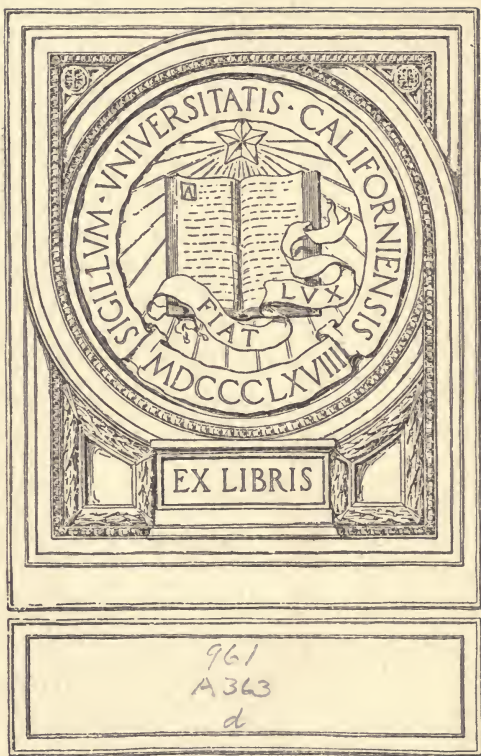


DRIFT

MARY ALDIS





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TO VIVID
ARTISTIAO



EILEEN

DRIFT

BY

MARY ALDIS

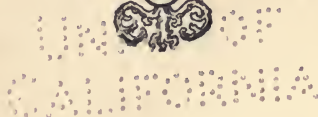
AUTHOR OF

"PLAYS FOR SMALL STAGES," "FLASHLIGHTS," ETC.

*"For Life's helm rocks to the windward and lee,
And time is as wind, and as waves are we;
And song is as foam that the sea winds fret,
Though the thought at its heart should be deep as the sea."*

ETCHINGS BY

PIERRE NUYTTENS



NEW YORK
DUFFIELD & COMPANY

1918

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TO MY
ALMA MATER

**TO
MY SISTER**

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

EILEEN	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
EILEEN	98
JOHN TEMPLETON	126
HELEN	162
ROBERT THORNE	230
SPENCER CROCKETT	280
MARGARET	334

PART I

D R I F T

CHAPTER I,

MISS EMMA ENDICOTT sat up very straight, knitted rapidly and looked at her niece. The expression around her mouth indicated that no further statement of the case need be made; she was unalterably, inexorably, and completely opposed.

Nevertheless, her niece went on talking, the slow cadences of her young voice rising and falling until her aunt gave an exasperated sigh. Eileen's voice was one of the things that made it difficult for an elderly lady, outwardly rigid but inwardly soft, to hold her own. In an undulating, wheedling, altogether illegitimate manner, independent of the words it spoke, this shameless voice assailed and beat upon her unresisting ears, crept in and wound itself around her too tender heart, until, struggling more and more feebly, she would feel her brave show of resistance fade to a spasmodic flutter and go out.

This was, of course, what would happen in the present instance, but it took time, more time than usual. Aunt and niece were gentlewomen, their disagreements were conducted in a manner befitting gentlewomen; that is to say, there were twists and turns and convolutions, all meant to imply the deepest mutual concern and deference. These courteous disagreements had been go-

DRIFT

ing on ever since Eileen could only soo her side of the argument, yet Aunt Emma still wondered why she always had an unsatisfied feeling at the end of them.

The silvery voice went on: "But, Auntie, dearest, they live, down there. Here, we only trot—to one little thing after another."

The girl got up and went wandering around the room while her aunt watched her. Several minutes passed. The clock ticked, the fire crackled, and Eileen walked. It was very depressing.

Miss Emma Endicott had just taken a resolve to say nothing more whatsoever, nevertheless she found herself casting about in her mind for some further words to express her dissatisfaction. She picked up her lament.

"Well, if you've made up your mind, I suppose there's nothing more to be done, but it's so queer, and you've got so many engagements ahead! What in the world will all those people say, and what are you going to say to them?" She peered up sideways at her unaccountable niece, who now came and stood beside her to add the allure of caressing hands. The last question was unanswerable, she was sure of it.

"Why not the truth?" Eileen returned, "That is always simple. I'll write the politest kinds of notes. 'Dear Mrs. Desborough: I can't come to dine with you on the twenty-ninth of the month after next, because I've renounced the devil and all his works.'" Aunt Emma's expression was provocative: "That won't do? Well, then, I'll leave out the devil and just say I'm going to live at Helena House to try to get acquainted with my neighbours on the East Side, because I think I'll like them better than my neighbours on the West."

Aunt Emma Endicott picked up the evening paper. "I should think you would be willing to discuss a serious subject seriously," she said.

DRIFT

“Oh, Auntie darling!” Eileen was on her knees, her arms about the rigid shoulders of the protesting lady. “Please, please try to understand me. I think it would be tremendously interesting and exciting to go to Helena House—lots more exciting than dashing about the way I’m doing now. I’m really serious about it; I want to see what they do, how they live down there. You read such curious things in the newspapers; I’ve always wondered if they really happened. I’d like to find out. I know it’s not the ‘thing,’ really, to go to a settlement unless you’ve been out two years, or are disappointed in love. Still, I do want to go, I really do. I asked them the other night if they’d take me in. The ‘residents’ seemed so surprised. They call them residents, you know—it sounds so impressive. I do want to be a ‘resident.’”

“Well, I wish I had known you were going to be so queer before I built on the new room! We’ve only used it twice—for the Tea and the Musicale! What good will it be now, I’d like to know? It will just have to be kept clean and taken care of for nothing.” Aunt Emma’s voice had the accent of one overcome but unconvinced. A vision of superintending careless housemaids in the care of the new room an indefinite number of futile years swept over her. She had an inclination to shed tears. Eileen gave a little exclamation.

The new room, a lofty and beautiful apartment opening from the library, was the pride and joy of Aunt Emma’s heart. Talked of at intervals when Eileen had come home from boarding-school on vacations, the room, after much consultation with architects and decorators, had recently become an actuality. Eileen had deplored the building of this addition, feeling it as a kind of mortgage upon herself to which she was unwilling to subscribe, but the present seemed no

DRIFT

time to remind the aggrieved lady that she had demurred.

"Now, Auntie, listen!" she said. "I can't seem to make you understand why I want to go to Helena House, but I do. I've had the idea a long time: ever since Mrs. Tucker and Helen took me there that night and I heard Mr. Martin and that queer socialist editor talk. I don't think I shall do anybody any good, help them along, I mean—I couldn't, except by presents, and they say that's frowned on. I've explained it all to Mr. Martin. I just want to find out."

"But you'll be so uncomfortable!" Aunt Emma put in. "You say Sophie can't go with you?"

"Fancy a lady's-maid in a settlement!" Eileen laughed, "and fancy Sophie's expression! I've got a nice room; the walls are calcimined grey-green and there are soft green curtains to match with matting on the floor. 'All the comforts of home,' including Botticelli's 'Spring'. You must come and see it."

"But it's all so queer! your going, I mean, people will think you aren't happy here."

"Yes, I daresay they'll conclude that you beat me, or drove me out of the house, or something like that. Shall I explain in my notes that you haven't—that I'm going of my own free will and accord?"

Aunt Emma Endicott sighed. "I am deeply troubled," she said. "It is not, I am sure, what your dear mother would have wished. It makes me feel that I am not fulfilling my trust."

The girl frowned. "Wouldn't she have wanted me to have experience?" she asked, but Aunt Emma shook her head.

"Not that kind, no, certainly not that kind." She looked Eileen over. "You are just like your father, just exactly like him. He was always doing unexpected things, nobody could ever tell what made him."

DRIFT

Eileen was familiar with the observation, as familiar as with the "trust" that was not being fulfilled. They were resorted to when her own words or actions failed to fit in with the scheme of things as Aunt Emma saw them. She knew little of her father, but the way in which her likeness to him was pointed out had the result of causing her to think of him as a splendid and triumphant rebel, striding over and beyond all the objections and protests that society or tearful relatives put in his way. If Aunt Emma thought to reduce her to submission by remarks upon the likeness, she was mistaken; nothing had a more stimulating effect upon Eileen's determination.

The girl drooped, leaning upon the mantelpiece, watching the fire. She wondered why she had been so vehement when she didn't really want to go, or at least not as much as her words had indicated. It would be pleasant, however, to see a lot of odd, interesting people and hear them talk. She looked at Aunt Emma as she sat by the lamp trying to read but winking a little, and a pang swept over her. She wished her aunt would understand, but Aunt Emma never did understand. It was becoming increasingly wearisome, explaining.

Eileen Picardy was nineteen years of age. For just that space of time she had desired something different from whatever she had; her restless, oblique eyes, under their dark brows, were constantly searching for something out of reach.

Eileen's eyes were as hard to deal with as her voice. They were so dark that the pupils were almost undiscernible. When they were swift, Aunt Emma was dismayed, when they grew soft and pleading, what could a poor lady do? Her own would become tender and yielding in spite of herself. Ordinarily, the eyes of Miss Emma Endicott wore a serene expression, as if

DRIFT

they looked out upon a kindly and satisfying world; her carefully waved hair denoted precision and contentment of character, and the ample folds of her black silk dress, spotted with white, were soft to touch. Eileen thought it a very ugly dress, but it did not really matter in that room.

In a few moments the gentle lady laid her paper down, sighed, and looked around at the family portraits of other Endicotts who had pursued their lives, apparently content, without resorting to settlements. She seemed to be asking their support in her present opposition to the project of their descendant, but they only smiled benignly from their places against the dark wall and gave no comfort.

The surroundings in which aunt and niece, grand-aunt and niece, to be accurate, expressed their differing ideas gave reason for the conservatism of Miss Endicott's point of view. The large room was panelled in walnut, with high bookcases on three sides. On the fourth, a marble fireplace was flanked by two double French windows hung with red brocade curtains tied back with gold cord. Eileen had often speculated upon what could be done to embellish this apartment, but the room had powers of resistance all its own. It set itself immovably against the decorations of a newer age. The contents consisted of the refined, if indiscriminate gatherings of a blameless lifetime, superimposed upon the similar gatherings of several other lifetimes, equally blameless. Such surroundings were not easily susceptible to a magic touch. They had better be left to their own comfortable worthiness.

Eileen's mother, a gentle, unassertive creature, had died in giving her birth, after two years of unhappy married life. Her father, suffering from his loss and bitter self-accusation, had confided the child to the only near relative the dead woman had, "Aunt Emma,"

DRIFT

who had performed the offices of a mother to her for some years before her marriage. Aunt Emma, or to give her her proper name, Miss Emma Endicott, had sorrowed helplessly with her niece, Eileen's mother, during the two years of her troubled married life; developing a conviction that all men were inexplicably wicked and cruel. She was led to believe this from the fact that her niece cried constantly, whereas, before her marriage she had been a simple and joyous person. She had at first been inclined to express this view, but the gentle, weeping, young wife would not allow it. Her trouble was all her own fault, she said.

When Herbert Picardy brought his child for Aunt Emma to take care of, she seemed to have no choice other than to accept the charge and wonder still more at the ways of men. He had made what arrangements he could, and soon after had gone away to far-off lands, where, some five years later, he died, leaving a fortune to the little girl whom Aunt Emma befriended. Strange tales had come from time to time of his career in "Rio,"—a Brazilian wife, or someone who had stood to him in that relation, Aunt Emma never wanted to enquire too closely. He wrote regularly to the child, peculiar letters that Aunt Emma was not sure she ought to read aloud.

Eileen kept her father's letters in a box in her own bureau. When she learned to read, she would take them out and try to discover from their phrases more of her father than Aunt Emma could tell her. They gave her nothing of his life, only expressions of deep affection and the hope of sometime seeing her again, interspersed with observations upon life and its mysteries, often penetrating, sometimes bitter, all odd when addressed to a little girl of five. It was as if he expected his letters to be kept and read in after years; as if he sought to give to the child he had hardly seen, something of his

DRIFT

own melancholy conclusions. He may have felt these letters to represent all he could give to the daughter he had left to the care of others. Eileen would, even now, take out the box and wonder about the brilliant, unhappy man who had been her father.

Miss Emma Endicott was a curious guardian for the young child thus confided to her care in the year eighteen hundred and eighty. By accident she lived in New York—in birth, manners, and instinct she was of New England. She had been brought up to respect the Bible and the marriage relation, and she continued to do both. Unaffected and undismayed by all the turbulent currents around her, her placid life flowed on in ancient grooves.

Eileen's childhood was spent at the old homestead among the Connecticut hills. She was brought up as Aunt Emma herself had been. For two hours a day she was obliged to sit on a stool without a back and do patch-work, with pieces kept from print dresses Aunt Emma had worn when she was young. On Sundays she learned the collect and said the catechism. Every evening Aunt Emma read aloud to her the works of Walter Scott. One day in each week, other nice children, carefully brought up, were invited to spend the afternoon and stay to tea. Eileen performed her tasks with docility and treated her guests politely. She was what is called a good child. One part of Sunday she liked, the hour after dinner, when Aunt Emma showed her Doré's illustrations of Paradise and Inferno. That was something her soul could feast on. For the rest of the week she was obliged to content herself with mild story books and such works as she could extract from unforbidden portions of the shelves. She was a very unhappy child but no one thought about it.

In due time she was sent to boarding-school, where she learned to recite "The Cotter's Saturday Night," by

DRIFT

Robert Burns, Gray's "Elegy," and "Il Penseroso," by Milton. She learned also a large number of other things, of which Aunt Emma was unaware. It might be considered an education, again it might not. All this happened in the last years of the nineteenth century.

School over, she returned to New York to "come out." All had gone pleasantly until, one unfortunate evening, Eileen had paid a visit to a social settlement in the company of a girl friend, Helen Tucker, and her mother, a lifetime friend of Miss Endicott. Eileen had come home greatly excited. She said it was the most interesting evening she had ever spent, she had visited another world, a real world, where things were happening. And now, suddenly, so it appeared to her aunt, everything was to be thrown over. Nothing would do but she must go and live at this preposterous place. It was small wonder Grand-aunt Emma Endicott pointed out Eileen's likeness to her father; in no other way could her unaccountability be explained.

During the nineteen years of her guardianship, gentle Miss Endicott had been at infinite pains to fulfil her task. She felt at times she had been placed in charge of a changeling; she was sure Nature had never designed her for the task. She could never feel any real kinship; no blood of the respectable clan of Endicotts seemed to flow in Eileen's veins. She had done her best, her very best, to bring the child up with an education befitting a gentlewoman—she could not understand why Eileen should be dissatisfied.

Before starting for the settlement, Eileen had certain preparations that she wished to make by herself. She purposed to dress suitably, and to that end purchased a ready-made tailor suit and a number of severely plain shirt waists, also several dozens of fine-textured underwear of nun-like simplicity in the way of adornment.

DRIFT

Sophie unpacked the various garments with a peculiar expression, but when Eileen tried on the suit, was obliged to admit she looked "très chic et bien pratique."

Notes to prospective hostesses took a good deal of time, and one night very late Eileen had a ceremony—a holocaust of German favours, fans, notes, party slippers, and other reminders of the life she was discarding. It was very interesting and solemn, watching them burn. She felt almost like saying a prayer, but could not think of anything appropriate. She was not quite sure whether it should be of renunciation or triumph.

Within a week after Aunt Emma's protest, she was packed and ready to go to the settlement. Aunt Emma, tearful, but at last unprotesting, was planning to spend the following day shutting up the new room.

"I'll have the blue carpet left on the floor," she said as they sat together before the fire on their last evening. "It can be covered with heavy brown paper, tacked down securely all around the edges, and will be quite safe from moths, I'm sure. Being all in one piece makes it so difficult to handle, if it were to be taken up."

Eileen took Aunt Emma's fancy-work out of her hands. On the eve of her departure she longed for something intimate. "Oh, don't let's talk about carpets!" she said. "Everything will be all right of course. Tell me about my father and mother."

She had asked the question many times before; it always brought to Aunt Emma's face a look of perplexed distress.

"There's nothing more than I have already told you," she said. "She was very young, you know, and I don't think she ever understood your father very well. He, well—he overwhelmed her a little, perhaps he expected too much of her. Yes, I guess that was it, your father

DRIFT

asked her to be more than she was, and she just couldn't be."

"How, Auntie?" demanded the girl; "can't you explain?" But Aunt Emma drifted off into vagueness, as she always did on being pressed.

"Was she happier when she knew that I was coming?" the girl asked, putting her head down on her aunt's knee. Aunt Emma stroked her hair. "I'm afraid not very," she said. "I wasn't there all of the time, so I don't know. Your father was away a great deal, as I have told you, and your mother was very sick when you were born. I couldn't do much. She suffered a great deal."

Eileen went to her room with a baffled feeling there was a mystery that she could not reach. She knew that Aunt Emma was not deliberately withholding anything; it was only that she did not know enough herself to explain.

Why, the girl asked herself, should two people who loved each other make each other unhappy? Why should her own coming have caused such pain, even unto death? What was the law of life that made loving and marrying and having children so full of distress? She lay and thought over all the people she knew who were married. How did they manage? They seemed contented enough. She remembered talks with other girls at school—vague, romantic speculations, interspersed with sentiments about healthy children gleaned from the biology course. Puzzling questions crowded in upon her. What would it be like to fall in love? If she married, would she be unhappy as her mother had been, and be left, much of the time, alone? And children? One wanted children of course, but why did her mother die? Was it so dangerous as that, and why had she cried so much?

Eileen longed for her father that she might question

DRIFT

him, ask him of these deep things concerning life that Aunt Emma seemed incapable of telling her. She wondered if life were as painful to everyone as to those two whose coming together had meant her own existence. Now they were gone, and she was left with life before her.

CHAPTER II.

THE weeks at the settlement were a period of her life Eileen ever afterwards recalled with a shudder of recoil. The impulse which had made her go was not, as she had frankly asserted when excusing herself from her engagements, in the least a noble one. On the contrary, she merely wanted to see what was happening "down there," by which she meant how those not born to the purple pursued their lives. Well, she had seen, and the scars of the impressions she had gained would be with her always.

Helena House was one of the newer settlements established, apparently no one could quite say why or for what, in the midst of one of the most congested districts of the huge city. It served as a means of pleasure and possibly of enlightenment to the many who came in and out of its hospitable doors. It certainly provided an interesting field of operations to the six clever and unconventional people who composed the "residents."

At the head of this modern enterprise were a Mr. and Mrs. Martin, who had become engaged when they were fellow-students in social science at a State University. They had made a sort of prenuptial contract with themselves and the world to do this thing if the gods would be good enough to permit them to do it together. They were both keenly interested, very busy and very merry; in fact, Eileen's first impression of Helena House was

DRIFT

one of great cheerfulness. The "residents" seemed to take themselves and their mission lightly.

The girl had not told Aunt Emma how difficult she had found it to persuade Mr. and Mrs. Martin that she would be valuable as a member of the oddly assorted group that composed their "family." Perhaps it was because of her whimsical honesty in assuring them it was entirely for her own soul's good, perhaps because she always obtained what she wanted, that had caused them finally to agree to the experiment. When Mr. Martin first heard of it he evinced a lively distrust of young ladies dissatisfied with their first season. He had been obliged to enquire of his wife what a "season" was, and upon being informed, had expressed the opinion that Eileen had much better stick to hers.

After a few polite expressions of interest, the busy residents left Eileen to her own devices and had it not been for Mrs. Martin's kindly and humourous interest, she would have felt herself both lonely and useless. For the first fortnight she watched the activities of the settlement with her usual eagerness in following a new pursuit. She talked winningly with the girls from a near-by box factory who came to the evening dancing classes and pounded out piano accompaniments to mark time for a peculiarly ear-racking combination of musical instruments known as "the boys' quartette." She also gave assistance in stocking the loan-closet used by the district nurse and offered to make rounds with that busy person, only to be declined.

Constantly in her mind was the wonder what she had come for, what any of them were there for. It all seemed confused and aimless. Every afternoon and evening there flocked to the settlement a polyglot assemblage of children and young people to claim the attention of the residents. Eileen wondered what all the classes and lectures and plays had to do with their daily lives;

DRIFT

whether the quiet dignity of the spacious rooms, the good manners and the ways of cleanliness of the six people who called the settlement home would ever have any effect upon the clamorous throngs who availed themselves of its opportunities. At times she doubted it; at times, as she watched the unconscious friendliness of Mr. and Mrs. Martin, the absence of any sense of difference between them and their "neighbours," she had a glimpse of what such influences might mean. It was not to be analysed or measured, it was not to be appraised, perhaps it was not even to be seen, but it was there.

Eileen had gone to Helena House in late January, and it so chanced that she was almost alone at the settlement one evening a month later while Mr. and Mrs. Martin were away for a short holiday over Washington's birthday. They had taken the "Boys' Club" for coasting and skating to a farm in the country belonging to the settlement and intended to remain for some days.

Eileen was seated at the telephone with a book, when the young Greek boy who acted as general utility servant announced a visitor. He said it was a young person and she was crying awful and would Miss Picardy please hurry.

Eileen found a dirty and dishevelled creature, "crying awful" as the boy had said. Her condition was evident. Wishing that Mrs. Martin was on hand, Eileen sat down by her with a word of question. The girl stopped crying long enough to look her over and ask "Where is she? I mean the Missus, I want her."

"She's away," said Eileen. "I'm dreadfully sorry; can't I help you? I'm alone in the House now, but I can get someone in a little while."

"No," said the girl. "It's her I want; where's she gone?"

DRIFT

Eileen explained that Mrs. Martin was taking a brief holiday, as she was very tired. It might be a few days before her return. The girl rose heavily. "All right," she said, "I'll get on."

"Oh, no!" Eileen protested. "Mrs. Martin would want to help you if she could. Don't go till you're rested."

The girl gave a snort. "I guess I'm not goin' to get 'rested' much fer quite a while, but if she's takin' a rest, she'd better have it—I don' want to do nothin' to interfere. She told me to come here—she said I could—always—I ain't got no where else to go—oh, what'll I do—now she ain't here?" She began to cry again, and Eileen beckoned to the young Greek boy, who stood looking stolidly on. His counsel might be better than none.

"'In trouble' o' course," he said, shaking his head sideways. "Lots of 'em's like that. They always have to get through the cryin' stage. I've seen 'em. She'll be all right, don't you worry."

Finding he had no definite views beyond these comments, Eileen returned to the girl, sitting huddled up, trying to dry her eyes on the hem of her dress. It occurred to her that Mrs. Martin would institute enquiries.

"Won't you tell me about it?" she asked.

Again the girl looked her over, with doubtful eyes, as if testing her. Eileen motioned the Greek boy to go and leaned back, waiting.

The girl looked around the room. "I ben here before," she remarked. "It's pretty, ain't it? I wish I'd come back sooner."

"Won't you tell me your name?" Eileen asked, "and how I can help you?"

"My name's Victoria Lenowska," said the girl; "there's a kid comin', but I dunno's you can do anything about it."

DRIFT

Victoria laughed and again gave her a disconcerting stare. "At least you don't look as if you could," she added.

A curious sensation came over Eileen—what did this girl of the streets think of her? "Please tell me all about it." she said.

"All right, I will," Victoria's face seemed to shrink with the sneer that spread over it, "an' I guess you ain't often heard anything like it. I hate the kid that's comin', hate it, hate it, d'you hear? An' I hate him! If I ever get through with it I'm goin' to take the kid long enough to throw it at him, there!"

Eileen steeled herself and waited. "Do you want me to go on?" Victoria asked, and Eileen assented mutely.

"He's my step-father." Victoria's voice was loud and hoarse; it seemed as if she wanted all to hear. "He talked—Lordy, how he talked! Said he didn't like her—he liked me—said we'd go somewhere, him an' me—said I could do anything with him. When I told him, 'bout the kid, what d'you think he said? Said it wasn't his'n, said I'd been goin' 'round with everybody—and he knew, he *knew*, I'd a done anything fer him! Oh wait till I get at him—wait till I fix him!" She fell to crying again in a sort of fury, but in a moment went on. "It was one night when I come in from work, late, and took off my cloak, Maw found it out, 'bout me I mean, what was goin' to happen. She acted up violent an' said I'd got to go. I didn't say a word fer a minute, I thought he'd say somethin', but he just sat there lookin' ugly an' I pointed at him. 'There's the father,' I says, 'sittin' there in that chair—*now* what you goin' to do?' Maw stopped talkin' and looked at him. Seemed as if she couldn't take it in, what I said. Then she went over to him and stood there beside him—'Is it true?' she said, and then—over again, 'is it true?' He looked at her an' then he looked at me. 'You know

DRIFT

your own daughter,' he said, cool as you please, 'I s'pose you've discovered she can lie like the best of 'em—this is about the neatest one she's told yet.' I could a killed him—I don' know why I didn't. I got my hat and cloak and I walked straight out o' the door. D'you think I'd stay? I ain't seen 'em since—either of 'em, but I'm gona kill him when I get a chance. I lost my job today, I was dish-washin' in a restaurant, they said it would come soon an' they wouldn't have me 'round. I've been sittin' over in the Square. D'you know what I've been thinkin'? What she and him said to each other, after I went out—what she said. She'll make it hot fer him. She knows that wasn't no lie I told, 'though she was fooled fer a minute. She'll think about it, and after a while she'll know it's true. I dunno's I want to kill him after all, guess havin' to listen to her talk 'ud be better." Victoria gave a horrible laugh, then she suddenly screamed. "I've had pains all day." she gasped, leaning back, ghastly pale, "I guess it's comin', I want to lie down! Oh, what'll I do? What'll I do?"

Eileen comprehended there was need of swift action. The Greek boy supplied the address of the nearest hospital. Telephoning to enquire, she was thankful to be assured that Victoria could be admitted. A taxi-cab was summoned and in a few minutes the two were on their way—Eileen badly frightened, Victoria pouring forth her misery. Once Eileen begged her to stop, crying out, with her hands over her ears, but at her protest Victoria only went the more ruthlessly into details. Eileen was stunned by the abandonment of the recital, the absence of all explanation or excuse. Victoria stated the facts, that was all, and her bursts of tears seemed to spring only from fury at her predicament. Over and over again she said, "I don' want the kid, I don' want to see it—I hate it! Tell 'em I won't take it. I

DRIFT

just want to get over havin' it—I can take care of myself.”

Eileen sat crouched in the corner of the cab, frantic with the slowness of their progress, the delays at street corners. Every word that Victoria spoke seemed to burn itself into her mind. So this was what her world had conspired to hide from her—this horrible thing! As if lighted by wild fires, Eileen beheld the spectacle in all of its nakedness,—the awful drama of procreation—the mystery of the lust of man, the unwillingness of woman. Suddenly there flashed into her mind Aunt Emma's vague words concerning her mother's pain. Was it thus she had felt before she, Eileen, was born? What had her father been? A groan from Victoria brought her thoughts back. A dazed sense of incredibility came over her as the cab drew up at the door of the hospital.

Eileen was thankful for the simple way she and her charge were treated. A competent-looking young doctor, assisted by two nurses, possessed themselves of Victoria's person and in a short time she was lying on a stretcher between clean sheets, while Eileen stood by wondering at the quiet way this appalling event was taken. She had been asked a few questions and then ignored. She would have gone away, save that Victoria as they neared the hospital had extracted a promise from her to “stay alongside of her.” “You've got to promise to tell 'em I won't have the kid” she screamed out as they entered the building. So Eileen stayed, and on mentioning the promise she had made to the half-unconscious girl, was provided with a white gown and cap and told to follow the stretcher as it was wheeled along the halls to the delivery room. Eileen did as she was bidden, and then lived through an hour the memory of which was to haunt her for many years.

In a period of consciousness Victoria became fright-

DRIFT

ened at the strange faces around her in their ghostly clothes. She looked wildly about for Eileen. "They're giving me stuff," she said, "they want to kill me! I won't take any more. I won't! I won't! Tell 'em to kill the kid and let me go, I'll get out! I won't be any bother to anybody—he needn't be afraid, I'll never go home again."

The nurse urged Eileen to go into the corridor, but she would not forsake the girl who turned to her in her anguish, and the raving and screaming went on. Victoria would not submit to the anæsthetic, and after a few unavailing words of argument, the young doctor waved it aside. "She's strong," he said, "it isn't necessary, don't force it." Once Victoria started up and looked around. She seemed to be demanding witnesses. "Get me out o' this" she said, and her eyes widened horribly as she looked at them, one after the other. "Just get me out o' this, and I'll never let any man get at me again, s'help me Gawd!"

It seemed to Eileen the birth would never take place, but at last a peculiar sucking sound made itself heard above the low voice of the doctor and she understood that another human being had drawn breath. She looked at Victoria, quiet now, her face white and pinched, her hands, large and stained and ugly, clasped under her chin. What was it that was wrong? This woman had become a mother and she did not turn her head to look, did not ask one question. The nurse was holding something wrapped in white. "It's a boy" she said, then she looked at the mother. "Don't you want to see it?" But the young doctor made an exclamation. "Don't press her," he said, "wait till tomorrow."

An hour later Eileen found herself free to go. She had told the hospital clerk all she knew of the case and her answers had been duly recorded. They assured her the new-made mother and her child were both asleep

DRIFT

and all was "normal." There seemed nothing further for Eileen to do but return to the settlement. She called a cab and was driven through the brightly lighted streets.

As she entered the hall of Helena House, she noticed that the hands of the big clock stood at eleven o'clock. Only eleven! Three hours before she had been sitting there at the telephone, and all these things had happened since. She had a feeling that she herself was changed, that she would never again be as before. How could people laugh and be gay and go about while such things as this were taking place all the time, every day? She recalled how they had had to wait at the hospital before going to the "delivery room" because it was being set to rights after some other woman had gone through that dreadful pain.

Eileen hurried to her room. She wanted to be alone, to think it out. All night she lay turning it over in her mind. All she could remember to have been told or read, every possible thing she could recall, she brought up and examined,—Aunt Emma's vague generalities and advice to "wait until she was older," scenes in books, occasional intimate conversations with other girls at school, when the mysteries of love and life had been discussed with a certain aloofness, holding both reverence and fascination. None of these things gave her any understanding or clue as to what had just taken place. Always in the back of her mind lay that dreadful question as to her father and mother—why had her mother died, what had made her suffer? She fell asleep at last, weary and bewildered.

Mr. Martin was concerned that she should have been frightened, but commended her quick resourcefulness in getting the girl to the hospital. Of her own part in the affair he did not enquire further, seeming more interested as to what was to be done for the girl to

DRIFT

keep her from what he plainly considered the inevitable road. Mrs. Martin had frequent talks with Victoria during her convalescence. One day, on starting for the hospital, she asked Eileen if she would like to go with her. Eileen gave a quick exclamation of dissent and Mrs. Martin said no more. A few days later she told Mrs. Martin that she was ashamed of herself and would like to go. Mrs. Martin looked at her with an odd expression. "I'm sorry," she said. "I asked Victoria if she would like to see you, but she said no."

Eileen was intensely chagrined. Mrs. Martin caught the look. "I'm afraid I'm blunt," she said, "don't be troubled. Victoria is difficult to deal with. I am at my wits' end sometimes to know what to say to her."

"She said she was going to kill her step-father," said Eileen in a small voice.

"She won't," Mrs. Martin asserted, "merely hysterics, although I know what she meant. I feel that way myself, frequently."

It seemed that Victoria had persisted in her refusal to see the child, which was shortly sent to an orphan asylum. She merely stated that she hated it. She was a source of trial to the hospital authorities because of her rampant insubordination, and the moment she gained physical strength, watched her chance and escaped.

Mrs. Martin was much depressed, but Mr. Martin took a hopeful view. To Eileen's amazement, he even laughed when informed of her flight. "How she must have loathed it!" he exclaimed, "the neat, white beds—the rules! She'll fight her way through."

Eileen could hardly endure the discussions. She wanted to blot out the scene. For weeks she would wake up suddenly with Victoria's screams in her ears or hear that harsh voice—"Just get me out o' this and

DRIFT

I'll never let any man get at me again, s'help me Gawd!"

The horror seemed to grow until she became possessed with a desire to get away from all that reminded her of the night Victoria had come.

It was mid-March when she sought Mr. Martin one evening in the small room dedicated to his exclusive use and told him of her decision. She added a humble expression of gratitude to him for allowing her to come, and of affection for Mrs. Martin. "She's wonderful," she said, "I think I can never forget what she is."

Mr. Martin, at first ironically sceptical of Eileen as a "resident," had grown to like her. He was sorry for her—she seemed so pitiful. He asked her to sit down and tell him what she was going to do next. "I don't know," said Eileen. "My aunt wants me to stay with her, perhaps I'd better."

Mr. Martin bade her good-bye next day with an added word of counsel. "Come and see us," he said, "but first get a job. That's what you want, a good job. Everybody ought to have a job."

Eileen looked up at him smiling. "I thought you would show me one," she said.

CHAPTER III.

AUNT EMMA was dozing, waiting for dinner to be announced, when Eileen appeared and stopped in the doorway to glance around the big, dark room. "How grand everything looks!" she said. "I've decided that as a social worker I'm no good. Let's go to Europe."

"Oh, dear!" said Aunt Emma. "It's so hard to make people understand! I thought I'd like to spend the summer at the Farm. You're really not going back to that awful East Side? Well, I certainly am glad of that."

After her first flippancy Eileen made an attempt at explanation of her abrupt departure from the settlement. It was hard to tell about, she said. Aunt Emma displayed little interest in what had happened as a result of Eileen's queer notion, now that it was over. She asked a few general questions and was frankly relieved to have her niece back again "safe and sound." She suggested postponing dinner so that Eileen could have a nice hot bath and fresh clothes.

"I've had both this morning," Eileen laughed; "did you think I had joined 'the great unwashed'?"

After dinner Eileen sat silent, listening to her aunt's recital of how troublesome she had found it explaining her absence, interspersed with exclamations of thankfulness that now all the "little fibs" she had permitted

DRIFT

herself to tell would be "all right." "I couldn't say that I didn't know when you were coming back, could I? You've no idea the questions everybody asked! I felt just like saying, 'Go and ask Martha Tucker why she went, she is responsible.' I assure you I felt almost cross sometimes, really almost cross. It seemed to me they should not ask questions."

Eileen, wandering about in her usual fashion, stopped to stroke the soft, old cheek. "Darling Auntie," she said, "don't feel cross. I'm at home now. No harm's done." She waited for a little and then said in a low voice, "There's something I want to ask you about, something I can't understand. I went with a girl to the hospital—she had a child—she didn't want it—it was all pretty dreadful. Aunt Emma, I wish I knew more about things like that. I wish you'd tell me. I don't mean physically exactly, but how these things come about,—what makes men make women so unhappy? I can't understand—I wish I knew more about love."

"My dear child!" Aunt Emma exclaimed. "Did you say you went to the hospital with a girl from the settlement? You mean when a child was born? How on earth did that happen? I asked Mrs. Martin to take care of you. I wrote to her when you first went and said it was my wish that you should not be brought into contact with such things. I am amazed at what you tell me."

"Oh Auntie, why did you do that? You don't understand how it is, how they work, I mean. Mrs. Martin's too busy to bother about me; I wish you hadn't. It seems so silly!"

"I thought it desirable to take care of you," maintained Aunt Emma, "'though I didn't think her answer was very satisfactory. She said she would try, but that a settlement was not like a girl's own home

DRIFT

and she had done her best to dissuade you from coming."

"She did. Oh poor Mrs. Martin! She never told me you wrote, she was just heavenly kind to me. Auntie, you'll never understand." Eileen was silent for a little and then returned to her question. "Won't you tell me what I asked? I find so many things puzzling,—I don't feel as if I understood—anything."

"My child," said Aunt Emma, looking out of the window, "I hope you will marry a good man some day and then you will know about love."

"But that doesn't answer me!" In spite of her previous difficulties she was determined this time to find out if she could. "I hope I will, too, if that's what makes people happy, but—oh Aunt Emma, was my father a 'good man'? did my mother love him? did she give herself to him gladly, or did she hate him—for it,—for what he wanted—what he asked of her?"

Aunt Emma took out her handkerchief. "My dear," she said, "I regret exceedingly that you had this unfortunate experience and got all these ideas in your head. I cannot help being displeased with Mrs. Martin."

Eileen said no more. It was no use trying to find out. They did not want her to know.

"Now let us talk about summer plans," said Aunt Emma; "that will be more cheerful, and please promise me to put all these gloomy thoughts out of your head. You said something about going to Europe; do you think that would be pleasanter than the Farm?"

