we might be out of everybody's way, particularly harm's, it seemed. One of the visitors was Charley, and the other was Ophelia. With the latter the house of Abercrombie held everlasting peace, but it did not extend to include Charley. Him I detested. I could manage other children,

but he stood out against me, and neither by blandishment nor by authority nor by exercise of Christian kindness had I yet conquered this stubborn spirit. I yearned to try it by matching my strength with his, but refrained because mother and Aunt Mandy and the Good-Lord—whose hints on etiquette and form for little ladies reached those two in some secret way—were set against it.

But we all loved Phelia. She was a soft, round orphan, with a wealth of downy, red hair curling over her head. She had also an ingratiating smile, which she used continuously, disclosing thereby a single front tooth, and that a shaky one. She was full of anxious care for her lonely dental ornament, having seen other pearls disappear, and feeling but scant faith in promises of new and better ones to come. For the rest, Phelia had a habit of repeating with a lisp the last words of every sentence that reached her ears, and in age was just half way betwixt my brother and myself.

We were very spruce and starchy in our travelling garments—brown linens for those that were orphans, and white for Charce and me; and were enjoined to be very careful of them, as there would be no further change of clothes that day, and we were to ride in the automobile with the Buckingham. Let us only remember that! Effie Buckingham had never been known to look crumpled or soiled or hot or ugly, and her mother was of nervous temperament which could not endure the slightest hint that there was a seamy side to life.

We studied each other in silence for a minute or two, and then I offered to recite a poem for the entertainment of the others; but Charley demurred. He had brought along a new game from the Orphum-House, it appeared, and my manners and instinct both told me there would be no joy in living until his mind was relieved of it. So I invited him to proceed.

The game was called Dutch Doll, and it soon developed that my part was to wait a long, long time on the back porch quite alone, while the others giggled together and were merry in the nursery. I waxed bitter and impatient as I heard them, and when summoned at last I went in with a rush.

The Dutch Doll sat plump on the floor, her back braced against my bed, very large and pillowy as to body, and very small and towely as to head. Charley, with a portentous frown upon his brow, kept a detaining grasp on Phelia's wrist, and that small maiden held her free hand before her mouth, as if the toothless gums might in some way betray the secret. For the very air reeked with challenge that there was mystery to be scented out. My brother was not in sight.

Charley introduced me to the Dutch Doll, and invited me to tell her "howdy," promising an answer. I complied grudgingly, but did not get the answer, which disappointment lifted my drooping spirits

greatly. "Huh!" I remarked with Aunt Mandy's own sniff, "it's nothing inside of her, only feathers."

Charley ordered me to look out a minute, and whispered a husky growl into the lady's lap. I distinctly heard him tell her she was nutty, and that he would break her slats. It was immediately effective, for the small head wagged to and fro at his command, and a muffled howdy came from somewhere about the Dutch Doll's person.

"Now, is it feathers?" demanded of me the lady's keeper, dancing about and poking his finger unpleasantly near my nose. Whereupon Phelia snickered, and took her hands off her ever-widening smile to goad me: "Now, ith it featherth?" She was laughing at my slowness! She, an orphum!

Charley capered about me. "Smarty!" he cried. "Tell her 'howdy' again and see."

There occurred to me a more direct way of solving the mystery. I flew at the Dutch Doll and kicked a bronze shoe right into her middle. She was not soft, as I expected, but hard, and there came instantly from her depths a plaintive cry.

Mother, of course, would have heard a whisper from that voice in the remotest corner of our big house, and she was with us before the wail had died away. "Ellen!" she said, with reproach in her accents. "When there is so much to do and so little time to do it in! Oh, Ellen, Ellen!"

But still less was there time for vain regret or righteous punishment. The Dutch Doll was dragged hastily asunder, and from her innermost pillows my brother was gathered up into tender arms. A blue lump was rapidly swelling on his forehead; his white linens were soiled and crumpled; distressful wonder was in his eyes, and tears flowed down his cheeks. Charce always solaced himself with gentle grief rather than with vengeance.

They set him in a big rocker, swathed in silk handkerchiefs and witch-hazel, with the new bust of Beethoven to make him happy; they set me on a small, uncomfortable stool, with the offending bronze shoe suspended about my neck to make me unhappy; and we were both instructed, he in tenderness and I in tones of discipline, to hold intercourse with no living creature for the next hour to come.

Charley and Phelia retired to the back porch and nothing was heard of them for perhaps ten minutes. Then the summer breeze, floating through the nursery door, brought with it a frenzied shriek. Another, more heartrending, followed hard upon. My mother came running, half dressed, anxiety written large upon her patient face. Aunt Mandy puffed up the stairs, her swollen jaw wrapped in bandages. I jumped to my feet unchecked, and even my brother joined the party to the rescue.

Outside Phelia was dancing up and down, first on one foot, then on the other, but by no chance on both at once. Her smart brown frock was stained with reddish splotches. Her mouth was open, though not in smiles, and in all the expanse of gum displayed there was no break of any kind. Charley had climbed, monkey-like, to the top of the wooden swing, and there he clung, looking down with unrestrained, spontaneous joy upon his features. From a long string he dangled something that was small and white, but plainly of exceeding value, for Phelia made toward it whenever it came within reasonable nearness, and each time in turn Charley snatched it high again. The tragedy became clear in a moment. It was the orphan weeping for her tooth!

When mother realized that not good bones but a mere heart was broken, she led the sufferer in and implored her to choose whatever the house afforded; and Phelia, after considerable pondering and the loss of precious moments, demanded the handkerchief from Charce's wounds, my father's watch, and my mother's lap, and would not negotiate on any other terms. Only the call to luncheon restored the vanished peace.

When we had finished a hurried repast, it wanted yet an hour till leaving time. Father had not returned from his last tour in quest of baggage wagon; Aunt Mandy was putting up hampers of fried chicken and bread and cake and olives—for fear, no doubt, we should not care for whale blubber during our sojourn in the North. Mother came into the nursery and spoke earnestly with us. She found it necessary to go down the street for a few minutes. She relied on us to be good—as good as if she were there in the house; she relied on Ellen more than on all the rest, because Charce was a little fellow, and the others were company. And we would *please* keep what slight freshness of appearance had not yet faded from us, because the Buckingham—

“Less play circus,” demanded Charley, as soon as we were alone. Of all things the game of circus would have most delighted me; but I remembered what mother had asked and I did not stir. One could not preserve one's looks for the Buckingham's delight while playing circus. The little ones, however, hailed the idea with exultation.

“I bid to be a dog,” cried Charce with unwonted boldness; “I bid to be a nice shamoodle dog;” then as Charley laughed he weakened and added in a hurt tone: “You know there is 'em, Ellen, 'cause Miss Sallie told me so.” And, “Mith Thallie told me tho,” repeated Phelia.

“Don't play circus,” I pleaded feebly. Their pleasure was so contagious that I fairly ached with sitting still. But they paid no slightest heed to my protest, and in a jiffy were pulling out the clothes-horse from the closet where Aunt Mandy had stabled it for the summer season, and a couple of rugs from the camphor chest, still unlocked

after the morning's packing. These they deftly turned into cages for wild beasts. There were but two compartments in the dens, and the shamoodle dog seized on one of these, and Charley made leisurely toward the second place, but halted to give me a parting thrust.

"I know why!" he jeered. "You're too fat to be an animal! But you could be the keeper maybe, Ellen. You could sit still then, and do all the work; scrub the cages, and shine up our tusks when they get stuck up with peanuts. You're a heap too fat to jump about."

I was sensitive about my stoutness, and his gibe struck home. Besides, I did not want to do the work of the menagerie. If they *would* play animals—and I had begged them not to, my conscience spoke loud within me—I wanted to be the biggest, the fiercest, the most remarkable, in all the show. I forgot how mother's pleading face had made me feel so sorry and so good. I threw myself down upon all-fours and began to grovel, shaking my body from side to side, and making queer noises—grunts and groans and snorts and snuffles. A sudden memory of father's words came like inspiration to me. "Oh, look, you-all," I cried; "look-a-here, what's this animal?"

Charce and Phelia were consumed with gratifying curiosity, but Charley stood aloof and did not catch fire as I could have hoped. I redoubled my contortions. "It can't nobody guess what kind of animal I am," I panted, quite out of breath with puffing and shaking.

Charce mildly guessed a Gypta-Cat and Phelia guessed another Gypta-Cat, but Charley volunteered no speculation. His indifference well-nigh maddened me. I came close to the two little ones and whispered in their ears the name of what I was. Charley pretended not to listen, but I was sure he tried to. He strolled toward the door. He was not going to play! He was retreating, whistling carelessly as he went and would n't take part in our game at all! There was little reward in lumbering heavily about before two infants like my brother and the toothless Phelia. I dashed awkwardly but appealingly after the vanishing one.

"Charley," I cried, "Charley, I'll tell you what I am. I'm a quarantine! They hold up trains, and they're the fiercest of all the animals, I reckon. There has n't been any caught for twenty years."

In my eagerness to hold him with us I rushed into self-sacrifice. "Charley," I besought him, "don't go away. Come back and you can play like *you're* the quarantine. There can't be only one."

He turned about, but not to join us. He was bursting with mirth!

"A quarantine!" he shouted rudely, with whoops of hilarious laughter. "Oh, look at Fatty! She's going to be a quarantine!"

Phelia looked from one to the other of us, and, clapping her hands across her mouth, joined her laughter to Charley's. Even my brother smiled and chuckled uncertainly at my expense.

I knew I was right about the word, for had not father himself said it with his very mouth? A thought came to me with overpowering conviction. If Charley and I were going away together for a summer's outing, one or the other must be acknowledged head and front, ultimate authority and unquestioned boss. Life would be unbearable on any other footing. There was no time like the present. For the moment I was free of limitations for little ladies. I was only a quarantine, a wild and savage creature. Neither prettiness nor Christianity could be expected of me.

I rose to two of my feet—those I was more accustomed to, and used with greater ease—and made in the direction of my guest and enemy. He was surprised but ready—pleased indeed—and we closed together. We whirled about and about until I was dizzy, but I never once let loose my hold. I got my hand into his hair and pulled it. I pinched his wrist. I wanted to *hurt* him. I wanted to make him cry with pain. I felt vicious, and I longed for visible signs of my nails and clutching fingers. I was getting the better of him! I was backing him down! Then of a sudden the passion left me, and I grew weak and trembling. I felt sick. A hotness ran through my veins and into my face and neck. I was ashamed and I was frightened. He was so big and strong and rough.

"Charley," I said, trying to slip out of his grasp, and turning my eyes from his face, damp with perspiration, and horrid with its fighting lust, "I'm not going to fight! Charley, don't!"

But Charley did, and again we were spinning around and around, so that everything was hazy before my sight.

"Don't," I begged; "don't, please don't! Ouch! You hurt!"

Still he did not let go, but some new force had come into the tussle. I did not know what or who it was. I was suddenly freed from all restraining grasp, and was flung rather violently away, falling into the clothes-horse and the nursery rugs. Phelia ran to me, and we two women-children clung to each other and cried a little, as we watched our menfolk strive to settle matters after an old, old fashion.

For it was Charce,—Charce, the Mollycoddle,—who had rushed into battle in answer to my cry! My brother—my baby brother—sugar and spice and all things nice! As I realized that my weakness had called forth his strength, the tears dried upon my cheeks and no others followed them.

Charley was taller and heavier, but Charce struck out with a simple purpose and an inspiration against which his opponent had no smallest chance. It did not last long. Charce got his slender arm in between the other's stocky ones, and punched him squarely in the nose. A spurt of blood spattered them both, white linens and brown impartially. Phelia screeched and hid her eyes against me.

My gaze, wandering for an instant, saw some one standing in the doorway. It was father! He was looking on, and he never said a word. I turned again toward the boys. Charley held advantage now. He had pushed my brother back to the wall, and kept him there with two hands planted outspread against the heaving little breast. But Charce's eyes blazed, and his head was high. Suddenly he reached out a foot and twisted it between the big boy's sturdy legs, and Charley came with a crash to earth, half bringing Charce on top of him.