Eileen recalled the many long, idle, hot days at the Farm, when she had wondered how to occupy herself. She wanted very much to go to Europe, she said, wanted to get far away.

Aunt Emma looked at her wistfully, hoping her mind was not too firmly set on the plan. She hated hotels and she hated table d'hotes, and she dearly loved

DRIFT

her Connecticut home, known as the Farm. She was glad to have her wayward niece at home again, for she was responsible for her welfare and was, besides, very fond of her, but there could be no denying that life was more tranquil when Eileen was absent.

The Farm was a beautiful old place among the Connecticut hills. The house was low-roofed and unpretentious without, and the last word of luxurious comfort within. It had yielded to modernising effects of chintz and Japanese wall papers more graciously than the house on Washington Square. Around the elm-shaded, rambling old house were several hundred acres of fields and woodland, along which ran the Connecticut River. There were a few cows, unconsciously posing, several horses, as Aunt Emma preferred her stately carriages and black-tailed horses to those new ugly, evil-smelling motors, a chicken yard, vegetables, flowers and hay, so the name Farm was considered suitable.

With a sigh the good lady thought of all these things, and after a few more protests yielded to her niece's desire to go "far away."

It was a few days after this that Mrs. Tucker, sitting at luncheon with her daughter Helen in their cottage on Staten Island, was startled by the girl's remarking, "Mother, did you know that Eileen Picardy had just come home from spending a month at Helena House?"

"I did not," said her mother. "What an extraordinary idea!"

"Very!" said Helen, "and there's something queer about it, because I couldn't get a word out of her as to why she went, or why she came away, or what she did while she was there. All she would say was that she thought it seemed interesting the night she went there to dinner with us,—that's why she went."

Martha Tucker looked worried. "Was that the first

DRIFT

time that child ever saw a settlement house?" she asked.

Helen thought it was and recalled to her mother Eileen's questions on the way home. "Don't you remember how you enlarged upon how happy they all were because they were interested and loved their work? It was quite alluring, the picture you painted. Eileen was bewitched."

"Certainly I remember," said Mrs. Tucker, "but who would have supposed—"

"Oh nobody but Eileen," Helen broke in. "She's quicksilver; you can't tell which way she'll run, always away from where you think you'll catch her."

"Dear, dear!" Mrs. Tucker was plainly concerned. "I hope her aunt doesn't think it was my fault."

"Hm!" mused her daughter. "I guess your conscience must trouble you, because that is precisely what Miss Endicott does think. I went up there to lunch yesterday. I hadn't seen Eileen for ages. It didn't come out until after we had finished luncheon,—where she'd been, I mean, and then Eileen was so silent and mysterious! We thought we'd go for a walk, and when she went to get her hat, Miss Endicott was queerer still. She took hold of my arm; 'Don't say any more about the settlement,' she whispered, 'Eileen's very unhappy. I don't know what it is, but don't talk about it.' I asked her what in the world made her go, and she looked at me solemnly and said 'Your mother.' Just then Eileen came back."

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Tucker's tone was tart. "I can't be held responsible for a girl's whims."

"Nevertheless you are," said Helen. "Poor old Mummie, as if you hadn't enough trouble with me!"

Martha Tucker brooded for a day on the injustice done her, and then set out from her home on Staten Island to visit her old friend Miss Endicott. She would not allow her to labour under such an outrageous mis-

DRIFT

apprehension,—everybody knew how troublesome Eileen could be—she was a spoiled child, a badly spoiled child, her aunt had no control over her, and then laid the blame of her eccentricities on other people. The idea!

She found Aunt Emma mild enough, now that it was over. The whole thing had been “unfortunate” she said. She hoped Eileen had learned a lesson at any rate, and would realise that older people sometimes knew best. “It was a ridiculous notion,” said Aunt Emma. “I told her so, but she wouldn’t listen,—she never does. However, you needn’t feel guilty,—I can’t see why you should—I only meant it was your taking her there and talking about it, started her off.”

“I merely told her that what they were doing was interesting,” protested Mrs. Tucker, “they need so many things,—a gymnasium and a large lecture hall,—I thought if Eileen saw what was taking place, recognised the needs, you know.”

“I know, I know!” said Aunt Emma. She will probably build them several houses before she gets through, if anybody has asked her to.”

The two ladies chatted a little longer, and then Mrs. Tucker returned to her home with a mind not entirely at ease. However, she decided that Emma Endicott was foolish to let herself be so upset; she might as well get used to Eileen’s vagaries. A charming creature, Eileen, but very wilful, oh, very wilful!

Helen met her at the door of the cottage, which stood on the top of a hill, overlooking the sea. “Did you clear your skirts?” she said.

“Nonsense,” said her mother, “I told Emma Endicott I had nothing to do with her going. Where’s your father?”

“In the study,” said Helen. “He’s had his tea. Shall I make you some?”

“Oh do!” said Mrs. Tucker, sinking into a chair.

DRIFT

“The ferries are so crowded at this hour! I’m not going to town again for a week, I’m so tired!”

Helen Tucker went out to get the tea, and her mother looked around the little sitting-room with its faded furniture, faded carpet, faded portraits in old gilt frames, with a sense of relaxation and comfort. She would like several things in her life to be different, yes, a good many things if you came to reckon them, but she would not like to live in a huge house on Washington Square with two solemn functionaries standing about, and a wayward niece flying around to settlements. She was thankful Helen was not that sort,—and Josiah? Well, Josiah could not be called companionable, of course, but he was much better than nobody at all, always amiable at any rate. Emma Endicott had nobody.

Martha Tucker was a remarkably handsome woman of forty-five. She was very tall, with an erect carriage of the head that made people use the word “queenly.” She was the kind of a woman who could have worn rich silks and velvets and heavy jewels and been more beautiful; yet here she was in her plain stuff dress, looking about at her faded sitting-room and actually rejoicing at its shabbiness.

Martha Tucker’s reflections as to her husband Josiah were remote, but then Josiah was remote. There were those among Martha Tucker’s friends who would not have agreed to her conclusion that he was “much better than nobody at all.”

Josiah Tucker was a peculiar person. He seemed to have decided long ago that human beings were unnecessary adjuncts to life. His days and hours moved serenely onward, as he, lighted, surrounded and embraced by an aura of thought, pursued his course alone. Unaffrighted by the scenes around him, he asked not love, amusement, sympathy. His books were his chosen

DRIFT

friends,—Tacitus, Virgil, Horace, Pliny—each was beloved. They sufficed. Now and then, as a diversion, a little bout with the early English poets,—he was considered an authority on Piers Plowman.

Josiah was happy in his study, and that was much in a world where few are happy. He came forth at intervals to be fed and was particular about the quality of food presented to him; he also slept for certain periods. These were the only interruptions to a life of thought.

He was impressive to look upon. Tall, spare, with a dome-like head and thin, arched nose; he habitually wore a black frock-coat, which he considered the only suitable apparel for a gentleman. Into the breast of this coat was thrust a snow-white handkerchief. It was always snow-white, it was always thrust into the breast of his coat, so the effect, it would seem, must have been calculated. The thin, brownish-grey hair on the top of his head was brushed with scrupulous care to have a little upward turn, almost like a curl, and all of his personal habits were fastidiously neat.

When he met the guests of his wife and daughter, he would express pleased surprise. His manners were courtly and his conversation informing. He moved in great company, communing with spirits whose mark had been made upon the world.

Now and then a professional-looking personage would journey to the Staten Island cottage to visit Mr. Tucker, stay for a meal perhaps, and retire with him to the "study" afterwards; or, Mr. Tucker himself, after mentioning the matter a number of times as liable to happen in the near future, would emerge, brush his high silk hat and worn overcoat, and for a number of days would be seen walking to the eight o'clock train for the purpose of reading at one of the consulting libraries in the city. It was at these times, trembling like guilty

DRIFT

creatures, his wife and daughter "tidied up" the "study."

Years ago there had been an impression that Mr. Tucker was reading in preparation for the production of a book. The theory still held, to be assigned when necessary to enquiring friends, but it had grown mythical. Save for the pure pleasure of imbibing, there seemed to be no adequate reason for Mr. Tucker's excessive absorption of the classics.

In her twenties, Martha Tucker had been beautiful and a flirt. Why she selected, from many pretenders, the even then erudite person who asked deferentially her hand, no one but her maker ever knew; nor did any one ever know if she had since regretted the act. The couple, they could hardly be called a young couple, since Josiah was one, had between them a modest competence, enough to live on, and it became apparent soon after their marriage that Mr. Tucker did not expect to augment the sum. He never expressed his views directly, but in the course of years it came to be inferred that he considered that the world had been a more attractive place a number of years ago than it was at the present date. He would dwell apart from its sordid struggle.

Helen Tucker had grown up happily in her mother's companionship. At the age of fourteen, her father made enquiries as to the progress of her education. Finding that it lacked both Latin and Greek, he was seriously concerned. After a period of consideration on the subject, he gave forth that for the next six years he would devote twelve hours a week to Helen's instruction. He did so and proved a patient and painstaking teacher. Helen at twenty was unusually well versed in both Greek and Latin literature, also Piers Plowman. Thanks to her mother, the local schools and a quick observation, she had acquired a number of things besides. She was

DRIFT

very pretty and very tender, with the auroral beauty of healthy youth.

As the girl entered, tea tray in hand, the mother's eyes rested upon her with a sense of profound thankfulness. Helen was sweet and fair and happy and hers—poor, childless Emma Endicott!

After Helen Tucker had fetched "just a tiny bit more hot water, please, darling, this tea is so good," she knelt and took off her mother's shoes.

"That's good," murmured the tired lady.

Helen sat on the floor in front of the fire, knocking the shoes together. Her face looked very warm. Finally she said, "Dr. Arnold was here today."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Tucker, and the word seemed to come from strange depths.

"I told him I would marry him." Helen's voice was even and still. "He went in to talk to Father. Father is pleased, I think."

The mother sat watching her daughter, the mother who had been very beautiful and of whom no one knew whether she wished her own marriage otherwise or no. She could not formulate her thoughts. Her impulse was to cry out, to take the girl to her breast, to weep with her for the new mystery that had come to be; but Helen sat gazing into the fire, the shoes held before her.

The tears brimmed in Martha Tucker's eyes. She held out her arms. "My very dear!" she said, and then, holding the girl from her, she asked, "Do you love him? Oh tell me, child, do you love him? Do you love him enough?"

"Yes, Mother." Helen lifted her eyes steadily. "I am very glad that I said yes."

Mr. Tucker came in and stood gravely regarding the two women. "My dear wife," he said, laying his hand upon her shoulder, "you may be well content. I talked with Dr. Arnold for a period of an hour. He is a

DRIFT

gentleman and a scholar. Our daughter is in safe hands. I would not have it otherwise."

Martha Tucker sobbed and clung to Helen. In that moment it came to her that perhaps Helen had something of her father in her, she seemed so strangely calm. "A gentleman and a scholar"—oh, yes, Dr. Arnold was that,—but a husband? a lover? was he that too? Did Helen know? She wanted to cry out the question, but she was dumb.

The mother had watched the grave wooing of the man thus characterised by her husband as a "gentleman and a scholar." She could not suppress a sense of troubled wonder.

Dr. Arnold loved Helen, that was plain from the first, and he was attractive in a well-bred, intellectual fashion. He had already won distinction in his profession, that of a physician, and as he had independent means, he was devoting himself more and more to writing and to research work. It was surprising, Martha Tucker told herself, that such a man should seek out her little country lass. Small wonder the girl was dazzled, it would be a remarkably "advantageous" marriage, and yet,—and yet,—something was wrong, very wrong.

In Martha Tucker's rich nature was a vein of romance that had been kept down—it was not possible to permit the surge of passionate desire to take possession of the woman who had Josiah Tucker for a husband. In Helen she saw herself again, saw her own clamorous, warm youth—saw what its needs would be. Would Dr. Arnold's thin lips be capable of yielding kisses such as Helen would give and ask? What if Helen married him and then was unsatisfied, hungry with the profound hunger she had known, what then?

Long after the girl was asleep, the mother, by her bedside, knelt and prayed, "Oh God, make my little

DRIFT

girl happy, make my little girl happy! Let her not know what I have known!"

In the morning, looking at Helen's bright face, she was partly reassured. The girl seemed tranquil, full of gay talk; she looked forward to her lover's coming in the afternoon.

"Be nice to him, Mummie dear," she said. "I think he is more afraid of you than of Father."

When Dr. Arnold came, Mrs. Tucker was reminded of her husband's phrase again. Yes, he was both a gentleman and a scholar, of that there could be no question, and unworldly as she was, she would not have been human had she not remembered all the "advantages." She watched them walk away together,—the child of her youth, of her happiness, of her hopes and dreams—and tried to still the ache of fear that persisted in her breast.

CHAPTER IV

IT is May in Paris. The cold and snow are gone, and the city basks and luxuriates in the sunshine. "Give over work for a little space and go forth!" cry the Parisians. Out in the Bois there are picnic parties—hundreds of happy families rolling about on the grass. Lunch baskets are brought out and unpacked while the children range themselves in a starched and expectant circle. Each child has its portion of good red wine, nicely graduated in colour as to age; the glass of tiny Jeanne shows only a faint tinge of pink, while big Raoul, with his bare legs getting quite hairy above the socks, has his almost as red as father's. After lunch each child gathers up the pieces and puts all neatly back in the basket. Father, a bit rosy and warm, lies down to nap under a tree, and Mother begins to knit.

At the near-by restaurants, with their lakes and flowers and fluttering tablecloths, are crowds of foreigners, no less happy than Father Jacques and his tumbling brood. From Brazil these come, from the United States, from sober England, with its rain and heavy bread, from Africa and India and Borneo. Here is an Indian prince, grave of mien, gorgeous of raiment; he has brought his chief wife to Paris to see the world, but she at the moment is wistfully looking out of the hotel win-

DRIFT

dow wondering about her lord; over there is a young English duke, whom nobody would know to be a duke, he is so simple and big and gay, and having such a very pleasant and casual time; and there, at one of the tables set close to the water's edge, where the flowers are doubled by reflection, is a little party of three, a young Californian and two American ladies. They have just come back from the races and are now watching the parti-coloured throng about them, greeting a friend now and then, condoling or congratulating on loss or gain.

It has been a great day,—Rosalie has won, in two events. All those who knew that she would are patting their pockets and vowing that "she" shall not get it all this time, and all those who haven't are carefully explaining why.

The man from California, whose name is Robert Thorne, is watching the scene with keen and amused eyes. The girl beside him laughs a little at his eagerness. He is like a child, she thinks, looking at a show. To him it seems pleasant and fantastic, but unreal, untrue.

Eileen's heart had been set on Paris from the day she came home from Helena House, and after a week at the Farm, to arrange matters for her absence,, Aunt Emma had professed herself ready to sail.

The voyage had not been uneventful; it had developed the young Californian, Robert Thorne, now intent upon becoming permanent. The Paris *Herald* announced that Miss Emma Endicott of New York and Connecticut, and her niece, Miss Picardy, had arrived at the Hotel Bristol; friends, flowers and invitations followed, and here they were, drinking tea and eating strawberries in the Bois.

Eileen looked very lovely as she sat back in her

DRIFT

chair, her parasol across her knees. Why she had chosen to wear black on this bright day, only the little, perverse imp that dwelt within her knew; but in black she was, making an odd and distinguished note amidst the flowers. It was a luminous black, soft and sinuous of line; on her small, high head was a jetted turban with a great black plume at the side, sweeping backwards over her hair, almost to her shoulder.

After a little they were hailed by an old friend, Spencer Crockett, "Eileen Picardy, by all the saints!" he cried. "I didn't know you were in Paris. The last I heard you were at Helena House being serious. Are you serious still, might one enquire—these clothes? How do you do, Miss Endicott, what's this child about?" He shook hands cordially with each of them, and sent a quick glance of enquiry at Eileen for further explanation than the name "Mr. Robert Thorne of California," as pronounced by Aunt Emma, afforded. "Mayn't I join you?" he asked, turning to her. "I'm all alone—alone in Paris," and forthwith devoted himself to the aunt, the better to observe from the corner of his eye how the niece comported herself in regard to the rather splendid-looking person by her side.

Spencer Crockett, New Yorker, born and bred, lover of pictures, observer of people, was an old bachelor nearly fifty-five. One would not guess his age unless one examined the fine wrinkles around his eyes, caused by years of amused scrutiny of the vagaries of his fellow-mortals. He was tall and spare and correct. His whitish hair was brushed considerably forward. His eyes were swift and twinkled at the world, while his little slanting smile seemed to say, "Come now! you know that isn't so." He suffered from a slight nervous affection which caused him to wink one eye at irregular intervals. This infirmity sometimes punctuated his remarks with a sardonic flavour, and may have been

DRIFT

one reason for his bachelorhood,—it would be difficult to propose.

He had one great passion,—pictures, and was now in Paris to look about and see what was happening. When Spencer Crockett was not in Paris he was in New York. Occasionally, if Paris were cold, he journeyed to Rome, and London might be agreeable for a few weeks in June; as for America, he was unaware there were other cities than New York.

Robert Thorne had just discovered Paris, and when at home was under the impression that the Atlantic seaboard yielded little in comparison to the rich charms of his native State.

As Crockett turned from his chat with Aunt Emma for a word with Thorne, Eileen thought the two men might well come from different countries, so radically different seemed their aspect and point of view.

“It’s odd to see everybody having such a lot of time—for this sort of thing,” Thorne was saying, “and it is all so finished, so well done, as if it had been demanded for years, and grown to perfection.”

“I’ve never been in California,” Crockett replied. “I suppose you are pretty busy out there, ‘building up a new country,’ isn’t it called? It sounds exhausting to me, but you young men have the courage. You’ve some interesting painter chaps in your country. I like Wendt’s work.”

Thorne looked blank. “Wendt?” he asked.

“Perhaps he exhibits more in the East than at home,” Crockett remarked. “It’s often the case, ‘not without honour,’ you know. Pretty good painter, I think—those great spaces are thrilling. They make me want to take the train for the West, only I always seem to find myself on a boat instead.”

“Please tell me about him.” Thorne was interested

DRIFT

at once, delighted to find his beloved State was represented in art.

As Crockett talked lightly, Eileen watched Robert Thorne, and Aunt Emma watched her; the guardian in her on the alert. She was not sure she approved of Thorne. He was rather overwhelming. His rapid, insistent ways always left her a little out of breath, and he lived so very far away! Aunt Emma couldn't seem to think of California, a place called Los Angeles it was, she believed, as a place to live in. She wondered how much Eileen liked him. She was certainly flirting with him in that vexatious, languid way she had,—what would be the outcome? Dimly Aunt Emma felt that Robert Thorne was too large to be handled lightly.

“Miss Picardy has kindly taken my education in hand.” Thorne turned to Eileen, adoration in his eyes, a caress in each word he spoke. “She’s been good enough to show me about. There’s a good deal to see, isn’t there, when one arrives for the first time, and, of course, when one hasn’t been thinking along these lines, it’s a bit overwhelming—but Miss Picardy has a heavenly patience?” He looked at his beautiful lady, and touched the edge of the lace on her parasol.

“Oh, Mr. Crockett!” Eileen’s tone was serious, “you really know—about pictures—won’t you come with us,—with Mr. Thorne and me, I mean? Then we might learn something. You see, he’s sure to like all the wrong things, and I can’t make him see why he shouldn’t.”

“Oh, do go, Mr. Crockett,” Aunt Emma urged. “In all the visits we’ve made to Paris, I’ve never been able to persuade Eileen to go to the Louvre. She always said it was dull, and now she’s teaching Mr. Thorne about art!”

Eileen laughed with the others. “Cruel Auntie! It always was dull when I was being instructed. Im-

DRIFT

agine it!" she turned to the two men, her hands out, "being led along by a governess and told what to think. [Now, Mr. Thorne never by any chance thinks as I tell him to. It makes it much more interesting. Mr. Crockett, please explain why he mustn't stand in front of the Rubens. He will do it every day. He says they remind him of California."

Crockett laughed amusedly. "Mr. Thorne," he said, "you're the man I want, an unspoiled spirit at last! Will you give me your criticism on some pictures I'm thinking of buying? They're by a queer duck named Gaugin. Let's drop the Louvre for something a bit more recent. Will you come tomorrow?"

"And leave me out?" cried Eileen, "how outrageous!"

"You'd interrupt." Crockett's tone was firm. "Miss Endicott, do take the child dressmaking. I'd like Mr. Thorne's opinion uninfluenced by her 'instructions.' She's too young to go delving into Gaugin, let her stick to the Salon Carré."

Crockett had known Eileen all her life, and thought it was good for her soul to treat her thus; she received far too much kowtowing. Moreover, it amused him to catch Thorne's shocked expression at such flippancy towards his goddess. Crockett's remark had been most innocently intended; he merely wished to create a diversion and see what would happen, but a sudden wink as he turned to Thorne gave it a bewildering significance.

Thorne turned to Eileen. It was a plot to separate him from her! It must be nipped. Who in the world was this strange person trying to establish secret communication with him? He made no circumlocution.

"I should rather go with Miss Picardy tomorrow, if she will let me," he said gravely, and Crockett threw up his hands.

DRIFT

“The triumph of beauty over wisdom,” he cried. “When was it not so? Miss Endicott, will you go with me while these two wander together in classic halls and admire Rubens from their state of innocence?”

Eileen was vexed underneath her smiles. She wished Thorne was not such a big boy. Was Crockett laughing at him? She wished Crockett had not come.

The crowd about them was thinning out and lights were twinkling. Aunt Emma rose, announcing departure. As they neared the hotel, Thorne grew grave. He did not know what was going to happen to him on the morrow. He wanted to throttle the bland person with white hair and a wink who sat on the seat beside him, taking all of Eileen’s attention with talk he did not understand. He looked at her beseechingly as they parted, but Eileen’s lids were lowered, she would promise nothing. Robert Thorne passed a miserable night.

In the morning flowers and a note failed to placate the worshipped one. She would not go with him, nor would she promise anything ahead. Something had happened, he did not know what it was.

Again Thorne experienced murderous feelings towards Crockett and declined that gentleman’s renewed proposals for a picture feste together.

Crockett chuckled. He liked Thorne,—if Eileen could be deflected by such slight means, the big Californian would be saved much pain.

More flowers arrived at the Bristol, this time with Crockett’s card, a box for Miss Endicott as well, and pleasant invitations. Crockett was a delicate interrupter, never obtrusive, but his spirit hovered over the next trip to the Louvre, accomplished a few days later by Thorne’s persistent effort, and his wink seemed to accompany all of Eileen’s nonsensical instruction. Moreover, the expression in Thorne’s eyes, and about his

DRIFT

mouth had become disquieting. She wanted to run away.

Eileen complained to Aunt Emma that Paris was growing warm. Why not rent a villa somewhere by the sea? She had been to see an agent—it was quite feasible. There were lots to be had.

“Dear, dear!” said Aunt Emma, “I hadn’t thought of a villa. It seems very pleasant here. Do you think a villa is what we want?”

“I don’t know,” said Eileen, “but let’s try it. It isn’t a very original plan, I admit, but better than Switzerland.” A little smile lighted her face as she added, “You see, I’m sticking to the ‘ways of my tribe.’ ”

Aunt Emma thought the plan a good one on the whole; better than hotels and that tiresome chicken and lettuce and *haricots verts* you got every night everywhere.

“Let’s go tomorrow,” said Eileen. Aunt Emma jumped, but had no valid objections to suggest. Clothes could be sent on, she supposed.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN they arrived a pretty scene greeted them,— a rambling stone house, bright with window boxes of flowering plants; in front of their drawing-room windows an elaborate garden, and beyond, the sea. Eileen walked through the house with a little glance around at the gay chintz-covered furniture, out past the geometric flower beds, through a little gate, and following a path outside, soon came to the water's edge.

She sat down in a rock-sheltered cove with an exclamation of content. One should be able to think out one's problems here. She wanted to find out what she thought of this strong and vivid personality that had suddenly become wholly hers. His image came before her; yes, he was good to look at. She wondered why, for he was rather homely. Was it his broad shoulders and the way he held his head, thrown back a little; was it his ready laugh and the quick fun with which he poured forth his voluble and atrocious French; was it his hands, which were large and strong and brown and extremely well cared for; was it his eyes with their steady gaze of absorption in whatever interested him?

She thought of all these things and then of their talks together on shipboard. What made this man so different from others she had known? He had bewildered her at times by telling of traction companies

DRIFT

and water-power plants, of his efforts with aldermen and state legislators to get through certain large plans which must ultimately come about because "the people needed them." Through all his talk ran a feeling of breadth, as if his vision reached out and beyond the needs of himself or his fellows. He was looking far ahead, this man of the West, planning for what should come after he himself was dead.

As she had listened, Eileen had felt lifted into a larger world of activity and endeavour, of which she knew little and wished she might know more. His name was like himself, decisive and quickly said,—Robert Thorne. Well, it would not be long before Robert Thorne would be there with her, asking his question, and she would have to find out what she thought about him, and about herself in relation to him. He would want his answer at once, as he wanted everything, and if his ways in Paris shops and restaurants were any guide, he would obtain it. She knew that one way or another, she must decide, and she did not want to decide yet. She wondered how she would bear transplanting to the West, whether such an "experiment" would turn out better than lesser ventures. She would have to revolutionize all her thoughts, could she do that? Did she want it? Robert Thorne's views on poetry were akin to his admirations in the Louvre. She remembered one night on shipboard when, in telling a ranch story, he had been reminded of a poem of Lindsay Gordon's, and recited it in his rich voice with considerable dramatic power. He had then added the information that Gordon was his favourite poet, next to Moore. Eileen had made a funny little face to herself in the darkness. It was curious how his ignorance both delighted and exasperated her. He had spoken once of his class day at Harvard. She wondered how four years at that sacred place could produce so slight an effect,

DRIFT

After an hour or so of wondering, but with her mind no nearer what she wanted to do, Eileen finally wandered back to the villa, where Aunt Emma was giving directions in her funny French. She was quite cross.

"I really wish you wouldn't go off like that when there's so much to do," she said. "How am I to know what room you want? All the trunks are there in the hall waiting for you to decide, and I can't understand a single word that man says." She pointed to a large, blue-smocked individual standing cap in hand by the door. He smiled and made some more remarks in a patois quite unintelligible. "There, didn't I tell you?" said Aunt Emma, "I think he's the gardener. Oh do go upstairs and see about the rooms. There must be ten, but they're not all on the sea side. I'm all unpacked."

Descending later, Eileen found Aunt Emma dressed for dinner and quite calm. She had established herself in an easy chair with a reading lamp. An infinitesimal fire of twigs was crackling on the hearth. The furniture had been pulled about and a few embroideries and photographs installed. The room looked as if it were inhabited and Eileen glanced about appreciatively. "How do you do it?" she asked. "You've a genius for hominess, Auntie dear. What should I do without you?"

"I like to be comfortable," Aunt Emma replied, "and this seems like a nice house. It was a great risk taking it in that crazy way without the slightest idea whether it was damp or not, just because there was a view. I'm glad it's turned out so well. Is that young man coming down here soon?"

Eileen laughed, "I dare say!" Aunt Emma looked at her and gave a little grunt.

Life was pleasantly and easily arranged at the villa

DRIFT

by the sea, also very tranquil. There were occasional calls from the surrounding gentry, acquaintances appeared at near-by hotels, various summer amusements were arranged,—still there were many unoccupied hours, when books seemed the only resource.

Eileen spent long afternoons by herself in the garden or on the rocks, sometimes reading, sometimes dreaming. She would come back to the house slow of step, her thoughts drifting back to the old unhappy questions that troubled her. It was the time when Strindberg first sent his genius-tinted poison through the world. She read one book and sent for others, devouring them with wonder and horror and increasing fascination.

Next came a dozen or more of the latest novels, obtained at the local bookstore, so cleverly written they delighted her, but presenting a view of life she could not comprehend. Its romantic sentimentalism was as far removed from her experience as had been the sickening incident at the settlement. She had never been a reader, now books meant to her only a possible avenue to further knowledge of life,—of that great, mystifying experience that lay before her, to the door of which she could not find the key.

She wondered what Robert Thorne would say to Strindberg, imagining how impatiently he would cast him aside. She felt that Thorne's big outlook would not take in or be affected by the intricate pain of the great Swede.

After spending a forenoon with several of the books Eileen had been reading, and a French dictionary, Aunt Emma was moved to protest.

She had found herself quite unable to take her usual nap after lunch, so strong was the conviction upon her that this form of reading was very unwholesome. At about three she set out to find Eileen, who had disap-

DRIFT

peared for the afternoon. After an uncomfortable scramble she found the girl, perched in her favourite place on the rocks.

"I want to talk to you as soon as I get my breath," announced Aunt Emma, plumping down.

"Why, Auntie, dear!" Eileen exclaimed, rolling her coat for a cushion. "You are all tired out! There, is that better? Whatever do you want to talk to me about that couldn't wait till tea-time?"

"Those books," said Aunt Emma, pointing to the yellow-bound volumes on the rocks. "I couldn't wait, because I had been reading some of them this morning, some you threw away. I didn't get on very fast, I had to look up so many words, but I read enough to see they are not the proper reading for a young girl. I came out here to ask if you would burn them. I got to thinking about them when I lay down to take my nap, and I wanted to see you at once." Aunt Emma's cheeks were pink, her words came fast. She seemed afraid to let herself be answered.

Eileen picked up the book, and turned the leaves. "It is rather nasty," she said, "but what have I got to do?"

Aunt Emma seemed relieved. "I was afraid you'd think I was interfering," she said. "I'm so glad you don't mind, and you will give them up?"

"Did I say I would?" mused Eileen. "I thought I only asked what else there was to do."

"Surely there are better books to be had! You could send to some library, or to London,—you will, won't you, darling? I wouldn't ask it if I didn't feel very strongly on the subject."

"It might be a good idea to send to London," said Eileen, "but are you sure these books are all bad? You know I'm grown up, and I want to find out about things,—about life."

DRIFT

“Oh, my child! you mustn't think those horrid books represent life.”

“Well, the people who wrote them thought they did, I suppose! There are a good many sides to life!” A vision of Victoria came over her. “I want to find out, oh, I do want so terribly to find out,—and I can't!”

“Won't you yield to my judgment, then?” Aunt Emma went on. “I am much older than you, you know, and I am sure I know best.”

“You are a dear Auntie,” Eileen answered, “and very thoughtful to be so concerned, and now don't let's talk about it any more. I have had it in mind to return the visit of those pleasant French people. It isn't four yet, what do you say to going today? Don't worry any more about the books, will you? I'll come to no harm. Let's get rid of this one.” She climbed quickly up onto the highest point of rock and calling “one, two, three, go!” flung the volume into the sea. It fell into a pool at the foot of the cliff and was tossed to and fro by the incoming tide.

“Watch 'the moving waters at their priest-like task,'” said Eileen, skipping down from her high perch. “Now come, Auntie dear, let's do our duty to the ancient nobility of France. Don't hurry, it's easy to turn an ankle.”

Aunt Emma was thoughtful as she picked her way back. She was not sure that Eileen had agreed to do as she had asked.

Eileen wondered when Thorne would come. In his last letter he had spoken of finishing up certain matters before he left Paris, so as to have more free time when he came. She read the letter over again and thought that he seemed very sure. Well! let him come, perhaps she would say “yes.” It would be good to end all this restless searching about by something definite.

DRIFT

One morning she was awakened by the maid, bearing a telegram. It read, "Called home by my brother's death, sailing Saturday," and then the words, "May I hope?"

Eileen dropped back on her pillows. What was to be said to such an extraordinary question made in such an extraordinary way? Seeing the maid waiting with pencil and paper for her answer, she began to laugh, but the laugh turned into a sound like a child crying. All at once Thorne seemed to her remote and impossible. She had counted on his presence, on the magnetism of his quick laugh and his big, swift, attractive way of doing things, and now he was going far away with only this imperative question. What should she do? She couldn't telegraph back "yes," and let him go on that long journey feeling sure of her, and yet what could she say in a telegram that would not imply a promise? She had felt that he would demand his answer with no uncertain voice, but she had not dreamed it would be like this; and there stood the maid with the pencil and paper!

After a little she scrawled, "Terribly, terribly sorry, writing to steamer" and pushed the paper into the woman's hands. She had a few hours at least, and set to work composing a letter that was several pages long, but which contained no more than the telegram.

Thorne read it the next day in front of the purser's office, where he stood scowling and blocking the passage-way. Then he took it up on deck and read it again, then he sought the writing-room and remained there the rest of the day, pouring forth his heart to the woman to whom he had given it,—the delicate, dark creature whom he at times wanted to hurt and crush, and at times longed to bend himself before, as in an act of worship. He had had his love affairs, but not like this—he must have this girl, or the world and all the

DRIFT

aims and purposes on which he had been intent would be as nothing; so he sat, pouring out his passion, the heart and soul of him absorbed in his task.

By the time Thorne's letter reached her, Eileen had decided that adventuring forth with him into the West was not for her. It was hard writing to tell him this, for his letter was full of eager hope, but finally the answer was sent and Robert Thorne went his way alone. Eileen thought of him more than she had of any of his predecessors. Once or twice during the long summer she almost wrote again, so strong was the desire not to lose the stimulus of his friendship, but letters were not what she wanted. It was the man himself who had stirred her. She wanted his physical presence, and his written words, passionate though they were, failed to touch her in the same way. She wondered why she could not yield. What was it that she wanted? She did not know.

CHAPTER VI.

SPENCER CROCKETT had urged that the child be taken on a visit to the dressmaker as a means of keeping her occupied. He had a vague idea that seances with dressmakers took place in Paris among ladies, but grasped little of the significance of his words. Pastime indeed! All of the time not spent wandering in the Bois, or visiting the galleries with Thorne, had been taken up in absorbed consideration of this important subject.

Like other fine works of art, Eileen's clothes seemed inevitable, but in reality were procured at the cost of time, labour, and weariness of body and spirit. She was likely to advance her own ideas, resulting in serious differences of opinion. Aunt Emma never interefered in this realm. Recognising in her niece the artist's touch, she contentedly acquired her own patterns in black and white with many little bows and left Eileen to differ with those who served her, alone.

The girl had a face and figure that caused smiles of pleasure to the creators of costumes, upon whose skill and patience she later made such heavy demands. She gave the impression of extreme slenderness, yet there was about her no effect of angularity. Her bones were small and the flesh over them delicately rounded. People sometimes used the word "oriental" in describing her, for her eyes were set obliquely, and her brown hair grew very low on her forehead. At the temples

DRIFT

there were little peaks that came near her eyebrows. Her mouth belied the upper part of her face. It was thin-lipped and straight, with small, white teeth. Her head was small and set on a long neck, and she held it high, giving her a slightly disdainful look, which her gracious ways offset.

Was she beautiful? It was hard to say; peculiar and arresting she certainly was, and she knew with an unerring sense what to put on. No one else could possibly have worn her clothes. They were of odd, soft stuffs in dull gleaming colours, with long lines that clung and shaped themselves to the grace of her slender hips. She was fond of girdles of heavy stones that seemed to make the one necessary note of colour, and of earrings, small and exquisite, that made one think of Cleopatra.

Beautiful or not, where Eileen was, lovers succeeded each other like the ghosts in "Macbeth," and were apt to be left as pale. It was not long before a polite and silent young Frenchman showed signs that the ancient passion was stirring in his breast. Its expression was ceremonious, even obscure. He came to call every Wednesday afternoon, and asked for the ladies, presenting two cards. His visits were something of a trial to Aunt Emma. They grew longer and longer as the summer advanced.

One day, as she was taking her nap, a single card was brought to "Mees Endicott" with the information that it was presented by the father of "Monsieur Gaston," who desired, if possible, an interview. Aunt Emma was greatly concerned. She read the card again: "Comte Bernardine Marie Gaston Leroux de Barsac," it ran.

She bore down upon Eileen, card in hand. "Well, what do you want me to say to him?" she said. "Do you like that young Frenchman who stays so long?"

DRIFT

I suppose his father has come to make arrangements. There's no use my talking to him unless you're thinking about him seriously. I'm sure I don't know what is to be said. It's absurd, his coming like this."

No, Eileen was not thinking about him seriously; not thinking about him at all, in fact. Why should she? She saw him only once a week, and he had never said a word.

"I know, I know," said Aunt Emma, "but what's to be done now? His father is downstairs."

A vision of Thorne came to Eileen's mind. How different were the ways of wooing in California and France—yet, there was a look in the young Frenchman's eye as he solemnly conversed that resembled Thorne's expression.

"Well, go down and see him anyway," said Eileen, "I certainly can't. You'd better find out what he has to say."

Aunt Emma moved dubiously stairwards. The mission was not at all to her liking.

"Tell him I've no dot," was Eileen's parting injunction.

Comte Bernardine Marie Gaston Leroux de Barsac made a low bow as Aunt Emma entered, and lifted her hand to his lips. He was a stately gentleman and wore a tightly buttoned frock-coat of ceremony. It all seemed very grave. After they were both seated he lost no time in announcing the purpose of his visit, in excellent English. This was a great relief. Aunt Emma felt a little more able to cope with the situation.

"My son Gaston entertains a very high regard for your niece, Mademoiselle Picardy," he began. "I am come at his request to enquire if his suit be agreeable to you, and to answer any questions which you may wish to put to me about him."

He looked expectantly at her, but Aunt Emma, find-

DRIFT

ing no questions at hand, was silent. The Count continued gravely:

"I think I may assure you that my son is an honourable gentleman. His character is completely unimpeachable." He evidently considered these last words impressive, for he repeated them slowly, "completely unimpeachable."

Again there was a pause. "Yes," said Aunt Emma. "Yes; you must be very glad of that."

Comte de Barsac stopped, bowed slightly, and continued his discourse with a less confident air. "I do not know what plans you may entertain for your niece. If the pretensions of my son are unwelcome, it is only necessary to state the fact."

Aunt Emma was troubled lest she had been rude. After all, this serious and embarrassing person was doing them an honour. "Oh, not at all, not at all," she said. "He is a most agreeable young man."

"Then I may venture to hope that you would like to hear a little more about him?" the Count enquired.

Aunt Emma was not in the least desirous of hearing more about Monsieur Gaston Leroux, but there seemed no help for it, so she assented with a little bow.

The Count cleared his throat and began. He stated his own parentage and that of the Countess, his wife. He related the circumstances of their marriage; passed lightly over Gaston's infancy, which he hoped would be understood had been exceptionally healthy; recited Gaston's accomplishments at the Lycée, and spoke of his honourable military service. It all seemed, as he stated, unimpeachable; how was she ever going to make the man stop?

Arriving at a period in his recital when Gaston was twenty-two, the Count seemed to find a slight difficulty. He coughed once or twice, and glanced about the room. "It will be understood," he observed, "that we had our

DRIFT

anxiety. His mother and I were naturally most anxious that—that he should show discretion, that he should find someone quite—he was much away from home. We did not know. We urged him to be extremely careful. We had brought him up well; he was virgin up to this time.”

The Count was intent upon his tale; he failed to note the queer sound Aunt Emma made in her throat. She had turned herself in her chair and sat gazing at him with a terrified expression. The Count went on:

“I said that he was much away from home. You can imagine that we were greatly relieved when informed by our son of his affection for a young woman who was both amiable and healthy. He assured us that he was very happy; it seemed an excellent arrangement. There were, fortunately, no—complications, none whatever. She is now quite happily married. We were thankful it all turned out so well. Parents have many anxieties, Madame. You will understand what pleasure I have in presenting my son to you with such an excellent record. This all happened some time ago, since then Gaston is chaste. He is a romanticist, our Gaston, he must love,—his thoughts are high—he would rather suffer and be alone than—We are proud of our Gaston.” The father’s eyes were dim. He seemed deeply affected. “I have told you all, Madame. What is your verdict?”

Aunt Emma looked to the right and to the left. She looked out of the window and out of the door, and found no word. She desired to be polite, recognising that she was dealing with the customs of other lands, but it was beyond her. All the blood of her New England ancestry rose up in her breast: it crept into her cheeks and made them burn, it crept into her voice and made it icy.

“I have no doubt, Monsieur,” she finally managed to

DRIFT

articulate, "that the character of your son is 'completely unimpeachable' (was it possible Aunt Emma intended to be caustic?), but unfortunately, as I have endeavoured once or twice to say, only you would not listen, my niece cannot consider this plan at all,—in short—she is not—not at all interested in Monsieur Gaston—not at all attracted I mean— Our talking this way, don't you see, is quite useless—quite unnecessary." She came to a full stop.

Comte de Barsac listened with the deepest attention. "May I ask one question?" he said. "Mademoiselle Eileen—she is—? You have arranged something—you have in mind a little plan perhaps?"

"No, no, certainly not."

"Well then—?" He threw out his hands. "A little time would help,—if she understood the deep affection of my son Gaston?"

Aunt Emma Endicott became desperate. "Monsieur" she said, "I will try again to make it plain. My niece does not wish to marry your son, and if she did I should not permit it. I do not consider his character 'unimpeachable.'" She rose from her chair. She was greatly exhausted. She felt she was unpardonably rude, but what could be done? Moreover, the word "permit" sounded so strangely to her that she had a nervous feeling it might be overheard.

Comte Bernardine Marie Gaston Leroux de Barsac rose also. He was very deeply chagrined and almost as deeply puzzled, but the American lady's words had a ring of finality. He forebore further argument, although recollection of the melancholy mien his son Gaston had borne of late almost drove him to renewed effort.

After her last remark, Aunt Emma stood before him and waited. Her eyes were winking very fast, her lips had become a tight line; it was an exceedingly limp hand

DRIFT

that the Count raised to his lips as he made a second low bow and withdrew.

Eileen was never able to obtain the details of that interview. In fact, Aunt Emma went forth and did a number of errands in the village before encountering her niece and then developed an unusual elusiveness.

“Did he offer to make a settlement?” Eileen enquired, “and did you tell him I had no dot?”

“We didn’t get as far as that, we talked about character.”

“Goodness!” said Eileen. “What did you tell him mine was? Oh, do tell me what you said?”

But no,—no coaxing could extract any more information. Eileen never knew the unimpeachable character she might have acquired as a husband.

CHAPTER VII

YOUTH and love must needs be inseparable companions. Helen Tucker, it seemed, had been having her own troubles. "My engagement is broken," she wrote. "Father is deeply distressed. He liked Dr. Arnold, but all he said was, 'The passing of one's word used to be considered a matter of honour, my daughter. It is hard for me to understand the motives from which your present course of action springs. I am sincerely sorry.' Mother is frankly glad, and I,—oh, I don't know. I couldn't marry him, that's all, but it has all been terrible. I did not know that it meant such a lot to him. I don't know why I said 'yes,' why I thought that I could, that it would be all right, I mean. I envy you a little, I think, going off to foreign parts; I'd like to get away somewhere. I've sat at the window of my room and thought till I'm tired of everything."

"Oh, dear!" said Eileen, "oh, dear me! Why didn't these things happen before we came away?"

She sent a number of hastily scrawled, affectionate pages to the effect that Helen must find somebody to come with right off, and follow by the next steamer. "Please, please, please, let me have this great joy. You never will let me do anything for you, and oh, I want you such a lot! It's so dull here! Why didn't you tell me you wanted to come abroad?"

Helen's answer travelled to Paris in her stead. "You

DRIFT

are a darling goose. Of course, I'd 'let' you! If I could have come I would have put my trunk on a cab and just appeared at the boat with a 'please take me along,' but it is out of the question. I couldn't leave Mother; she isn't well, nothing serious, only the old trouble with her heart, but the heat always pulls her down, and she has fretted, I'm afraid, over this affair of mine. She and Father did not think alike about it. Oh, Eileen dear, don't ever, ever say 'yes' until you just can't help it. That's the only way! Dr. Arnold has been so fine and generous! I hate myself! I didn't mean to write like this. Have a nice time and be sure to bring home lots of lovely clothes to gladden our eyes. Dear, dear, love—Helen."

Eileen told Aunt Emma of the letter, and watched the fierce expression which always overspread her features at the mention of Mr. Tucker. "How those two live with that terrible old man!" she exclaimed. "I don't wonder Helen thought she wanted to get married."

"He isn't terrible," said Eileen. "He is gentleness itself, and most amusing. The last time I was there at lunch, he told me that it was a matter of real grief to him that Xantippe was so misunderstood. 'Possibly hasty expressions may have escaped her lips,' he said, 'but it must be excused; she had much to contend with.' Then such a funny twinkle came into his eyes, and he added, 'My Martha here,—I've no doubt she would understand.' We all laughed, and the old dear went around the table and kissed Mrs. Tucker's hand with a beautiful low bow. 'The best wife in the whole world,' he said."

Aunt Emma gave a kind of snort. "Very pretty!" she observed, "but easy. Martha Tucker's a saint."

They reached home in late October, and all the rich, soft dresses were unpacked by a bevy of delighted maids,

DRIFT

and put away in the cupboards of Eileen's apartment over the new room in the great house in Washington Square, while Eileen herself prepared for her second "season." Aunt Emma hoped it would contain no such disturbing interruption as the first.

Helen Tucker enjoyed the beauty of the new frocks. Of her broken engagement she did not at first want to talk, more than to tell Eileen it was the hardest thing that she had ever done.

"I sometimes wonder how I ever had the courage," she said. "Father felt very badly."

Eileen permitted herself the observation that what her mother thought was more important. It was always difficult for other people to sustain the conversation with discretion when Josiah Tucker's wife or daughter spoke of him with that exasperating air of reverence.

"I wrote you that Mother was glad," Helen said. "She was wonderful all through; so good to me and to Frank! You know Dr. Arnold is—well he has everything he wants, I suppose. I wondered if that influenced Father. It is a funny idea when he is such a recluse, isn't it? But I couldn't help thinking,— Oh, Eileen, dear, don't let's talk about it any more. I didn't love him. I tried to, but I could not do it, that's all. I'm so glad you're back,—tell me about your trip."

"There's little to tell. I wrote you about the villa. It was nice enough, but dull, oh so dull! I went in swimming and read awful books that Auntie hated. There was a queer Frenchman for a while; Auntie talked to his father, but she would never tell me what she said. Then we stopped in Paris and got some clothes and came home, and that's all."

Eileen got up and wandered about the room while Helen watched her.

"And what are you going to do now?" Helen asked.

"Oh, everything Aunt Emma wants me to, I sup-

DRIFT

pose," Eileen yawned. "There's a whole heap of cards already. I behaved badly last winter."

They talked for a while after they went to bed, and it came to Eileen to tell Helen about Thorne, but what was there to say? She had said "no" and he had gone. That was better certainly than an uncertain engagement ending in distress.

Studying the soft curves of Helen's face the next morning as she slept, she failed to find any marks of grief. Aunt Emma was wont to say that the girl could not approach her mother's early beauty, but certainly she was pretty. Her hair was a curly, golden brown glory around the young fresh fairness of her face. Her nose turned up, which she deplored, and it was freckled besides. Her mouth was rich and soft and curved, with ready smiles. Her eyes always seemed to hold a little imp of gayety lurking in their brown depths.

Under Eileen's scrutiny, Helen moved and opened her eyes, then stretched out two round arms, sat up and looked about. "Oh, it's so pretty,—all this!" she said, "I love it, but I've got to run." She was out of bed, and Eileen heard her singing a gay little lilt to the accompaniment of splashing. Certainly Helen did not seem to be grieving.

"Eileen is not happy," Helen Tucker announced to her mother on her return home.

"And pray, why not?" Martha Tucker demanded. She was contemplating a desk full of bills and accounts as she spoke and they irked her. At the moment, freedom from these seemed to constitute happiness. "Pray why not? She has the world to choose from."

"That's just it," said Helen, "and she can't choose. It's making her miserable."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Tucker. "Helen, will you water the rose garden before the sun gets there and look for slugs as you go along? I've got to do these accounts."

DRIFT

Helen went into the garden and absently watered and slugged. She was puzzled about Eileen. Those lovely clothes and the whole summer abroad,—what in the world was the matter with her? Helen was not envious; she only thought of a few things it would be nice to do—if—but then, she couldn't leave Mother anyway, what was the use of thinking about Europe?

Eileen had had time for a deal of thinking as she sat on the rocks of the coast of Brittany and watched the sea. She thought it would be pleasant to fall in love,—but what was love? What did it mean? What did it do to you? Her father had loved her mother and there had been only unhappiness. Had Victoria loved the man who had—? She covered her face as the recollection swept over her. No, no, that wasn't love. She remembered the books she had read, to which Aunt Emma had objected. Strindberg was not calculated to instil pleasant ideas of love in the heart of youth. Helen had broken her engagement; what had made her do that? Eileen wanted something, but she was afraid—desperately afraid. She wished Robert Thorne had come to her; she was not afraid when he was with her.

After due reflection, she decided that for one winter she would go to parties as Aunt Emma expected her to do. So to parties she went, night after night, dressed in the lovely frocks from Paris.

It was a strange winter. Aunt and niece lived together in outward harmony and inward discontent. More than once Aunt Emma exclaimed, "You are just like your father!" and one time Eileen answered, "I wish I could go away to South America like him and be free."

The pained look that came over Aunt Emma's face smote her. Instantly she was on her knees, begging forgiveness, caressing the soft old hands, calling herself

DRIFT

harsh names. How could she be so dreadful, so terribly, terribly ungrateful? She did not mean it, Aunt Emma must not think she meant it.

She was forgiven, of course, and petted, but the quick words had cut deep and could not be forgotten.

“I wish that I understood you better, dear child.” Aunt Emma said, stroking the brown head on her lap. “I wish that I could make you happy. I want to, but I don’t know how.”

After such a talk Eileen would try in every way that she could think of to please Aunt Emma, even to writing notes promptly.

Her ways with invitations were apt to be casual. There was always an element of uncertainty as to Eileen’s appearance when expected, but when brought to book for her ways, she contrived, in her delicately caressing voice, such graceful apologies of contrite words that she had to be forgiven. To Aunt Emma she explained that she liked to choose how she would spend the evening, and people never told you in advance, you just had to trust them and sometimes your faith was terribly misplaced.

She loved dancing, and hated dining; as for the opera or any kind of concert, she would not go to them at all. She said it gave her time to think, and thinking made her melancholy. These elective tastes were apt to produce confusion in the matter of invitations.

Aunt Emma tried to interest her niece in her own favourite pursuit—that of ameliorating the condition of the poor. Every Wednesday morning Eileen went to do filing in the office of the society of which Aunt Emma was president. She worked at first with some assiduity, duly docketing Mr. and Mrs. John Sumulowski with their numerous brood and all attendant ills in the proper pigeon-hole for future reference; but filing cards

DRIFT

in cases grew irksome as the winter gayeties grew livelier. Attendance at the office became more and more uncertain. Finally one day, coming in late, she found a deft young clerk rapidly finishing the work. It seemed quite useless to go any more after that.

Where all this dining and dancing were to lead to, Eileen did not enquire. She had decided that she was not adapted to any other life than the one in which she found herself, so she drifted without intention from one day's occupation to the next: to steer her craft she had no chart or compass, nor could she see ahead any haven of content.

One curious trait she developed that was a sore trial to Aunt Emma—she would make no plans in advance, but wanted to decide and execute everything on an hour's notice. It was disconcerting for a home-keeping lady, whose mind worked slowly, also for hostesses who had counted upon Eileen's decorative presence. It was as if inwardly she was always hoping that something might happen, something important, and was unwilling to put the slightest obstacle in the way. Let her be a pilgrim, girded and ready, so that if ever a heavenly visitant should beckon to some unknown fairyland, there would be no shackling bonds to break.

One day in early spring she visited the studio of a painter who had a group of ardent spirits working under him. They all seemed busy and happy. One of them complained that the "daylight wasn't long enough," a phrase which Eileen thought about in the watches of the night. She decided that she would study art.

Aunt Emma made no objections. It seemed an innocent desire and she thought that it would probably not last long.

DRIFT

Forthwith Eileen made application at the School of Design, paid a fee and was bidden to present herself at nine o'clock the next morning. She was greatly excited; visions of working happily "while daylight lasted" and contemplating with pleasure the result of her labour, rose before her. It would be a great deal more fun than balls.

But it was not. It was intolerably arduous and dull. It took her about ten days to discover this. The things they gave her to draw—jugs and balls and bananas—were deadly uninteresting, and besides, she couldn't do them. The hours, nine to five, with an hour at noon, were exhausting; her knees ached and she wanted to faint; but she kept on, remembering the sudden ending of the Helena House experiment.

Her fellow-students amused her. They were a gay crew, most of them industrious, all light-hearted. At first there had been a little distrust of her. The newspaper headlines "A Society Career Thrown Aside for Art." "The Brilliant Miss Picardy Will Have No More of New York Balls. She Dons the Blue Smock of an Art Student," were not reassuring to their democratic souls.

Eileen was modest and always polite, which some of them were not; they found her odd beauty alluring; she drew abominably and knew it. They took her in.

Noticing their meagre luncheons, she contrived in a little while a series of "Talk Parties," as she called them, at a near-by restaurant, to which her fellow-workers flocked delightedly.

May came with its breath of new life. There were a few warm days. Eileen toiled away at her easel and wondered. Aunt Emma noticed a waning of enthusiasm and one evening made the observation that she was

DRIFT

getting homesick for the Farm. She hoped Eileen wasn't thinking of Europe again for the summer. Eileen wasn't. She had made no plans.

"Well," Aunt Emma went on, "I should like to move to the Farm next week. I love the early spring in the country. But of course I suppose you can't leave the school? It would be nice if you could leave,—a little sooner perhaps?"

Eileen would see what could be arranged. Oh what heaven! not to have to get to that terrible easel at nine o'clock! Aunt Emma couldn't be allowed to go alone to the Farm, of course not.

The instructor smiled pleasantly when Eileen explained the necessity for her departure. He made no objections, in fact, he made the inconsiderate observation that he was not surprised. He then pointed out to her that she must expect to forfeit the remainder of her tuition fee. The grins on the faces about him reminded him suddenly what he had said. He shook hands hastily and departed.

Eileen's career in Art was over. She was so thankful that she proposed to give a students' ball. Aunt Emma was amused at the idea, and surprised at the *ménu* Eileen ordered for supper; also that the date was set only two days off. "Oh, they'll all come," said Eileen. "they haven't any 'previous engagements.'"

They did. The ball took place with great hilarity and the supper was evidently appreciated. Aunt Emma thought the clothes of the female art students odd. "Not quite, my dear—well, not quite what we like to see young girls wear, do you think?" She looked at Eileen hopefully.

"You must remember, Auntie dear," Eileen explained, "they are all poor. They have to make a little cover all they can."

DRIFT

Aunt Emma took off her glasses to see if this was a joke. If so, she thought it a poor one. Eileen was apt to be obscure; one never could be quite sure what she meant. She put her glasses on again. It was no laughing matter.

PART II

CHAPTER VIII.

“I AM very glad to meet you, Miss Picardy. May I take you in?” were his first words.

Eileen turned at the name, “Mr. John Templeton,” as pronounced by her hostess. She saw a tall, rather grave man who bowed and gave her his arm as he spoke.

“I have wanted to meet you,” said Mr. John Templeton, “and now I have.”

“Why?” Eileen glanced up at him as they moved forward. She had been thinking of herself of late as a poor sort of creature. It was gratifying to find that this distinguished-looking man wanted to meet her. She wished she had not declined so many invitations.

“For several reasons. You do picturesque things,—you don’t take all this too seriously, and—oh well, because you are you, I suppose.” He smiled in a queer, amused way, apparently at himself for being so frank.

“‘Picturesque’ is a pleasant word for my failures,” said Eileen, “or are you merely being polite? I can’t do anything but—this. I’ve got to take it seriously. Besides, I do.”

“Not very,” said John Templeton. “I’ve been extremely uneasy. Our kind hostess told me you might come to-night, but then again you might not. I asked her to ask me, you see, so she was naturally anxious, fearing my reproaches. I am glad you came.”

Eileen was disconcerted. She thought him amusing,

DRIFT

but personal. She started to speak, but not finding the right word, half turned to her other neighbour.

“Aren’t you interested to hear who told me of your last ‘failure’ as you call it?” He had no idea of letting her escape.

“Who?”

“A young designer, an Italian, whom you asked to lunch somewhere with a lot of other students. I’d like to tell you what he said; may I? I wonder if I dare?”

“I see you intend to.”

“He said your eyes were like a Chinese princess’s and when you spoke it was as if birds were singing in their sleep. Do you wonder I wanted to meet you?”

This was sufficient to gain her attention. She turned all the way back. What an odd man! Was he laughing? No, his face was quite grave; he seemed to be thinking over the words he had just spoken.

“Is he a poet too?”

“Perhaps. He loves colour and soft, rich things, and he lives in a boarding-house and draws designs for iron grills. You were good to him at the school.”

“But I can’t remember——”

“And I’m not going to tell you.”

Eileen’s forehead had a little frown of enquiry as she looked at him for explanation. He returned her gaze smilingly, giving a little nod as if to say, “Yes look me over, try me out, I am going to say bolder things than that in a moment.” She took a spoonful of soup.

“Will you tell me how he came to speak of me?”

“Gladly. He brought me some designs. In the portfolio were a number of other pictures,—one a reproduction from a newspaper of a portrait of you, with a notice about your studying art. I picked it up. ‘She is gone now,’ he said, ‘but I have known her.’ We talked about you then—you would not have minded, I

DRIFT

think, and well—here we are, you and I. You came! Since I'm confessing everything I may as well tell you that I had a prejudice."

"Against me? What for?"

"Your clothes. My young sister has a habit of reading aloud descriptions of them from the public press. It is terrible! She loves clothes—Julia—I'm worried about her; and then there were the pictures. I see now they didn't look like you—they looked cruel." Suddenly he was not smiling—he was intent. "Are you cruel?" he asked.

"I don't know." She felt a little desperate. "I think I'll have to be now, you talk so fast."

"But are you? I want very much to know. That young Italian—you can't even remember—" but Eileen was, apparently, not listening; a question from the other end of the table claimed her.

"Please come back soon," he said, and turned.

His other neighbour, with whom he dutifully conversed, found him, as she afterwards complained, "impossibly dull." She tried him on art, religion, music and the coming elections, and then gave him up, for which mercy he was glad.

Released, he could get a glimpse, as often as manners allowed, of the back of a long white neck surmounted by masses of brown hair entwined with gold and of a lovely bare arm leaning on the table perilously near him.

Eileen was fully aware of his desire and enjoyed keeping her back turned. She was teased and interested. Nothing that she had heard of John Templeton fitted with the tone of what he said to her. People spoke of him as remote, over-serious; what was she to think? Was he trying to see how daring he could be? Was he testing her? Something told her that underneath the lightness of his words the man was stirred. He had asked that last question as if he wanted to find out, as if

DRIFT

he wanted to know—in time. A curious feeling came over her; she caught her breath as she had not done since she and Robert Thorne had sat talking together those May afternoons under the chestnuts in Paris.

John tried “willing” her to turn her head. No use! He reflected sadly that he and the lovely lady who spoke in a voice like birds singing in their sleep were not in Arcady: his words must be modified lest she be affrighted.

“I think I’ll try some of that young Italian’s designs,” he broke in in desperation. They were serving salad—life was passing.

Ah ha! It worked! Eileen turned to him. “Try his designs?”

“I make silk,” said John Templeton, “that’s my business. I’ve been making it ever since I was nineteen. It’s very absorbing—making silk, but don’t let’s talk about that. I’d rather hear about your experiment. What made you study art and what made you stop? Please tell me about it.”

“You are very direct,” said Eileen. “I couldn’t learn to draw. That’s why I stopped. It’s a perfectly good reason, don’t you think? That’s all there is to tell.”

“Have I offended you? I’m terribly sorry. I didn’t mean to.”

“Oh, no,” Eileen laughed. “But you see, it is embarrassing, confessing to failures.”

John Templeton had fallen in love, although he did not know it yet, and the joy of it was making him a little drunk. He heard his own words with amazement, as one hears another person say surprising things, with no sense of responsibility.

Late that night he was to stand at his window saying to himself, “Fool, fool, fool! How could I? What must she think? Will she ever want to see me again?”

DRIFT

but for the moment, the reserve that was apt to make him tongue-tied was gone.

Eileen talked more than she usually did in answer to his questions. By the end of the dinner they knew a great deal about each other and more when it came time to go home. He told her that he had been designed for a strolling fiddler, he loved the open road and the earth and sky and nothing to think about, but for several reasons, known only to the gods, he had turned out a manufacturer of silk; he supposed because his father was. He had tried, he said, to instil romance into the business by importing designs from the far East in "quinqueremes from Nineveh" and by making the surroundings as beautiful as might be, but nevertheless, a business it remained. "You see I wanted to be a musician," he said, "wanted it passionately, and so my silk has to make up." Eileen gathered that he took a personal interest in his operatives. He spoke of a lad who was found to have a remarkable eye for colour and was now studying painting.

"I wonder why I'm telling you all this," he said suddenly, "I don't often run on about myself. You are good to be interested."

When good-nights were said, he asked her gravely, "And when may I see you again?"

Eileen smiled up at him vaguely, perhaps a little wickedly. "We are 'at home' on Tuesdays in January," she said.

The lady who had arranged the dinner at John's behest had some comments to make to a sleepy husband. "I know it's late, but it went off well. John Templeton was like a boy on a holiday. I never saw him so before. I believe he's in love with Eileen. His face had a radiant look. He was wonderful."

"Thought you said he never saw her before," said the host, switching off the lights.

DRIFT

"I did, but that doesn't make any difference, does it?"

"Dunno, I'm sure. Are you coming up?" but the lady was thinking, she did not heed.

"It will be a perfect shame if it's so—they're both——"

"You mean money, I suppose. Why don't you finish your sentences? Well, no one can accuse them——"

"Oh, don't be obvious," said the lady, "and don't stand there in the door. Go on upstairs, I've some notes to write."

After that first night with the surprised thrill of its intimate talk John held himself in check. Eileen wondered a little on their subsequent meetings what had induced in him the wild mood of the dinner party. She did not know that for years John had been aloof, fearing women. He had made up his mind that he could not care for any one again as he had once cared for someone who had hurt him deeply; the scars were long in healing. He had not known that they were healed until, with a sudden whirring of his wings, love came. He had let himself be mad with the sheer joy of it, trusting to his sincerity to excuse his boldness.

John Templeton's low voice with its intense inflections was with Eileen during the days that followed. It was not long before she saw him again. He did not wait for "Tuesdays in January." Their friendship grew rapidly. She was glad to see him, glad to talk to him; he did not seem to have found life at all troublesome. He was keenly interested in his factory, "the works" he called it, where he had been concerned in rebuilding a dingy little factory town into an attractive abiding place for his work-people. As he talked, her perplexities became insignificant.

One day when he came, her gracious ways had de-

DRIFT

served her, she was silent and unhappy. Truth to tell she and Aunt Emma had had an argument on the subject of the uselessness of Eileen's present existence and the girl was smarting at the injustice. She had said little; unless one wanted something it never did much good to talk when Aunt Emma's mind was fixed, but underneath her silence was a deep determination to do something—perhaps something desperate. She would go away from home, she would go on the stage, she would not go on like this. Meanwhile Aunt Emma was saying, "I think you should devote three mornings a week to some useful pursuit, you would be far happier."

"You didn't want me to go to Helena House," Eileen had remarked.

"But you did go and then you came home again. Now you don't do anything but mope about and decline invitations." Aunt Emma was unusually tart. They were short of clerks at the office of her society, and she had suggested that Eileen resume her neglected duties in filing history cards of "cases," only to be met with a refusal. Eileen stated that she hated filing, and would never do any more. She went wandering to the window. "I wish I was educated," she said, "I wish I'd gone to college, I wish I could draw."

"I wish you could," said Aunt Emma, and there the interview had ended.

Eileen longed to ask John what to do, but she rather imagined he would have an answer too ready. It was there in the look of his eyes and the touch of his hand, but she was not prepared yet to accept his solution. She kept the talk impersonal until suddenly he said, "What's the matter? Won't you tell me? I wish you would."

"How did you know?" Eileen turned to him with a little gesture.

"Never mind, just tell me."

"I'd like to, I'm so puzzled. My aunt thinks I am use-

DRIFT

less. She's quite right, of course, I am—useless, but what to do about it—that is not so easy to answer. Everything I try to do that is useful, I can't." She looked up at him and held out her hands, palms upwards.

John was sincerely concerned, but found no immediate answer. He wanted to take the two hands and kiss them, but that did not seem the proper reply to a serious statement, at least not then.

Eileen went on, in that low, silvery voice of hers that seemed to hold the enchantment of some softly played oriental music. John tried hard to give due attention, but the magic of her presence possessed his thought. In his heart he was crying out, "Beloved, I want you! I want you! Come!"

Eileen heard the cry ringing through his grave words of polite enquiry as to her difficulties with Aunt Emma Endicott. Feeling his strength, his tenderness, she found it good to talk to him of some of the baffling questions that beset her. She told him how she longed to accomplish "something" and couldn't. "It would be clearer if I knew what it was," she added, with a forlorn little laugh, and gave him some sad reflections upon life itself; it was utterly and increasingly incomprehensible to her—what it was all about—why she was sighing for an occupation, while most people were too busy. Aunt Emma, for instance. She had letters and committee meetings and people to consult all day long; she seemed to like it. Then in a burst she told him about the filing cards, and how after her toil the clerk did them better. "Nobody can conceive how I hate filing," she said.

John had no particular advice to offer as to satisfying occupations for idle young ladies, but he maintained that in spite of many puzzling things, life was very good indeed, "splendidly worth while." He seemed so sure about this that Eileen was comforted. If other people found it so, perhaps she could.

DRIFT

“Come for a walk in the park,” he said; “it’s a gorgeous cold day. Exercise is a homely remedy for low spirits, but let’s try it.”

When they came home at dusk along the lighted avenue Eileen was loath to have him leave her. She asked him to come in, but John, to his own surprise as he thought it over, developed powers of strategy. He had made her need his presence; she should feel the lack of it; she should miss him. “You have given me a very wonderful afternoon,” he said, “I shall never forget it,” and he was gone.

Alone in her room, Eileen tried to analyse her feeling. It was his serenity, she decided, that was so attractive. He pursued his path with a steady purpose, making the most of it, taking such pleasures as he sought, lightly yet heartily. She wished, oh how she wished, she could be like that. But then he had his work. He had told her that it was an absorbing interest, and indeed as he talked of how his silk was made, the story sounded like a romance. How pleasant it must be, she thought, to make something. She remembered the charcoal drawings of jugs and bananas she had made and how she had crumpled them furiously and burned them up when their futility swept her.

John Templeton was forty fathoms deep in love. He was fastidious. Only in Eileen had he found himself wholly uncritical, wholly satisfied. Everything that she said, everything that she did was a delight to him. Eileen was not prodigal of speech, she was apt to leave a good deal to her hearer’s powers of guessing, never troubling to explain if she was misunderstood. Sometimes John did not at all know what she was trying to say and did not try. To look at her, to know that soft, dark beauty near him was enough.

When they were together, her slow grace roused his blood to such a pitch of longing, he could not believe that another meeting could take place without his tell-

DRIFT

ing her of his need, his utter need of her. Several times he made an attempt, but the words were awkward. His sense of reverence for love itself, for the profoundly beautiful thing he felt within his heart, made what he said so grave as to be almost cold. Eileen's lack of answer caused a constraint only to be broken by a quick return to the impersonal. One thing she noticed,—if he was touched or moved by what she said, if by a little word or look she seemed to answer to his great demand, the demand that he let her feel was there, suddenly,—he would become strangely dumb.

Aunt Emma was all graciousness. She thought Eileen was happier and believed that marriage would put an end to all her waywardness. She was fearful that Mr. Templeton would make mistakes in his wooing and so jeopardize his chances. She had some idea of giving him counsel, but reflected that she might advise him wrong; it was safer to remain silent. You could never tell how Eileen would take anything.

She was afraid of showing her liking for him, and so having a possible deterrent effect upon Eileen's decision. To give an effect of disapproval, she made little efforts to treat him coldly, making up by a burst of cordiality if Eileen were absent. John thought her a pleasant old lady but eccentric in manner.

CHAPTER IX.

JOHN TEMPLETON was thirty-two, clean-looking and clean lived. In a different way he had had as peculiar a youth as Eileen, for he had been occupied in building a city, which some ten thousand souls now inhabited. He bore the marks; his serious air gave an impression of extreme gravity.

When John was seventeen his father had died suddenly, leaving him with a mother and younger sister to take charge of and an impressive mass of documents and plans relating to extensive proposed improvements at the factory where John Templeton, Senior, had made a fortune in the sixties by the manufacture of silk.

Now, the town of Templeton stood complete, a "model village," built through the determination and desire of the widow and her son to carry out the plans entrusted to them.

After her husband's death, Mrs. Templeton had found solace for her loneliness in throwing herself into a study of industrial villages in the various foreign countries where she took her children for the purpose. It was a queer preoccupation for a boy of seventeen. During the four years of his college course, each vacation was spent in a different country, seeking to learn all that might avail for the great task before them. Mingled with the seriousness of these pursuits was the joy of work with his violin. At times the boy thought wist-

DRIFT

fully of the life of a musician, but it was only a vision. His mother's life was consecrated, his must be. His sense of inherited obligation was strong, for with the plans had been a letter from his father charging his son to carry on the work "my hands must now lay down." His father had dreamed; to him was now given the task of making that dream reality.

To a nature rich in emotion, romance was as the breath of his nostrils. It must be had to live. Into his study of industrialism, he put the fervour, the imagination, that might have made him an artist. Like his father, his work became his dream.

The little girl, Julia, a child at the time of her father's death, caught the fever of building and became an ardent student of housing reform. She would be left out in nothing. Imbued with the spirit of the charming towns they visited, she made ingenious card-board models for cottages, surrounding them with stiff little formal gardens of gay-coloured paper flowers. Some of these later came into being, flower-beds and all, built by an indulgent brother.

On their return from a final year abroad, the aspect of the town of Templeton, then called South Fork, struck them as unlovely to a lamentable degree. The surrounding country was beautiful; it was unbearable that the hand of man should make such an unsightly blotch. They set to work. None save the keeper of the archives of the company ever knew what sums were spent, nor to what extent both John and his mother sacrificed their own incomes. On account of her youth, Julia was considered exempt from these sacrifices, with the result that on her majority a startling fortune was made over to her.

When the matter was explained she expressed her views with clearness. Was she to have no part in the building of her father's vision? She should have been

DRIFT

consulted, she would have understood, of course, she would. Hadn't she gone with them to all those little towns in Europe, one after another, for months?

It was a curious family scene; John and Mrs. Templeton arraigned by the young enthusiast for not allowing her to help,—she maintaining in the course of her vigorous remarks that she could well have omitted that expensive boarding-school, as it never did her any good. The result of the conference was permission to Julia to build certain proposed improvements in the village, the gymnasium and a little theatre. Thus Julia's sense of fitness was restored, and the inhabitants of Templeton provided with winter recreation.

It was not surprising that John Templeton was proud of his "village." Into it he had poured the idealism of his youthful hopes, the belief that by such means the old, old struggle was to find a solution.

It was a beautiful little city. Convenient to the many-windowed factory buildings were the workmen's cottages, on either side of well-paved, shaded streets, radiating from a central square.

Symmetrically arranged around the square were a Town Hall, Club Rooms, a Gymnasium, a Library and four churches. In the centre was a beflowered village green on which these harmonious community institutions looked forth. A lovely bronze fountain at one end was balanced by a band stand at the other. Here on summer evenings the people gathered to listen to excellent music. On Sunday mornings the different congregations issuing from the various churches lingered on "The Green" for friendly chat.

At a short distance were the shops, also graced with creepers, vines and flowers. Even the butcher's shop was discreetly attractive, displaying vegetables under a fountain with the carcasses in the background. Near the shops were several orderly saloons, billiard

DRIFT

halls and restaurants. A police station testified to the fact that even in this model village there was occasional need of the arm of the law.

The reconstruction had covered a period of ten years. It had proved no slight task to dislodge and relodge six thousand employees, not to speak of the residue of the population, all of whom preferred to be left as they were. In various ways the inhabitants of South Fork lifted up their voices, crying out that all they wanted was to be let alone. Now the village was accomplished, they were enormously proud of it. In a moment of enthusiasm the town council had voted to change the name to Templeton, an action which was to earn them much criticism. By the wish of the same grateful council, the dedication of the various schools and buildings to the public was made an occasion. John found the ceremonies acutely embarrassing.