Then Charce spoke for the first time. He straightened himself and looked down upon his fallen foe. His voice had a new ring in it, intense, full of meaning, manly. "I'll kick you in the slats," he assured Charley-fom-the-Orphum-House, "if you ever touch my sister. You're nutty!"

"Good! Good!" sounded from the doorway. "It was a fair fight, Charley, and you lost. You'll manage without the camp after all, Charles, I rather think." And father's satisfaction was very evident.

Mother's pleasant voice interrupted from below, warning us that the automobile had arrived. A laugh, ladylike and modulated, floated through the open window. No one but fastidious Mrs. Buckingham could laugh that laugh. They were waiting for us.

Aunt Mandy appeared, words of urging falling from her tongue, but at sight of us she stopped short, and, putting her hands on her hips, regarded the four battered and bespotted wretches with mute horror.

"Fo' de Good-Lord!" she ejaculated at length. "Ellen's at de bottom er dis, an' dat I know. Her evil passions done riz again. Nobody never went on a squshion yit but what she raised a 'sturbance!"

Tremulous appeal came from downstairs. The train that left at one-fifteen would not wait on our account. Would n't Mr. Abercrombie *please* come on? What could be keeping us when everybody knew——

Father caught Phelia by one hand and me by the other; Aunt Mandy drove the boys before her, making passes at them on the stairs with a bath towel she had dipped wholly into the water pitcher, and scolding loudly all the way.

Mrs. Buckingham's laughter, peevish this time, reached us again as we started down the broad flagged walk, and mother's voice in soothing reply. Then they looked up and saw our little band, and a great hush fell over them.

The expression on father's face checked what outcry might otherwise have greeted us, for none dared address Judge Abercrombie when he held himself like that. He apologized to the ladies with stiff and uninviting front. He was sorry to have kept them waiting, he said, but there was not a minute now for explanation. Charce and Phelia

were lifted in, and huddled down together, subdued and lamblike, with their gore scarce dried upon them. Aunt Mandy hoisted herself to the step, a volley of words still pouring from her mouth, and the wet towel slashing right and left about her.

Charley, however, surveyed the automobile with its fair and summery occupants for just one dubious moment; then he turned tail and fled whooping down the street and in direction of the Orphum-House. His words came back to us: "Aw, rats! I'd ruther take chances on the yellow-fever for mine!"

"Oh!" said mother in a very agony of mortification, the color suffusing her delicate face.

"Shucks! Miss Alice, I'll be bound I'll git him," promised Aunt Mandy, preparing to drop her large self from the step to give chase.

But father stopped her. "Let the boy go," he said authoritatively; "we don't need him any more."

With these enigmatic words he took me with him to the deep front seat, and while we were settling down he laughed as if he had a funny secret all his own. Then he leaned over me and instructed the chauffeur in a low voice not meant for any other ear than his alone:

"I would n't have missed the sight I saw for fifty trains at one-fifteen! But you'd better let her go now like the very devil, Jim."



THE ROAD TO YESTERDAY

BY MAZIE V. CARUTHERS

THE world is fair, blue skies o'erhead,
 My primrose path shows gay;
 And yet, betimes, I look behind
 And long with all my heart to find
 The Road to Yesterday.

Grass-grown and faint the path may be;
 No signs to point the way
 Except a kiss, a memory,
 A sigh, a sprig of rosemary—
 These lead to Yesterday!

What means To-morrow's unborn hopes,
 The fragrance of To-day,
 When once my heart's desire and need
 Is for the dim, sweet paths that lead
 Me into Yesterday?

A DESPERATE CHARACTER

By Owen Oliver

Author of "The School-Mother," "The Martyr," etc.

FIVE YEARS after John Harper was drowned, according to the log of the *Freeman*, I ran against him in a port of Britain beyond the seas.

I'd have passed him for John's double, though we were five and twenty years together, boys and men; but I noticed him start at the sight of me. When I took a good look at him, I knew the way that he walked, and the way that he half stopped, and the twist of his mouth, that he had when he was taken aback; and the little zig-zag cut on his temple; and I clapped my hand to his.

"John!" I cried. "Old man!" And I laughed with joy.

He shrugged up his shoulders; the right a little more than the left. I knew that trick of his, too.

"You are mistaken in me," he said politely. He had found the manner of a great gentleman, and, judging from his dress, he had become well-to-do; but the voice was John's.

I looked at him very hard.

"Yes," I said, "I am mistaken in you." And I walked on. He had grown too fine, I thought, for his old friends; and given himself out for drowned to cut off from us.

I had gone on for a matter of fifty yards, burning hot with rage, and never looking around; and then I heard his voice in my ear.

"Come with me," he said; and he took me to a grand hotel, where we had a room to ourselves up-stairs. He did not speak, even after the waiter had come and gone; only stood and stared.

"Well, Harper?" I asked; and he held up his hand.

"John Harper is dead," he said. "If you give me away you'll do murder; as was in my mind when you recognized me. . . . Well, I could n't do it. So I've got to trust you."

"Time was," I said bitterly, "when you'd have trusted me more living than dead."

"If it was only myself," he said, "I'd do it now; but—I'll tell you afterwards. Tell me about the old place and the old people first."

I told him what there was to tell. His father and mother were gone. His sister that he left with her hair down her back had married my

brother, and had a three-months-old baby that they'd named after him, John. She was happy enough, I told him, but they had a hard struggle; and he arranged that I should take them a hundred pounds, as if it was a present from myself.

"You won't give me away," he begged.

"I won't give you away," I promised; "but you'd best not tell me what you've done."

"Mate," he answered, very solemn, "if I can't trust you when you know the truth, I can't trust you at all. You're all of my old world that's left; and I would n't like you to have a wrong idea of me. I'll tell you."

He told me this story.

I was coming home in the *Freeman*, being carpenter, as you know. I mean the voyage when I was drowned or died of fever. I don't know how the captain put it down.

Just before we started for the home trip three passengers came aboard: two men and a woman. She was veiled and they carried her. I thought then that she was ill. I learned afterwards that she was drugged. She was an escaped Nihilist, and they could n't get her under the extradition treaty, so they'd sent the two ruffians to kidnap her. The captain told me about it when he ordered me to make the first officer's cabin on the boat-deck into a sort of prison for her.

"Like enough to throw herself overboard," he said. "Regular desperate character. The Lord knows what she has n't done."

She was n't very desperate to look at: a little, pale, pretty girl about twenty; soft black eyes and a lot of black hair. Sat with her hands across her knee and stared at nothing, while I did my work; left the food that they had brought and did n't touch it; and whatever she'd done I felt sorry for her.

"Best eat something, missie," I suggested, after a bit; and then she looked at me.

"Thank you," she said, speaking slowly, as if she was n't sure of her English. "I do not want to eat."

"If you do not eat," I told her, "you will die."

"They are taking me to die," she said; and I felt a shiver down my back. She seemed such a childish little thing.

"What have you done?" I asked; but she did not answer. "Something wrong, eh?"

"You might call it wrong," she replied; "but I call it right. No; not right. Only—only what had to be done. I call it that. You live in England, and you would not understand. I do not mind to die; only prison, and——" She shuddered violently. "Leave it that I can get out and die of the sea," she begged.

"I can't do that," I answered; "but I'm sorry for you, little missie."

"Missie?" she asked. "What is that?"

"It is what we call young ladies in my country," I explained. "What do they call you in yours?"

"Princess," she said.

"What!" I cried. "You a princess! Then they won't dare to kill you."

She laughed queerly.

"I shall just be ill and die in prison," she said, "if you will not let me drown in the sea. Will you not?"

I turned away from the look of her big eyes.

"I can't, missie," I said. "I can't."

I went on with my work for a bit; and she sat watching me with those great eyes of hers. They seemed to ask help more than if she spoke.

"I can't, missie," I said again, answering them. "I mean, your highness."

"Call me 'missie,'" she asked. "It's no use being polite when—but you mean to be kind." She sighed.

"I'll speak to the captain," I offered. "He's a good sort; best I ever had. Perhaps he'll let you go. I'd rather see you live, whatever you'd done. . . . Did you throw bombs? Or kill any one?"

"No," she said; "but I was—what do you call it?—belonging to the society who did. Suppose you saw your friends die, one by each? Suppose you knew that some one was making a list of more to die? What would *you* do?"

"It was men's work," I told her, "and they ought n't to have let you meddle with it. You're nothing but a child. Well, I'll speak to the captain. But not unless you eat and drink. Come now."

I coaxed her into eating and drinking. She was ravenous enough once she began, poor little girl.

I spoke to the captain at dinner-time and told him about her, and he listened patiently enough, as he always did, tramping about and muttering to himself.

"It's a beastly business," he owned, "but it is n't *our* business, John. They've squared the consul, and there's authority for it, though he did n't want a fuss; and the owners are squared through the agents. She's simply freight, so far as we are concerned. We have got to land them at Valetton; and the rest we don't know anything about."

"She's just a child," I declared; "a soft, little thing; about the age of that eldest girl of yours." He muttered some strong words under his breath. "Can't you run past Valetton?"

"We call at two more ports in their confounded country," he reminded me. "They'd board us then. If I were a single man, dashed if I would n't miss them all; but it's the sack; imprisonment, perhaps; and the wife and kids to starve. Look here! You don't understand. You're a single man. Those kids of mine *count* to me; and nothing counts beside them. Now you understand. I—I can't do it, John." He mopped his forehead.

"Put her in a boat off the coast," I suggested, "before we come to Valeton."

"Don't be a fool! Boats have to be accounted for; and one short would give the whole show away. And what would she do in a boat? Starve or drown."

"I'll go with her," I proposed.

He shook his head at me.

"Don't make an ass of yourself over a girl," he advised. "You could n't get off without others seeing; and, besides, what would happen when you came home—if you ever did? The sack for you and me; and a knife in our backs some time. It *must* leak out when you came home."

"Well," I offered, "I won't come home. I'll give up the old place and everybody, rather than have her done to death; that little girl."

"Don't make an ass of yourself," he repeated. "Not over her. She's a desperate character, mind. The Lord knows what she has n't done."

A desperate character! Why, she was nothing but a child. She smiled like one because I took her a box of chocolates that I'd bought when I was ashore; and she talked like a child while I worked; and played like a baby with a puzzle that I found to amuse her.

The men who had charge of her were seasick; and the captain said she might walk on the boat deck in the evening for exercise, if I walked with her. She was quite bright and cheerful then; and he came and talked to her himself for a time, but didn't stop long. It was more than he could stand, he told me afterwards, to hear her talk just like his eldest girl; and he made me take some of his furniture and put it in her cabin.

"In England," she remarked then, "you are kind to the prisoner who is to die; but she dies all the same."

"Oh, missie!" I begged. "Don't! I'd die instead right enough, if it was any use."

And then she gave me her little hand and called me her friend.

The next day there was a fearful storm; and half of our men were down with fever, and her two countrymen with seasickness. The waves smashed a boat and carried it away, and two men who were trying to secure it. The captain sent all hands who were n't down with

fever to the engine-room, to try to keep us going. I was on the bridge alone with him.

"I'll manage the helm," he offered, "and call if I want you. Go and talk to the little girl. She'll be frightened."

She was too sick to think much about fright; only once she asked me to let her jump overboard. It was so much better than what was before her, she declared. At last she fell asleep, and I went and talked to the captain.

"When we give her up," I shouted through the storm, "I drop overboard, mind you. It is n't men's work we're doing;" and he nodded and groaned.

"What's to be done?" he asked. "If we took her to England, she's in custody of those two men, and——"

"Kill them!" I roared; and I'd have done it!

"And then," he answered back, "in the end we'd hang; and no good done. My wife and children disgraced and to starve; and your old mother's heart broken; and her given up after all."

Now I know more of the world, I believe if we'd taken her to England and made a fuss in the press, we'd have saved her and been heroes. Still, there'd have been a knife into her, and perhaps us, in the end. They've a long arm in that country of hers; but I did n't think of all that then.

"Captain," I said, "look here. There's one boat gone, and two men. Who's to say anything if another boat goes and another man? Or if she got out—and jumped over, we'll say? Give me a boat and I'll take her; and never come back. You can swear me on the book. I'll be a dead man."