The village was only the shell. Not a scheme, not a device, not a plan for the betterment of workers, but was investigated, and if approved, put into operation at "Templeton." By a system of wage credits, many a youthful pair had set up housekeeping, both continuing work at the factory until such time as natural cares prevented. An ingenious system of benefit insurance was made possible for all employees. It was only John's strong sense of individual liberty that kept the balance and prevented the "paternalism" he recognised and feared.

He proposed at some later date, when his endeavours had ripened into accomplishment, to write a history of Templeton. He wanted to put into permanent form the record of his study and experiment. He was trying with all the imagination that was in him to find an answer to the problem. Given human nature as it is, how were the two elements, capital and labour, to be welded? John persisted in a belief that he

DRIFT

knew human nature. He believed that he had no illusions except the permissible one of hope. Always before his mind was the qualifying phrase "given human nature as it is." Knowing himself, he kept the words in his mind as a sort of anchor to reality.

Part of his mind was occupied in seeing how far this persistent hope was justified. He was merely an observer getting material for his record, be it what it might. With another part he was the romantic educator, using every known means to give his work-people the ability to conduct their lives with due regard for the common welfare. It was this wider aspect that made every event, every incident at the factory of supreme importance. It was all a test of theory, of his belief in human nature, of the possibility of pointing the way to some method which might in the end solve the problem. His work was his great adventure in the world of which he was a sojourner, holding in trust for the next to come an industry which held a definite place in the march of civilisation. During his stewardship there must be progress.

He had told Eileen on the evening they met he was thankful that he did not make shoes, but the point was he could not have made shoes. He loved his silk, loved it all, from the masses of lustrous, shining bales that came to the mills with the curious smell of the holds of ships and wharves, to the vast variety of finished silken products he sent out for the delight of woman-kind. He loved the dyeing rooms with their huge vats of liquid colour, brilliant as jewels, and the designing rooms, where were gathered clever young artists from art schools eager to try new designs. He had told Eileen that he tried to instil romance into his business. The whole place breathed of beauty.

In all this work mother and son had been close companions. Besides the problem of capital and labour,

DRIFT

there was Julia, and the problem of Julia had needed all the wisdom that both of them could supply.

Mrs. Templeton gave her son an admiration and love that had been his stimulus. She had come as a bride to the small town of South Fork, had sorrowed over the conditions and been in reality the instigator of the plans for reform. Now she saw their accomplishment by the devotion of her son. She was content.

At the time John met Eileen he was living with his mother and sister in New York, spending about half his time at the mills. It was some months after the meeting and John was very much in love before Mrs. Templeton met Eileen.

The encounter, after much wondering on John's part how it was to be brought about, happened quite by accident at a picture exhibition. John was fearful, but pretended to himself that he was not. Would his mother see how wonderful Eileen was? Would Eileen understand his mother's stateliness of manner, find the tender woman underneath? As he stood by the two, chatting about the pictures, a whimsical idea came to him. Why should he not say simply, "Please care for each other, please, for my sake! You are the two most precious to me on earth." Instead, he made idle comments on pictures he hardly saw, and soon after he and his mother and young Julia were whirling home.

"She's the loveliest thing!" said Julia, "and the oddest! She doesn't look like just a young lady, she looks like somebody out of a book,—somebody who's going to have things happen."

Late that evening, Mrs. Templeton came to her son's room. She stood looking at him and then put her arms about him. "You want to marry her?" she said, and then, "Oh John, John I love you! I want your happiness. I want it terribly! Life is so full of perplexities! It is pitiful to be able to do so little for

DRIFT

those we love!" The outburst was not like her usual serene reticence and John looked at her, trying to find her meaning.

"You will love her for my sake?" he said.

"Yes, yes," she answered, "if she is good to you."

Mother and son sat down and talked of the years they had spent together, happy years they had been; she was proud of him, he had been so good to her, always. She told him little intimate things of the early days of herself and her husband, even of quarrels that "had seemed so unhappy at the time." "If one could only pass on these things!" she said, "you are older than your father was, and we did not find it easy. Oh, my son, if I could only find some way of helping you, some way to make you see how difficult it all is,—marriage, I mean—"

They talked until very late, and when she left him John sat and thought over many things she had said. "Dear, dear Mother!" he thought, "how sad it is to be old, to have only memories!"

Mrs. Templeton had assumed that all was arranged between him and Eileen, and her confidences encouraged him to say next day quite simply, "Dear, I think you know what I have wanted to ask many times these last weeks. What is your answer?" And as simply, Eileen told him that her answer was "yes."

It all seemed to come about naturally, inevitably. They were engaged—they would be married soon—what then?

CHAPTER X

IN a few days the engagement was "announced." John would have it so and Eileen, when he pleaded, could find no adequate reason for delay.

"But I am so proud," he told her, "so inordinately, madly, unbelievably proud, I want everybody to know it. I never thought that I could be so proud. It's odd, you know, how I walk along the street and people just go by as if I were a plain ordinary person. Isn't that stupid of them? But, of course, I suppose, they couldn't be expected to know. Some day I shall make a great shout and when everybody stops, I shall mount something and stand above them and cry out, 'Look! all ye men of little worth—look upon me—I am going to marry a royal lady! Off with your hats, bow down and salute me!'"

His tempestuous joy caught her as a great wave sweeps a swimmer who rests floating upon its strength. Eileen thought him quite mad, but found his ways attractive. Love letters and violets greeted her with her morning coffee, later a telephone call—"Just to hear your voice! Tell me that you are happy." Gifts appeared hourly, borne by grinning messengers plainly subsidized. Flowers were not enough—his royal lady must have rarer things; one day an early edition of the *Epithalamium*, encased in a binding of delicate art, on the fly-leaf, "Let this tell you;" another day, a jewel casket,

DRIFT

cunningly wrought by some long-dead Italian master. "Only one," was written on the card. "No need to send you three, for this contains my life and death."

Eileen read the great love poem, its stately cadences carrying the realization of the passion of the man to whom she had promised to give all of herself; she looked at the ruby glowing upon her hand, the ruby he had put there as a sign, and wondered.

When John came to her, eager, happy; when his hands tightened around her body, when his kisses left marks upon her throat, she trembled.

Aunt Emma Endicott overflowed with pleasure. Now all would be well of course. She had no doubts on that score.

Shortly the newspapers had properly worded statements befitting the high social status of the principal persons concerned. The marriage would take place, it was understood, in early spring.

Gilded teacups, frail and perishable; flowers—great boxes of them—roses, orchids, violets—lovely for a day; pretty notes of congratulation, all poured in, and invitations; many, many invitations. The two people who had pledged each other to come together as man and wife were invited out to eat their evening meal in company with their fellows every night for three weeks. They were kept so occupied by their friends who wished them to be happy that, except in going to and from the dinner parties, they rarely had a chance to be alone.

The lady who had given the dinner party where they first met was triumphant.

"Didn't I tell you, that first night?" she demanded of a bewildered husband.

"Tell what?" he growled, being weary at the moment and knowing he must shortly hurry and become more weary.

DRIFT

“That John Templeton had fallen in love. I knew it that night that they’d be married. I remember distinctly telling you.”

“Humph!” he gave her. “I remember it was very late and you got off something sentimental—said John Templeton looked ‘radiant’—that was it, queer word—radiant—never should have thought of it myself. If I recall, you deplored the idea at the time and now you’re rejoicing! There’s no accounting for the way a woman will think.”

“Oh, you’ll never understand,” said the lady. “Don’t you see, I’m glad for John if that is what he wants.”

She was consoled next day by a huge box of flowers with John Templeton’s card, “You asked her!” written on it.

Everybody was delighted except Helen Tucker, who said all the proper things but in her heart, was troubled. She had conferences with her mother on the subject of Eileen’s engagement. “She won’t talk about anything but clothes,” Helen complained. “I do wish she would be a little sentimental, when we’re alone I mean. I like Mr. Templeton tremendously. He adores her and he isn’t a bit ashamed of letting it be seen—he’s amusing about it. You know they’re to be married right away. Miss Endicott is in a flutter—chattering about the presents and the breakfast. She’s having a lovely time—I wish I knew whether Eileen was!”

“I wouldn’t meddle, Honey,” said her mother. “If Eileen doesn’t want to talk, don’t ask questions.”

“I don’t,” said Helen, “but she’s so airy and queer and elusive about it all. I have a feeling she’s marrying him because she couldn’t learn to draw. He’s extremely attractive; there’s no reason why a woman shouldn’t care a lot.”

“Well, better not make up your mind that she doesn’t.” Martha Tucker’s voice was a little absent.

DRIFT

She had scant sympathy with Helen's concern about the state of Eileen's feelings. Eileen had so much and her girl so little! For herself, Martha Tucker wanted no more, but for the glowing young creature standing beside her wiping the breakfast cups, she wanted the whole world.

"Mr. Templeton seems very happy," mused Helen. "Perhaps it's all right. It's the way she talks about him that worries me, or rather the way she won't talk anything but nonsense. I said something serious yesterday, for I wanted to find out—and what do you think she answered? asked me if I knew what happened between the time the worm wore the silk on his back and I put it on mine! Of course, I didn't. 'John does,' she said, and then she ran along in that crazy way she has when she's unhappy,—you know what I mean. She began telling me how a Chinese princess carried the eggs of the silkworm and the seeds of the mulberry-tree into India concealed in her head-dress and a lot of other stuff. I interrupted her and took her by the two arms, then I looked at her, and I said, 'Eileen Picardy, tell me one thing. Would you marry that man if he made tin cans?' I said it laughingly, but she knew what I meant. 'Certainly not!' she said, and that is as far as I could get. Oh, Mummie dear, I hope she'll be happy! She's so sweet and Aunt Emma bores her so! I'm glad I've got you!"

Martha Tucker looked severe. "Miss Endicott is one of the finest women I know," she said. "I have often thought Eileen was most undutiful."

"Yes, darling," said Helen, "and now you've said what you ought to say, tell me what you think. Aunt Emma's a duck, of course, but she wears such ugly, spotted clothes, and fusses. I know that's why Eileen is getting married,—that and the art school. What do

DRIFT

you think?" But Mrs. Tucker refused to have any opinions on the subject. She told Helen again "not to meddle."

All at once, in the midst of the congratulations and festivities and flowers, Eileen fled to the Farm. She gave no reasons, she made no excuses. She could not tell herself why she must get away. A wave of terror, of shrinking from what was to come, swept over her. What was it she had done? What was to happen to her? On the night before she went, John had found her listless and miserable. She tried to tell him that it was all a mistake, but his look frightened her and she merely said she wanted to get away, that she was tired out with all the fuss. No, he was not to come.

When she reached the Farm it was profoundly dreary. The snow had gone and the brown fields showed no sign of spring. The caretaker had made a few hasty preparations, but the house wore a shut-up melancholy air. She had been almost angry when Aunt Emma, in bewilderment at Eileen's whim, had proposed coming with her. Now she would have been glad of her companionship.

As night fell, the March drizzle deepened into a steady rain. Eileen lay sleepless and wretched, listening to the monotonous patter, all the old fear surging over her. She could not, could not be married! In vain she argued with herself, trying to shut out the memory of Victoria Lenowska's vow; in vain she put from her what she had learned of her father's and mother's pain. She told herself that she was morbid and worn out, trying to remember those she had known who had wanted to be married, wanted what she now longed to flee away from; none of her efforts at reasoning with herself availed. She was afraid, with a sick fear that left her weak and trembling.

For many days she wandered about, trying to think

DRIFT

out what to do. If she did not marry John, what then? She could not go on with her life as it had been before. She supposed all girls were frightened as she was before giving themselves up, yielding to what seemed the only thing possible to do. Why should she find it harder than anyone else?

After a week there came a letter from John. "I am disobeying you," he wrote, "because I cannot stand this anxiety. What has happened? What can I do? Just tell me that you are well and I will try and be patient until I have some further word. I long to come to you."

She sent him a telegram giving him permission to come in a few days. The next day he was there, troubled but infinitely tender and concerned. He made no move to touch her. "Do you want me to go away again?" he asked.

She had been very lonely and John was gentle. She told him, "No."

He persuaded her to go for a walk over the brown hills. After he had been with her for a few hours she thought herself very wrong and foolish to have been so frightened. It was good to see him again, good to hear his voice; the loneliness had been dreadful. As she turned to him, John became himself again, happy and confident. He told her of his distress and wonder, he did not want to press her, but she must trust him, have faith in him that all would be well. He could not lose her now, he could not; he would wait, he would do anything but give her up. That could not be. They belonged to each other. Eileen listened and gave way. She let him take her in his arms and hold her, she was weak and tired with thinking. It was good to be lulled. She begged him to be with her as much as possible. "I get frightened without you," she said.

The marriage ceremony took place in late May. It did

DRIFT

not differ materially from other spring weddings, save that, Eileen being the centre, there was an added touch of distinguished grace that made the guests exclaim to each other, "What an unusual wedding! How odd and pretty for the bridesmaids to be in that soft, old green!" At one period of the discussion of preparations, Eileen had expressed a desire for a wedding garment of old gold, but Aunt Emma had lifted up her voice in such a wail of dismayed protest that Eileen had yielded.

She hated to wear white, but it was in white she stood with John before several impressive personages in full canonicals and said things she was told to say and gave the proper responses to the very curious questions they put to her. It was all very solemn indeed; eminently well calculated to give the idea of permanence and inevitability to those taking the principal parts in the ceremony; or to those in the audience contemplating a similar course; even—it might be added—to those who had thought they might unjoin what—so it was clearly stated—God had joined together.

When the proceedings were over, Eileen looked at John as he leaned toward her and thought that she would try and remember all that she had just said.

She had hardly seen him during the weeks preceding the wedding; there had been such a multitude of things to attend to. Now they were to be always together. They were to go first to the Farm, where a complete household had put all in readiness. Eileen had demurred at this, for the hours she had spent there alone were poignantly in her mind and she dreaded the association; but the plan seemed the best one, and not wishing to give her reason, she made no objections.

When they found themselves alone together, John, believing her tired, tried his utmost to ask nothing of her. His tenderness was great. It was so wonderful to have this delicate, beautiful thing he cherished there

DRIFT

with him,—his wife; he would wait until she had become used to his presence, until she would turn to him herself, before letting her feel the strength of his great need of her.

The days slipped by quietly enough. They took long walks over the hills and fields and at night he would often read her to sleep, then stealing away so as not to disturb her.

John was happy. He tried to put from him any thought except that she was near him. Sometimes he suffered, for a wonder came over him whether the woman he had married would give herself to him fully and freely with passionate desire for his caress. He would not make demands, he could ask nothing of her she was not willing to give; so the days and nights went by.

They seldom spoke of their relationship to each other. John could not, he did not know how, and Eileen understood little of what was taking place in his mind. Her fear had gone, his tenderness and concern had banished that. She was glad to be with him, glad of his protecting touch. She knew that it was not possible their lives could go on like this, but she made no sign and gave no word.

One night John came to her very late. She had left him reading downstairs. His broken words, his tightening hands, told her of his need. She was passive as she let him take her in his arms.

CHAPTER XI.

THE spring was lovely on the hills. The days, with their harmony of young green and white and shining gold, went drifting by. Soon the jewelled dandelions turned to fluffy balls, the apple-blossoms fell to make soft snow storms on the grass, the lavender of lilacs and the pink of thorns lifted up their notes of colour to mingle with the deepening symphony of greens. The wrens came back, twittering and cheeping over the seriousness of their affairs, blackbirds squawked maternal and paternal anxieties about their fledglings' flights; the world seemed intent on the important business of creating beauty.

As the days lengthened, a peace descended upon the restless spirit of Eileen. She yielded gladly to the man who gave her such encompassing love. She had been afraid, but his tenderness had won and she was happy.

John was as one transformed. For many years he had starved and thirsted, yet had remained alone. He was unversed in the ways of women. He, too, was afraid—afraid of troubling, afraid of asking over much. Eileen was so delicate, so frail a thing, she must always be considered first; he kept his need subordinate to his love.

They were out of doors all day, wooed by the sweet wiles of June. The wood by the river was their fa-

THE
LIFE OF
EILEEN



EILEEN

THE
MUSEUM

DRIFT

avourite spot, and there they would spend hours, lazily reading or talking. Of themselves and their relationship to each other, they seldom spoke. To John the beauty was too precious, too wonderful to put into words; for Eileen to turn to him, her hand held out for his, was enough. Eileen had been so long alone with her thoughts, to have a companion was all she asked. She told him of her unhappy brooding, of her wonder whether she would ever care for anyone; she even confided several love affairs, but of Thorne she never spoke.

John, lying on the grass, touching her dress, or with a hand in his possession, could not recover from his astonishment that he—plain John Templeton—had won her. For a space, the world belonged to them and they were happy; to share each trifling plan or event became a joy. Each day held a store of unknown possibilities to explore and discover. Often they would glance quickly at each other, as if each tried to see the effect on the other first, of some new beauty.

John was the gayest of companions. He had a fund of spirits that bubbled forth in charming and unexpected ways. It seemed as if his gravity, which Eileen had thought a part of him, was only something over-laid, something life had taught him. He was glad to forget the lesson. Sometimes his nonsense recalled to Eileen the abandonment of his remarks on the evening they had first met. She had told him how cruelly he had embarrassed her on that occasion. "I was embarrassed myself," he averred. "I was profoundly shocked at being so impertinent to a lady, but it couldn't be helped. Moreover, it was dastardly of me to curry favour through the charming fancies of that worshipful Italian boy. I must have been thinking of Cyrano."

Sometimes he would play mad, elfin music to her, flinging his violin down to explain to her what it said,

DRIFT

laughing at her efforts to understand; sometimes he would be almost melancholy and suddenly put the violin away saying that he would not play again. During these days Eileen began to realize the tremendous thing that she had done. It was only at times she felt this, when a quick, bewildered look from John made her question herself, wondering what he would ask of her in the years to come.

She looked at the jewel casket on her dressing-table that had come, in those first days of their engagement, with his message that it held "life and death." She had thought the words charmingly romantic. Remembering, she turned to John her eyes full of tears. "'You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,'" the words came brokenly, pitifully, "'though for myself, I would not wish myself much better, yet for you—I would be trebled twenty times myself—' Oh, John, John dear! How can I be 'trebled twenty times myself?' Who is there to show me what to do? I long to be—for you! You'll know some day what I mean—what I really am—how little—how inadequate! And then, what will come—what will come?'"

He soothed her bitter weeping with adoring words—"Foolish, foolish one! His worshipped one, his 'royal lady,' his beloved, to feel inadequate!" If she would only stop crying she would see that it was funny—positively funny. Could she but know how he had wondered whether he dared take her happiness into his keeping, whether he had a right, even with his great love, to ask so precious a gift. He longed to give all—and more than all that he was—that he could make of himself, to her.

But Eileen could not be comforted. "Aunt Emma told me once that my father asked my mother to be more than she could be. I wonder if I shall be like that—if you—" She gazed at him, terror in her eyes. John could

DRIIFT

find no words to ease her pain; it was days before the shadow passed.

They used to bring home tiny ferns and young growing things from their expeditions to the woods, and these accumulating, Eileen had a fancy they should be arranged into a miniature Japanese garden. She set to work one morning, with several amused gardeners to help, and for two days John was a surprised spectator of her capacity for toil. As everything she did seemed to him wholly entrancing, he stood about and admired, unconscious that the "garden" was shortly to provide him with a shock.

By means of mirrors and bits of stone and bark, with odd plants from a near-by greenhouse to supplement the original ferns, something resembling a Japanese garden was ultimately effected. When diminutive and very ancient pine-trees had been added, Eileen declared it a work of art. She was enchanted with her handiwork and immediately desired a bronze Buddha to complete the picture. A telegram to New York procured a Buddha, who was duly enshrined and sat smiling blandly amid his new surroundings.

Unfortunately there was an insufficient supply of earth under the garden, and it was not long before the growing things around Buddha began to fade. Eileen was disconcerted, the sun had been hot as she worked, and now behold the garden a miserable object. She ordered the sad looking plants removed. "I think I'll save Buddha," she said. "He's rather nice, don't you think?" She put him on the mantle, where he continued to sit and smile.

A few days later, Eileen, opening her letters, gave an exclamation. "My goodness, John!" she said, gazing at a bill, "what do you think? Buddha cost two thousand

DRIFT

dollars. I didn't know he was a good one, I must go and look at him."

John was startled. The cost of the tiny ancient pine-trees had surprised him a good deal. "Can't you send it back?" he asked.

"I suppose so," said Eileen, "but he's rather nice where he is, against that yellow brocade! Why not keep him now he's here? I tell you I have a discerning eye, I thought he wore a superior air when I took him from the box."

John wanted to make further protests; he did not consider Buddha even an ornament, but he reflected Eileen was at liberty to buy what she chose and held his peace.

After a month of their "dream life," as John called it, a big sealed package of mail was brought to him one morning, and he forthwith abstracted himself from the world around. Eileen spoke to him once or twice and received only a vague word. He had suddenly become a distant being, aloof and unapproachable. After about an hour of waiting she went over and kissed him on the forehead. He put up his hand and patted her and went on reading. She rose slowly and opened the door, preparatory to departure, but he made no sign. This was awful; she went upstairs and cried.

The next day a young man from "the office" appeared with more papers, and he and John were closeted together all of the morning. Eileen came to the door and was courteously greeted. She was given a chair and invited to sit down, but that was all. It was very strange. After a little she wandered off, unobserved.

Gradually it came over her that John was a busy person. She had never seen any busy people except at the settlement and that was from rather far off. At luncheon she asked him what he and the young man had been talking about. He started to tell her. She

DRIFT

wanted to understand and asked several questions, elementary in character. John was a true American; he considered his wife as something quite apart from business. Seeing that it would be necessary to go into detail to make her understand, he put the matter aside. "After our honeymoon," he said.

Coming in from the garden one morning, she found that John had left for town after a long-distance telephone call. There was a note for her and he had left a good-bye, as the servant had not been able to find her. Mr. Templeton would be at home by the next night, probably; he would wire or telephone, of course. "I think there's some kind of trouble at the factory, Ma'am," the butler volunteered, "Mr. Templeton seemed worried."

Eileen was startled and a little resentful. What could be the circumstances that necessitated such an abrupt leave?

In the evening came a telephone call. Eileen hurried to answer, only to find that it was someone else speaking. Mr. Templeton wished Mrs. Templeton to be informed that there had been an accident, one of the women at the factory had been seriously injured. Mr. Templeton hoped to get home by the next evening, but was not sure.

The new wife, thus deserted, found the hours long. Late the next night, John appeared, very tired and distressed over the accident, which he said was inexcusable. There had been great carelessness somewhere, the matter must be thoroughly sifted: might he have something to eat, as he had had nothing since morning. There had been a great many people to see and things to be looked into. He might have to go back in a day or so. Of course he would pay, do everything he could; it was detestable, all the heartless precautions that had to be taken simply out of fear, because of those scoun-

DRIFT

drelly lawyers that always battered on cases like this. They were the greatest knaves unhung. He could never make the operatives understand that, with all the safety devices in the world, their safety must rest, ultimately, on themselves, on their own care and thought. He could not foresee or guard against recklessness.

After he had had supper and lighted a cigar, he asked what she had been doing. It was good to come back to her; had she wanted him, missed him very much? He held her close and Eileen was happy in his presence, his caress.

In a few moments his thoughts went back to the events of the day. He could not rid himself, he said, from the sense of personal responsibility. There had been a man killed some years before; it had been the man's own fault, but there would always be that haunting sense that it might have been prevented. He sometimes wished he was one of the operatives himself, with no further responsibility than a day's work and a pay envelope on Saturday night. He believed that was the truest way to live anyhow. In this case the woman was actually disobeying orders. The overseer had just called sharply to her when she turned and her arm was caught and crushed. There was a hope of saving it, the doctors said, but not much; a day or two would show. Meanwhile he had only been able to make arrangements for every care possible.

Eileen grieved with him. She could understand his concern and anger, she said, when disobeying orders was so directly the cause.

John had no idea as he talked how she recoiled from the scenes he described. The thought of suffering was always terrible to her, and the incident at the factory seemed to bring sharply home to her consciousness that side of life which at times haunted her by its ugliness. A sort of rage of regret filled her for those who were de-

DRIFT

nied that which was so necessary to her—light, beauty, graciousness; and when in addition accidents occurred, it seemed unbearable. The only easement she could find was in giving money. She suggested this now, but John assured her that everything had been done for the present.

After John was asleep, wearied from the anxiety of the day, Eileen lay looking out of the window at the summer night, thinking of what he had told her. Against the deep blue of the sky, she could see the waving outlines of the hovering trees; now and again a hoot owl sent its eerie call quivering through the night. She got up and stood at the window watching the quiet scene. The lawn stretched out, dim and soft and dark; a great bed of white iris at the far end shimmered its blossoms in the summer night sending out its call; the sleeping world was very fair. Eileen watched the still beauty, asking herself, "Why, why must there be pain?"

In the morning she was surprised to find John refreshed and ready for their tramp across the hills. The accident seemed quite gone from his mind, or at least held in abeyance until such time as further consideration would be necessary. When they came in there was a telegram reporting the woman's condition as more hopeful.

Two days later as they were at luncheon, a request came by telephone for his presence at the factory. He went upstairs at once to pack a valise. Eileen took a sudden resolution. Summoning Sophie, they both made hasty preparations, and when John came down, he gazed astonished at a lovely wife, hatted and gloved and ready to accompany him. And that was not all; beside her were a variety of bags and in addition a sizable hamper, which showed signs of leaking.

"My dear!" John exclaimed, "I can't take you! There'll be nothing for you to do. I shall get back

DRIFT

tomorrow night." John had a small apartment adjoining his offices at the factory that he found adequate, but he could not imagine Eileen there; nor could he see her partaking of the fare provided by a near-by boarding-house or the lunch counter of the employees.

"Can't I be of use at all?" Eileen asked. "I thought you would like to have me come, just to be with you and perhaps I could go and see the girl and do something to help?"

John laughed and caught her to him. If he would not let her come, it was infinitely sweet to him that she had wanted to do so. There was little time for discussion.

"What's that?" he asked as the hamper was selected from among Eileen's bags and placed in the motor.

"Just a few things I thought the poor woman might like," Eileen explained. "Will it be troublesome? Sophie was going to carry it."

John lifted it to test the weight. A few drops of water falling on his trousers sealed the fate of the hamper.

"It's the ice, I suppose," said Eileen ruefully; "Can't you get her some flowers or something? I'll go to the station with you."

The car whirled down the driveway. She wished he had not to go, wished that he would let her go with him and try to help; it was all rather bewildering. She waved him a good-bye with her eyes wet.

The next day she had a telegram saying that the woman's arm would be saved without permanent disablement and satisfactory settlement had been made. "Might send hamper contents by express if you like. Sorry could not bring them."

Superintending the packing of the basket and getting it off occupied some hours happily and late in the

DRIFT

afternoon John got back. Eileen was in her room, and he came to her, eager and happy. "Beloved, oh my beloved!" he held her and would not let her go. "My arms are starved for you!"

After several visits from the "young man from the office" John announced that his "holiday in heaven" was over and there was work to be done on earth. He would spend four days a week in town and three in the country while they were at the Farm. He suggested breakfasting in the dining-room the following morning at seven-thirty as more conducive to a business frame of mind. Didn't Eileen think it was just a bit messy anyway, having breakfast upstairs, and it took so long to get more of anything.

Eileen appeared at the early breakfast clad in a diaphanous garment of pale blue. On her head was a little bonnet of gold net bedecked with a black poppy. Her hair was about her shoulders, and she looked very lovely and very sleepy. She had had her bath, she said, but Sophie never came when she rang, so she couldn't get any more dressed. She wanted to be a dutiful wife.

On the polished dining-room table, one at each end, were two daintily appointed breakfast trays. "How funny the table looks," said Eileen. "Is that the way it ought to be?"

"I don't know," said John; "it doesn't matter, does it? The main question is food. Where is it? I've only about fifteen minutes."

After ringing frantically but unavailingly Eileen disappeared, returning shortly with a plate.

"But there's nothing on it!" said John. "I've got a plate."

"I've scolded them," she said; "it'll be here in a minute. I'm sure those trays aren't right."

"There's a big silver thing at our house," said John.

DRIFT

“Mother manages it and coffee appears. I never noticed how. I don't think there are trays. Didn't we get lots of coffee pots?”

“Five,” said Eileen, and disappeared pantry-wards again as John looked at his watch. This time she returned with a trail of servants, each bearing a dish. She made a low obeisance, her hands at her forehead, palms out. “My lord is served,” she said. John was obliged to forego part of his breakfast time, she looked so enchantingly lovely standing by him, anxious to know if all was to his liking.

After he had gone, Eileen was very lonely. She had a serious conversation with the butler and then the cook, who both expressed contrition. The cook said, “Sure, Miss Eileen's husband can have his breakfast any time!” Afterwards they all three considered the proper arrangement of a breakfast table. “It must look prettier,” Eileen decreed. Next she read the newspaper. Then she picked some roses and arranged them and wondered what she should do until night. She had wondered the same thing many times before at the Farm. She was rather surprised that she should still be doing so after she was married.

CHAPTER XII.

AS the maples began to turn red and gold Eileen said they must go to town. There was a great deal to be done.

There seemed to be. John could not be made to understand why it took so much time and attention to prepare a house for habitation. He said the houses he had lived in were always ready, with beds and tables and things like that. He had never thought about how they got there. He remembered that his mother had come up and arranged his rooms when he first went to college, but after she had gone he took out a lot of things. She had said his sitting-room looked "bleak" when she came up to visit him and enquired for certain articles of furniture. He laughed as he recalled the incident. "It developed the blessed woman had given me some family heirlooms, and I'd bundled 'em off somewhere. However, the janitor hunted them up and all was well."

Eileen looked serious. "Are you attached to the 'heirlooms'?" she enquired.

"Lord, no!" John assured her; "don't get frightened. The mater didn't think I was appreciative, so they were bestowed upon the helpless Julia."

"It is hard to combine things, you know," Eileen looked around Aunt Emma's dark library, remember-

DRIFT

ing her efforts, "The old things—I mean old things like these—get stubborn and disagreeable. They seem soft and comfortable and nice until you try to put them in different positions and then you find you can't."

John laughed. "Like their owners," he said, "there is steel inside."

Eileen was in a state of joyful excitement over her new house. She spent her days hunting down treasures of old and odd furniture and would come home exhausted but radiant over new acquisitions. Stuffs and samples of all kinds lay about. She had a pleasant impression that all silk things could be had from "John's factory" free of cost. It was a disappointment but not a deterrent to find this not to be the case.

Mrs. Templeton, Senior, thought the house John had taken a very large one for two young people, but she forebore comment. Aunt Emma thought so, too. They shook their heads a little, remarking times had changed.

The two ladies admired each other distantly. They were always extremely cordial, but underneath, each wondered how her darling would fare at the hands of the person the other had brought up.

They united their praises for the beauty of the new house. The drawing-room was grey and white. On the floor of dull black tile were old Chinese rugs of rich colours and there were jars of grey-white and faint rose. An old lacquer screen radiated dim beauty. Buddha was promoted to a place of honour, enquiries into his history bringing out the fact that his origin was highly ancient and honourable. The room was a curious combination; it was almost austere, yet it had an indefinable air of softness and exotic grace.

Aunt Emma Endicott sat herself down with a dubious air upon the various peculiar pieces of furniture, one after another, to test them. She said she preferred upholstered things herself, but acknowledged that the

DRIFT

cushions of soft, old brocaded stuffs made the straight-lined chairs and couches comfortable.

Eileen's own apartments were in mauve and blue and silver; Chinese embroideries were everywhere, glowing in their faded colour like clouded jewels.

Eileen revelled in colour; sometimes startlingly brilliant—one room was in black and white with flashes of scarlet—yet she used it with such delicacy of restraint that the effect was like perfume, caressing,—sensed rather than seen.

“How did you know how to do it?” said Mrs. Templeton, looking around. “It is so different from anything one sees and so perfect, so indescribably yours.”

“Why, I don't know,” Eileen answered. “I've enjoyed doing it,” and indeed the “knowing how” seemed an instinct. Unerringly she obtained effects in which she herself shone as a jewel in a setting of perfect grace. It was not conscious; she needed to be so surrounded to be happy.

Julia Templeton wandered about and made no comments. Finally she remarked, “It's funny how a man changes when he gets married.” Aunt Emma bent upon her an enquiring eye, but Julia did not heed.

“Behold,” said John, coming in, “the softening and refining influence of woman! I am to live in this fairy land of loveliness. Expect soon to hear me speak in dithyrambs.”

John was happy at Eileen's pleasure and uncritically appreciative of the beauty she created, but dumbfounded at the bills. His surprised protests met with such gay lack of comprehension he soon held his peace. “But John,” Eileen would explain, “that is *good!* It's real seventeenth century. Couldn't you have told?”

No, John could not have told, but he learned in a short time how the centuries count up. He sought the head of the firm of lawyers having in charge mat-

DRIFT

ters pertaining to the Picardy estate. John had been scrupulously careful at the time of their marriage that Eileen should retain all control over her income, but it seemed well to find out whether she were exceeding it.

The bald-headed lawyer threw up his hands. He appeared to think that John had a monumental task. "I never minded her expenditures so much," he said, "at least there's something to show for them. It's those crazy gifts she makes that are the devil, and then she'll forget. You never know what's coming in to be paid. There's Delia O'Houlihan or Maggie O'Hara or Ole Olson or some Rudolfo Tutti Frutti person that she thinks can sing,—Lord knows who all, no end to 'em. There's always some perfectly good reason,—Delia's sister's children have to go to the country or Ole Olson's brother has consumption at a sanatorium, and so it goes. You love her for it, of course, but it's crazy, perfectly crazy. Oh, yes, she'll exceed her income, that goes without saying, and then she'll wheedle you. Want to take charge? I'll trust you."

John laughed and declined. He thought over the words on his way home—"It's perfectly crazy, but you love her for it." He did indeed, "love her for it."

"Mother," he said one day, "how much do ladies' dresses cost?"

"It depends on the lady," said Mrs. Templeton, "for beautiful ladies they cost a very great deal."

John grinned. "And how much do ladies' fur coats cost?"

"As much as a king's ransom in a fairy tale," was the only answer she would give.

Every day or so John went to his mother's house. Sometimes Eileen went with him, more often she would urge his going alone, saying she was sure it would give his mother greater pleasure. "Just think, John, how terrible for her, having you come home to me instead of to

DRIFT

her, at night! Do you think, oh do you think, she will love me a little? I want her to so much, but I don't see how she can."

Mrs. Templeton had begged for a visit "to get acquainted," but Eileen had pleaded to "go home to Aunt Emma's," and now their afternoon visits seemed a little ceremonious. Eileen was not at ease with John's mother. She could not tell why, for the elder woman's kindness was unailing.

When he was with his mother, John missed something. The old intimacy of their common thought-life, the spontaneity of expression was gone. There was withholding. Deeply tender as his mother was, a curious formality had come between them. Said Julia, "I wish I didn't feel Eileen was sending you to call on us, it kills my merry chatter."

By December invitations began to pour in. They came by every mail; they piled up in the big blue bowl in Eileen's morning room; they overflowed and were pinned together in a long streamer from her dressing table:—teas, musicals, balls, dinners, the opera, luncheons,—there seemed no end. They overlapped and interfered and made each other impossible—these importunate, exacting, unrestrained invitations; they jostled and pushed each other shockingly; between them, they almost murdered Time. "Isn't everybody kind?" said Eileen.

Each night they went forth,—Eileen in the lovely things of golden half-tones she affected; John in correct black and white—to greet their fellows; to smile and eat and talk and dance and whirl; or else the gay, perfumed throng came to them—one or the other.

As Mrs. John Templeton, with a beautiful new house of her own to be admired, Eileen found "all this" more to her taste than when, as the niece of a busily phil-

DRIFT

anthropic lady, she had "come out" with a tea. She was entranced with new possibilities and found amusements in planning odd entertainments where her flare for unique effects had full swing. There was a "phantom play," where the guests were grey-clad spirits moving to ghostly music in dimly lighted halls: suddenly a wild dance by a flock of demons in mad array, who whirled through their revel with unearthly cries and vanished: next, a seraphic boy's voice soaring with piercing sweetness, up, up, up—transporting the startled listeners to a far region of white cold, of frozen beauty, where dwelt perpetual purity. No wonder everyone loved to come. Eileen was adored; she was highly decorative.