"And that you would be," he declared, "in this sea."

"It's going down," I told him; "and it will have gone down more before we get a boat off; and anyhow I don't care. I'll whittle the name off the boat, and they shan't bring it home to you ever."

"It's a dog's chance," he protested, "if we can get a boat off; and if we do it'll swamp, almost for certain. If she was n't such a child. . . . You're a good chap, John."

"The sail's in her," I said. "I'll go and get blankets and coats and rations."

I got everything ready, and he gave me a compass and explained the bearings, and how it was two hundred miles to land, unless I had the luck to fetch an island half way. He gave me a few pounds, and I took seven that I had saved, being a sparing man. (As luck would have it, she turned out to have a good bit more in her pocket.) Then I went and woke her.

"Missie," I said, "the gale's going down, and the deck's empty, except two chaps that I've squared. The captain's letting us off in a

boat, you and me. There's just a chance that we'll make land; and if we don't you're no worse off, do you see."

She pulled me under the light of the swinging lamp to look at my face.

"You'd give your life for me?" she asked.

"Any day," I told her.

"And no day," she said in her funny English, "would I take your life for me. Ah, no! . . . But, my dear friend!" She put her hand on my arm.

"Missie," I said, very solemnly, "you're not taking my life. You're giving me a chance as well as yourself. For the day we give you up, I drop overboard. If my word is n't enough—" She put her hand in mine and looked at me and smiled. "Well, you've my word. It's both of us or neither. Now come."

She bent and kissed my rough fingers; and then she came.

The sea had got calmer, but it was black and fierce and swollen. You know what it's like at the tail of a storm; and you'll know that the chance of launching a boat was about one in ten. Well, we had the luck. I slid down a rope with her in one arm, and holding me around the neck—and near mad at the feel of her little arms! The captain let go, and we plunged into the black sea. We nearly overturned when we came out of the lee of the ship, but righted, and I bailed out with her trying to help me. I put up a scrap of sail to steady us, and she stood it, being a big, stout cutter, and away we splashed. After a bit it calmed a trifle more, and we had n't to bail out. Then I sat at the rudder and she sat beside me, both of us in oilskins and sou'westers. She leaned against me, and when she fell asleep her head dropped on my shoulder; she a princess and I a common seafaring man. Well, I never treated her different from a princess, except that I called her "missie" and was kind to her.

We squashed away in the heavy water all that night. Near the morning the sea smoothed into a mill-pond; and then I dozed a bit; and when I woke it was broad daylight. She was still sleeping, lying against me with her head on my shoulder. Her little face was just a round in the sou'wester, with her black hair straying out a bit. I snipped a lock off with my scissors to keep; and I've kept it.

We wandered off our course a bit while I slept; and I could n't steer, because there was no wind. So I just sat still, not to wake missie. When she opened her eyes she looked dazed; and then she looked all round; and then she looked up at me; and then she smiled, and clapped her hands. It was "like a pic-nic," she said. She called it nic-pic! She got out our breakfast, insisting that she was to be "stewardess," and I must only sail the boat, and not interfere in her department. It was just tinned meat and biscuit and water. She said grace over it,

folding her hands and shutting her eyes, and looking like an angel in a picture. And they called her a desperate character!

We sailed on all that day in a light wind, seeing nothing but the round of the sea and the round of the sky. It was blazing hot, and I could get no shade at the helm, but I made her take shelter under the sail. I can see her now, with her laughing dark eyes, sitting there, and talking in her queer English. I smoked my pipe and listened and wondered what I'd do with her. For she would never dare to go back to her people, she said, or even let them know that she lived. It would mean death to them as well as to her.

"And now," she told me, "I do not like to die. I like to be in a boat with you better." She lay back with her dark head framed in the white sail and smiled happily.

"But how will you live?" I asked.

"Of course," she said, "I live while I do not die!"

"I mean—to live one must get money."

"Oh!" she said brightly. "We will make much money. You can work and I can paint and teach to play music. We shall be rich." She nodded emphatically. I noted her childish idea that we should be always together—princess and sailor man!

I took my nap in the day while she held the tiller. At night I wrapped her up and she slept in the bottom of the boat; and I sat and looked at the smooth water and the starry sky, and listened to the ripple of the water running by; and I made up my mind that I must try to get little missie settled among friends who would be near enough to her sphere to be far from mine.

Two days and two nights we went on; and on the morning after we saw an island like a black rock in a mist; and in the afternoon we sailed in. I wrenched off the plank that bore the name of our ship; and I said that we had escaped from the *Mary Hope* that had gone down; and the crew were mad with rum, so I had taken a boat alone with her. I was John Smith, ship's carpenter, I gave out, and she was a passenger, Miss Seymour. They did not speak English well enough to know from her speech that she was not an Englishwoman.

The island belonged to her country, and there was no communication except with Valetton. We thought it best to go there and try to get passage at once to England or to a British colony. We went in a little trading schooner, that took five days, and tried to find a vessel to take us away, but without success. In the afternoon a very tall man came into the room where we sat in a little inn.

"Well, princess?" he said; and she clung to me with a cry. He was the chief of police from the Capital, she whispered, and the cruellest man in the country. I got my hand to my knife; but he showed me a little revolver very quietly.

"Come," he said in good English. "That is useless. It can do you no harm to tell me how you escaped, and I may be able to make things a little easier for *you*." He nodded to me.

"It does n't matter about me," I said. "If you're a man, make them easier for *her*."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"The princess will tell you that I am not a man," he said, "but a fiend. But she will tell you perhaps that I am a fiend who keeps his word."

"You keep your word," she said—and she seemed to have grown from a child to a woman suddenly. "Give me your word to save him, and I will tell you."

"I will save him," he promised, "if I can."

I protested that I did not want to be saved without her; but she pleaded with me that she would die happier if I did not suffer for her. So I pretended to agree to satisfy her; and then she told him our story, making much of what I had done.

"You will save him," she concluded—they spoke in English so that I should hear. "You have promised."

"If I can," he qualified.

"You can," she declared. "You know you can."

He smiled slowly.

"How can I save him from himself?" he asked. "If you die, he will put himself in the way of death, I think. I should. I, too, love you, princess."

There was a dead silence. At last I broke it.

"If you loved her as I do," I said, "you would send her with me."

"Don't plead with him," cried missie. "You don't know him!"

He looked at her and then at me.

"*She* does n't," he said. "Yes. I must send her with you. There is, of course, nothing else to do. You will be safe here to-night. To-morrow I shall find a ship for you."

He bowed and went; and missie flung herself in my arms.

"He is playing mouse-cat with us, my dear," she declared—her English was always funny when she was excited. "In a few minutes I shall be taken from you. Love me till then."

I held her in my arms for hours, expecting the police every minute; but they did not come. I walked my room all the night, except when I listened outside her door, to hear her breathe and be sure that they had not taken her away. They never came. He came in the morning with disguises and took us to a ship. It was an English vessel, and when we were aboard missie believed him. She gave him both hands, and said something in their own language, with the tears run-

ning down her cheeks. He kissed her hands; and then she raised her face, and he kissed her forehead. Then he took my arm and led me aside.

"Now, my friend," he said—I am always proud to remember that he called me that—"we will have some man's talk. You understand that you and she must be dead to the world?"

"Yes," I said. "I understand."

"But it does not follow that you will be dead to me. I find out many secrets; and I am a desperate man. . . . Let me tell you why I came to Valeton. It was to meet the princess; to escape with her; or, if she would not escape with me, to let her escape, and then to die. My life is nothing; or yours, if she is concerned. You understand?"

"I understand," I agreed. How I liked that man!

"When they came in the ship with their story I made inquiries which they never guessed. I heard there was a ship's carpenter—that he was crazy over the princess. He had gone overboard in the storm—so had she. Also boats had gone. . . . Well, perhaps all went at the same time—perhaps not. *If* the ship's carpenter and the princess went in the boat, they must drown unless they reached a certain island. If they reached the island they must come here. I watched the boats. They came. I watched *them* for half a day. They loved each other. That was plain. If I had killed you, the princess would not love me. You understand."

"I understand," I agreed.

"What was more important, she would not be happy. If you cease to love her she will not be. Some women are like that. She is. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I said. "You will keep track of us; and if I am not good to her you will kill me."

"Exactly," he said. "It will be difficult to trace you, but——"

"No difficulty at all," I said. "I'll send you a line once a year, if you'll tell me how to do it safely."

He held out his hand and I gave it the best grip that I ever gave a hand.

"Mind," he said, "I'm a desperate character."

"So am I!" I told him. "So am I!"

And that's what they called *her*! Why, she's not much more than a child now. You should see her play with the baby!

I went and saw her. She reminded me more of a kitten than anything, *but*—well, if any one tried to hurt her John or her baby I think he'd find her a real desperate character! Women are like that—good women!

THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH

By Thomas L. Masson

Author of "A Bachelor's Baby," "A Corner in Women," etc.

"YOU have never told me anything about—your past," she said timidly.

A troubled look came over him. He realized that, although they had been engaged nearly a month, he had certainly been negligent in that direction.

"I suppose I ought to say something about it," he said.

"Promise—to tell me all."

"Do you mean that?"

"Everything."

He clasped her hands. The crisis had come.

"Dearest," he said, "I'll make a clean breast of it. Of course I realized that it had to come. Still——"

"Go on!"

"I've led a pretty hard life, I guess. In college there was a time when I did n't do much else but buck the tiger."

"What's that?"

"Well, it's playing poker mostly. I got in the hole pretty deep. Then, of course, I had my fill of drinking, carousing, late hours. I broke loose at last. You see, I had to, but it was pretty fierce."

"Did you stop?"

"Well, partly. Then I had love affairs—there were so many of 'em, you know, that it did n't matter. I was dropped once—then I braced up—got through. I spun around a little after that until I got to playing the ponies."

"Playing the ponies!"

"Yes—race track, you know. Betting on horses. But, thank heavens, I saw the folly of that."

"And you stopped?"

"Absolutely. You see, I came to myself. My character asserted itself. It was a hard fight, but I won. I wish it was n't there, dear. But I was bound to tell the truth. Tell me that it's all right. Tell me you will forget it."

"Have you told me all?"

"Everything. Tell me it's all right."

She looked at him with a troubled look.

"I suppose I shall have to," she said. "But—I thought you were a good deal worse than that."



THE MODERNS

BY ELSIE CASSEIGNE KING

THEY turn the night to a glaring day
 With their new deep-searching flame,
 And the great blue space where the wild winds play
 They shut from sight with a veil of gray—
 A smoke-dyed veil of shame.
 They hale the kings of the lower folk
 Each from his ancient hold,
 And they bind them fast with a galling yoke
 Till the blood is chilled and the spirit broke,
 And their fair birthright long sold.

O Mother Eve! O Mother Eve!
 The juice of the apple turns
 From the pure white wine that the new fruit bled
 To the spirit of Knowledge old and red,
 That burns and burns and burns!

They set their wings on a bending plank
 To fly o'er a muttering sea
 From the nether waves where Atlantis sank
 To the edge of the ice-worlds dim and dank,
 Where the sea-wolves howl to lee.
 They set their hands to grapple fire,
 And the devils that dwell below
 They harness fast with living wire,
 White-hot as the flame of their desire
 For the things they should not know.

O Mother Eve! O Mother Eve!
 In the turn of the seething years
 No god-like blood is in our veins;
 Only the juice of the apple reigns,
 And sears and sears and sears!

TEMPERAMENT

By Eleanor Mercein Kelly

Author of "The Girl Who Forgot," "A Friend of Jimmie's," etc.



"ZELIE, I cannot bear it one other moment!" The lady suddenly cast her cigarette one way and her novel the other. "Is this adventure? Is this excitement? Bah! In my own car there was at least room to breathe. To retire with the chickens at eleven o'clock—*bien*, it is perhaps the novel experience you promised, but it does not amuse. I am bored. I tell you I am bored! Insolent! Why do you not speak?"

The maid continued imperturbably to smooth the blue-black hair under her brushes into long satin strands. "It is perhaps three seconds," she remarked, "since Madame desired me to shut up."

The lady groaned. "If you were *simpatica*, if you were in the slightest degree—*zut!* What can one expect of a woman? My book, instantly! Do you not see that I have dropped it?"

"If Madame were to permit me to read to her," suggested the maid, "I perhaps——"

Her mistress snatched the book from her hands. "But certainly not! You have an accent unspeakable. Moreover, this is no reading for the unmarried. Zelie, I blush for you! *Ciel*, that persons who have such immodest thoughts rush to display them in books! It is astonishing. I should take them to confession, me. . . . You say that there is nobody out there in the car—nobody at all?"

"Four commercial travellers," repeated the other patiently, for the third time, "a fat lady who snores—oh, but horribly!—a very young gentleman in black (too young, Madame, as I have said), and a person with an infant."

"An infant—*bon!*" The lady clapped her hands. "Infants I adore. Run, Zelie, fetch me this child on the instant."

"But at such an hour! It is of a certainty sleeping."

"Then," said the lady cheerfully, "it is I who shall wake it."

Zelie returned empty-handed. "It wakes already," she reported. "It roars. The parent is distracted. Up and down she marches, up and down, while the wails of the infant rend the air. It is not, I think, an infant which Madame would enjoy."

"It should not be marched. It should be trotted," said the lady briskly, springing to her feet. "I will show her."

Zelie cast herself appealingly before the door of the state-room. "Madame, the costume!" she cried. "I beg of you to consider. The drummers—the young gentleman in black—picture to yourself how these will stare and stare!"

"It is possible," admitted the lady. She wheeled about to inspect herself in a mirror. What she saw was a gracious and deep-bosomed figure in a trailing robe of pale blue velvet, with here and there a hint of lingerie peeping forth. The bare feet were thrust into blue velvet slippers. The hair was folded Madonna-wise about the brow, falling in a heavy braid over each shoulder. The face was white, a trifle hollow in the cheeks, with a large, sweet, mobile mouth—not a pretty face, perhaps, but people rarely looked beyond the eyes to see. For they were wonderful eyes, gray and black by turns, shadow and fire.

A smile crept into them slowly. "*Ma petite,*" she said, tilting up the maid's chin till their lips met, "if you were as I, should you be very angry because the men stare and stare?"

Presently the very young gentleman in black emerged tentatively from the smoking-compartment, where he had retired to escape the wailing of the baby. There was blessed peace in the car, filled with a low, sweet humming. The boy stopped and stared, and if he had been Catholic would have crossed himself. A Madonna sat enthroned before him, draped in cloudy blue, rocking a child to and fro on her knees, and singing. It was like a flute heard far away. Her face bent low over the child, brooding and tender, and one little pink hand clung fast to a braid of her hair. The boy dropped his eyes. The concentrated stare of the four drummers seemed to him sacrilege.

She glanced up sidewise as he tiptoed by, and beckoned confidentially. "So many people breathing here—pah! It is—what you call?—stuffy. Will you not open windows on the other side?"

"I wish I could," he said regretfully; "but, you see, the woods are on fire over there, and the smoke is pretty bad."

"Ha! The woods on fire?" she cried. "Is it near? We are in danger, then?"

"No, no, not at all. It is far to the west," he hastened to reassure her.

"But of course! That would be too much luck," she said, sighing.

The boy laughed. "Oh, we are running at top speed to get out of the neighborhood, if that is any comfort to you!" And indeed the car was swaying and rocking very uncomfortably.

She patted the seat beside her. "Sit down," she said. "Sit down and talk, if you know how to talk. I am most horribly *ennuyée*. I cast myself upon your chivalry. Everything fails me, even this ungrateful infant. I come to amuse myself with him, and *voilà!* immediately he sleeps."

"Then you must be a magician," said the boy. "You have accomplished the impossible. Everybody has taken a try at quieting the poor little beggar, even I. But I believe," he added shyly, "that you never have any trouble making people do what you want them to."

She beamed on him. "Good! You *do* know how to talk. That is what I like. Compliments. And confidences. Let us be friends at once. Let us exchange experiences."

He tried to play up to her. "You begin," he said. "A fellow of twenty-two has n't had many experiences, you know."

She saw the sudden shadow in his eyes, and laid her hand on his black sleeve gently. "But you have had the best one—sorrow," she said. "It was the father, perhaps—no, the mother? Alas! Still, sorrow is the best experience, believe me. And now you go to the great city to make yourself a career—not?"

"How did you guess?" he asked.

She smiled at him wisely. "Painting? Music?" She picked up his hand to examine it closely. "No," she decided. "Nor the stage, I think. Then it is literature. Good! You are a poet."

The boy's hand was thrilling from her touch. "No, not a poet," he said, with a rather unsteady laugh. "Just a journalist. A terrible come-down, is n't it? But some day, perhaps——"

She nodded. "The stepping-stone, eh? First one lives, then one writes."

"Well, I suppose you've got to live if you expect to write," he admitted facetiously.

But the lady chose to misunderstand him. "You have got to live if you expect to do anything," she cried. "Write, sing, paint, act—oh, we must allow our own hearts to throb before we can make to throb that so-cold heart of the public! *Pouf*, such a public! To take its emotions out of books or the play-house, like medicine out of a bottle! And we must suffer everything, we others—grief, pain, passion, sin, remorse, everything, that the public may observe and clap its hands. *Eh bien!* I would not be a public, me. To look on, always to look on—how that is stupid! I am not afraid to live."

"Nor I!" cried the boy, his eyes kindling to hers. "Only—only I don't just know how to go about it."

"I will tell you. Begin by loving. End by loving. It brings all the rest. Love when you can, whom you can, how you can. To be out of love is to be dead. Are you married?" she demanded.

The boy shook his head, staring at her, fascinated. It seemed to him that he was already beginning to live.

"*Bon!*" she said. "For women it is the necessary experience. For men, no. Do not marry."

"But I am engaged," he admitted. "There is a girl at home who promised to wait for me."

The lady snapped her fingers. "What of that? *You* are not bound."

"I am afraid I am," he said. "You see, I—I kissed her good-by."

She laughed merrily. "Naturally! But of course! Oh, amusing one, how many there will be whom you kiss good-by! But this girl," she said seriously, "is she of us? Has she temperament?"

"I never thought about it," confessed the boy. "She is pretty. She likes to sew, and cook, and—that sort of thing."

The lady made a contemptuous gesture. "Never go back," she said with finality. "You have nothing to gain from her. Sew and cook—ha! *She* cannot make of you a poet. See! Already you are not certain that you love her. Am I right?"

She leaned toward him, letting him look deep, deep into her eyes, her hand laid lightly on his.

"You are right," he stammered incoherently.

At that moment the train, with one loud shriek from its engine, came to a sudden stop. Everybody woke up and demanded to know what had happened. "At last an accident!" cried the lady gleefully; and, depositing the child in its mother's arms, she went forth to investigate.

They had stopped in the midst of deep woods. There was a glow in the western sky like sunset, except for the pall of smoke that trailed below; and over the puffing of the engine a dull roar could be heard, a snapping, crackling roar, mingled with the crashing of timber.

"Observe!" said the lady, pointing. "You have told me fibs. It is not far away at all, that fire."

The train started with a jerk, and the conductor, swinging himself up beside them, stood for a moment on the platform, frowning toward the flaming sky.

"Well, well?" said the lady, tapping her foot. "Am I not to be told what is the matter?"

He turned as at the voice of authority. "Beg pardon, miss. It was just a family of settlers who stood on the track, you see, so we had to stop or run over 'em. We certainly would n't have stopped otherwise. That's a lot nearer than I like," he explained, nodding toward the west.

"But why," demanded the lady, "did the family of settlers endanger their lives by standing upon a track?"

"Why, they waited too long and got burnt out, poor devils! Lost everything—crops, house, cattle, even the pig and the watch-dog."

The lady was pulling rings from her fingers. "That is very sad," she said. "Here, and here, and here. These will buy plenty more of pigs and watch-dogs, *hein?*"

The conductor stared open-mouthed at the glittering jewels in his palm. "Why, madam!" he gasped. "You—you wish me to take these diamonds for——"

"Pigs and watch-dogs," she said, nonchalantly waving him away. The conductor vanished, still open-mouthed.

"Oh!" breathed the boy. "You are splendid! You are like a queen. I want to be one of your subjects. May I?" and he caught the ringless hands to his lips.

"La, la, la! Do you hear?" she appealed to the surrounding atmosphere. "Already this youth makes love to me, and I do not even know his name."

"It is Thomas——" he began, but she interrupted.

"*Bon!* That is enough. I shall call you Tom-mee. It is a nice name, Tom-mee. It fits;" and she patted his cheek affectionately.

The boy followed her into the car with his heart thumping. But his plans for a further tête-à-tête were frustrated. The car was filled with wide-awake passengers in various stages of undress, all at the windows, watching that ominous glare in the sky. The menace had become plain to everybody. The roar of the flames could be heard distinctly above the rattle of the flying train. Great sparks shot toward them over the doomed forest. In spite of closed windows, people were coughing with the smoke. Once the conductor came through with words of reassurance, belied by the strained anxiety of his face. "We'll make it all right! There's no real danger. We are getting every pound of steam out of the engine and ought to reach cleared land in fifteen minutes, if all goes well."

People stared at each other. If all goes well! Zelig produced a rosary, and began to patter prayers under her breath. The lady slipped her hand into Tommy's, and he clasped it tight, urging her not to be frightened.

"Frightened?" she said with a long breath. "But this is *mag-nifique!*" and suddenly in the tense silence of the car, she threw back her head and began to sing. It was a strange song, wild and defiant, such a song as a Viking may have chanted as he sailed into battle. The passengers listened, amazed, with pulses thrilling, forgetting their fear, forgetting the peril that crept closer with each moment—listened until the last ringing note died away. Then one of the drummers sprang to his feet.

"Now I know her!" he cried triumphantly. "Ladies and gentlemen, we have just had the privilege of hearing——"

A frightful grinding of brakes drowned his voice—there was a crash—the car reared on end—then silence. Silence and darkness; through which a steady, crackling, rushing sound gradually penetrated to the ears of the boy.

He opened his eyes with a great effort, dimly realizing that there was need to hurry. He struggled to rise, but a weight across his body held him down, and there was a stabbing pain in his left side.

"Can somebody help me, please?" he called faintly.

There was no answer, not a groan, not a sigh.

"My God! Is everybody killed?" he cried, choking as a breath of smoke filled his lungs.

Smoke! Suddenly he remembered. They were fleeing from the forest-fire, and in the confusion he had been forgotten.

"I don't blame them," said the boy stoutly. Then, because he was a boy, he put his hands over his eyes and sobbed.

"Tom-mee! Oh, Tom-mee! Are you here?" The voice came faintly from somewhere beneath him, it seemed. His heart stood still for a moment. The lady! They had forgotten her, too, the miserable curs!

"Don't be frightened," he called loudly, struggling with the weight on his body. "I'm here. Don't be frightened."

"*Bon!*" said the voice, nearer. "But why do you not come out? I now crawl in to see."

In a moment he felt hands on his face. "But you are sticky! You bleed!"

"Just a little cut on the head—please don't faint," he begged her.

"I have no time for such nonsense as that," she said briskly. "First I shall remove this pile of baggage that sit upon your chest."

"You'll strain your back!" he protested. "Where are all the men?"

"The men?" she laughed. "Aha, those noble animals are scampering down the track like mice! The conductor has said everybody is safe. *Bien!* they are content. Shall they doubt the word of the conductor? Never! Therefore I return alone. *Pourquoi?* Because I know that if you are safe, you are at my side."

While she talked she was pulling and tugging and pushing, till at last he was able to sit erect.

"Now come! Crawl downward through this window—see? It hangs over a little muddy ditch, where you must wriggle on your *estomac* like a worm. So! *Aie*, what a squeeze—I thank Heaven that I am not a tenor," she panted as she emerged beside him.

The boy, rather dazed from loss of blood and the pain in his side, stood for a moment staring about him. A strong wind blowing from the east kept the worst of the smoke away from them, but it fanned the flames as bellows fan a hearth-fire. Through the long aisles of the forest he saw them coming, leaping forward with a roar of triumph upon each new victim, clinging to it as it writhed and twisted in agony like a sensate thing before it crashed headlong. The blistering, stifling

air was hard to breathe. A rabbit bounded by at his very feet, unafraid because of the greater peril behind; and down the track he saw other little wild things of the woods, all hurrying toward safety.