John found himself in a new world, an enchanted world, where all was graceful, lovely and exciting; but after a little while, in some peculiar way, it was for him unreal. He was not an integral part. It all seemed to go by on the outside, leaving him charmed, but bewildered, a spectator at a show. He watched Eileen, saw other people's pleasure at her coming and felt proud. He tried to keep on feeling proud enough, for as the winter wore on it seemed to him he saw her only at a distance. He damned himself for a selfish brute because his thoughts went back to the riverside, to those evenings alone amid the stillness of the Connecticut hills.

In March they took a two weeks' trip to the South. The days were precious. "Heaven revisited," John called it; here was happiness and tranquillity and rest. Eileen was eager to do all that he wished, and for a little space the mountains of Virginia became as perfect a setting for love-making as the Connecticut valley.

As they sat under the pines in a lovely spot they had found and appropriated as theirs, Eileen grew thoughtful. Finally she said, "John, I wish I were bigger."

"You are as high as my heart," said John lazily, "I

DRIFT

don't want you any bigger. I don't want anything in the world different from what it is, at least, I don't just this minute."

"That is a pretty but very selfish answer."

"Quoted," John gave her, "sorry I can't claim it. Why be bigger? What do you want to reach to?"

"You."

"Oh!" John sat up and looked at her.

"You look so foolish with all those pine needles in your hair," said Eileen, "make yourself tidy and sit 'way over there so we can talk. I want to be serious; I've had it on my mind for a long time, to talk to you, I mean."

"Dear me!" said John, feeling his hair, "you make me feel very guilty, somehow. Couldn't you manage a lighter tone? The sun and the lovely smells and those high branches up there all seem so cheerful! Was it the trees made you want to grow, perhaps? Go on, I'm tidy and attentive." He leaned against a pine-tree opposite her, embraced his knees with two lean brown hands and waited.

Eileen paid no heed. "You are flippant," she said. John nodded and agreed that he was. It was probably the pine needles in his hair. Mightn't they act like vine leaves?

"I'd like to be as high as your head," she said, "and I'm not. I can't think the things you think about. I don't know what they mean."

"God be thanked!" John put in.

"You are not very encouraging to a person trying to talk seriously." Eileen's tone had become very grave. John moved over and took a hand for comfort.

"What kind of things?"

"Business, of course."

"What do you want to know about business?"

"How it's run—what else?"

DRIFT

“But why do you want to know that?”

“So as to be a better wife to you. Don’t you remember I told you I wanted to be adequate. I do want to be!”

John kissed the hand. “But I didn’t marry you to help me in my business.”

“No, of course not, but I’m so ignorant, so useless as an advisor! I wish I knew more, I wish I’d been educated differently! Couldn’t I go to a business college?”

“I suppose you could. I think they teach shorthand and stenography. If you were to do that for me I couldn’t do any business.”

“Oh, John, please don’t talk idiocies. I’m trying to tell you I want to improve myself, want to know more, so you won’t find me stupid and lacking. That’s not a foolish idea, yet you make it seem so.”

John put his arms around her. He was touched and therefore became silent. He saw her sincerity, but it seemed to him difficult to lay out a proper course of instruction. He held her close.

“Now—you see!” said Eileen, “you think everything is all right if you can hold me; that doesn’t make me any more intelligent, does it?”

“But, my dear, what are we going to do?” said John. “I certainly don’t expect you to have a hand in business; the idea seems absurd, you don’t know anything about it; it’s perfectly adorable of you, of course—”

“Couldn’t you explain to me,—about things?”

“Why, I’ll try to gladly.”

“I never heard anybody speak in a tone conveying less expectancy of success,” said Eileen. “Come, let’s go home. It’s cold.”

On their walk back to the hotel John tried to plan a visit to the “Works” on their return, promising to take her all over them. She should ask questions, he

DRIFT

said, and he would explain everything—the whole process. It was all in vain; she would have none of the subject nor did she recur to it during their stay.

There was a little spurt of post-Lenten gayety, and to John's dismay when they returned, engagements piled up ahead. One night he protested. He was very tired, he could not, would not go. Eileen was concerned. She flew to the telephone, coming back to soothe and pet him till he felt like a hypocrite.

Next day she announced that she had cancelled every engagement; they were free.

"It took me nearly all day," she said. "It was so hard, thinking up enough excuses!"

"I didn't suppose you would be so drastic," John laughed. "It's fine, but rather rude, I'm afraid."

"Oh, but I wrote such polite notes!" Eileen looked serious. "I'm sure no one will mind." She was filled with uneasy compunctions at the suggestion. "I hate the idea of being rude," she said, frowning.

"I know you do, bless you!" John said. "There's no one like you. Being rude is a crime in your code, isn't it?"

"It makes people look sad and miserable," said Eileen, "and that's a pity."

"How do you know," John asked her, "since you never are?"

"Oh, but I am, terribly rude and cruel and unkind and forgetful, and then I'm sorry."

John laughed. In the months since their marriage he had never heard a petulant word, it was amazing to him, he told her, how she kept such serenity.

Eileen smiled and came close to him. "It's because I'm happy with you," she said. "I used to have an awful, awful temper. Aunt Emma and I quarreled all the time."

It was not the truth, John averred. Aunt Emma

DRIFT

was a nice person, a dear person, but old-fashioned and a little exacting of course, old people always were. How could anyone quarrel with a person so invariably yielding and sweet as Eileen? Her gentleness was one of the lovely things about her. That silver voice always kept its music, its lure of soft cadences.

As summer approached there was an old country house on Long Island to be put in order, taking, as before, an infinite amount of planning and buying. Eileen had bought the place because of the garden. The former owner had amused himself by laying out an extensive Italian garden, richly planted. He had moved away or grown tired of his toy, and the place from neglect had a wild, overgrown beauty. Creepers had encroached everywhere, untrimmed, unhindered. Exotic flowers struggled for supremacy with field daisies, queen's lace, and golden rod, gravel paths were only to be discerned by guessing where they should be. The fountain was a mass of wild grape-vines and the balustrades had waving tendrils of Virginia creeper reaching out as if to clutch and hold a rare passer-by. The hedges were high rough barriers, forbidding and secretive; altogether a most romantic garden.

The Scotch gardener was agape when he heard his new mistress decree that the garden was to remain as it was. "That mess?" he enquired. "There's no sense in that! A shocking, bad, weedy place, I call it."

He was so outraged that he threatened departure, but Eileen's persuasions won a grin from him and he stayed. Eileen looked at the garden and meditated. She would have a Boccaccio fête. Behold shortly, high awnings of the orange of Venetian sails; rugs of Damascus; long tables with golden horns filled with rich-coloured fruit; cushions of old Italian brocade on the stone seats. The garden became the supposed scene

DRIFT

above Florence during the plague. Story-tellers, minstrels and strolling players appeared, to amuse the guests and distract their anxiety. Through one golden summer afternoon, beauty and joy held revelry.

Eileen was full of delight at the success of her efforts. "It was a nice party, wasn't it?" she said. "I'm glad everybody was pleased; they said all kinds of pretty things. Oh, John, how lovely life is! Did you have a nice time and were you glad? Hold me tight and tell me that you were."

Eileen was happier than she had ever been. If there were no moments of profound joy, she was not acutely conscious of the lack. She was free from Aunt Emma,—that was much, free of all those fussy arguments about everything she wanted to do. It was heaven to be indulged and petted as John indulged her. His tenderness enwrapped her as in a sheltering garment; she turned to him for everything as simply and naturally as a child.

As John watched her, saw her absorption and pleasure in all that was beautiful, her tender, graceful ways, her courtesy for every one around her, she seemed to him like a lovely child, looking out on life with undimmed, expectant eyes. His be the task of shielding her from all that was ugly and unclean.

CHAPTER XIII

IT was the year of the municipal elections. Evil threatened the great city. After a period of freedom from the monster, Greed, suddenly, his leering head was seen on the horizon. It would be a fight to keep him back from the citadel. Like a loyal son, John prepared for the fray. The Beast must be slain before he grew too great.

A band of five hundred citizens was formed under the resounding name of "The League for Political Freedom," and doughtily they set forth to carry on their warfare in all sorts of evil-smelling, illy lighted halls and public places, with weapons of eloquence and zeal. To every far-away corner of the field they sent their emissaries, caparisoned and bright with righteousness. No saloon, no haunt, no union so obscure but the League must find it out for capture.

John developed powers as a stump speaker. Aflame with earnestness he climbed up on dusty platforms to face surliness and opposition, pounding away until he won recognition for his candidate.

Night after night he was absent on this important business. Eileen did not know what had happened to her. She seemed to have lost a husband. John played fast and loose with engagements, ate and slept at eccentric hours and took to bringing home to dinner individuals in tweeds who addressed her as "Ma'am"

DRIFT

and whose conversation was obscure. She ardently desired to hear John make a speech and petitioned to go.

John objected. "It's no place for you," he said. "Too dirty; besides, you'd shake my nerve."

John enjoyed the fight. He was stifled with hot-house perfume; the male in him rejoiced in the dirty halls. For some months he had been growing dissatisfied with everything around him. It all seemed uselessly beautiful, oppressively perfect, too remote from the soil to be endured. He feared to say it to himself, but it was true; he hated the beautiful house Eileen had made. It represented for him unutterable weariness of spirit. He had stood about smiling on so many brilliant occasions that now, to enter the drawing-room was to feel himself become unreal, a black-coated creature of a golden world.

He told himself that it was illogical to spend years in providing beautiful surroundings for his work-people and find the same idea intolerable when carried further, yet so it was. Eileen's ways with money continued to amaze him. What she saw that attracted her, that she bought; whosoever touched her pity, to him she gave. She loved the beauty she created around her with such daintiness of passionate attachment John could not find it in his heart to spoil her pleasure. From the day smiling Buddha had arrived at the Farm, there had been an ascending scale. He found a savage satisfaction in pouring equivalent amounts into the coffers of the "League for Political Freedom." If clean gold could be forged into a weapon to defeat the Beast, by all means let it be expended lavishly, as lavishly as on themselves.

There was no lack of method. Translators set to work and made known in many tongues the desirability of certain candidates; bright page boys of the "League" distributed these leaflets from house to house; placards,

DRIFT

posters, campaign literature poured forth; the pictured countenances of the candidates favoured by the "League" were as the sands of the sea for multitude; every school child in the city as he ambled homeward was presented with a picture with excellent reasons underneath for voting for that particular person and above in bright colours, "Take home to Father."

The fight was telling. Under the onslaught the Beast weakened visibly and receded; there was hope of victory.

One night John was determined at a committee meeting and went to dinner at a chop-house, talking earnestly with a fellow-member, forgetting a dinner-party at home. He came in about nine to find eleven laughing people half way through the meal.

Eileen was as nearly cross as he had ever seen her. Her guests were important, she said. Thereafter she took to telephoning him by day what he was expected to do by night. John was repentant for his lapse of manners and obedient, but he was also occupied with other things. He would go only occasionally to the various gayeties where Eileen shone in her own royal and indolent fashion.

Finally election day dawned. There were a few hours of uncertainty, and then jubilation in the camp of the "League." The Beast was slain, or at least reduced to impotency for a number of years.

John was gratified and exhausted. He purposed, he said, to take ten baths one after the other, give away his clothes and procure the best cigar there was to be found in the world. This done, he would resume charge of the silk industry, which he presumed would show signs of neglect.

Eileen listened to his eager talk and wished that he had let her share in the excitement. Why must she always be set apart? She bought some literature on equal suffrage.

DRIFT

The silk industry did indeed show signs that the owner had been absent. On his first visit John wired her not to expect him at home for a day or so, as there was much demanding his attention.

When he came Eileen was very silent. She asked him about matters at the "Works," listened absently, and finally gave him an account of a dinner-dance she had given the night before, a wild revel it had turned out to be. It appeared the guests had danced till morning. "Then they wanted breakfast," she said, "so the servants got coffee and rolls, then they danced some more,—well—then—then they went home." There seemed to be gaps in the narrative. "It was a little crazy," she added, "I didn't have a very good time. I wished they would go home—sooner."

The recital had a curious effect upon John. It crystallised all the smoldering pain and rebellion into a definite decision. All this should end. Eileen watched him for a moment, then came and sat on his knee. "You are troubled?" she said. "I hated it, you know I did."

John held her and tried to think what to say. He knew that it was his absence that had made the frolic possible; knew too that although this particular evening had not been in accord with her fastidious taste, she was a part of the world of pleasure that he found so alien. If he took her away from it, how could he make her happy? He felt helpless. He had come home anxious about certain matters at the factory; doubtless he was "out of sorts," to be so little able to understand.

"I am worried," he said. "There are all sorts of rumors, the superintendent tells me. A number of the older men have resigned their jobs. I can't make it out."

"Tell me about it." Eileen leaned against him and her touch soothed the trouble in his mind; he put it away from him.

DRIFT

“There’s little to tell,” he said, “just a word or two of discontent. It weighs on me out of all proportion. Oh Eileen, I love you. Tell me that you love me, that you want me, very, very much. I need you, oh so much. I wish I could tell you.”

His stammered words made their appeal. He held her, fiercely, possessively. Eileen stroked his forehead, soothing him by the music of her voice, the magic of her delicate hands.

Almost immediately after dinner Eileen went upstairs, saying she was very tired. She was so often tired that John was troubled. He would creep up softly later on, and finding her asleep would feel reassured. Sometimes he would sit down beside the bed and watch her, yearning over the delicate creature he had in his keeping, wishing he could do more for her, care for her better.

On this occasion he came upstairs about eleven, but was too restless to go to bed. Returning to the library, he lighted a cigar and sat down to think it out. He was profoundly dissatisfied with their life; it was too full of other things, other people. He had drugged himself for a little with the interest of the campaign, but now the situation must be faced. He wanted Eileen with him more and the world was winning her away. With insatiable greed, it closed around her, taking all her sweetness to itself.

He thought of her lying asleep upstairs with a great longing to go and tell her of his thoughts, to talk all these things over with her as he had tried to do in the afternoon. Perhaps together they might find a solution; she was always eager to accede to any proposal that he made. He rose to go but stopped. She had said she was tired, he hesitated to waken her. He went in search of his violin, and shutting the doors began to play.

DRIFT

Many times during the two years of his marriage he had poured out to his violin what he could not say. Tonight he played with a curious passion that held in it the hopelessness of one who knows but will not see.

Suddenly Eileen came. She stood in the doorway, a fur coat over her nightdress. "I woke up and you weren't there," she said, "and I was frightened. I heard the violin, it sounded so sad, coming through the night! Oh John, what is it?"

He looked at her, wondering whether to try and tell her what he had been thinking. She seemed so young, so appealing, standing there with her cloak around her, that he could not speak. Her troubled sweetness drove away his fear. He took her in his arms.

"I think I was calling to you," he said.

Not long afterwards John found her in her room, crying bitterly. She would not tell him at first what was in her mind. Finally in broken words it came; she was afraid she was going to have a child.

"Afraid! Oh my beloved, my beloved!" John cried. "Don't feel so! If it is true, it will be all right."

A few weeks later she told him that she had been mistaken. "I am so thankful, so profoundly thankful!" she said.

John looked at her. He could not speak, could not believe that she had meant what she had said. He went to his rooms to be alone, to think it out. How strange that she should feel like that! What was the reason? During the weeks that followed he longed to find out what was the cause of her fear, but she would not, or could not explain. "Sometime ahead, in a few years," she pleaded, "not now, oh not now!" She seemed so distressed that John was silent. He could say nothing. He was greatly troubled.

CHAPTER XIV

A STRIKE was threatened at the factory. John was dismayed. In all the years of his own and his father's management there had been no strike.

He had had up to now the satisfaction of knowing, or believing at least, that his work-people were content. Well housed, well paid, with every device that he could think of for their well-being added, he was doing all that he could do, all that he felt could be done until changed conditions made more radical reforms possible.

His policy had been that all reasonable requests be granted. The few malcontents who had appeared from time to time had found their positions too much desired to be able to use the threat of departure. Had the entire force marched out, their places could have been filled next day. Unions there were in number and occasionally it had taken argument to effect an amicable settlement. Since the improved conditions brought about by the building of the village, there had seemed entire content. The telegram had been a profound surprise. "Plans for a strike maturing rapidly," it read. "Please come at once. Suggest calling directors' meeting by wire, for tomorrow if possible. The demand is a flat fifteen per cent. raise for all operatives. Am told trouble has been brewing for some months. Chairman of committee, man named Alfred Brent. Says the president of federated unions would not consent to the strike

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JOHN TEMPLETON

DRIFT

earlier, but now insists it be called. Wire me your train so can arrange for conference with Brent."

John found it hard to bear. All the way up in the train he sat aloof, chewing the cud of his bitterness. It was intolerable to him, after the years of study and thought and love he had given, that his employees, without a word of warning, without proffering a request, had announced a strike. Had he not shown that he would grant every reasonable demand; had he not given them everything possible for their welfare, their happiness? Now, just as though he were an employer who had been trying to get the best of them, to exploit their labour, they had turned to rend him, showing their teeth in a snarl of hatred. He was filled with a kind of sickness, a rage against them for their act. He would fight, he resolved, fight them to the end; they thought him weak because he had tried to be their friend, because, fool that he was, he had believed that if he did his part they would do theirs. Well, they would see; he would use their weapon; he would refuse their "demand." Let them go forth and find other employment, they would soon see how difficult it was; let them discover what their lot would be in other places. He knew conditions of other factories; they did not, but they would soon find out. He would close down the works, if necessary, if the strike were general, before he would yield. They would come back in a few months, humbled, begging for work; they would appreciate then, perhaps, what he had done for them. So it was his mind formulated methods of doing what he planned.

He sat thus for perhaps an hour, his arms folded, his head bent, oblivious to everything that went on around him. In that hour John Templeton tasted the very dregs of defeat, knew the fury of baffled purpose, the hatred and despair of the man who is wounded by his fellows and wants to kill in return.

DRIFT

Perhaps he slept, he did not know, but slowly there penetrated through the mist of pain a curious feeling. It was as if his spirit lifted itself from his body, sitting there in the train with bowed head, and regarded him with searching eyes. He saw himself, saw all that he had been thinking, saw it bleak and stark, horrible to look upon—he hated his men, he wanted them to suffer, wanted their wives and children to suffer, if, by such means, they would come to recognise what he had done for them. A great horror swept over him; he covered his face with his hands, appalled at his thoughts. Was he then a hypocrite, even to himself? Had he been merely plotting to control these people who worked for him,—giving them, *unsolicited*, comfort and beauty in addition to their just wages, in order to lull them into acquiescence? Was this the real motive underlying the village? Never before had he felt such bitter doubt; doubt of himself, of the men, of all things. All his work seemed valueless and insincere. Never before had he questioned the desirability of what he was trying to do. He considered it all that could be done. Now, doubts came crowding in upon him, overwhelming him; all that he had taken pride in became as dead sea fruit. He was not sure of his own integrity of purpose.

He recalled an old copy-book maxim he had written as a child, "Assume a virtue if you have it not." He could see the page, the lines growing worse and worse, straggling down. He laughed grimly. He would keep the thought of "closing down" under; no one should know what he had planned; no one should ever know; he would treat the men in the same manner in which he had always treated them, assuming that their claim was just or they would not have made it.

By the end of the journey he had resolved upon his course. He would test himself. He would hold to his faith in the men; he would hold to his faith in his

DRIFT

methods of dealing with them. At that hour, nothing seemed of importance but this one thing. Let them have what they wanted, economic or uneconomic, if by so doing he could find out whether one employer was honestly trying to solve the question, or merely trying to obtain more complete dominion. He recalled the thoughts that had possessed him,—they were exorcised, but the doubt remained.

CHAPTER XV.

THE superintendent was waiting for him at the station. He was a short, stocky, out spoken man, named Fred Morris.

"I am glad to see you, sir," he said. "Things are looking a bit better tonight; I just heard that Wilkes has called a meeting of the foremen, who were the last to consent to the strike. He's hoping to influence them to remain loyal, but hasn't the tongue Brent has. I am very sorry this has occurred, sir, I hope you understand that?"

"Look here, Morris," said John when they were in the cab, "I want your straight opinion. Why are the men doing this? What is their real grievance? What justice is there in their demand?"

"Justice!" echoed Morris, "justice! They're damn scoundrels, that's the justice."

"Hold on," said John, "I asked you a question. I should like it answered. The men know I've listened to every complaint, adjusted every difficulty up to now, why do they threaten? They must have a reason to do it."

"Are you going to talk to the men that way? Morris enquired.

"Certainly," John's voice was stern, "I shall let them see they have my confidence."

Morris turned to stare at him. "You pay union

DRIFT

wages and hand them out a parcel of premiums besides," he said, "it's beyond me what they want."

"You have been superintendent here one year, I think?" said John.

"Yes, sir."

"It seems not to have been sufficient time for you to grasp the principle upon which this business is run."

"What is that?"

"Fair play," said John. "I suppose you would call it romantic idealism, the name doesn't matter; what does matter is that it is a principle here, on both sides. I refuse to have it disturbed by incidental difficulties."

"Spoken like an aristocrat, as Brent would say." Morris gave a short laugh.

It was John's turn to glance at the man beside him as Morris went on speaking. "I think I understand what fair play means. I go on that principle myself and I don't call it 'romantic idealism' either. They're two quite distinct things, to my way of thinking."

"But you think they are confused in mine?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

John was attracted by the other's bluntness. "I beg your pardon," he said. "I seem not to be practising either at the present moment."

"I guess the strike's getting on all our nerves," was Morris's answer.

"The strike isn't a fact yet, remember." As he spoke John determined that it should not be. His short conversation with his superintendent had shown him, he thought, where one of the difficulties lay.

"No, not yet," Morris admitted, "but it will be by this time tomorrow. They're not going to yield, the thing's been stewing too long. Maybe you intend to?"

He looked curiously at his employer. He had always thought John a romantic idealist, but it was disconcerting to him to find that John knew that he was. If

DRIFT

he had adopted his crazy creed as a working basis and meant to stick to it through thick and thin, if he purposed and planned and intended to be a "romantic idealist," how in thunder was he, Morris, to get on with him?

The chairman of the committee representing the strikers was one Albert Brent, an intelligent man who had been at the factory only two years. Morris credited him with being the instigator of all the trouble. Brent was markedly a leader. He had been foreman of a division for about six months and had recently enquired how soon he might look for further advancement. It was only in the last few months that rumours of trouble had been circulating.

Morris had suggested that they send for Brent and have a talk with him unofficially before the meeting with the committee.

Brent came, shook John's hand with every evidence of good will, and took the chair offered to him.

"Well, Mr. Brent," said John, "I came up here on Mr. Morris's summons to look into the causes that make you think it justifiable to ask for higher wages, you and the men behind you. Please state your case."

"We think our labour is worth more," said Brent, "that it should have a larger share of the profits. This is a big business."

"Yes," said John, "it is. I know that quite well. You have union wages."

"And we think union wages aren't high enough. That they are union doesn't mean anything, except that we haven't been at it long enough to get higher. Mr. Scanlon, the head of the union, has authorised this strike. If we can get higher wages, it will mean all the other factories will have to go up."

"I suppose you know we can get other operatives?" Morris put in.

DRIFT

"You certainly can," Brent replied, "all you want, tomorrow, and you can begin and teach 'em how to weave silk, every one of 'em. You won't get a single union man; we've attended to that."

"I see what you mean," said John slowly. "My people have been with me a long time, most of them, far longer than you have. They have become skilled workers. You think that you can incite them to demand more than union wages?" The bitterness rose in his breast; it seemed that "his people" had been too ready to be led.

"Not can do it, *have done it*," said Brent. "I've made no secret of it. Somebody has to wake 'em up, show 'em what they can do, what they are worth."

"Well," said John, "I've often thought your labour was worth more."

Morris stared and Brent laughed. "What am I to conclude from that last remark?" he asked.

"Nothing as yet," John said. "There will be a directors' meeting this afternoon. I was merely stating what I had often thought. I wish to be quite frank, as you are. It's the only basis for a clear understanding, isn't it, to state exactly what one thinks?"

Brent bowed and waited. He showed that he was a little nonplussed. Finally he said, "Well, I'll be frank too, Mr. Templeton. This strike, even if we win,—well,—it won't be the last one. I suppose you know that."

"Quite well," said John and his voice was very clear, "and I dare say numbers of you are beginning to think we should change places,—you employ me, I mean. Isn't that so?"

"Maybe there's a few," said Brent, "but I'm not one of 'em. I hope you understand that. I don't want you to think I'm working for those fellows. I can see where this business needs you."

"Thank you," said John.

Brent looked around the room. "I didn't put it

DRIFT

right, Mr. Templeton," he said with an awkward laugh, "I mean, well, I see it like this; it's fool talk,—this stuff about getting control in the end. There ain't one of us but what would jump at the chance, if we ever got it, to go up as high as we could. Then we'd be talkin' from the other side. No, I don't hold with those notions, but I'll fight for the biggest share of the profits I can get."

"Do you know what the profits are?" John asked.

"Last few years, round about twelve per cent. net," said Brent.

"How did you figure it out?" John was curious to know. On account of the amounts spent on the building of Templeton, the books were inaccessible. He was willing to have his business known, but not how much he had "put back."

Brent was beginning to speak when Morris broke in. He had been muttering for some time. "Do you know how much Mr. Templeton takes for himself?" he demanded, "for if you don't, I'll tell you. It's less than three per cent., do you hear, less than three per cent., and some years it hasn't been one per cent."

John put in an exclamation, but Morris was not to be stopped. "All the rest has gone back, every cent, I've been over the books and I know,—it's gone into your homes and all the rest of it that you've got here, and now you come squealing you want 'more wages'! It makes me sick."

Brent looked at him quietly. "Why don't you be as honest as Mr. Templeton?" he asked, with a queer smile. "I didn't know just how much it had taken to build 'Templeton.' It's a pretty town and costly. It's very kind of course, very kind indeed to give it to the men and their families; I'm not saying it doesn't make 'em happy, most of 'em, but you see, some of us think it doesn't cut any figure. Mr. Templeton would tell you

DRIFT

he got a lot of pleasure building this 'village' that's named after him, an' plantin' the vines and all. He likes it to be pretty so's to be a credit to him; he gets more pleasure, every time he sees the happy, shinin' faces of 'his people,' as he calls 'em, greetin' him when he comes."

Morris started to speak but John held up his hand. "My turn now," he said. "You're quite right, Mr. Brent. I have enjoyed it, enjoyed it immensely. It isn't an illegitimate pleasure, I think, to enjoy making a large number of people comfortable, instead of wretched."

"Of course it isn't," Brent yielded with a wave of the hand, "but it doesn't do any good,—doesn't get anywhere. Mr. Templeton, you don't get on to us; you're generous, no end; you're a good man,—I like you. I'll allow our conditions are better'n anywhere else in the country, but we don't want 'em given to us; we want to bargain and struggle and trade for 'em, just as you do. We want to sell our labour high enough to get all this for ourselves when we want it, or put our extra money in the bank if we don't want it. We *have* to have our vines here, even if we don't like vines, an' we have to be clean and neat an' sanitary, even if all of us don't want to be. Why, Mr. Templeton, Mr. Morris here understands us better'n you do, though he did try on a bluff just now. He'd give us less and treat us worse and bully us if he could, but he'd trade with us and beat us down and then he wouldn't have no grievance if we didn't feel gratitude. Excuse me for speakin' out blunt, Mr. Templeton, that's the way I am. I like you, as I told you before, but you're so damn kind it makes you hard to deal with."

All three men laughed. "Go on," said John.

"Well, I guess I've 'stated the case,' haven't I? That's what you asked me to do. I've tried to show you

DRIFT

the truth about the 'working man.' I guess it ain't all new to you, is it? Why this business of 'improving the conditions of the working man' is about the biggest luxury we have; you mustn't take it away from us. It gives us a 'cause' and a religion; God knows, maybe sometime it'll give us a political creed, there's some of us think so. We're bound to show you we're worth our window boxes, an' not go on havin' 'em thrust on us some places and left off in others, according to whether the owner of the works likes flowers."

"As you say, the ideas you present are not new to me," said John, "but you will appreciate that it is extremely difficult to avoid creating this feeling while instituting improvements that one believes desirable. Shall we talk matters over again tomorrow?"

The three men separated, and Morris went to the window and strummed before turning to look at his employer. His expression indicated that he had nothing further to say.

The meeting of the board of directors was a peculiar one. It consisted in a picturesque re-telling by John of Brent's remarks. All the sarcasm of his soul had free play.

"I've wished before now," he ended, "that I was one of the operatives. It's simpler, or was, until Brent came along."

The directors were kindly men, several of them minority stockholders. They were an inheritance from the days of the elder John Templeton. For the most part they agreed with John's schemes, received their dividends and were content. One, a Mr. White, eighty years of age, always expostulated sardonically before yielding. Nothing seemed to him of great importance. He had seen each generation making the same earnest struggle, repeating the same follies; he supposed they

DRIFT

would go on doing it, but what did it matter really, in the end?

He perceived, as did the others, what John intended to do. Soon they would solemnly proceed to make motions and give the plan back in due form as their counsel.

“But won’t yielding in this grand manner,” said Mr. White, “be but another evidence of your ‘damn kindness’? How are you going to get around that?”

John laughed. “We’ll begin the agreement—‘Recognising the justice.’” Evidently he had his plans laid.

The matter of the strike disposed of, he propounded another, namely, a plan of putting the business on a profit-sharing basis. He had been studying the matter for some time, he told them. There would undoubtedly be another strike very soon, or threat. Brent could, of course, be dismissed, but he rather thought that he, John, needed him. Brent spoke the truth; the truth was always interesting to hear. Before another effort at higher wages could be made, he would like to make a proposition to all of the employees in regard to putting the business on a strictly profit-sharing basis, with all that that plan implied. Possibly it would be better, instead of granting their demand of a fifteen per cent. raise, to set before them this new plan as a counter proposition, provided the directors were all agreed that was the next step. He would like a frank statement from each one of them, as to their opinion.

Mr. White shook his aged head. “All very well, all very well,” he said, “until the lean years come, as come they may. Then you’ll suffer, but you’ll go on paying out your ‘minimum wage’ just the same. You’ll be too ‘damn kind’ to shut down,”—the phrase seemed to have curdled his compassion—“all that’s been done won’t count then, either, any more than it does now, when they chatter about being ‘worth their window boxes’! Arrogant fools! They are fools, I tell you, to let a man

DRIFT

like that demagogue Brent pull 'em about by the nose, make them quarrel with their bread and butter,—and then he talks you into proposing profit-sharing,—now, at this late day, after all you've done! Why didn't you propose that before you built Templeton?"

"Perhaps it would have been better," said John. "The town was my father's plan, you know. I wanted to fulfil his wish, but the times seemed to have changed while I was absorbed in its building."

"Humph!" said the venerable Mr. White, rising, "changed for the worse, much for the worse!"

The meeting broke up. The board of directors had signified its approval of the plan proposed by the chairman. Mr. White shook hands with his fellow-directors and departed, leaning heavily on his cane and muttering "too damn kind." That evening he told his wife he had lived too long. "The human race is degenerating," he said, "in my day, work-people had some decent feeling; now they are all fools or 'labour leaders.' I don't know which are the worst."

John found the superintendent waiting for him in the outer office and communicated to him the views of the board of directors, including those of Mr. White.

"Fine old man, Mr. White," said Morris.

"Yes, you agree excellently," observed John. "Morris, do you think Brent is honest?"

Morris waited a moment before answering. "I rather think so," he spoke slowly. "But did you take in the significance of what he said about getting as high up as he could go?"

"What?" John turned sharply. "You don't mean to say—"

"Yes, I do mean to say," said Morris. "The fellow's arrogance has no bounds. He knows he's getting a certain power over the men; he's glib enough, and he thinks you're easy."

DRIFT

John threw back his head with a queer laugh. "Well, of all the damned impudence! Surely you're wrong, Morris, it's inconceivable, it's ludicrous; besides he wouldn't have permitted himself all those sneers afterwards, wouldn't have betrayed himself. You're out of your mind."

"Maybe," Morris nodded his head sagely. "Just the same, there's some idea working inside that fellow's bullet head. He's shrewd and sharp as sin. He's out for Alfred Brent and nobody else on earth. He's gotten a hold here. I can't make it out."

"Morris," said John, "do you think I'm 'easy'?"

"I think you are a romantic idealist," said Morris with a grin.

CHAPTER XVI

THE two men walked together across the small park that lay in front of the administration building. The wind was sharp and flying snowflakes stung their faces.

As John opened the door of his rooms they looked pleasant and cheerful. An open fire crackled, the lamp had been lighted, and the evening paper laid near the easy chair. They were comfortable rooms, almost shabby; not beautiful at all, but everything had been just as it was for a long time and fitted him.

Morris stopped in the doorway with a word of thanks at John's gesture of invitation. "I'd like to know what you're going to do about Brent," he said, "keep him on, I suppose."

"Of course. Do you suppose I'm afraid of the man?" John threw off his coat; it was good to get in. "You say he's honest. Well then, we can deal with him, or you can, he amuses me too much—I'd show it and offend him."

Morris did not laugh. He found his employer difficult. Moreover, he abhorred Brent and all his ways. "What are your instructions, sir? There's a committee meeting going on now; it will be necessary to make a definite reply very shortly."

"I'll tell you in the morning," said John. "Good-night."

DRIIFT

Left alone he walked slowly to the fire, poked it unnecessarily and viciously and stood swinging the poker and staring into the leaping flames.

He had left the directors' meeting with a consciousness that the six older men had for him something of the same feeling that Morris entertained. They yielded to his vagaries because they liked him and because he owned the majority of the stock, but they thought him a dreamer. Well, a dreamer he would remain. In spite of the strike, in spite of all that Brent had said, he could not keep down his faith that his methods of dealing with his work-people would win, must win, in the end. They were children, fiery children, discontented for the moment, but bidable. He would give them what they asked now, give it to them without further discussion, and shortly afterwards, more,—a direct share—to show them his faith that their trust in him was unimpaired. He would not admit his hurt.

As he sat thinking it over, it came to him that he would try to find out the trend of feeling from some of the operatives. He would not believe that the sentiments Brent had expressed were general. He wondered that he had not thought of this before; perhaps he had accepted the threat of the strike too quickly; perhaps Brent spoke with more confidence than he was entitled to use; perhaps he had won a temporary supremacy which did not really express the opinions of the men.

"I will go into the seventh house on the seventh street," he said to himself, "and find out what that man thinks." Smiling at the absurdity he went out. It would be something to do at any rate while he was trying to come to a decision.

The storm had risen. Everything was covered with snow. John had a feeling of impatience that the burden on his mind would not let him appreciate the beauty of the winter scene.

DRIFT

He found his seventh house; a woman with a baby in her arms opened the door.

“S your husband at home?” John stood bareheaded and bowed as the woman, evidently surprised, pronounced his name. “I’d like to see him if he is.”

The woman glanced at the clock behind her, “He will be in a minute,” she said, “he’s at the gymnasium. Will you come in?”

“Thank you.” John stepped into the sitting-room, where the woman turned on the light.

“You’re wondering why I came,” he said. “I’ll tell you. I’ve been trying to run New York politics for a bit and neglecting my own business. I’d like to talk to your husband about the strike if he’s willing. Will you tell me your name?”

“My name is Vails, Mrs. Frank Vails,” said the woman. “Is the strike really coming off?”

“I don’t know,” said John. “It will be decided tomorrow. Now please just let me sit here and wait. I won’t interrupt what you are doing.” He bowed and Mrs. Vails with one hand poked up the fire in the open stove and went out slowly, saying as she went, “I’m sure he’ll be here soon.”

In a moment a word of greeting, accompanied by the opening of the front door, announced the return of Frank Vails. He stopped suddenly on seeing someone there and took off his hat.

John announced his errand. “I’d like a few questions answered if you are willing,” he said, “I want to get at the bottom of this strike business if I can.”

Vails looked uncomfortable and a little defiant.

“Would you tell me why you came here?” he asked.

John laughed. “For no reason,” he said, “you’re number seven. Don’t you remember the old fairy stories? There was something significant about the number seven, that’s the only reason, a ridiculous one

DRIFT

of course. But now I am here, are you willing to answer a few questions? If not I can go next door." John had a feeling this man too would think him fantastic, well—all right—let him!

Vails was bewildered and suspicious, also extremely uncomfortable. "Will you have a chair?" he asked, pulling one out. "I guess I can answer anything you want to ask me."

Both men sat down. "Will you tell me what department you are in?" said John.

"Weaver in velvet."

"And will you tell me how long you have been at work?—here at Templeton, I mean."

"Eight years."

"Through the last few years of the reconstruction, then? That was a wearing time on everybody?"

"It was worth it, I guess; it's all right now." The words were grudgingly said, yet they were said. John realised how pleasant they were to hear. He could imagine Brent's sneer.

"And will you tell me if your wife, whom I saw when I came in, worked at the mills?"

"Only about a year, after we were married, that is; she was in the spinning rooms."

"Do you rent this house?" John looked around. "Please don't think me inquisitive, I am really asking for a purpose. I've chosen number seven, you see; I want to get at the situation."

"The house is partly paid for." Vails's tone was peculiar. Evidently he disliked the rôle of representative that had been thrust upon him because of the number of his house.

"Is that your only child?"

"No, there's an older one. He's at his grandmother's across the street."

"Now, one or two other things, since you gave me

DRIFT

permission to conduct this cross-examination, and then I'm through. You belong to the union, of course."

"Yes."

"Will you tell me how many times you have been promoted in the last eight years?"

"Nearly every year, up to last year."

"And will you tell me— No, I beg your pardon, I have no right to ask that question. I take it you are discontented now with the wages that you are getting?"

"I'd like to get more. That's natural."

"Have you consulted your foreman about when you can get a raise? I mean aside from the strike?"

"I was thinking about doing it—no I haven't."

"I'd like to say again that I appreciate your answering all these questions. Tell me, of course, if at any point you would like to have me stop. It is a great help in clearing my mind to get at what you are telling me. I'd like very much to know how long you have been thinking about striking."

"Since the union ordered it."

"Oh!" Here was light, indeed. If this man was typical—"Who told you the union ordered it?"

"Mr. Brent, of course. He's the representative here of the National Federation of Silk Workers."

"I see. Do you belong to the Discussion Club?"

"No. I've thought about joining."

"Will you tell me what you think of the justice of the strike? I mean are you wholly in sympathy with it, with what is asked?"

"I'd like to get higher pay if I can. I've got my children to think of."

"But you just said you had not asked your foreman when you could get a raise."

"That's true, but I didn't suppose— You see, if he didn't think—well that isn't the way it ought to

DRIFT

be, to ask." Vails was floundering. The union had issued no instructions as to how he was to comport himself in a situation like this.

John had one more question: "You're insured in the company?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, that is all. I am very much obliged to you." John's tone was courteous but impersonal. He was not aware himself of how he bewildered Vails. He was thinking that the questions he put concerned the aims of his whole life, and yet he seemed to care little how they were answered. The strong sense he had always had of a mutually friendly relationship with every inhabitant of the town of Templeton was gone. There was no rancour towards the man whom he questioned, but neither was there any special interest. He seemed unimportant.

John rose to go. Vails fidgeted. "I'd be glad to tell you anything more I can," he said.

"No, that is enough. One thing you said astonishes me. I am at a loss to understand how the union has obtained such extraordinary power over men who are and who always have been at liberty to make arrangements for themselves. The company would not presume to be so dictatorial. I will say good-night, and once more, thank you."

John knew as he walked away that he could have brought Vails to apologise and repudiate his union had he cared to try, but what was allegiance worth if it could be shifted as easily as that? The man was weak. Eight years, he had said, eight years, and in all that time—not a spark of loyalty!

The lady who had spoken of John's face on the evening he first met Eileen, as wearing a radiant look, would hardly have known him had she seen him as he walked that snowy night across the square back to his rooms.

DRIFT

His mouth was set. He had the look of one who is determined not to show a wound.

He walked slowly, thinking over the interview. The man had no particular grievance, he was rather stupid, evidently; he was taking a chance on getting something if he could with little realisation of what he was risking if he failed. His wife had seemed more troubled. Women were like that, they did not want to be disturbed, he supposed. How typical was Vails's view? That was the only important thing.

John's estimate of the weaver, Frank Vails, was wrong. He had left on the doorstep an inarticulate but miserable man who sought his wife to tell about the visit of the "Boss."

"I wish I'd said something! I wish I had! I was a fool not to. I don't know why I couldn't; he didn't seem to want me to say anything, just answer his questions, and they were queer ones. It was just as if he didn't care, really, what happened, and then, suddenly, he went away. I wish I'd had the sense to ask him if he'd tell me what he thought about it! I wish I didn't feel so—mean!" He banged about the room.

Mrs. Vails watched him. "If you'd had the sense not to listen to all that crazy talk Alfred Brent handed out, I'd respected you more, Frank Vails, and that's the truth. Why didn't you wait till the Boss came up before decidin'? You might a' known everything would be fixed up. I nearly went in and talked to him myself while he was waiting for you, but he sorta shut me up when he first came in."

Her husband regarded her dismally. "I wish you had, anyway," he said. "I wish to goodness I'd never signed!"

"Next time perhaps you'll listen to me," said Mrs.

DRIFT

Vails. "Now go across and get Danny, it's late."

Vails went across to his father's house to fetch his son, young Danny, but the boy missed his frolic. None of his tugging wiles could coax his father to a game; the youngster was put whimpering to bed.

Late that night John sat thinking by the fire. A desire for his mother's counsel came to him. It was long since they had talked together intimately—why, why had he not told her at once of the difficulty? He was amazed at himself. He despatched a telegram telling her of the situation and adding, "I wish you were here." Giving orders to be called early, he went to bed at last, still undecided what course to pursue.

Old Mrs. Peters appeared with coffee, humbled and depressed of mien. John greeted the familiar figure of the little old woman, not knowing that she was to play an important part in what was to take place that day.

Mrs. Peters was an institution at Templeton. She had worked at the looms as a young, fair girl; married and seen her children become skilful operatives handling the improved machinery; now her grandchildren, educated in the company's schools, were seeking higher positions in the city.

Mrs. Peters showed a tendency to tears as she put the low table near the fire. "I hope you'll find the coffee right, sir," she said, "the paper 'll be here shortly," and then, standing near the door, "Oh, Mr. John, I can't tell you how bad I feel!"

John looked at her, hoping she wasn't going to cry. "That's very good of you," he said.

"I hope you know none of us has any hand in it."

"What do you mean, Mrs. Peters?"

The woman gulped and came nearer. "I'd like to speak out if you'll let me," she said, and John nodded.

DRIFT

"I hear the strike's going to be called today."

"I don't know. Possibly. It isn't decided."

"I wanted to say— I wanted you to know—we old ones tried to make 'em see reason, but it seems like what Mr. Wilkes said didn't make any impression—but, oh I do believe, Mr. John, I do believe lots of 'em hate doin' it. Why there's many that's been here all their lives; they've just gone crazy, I think—they don't really mean it, sir, I know they don't." She stood before him, a weak, trembling, old figure, trying to express the loyalty that was in her breast, to make excuses for those who in her sight were treacherous. In spite of his determination to be unmoved John found himself stirred by what the old woman said.

"Thank you, Mrs. Peters," he held out his hand, "I'm glad to hear what you've just told me." He opened the door for her and she went out slowly, turning to say, "Please don't let the coffee get cold, you'll need it. I'll bring the paper."

But the coffee did get cold while John stood at the window thinking of what the old woman had said. What did it mean? Her words had echoed his thoughts of the evening before—was it possible the strike was unpopular?

Soon the operatives began streaming by, going towards the different mills. They swung along in the winter sunshine in twos or threes, talking to each other; some of the young ones taking little slides along the ice of the sidewalk. John drew back, not to be seen. Brent had sneered at his satisfaction in the cheerful faces of his work-people. Good God! Why should he not be glad that he brought comfort and happiness into thousands of lives? He watched them swarming in to the different departments.

Their unconcern astonished him. How could they talk and chaff as they were doing? Again the sense

DRIFT

came over him that this was no deeply planned affair of long fomenting, but a flash that could be dealt with by the same methods Brent had used, only, with this difference, he could build on the foundation of years.

He took a sudden resolution. He would play Anthony to Brent's Brutus. He would put to the test the allegiance of that passing throng out there; find out what they really wanted.

He sent for Morris. "Call a meeting of all the foremen and supervisors at the Hall at one o'clock," he said. "Let the works be closed and such of the weavers and spinners and any other operatives as wish to come invited to attend a second meeting at two. Ask that definite action of the strike committee be deferred until after I have spoken at these meetings."

"Yes, sir." Morris's expression was as grim as on the day before. He seemed to have decided to have no views, or at least not to express them.

CHAPTER XVII

I AM glad to see so many here," said John, stepping forward on the platform. "This is a peculiar situation in which we find ourselves. I have thought that by talking it over we can find, possibly, a solution. I want the help of all of you." He stopped. There was a complete silence, not hostile, not kindly, merely expectant.

"I am informed that you are asking for a flat fifteen per cent. raise in all departments?" he went on. "Is this correct?" His quiet, controlled voice seemed to treat the matter as a perfectly simple proposition, needing only a little investigation. There was a murmur of assent.

"All right. I wanted to find out from you directly; to learn it straight from your own lips. It is difficult dealing through intermediaries. We have always believed in direct methods here.

"Very well. You are asking for a fifteen per cent. increase in wage scale and you have sent word to us, the board of directors and myself, that you will leave the looms unless it is granted. Am I correct?" Again a murmur of assent. One voice cried out, "Right you are."

"Now, I should be glad to get at the reason, what is back of your decision, what led you to make the re-

DRIFT

quest, I mean? I am free to admit we were astonished. Today I am here to find out, if I can, why you are discontented. Will anyone in the audience volunteer to answer?" He turned smilingly to Brent, sitting beside him on the platform. "Anyone except Mr. Brent. I have already had a talk with him, and he will address this meeting later."

A man named Wilkes rose in the back of the hall. He was the one who had tried, as John knew, to stem the surging tide towards the strike; but before he could speak a stalwart young Swede, much excited, was on his feet, pounding one fist into the other palm. "We believe our labour's worth more'n it gets," he yelled, "and we want it all paid in money—lots more money. We don't want all these fancy things we got here, we want more money. Where'd you be if you couldn't get us to work for you? Nowhere! You couldn't make anything—you'd go right down, down, down, till you hadn't a cent. Where'd you be if you didn't have our hands, thousands and thousands of 'em, moving quick over the shuttles nine hours a day for *you*? All we want is justice; we want our work paid more, lots more, and we're going to get it too! All the time the town was gettin' fixed up—everybody gettin' fixed up, even if they didn't want to be fixed—the union was laying its plans to do things in a different way, a mighty different way. It was planning deep too; this ain't the last strike."

He sat down, wiped his face and looked around. There was a moment's silence and then a low murmuring sound. It was hard to tell what it indicated,—assent or disapproval, perhaps both.

"Does anyone else wish to speak?" John asked. "Please do so. I desire above all things to find out what you are thinking, what is being said among you. You have never been afraid to express yourselves frankly

DRIFT

before." He turned to the speaker. "You have been frank in expressing your views, I wish others would do the same."

Again there was silence then Wilkes rose. "We were ordered to strike by the union," he said in a peculiar voice. "We had no choice, except to break with the union; at least so we were told."

Tumult! Everyone talking or hissing or applauding—a few cries of "It isn't so!"

John rose, walked to the edge of the platform and waited. He felt a sense of exultation; he was almost afraid it might betray itself in his voice.

"There is a curious divergence in the ideas expressed by the two men who have spoken," he said. "One would imagine from Mr. Wilkes's statement that you were not free agents, or at any rate that you had allowed yourselves to be coerced. I take it, no union can order a strike unless its members agree. I had thought that when there were grievances it was the work-people who asked the support of the union in case of a strike. I should be glad to have the matter more fully explained."

No one spoke. Wilkes rose again. "I have told you the truth, Mr Templeton," he said, "ask Mr Brent to explain."

John had asked him and Morris to sit with him on the platform, to Morris's wrath. John had been fully conscious of Brent, and had watched his expression. "Do you wish to speak?" he asked.

Brent waved his hand seemingly with perfect good humour. "Not yet," he said.

"Well?" John made a forward gesture with both of his hands. "Please be frank, please speak out and say what you have to say. This is a meeting to talk things over, to see if we can understand each other. I should be very glad indeed to get more light on this matter.

DRIFT

There must have been a good deal of talking going on before the proposition was made. I can't imagine why it should be so difficult to repeat." Again he waited. "Well, if no one else wishes to speak, I shall be glad to do so?"

There was a stir in the audience; some of the men smiled. It was as if, insensibly, a weight was being lifted from them; their heads went up.

"Is there any one in this room who has been here over twenty-five years?"

One or two voices responded.

"I should be very glad if you will be so kind as to rise." Four men did so, rather hesitatingly. As they rose John spoke their names with a little bow of greeting—"Mr. Werneberg, Mr. Garrity, Mr. Metzger, Mr. Erickson. Now will you four men tell me the number of times in the last twenty-five years that the company has raised the wage scale of its employees?"

The men looked at each other. Two of them said five with slight uncertainty, one four, the other six.

"Thank you. Now will some of you who came ten years ago kindly rise, if you are willing."

Some ten or fifteen men rose one after the other. Again there was the courteous acknowledgment by name.

"Will you tell me, please, how many times the scale has been raised in ten years?"

There was a second's pause. "Three," said one and the others agreed.

"Thank you." John permitted himself a look at Brent, who replied with a slight inclination of his head as if to say, "Go ahead, I'm not missing anything."

"Now, my men,"—he used the possessive pronoun consciously; he would show Brent he dared to say it to them as well as of them,—"I can say what I have to say to you in a very few words." He stopped, considering how to make the request that he had decided

DRIFT

to make, namely, that the demand for an increase in wage scale be withdrawn. He knew that it must be, if ever again there was to be peace at Templeton. Anything less would be compromise. He must know if he had their confidence. Suddenly he remembered Mrs. Peters—her distress—her broken words. He had hardly taken them in at the time; now their significance came to him with disturbing force. He looked at those waiting faces, many of them known to him personally, and the hardness that had bound him gave way. He began to speak.

“I used the words ‘my men’ just now; well, the words indicate my sense of a personal relationship with you, with all of you. I was on a street car one day and I heard two boys in the seat in front of me talking. One of them was from a distance. They were talking about swimming. Now, I believe, I am generally known hereabouts as ‘the Boss,’ but this boy spoke of me as ‘our Boss.’ ‘You ought to see our Boss swim,’ was what he said. I assure you I was very much gratified to be so claimed, not to speak of the compliment to my swimming.”

The audience laughed a little; the tension was relaxing.

As John heard himself relate the incident he had a curious sensation. Almost he was ashamed. He had resolved to be absolutely impersonal, as business-like and commonplace as he was conscious he had been on the evening before when he had talked with Frank Vails. He *would* not show that he cared, that they had any power, no matter what they did, to reach him,—the man. He would be the employer merely, the head of Templeton & Co. Now, behold, the words he had used as a challenge to Brent had reacted upon himself. He had meant to be hard and suddenly he found himself saying this. Well, it was out now; he was not sorry.

DRIFT

“Now, as I see it,” he went on, “there are two methods for companies and employees to work together—one is on a basis of trust and good-will,—the feeling that was expressed by ‘our Boss’—the other is distrust and hostility. If distrust is shown on either side, of course, it is at once engendered on the other.” (Not for nothing had those bitter thoughts come to him on the train. A certain vibrant quality in his own voice, as remembrance flashed over him, seemed almost to betray what he had thought.) “If there is antagonism and distrust, there must of necessity follow strikes—all the melancholy trail of ills known as ‘labour troubles’—rancour, ill-feeling, hostility and distress, surely a state of things we do not desire at Templeton.

“I am not here this afternoon to plead with you. You control your own actions; doubtless you have thought carefully about this one, from every point of view. I have no desire or intention to urge you to anything that you do not wish to do. I merely want to call your attention to the foundation principle upon which this business is run, and always has been run, namely—good faith. I think I do not need to prove to those of you who have been here a number of years that the company may be trusted to do what is fair. Its record is clear in the statements that you have just heard. The raise in wage scale made from time to time is based on the profits earned by the business and on the increasing cost of living. I told Mr. Brent yesterday that I thought your labour was worth more. I think the first speaker stated this. Well, it is this feeling on the part of the company that has led to the increases in pay; that and your own ability. You are all free agents. to make terms as to wages. The only ultimate means of judging what they should be is skill, isn’t it, and application and ambition? How much these can earn? We all of us consider the United States a free country.

DRIFT

[As to the union and its orders I have little to say. I cannot believe that some person or persons away from here would have the power to force you to strike. It is inconceivable. Your actions are your own affair. The company gives you its faith. It asks yours. I am going to ask you to withdraw your demand for an increase in wage scale. I make no promises for the future. We do not know what it will hold. The only assurance you have is the history of the company's dealings with you in the past. That is all I have to say. Mr. Brent, do you wish to speak?"]

There was a burst of applause, some cheers. Brent's face wore an odd expression, as if to say, "You've scored. I admit it." He half rose when a voice cried, "We don't want to hear him." Clamour again—"Let him speak. What's he got to say?"

The tall Swede who had spoken first was on his feet. "I ben here a year," he said, "I haven't seen any increase of wages; and I don't believe there's going to be any more now. You're all fooled, fooled I say. You listen to anybody talks soft and polite at you."

He was allowed to go no further; hisses and cries interrupted. John waited, sure now, wondering what Brent would do.

Heavily Brent rose and held up his hand for silence. There were a few cries of "let him speak," but for the most part the men were getting into their coats and moving down the aisles. They seemed to ignore their late "leader." John had won. On the faces of those to whom he had spoken was a mingling of relief and shame, yet the casual way in which he seemed to have taken the whole matter, coming to them simply as if to say, "Why, look here, what's all this about?" had freed their minds of the obligation of being ashamed of themselves. They were hugely relieved. Perhaps the master stroke was one of which John himself was wholly un-

DRIFT

conscious,—not a hint or a word as to what the building of Templeton had meant.

There was hardly a man present who had not been during the preceding weeks the recipient of comments and reproaches from his women-folk. Now these would end! They were indeed thankful. Suddenly they found they hated Brent.

John stepped down from the platform to greet various men with a nod or a word, as he made his way towards the door. If there were emotion in the silent grip of the hand some of the men gave him, he did not acknowledge it. His manner was as usual. The affair seemed to be shrinking in importance.

There was a crowd waiting outside for the second meeting. Suddenly the gentle Wilkes did a surprising thing. He stood in the doorway and waved his hat with a shout. "The strike's off," he yelled. The crowd outside gasped, the crowd within laughed. There was a turning of heads towards Brent for confirmation.

He stepped up on one of the seats and clapped his hands for attention. "Yes, the strike's off," he shouted. "and it makes me sick, the way you've turned tail. Another triumph for the aristocratic ideal! You don't like that? Well, it's true—stop now, don't yell, go home and think about it, see if you're proud of yourselves. The exercises are not concluded," he changed his voice to a whining drone, and cast up his eyes. "Let us all unite in singing 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow!'"

It was lost. That excited throng of men were not susceptible to gibes. In fact, they had hardly heard, above the noise of moving feet. But John had heard, and all the satisfaction of his triumph was gone. Where was his resolution made on the train to test himself, to find out, if he really sought first the good of his men? He had manifested his power—of what avail, of what

DRIFT

avail? A rush of bitter distrust swept over him.

The tower clock showed there lacked a few minutes of the time set for the next meeting. With a word to Morris to begin the meeting, explaining that he would be late, he gained his rooms. "Ask Brent if he wishes to speak," he called back.

As he flung open the door, determined to get away from the throng for a moment, his mother met him. "John, John!" she cried, and he held her close, pressing his face down on her shoulder. Oh the blessedness of having her come like that! He could not speak. She would understand, she would be wise, she would know whether he was honest or whether he merely wanted—power. Brent's parting sneer had cut deep. He was racked with self-contempt.

After a moment he released her. "Oh Mother," he said, "it was so easy, so hideously easy! They hadn't thought it out. If I'd been here it wouldn't have happened. Don't you see? What other way can you deal with them?—now, I mean. They aren't ready for anything else, they aren't, they aren't!"

"My dear, you are incoherent," said his mother, petting him, loving him, "you forget I know nothing of what has happened except your telegram."

John stared at her. It came over him how far apart they had been, and she had said no word, had merely waited until now, and come at his summons. He took her hands and kissed them.

"I must go now," he said, "they're waiting over at the Hall, or perhaps they're singing a hymn! Will you wait here? We'll talk afterwards—or no, you come with me. Don't I'm out of my head. Oh, Mother, why did we do all this, why did we?" He gestured outwards, as they walked across the common to the Hall.

All the fire was gone out of him, all the faith, but

DRIFT

once on the platform he spoke simply and gravely on much the same lines as before. The meeting was quiet. In spite of John's effort to treat all as casually as possible, there was more sense of shame.

Late that night John and his mother sat talking. All of the perplexities that had beset him, all the doubt and rage and bitterness that had possessed his soul he poured out to her. She did not say very much, did not offer counsel. The business was in his hands now, she said, she had faith in his judgment. He was soothed.

He had ordered his room arranged for her, and was to sleep on the sitting-room couch himself. Was it a dream that someone came in the night and kissed him on the forehead and laid her hand upon his hair?

The strike was off in spirit, but not in fact. Once set in motion, there seemed to be innumerable difficulties in the way of stopping the machinery of rebellion. There was such vexation at headquarters it looked at one time as if the strike would still be called, but Brent was too shrewd. He appreciated fully the tide of feeling that had set against him. John admired his apparent good humour. He, too, refused to show his wound. After that one outburst he made no further reproach, but set about the task of adapting his tactics to an altered situation with at least an outward semblance of assiduity.

A week later, John took the train for town. He found the same relative seat in the car that he had occupied on the way up,—he could have not said why—to find out how much his thoughts had changed perhaps. There was no longer bitterness, that had been purged away in his long talk with his mother, her pitifulness had driven it forth, but there was profound disillusionment. He had thought that by his striving he could bring the

DRIFT

everlasting struggle a little nearer to solution, could throw some light on the difficult path, and now he found that he had done nothing! Never again could he have joy or confidence in his work; never again could he greet the "happy shining faces" of his work-people without distrust; never again could he be sure. He thought of the evening in Dresden when, as a boy of eighteen, he had gone out alone to make his decision as to whether he should devote himself to music. He had wandered about half the night before he could force himself to accept the obligation laid upon him by his dead father. He remembered the scene with his old maestro the next day when he told him what he was going to do; the old man's wrath had been exclamatory, he seemed to think he had been cheated into teaching a person who was not *ernsthaf*t. He remembered his efforts to keep his mother from knowing what his decision had cost him; her tenderness and understanding, yet her indomitable holding to the faith that to his inheritance, not to music, was his allegiance pledged.

He had given up what was dearest to him in life; he had chosen the hardest way and now he saw that in what he had renounced lay for him the only possibility of achievement. Now he saw—when it was too late.

CHAPTER XVIII

HELEN TUCKER was in love, and Helen Tucker in love was a very beautiful thing. Her eyes radiated a soft light, her words were gay, with little ripples of laughter running through; the touch of her hand was warm and caressing, and her swift step seemed to say, "I am going to my lover."

Spencer Crockett, coming to see Eileen, found Helen waiting, smiling into the fire, and took both her hands. He was wont to say he preferred art to nature, but Helen Tucker was an exception. It pleased him to call her Enone.

"So! there's a faun in the forest," he said, "and Enone's been in his arms and finds it sweet?"

This was disconcerting, but so true that a lovely flush flamed up in the girl's face.

"My child! you are so beautiful, that I shall have to kiss you," said Spencer Crockett. He bent and kissed her forehead gravely and turned away. There was an unaccustomed feeling in his throat.

Helen was sometimes in awe of Spencer Crockett, and sometimes he exasperated her. She thought his faint smile intolerably supercilious, and the pretty things he said to her always seemed tinged with the ironic tolerance with which he regarded all human creatures. Behold him now, with eyes a little dimmed, and never a wink; Helen was bewildered.

DRIFT

“My faun is quite a real person, and we haven’t had much time in the forest,” she said. “His name is Augustus Lee, and he’s an architect,—that is, he is going to be an architect. He is in Brewster & Knoll’s office. I—I love him.”

Was it that courtly kiss that had brought out those last words? One corner of Spencer Crockett’s mouth smiled. “My child!” he said again, “I am not generally considered a stupid person.”

Eileen came fluttering in, arms outstretched; Crockett was neglected as the two embraced.

“Have you heard?” said Eileen, turning to him, “what this reckless young person proposes to do?”

“I hadn’t,” said Crockett, “until she told me.”

“Good gracious!” Helen turned surprised eyes on him, “but you said—”

“Yes,” said Crockett, “I said—and now I know—and why not? Only a faun can bring that look to the eyes of a river nymph. It was quite, quite plain.”

“Didn’t you know that Mr. Crockett sees what others cannot see?” laughed Eileen.

“No,” said Helen, “I didn’t, except as regards queer pictures; he certainly does in them.” This seemed to her so impertinent to an authority on art, that, having said it, she looked at him in alarm and then blushed again.

Crockett addressed Eileen. “I had to kiss her once,” he said, “she was so beautiful. I fear if she does that I may have to again, and it seems to hurt my throat.”

Eileen took a hand of each and drew them down, one on each side of her. “Now let’s talk about it,” she said, “and in the years to come it shall be known that Helen Tucker was so much in love that Spencer Crockett wept.”

“When I told him,” said Helen, “he said it wasn’t necessary to mention it.”



DRIFT

"I didn't," said Crockett, "I said that I was of ordinary intelligence."

"Well, don't quarrel." Eileen patted each. "Where is Augustus Lee? I want to see him. Your note was brief. What do you suppose she wrote me, Mr. Crockett? 'I am going to be married. We are coming to see you today.' That was all. Where is he? this person? You haven't married him yet, have you? It sounded so immediate,—your note."

"No," said Helen, "we can't be married for ages. We haven't any money." She leaned forward to speak to Crockett. "I said that, now," she told him, "before you, because it had to be got over some time, and Eileen's remarks might have been,—well—hard to deal with. They are sometimes." Her hand possessed itself of Eileen's, and it was the latter's turn for a catch of the breath.

"Oh, dear, oh dear!" she said. "When people talk like that, I wish I hadn't—what's the sense of it, if you can't—if people you love won't—" This was an old subject of discussion, evidently, between these two unlike and beautiful friends! Crockett suspected as much. It was graceful of them, but he was helpless. How lovely they were in their different ways!

"If people you love won't!" he echoed—"and they so seldom will!"

Helen broke in, "But we don't want anything, you see. It doesn't matter, does it, all that I mean, when we know?"

Again Crockett found himself at a loss. What odd creatures young womenkind were! And just then Mr. Augustus Lee was announced.

A young man entered and stepped eagerly forward, a presentable young man, good-looking, clean-cut and clean-shaven, but not different in appearance from many

DRIFT

others, save perhaps, to the eyes of one who now regarded him; her own, love-lit and luminous.

Helen's phraseology seemed to have turned sentimental, possibly by reason of Mr. Crockett's remarks.

"My friend, my lover," she said by way of introduction, and Eileen and Augustus Lee shook hands. "And this is the person who thinks you're a faun," she added, turning to Crockett.

As the two men greeted each other, Crockett's glance was keen. His habitual slant smile was gone. His look seemed to demand "Are you the one?"

"I hope you will like me, Mr. Lee," Eileen's voice sounded like that of a shy child, "because, well, because Helen does. I'm so relieved to find you aren't as formidable as your name." She looked at him considerably. "I was brought up with the bust, you know. I've been thinking about the expression ever since Helen's note. It seemed grim for a lover."

The young man looked puzzled, then he threw back his head and laughed. "Didn't the 'Lee' help?" he said, "and twenty-seven isn't so awfully 'young.' I'd like you to like me too, please."

Augustus Lee turned to Crockett. "Your name seems to be withheld from me by these ladies, why I don't know, but may I compliment you on your discernment? A faun is precisely what I feel like,—the kind that skips and shouts and loves the sun."

Tea was brought in shortly, and there was more sentimental nonsense to cover the tremulousness of these two who had found each other and were startled into such mad joy by the discovery.

"If one may speak of ordinary things in Arcady," said Spencer Crockett, turning to Lee with his air of interest, "do you know anything about the plans for the new Uptown Club? Your firm has a responsibility to

DRIFT

make a very beautiful building with that site and outlook."

Augustus Lee's face wore an amused smile. "Yes, I know a good deal about them," he said. "I am making them." Then, embarrassed at his statement, he hastened to modify it by adding that of course he was only drawing out detail. Crockett was quite wise enough to understand the impulsive words Lee had let slip, but he made no comment.

"Have you heard any mention of a plan for decorating the main room?" he asked. "I am anxious that a painter by the name of Medway should be commissioned to paint a series of panels. He is one of the big men, I think; his work is just beginning to be known."

"Oh, I've seen it!" Lee exclaimed, his whole face lighting with his remembrance of an afternoon he had spent at Medway's studio. "I knew his sister, Carol Medway, at the Art Students' League. She took me to see his pictures one day. Isn't he great? I didn't know there was any plan on foot for him to do the Club. Golly, I'd like to see that go through! It's going to be a great room, I tell you."

Helen jumped up at the striking of the clock. "We must be at home by dinner-time," she said, and then softly to Eileen, "Mother's so happy!"

Spencer Crockett watched the two from the window. He came back when they were out of sight. "I wish I didn't feel so holy," he said, "it unfits one for dinner at the Club."

Eileen went slowly upstairs. So! that was what love was! She went to the window as Crockett had done, and looked down the street, the street those two had trod. The lamps made little radii of light, people were hurrying along holding umbrellas aslant; a newsboy's raucous tones called out "Extry! Extry! All about the suicide for love!" The cry seemed to come from some

DRIFT

hellish depths. It struck upon her exalted mood with the death-dealing intonations of a funeral bell. She shuddered and turned away. That was love too—that was what love meant, sometimes.

She was still standing at the window when she heard John come running up the stairs calling her name. She ran to greet him and he held her close, silently. "O John," she cried. "John! I'm so glad you're back! I love you—I love you! Love can be very wonderful, we must make it everything, mustn't we, not let anything else come in. Oh, can't we make it beautiful—like those two?"

She told him as he held her of Helen and Augustus Lee and of what Spencer Crockett had said. She wished he had not expressed his fear when they were so happy—it seemed to make it all wrong—dangerous—she had been afraid. "O John," she gave him a little shake, "they want to be married, they ought to be married if they can be happy, and they haven't any money. Doesn't that seem a silly reason? Don't you suppose they'll let me—it's so terrible not to be able to—so intolerable!"

Suddenly she turned to him a startled face. "The strike?" she said. "What happened? How could I forget? How could I?"

"It's off," John told her, "I talked to the men. It was very easy. They don't know what they want."

To his dismay she began to cry, bitterly, hysterically. "Oh, what made me? How could I?" she sobbed. "I'm just like Nora, just a doll wife, like her— Did you bring me some chocolate creams?"

John tried to comfort her, telling her that it was no matter, that he was glad to get his thoughts away, that her greeting had been sweet to him beyond words, but nothing he could say availed. She clung to him begging for his forgiveness.

DRIFT

Meanwhile Augustus Lee was saying, "Do take me to see some more 'society leaders' please. What an enchanting thing to look upon Mrs. Templeton is, and that house for a setting! It's a wonder! Who did it?"

"I can't remember," Helen told him, "Eileen herself, I dare say. She is wonderful, isn't she? And nobody knows what a friend she is. She would like to buy us a house and lot, or let us say a country estate, tomorrow. Shall I ask her?"

The face of the young lover grew grave, and Helen's troubled.

"Dear!" she said, "please let me say foolish things! Do you think I *want* a house and lot when I have you?"

His hand reached out and found hers, and they sat silent, drinking in the magic of each other's touch.

They had taken the end seat of the crowded suburban train. Now and then a passer-by would give a little smile as his thoughts flew back to the hour when for him too the touch of a hand transformed the world. There were jostling crowds about, and peanuts and evening papers and bananas and babies; but these things were not: they wandered on the sunny slopes of Ida, around them, the soft silences of woodland places, in their ears the cries of mating birds: Enone,—calling, calling, to her lover; he, crashing towards her in his eager haste; the high gods looking on.

Spencer Crockett wended his middle-aged way to his Club. He was profoundly disturbed. What was it? What did he fear? He could not tell. Friar Lawrence's nodding words came to his mind. "These violent delights have violent ends and in their triumph die; like fire and powder which as they kiss, consume." That security of joy,—why was it so tragic? Something stirred within him,—an impulse to cherish, to protect, to guard at all costs the beauty and wonder which he

DRIFT

had just seen. He considered what he could do, and smiled at his fantastic thoughts, knowing his powerlessness. He smiled again, in his strange fashion, a few weeks later when Eileen told him that "his faun and river-nymph" were married.

"I thought so," he said. "On nothing?"

"On everything," Eileen replied.

"I said on nothing," Crockett insisted. "The 'Young Augustus' is misnamed. He is very attractive, but he is a child, a brilliant child,—a faun. I saw his pointed ears."

CHAPTER XIX

THE lovers dawdled up the road that led to the Staten Island cottage and dined dutifully with Mr. and Mrs. Tucker, "Gus" making himself charming in his gay, boyish way. As Helen watched him, she thought there was something oddly appropriate in calling him a faun. Life sat lightly on his shoulders, he took the world with a laugh, and the world laughed back. She had met him at a fancy-dress ball dressed as Pierrot. They had danced together all of the evening, flirting gayly, met next day, and again the next, and now two months after, they had promised each other to spend their lives together.

Josiah Tucker had been rather bewildered, but could find no valid objections. He was not ready to call his prospective son-in-law a "scholar," but a "gentleman" seemed applicable. Letters had been received from Augustus's mother and father, gentlefolk of small means living in Pennsylvania; Helen had replied with proper expressions about hoping to be a real daughter to them; it was all quite usual and the horizon seemed fair. There was nothing to marry on, but that was usual too.

After dinner the two wandered out into the night, down the road, across a meadow to the sea. The remote, cool darkness was very sweet. It was almost raining, a soft mist touched their faces; there was a feeling of spring mildness in the air. Their young pulses danced

DRIFT

and sang, and their talk was the world-old lovers' talk,—the incredible wonder of their meeting, the humility, the pride, the sense of perfect rest.

Finally Gus said, "I suppose there are thousands of others saying these same things tonight, and all of us thinking that we are the only ones to know what it means."

Helen pressed closer to him. "But we are the only ones," she said, "who really and truly know."

As they turned homeward and knew they must soon part, they talked of their marriage. It must be soon, they could not say good-night many times more,—it was too hard. What did a place to live in matter, what did clothes matter? They wanted each other's arms,—oh, it must be soon, it must! They considered Gus's salary of one hundred and fifty dollars a month; surely that would do—it must do,—they planned it all out.

When he left her, Helen stood on the steps of the cottage quivering from his kisses, her flesh bruised from his embrace,—she loved the hurt. She listened until the last sounds of his footsteps disappeared. "Dear God," she said, "I wish that I could die now,—tonight. There cannot be anything more than this."

After a while she crept upstairs to her room, the pretty rose-room that had been hers alone all her life. Now, what was to come? The loneliness was at an end. She took off her dress and let fall the brown-gold glory of her hair. She wanted to look at herself in the glass. She wondered how her eyes would look. Mr. Crockett had said, "Only a faun could bring that look to the eyes of a river nymph." Slowly she turned to the mirror, and picking up a candle, held it high over her head, and gazed at the image of herself. No it was not herself any longer; she belonged to him, to her lover,—all that radiance was his! She bent forward and kissed her own lips in the glass,—because she was his, because

DRIFT

soon, soon, she could give all the beauty, the rich sweetness that she saw, to him. Then, trembling, she put out the light and crept into bed.

For a long time she lay, looking into the darkness, her senses wrapped in the languor of first awakened passion, her very soul engulfed in the need to give.

The sun was high and bright when she awoke, to see her mother smiling beside her, a coffee tray in her hand.

"What a lazy child, and oh, how lovely you are!" cried the mother kissing the flushed, happy face. "I've wanted to say that for twenty years, ever since you were born, for you were a lovely baby. I don't know why I didn't. Now you are engaged, I guess it won't hurt."

Helen drank her coffee, and the two women cried and then laughed in a way women have when they are happy and no man is by to be worried and bewildered.