"Quick!" cried the lady, tugging at his hand. "The clearing may still be far. We must run."

"You are sure everybody else is out?" he asked, with a shuddering memory of his own moment's despair.

"Yes, yes. You see what a silly little wreck it was, with only one baggage-car smashed. Stupid!"—she stamped her foot at him. "Do you not know this smoke is bad for my voice? Come instantly, or I leave you."

Even as she spoke, from the pile of wreckage in the ditch a faint moan reached their ears. They stared at each other, paling. Then she glanced over her shoulder, and caught at his arm with a gasp.

"Look! *Mon Dieu*, we have already waited too long!" She was pointing behind them, to where the fire had leaped the track and was bearing down toward them, a solid wall of flame.

"Run—I will follow," muttered the boy, trying to jerk away from her. But she held to him frantically.

"What can you do alone?" she wailed. "You are injured, weak, and I am but a woman. We have a right to our lives. Tom-mee, I am frightened! Will you not come with me?"

"Dear," said the boy, "how can I?"

Her eyes dilated. Suddenly she flung both arms about his neck and kissed him full on the lips. "You are a man, a man!" she exulted. "I love you!"

The boy clasped her close for a moment before he put her away. It was the greatest moment of his life. "Now go," he said.

The little moan came again, several times, sounding terribly like the whimper of a child. The boy worked like a madman. Once he paused a moment, panting, to ease the pain in his side.

"Drink," said a voice at his elbow, and a cup of water was thrust into his hand.

"You! My God, you!" he groaned, pushing at her. "Why don't you go?"

"Dear, how can I?" she mocked, very tenderly.

For an instant he was tempted to seize her in his arms and run, away from this hell of heat and smoke, down the track to the open fields and safety. But the little moan came again, close now and very faint.

At the last they worked together, silently, desperately, tugging with frantic strength at the wreckage of trunks, barrels, boxes, till finally they uncovered a crate which contained the still warm body of a setter dog. Then they turned toward safety.

"Only a little farther," encouraged the woman. "Try, Tom-mee. For my sake, try!"

He staggered on a few steps, her arm about him, before he fell to his knees. "I can't!" he sobbed. "I'm played out."

"*Dieu!*" whispered the woman; but aloud she said cheerfully, "And I also. We will rest a moment, *hein?*"

He lay with his head in her lap, straining his eyes up to her face with its brave smile. "Did you mean it—when you said you—loved me?" he panted.

For answer she bent over and kissed him again.

"Ah-h!" he laughed deliriously. "Then we *must* get out of this. Come!"

But she held him fast. "Rest a little longer, my Tom-mee! There is time. You are so weak."

"Some day we'll laugh at this," he babbled. "We'll come back here, you and I, and build a little cabin in these woods—if there are any left. Shall we—you and I together? Shall we?"

"It would be very sweet," she whispered, smoothing his hair.

They got only a little farther before he had to rest again. "You did not promise," he said when he could get his breath.

"Promise what?"

"To marry me."

She smiled at him oddly.

"You—you are not married already?" he cried, in quick fear.

"Not at present," she said demurely. "But such a foolish Tom-mee! What is it you love, then—me, or your idea of me?"

"I love the woman who mothers sick babies; the woman who does not desert a comrade in danger, who can work side by side with him, like another man, to save——"

"*Zut!*" she cried. "It is as I thought. That is not me! That is mood, impulse, temperament—what you will."

"Whatever it is, I want to marry it," said the boy.

"And the girl who cooks and sews? It is perhaps an hour since you were about to marry her."

"Thank God for that hour," he said earnestly. "For now I know that I would rather die here, like this, with you in my arms."

Suddenly she hid her face on his breast with a little frightened sob. "I think, Tom-mee, that you will have your wish," she whispered.

There was no time to rest after that. Flames were reaching after them in great leaps, like hounds that sight the quarry. They fled down the interminable track, stumbling, staggering, the breath whistling through their clenched teeth. Once he slipped to his knees, but she dragged him up again.

"Leave me!" he begged; but she only smiled.

As they stumbled on again, he slipped off the ring he was wearing and gave it to her. She kissed it and put it on the third finger of her left hand; then, unclasping a bracelet from her wrist, she clasped it about his. The boy's face was radiant.

Almost at the edge of the clearing, a hand-car, spinning to the rescue, came upon a desperate, exhausted woman struggling to drag a man's body down the track by its heels.

The boy, in a hospital, waited very patiently for his lady to come and find him. Broken ribs and exhausted nerves take a long time to mend, and the days seemed endless. He could send no word to her, for in the stress of that dreadful night he had never thought to learn her name. There must be many Tommies in Chicago, he knew. But he did not worry. She would find him now as she had found him then. Love would guide her.

Once he thought rather wistfully of the girl at home. How she would hurry to him if she knew! How soothing her quiet voice would be, and the touch of her cool little hands! Her eyes were so sweet and blue, too, like a child's—but suddenly two very different eyes burned into his, deep, gray eyes of shadow and fire; and the boy, with a passionate gesture, lifted the bracelet he wore to his lips.

At last, as he lay in the twilight dreaming of his lady, the door burst open and her voice came in to him, borne on a delicious fragrance of flowers.

"But what a gloom, what a darkness! Nurse, quickly make many lights, if you please. Is he not to see me, then? Aha, my Tom-mee! I arrive. Behold me!"

He was speechless, but his face spoke for him. She turned with a jubilant laugh to Zelig behind her, and, seizing masses of roses, violets, and orchids from her arms, she scattered them over his bed.

"You see, it is to you I bring the fruits of my harvest," she cried. "*Dieu*, what a week! What houses, and how they rose to me! Everybody adores me—*n'est ce pas*, Zelig? Never have I sung as now. It is because I love again. Embrace me! Zelig, go away."

"I thought you would never get here!" sighed the boy.

"And I," she murmured regretfully. "So many parties—the luncheon, the dinner, the tea-drinking—everybody wanted me, you see. *Enfin*, I run away from all these people to tell my Tom-mee good-by."

His heart contracted painfully. "You—you are not going away?" he stammered.

"To-night, *mon cher*. First to fill a second engagement in New York, and then to Paris—at last, at last to my Paris!"

"But what about me?" said the boy dully.

"It is for you to get well instantly and follow." She patted his cheek. "Aha, but we shall amuse ourselves well in that little old Paris!"

"I had n't thought of going abroad just now." He flushed a little. "You see, I could n't very well afford it. I've got a position here. Would n't—would n't you be happy with me in America?"

"I? In America?" she protested. "What a thought! One comes to America to make money, not to be happy."

There was a sudden fear in the boy's eyes. "You have n't forgotten what you said—that night?" He caught at her left hand. His ring was still there.

"Foolish one!" she chided tenderly. "Of course I remember. How we kissed and clung, two frightened babes lost in the wood! It was very silly and very sweet. I said—what was it I said, Tom-mee?"

"You said that you—loved me," whispered the boy. "You promised to marry me."

She burst out laughing. "No! Is it possible? La, la, la, what an old fool am I! It is true that I love you, my friend. I am quite mad about you. But marry? No, no, there has been enough of marrying. Three husbands, five children—truly I have earned a vacation. Besides"—she leaned over to stroke his hair—"I love you too much to marry you, my Tom-mee. I am the devil to marry. Ask my husbands!"

Chill after chill shook the boy. "You were playing with me, then? You were playing with me?"

"Playing? At such a moment?" she reproached him. "Consider the situation, my friend—death approaches, no help to be seen, in my arms a beautiful youth who adores me—ah! Am I a clod, a stone? No! I am a woman, me, a woman of temperament."

The boy was struggling to drag her bracelet from his arm. "My God!" he cried. "D—n temperament!"

Presently, through swimming senses, he became aware that she was bathing his face with a wet cloth. "There, there—you are better now," she crooned over him. "But what a poor, pallid Tom-mee! I think you must send for the girl who likes to sew and cook. It is possible that she likes also to nurse, eh?" She held out toward him the jewelled bracelet he had flung at her. "Will you not give her this, from me, for a wedding-gift?"

"I would not let her touch it!" gasped the boy, shrinking away.

"So? I am sorry." Her voice was like a grieved child's. "I shall keep the little ring, Tom-mee, because I love you."

He thought she was gone at last; but she put her head in at the door to add wistfully, "And you have just the look and the years of my favorite son!"

AND AWAY THEY GALLOPED TOGETHER

By Will Levington Comfort

Author of "The Viper," "Lady Thoroughbred, Kentuckian," etc.

A cowboy riding the range with the herd
Dreamed of his rancher's daughter.
To his mates he said not a single word;
Just brushed his hair—and sought her.

The Western girl had a heart of steel;
She liked the style of her lover.
She told him, "I'll stick, come woe, come weal—
But we'll have to vamose under cover!"

The cowboy whistled a lively tune
(His heart was light as a feather).
The girl rode out in the dark o' the moon—
And away they galloped together!

WHICH is brief and true so far as it goes, but the rest of the facts, and they are lively enough, can't be cramped into verse. The cow-puncher, Tige Galway, was a gaunt young man who had grown up less in schools than in the silent places. He had a way of his own, which is a peculiarity of men who have inner substance enough to keep them from going mad in the midst of the aforementioned silent places. This Tige had regarded the person and lines of action of Miss Kitty Tingle for many long months with prayerful solicitation and brooding regard. Who knows what interstellar spaces he filled with his dreams of her when he rode the night ranges?

As to the things which passed in the hour when he went to the girl and won, no one knows. That is a sealed document. It is a fact, however, that Tige had never spent an hour with her before; a fact—sit tightly here, all you world-jaded—that Tige had never spent an hour with any desirable, or even possible, young woman, in his life; a fact, moreover, that the man was slow of speech and plain; also bleak, rambling, and unpainted as to outward building. But Tige carried the citadel.

Now, to the father, Tingle, himself. The old man planned to be in on all matters which pertained to the ranch and his daughter's

romance. His chief-herder, at the hour of midnight, a black hour, reported a pair of good ponies missing from the corral; also Tige Galway missing from the herd, the beef-stuff in this certain section being without a monitor—on their own recognizance, as it were. Then Tingle discovered *nothing* in the throne-room of the ranch-house, where his daughter should have been.

The old rancher sat down by the big door that looked out on the corral. Deep dark outside, but he could see the huge pointed stakes, because he knew they were there. He swore. He swore again. Then he boiled up from his toes to his brain-coils, which went dizzy for a moment from the steam. He was a *man*—this Tingle—a state-builder, a man who had *shown* his enemies and treasured his friends. He had drawn guns quickly in old days; he had stood by half-dead brother-fighters when the red lines of the Sioux had closed in on three sides. Of late his life had been still and sweet—intro- and retrospective, with a gorgeous girl growing before his eyes into an ineffable replica of her mother's memory. A crude man, this Tingle, but a big one.

And Galway, the least and last of his herders, had taken his girl away!

Tingle swore again. It was only his lips that swore. His heart was a ferment of tears and rage. He arose and went out. The chief-herder was standing at the far-end of the veranda, waiting for orders.

"Have that wolf-eatin' roan saddled for me," the old man ordered quietly, "and Rockin'-horse Slim's best pony. . . . Slim's in the bunk-house, ain't he?"

"Yes, he's on days."

"Wake him up. I'll take him along because he *hates* Galway so! . . . No, I don't need no one else. We'll get 'em—and we'll get 'em quick—before they get to the preacher at Specklin's! . . . My girl will lead the way to a preacher—or there ain't no God in Israel! . . . Run, dammit! Bring in the hosses and Slim!"

There was a squeal and a struggle in the corral. Rocking-horse Slim appeared on the veranda, buckling his belt. Until the horses were brought he seemed to sleep against a post, this high, hulking fellow with a maiden's waist. Two men held the Wolf-eater while Tingle mounted. Slim slipped over his pony, and the two sped away famously.

"You hate this here Galway, don't you?" the old man called back after miles.