"Here are some letters for you," Mrs. Tucker said. "I nearly forgot. I suppose they are congratulatory notes." After her mother disappeared, Helen lay in her white bed and watched the sunshine on the carpet. She didn't want to get up, she didn't want to read her letters,—all she wanted to do was to lie and dream, to shut her eyes and remember last night, the mad, mad, joy!

Finally she picked up the topmost note, turning it about to find the signature, "Anna Lee," Augustus's little sister. What could she have to say.

"Dear Miss Tucker," it began, "I have seen you only once, but I like you. I think you ought to know something before you marry Gus."

Helen looked up, startled, piteous,—she looked about the room, she wanted to cast the note from her. In a moment she forced herself to go on.

"Mother said that you mustn't know. She said that Gus was so happy now, it would be all right, but I *know* it's right to tell you, and then you can decide.

DRIFT

We don't know anything for sure, but sometimes he is so strange. Last summer when he was working so hard, it began. It isn't drinking, it's something else. I don't know what, I don't know anything at all. Mother would be very angry if she knew I wrote you this letter. She tried to make me promise that I wouldn't tell. I'm crying dreadfully while I write it. It nearly kills me, I love Gus, he's my only brother,—but I have to tell you. It isn't right for you not to know,—it isn't. Dear Miss Tucker, please be very kind to Gus. Your loving friend, Anna Lee."

Helen tore the letter violently across. It wasn't true, it wasn't true! She knew Gus better than anyone on earth,—she had seen him every day for months,—she would know if there had been anything wrong. She picked the letter up, putting the pieces together. What did it say? "Last summer when he was working so hard." Yes of course, it might have been, but that was before they knew each other. Now there *could* be nothing! She tore the letter again, and yet again. Then she got up, and taking the little pieces to the fireplace, burned them. There must be nothing left of those dreadful words. What did a girl of fifteen know of such things? Gus would be so angry! Would he guess from her expression that she was concealing something? He must never, never know that Anna had written that treacherous letter. Perhaps years later she would tell him, and they would laugh about it together,—there would be some explanation, of course. Gus's mother was right: if there had been anything wrong, Gus was happy now, it would be all right. How foolish she was to be so frightened over the words of a child.

She dressed herself quickly. She must find her mother and be natural and forget the letter. She looked at herself in the glass—where was the vision she had seen last night? The eyes were frightened. No, no, no! She

DRIFT

would not believe it! No one must ever know that she had seen the letter,—she resolved not to answer it. Anna would think it had not been received. They were so happy! He would come in a few hours, they would be happy again. They must be married soon, they must be! Gus would be happy and all would be well. Oh, how she wanted him, to still by his presence this ache of fear! She almost telephoned to ask if he could come, but no, she must not do that.

The hours dragged. She looked carefully in the ashes to see that every scrap of the letter was burned. Six o'clock came at last and with it Gus, eager, happy. Sobbing, she fell into his arms. "Oh, I've wanted you so!" she cried, clinging to him, holding him desperately, "wanted you so dreadfully! Can't we be married soon? Oh Gus dear, let's be married right away,—what does anything else matter? I want you! I want you!"

CHAPTER XX

THE rain came down steadily, steadily; Eileen stood at the window following with her forefinger the delicate patterns of the drops upon the glass. Would the day never end? She looked out at the dripping trees, at the beaded shrubbery, at the swaying flowers, appraising them as senseless and uncompanionable. She wondered how other people managed to get comfort or consolation out of things like these. After a little she drew the shade and went back to her couch which had been drawn before the fire. Why couldn't she read any more? Was she growing utterly vacant minded? She picked up her book, but the pages seemed dead and meaningless. There was nothing in them that related itself to her thoughts, to the one overwhelming fact which absorbed and possessed her.

In a few weeks, three perhaps, four at most, the child would be born, her child, John's child. In all the months since that unforgettable day when she first knew it was to be, when the knowledge was forced upon her beyond doubt, she had not been able to accustom herself to the idea. It still seemed incredible and unreal.

Aunt Emma was frankly delighted and sent exquisite small garments at short intervals. She confessed that she had grieved at the delay. Everyone spoke to her as if this were a joyful thing that was about to happen, but for months past she had known only pain and discom-

DRIFT

fort, a sense of distress and depression that she had not been able to escape. Soon there must be great agony. How was she to face it. Well, other women had gone through it and lived to be glad again, perhaps she would.

Another half hour passed. The rain kept up its maddening drip, drip. Eileen rose heavily and went to look at herself in the long glass in the hall. The disfigurement was unbearable. Sitting down by the mirror she threw a long cloak around her, then, pulling the lace folds of her dress back from her shoulders turned her head slowly and looked at herself again. No use! Her white face and dark-rimmed eyes showed the strain. With a little cry, she turned from the glass and went again to her lounge.

It was there John found her, when he came at dusk, staring into the fire, dull and silent.

“My dear!” he exclaimed. “What is it? I am so sorry! What can I do to help you?” He bent over her, but underneath the tender concern of his voice Eileen imagined she detected exultation. He wanted the child, and what she had to bear was unimportant. She turned away from his touch with a short laugh and an indifferent “Oh, I’m all right,” and questioned him, with a show of interest, as to his day. He answered readily and the farce of the evening began, he trying his best to distract and amuse her, she answering absently as she had ten thousand times before it seemed, and thinking, “Why doesn’t he think about me? Why doesn’t he ask me what I’m thinking about? It’s because he doesn’t care, he doesn’t want to know. If the child is all right it doesn’t matter what I’m going through.”

Her irritation, underneath their talk, grew so acute, that suddenly she arose and left the room, paying no heed to his anxious inquiry. Alone in her own room

DRIFT

the tears came, and she sobbed herself to quietness. She had been asleep when John came up and wakened her by asking if she wanted him, if he could do anything for her.

"No thank you," she said, and turned away.

The man stood by the bedside looking down upon her as she lay, one arm flung over her face. Everything in him longed to help her, to comfort her, to give her ease from the distress he knew was hers, yet he found no word. He asked if he could do anything for her. She made no answer, and he turned to go to his room. As he reached the door, she gave a little moaning cry to him to come. Instantly he was at her side, kneeling by the bed, trying to take her hands. "What is it? Oh, what is it?" he said. "Can't I help a little?"

She clung to him then, crying like a little hurt child. "O John, John! I'm so unhappy and so afraid, and you never ask me, and I think all day, and when you come home you just talk about other things, and I'm so lonely, so terribly lonely."

The pleading words seemed to him poignant beyond bearing. She had used them before when the floodgates had been broken by her bitter need and they had come for the moment closer to each other through the medium of stammered words. It seemed they spoke the truth to each other only at these times, under the stress of some desperate determination to attain something out of reach.

"I'm so lonely! so terribly lonely!" The tone, even more than the words, smote upon his brain with an intensity he sought, in self-defence, to allay. What was there he could do? He too was lonely. He had been lonely during the four years of their marriage and had accepted it as inevitable. While he believed her happy, he put his own longing aside, but when she cried out to him from the desolation of her loneliness,

DRIFT

he could not tell why they failed to reach each other.

When she was quieter, he drew a chair beside the bed and stroking her hand, tried as best he could to draw a picture of the child that was to come, asked her about the name, of what they should do the following summer, when plans must be made according to the needs of a tiny child and its caretaker. She listened for a little, then suddenly drew her hand away.

“You are talking as you would to soothe a petulant child!” she exclaimed. “You can never, never understand! Oh, please go, please go!”

John rose and went to his own room, where he sat thinking, trying to make some plan for her, until a streak of sunlight came through his shutters.

It was late when he awoke. Sophie told him that her mistress had not rung for her, and asked what she should do. John went to the door and listened, but there was no sound. He hoped Eileen was asleep and wrote a little note for her, to be given her when she awoke. Leaving a message as well that he would return as early as possible in the afternoon, he went to town.

The scene of the night seemed to John typical of the difficulties of their short married life. As he sat thinking in the train, he looked back over the four years, from the first days at the Farm to the present. It was inexplicable to him that the coming of a child should be so full of distress. He wondered why he was so useless; everything that he did was wrong. This strange feminine soul that cried out to him, he could not meet, could not answer. During the first years it was he who had called to her across great silences; now she in her need reached forth to him, and with all his longing he was unable to answer.

The next few weeks were passed by the two awaiting

DRIFT

the birth of their child, in a silent misery of apprehension: Eileen of the immediate ordeal, John of the years ahead. Eileen thought of Victoria, of her screams of pain, her refusal to see the child; yet it was not the physical pain that she feared, it was something deeper, something that had to do with her wondering as a girl, with the strange passivity and lack of joy of her early married life.

The doctor was not encouraging. He reported to John that Eileen's physical condition was satisfactory, but confessed his failure to reach or eradicate the cause of her depression.

Finally came the trip into town to the hospital, the preparations, the days of waiting. Of the actual birth Eileen knew little. All she could remember afterwards was a confused impression of people in white and a sickly sweet smell that seemed to alternate with racking distress. She thought she was not like Victoria; she wanted to see the child, wanted to hold it in her arms.

After what seemed a long time she opened her eyes on the bare hospital room. John and the nurse were near. Was it over, she asked, and they told her yes. The doctor was sitting beside the bed. He rose as she spoke and went away. John leaned over her.

"Try and be brave, dear," he said, and his face looked strange. "We have no child now, we must be good to each other." In answer to her weak "tell me!" he added, "It was a boy and perfect, but it did not breathe. Oh, I wish, I wish he had lived just a moment—my son!" Then he bent his head and held her hand against his cheek and was silent. Eileen turned her face away. She wanted to say something to John, but she could not. All these months of horror and distress for this,—they had no child, John had said. Perhaps it was her fault. In a great pity for him she reached out her other hand and stroked his forehead. He lifted

DRIFT

his face and tried to smile. For a moment they seemed to find each other; then the sick weakness came over her, her hands relaxed in his grasp and she fell asleep.

When she awoke it had grown dark; she could see the lights from the street dancing on the ceiling. John was sitting by her, his hand upon the bed. "Where is it?" she said, "the baby?"

John got up and said something to the nurse who was standing by the window. She went out very quietly and came back in a moment with something in her arms. Eileen looked at the tiny, tiny face. She wanted to touch it, but she was afraid. She looked at the nurse and then at John for explanation; why was it dead? She could not seem to understand. Often she had thought that she might die, but she had never thought the baby would be like this. Victoria's baby had lived, why did hers die? Why did they not tell her how it had happened, what was wrong? Mutely she looked at them, too weak to frame her questions into words.

"Aren't you glad he is so perfect?" the nurse asked, uncovering the tiny body, and then she heard John's voice, as one hears in a dream—"See, dear, we have had a son—that is much, isn't it?"

The terrible weakness came over her, she closed her eyes, she could not look. They took the dead child away then and she did not see it again. Later on they explained to her that the heart was defective, it could not breathe, but that did not make it any easier for her to understand.

For weeks afterwards she lay in a peculiar stupor, speaking little, a vague wonder in her heart that such things could be. Finally John took her home; the doctor had said it would be best. She looked around the luxurious, familiar rooms in a curious way as if to ask why all these things remained the same.

DRIFT

She had wanted to go home, wanted to leave the dreary hospital, where everything was so ugly; but now that she was at home, it was hard to rouse herself, hard to make an effort; almost she wished herself back again in that quiet room with the white-clad, softly moving nurse. Every day there were notes and flowers and kind expressions of sympathy and interest, as there had been at the hospital. People came to see her. She would talk to them graciously, but with a feeling that they were very far away; they could not understand.

Aunt Emma sought to break through the barrier of misery which seemed to isolate Eileen from all around her.

"My child, it wrings my heart to see you so unhappy. What can I do for you? Is there anything you will let me do; I wish that I could, I wish it so earnestly. You know that, don't you, dear?"

Eileen put out her hand to take Aunt Emma's and hold it in both of hers. "Oh Auntie dear, Auntie dear," she said, "I know you would if you could, but no one can do anything for me, I don't know what's the matter. I just don't seem to want anything any more."

Aunt Emma went away greatly troubled. She and John had anxious consultations. Eileen seemed slipping away from them, they could not reach her. She was always gentle, but so listless that even to make responses to their questions seemed an effort.

John remembered the afternoon he had found her crying with fear that she was to have a child, remembered her cry of thankfulness when she knew it was not to be. This time, when she first knew, she had accepted it without protest, but without joy. John had been afraid to let her know that he was glad. Then all those months of distress had come, with the dreadful ending

DRIFT

of that little, tiny, dead face. His heart was wrung for her, but he seemed helpless to give her any comfort. Her efforts to smile and talk because she thought it gave him pleasure were pitiful to him beyond words.

One day she said to him, "It is just as if I were in a boat, a little boat drifting far, far out to sea. I can hear people calling to me from the shore, I can see them reaching out their hands to me, but I cannot answer, cannot turn my boat, I must go further and further."

As the weeks grew into months and she seemed little better, John consulted various specialists, who could give him only vaguely encouraging words that when her physical strength came back she would become happier. Aunt Emma came and went; Eileen was always gentle, but never asked her to stay longer. There seemed no one who could understand what was the trouble. She turned to John for help as a child turns to someone stronger than itself. Her need of him was precious to him, and he watched over her with profound solicitude.

Slowly she gained strength. They travelled for some months and then returned home to take up, if possible, their life of the winter in New York. As the vessel neared port, Eileen seemed happier than for a long time. She was eager, she said, to get home to see all the good friends.

John watched her anxiously, fearing for her strength, but she entered into the city's activities with much of her old zest, and he was glad of her interest. The situation between them, as in those first days after their marriage, was held in a suspended state. Each knew there must sometime come a readjustment, each feared to disturb the comparative serenity of their friendliness by intimate talk which might reveal the impossibility of deeper things. In the solitude of his own heart, John had given up any thought of children in the future. Eileen could not bear the strain; he could not

DRIFT

ask it of her. And she? What did she wish? She did not know.

Once, soon after her return from the hospital, she had told him that she would rather die than live over again the months just passed, and he believed her.

As the many occupations each sought claimed them more and more, the dependence on each other which had grown during their days of travelling lessened; sometimes days would pass with only a few words.

John had his own rooms, for Eileen read much at night, and would often sleep during the forenoon. Neither of them quite knew how it was, that they became more and more formal in their relations to each other. Sometimes one or the other would make an effort to break the distance. There would be tenderness, an approach to intimacy, promises that they would try and be more together, but underneath, each knew that the distance between them was growing wider, too wide for hope of bridging.

Outwardly all was well; Mrs. Templeton, after one or two unsuccessful efforts to talk with John, realised that she was helpless. She was unfailing in her kindness to Eileen, but she could never rid herself of a sense of being baffled by the life Eileen lived. It was so full of people, interesting people of course; Eileen tolerated no one who did not contribute some originality of viewpoint or achievement, but the older woman wondered when there was time for hours alone, for thought for John.

John and Eileen had been married for five years. They lived in the same house, they went out to dinner in the same motor; returning, they exchanged a few words as to what had occurred during the day, and bade each other good-night.

What were their thoughts? Since the threatened strike, John had been more and more involved in ques-

DRIFT

tions concerning the never-ending struggle. He was determined, if he could, to establish before he died a relationship between him and his employees that rested on mutual trust and not on hostility. The profit-sharing plan was now in operation; it remained to be seen how successfully. At times he became profoundly discouraged, but he had set himself the task, he would not relinquish it. He instigated various bills looking towards factory inspection and regulation of hours and made frequent trips to Albany, there to await the pleasure of haughty or indifferent state legislators. On his return from such trips and from the investigation and inspection that he did personally of various factories, the house he lived in, the number of obsequious, idle, men-servants, the luxurious daintiness of it all were intolerable. The very bareness and restraint in the furnishing of the house irritated him, it was such costly restraint!

Often he would send word that he would not be at home and spend the night at one of his clubs or at his mother's house. He did not attempt any change in their manner of life; he could not think of Eileen without the surroundings which seemed necessary to her. She had a right to it all if she wished. If thoughts of their parting came to him he put them away. Eileen needed his care. She seemed to him a beautiful, unreal being who must be cherished.

And Eileen? She went her way, petted and adored by those among whom she moved, languid, lovely. She too accepted the strangeness of their life and found her own occupations.

PART III

CHAPTER XXI

ONE summer evening John Templeton was smoking a cigar on the deck of a boat, which he had taken in preference to a July night on a sleeping car. Even on the water the heat was oppressive and the number of shrill-voiced tugs and vessels darting busily about the harbour seemed to accentuate the air of incessant and wearisome activity of the great city he had longed for a little to escape. John watched the tall buildings as they slowly melted together, forming a jagged outline against the sky. Lights were gleaming out here and there through the dusk. Even at close of day there were millions still at work, high up in their warrens, while millions more were hurrying homeward to eat and sleep and then, hurrying back to begin it over again. What was it all about? Why did everyone work like that? He too had been intent all day; now he was very tired.

A sense of lassitude and weariness took possession of his spirit. Drawing a chair to the railing he sat down to watch the engulfing into the mist of the great buildings which represented to him his day's toll of work. He asked himself whether it was worth while, what he was doing it for? Clearly came the answer,—he was making himself exhausted every day that he might forget the needs that beset him when his mind was released from work, that he might be glad for rest, asking nothing further.

DRIFT

Well, and what if that were true; what then? Probably most of the others working over there with such daily expenditure of force were doing the same thing. He seemed to have missed out, but there was nothing to be done about it, at present at least; he saw no course that he definitely wished to follow. Having faced his difficulty and found no solution, he turned his thoughts away. After all, the work itself was tremendously interesting. His mind took up certain unsatisfactory points in the bill known as the "Ten Hour Law" recently passed in Albany. It must be amended, there was much to be done in the next two years, but it was something to have gotten it through against such opposition. The world and its clamouring needs encompassed him, and he forgot his trouble.

It had grown almost dark. The boats about grew fewer, the noises more hushed and distant. Soon the lights of the city would be gone and perhaps the light of the stars would come down. It was too hot to go below. He lighted another cigar, thinking that he would spend most of the night on deck.

After a little he became conscious that someone was standing near him, leaning on the rail, looking out as he had done at the beauty of sea and sky. Seeing that the figure was a woman, he rose to offer his chair.

"Oh," said a clear voice, "it's Mr. Templeton."

John was disconcerted. Something about her was familiar, but his recollection went no further. He took off his hat with a bewildered smile.

"You don't remember me," she said, "I testified before the Wages Commission. You were on the committee, and you asked me questions."

"Why of course, I remember you," he said. "It is Miss Whin, isn't it?" He held out his hand, looking at her with interest. The story she had told came back to him vividly. He had been struck with the courage

DRIFT

and simplicity of the girl, Margaret Whin by name, as she had told just how she lived, what wages she had earned, what she wanted and could not have if she "kept straight," to the five grave men who had formed the committee of the Wages Commission. Something in him was quickened and interested.

"Won't you sit down?" he said. "Wait and I will get another chair." He disappeared, and Margaret Whin returned to her contemplation of the scene before her. As she stood in her simple dress there was something about her that would have delighted a sculptor. She was a tall woman, strongly built. Her face was broad, with grey eyes set wide apart, her skin very fair with colour on the high cheek bones. Her mouth was large and full, the upper lip short. She moved with the free, big grace of a woman of the soil. On her brow there rested a serene tranquillity. Her face had the calm of a placid lake in which one might discern the reflection of storm-tossed clouds. Once, when she had applied for a position, and was waiting outside, she heard her prospective employer remark, "What a splendid-looking creature! I hope she is as competent as she looks." The compliment had proved a helpful stimulus in hours of discouragement.

"I remember you very well indeed," John told her as he reappeared. "Perhaps we can talk a little now, with more time. I'd like to hear more about you, for I recall perfectly what you told us. You said you would a great deal rather have a home of your own than work for your living, but that you wanted the right kind of a home? Was that it?"

"Exactly," she assented with a pleased, bright look; "didn't all the others say the same thing? Wouldn't anybody?"

"No, they didn't," John smiled, as he recalled some of the other girls that the committee had questioned,

DRIFT

“not by any means! I wanted to ask you then just what you meant by the ‘right kind of a home.’ I wanted to hear your definition, I mean.”

“Why, it isn’t very hard to imagine, is it?” She seemed to think him a little slow of comprehension. “I suppose I meant I didn’t want the kind of thing—well, that some of my friends have got. I’d rather be as I am.”

“I see,” said John, “you are afraid of an unhappy marriage.” His own words surprised him. They were too close to his thoughts, he had not meant to be so blunt. To his relief Margaret laughed.

“I suppose that’s it,” she said, “but ‘unhappy’ is rather a big word. The people I’m thinking of aren’t that exactly, they’re just—forlorn. They fuss a good deal about little things, and bother each other.”

She was silent a moment and then added. “I’ve thought about marriage, and the idea I have isn’t like that.”

Her face was grave, and John found that he had a strong desire to hear what this working girl had thought about marriage. She had said frankly that she wanted her own home; what was the reason she hadn’t obtained it? Her friends “fussed a good deal and bothered each other,” was that the real deterrent? He had a passing feeling of thankfulness that he and Eileen didn’t do that.

“I’m interested to know what you have thought,” he said. “Marriage is the most important thing in most people’s lives, I imagine. Can you formulate your conclusions into words?”

Margaret’s laugh rang out, then she looked at him smiling. “That sounds like the committee,” she said.

“I suppose I am pretty solemn,” John smiled back at her, “but you see I am very much interested, more so than you are, it would seem.”

DRIFT

His rueful tone made her grave. "Oh, I'm serious enough about it," she said, "and I can't 'formulate my conclusions' quite easily." A little smile crossed her lips as she repeated his phrase, "only, I'm quite used to my own thoughts, and I'm not to—all this." She waved her hand. "It is so lovely, it makes me happy, and this is the first night of my vacation. That is why I laughed, I guess. I didn't mean to be rude."

"You weren't rude." John had been glad of her gay laugh, and he was startled to find he had had no answering lightness for her reassurance. "It was I who was over-grave. Consider me as a committee member, or simply as a human being interested in what another human being has thought about a very important subject, a subject about which everyone is, must be, deeply concerned." Again his words seemed to him a betrayal of his thoughts, and his phraseology clumsy.

Margaret waited a little, then she said, "When I told the committee I wanted the 'right kind of a home' I suppose I might as well have said the right kind of a man. I think that is what I meant, but it is rather hard to talk about yourself to a committee."

"I should imagine so," John replied. "I thought it was fine in you to speak as you did."

"Why, 'fine'?" She looked at him curiously.

"Why, to be so frank about saying you wanted your own home, wanted to be married,—I liked your saying it as you did."

Margaret turned and looked at him again. She seemed to have difficulty in understanding his point of view. "I didn't say exactly that, did I?" she asked.

"Well, you made qualifications," he said. "But I gathered that you did want the 'right kind of a home'."

"Yes," she said, "I do. Isn't it lovely over there? We oughtn't to be thinking of anything else." She pointed towards the distant harbour as if the facts con-

DRIFT

cerning herself were now disposed of, and attention could be turned to other things.

It was Templeton's turn to feel that he had perhaps spoken too lightly, or what was more probable, pushed his questioning further than she wished. "Very lovely," he assented. "I have been sitting here watching it, but I wasn't thinking altogether of the beauty. You told the committee, I remember, that you had been working since you were sixteen. I work fairly hard in my own way, so do millions of others. I was watching the lights in the office building, thinking of the people in them, wondering why we all worked so hard, what it was all for. One gets moods like that; I suppose it's a symptom that one needs a holiday."

"Is it?" she said. "I think that almost every night, only I try not to. It's so silly!"

"Very silly," he assented, and silence fell.

"Excuse me," she said after a moment, "I ought not to have spoken like that,—said it was silly, I mean. I have to be cross with myself when I think like that, so it slipped out. You see how it is?"

John laughed as she turned to him. It was curious how their little apologies seemed to advance their acquaintance. It was as if each felt the need of being on guard, and regretted the necessity. "I do see," he said. "Haven't we all to be 'cross with ourselves' when we slip a cog? It's the only way to get on. Now I'm going to ask you a direct question, and please answer me frankly. Would you rather that I put to you no further questions about yourself, and what you think, I mean?"

She stared at this. "Why no," she said, "what made you think so?"

"You turned the conversation rather abruptly to the view, you know," he said.

"Did I?" Margaret was evidently puzzled. "But I'd

DRIFT

love to tell you anything you'd like to ask. I didn't know there was anything more."

"Then may I remind you that you were going to tell me what you thought about marriage?" Again there was a short silence. The question had been put gravely. It seemed to carry more meaning than the words implied.

"I suppose I've only thought about it in relation to myself," Margaret said. "I haven't any ideas about marriage in general."

"Well, that's the way most people think of it, I imagine," John put in. "What have you thought about it 'in relation to yourself'?"

Margaret waited to answer. She seemed to be trying to put it clearly without too intimate a confession. He felt that he had forced some kind of a reply, that she was troubled, but that at heart she was not unwilling to tell him what she thought.

"What I told the committee was true enough," she said. "I get awfully tired of working, but I don't want to marry anyone I have ever seen yet,—don't want to be with them, I mean, and,—you see,—the kind of men I like,—well they wouldn't think of marrying me, so there you are!" She ended with a laugh, but her voice was not quite steady. The admission had not been easy for her to make, and he divined that it held more of pain than the quiet words betrayed.

"Thank you for telling me," he said after a little. "It's rather odd, I think, for you to see your own situation so clearly, analyse it as you do. I can imagine just what you mean. You are sure I am not troubling you?"

"Oh no," she said, and her face was lighted again by her quick smile, "no, indeed."

"Because you see," he went on, "I didn't nearly finish my questions that day. I'd like to go on. May I?"

DRIFT

“Certainly,” she said. “It’s kind of you to take an interest. What do you want to know?”

John found himself a little embarrassed as she waited for him to speak. There was so much he wanted to know about this beautiful, frank woman he had met under such unusual circumstances. He had often thought of the story she had told the committee, with wonder as to how she had fared.

Margaret seemed to comprehend his difficulty. “You were surprised that I had analysed my situation so clearly?” she said. “I’ve had plenty of time to. I’m twenty-eight; I’ve been working twelve years. As I told the committee, I get seventy-five dollars a month. I’ve got a room that is fixed up the way I like it in a boarding-house on Twenty-second Street, and a little bed-room off. It’s got a nice view, I can see the river. I like my room. I have good meals every day, and warm clothes, but you see those things don’t begin to be enough, not anywhere near enough. There’s no harm in saying so, is there?”

“No harm at all,” John assured her, “the lack is universal. What else do you want?”

Margaret laughed. “Well, do you know, as I look back over these twelve years, it seems to me so queer—how I’ve changed, I mean, the things I used to want, want so hard, kid-wants you know—my, but they used to loom up big and important,—dresses and automobiles and opera tickets,—I wanted them with such an ache I couldn’t bear it. Do you know what cured me, made me see, I mean, there was only a part of me wanted those things? Well, I could have had ’em, yes I could. He wanted to marry me, he’d give me a ‘handsome house’ he said, and I dare say he would have. I tried to, I’m not ashamed to say I tried to hard, but something in me wouldn’t. All at once it seemed to me those weren’t what I wanted, really and truly. It was so funny! After

DRIFT

that I could go by the big windows without noticing hardly what was there. If I did stop I'd think I could have had it, yes I could, if it had only been—well—decent, and then I'd go back to my room and cry my eyes out, I couldn't have told what for."

"What do you mean by 'decent'?" John asked. "You said he wanted to marry you."

"Yes, I know; he was straight all right, according to the way he felt; he was a nice person I guess, but—oh, don't you see, it wouldn't have been decent to take all that when I just—liked him. He wanted, well—everything. I couldn't, I couldn't!"

"I see," said John. "What do you want now?"

"Why, what everybody wants! You say it is universal, and then you ask me again and again? You remembered what I said. I liked your remembering because—oh well, I guess it isn't very important anyway! I manage to get along all right. There's lots worse off."

"Please forgive my insistence." John was concerned. "I suppose I asked you again because to me, wanting what you do want seems very wonderful. Tell me, do you find the fact of others being worse off consoling?" The words conveyed to her that he had not.

"No," she said, "but it helps. You see I've been worse off myself, so I only have to look back. I used to spend a lot of time having the blues, but now I don't. I've learned not to."

"You seem to have learned some valuable lessons in your twenty-eight years. You might pass that one on." John was aware that he too was making revelations, but this time he added no generalisation to explain. He wanted her to know what he thought, what he had felt.

"I'm not sure I can," she said, "it's a recipe of my own. It seems to me it is ugly, wasteful, senseless to

DRIFT

be gloomy. I can't explain it very well, but I thought if I kept happy, that would be a kind of beauty I could make. I can't make any other kind of course. I'm afraid I'm not very clear, but that's the way I've thought it out. And then, besides, if you're blue, you have such a perfectly horrid time yourself."

"The last is true enough," John observed, "but I'm not sure your remedy is applicable for other people. I'll try and remember it. Tell me, what do you do in the evenings?"

"There's lectures," she answered. "I go to them sometimes, but they're pretty dry. Then Friday nights there's the concerts. They're nice if I had somebody to go with. You really can't enjoy music alone, can you? And of course there's reading."

"And do these things,—concerts and lectures,—give you real pleasure?"

"Of course they do, or why should I go to them?" She looked at him as if she thought he was a little, just a little, slow. "Then there's the library. I like to look at the big books on art and read about how cathedrals were built, and things like that. I don't know why, but it makes me forget the horrid things that happen at the office every day, only I never have anybody to talk to about it with afterwards and I'd like to. I guess that's why I'm talking like this to you now." And again the sudden bright smile came across her face as she looked up at him.

With a word that he would return shortly, John walked along the deck. He wanted a moment alone to ask himself what was stirring within him, what it meant. The girl's words moved him profoundly. Was she beautiful? Not regularly so, only strong and sweet and serene, with ruddy hair and clear eyes. So much he had taken in, and according to her own confession, in spite of her "cure for the blues," she was lonely. She had

DRIFT

spoken of it as a matter of course, as she would have spoken of the colour of the sky or the scene around them, making no appeal for sympathy, yet the appeal had come to him with such intensity that he was trembling. He wanted to go back and ask her more about herself, but first he must answer the question, what would happen were he to do so?

He could no longer see the lights of the city—those lights that had a short time since represented to him weariness of spirit, profound dissatisfaction. Where was his lassitude now, his sense of the futility of all things? It was gone, dispelled by the magic of a clear voice speaking simply of real things. He was alive, eager, wanting her, hungry for the stimulus she gave. He remembered the hour of his renunciation as a boy in Dresden, remembered the hour in the train coming back from New York after the threatened strike when he told himself that that renunciation had been wrong; now—now—he would take what he desired! In his soul rang a great shout of exultation,—not again should he be defrauded—he was free. He swung around and walked rapidly back.

“I want to know more about you, yourself,” he said.

Her eyes lifted. “It seems very wonderful to have that said to me.” John realised that her voice trembled. “You see, I don’t know anybody that I want to talk to, I mean that I’d want to have say anything like that to me, because there’d be no use. If you try and tell what you think, most people just think you’re queer. Do you know how it is?”

John smiled. “I fancy that also is a universal experience,” he said. “Most people soon give up trying. I’m glad you think I can understand. Please go on. Tell me what you think about,—about yourself, about me perhaps, our meeting here and talking. I want to hear what conclusions you have come to about life.”

DRIFT

"All I've had time to think about you is that you are very kind," she said.

"Isn't that enough for the present?" John asked her, "or shall I present my credentials before you say any more? I'm highly respectable, you know, as far as that goes, or at least I'm considered so, but in spite of that, I dare say it is a very unwise thing for you to talk to me as you are doing, or rather as you may do in answer to my questions." He looked at her directly, and she answered his gaze.

After a moment she said, "I'm not afraid." He settled himself back in his chair.

"Then go on," he bade her, "tell me all about it, how you came to be working here alone, where your people are, I want all of it,—all about yourself."

There was a moment's silence as if she were casting about in her mind where to begin her story, and then it came, quite naturally. It was usual,—a girlhood passed in a small town among simple people, happily enough, grammar school, two years of "High," then the city to seek employment. Dreary months as a shop girl, while shorthand and typewriting were acquired at a night school. Then a better position, forty dollars a month in an office,—a patent-medicine company; from there promotion as her skill increased, until now, seventy-five dollars a month secured her the room "fixed up as she liked it, the little bedroom off and three good meals a day," of which she had spoken. The recital had been entirely objective, not a hint of what she had felt, or thought, or longed for during the twelve years of struggle. John wondered if it were intentional, or only that his demand had recalled to her his former position on the Wages Commission, and she had so interpreted his question. Well, they still had hours before them and perhaps others. Let her tell her story her own way. It was

DRIFT

rather fine,—her keeping the outward facts entirely separate.

She seemed to have developed some views on the labour question. "Part of the time I was a socialist," she said. "When I saw what some people had and threw away while other people were eating their hearts out for the lack of something, they didn't know what, but something to make their lives less like hell, I got bitter and hard. It seemed to me that we people who worked made it all. I couldn't understand why we shouldn't get a bigger share. That was about the time I used to stare in shop windows and ache for limousines. I got some books on labour at the library, but they were pretty hard to understand. After a while I got to thinking differently. I saw it wasn't the work that was hard. I like to work, it's interesting; but there ought to be something more. You can work all day if you can look forward to something with a thrill in it at night, but if you haven't got that, then you get hard and want to kill anybody who looks as if they were happier. Ten to one they aren't, but they look so. Of course the only thing with a real thrill in it is love—and I don't mean by that kissing 'round in the hallways and looking silly, I mean wanting to give."

She stopped and gave him a look of enquiry. It was as if she had said more than she meant to and feared that he would misinterpret.

"Yes, I know what you mean," he said, "please go on."

"Well, I used to like to go to lectures at the Polytechnic Institute, though I haven't been lately. I was late one night and I stopped and looked at that long row of shabby coats and hats hanging there in the hall with shabby rubbers lying every which way underneath, and I thought to myself, 'All those girls in there listening to that lecture, the way I'm going to, and everyone

DRIFT

of them just aching for something else,—something they can't get. Some of 'em know it and some of 'em don't, but they're all alike in wanting.' It seemed pitiful somehow. I couldn't listen after I got inside."

"And was that what you were thinking all that time?" he asked.

She repeated his question, "'Was that what I was thinking of all that time?' No, I guess not,—when you are young, I mean when you are twenty, you believe something's surely coming your way if you're patient and don't fuss. But after a while you begin to get doubtful. I guess that's where I am now."

John had a wish that she would not talk so much as if he were merely a pair of ears with understanding enough to know what she meant. That seemingly was her present attitude towards him, or how could she be so free from self-consciousness? It did not seem to have occurred to her that what she "wanted" was there beside her, a man, lonely like herself, like herself perplexed by the necessity of being alone. As yet in her mind the relief of speech was uppermost, yet John knew that she would not have spoken as she had spoken had not his desire reached her, touched her. He could understand, as her story went on, how completely she had kept herself aloof from those around her. She had preferred her isolation to the only companionship available. Now her frankness to him was the breaking of the flood-gates. She felt his wish to reach her thought, and her mind and soul opened to him with perfect sincerity.

"You said you were twenty-eight," John said in answer to her last bit of analysis. "Too soon to be doubtful, isn't it? You have a precious possession in strength. Aren't you glad of that?"

His words sounded to himself extraordinarily stupid, but evidently they proved illuminating to her.

DRIFT

“Yes,” she said, “I’m healthy enough, I dare say that’s part of the trouble. I’d like somebody to talk with, somebody that I liked to be with, you know, but then there’s so much more. I wake up at night sometimes and think I’d do almost anything rather than just stay up there every night alone. Oh, I don’t know what I mean, it’s hard trying to put it into words. I don’t think it’s very spiritual or anything grand like that, it’s just physical,—it hurts, and then I think it will always be that way, year after year, and then I want to die.” Her voice had grown very low and continued its curiously impersonal tone. It seemed as if she were speaking to herself rather than to him, and yet he knew that his presence, his silent and absorbed attention, were precious to her, were what she needed, what she had thirsted for. He said nothing but “yes” as she stopped, and in a moment she went on.

“I’ve never talked about these things before to anybody,” she said, “because—well, because I was afraid. It’s so terrible to hear the girls chaffing all the time about fellows. It seems to be all mixed up with candy and theatres and getting kissed. The only way is to pretend you don’t know what they mean, and then they hate you, but they let you alone.”

Again John’s low, “Yes, I think I can understand,” was his only rejoinder.