"Sure," replied Slim.

"All right," sang Tingle, and his roan seethed beneath him.

The trail to Specklin's, which was a baby-town, twenty-seven miles from the Tingle ranch, was rough as the words of men. It wound

and climbed and dipped. There were ravines and hills; fords and bridges. By day, it kept the eyes of man and mount busy; and now in thickest night Tingle's roan was taking it like a boulevard—that mad obsessed roan, which Slim had once thus characterized: "He's so fast that his tail fringes; so mean that he sweats acid; so thin that you have to blanket him on a windy day to keep the hay from blowing out."

And Slim, by the way, was having some confusion. He rode a light-limbed mare, very good in her way and enduring, but not demoniac at all—so she was feeling pangs of the flesh now. Slim knew what the mare could do; knew that she was doing her best, and he did not rowl—but Tingle on the roan was *growing* away from him. Slim had a six-shooter that ached, now that the quest was Tige Galway. Frankly, this mild wasp-waisted fiend, Rocking-horse Slim, did n't want the old man to get to Tige first!

Meanwhile Tingle was straining forward in the saddle with a limp bridle-arm, and the Wolf-eater was doing the rest. He did not know when the fleeing pair had left, nor how fast they rode, but he knew that man and horse could do no more than he and the roan. . . . The old man sensed the approach to Garrison Gap, and he had heard that the bridge was bad.

The Wolf-eater felt the curb for the first time and shook his cadaverous head. His shoulders and legs stiffened in protest. The roan loved abandon—had almost begun to love the man who had given him the night and the wild to play in. The old hates came back now with the curb, and he snorted and dripped and trembled at the first plank of the bridge.

Specklin's was but three miles away. Slim was a mile behind. Old man Tingle heard voices. He could not leave the roan and retain his mount. He would scarcely have dared dismount, save that the monster had done twenty-four flashing miles. The voices came from the Gap, not from ahead across the bridge. The roan suffered himself to be led to the edge of the trail on the right; then dropped his head to blow a bit. The old man leaned over.

"Oh, no, Tige," her voice wailed as in deep pain; "I'm not sorry I came. I love you, but the night is passing! . . . You know we were to be to the preacher's house to-night! . . . What will people say? What will father—?"

"But the bridge is rotten! We can't cross the Gap without light!" Galway's deep, slow voice trailed up to the listener. "How could I know the bridge was n't working? Suppose I had n't grabbed you when your horse went through? . . . I'd have been left alone to shoot my fool head off—that's all. . . . Listen here, Lady, we'll sit right where

we are till the light comes. Then I'll make the Gap on foot and bring a wagon. We'll get to the preacher *pronto* then."

"But we're not married—and the night—and my father!" her voice faltered.

"I'll meet him man to man, as I should have done in the first place!"

The words reached the old man strangely. There was a pause. The miles had whipped the roan for a moment, and he waited limp upon the hand which held the rein.

"But we ought to be at the preacher's!" she wept.

Tingle, hearkening eagerly above, now heard Tige Galway's voice grow stern and quick. The father's heart went out to the man in trouble below.

"Listen to me, Kitty!" the voice commanded. "I say, listen to me—look here! We've got to wait for light, for me to get over the Gap. There's no other way. And say, I want to ask, if you're not safe for the last couple of hours of one night with the man you're going to marry, who in God's name are you safe with?"

Just at this instant the roan raised his head and whinnied like a cascade of sounding brass. He had heard the patter of Slim's mare far back on the trail. There was a scream from below and Tige's steady voice:

"Who is it?"

Tingle replied, adding coldly, "And what are you two doing down there?"

The girl answered frantically, "Oh, father, we were trying to cross the Gap in the dark! My horse went through the bridge, and Chester's——"

"Who's Chester?"

"That's me," said Tige.

"Come up here. I want to talk to you," commanded the old man.

"I can't leave the lady in the dark on this ledge, and we can't climb back until daylight."

"I've got business with you——"

"Which will be transacted in the first light of morning," said Tige, and he added angrily, "Say, look here, you've got this lady crying. I don't allow anybody to do that—not even her father! To-morrow is my wedding day, or else I sit for a coroner! In the mean time you talk pretty or keep still!"

Just now Slim rode in, stepped off his mare, and sized up the situation.

"Shall I go down and get him, sir?" he asked.

"No; he'd kill you climbin' down, you mad dog," said Tingle impatiently. "Keep tight, and let me think!"

Slim quietly took the roan from the old man's hands and tethered him out with his own lariat. The mare stood dutifully by the hanging rein. Then the two sat down together on the trail. There was a sound from below of low sobbing and Tige's clumsy whispering. The sobbing gradually subsided as the dawn began to make ghastly the white sand of the trail and cavernous the break in the bridge.

"I'm coming up," Tige Galway yelled suddenly, "and I'm leaving the lady below for a minute on the proposition that there's to be some shooting!"

The dead-white of the half-born day was in the air, but it was night below from whence the voice came. The old man did not rise, but he rubbed his hands together. Slim stepped back toward his mare with hand to holster.

"Don't hurry, Slim," Tingle called low to him.

Galway's face appeared over the cliff—a nervy, unbeatable face. There was no sound from below—a Western girl's silence in the midst of the animosities of her men. This silence was tearing the heart out of her and the father knew it.

Tige gained his feet, looked slowly from the man on the ground to his old enemy, Rocking-horse Slim.

"Tige," said Tingle slowly, "why did n't you come to me and ask for her. I'd have turned you down, but why did n't you come?"

The strain of the woman broke and the answer came up from below with quick intensity:

"Father—father! It was I who told him that we must run away to be married!"

Tige waved his hand deprecatingly. The old man looked hard at him a last time. "All in all," he said with slow finality, "I think the little girl down yonder has chosen her male better than I could. We'll see you over the Gap and then go back to the ranch. Come home when you get through your honeymoon. Do you need any money?"

"Thank you, no," said Tige.

The pair were safe on their way and Slim was untethering the roan.

"My mare looks pretty well blowed," he said.

"Well, we'll take her back easily," replied Tingle.

The two horses were together on the trail. The roan whiffed the mare's neck contemptuously and raised his head. She brightened.

"Did I hear you remark that Tige Galway was n't game?" the rancher questioned when they were in the saddle.

"No," drawled Slim; "I only rose to remark that certain opinions of his were a different breed from mine."

THAT DENIED "GIFTIE"

By Mella Russell McCallum

"I SHALL write a story about each of my five best friends," said the woman. "No fault, no virtue, shall be withheld." So saying, she told them her intention and set about the task.

Now, the woman had wit, and the stories found ready publication. Whereupon the five friends read them and hastened to their author.

Said the first: "My dear, you are the cleverest thing in the world. Your story about me is simply great. Still, I must confess that I am disappointed to find that, in spite of all our chummy school days together, you really know so little of my true self. Think how we used to pour out our hearts unreservedly to each other! True, you give me credit for good that I did n't suppose I possessed, but when you hint at 'an overdone streak of sensitiveness' you are entirely wrong. I pride myself on not being sensitive, and it has hurt me more than I can ever say—especially since I am the only one you blundered over. I don't believe I shall ever get over it."

"A good story," nodded the second, a man of seventy. "A most excellent bit of fiction. I'm proud of you, my dear—proud to have been the friend, I may say, the lifelong friend, of your family. You will pardon me, however, if I call your attention to the fact that there are a few slips and errors in your delineation of me such as I do not find in any of the other stories. For instance, your allusion to my being fussy and old-maidish. All my life I have heartily detested that characteristic in a man. But of what moment are such slight errors? It has been a profound joy to read the tale. I shall fashion it into a little booklet and place it at the left side of my ink-horn—the *left* side, my dear, in order that I may be always facing it as I work."

The third friend began with a strenuous handshake. "Bully for you!" he cried in ringing tones. "It is n't every fellow that suddenly wakes up on a fine morning to find himself the hero of a ripping romance, I tell you. You described the old campus in a corking way, too—makes a man feel almost weepy. But you made a wrong tack when you said I lorded it a trifle over the fair sex—conscious superiority, and all that. Why, I always try to be 'yours truly' on such occasions, even if the girl does n't know Calculus from camphor gum. Of course I realize that my people have always been 'somebodies' from 'way

down the line, but I never let that make the slightest difference when I'm playing the good fellow to a girl—never! Funny you got me twisted and all the rest so straight!”

“You darling,” murmured the fourth. “How could you do it? You have made me far too charming. I'm only ordinarily pretty, you know. But why was it you made me changeable?—me! I'm not—a bit! It was the only real mistake in the whole five. Changeable, dear—that is dreadful! Why, I've been engaged to George five months now, and I'm almost as much in love with him as I was at first. I'm sure it was n't my fault that I found Ned and Joe not to my permanent liking, was it? Every girl makes a mistake some time in her life. You could n't call that changeable.”

The fifth friend was the woman's husband. “Dearest,” he said, “every time you do something big I fairly glow with pride. It makes me feel like a schoolboy. I ask myself, ‘My wife?’ and answer, ‘Yes, my wife did that—*my wife*,’ over and over. The yarns are fine. I like them all. But I'm afraid I like my own the least. Somehow you have n't hit the nail squarely on the head in my case. I seem so mild—I may say, I fairly emanate meekness, my dear, as you portray me; while, as a matter of fact, you know that I have always insisted on the old-fashioned notion of being the head of my own household. Much as I adore my wife, and glory in her achievements, I cannot bring myself to believe but that her first duty is to her children and her husband, even in the slightest details. Now, my dear, if you have some writing on hand to-day I can just as well order the groceries and see that Mary gets the children off to school all right. It won't be a bit of trouble, really.”

All of which the woman might have expected in the first place.



THE GARDEN BEAUTIFUL

BY CLINTON SCOLLARD

IT is the Garden Beautiful
 With rose and clove and lavender!—
 It is the Garden Beautiful
 Since you, my love, are gardener!

SOME SPOONS AND A DOG

By Alice Louise Lee

AMY and I had been engaged two months when she decided to spend August at Windy Cove with the Zeiglers and the Dales. Rebekah Zeigler was Amy's most intimate friend, a girl somewhat lacking in judgment, and, in support of my opinion, I cite these facts: she was engaged to Samson, and cherished a small dog bearing the disgusting name "Fudge." Amy tells me that on the first count I am at best but a prejudiced witness, Samson being a rival lawyer, with an office facing my own across the street; "While Fudge"—Amy waxed enthusiastic—"is a dear little darling dog, and I do wish he belonged to me!"

Now, in the case of Samson, it's possible that I am prejudiced; but Samson gets on my nerves with his wasp-like waist and his wagging tongue, his twirling cane and the little curl dangling over his forehead. But concerning Fudge I maintain that I am a good judge, since Fudge had been consigned to my tender care during the Zeiglers' absence from town. By good rights Samson ought to have borne the infliction. Rebekah's intentions in the matter were good, but Samson told her with tears in his eyes that although he loved dogs, had been addicted to them all his life, in fact, they seemed to fear him! Said he could never get a dog to eat or sleep within sound of his voice. Rebekah had been engaged to Samson only a few weeks and, consequently, still believed him. She told Amy of her dilemma; she dared not take Fudge with them to the beach, because she feared he'd get in the way of a wave some day, and as the town house was to be closed she could not leave him at home. Then Amy, out of the goodness of her heart, offered my services. I have since wished that Amy were not so good-hearted!

I received the "dear little darling dog" from Rebekah's hands at the station, whither Samson and I had repaired to see the party off for Windy Cove. And when I awkwardly attached myself to one end of Fudge's chain, Samson, twirling his cane, jaunty and care-free, grinned so sardonically that I longed to punch his head—the more, because, while I was listening to Rebekah's parting instructions concerning Fudge, Samson had been talking apart with ex-Judge Dale, and whenever I saw the two men together I was tormented by the suspicion that Samson was being invited to become the older lawyer's partner, a posi-

tion which both of us craved, and which it seemed likely that one of us would get.

At last the train drew in and the party clambered aboard: Zeigler chewing a cigar and holding a newspaper, unfolded, ready to read the instant he was seated; Mrs. Zeigler, ample of figure and short of breath, fretting lest something should happen to the closed Zeigler abode on Woodbine Avenue; Rebekah, dividing her farewell smiles between Samson and Fudge; Amy, beaming at me, lucky dog that I am; and, lastly, Dale, with that baffling and noncommittal face of his, on which I was unable to read my fate in the matter of the partnership.

When the train puffed out of the station, Samson lit a cigar, remarked casually that it looked to him deucedly silly for a six-footer to perambulate the streets with a little doggie chained to his heels, and then strolled off, leaving me to the trial which ought to have been his.

Measured physically, that trial was six inches long and nearly as many broad. At each corner it was supported by a brief but agile leg. At one end it sported a caudal appendage of insignificant size but perpetual motion; at the other end was an overgrown head within which lodged a variety of canine ideas. Fudge wasted but little energy on sound, his strength being taxed to the utmost to carry out his ideas, and those ideas were such that had he belonged to me his allotted days would have been about seventy less than three score and ten.

I could not prevail on the janitor to keep him, so Fudge was permitted to reside in my rooms, where he busied himself with my property. Just how busy he had been I did not realize until the night the members of the county bar gave their annual dinner at the Paston Hotel.

My trials began when I attempted to collect enough unchewed articles of wardrobe to enable me to appear at the dinner. On account of the industry of Fudge, my array promised more nearly to approach in modesty the lilies of the field than the glory of Solomon. My pumps were tooth-punctured and my favorite necktie a moist warm pulp; my gloves were minus several fingers and my choicest handkerchiefs a wad of shreds.

Then, just as I was getting slightly warm under the collar, the elevator boy shoved a violet-tinted envelope over the door-sill. It was from Amy! I seized it eagerly, opened it, and faced—more trouble. The following day both Samson and I were expected at Windy Cove on the ten o'clock train, and the note dealt with our expected visit—or mine, rather.

As long as you are coming down to-morrow, Willis dear, [she wrote] and Mrs. Zeigler is so anxious about the spoons, I know you'll not mind the little trouble it will be to get them and bring them along. The home papers contain so many accounts of petty

thieving that Mrs. Zeigler is almost wild about them because they're an heirloom and very solid. [Amy has a noble disregard for antecedents.] Rebekah has the door key—I'm sorry—but she has gone to New York shopping for the day and there's no time to wait for it. But Mrs. Zeigler says to go up on the front piazza behind the vines, to the last window, and pound on the upper right-hand corner of the upper sash. That will dislodge the fastening so you can lower the upper half and get in that way.

Then followed five closely written pages of directions, exactly how I was to find my way through the Zeigler abode and down to the basement, thence to the kitchen closet, thence to the soup tureen on the top shelf, wherein lay, provided a thief had not already abstracted them, two dozen solid silver teaspoons.

The five pages ended with—

But, Willis, if there's the *least* danger of your getting mistaken for a thief by the special policeman they've put on Woodbine Avenue, don't you stir one step after those spoons. It would be simply *awful* for anything to happen so you could not get here in the morning and see Judge Dale.

Here I turned to the last page of the epistle and found something more interesting than spoons.

You know the Dale cottage is next door here, [she wrote] and I go over to see them every day solely on your account, dear. I don't like Mrs. Dale, she's so *snippy*, and keeps saying she wants Mr. Dale to wait until he can find a *man* for a partner. That makes me uncomfortable because I think she is reflecting on you. But Judge Dale only laughs and tells her the man and the occasion will come together. I don't know what he means and I don't believe he does either, but when Mrs. Dale is n't around I tell him how nice and *smart* you are and he just laughs some more. Rebekah goes over alone to see them, too, and I presume she puts in a word for Mr. Samson. We both feel sure Mr. Dale has his mind made up, but neither of us knows which way it's made. I *do* hope it's your way. And we both feel sure something about it will happen to-morrow because he said to-day that there was business in town which must be attended to at once, but he was going to wait twenty-four hours and let a younger man do the work.

This page, coupled with a sort of an I-know-something-which-you-don't air that had enveloped Samson for days past, made me low-spirited. I carried Fudge down to the janitor and departed to the Paston Hotel, feeling more in the mood for house-breaking than for jollity, but the jollity must needs come first.

Samson was at his best that night, judging him by his own apparent standards. His waist seemed smaller than ever and his vocabulary larger, while his wit matched his waist. But there I may be prejudiced, for I was the *butt* of his humor.

"How is Fudge this evening, Wilmot?" he began from the foot of the table, where his voice reached every man present. Then he told the story of the pup and his escape from the care of it.

Everybody roared except myself. I grinned feebly and bit my tongue.

"Wilmot is always getting taken in," pursued Samson. "Now, when I don't want to shoulder responsibility I find means to push it aside; but when I want my shoulder under"—here he looked significantly at me—"I light out after the responsibility and *land* it!"

I groaned inwardly, thinking of the partnership.

An hour later I groaned again when in the hotel foyer Samson paused long enough to say airily, "I had a hunch about Dale to-day. It seems—well—that is, I should n't be surprised if to-morrow he'd tackle one of us on the partnership proposition." With that Samson pulled at his glove and tried to look modest, but he's never practised enough to make a success of it. Plainly, he had some inside information, but I braced up.

"Well, if you're the lucky dog—all right." I threw the words off carelessly enough. "Here's congratulations, but—come to think, I'll hang on to 'em until after the articles of partnership are signed."

Then, having those confounded spoons to secure, I slipped out and made speed to the Zeiglers'.

It was two o'clock in the morning and Woodbine Avenue was quiet. Not a light appeared in a window, and no one, not even the special policeman, walked the street. The Zeigler residence stood back a few feet from the pavement, fronted by a piazza which a thick drapery of woodbine screened from passers-by. Arrived at the steps, I stopped, peered guiltily in all directions, and then skulked up to the piazza and tiptoed creakingly along behind the woodbine to the furthest window. Here I began to follow directions by delivering a blow on the upper right-hand sash. As guaranteed by Mrs. Zeigler, the fastening inside yielded. I lowered the upper half of the window, pushed aside the curtains, and climbed into the parlor, making what seemed to me a racket loud enough to arouse the distant police station. Lighting matches along my route, I traversed the hall and descended the basement stairs.

At the foot I paused and took my bearings. The stair door was opposite the door of the kitchen dish-closet, and midway between stood a table with a shelf about a foot from the floor. During the absence of the family, this table had been utilized as a sort of carry-all for the second best dishes. On top were piled dozens of plates, varying in size, while the shelf beneath was packed full of assorted pans and skillets.

As I opened the dish-closet I paused again and listened. On the pavement, far away, sounded a single step, brisk and business-like. Reassured, I lit a fresh match and investigated the closet. On the

shelves stood Mrs. Zeigler's best china neatly set in rows for the summer. Pitchers and platters, cups hanging to hooks, saucers in single file, each piece given plenty of elbow room. Cautiously I reached for the big tureen on the upper shelf, and sighed in relief when the spoons were revealed intact.

I had just finished disposing of them in my various pockets when a sound reached me which caused my heart to miss every other beat. The brisk step had paused in front of the house and become a stealthy step which was shuffling around the walk beside the house. There was a fumbling at the back door, then the door opened, and the step sounded here and there overhead.

My knees knocked together and the creeps, like long-legged insects, crawled to and fro under my scalp. I drew the closet door shut and grasped the knob. Down the basement stairs groped the marauder and into the kitchen. His way was evidently but poorly lighted, because he continually bumped against things. Had it been the special watchman, I reasoned, he would have come more confidently, accompanied by a light.

Presently I heard the faucet turn. Evidently the thief was athirst, but before he had time to drink, a noise from above reached us both. I at once located it at the window through which I had entered. Surely the special policeman was holding down his job, for there was no attempt at stealth on the front piazza!

I heard the gentleman in the kitchen say, "— the luck!" under his breath. The water was hastily turned off and the next instant he was on the other side of my door, wringing away at the knob. The sounds above increased. He pulled, and, for reasons so obvious they need not be enumerated, I pulled also. I braced my feet on either side of that door and laid back on the knob with all the strength I could summon and more than the knob could endure. Unexpectedly it resigned its position and quit. It came off in my hand, and I catapulted backward among Mrs. Zeigler's choice china with a momentum only equalled, apparently, by the fellow at the other end of the resigning knob. With pitchers smashing their ears against mine, with platters breaking over my unprotected head, and with cups raining about me like hail, I heard the funeral dirge of the second best plates piled on the kitchen table as the unknown fell back among them.

But I did not await the end of the gay clatter. Disentangling myself from the wreckage of the real china, I kicked open the door and emerged at the rate of sixty miles an hour. In my pathway I descried dimly a figure sprawled under the table, besprinkled with the ruins of the plates. Skillets and pans were rolling over the floor in all directions. I jumped clear of the figure. Had he been seven feet long, my leap would have cleared him and still left some space for his future

growth. I made for the stairs and the back door. A fence of solid palings ten feet high enclosed the back yard, but I scaled it. The limb of the law on the front porch should never encircle me provided my wind held out! But as I came out on the next street I heard the sounds of pursuit—the labored breath of another runner—and I tore madly around the corner and plunged into another back yard.

The race was on. I dared not look over my shoulder lest I be recognized. Instead, I humped over and bent to the work ahead of me with a will. In my own eyes I became a house robber, evading the law. I became crafty. The stolen goods were on me. That was not well. Therefore, as I heeled it around corners where, for a moment, the sounds of pursuit were inaudible, I cast away spoons by the handful. They sailed over hedges into front yards, they dropped into dark alleys, they disappeared through fences, they were swallowed up by manholes.

Finally but one back yard lay between me and my apartment, with the pursuit very, very near. Without hesitation I took a header for the high fence, struggled a moment on top, and fell—on my sole and only pursuer, he having shot through a diminutive hole under the fence while I was finishing up my Tuxedo on top of the palings. His breath came in gasps and his legs wobbled, but his tail was waving hallelujahs of victory.

For awhile I supported the fence, took stock of the damages inflicted on my person, and tried to settle on the form of Fudge's permanent exit from the sphere of his too extensive activities. Presently, pending the death sentence, I put him under my arm and carried him up to my rooms, totally unconscious that he was a benefactor of no mean order. That was a discovery reserved for disclosure by the events of the following day, and the appearance of our daily papers.

The few hours which remained before train-time I put in watching the street from behind drawn curtains, but no police patrol appeared. I walked to the station unmolested, having given Fudge over again to the janitor, with no mention of any carelessness on the previous evening. Buying a morning paper, I stuffed it into my pocket and watched for Samson.

The train came, but not Samson. The train drew out. It bore me but not Samson. Could it be that he meant to let me enter Windy Cove and the environments of Dale in advance of him?

I opened the paper and my eyes fell on the head-lines of the first page. For a moment I did not breathe, while those strange creepings slid around under my scalp again, but as I read the reading brought comprehension, then peace, and, lastly, unalloyed joy.

"Blessings on thee, little man," I quoted—referring to Fudge.

The paper, in delicate terms but large print, informed the public that an eminent citizen whose name was withheld because of his former

respectability, was found drunk under the table in the basement of a certain closed house on Woodbine Avenue, and conveyed to the lockup despite his incoherent and improbable explanation relative to the rescue of some silver spoons. The special policeman detailed to that section to maintain order had done his duty, but regretted that no order remained in the basement of the Woodbine Avenue house, said prominent citizen having created ruin and left desolation in his wake. Among the citizen's drunken explanations was the statement that three men had leaped out of the china closet, knocked him senseless, and made off.

Furthermore, the paper stated, the attention of the watchman was drawn to the house by the frantic caperings of a small dog. While the watchman was investigating, the dog disappeared around the house and was seen no more.

With considerable consideration for Samson's feelings, I made a small wad of the newspaper, hurled it from the car window, and calmly awaited developments. These came with the arrival of the train at Windy Cove. There were numerous people waiting to receive Samson and me—mostly Samson. Me they received.

There was Mrs. Zeigler, ample of figure and anxious of face. Her lips said "Spoons" before her voice could reach me.

There was Rebekah Zeigler, blushing from the collar of her white blouse to the edge of her auburn hair in anticipation of seeing the man who had shirked the responsibility of Fudge.

There was Amy, rosy-cheeked, her eyes dancing and her dimples flashing and disappearing. She was looking for me—lucky man that I am!

There was Zeigler, pacing the platform and chewing a cigar impatiently, hoping I had brought the morning paper!

And lastly but not least in importance was Judge Dale, standing on the outskirts of the group, pulling his mustache. Whether he was annoyed at Samson's non-appearance or not I could not determine. "You awakened in time to catch the train, did you?" he asked in his usual nonchalant manner. Then he stood and pulled his mustache some more, while Mrs. Zeigler bore down on me.

"My spoons! Did you bring my spoons?"

Regret sat high on my bruised forehead. My tone was apologetic. "No, Mrs. Zeigler. It was this way: Amy's note did n't reach me until just before I started for the dinner, and it was late before we left the hotel." I spoke the truth. The whole truth I did not think it prudent to reveal.

Rebekah hastened to reassure her mother. "Mr. Samson will bring them, mamma." Then to me: "I did n't know that Amy had written you, so I sent Mr. Samson the back-door key yesterday from New York, and asked him to get the spoons."

I turned my unfaltering gaze Rebekah-wards. "Did you? Samson said nothing to me about it."

"On what train is he coming?" demanded Mrs. Zeigler.

"I don't know, Mrs. Zeigler. I have n't seen Samson since the dinner—that is, since late last night," I hastened to correct myself.

"Did you bring along the morning paper?" interrupted Zeigler.

On him I turned regretful eyes. "No, I didn't. The boys were selling 'em when I was running for the train, but I was bound"—firmly—"not to miss that train, because"—here I glanced at the Judge—"when I make an engagement, business or otherwise, I keep it!"

Dale pulled his mustache more thoughtfully and drew nearer. "I wonder"—he spoke hesitatingly—"if you'd be willing to spoil your friends' pleasure and your own to-day? There's a bit of business in town——"

Promptly I turned my back on Amy, who only dimpled at the slight. "'Business before pleasure' is my motto, sir. I'm at your service. Command me."

He commanded me most satisfactorily that day—and since. I got back to the city just in time to see the maddest man in town leaving for Windy Cove—spoonless, of course. I stopped in the station to listen to his woes and to examine the patches of court-plaster over which the little forehead curl dangled disconsolately. I was lacking neither in interest nor sympathy, but as a bureau of information, absolutely useless.

"I tell you, Wilmot," he declared, "there were three men in that closet, and that darned watchman ran me in instead of going after them. So Mrs. Zeigler has lost her spoons after all."

But there he erred, through ignorance as to the location of those spoons. They have been returning to Mrs. Zeigler, singly and in groups, ever since she came back to town. Every time the door-bell rings the maid receives, not a card, but a spoon marked with a big plain Z.

The police are still looking for the three thieves who jumped out of the china closet, and are squeezing Samson's memory for the details of their appearance.



THE really brave man makes every other man feel brave.

THE greatest gain of age is to have lost the wisdom of youth.

THERE is something wrong about the man who is always right.

AMERICA produces great men because it believes that men are great.

R. G. Sutherland



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

A NEW MAIL SERVICE PROPOSITION

WE have certainly become a nation of enormous figures, legislatively as well as geographically. Only a few years ago a billion-dollar Congress was something to gasp over. To-day, billion-dollar *sessions* are on the threshold. Even so, it is difficult to comprehend, in figures, the gigantic proportions of the Post Office Department, for example, which last year handled three thousand million dollars for the people of the United States—and the amount increases in annual leaps of millions. The unfortunate side of it is that last year the Department realized a loss of about seventeen millions—\$46,000 a day—and for the first three months of this year the deficit reported is about nine millions, suggesting a possible loss for the present fiscal year much larger than was estimated in the official report; in fact, nearly double that of last year.

The Postmaster General had great faith in the benefit to the public of a postal savings bank system and that a parcels post plan which he urged would wipe out the deficit. But the Department lacked the power to inaugurate either and both projects seem to have lost heart if not life, altogether, in the lagging ways of legislation.

Now another plan is being brought to the front which has been held back for several years to give right of way to the earlier propositions. It is at present known only as "the return envelope and postal card" plan, but it has already gone through all of the preliminary examinations of the Congressional Committees on Post Offices and Post Roads,

and commissions appointed by the Postmaster General, and has not only been approved but by legal authority has been pronounced something which the Department has power to inaugurate without legislation; so that the public has reasonable hope of receiving the benefit with no great delay, and the Department of realizing a material increase of revenue.

The system is something which applies chiefly to advertisers who use the mails in distributing circulars with enclosed envelopes or postal cards, soliciting correspondence or orders. A careful investigation has resulted in the report that where the enclosures are unstamped very little is ever heard from them, and where the cards or envelopes are stamped, but one in ten ever returns. This results in making each reply which the advertiser receives cost him twenty cents for postage alone. And yet, under the discouraging conditions, there are sent out, annually, a hundred million envelopes and as many postal cards.

The law requires that all postage shall be prepaid, so that any plan which has been devised will require the co-operation of outside agency, to the extent of securing a deposit of a hundred thousand dollars with the Department, as a postage fund. The Department will manufacture envelopes and cards, bearing a peculiar stamp which can easily be recognized, distinguishing it from ordinary mail. These the Department will sell to whatever form of syndicate may represent the deposit, at the regular price less the price of the stamp. The contractor will distribute them as they may be ordered by advertisers, after having a return address printed on them, with notice that the stamp is void if the address is changed. Such envelopes and cards enclosed by advertisers may be returned to them without affixing additional stamp, but on arriving at their destination they will be held by the post office till the advertiser pays the regular postage on all such matter as he actually receives. The moment the envelope or card is mailed, the stamp which the Department impresses becomes a legal stamp and satisfies the law, while it is of no value if the address is changed, and no loss to the advertiser if thrown away. When the advertiser pays the amount of regular postage on all such mail as he actually receives, he only keeps the original deposit intact.

It is not unusual for the Department to rely on outside co-operation. Pneumatic tubes, for example—and in fact almost all transportation—are accomplished through private co-operation, and it is not anticipated that there will be any delay or difficulty in arranging with some form of corporation, as a reasonable profit will be allowed by Government contract to the receiver and dispenser; while it will be greatly to the advantage of the Department to have an active agency constantly at work encouraging trade and creating new business all over the country. As the result of the investigations it was reported to the commission

that without any further impetus than the removal of the present handicap to business in this line, the firms already using the mails would increase their use at least five fold, which alone would result in increasing the revenue of the Department over sixteen million dollars annually. With the natural growth and the new business that would follow it is thoroughly conservative to accept the report that when the system is understood and in working order the net revenue to the Post Office Department will come very close to wiping out even the threatened deficit of thirty million. Considering either the public or the Department, it is worth trying.

WILLARD FRENCH

EXIT THE HUSTLER

“ALL things come to him who waits.” How easy! This is the only known royal road to success. It is an old and time-tried maxim and has received important, if only partial, confirmation in the words of a classical somebody-or-other who said: “They also serve who only stand and wait.” Of course they serve themselves. In neither case is the reference to the attentive, aproned individual one meets in a restaurant, who, although a great many things come to him, by no means fills the proverbial bill. The reference is a great deal too profound to admit of such a cheap pun, as it applies solely to the infinitude of inactivity.

The difficulty, in this strenuous age, of establishing this most attractive doctrine of standing around, lies entirely in inducing people to wait long enough to listen to it. On the other hand, its beauty lies in its extreme simplicity. Absolutely unequivocal, there is no possibility of misunderstanding it. Manifestly, all one has to do is to sit or lie or stand or loll idly about and simply wait.

But while the adage with its pregnant meaning is perfectly clear to us philosophers who are able to grasp even the most incomprehensible things, and to us pragmatists who are thoroughly versed in the intricacies of old thought, new thought, and frayed thought, it might have been better had the advocates of this easy money, this inactive Utopia, this *status quo*, elaborated it somewhat for the benefit of *hoi polloi*. Furthermore, it should be remembered that this is a democracy, and that the politicians have made us exceedingly chary and gun-shy of glittering generalities.

The average unintelligent individual may master the concept that if he waits, somehow he will be handed, not a lemon or any other thing or series of things, but all things. But would n't he have taken greater interest had we described minutely the animate something or

somebody who would convey to him the inanimate everything? Needless to say. It might even have been advisable to schedule the character of the conveyance, how long he would have to wait, etc., etc.

And then, if the average unintelligent individual still refused to heed this omnipotent truth and insisted upon hustling, we could triumphantly play our trump card by picturing to him the beauties of its final realization. Just think of it! We would not even have to climb golden stairs or strum the harp; just every one grandly and nobly waiting and all things coming to all men. All things to all men is not a new idea, but it is a magnificent one. Why should we continue our present trite practice of all things to a few men and nothing for the rest of us? Nay, nay, let us wait.

Moreover, let the teachers and the editors and the progressives and the conservatives and the individualists and the socialists take the matter up without delay, that is, without waiting. Let them realize this pragmatic message once for all, that we can only progress by standing still. Let us then be up and doing.

ELLIS O. JONES

WANTED—MORE BOOKS FOR YOUNG GIRLS

WHY is it that upon entering her teens the average school-girl of to-day is plunged pell-mell into young womanhood, with no intervening transitional period? That dreamy period of idealism, budding enthusiasms, and delightful reserves known as girlhood is no more. It has vanished, frightened perhaps by the bald materialism of the twentieth century. The average American girl of sixteen or thereabouts has assumed all the prerogatives and responsibilities of young womanhood and believes herself to be fully armed and equipped for the fray.

This condition of affairs did not exist thirty years ago, and the reason for it to-day, aside from differences of environment, is largely because of the omnivorous reading by young girls of books which are "strong meat" for adults. They have been driven to them, in a way, for they have little fiction of their own, adapted to their minds and needs.

What kind of a life do these young women plunge into in their reading of present-day fiction? The strong psychological or social novel, the broad cynicism of Bernard Shaw, the melancholy symbolism of Ibsen, the bold realism of Hardy, or the mirthless sophistication of Mrs. Wharton. Is it to be wondered at that they are worldly-wise to an alarming degree, and that they exhibit a painful lack of genuine girliness, delicacy, and even reverence, in their views of life?

These modern young women—for we cannot call them girls—are keenly alive to the hard realism of life as portrayed in the society and problem novels of the hour, but their point of view gained in this promiscuous reading is generally distorted and untrue, for their untrained minds have not learned to discriminate the good in the evil, or to see the relation of the part to the whole. They cannot see far enough nor wide enough to judge whether it is real life of which they are reading, or only its froth and abnormalities. What could result save an over-dosed, unbalanced, shrewd young creature, with an exaggerated pessimistic view of life? Veritable Becky Sharps, many of them are, worldly and calculating, without her excuse for being so. Others are developed emotionally at the expense of their intellect. Nearly all lack the spontaneity and girlish enthusiasm which are their rightful heritage.

These blasé creatures' mothers and elder sisters, who were brought up on Louisa Alcott and Jane Austen, with an excursion into "Jane Eyre" as their wildest dissipation, are shocked at the lack of delicacy and maidenly reserve of the independent young women. The "bloom on the peach" is usually removed on their entrance into the teens, when fairy books are left behind.

Why do not more of the talented writers of to-day turn their abilities to remedy this crying need? It would be worth while both to themselves and to the world at large. There might be less need for turning their search-lights upon the evils of domestic scandal, divorce, and feminine immorality if our girls were given food fit for their digestions. What is the secret of the Rebecca books' popularity? Their simple spontaneity and refreshing naturalism.

While our factory children and ragamuffins of the slums are receiving a great deal of attention, our daughters are daily absorbing an unwholesome, unidealized view of life. Let the mothers and some few good writers join hands to provide for and guard over our young girls' mental diet as carefully as they do their material.

SARAH D. UPHAM



DON'T sow the wind, until you are ready to stand the whirlwind.

CLOTHES help to make a man, and charge accounts help to break him.

THE result of the Worldling's repentance is, *never* to be found out again.

THE man who looks pleasant at dinner is—masculine, but the one who beams at breakfast is—happy.

Minna T. Antrim



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