“That’s why I told the committee I’d rather be married than be in an office,” she added. “It sounded to me such a silly thing to say, as if anybody wouldn’t, only I couldn’t make them understand exactly what I meant. I told you how I could have got married if I’d wanted to. I’ve thought of adopting a kiddy from the Orphan Asylum, only I’d have to be away all day and get somebody else to take care of it. Still, it would be there in the evening. Only it wouldn’t be mine. It’s one of my own I want so terribly, but not one of those

DRIFT

forlorn, dirty little tads that play on the streets. I want a child that would be straight and strong and fine. It must be wonderful to show a child things that you've wanted and struggled for. I'd like to read some of the things I've found to a little thing and hear what it said, watch how its eyes looked. Do you know what I've thought sometimes,—that if I could have a child of my own to love and take care of and hold close, I wouldn't want very much more. I saw a woman wheeling a baby carriage the other day. She stopped at the door of a house and took the baby up in her arms, and do you know what happened to me? I wanted to go and take it from her, and as I looked I felt so strangely. I couldn't look at the woman and the baby any more. I've felt differently ever since that day; it seems as if none of the things I used to do meant anything to me any more. And there's another thing I'll have to tell. There's a teamster I often see going by our street. He's a splendid-looking man, big and strong, and his face looks clear. I don't even know his name or anything about him, but when I see him I think 'I wish I could have a child by that man.' It's strange to have thoughts like that come to you. I don't know what to make of myself." She stopped and looked at him as if for counsel. "And then I keep thinking of all those other girls wanting just what I want, and I see those thousands of kiddies that aren't wanted, sprawling all over the streets down there on the East Side and scrambling up any way they can, and I can't make head or tail of it."

John had listened with every nerve in his body drawn towards her. That he had not touched her was only because he feared to break the spell of her unconsciousness. He had asked himself as she spoke,—Is it possible she cannot know? Or is she reaching out simply and directly for what she wants, fully aware? He could not

DRIFT

tell. He knew that not yet had she thought of him as she had thought of the "splendid-looking teamster whose face was clear." He knew, too, that he had found his mate and that come what might, they two must be together.

The black water raced past them, the night closed around them: in a voice curiously hushed, as if in the presence of some elemental mystery, John said to her, "I cannot tell you how profoundly you have touched me by what you have said. It seems to me very wonderful that you should feel this way, that you should be willing to express it."

"Please don't say that, sir," Margaret broke in. "I'm just telling you the truth because I knew, that day of the committee meeting, that you were the one who understood what I meant. At least I thought so; I don't know quite why."

"Is it only because I was on that committee that you have been willing to tell me of yourself now?" he said.

She looked startled and distressed. "Oh, no, sir," she said. "It was because you were kind. It's late now, I must go to bed. I'm glad you let me talk, it's done me good. I'll never forget." She held out her hand.

John had a sense of bitter dismay. Was it possible that she had felt nothing during her strange recital save appreciation of the sympathy which had drawn it forth? It could not be, the tumult within him had been too great. He took her hand.

"I shall see you again," he said. "You live on Twenty-second Street—what is the number? I may come?"

"Why yes," she said, and wrote the address on the bit of paper he gave her, "I'd be glad to see you."

"Thank you," he said. "Good-night."

DRIFT

“Good-night,” she returned with her bright look, and went away.

As she walked along the deck and down the passageway to her stateroom, Margaret Whin was enwrapped in a strange dream. Her words had brought back to her all the old ache of desire that she had striven to put into the background of her thoughts, yet now the pain was sweet and she welcomed it. Slowly she undressed and went to bed, still under the spell. Through the little window she could see far-off lights; the swish of the water against the boat, the throb of the engine, seemed simple and natural and good to hear. It was pleasant to be here, good to have had that talk with someone who understood; she fell asleep, comforted and happy.

A few hours later she awoke suddenly, as if she had been called. It seemed that while she slept, full realisation of all that she had been saying had crept through her consciousness to demand explanation in a clarion note of self-accusation. She had been borne along on the current of sympathy, now the reaction had come and she was appalled. What had she said? She turned herself in the narrow berth, thankful for the darkness, covering her face with her hands, hiding it desperately in the pillows as a surging flood of self-consciousness swept over her. How could she have spoken so to a stranger, she who had taught herself to go her way silently? A great wonder came over her. She could feel the strong grasp of his hand, could hear his voice as he said, “May I come?” She knew now that she had called him; she had laid bare to him the sacred things of her heart, had given him entry to her guarded sanctuary, and she had done it unsought, unasked! No, not quite, he had asked her to tell him of herself, asked her twice, but had he meant so much? Again her cheeks burned as the hot flush swept over her. Did she regret

DRIFT

it? She could not tell. In spite of her distress, there was, deep down, a strong sense of exaltation and excitement. It was as if at last the woman in her had been released. She realised that she had sent forth her call, the everlasting mating cry; would it be answered? She did not know.

CHAPTER XXII

IT was several weeks later that John returned to New York. He had wished to be alone, to think out what he would do. As he had walked away from Margaret on the boat for a few minutes' thought, so now he absented himself from all whom he knew and spent the time thinking over the events of his life, his situation in regard to Eileen and what he wished to accomplish in the future. A need was upon him to ascertain exactly where he stood. "Part of me is my own grandfather, looking at what I do and criticising," he had once said to his mother. "He's bound to keep watch." And she had replied, "If you mean your grandfather Templeton, the watch must be pretty austere." "It is," he had said and laughed and kissed her. He did not know how many times his mother had hugged the light words to her breast. All that he had ever done in his life had been through intention. It would be so now.

When he returned to the city and later to the Long Island place, he found that Eileen had gone to the Farm. There was a note from her to say that Aunt Emma was seriously ill. She would telegraph to his office as soon as she arrived. She had not known where to reach him to let him know. Full of self-reproach he sent for time-tables, and finding that he could reach the Farm by evening, returned to New York.

DRIFT

The two hours' journey to the Connecticut village seemed long. John was tormented with the thought that while Eileen had borne this anxiety and sorrow, he had been away from her, his thoughts even had not been with her. Strange plans had suggested themselves to his mind which now seemed remote and altogether impossible.

The old butler was waiting for him at the station. "It's all over," he said. "I am very glad you are here. Mrs. Templeton was thankful when your telegram came saying you were on the way."

Eileen came down to him crying. "Oh, where were you? Where were you?" she sobbed. "I couldn't find you and I wanted you so! I got here in time, just a few hours before the end. She tried to say something to me but I couldn't understand. We couldn't make out. I sat by her all the time after I came. She knew I was there. It was all over so quickly! I didn't know death was like that. Isn't it strange?"

It was the first time that Eileen had seen death. She seemed shaken and bewildered. John could only be thankful he was there in time to take charge of all arrangements. It was dreadful to him to think of her journey alone.

They went together to the room where Aunt Emma lay in the quietude of her great sleep. As they entered Eileen whispered, "She is so beautiful, John. I never knew before that she was beautiful."

It was true. There was a majestic and noble beauty in the waxen face. Gentle, Aunt Emma had always been, loving and unassuming and kind; now it seemed that she had been much more. Why, John asked himself, when the spirit had gone should this be made more plain? Was the silent body speaking, bearing testimony at the last?

"John," said Eileen, "they say when people are old,

DRIFT

their lives are written on their faces. I wish, oh I wish, I could live so as to look like that!" She turned to him a face marked by weeping. "Will you help me? Oh, John, will you? I want to be good, but I don't know how. You are all I have, will you help me?"

"I want to help you, dear, if I can. I do not need to tell you that. It is hard to know what is good, isn't it?"

As John looked at the purity of outline, the extreme delicacy of that quiet face, he wondered what had been its history. Had those closed eyes known tears, that tender mouth been twisted in the effort to conceal distress? He wondered if Aunt Emma had known what it was to watch through the night, eaten and consumed and beset by restless pain. As he remembered her, it seemed hard to believe—yet who could tell? In a little time those whose hearts now ached would be as she was. It mattered little, one person's joy or pain.

Eileen sat down by the bed, one hand stretched out. "Oh, John—if I could speak to her! If I could only say one word! I told her I loved her, told her over and over, but I couldn't be sure she understood. She lay so quiet, and then,—it was just before the end, she opened her eyes and looked at us, each one of us, but as if she didn't see us, she looked away,—out, out, out—as if she saw something we couldn't see. There was an intensity, I can't describe it— Oh, John, what did it mean? Is there anything beyond, do you think? I'm sure she saw something, she almost started up as if to go towards it. If we could only know!"

John tried to persuade her to take a little rest, but she would not leave the room. "Not while she looks like that, it is just as if she might speak. I don't want to be away. Why didn't I come sooner, why didn't I? She never asked me to come, she never asked anything, but she wanted me, and I wasn't here. I know by the

DRIFT

way her eyes followed me that she wanted me, and now it's too late."

John said all that he could, but Eileen's grief was too deep for any consolation he might suggest. Finally he went down-stairs, where various matters waited for his decision. He found the lawyer and a number of people from the near-by village who had come to make offers of assistance. From their words, he learned how deeply Aunt Emma had been beloved, how sincerely she was mourned by those among whom she had lived her seventy years of placid life. The lawyer outlined to John the conditions of the will, a copy of which he had brought. He would read it after the funeral, he said.

It was evident that the small church in the village would not be large enough for those who wished to come, so it was arranged that the service should be held on the lawn under the apple-trees at the Farm.

It was a beautiful midsummer day. On the faces of those gathered to do her honour was the realisation that in the passing of a life, so gently lived, so peacefully ended, there should not be any clamour of weeping, any marks of undue grief. Let them rejoice for the beauty and loveliness that had been. She would wish it so.

Something of this, the white-haired clergyman, who had been her friend and almoner, expressed, and Eileen tried to still the cry of anguish in her heart. Oh, if only she had been kinder! If only she had been with her more! She loved her dearly, why had she not told her? Why, why?

As if for the first time she heard the everlasting words:

"Oh spare me a little that I may recover my strength before I go hence and be no more seen.

DRIFT

“As soon as thou scatterest them they are even as a sleep: and fade away suddenly like the grass.

“There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection from the dead.

“Hear my prayer, O Lord, hold not Thy peace at my tears.”

Solemnly the great affirmation rang out, “Whosoever believeth in me shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” And then there stole through the summer air, voiced in flute notes of high beauty, the promise—“Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed—Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown—Peace, perfect peace, with sorrow surging round.” In a little while the final words—“Dust to dust, ashes to ashes,” were spoken and Aunt Emma was laid away from sight.

The lawyer who had drawn the will evidently wished to make something of a ceremony of reading it aloud. He named a number of persons he thought should be asked to attend. In the evening an assemblage of ten or twelve people were gathered in the library.

There were generous bequests to a number of relatives and to all the servants, besides gifts to a number of charities. To Eileen was left the Farm and all personal effects. Then came the curious part. Not far from the Farm there was a large, ugly, brick building, known as “The Old Ladies’ Home.” As a child Eileen had watched the old women whose “Home” it was sitting about on the lawn and piazzas. She was rather afraid of them, they seemed so old and strange. She remembered Aunt Emma’s visits there and the flowers and fruits and books she was in the habit of sending. Evidently there were friends of years’ standing among the beneficiaries, for word had been received

DRIFT

that it was their wish to attend the funeral. Eileen had looked at them curiously as they were assisted to their places. The realisation came over her that many others had loved her aunt and companioned her during the years she herself had never come!

After the specific bequests, Aunt Emma's will became more complicated; that is, in the matter of phraseology and attention to remote possibilities. The substance of it was simple. With a word or two of explanation, "knowing that my dearly loved niece, Eileen Templeton, is amply provided for, and feeling sure that she will understand and appreciate my wish," Aunt Emma left the bulk of her estate to found and maintain a "Home" where aged married couples could remain together. The plan had been carefully thought out, and a board of trustees appointed. The Home was to be on the cottage system and "every effort made to bring to each cottage such personal effects of those who were to live there as to render it homelike and agreeable."

As she listened to the reading of the pages, underneath the formal wording, Eileen recognised Aunt Emma's tender thought, the minute and careful way in which she had planned. How strange, no word of her idea had ever been spoken except to the old lawyer who had helped her make provisions for "aged married couples to remain together." What had been at work in her mind to make that idea so important? Eileen wondered. She said something of this to John on the train next day, but he had no explanation to offer. Eileen was thankful for the trust implied in the words "knowing my dearly loved niece will understand and appreciate." She repeated the phrase over as if it gave her comfort. Vague plans were in her mind for revising her own will to compass some such ends. She asked John to advise her, and they agreed to go into the matter fully and carefully during the following

DRIFT

winter. Eileen did not speak of the thing that lay heaviest on her heart, that Aunt Emma had given her no share in the labour of carrying out her plans.

Alone in her room in the great city, Eileen said again and again, "Hold not thy peace at my tears! Hold not thy peace at my tears!"

CHAPTER XXIII

JOHN was perplexed at the depth of Eileen's grief. He had never thought the sympathy between her and Aunt Emma very strong. He tried to comfort her, tried to be with her, but he had filled his life very full and there were demands upon his time.

Eileen passed many hours alone. She tried to read during the long winter evenings, but would more often sit questioning herself in the old way. She was not yet thirty and what was before her? She felt that John did not need her. He was invariably kind, invariably thoughtful, she had grown dependent upon his care for her; however far apart they had been, that had never failed. She believed that he cared for her and wished that she could be more a part of his life. She tried to interest herself in his pursuits, but they seemed beyond her.

They had several long talks together, even reaching the point of trying to find out what was wrong in their own relationship, but without success. They were too close to the pain. Out of these talks, however, there developed a friendliness that was sincere. It seemed something tangible, if slight, after the constraint and aloofness of the preceding years.

Life was passing by. In a year or so Eileen found herself again the centre of the beautiful, gay world that

DRIFT

sought for pleasure. During her period of mourning she had tried to work on various boards and committees of charities in which Aunt Emma had been interested. There were certain duties in connection with these which she performed conscientiously, but they were not enough. As before, the world possessed her; there were house-parties and gayeties and entertaining; underneath, profound dissatisfaction and unrest. John was away practically all of the time. If their world knew of the gulf between them it was ignored. John was known to be very busy and his absence was excused. To some it was a relief; he had become very grave. He often stayed at his mother's house, and Eileen was glad that the two seemed to be coming closer together. What had eight years of marriage brought? Only emptiness and sorrow. Eileen did not know what to do to remedy that which was wrong.

One real pleasure came to her,—the renewal of friendship with an old school friend, Clara Ainsboro by name. They met in a shop one day and greeted each other warmly. Neither could recall the other's married name and various bits of personal history were quickly exchanged. Visits ensued and something like intimacy developed. They were very unlike. Clara said one day, "Your life is set to the accompaniment of a symphony of violins, mine to a jig on a hand organ." Another time she begged Eileen not to be so "transcendental." "You forget," she said, "I have three fat babies to care for and must consider the price of beans." Eileen found her directness pleasant. She liked to go to Clara's house, a small one on the wrong side of the park, where two maidservants and Clara herself managed the cheerful and noisy establishment as well as they could.

If Clara suspected anything of her friend's unhappiness she never gave any intimation, and Eileen had for

DRIFT

so long lived within herself that she had little impulse to communicate. In the years gone by she had often longed for someone to talk to, someone to whom she could go for counsel and sympathy, but the desire had passed. She had given up hope that anyone could help.

One day Eileen was roused to startled interest by a letter from Robert Thorne. It had been forwarded from the Farm. A letter had come from him at the time of her marriage, wishing her happiness. Now he was in New York and wrote to ask if he might come to see her. Eileen held the note in her hand as her mind went back to those spring days in Paris. How happy they had been together! She had forgotten what it was to feel like that. What if she had answered him differently? Would her life have turned out better?

She found that she wanted very much to see Robert Thorne. There had been several men since her marriage who had shown signs of devotion; she had wondered that they did not interest her more, but now she was excited. She wondered whether Thorne had married, what life had done to him, whether he had kept the same buoyant freshness and vigour she had found so attractive. She read the brief note over and answered it, bidding him come the next afternoon. Then she almost repented, fearing that he might discover changes in her, detect her unhappiness. She was sensitively afraid the failure of her married life would be discerned.

At dinner she told John of Thorne's note, asking him to come into the drawing-room on the following afternoon if he could. "He wanted to marry me," she said. "I liked him greatly, but I think I did not appreciate him. Aunt Emma was dreadfully worried. She never called him anything but 'that young man,' I remember." She went on to tell of the way Thorne

DRIFT

used to talk of the young city of which he was a part, and gave such a vivid picture that to John's mind came the thought, "What if she had married him? Would he have made her happier than I?"

The next day Eileen was uneasy. She almost wished she had not bade him come, yet she waited the hour with eagerness. She could not have defined of what she was afraid. At five Thorne came.

"My word!" he exclaimed as he looked around. "Does one sit down and talk here?"

Eileen laughed and the gayety in the sound surprised her. So he hadn't changed! She told him it was quite safe, and with another comprehensive look of awe and wonder he did sit down and bent his entire attention upon her. She had prepared her defences against any questions he might ask, resolved he should guess nothing, yet his look was disconcerting. It was as if he said, "Yes, I hear all these things you are telling, but what is the real truth? How is it with *you*?"

For the first few minutes each enquired what had "happened" to the other, laughing as questions and answers overlapped. There was no constraint as Eileen had feared. Thorne spoke of the past with entire frankness. He was so glad, he said, that they could meet again as old friends. To Eileen he seemed like the north wind, like some wide and elemental force which sweeps before it all things small and confused. She asked him how the projects of which he had told her had prospered, and he entered into an eager description; "and there was still so much to do ahead," he said.

Eileen watched him, and the spell of his virility caught her. She noticed how he threw back his head as of old; the quick expressive gestures of his brown hands delighted her. Suddenly he broke out with, "But here I am running on about myself and all these remote things

DRIFT

you're good enough to take an interest in and not hearing a single word about you, which is what I came for. I want the whole story from the time we were in Paris. If there isn't time today, I'll come again tomorrow. Don't skip anything, will you?" He looked at her smiling and waited.

"I'm afraid my life has been very uneventful beside yours," she said, and it took a number of questions from Thorne to elicit even such facts as she gave him. Eileen's usual ease at hiding what she thought failed her a little; his questions troubled her, vague as they were. He must not know. She over-elaborated the things that had given her pleasure, and after a little Thorne comprehended that she was telling him nothing and asked after Aunt Emma.

He was interested in her peculiar will. "Do you know, I think that's bully," he said thoughtfully. Again, as in those far-off Paris days, something in the homeliness of his speech stirred her.

John came in for a few minutes. Divining Eileen's wish for cordiality, he asked her when Mr. Thorne was to dine with them.

"As soon as you like," Thorne said in answer to Eileen's seconding of John's enquiry. "I'd like to come."

"Tomorrow," said Eileen, "and not a party."

"No! God save the mark!" said Robert Thorne, and went away.

On the following evening Eileen found him in the drawing-room examining the pictures. "Tell me about them," he said. "I never saw a house like this before. It is very beautiful; because it's yours, I suppose."

"Apparently your art education has not progressed since Paris," she said. "This is a Fragonard. I inherited it, I never would have bought it; and this," she turned a picture which leaned against the wall, "is a

DRIFT

Matisse. I haven't decided on it yet. Give me your advice."

Thorne considered both pictures gravely, then he said, "I like the queer one better; there seems to be more there. It certainly is queer though!" He bent to it again and shook his head. "There was a chap in Paris with white hair who winked who knew all about these things. I wanted to kill him. He was a wicked man."

"Oh no!" Eileen exclaimed, "he is quite harmless. He still winks—when he wants to. He has a beautiful collection, only people are rather afraid to go and see his pictures, afraid of saying the wrong thing, I mean. They always know it when they have. Would you like to go? I remember he called you an 'unspoiled spirit'."

Thorne was aghast. "You aren't serious, are you? I tell you he is a wicked man. Better not bring us together, I might want to kill him again."

Eileen laughed. She had always wondered about Crockett herself; it was odd to hear him gravely denounced by so simple a word. "All right, I won't take you," she said.

Thorne wandered about the room looking at various pictures. "I wish I knew more about these things," he observed. "You love them, don't you?" You were heavenly good to me in Paris. Weren't those wonderful days? I like to remember them,—better than the ones that followed."

Eileen caught her breath, but he went on quietly. "I think I'll take a year off and devote it to getting an education in beauty. Nature is so overwhelming out in my country she seems to crowd art out, but one ought to know about beautiful things like these." He waved his hand smiling and then looked at Eileen as if he considered her one of the "beautiful things."

Eileen stood leaning against a screen of tarnished

DRIFT

gold. She was dressed in heavy green silk. The soft folds clung about her long, delicate body and swirled around her feet. The sleeves were of filmy, floating stuff, confined at the wrists with gold. In her hair was a gold fillet with an emerald set just where the hair met the low forehead.

Suddenly Thorne's gaze was too full of admiration. She turned away startled, and he murmured a word of apology. "You know, it is rather wonderful, seeing you again like this," he said.

During dinner he and John found much to say to each other. Eileen felt herself a little left out as the talk flowed into channels out of her ken. They disagreed radically on all political questions, but were of one accord as to the utter obstinacy and general hopelessness of state legislators, whether on the Atlantic or the Pacific coast. Again, as she listened to Thorne's talk, Eileen had a vision of a bigger world. He seemed to deal with its needs and problems with a great patience, a great faith that all would be well.

After he had gone John commented on this quality in him. "Rather a remarkable man, that, I should imagine. I wonder if 'his State,' as he calls it, appreciates him? He seems to have stood a good many knocks politically. Men who fight for clean administration generally do."

Eileen was pleased at John's words. She had an impulse to repeat them to Thorne on their next meeting, but thought better of it. She could imagine his amused grin. Fighting seemed to be a stimulus he enjoyed.

Thorne came to see her often. He had, at first, spoken of expecting to leave shortly, but the days passed by and he always asked at parting when he was to see her again.

Eileen lived in a dream world. Thorne made her gay; it was wonderful to be gay again. She had forgotten

DRIFT

that she could be. She caught herself singing little songs in a low tone or running upstairs, eager to be ready when he came. They were travelling fast, but did not ask themselves the destination. It was enough to be together.

They were chatting over the teacups one day when there came a pause too intense to be borne. Thorne broke it by a question. "I want to know whether you are happy? I think you are not. I should like to know before I go home again. I've been staying on to find out. I decided yesterday that I would ask you."

Eileen put up defensive hands. "Don't, oh please don't!" she said.

"You have answered me," his voice was strained, "I am sorry. I have always thought of you as happy." He said no more, but there came to be after that a sense of intimacy that Eileen found very sweet. He knew then, this great big friend, knew from the delicacy of his own intuition, for she had been at the utmost pains to hide the truth. He and John had met frequently, always cordially, sometimes with an approach to real liking. If John remarked the frequency of Thorne's visits, he made no sign.

The days grew into weeks and Thorne stayed on. Each time they met there was a more tremulous uncertainty in their speech. They seemed to be struggling to hold back yet a little longer from something they knew must come.

One day Thorne repeated his statement. "You are not happy, you are not!" Then he added, "And I can make you so! Good God! what's to be done?"

CHAPTER XXIV

IN February there was a "Bazaar of All Nations" for the benefit of a lying-in hospital. Eileen had agreed to take charge of the decorations; no slight task, considering the size and ugliness of the hall engaged. Once interested, she threw herself into the work, determined that it should be the most beautiful bazaar ever held. It was soon apparent that the sum appropriated by the executive committee for decorations would be inadequate for the scheme as planned by Eileen and the few bold spirits she had summoned to her aid. Possibly this situation had been anticipated by the committee. Soon, bales of lovely coloured stuffs appeared, extra work-people bent to, and beautiful things came into being with no visible means of support.

Eileen tried not to think about Thorne. They had one unforgettable hour when they acknowledged what had come to be, when he had taken her fiercely in his arms and kissed her over and over again; she had not seen him since.

Late in the afternoon on the day before the bazaar was to open, John found Eileen on the top of a step-ladder in the flower booth. She was flushed with triumph over her achievement and clambered down to survey it. "I knew it could be done," she said, "but there is no use trying to direct people who can't see a thing the way you see it."

DRIFT

“That,” observed the chairman of the flower committee, standing admiringly by, “is a profound observation.”

Eileen could not think of coming home, oh, not for hours—they were bringing the flowers, and she must see that they were arranged properly as to colour. “To do justice to my background,” she explained.

The bazaar was opened with a flourish, and Eileen could not help a thrill of pleasure at the many compliments to her skill. It was pleasant to feel that she could do something well and she had actually worked. That was pleasant too. She had made a discovery.

On the day of the opening she encountered Thorne spending money and looking bored. He greeted her courteously but seemed to seek no special word with her alone. She watched him go from her with a sick sense of bewilderment. What had she done? In a few moments he came back. “I’ve been going through hell,” his voice was harsh. “I didn’t come because—well—I heard some nasty gossip—about you and me, I mean. We can’t talk here, I was afraid to speak to you just now. I sent you a letter—when can I come? Tomorrow?” She nodded, and he was gone.

So, that was what it was! Thorne’s ways were a constant surprise to her. He had kept away, kept her wondering, because of some silly thing that he had heard. Eileen was half angry and half relieved. What would he say tomorrow? If he could stay away from her for two weeks because of some whispered word, what might he not do? Eileen knew her world; what was said, in the way Thorne meant, mattered nothing to her, but could she make him see?

She wandered restlessly about the bazaar, looking here and there to see that her handiwork had remained unimpaired, greeted everywhere with deference. She

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became more and more unhappy as she thought of Thorne's words. How could he take that silly talk seriously?

The afternoon seemed endless. She found Clara Ainsboro bustling about and wondered how could she be so cheerful and smiling when it was all such idiocy. Clara handed her treasury box to her successor who was to serve in the evening, and suggested that she and Eileen depart together and at once. Hailing a taxi-cab they climbed in with sighs of thankfulness.

It was beginning to snow, and as they drove through the lighted streets, the white specks, whirled by the wind, made Eileen think of the Christmas-tree tinsel of her childhood; how it had showered down mysteriously from somewhere out of sight, entrancing her with its unfamiliar beauty. There were the beribboned boxes, the sweets; Grandfather Endicott, who always came at Christmas time, and used to read her the Wonder-Book. Why should she be thinking of that far-off time now? She wondered if anyone had Christmas trees any more, if anyone was happy enough to have them, and she wondered what the grown-up people who gave her presents then would think of what she was doing now.

Clara's voice broke in. "Never again!" she was saying, "never, never again! Five hundred and thirty-eight dollars less three hundred and eighty-two,—oh, goodness, I'll have to do that on paper—it isn't much, is it? About a hundred and fifty dollars. I wonder if any of the other tables did better. Bazaars are crazy things. I'm awfully late for my babies—they always expect me to be there at half-past-five when they have their supper. It's tyranny, but I adore it. I have to give a good reason for my tardiness, and let them sit up an extra half-hour."

Eileen was only half listening. "Have you to give

DRIFT

an account of all your actions to your children?" she drawled, "how very absurd!"

"No, of course not," came the answer, "only at supper-time. Clara was leaning forward in the cab as the driver slowed down to look for the number. "It is very sweet, you know, to have them waiting, eager for you, to know they need you, that no one else will do. Why, it's life itself! Here we are! Driver! Second house from the corner on the left!"

She had the door open, and was half way up the walk, calling over her shoulder, "Do come in, won't you, and stay for dinner?" She ran up the steps. The front door opened as she reached it, and three small figures, clad in strange, bifurcated garments of bright scarlet, fell upon her with outcries and reproaches.

"We had plum jam, and you weren't here, so I couldn't have any," wailed one voice. "Here's the book, page two hundred and five," said another, while a third, a slow deep bass, solemnly proclaimed, "You's late, and you's late tomorrow!"

"Oh, duckies," Clara's voice was full of contrition. "Mother's sorry! Shoo, now shoo! Shut the door." She turned to Eileen, silent, standing on the step. "You will come?" she said. "I'll warrant you haven't read Ali Baba in years. It's great stuff." She pulled Eileen in and gave her a chair. "Sit down there. Now, chicks, here we are, lots of time to read." The red gnomes tugged chairs to the fire, curled themselves up and fixed expectant eyes on Clara as she took the book, putting her own forefinger on the place her eldest son had been carefully guarding.

"Ali Baba loaded his asses with gold coin and then covering the bags with sticks he returned home. Securing the door of his house, he emptied out the gold before his wife, who threw up her hands in delight and amazement. He told her all, urging upon her the necessity of keeping the secret.

DRIFT

“The wife rejoiced at their good fortune, and would count the gold, piece by piece. ‘Wife,’ said Ali Baba, ‘you will never have done. I will dig a hole and bury it; there is no time to be lost.’

“‘But let us know how much we have,’ said the wife. ‘I will borrow a small measure and measure it while you dig the hole.’

“Away ran the wife to her brother-in-law, Cassim, and desired to borrow a measure for a little while. Now Cassim’s wife was curious to know what her sister-in-law wanted to measure, and artfully put some suet in the bottom of the pot.”

Eileen watched the scene with a curious sense of detachment. Was Clara really as happy as she thought she was? What had she meant by her words about “life itself”? She remembered a significant talk she had had with the doctor after that dreadful time five years ago. How would it be if she had not had that talk? Would she be sitting in front of the fire with a sleepy child in her arms and two more wriggling with eagerness near by? As Clara read on Eileen grew sorry that this joy was not hers. She had a sense of injury. Did Clara wish to show her all that she, Eileen lacked? Did she mean, by making her a part of the scene, to express in that way her disapproval of Thorne, to show her that her love affair was merely a substitute, a shadow? Clara had met Thorne several times and liked him; perhaps she thought—Eileen’s cheeks grew hot—it must be sweet to have a small hand reaching up around one’s neck! Then recollection swept over her,—no, no, it could not be—the memory of that year of misery was intolerable. She thought of John. He had never said anything since that one talk they had had after the child had died. He was absorbed in his work; children never meant as much to a man as to a woman. She pictured herself as Clara was; Thorne would never have

DRIFT

found his way to her, and how could she live without that, without him?

She got up abruptly, saying that she must go. Clara tumbled her youngest off her lap and rose to put out a detaining hand. "I thought you were going to stay for dinner?" she said. "Do wait till Frank comes."

"No, no, I must go, don't interrupt the story," and waving a smiling good-night, she went out. Something, she could not have told what, impelled her to stand for a moment looking in through the blind. The astonished youngster who had been dumped on the hearth-rug was picked up again, Clara mechanically pulling his thumb out of his mouth and holding his small fist in her hand as she began to read.

Instead of going home, Eileen sent the cab away and turned to walk up the avenue. The wind had risen and the snow stung her face. Something in her was grateful for the sensation of opposition in the storm. Holding her skirts and bending her head, she pushed along up into the park. She wanted to think it out, this thing which she had just seen, the little red gnomes. She did not want to go home, not just yet; besides didn't people who were unhappy always go out and walk in the storm? As she walked she thought of John with a sudden rush of tenderness. He had always been good to her, always giving, never asking, never resentful of her periods of coldness and distance. It was a long time since they had exchanged anything more than courteous formalities. She did not know at all what was in John's mind? Was he unhappy in their estrangement? He made no sign. She had been absorbed with Thorne and thought of John only with thankfulness that he left her free. What did John think of Thorne? She gave a little petulant exclamation. It was maddening that he should be so silent. For a long

DRIFT

time he had not come to her dressing-room to say good-night. Even that shadowy little remembrance of their early intimacy had ceased. How? Why? She could not tell. She wondered if perhaps John longed for her and would not speak or if perhaps—but no, he had always cared for her; he would be the lover again if she should make a sign. And Thorne? What would she say to him? As in the days long ago in Paris, she felt his power, knew that he would not wait long for an answer. She stopped under a lamp, took out a small mirror from her hand-bag and looked at herself, gravely, consideringly. So that was the face that had such power over men,—that thin oval, with upslanting eyes. “What is it?” she said to herself, and smiled.

The thought of Clara, gay and domestic, arose in her mind; the funny little red figures of the children, their noisy possessive greeting,—fat, sleepy Toddlers. What did one gain, what lose? It was very puzzling. She put the mirror away and walked on, her thoughts turning to John and then to Thorne,—the two men who loved her. What right had Thorne to treat her as he had, to be so imperious? He had said that they must decide. Well, he could go from her if he was discontented, she knew he would come back. She laughed a little to herself as she threw back her head and faced the storm. Men always did as she wanted; Thorne would in the end; they were doing nothing wrong, harming no one. Why should they not be happy?

Finally she found herself at the end of the park and hungry; a car took her home. On the hall table was the letter of which Thorne had spoken. “Please be at home tomorrow afternoon. There are important things to be decided. I must see you. I love you, love you, love you!”

DRIFT

She took the note upstairs, stretched herself before the wood fire in her dressing-room and read it over. "I must see you! I love you, love you, love you!" She had a delicious sense of ease and excitement. "Let Clara and her babies go," she thought; "I have my lover!"

CHAPTER XXV

WHAT was it Thorne wanted to say to her? Why had he spoken in such a peculiar way at the bazaar? Eileen had a sense of foreboding. She knew a crisis was coming in their relationship; she did not know how to meet it. Of late their meetings had been troubled and unhappy until that wonderful evening,—could she ever forget it? She hid her face in her hands, shutting out the scene about her, thrilled with the memory of his touch. Now he was coming. What should she do? She remembered her dismay at his telegram of long ago, “May I hope?” Now they had come close,—what would be?

As she sat and thought, she knew that Thorne had become a necessity in her life. She tried to imagine what the days would be without him. His presence, his letters, his caress were the stimulus upon which she lived. Remove them and she could not go on. Then she asked herself, “What do I give him?” Her life with John was so strange, she had never asked that question of herself before. John was sufficient unto himself, he had not needed her for along time. He was always kind, he loved her more than she deserved; why had they missed the way? And Thorne? Tomorrow he would come, she would be in his arms! She remembered what he had said to her, “I was the humblest of worshippers, your love makes me a god.” What was com-

DRIFT

ing? What was coming? Tomorrow would be fateful; let it not take this wonderful love from her life!

As Thorne entered, Eileen knew their hour of happiness was over. She reached out to him and he came and held her; gravely at first, trying to meet her eyes with the question in his own, then with the quick possessive tightening of the arms she longed for.

"I didn't mean to kiss you," he said, letting her go. "Please sit down over there. There are things that must be said between us two." Eileen obeyed and waited while Thorne stared at the fire.

"It's difficult to put into words," he said, "but I want to do so. You know this can't go on—this way, I mean?" He looked at her again gravely, questioningly. "Eileen, I love you, I want you, what's to be done?"

Everything in her leaped to the man's words. "And I want you," she said, and again her arms reached out for his clasp, but something had arisen now that would not be stilled with kisses. She saw that he would not touch her again until some answer had been made to his question.

"I think I knew this was coming," Eileen said.

"And what have you thought about it?" Thorne went on. "What do you want to do?"

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know," Eileen broke in. "What can I do? When I am in your arms, anything, everything seems possible. When I am away from you I am afraid. What do you want me to do? What are you asking of me?"

Thorne came then and stood over her. "Don't be childish, Eileen," he said. "You know what I want. I want you, you, you! Do you hear me? I want you in my arms at night, I want you by my side in the daytime, I want you waiting for me when I come home at night, I want to feel you near, to turn to you and touch you



ROBERT THORNE

DRIFT

when I awaken in the morning. I want our lives to be together. Oh, Eileen, love isn't only passion; think of the hours we've spent together, talking, reaching out to each other's hearts and minds—that's what I want, only—there's no use pretending, is there? I want first of all your love, your passion, your giving of yourself. I came today determined to say this. I can't go on this way—hiding, fearful of discovery. It's intolerable! Don't you see it can't go on? What have you to say? You want me as I want you, it lies in your hands,—what shall be done, tell me?"

Something in the way Thorne spoke told her more than his words, that he had come to a determination to which she must yield. If he would only take her in his arms, only hold her while they talked, she knew that she could put off decision, but he stood in front of her quietly waiting.

"You mean, go away together?" she said.

"Not necessarily," he answered. "You and your husband must have discussed divorce. You don't seem to understand. I want you with me; I want you for my wife. Heaven knows the ceremony means little, but it's the way we seem to have arranged matters. I can't ask you to come to me and be cut off from everyone else, can I?"

"I can't get a divorce from John," Eileen murmured; she seemed slipping away before this terrible simplicity. "I haven't any reason, and he would not consent, and I think I haven't the courage." The words came slowly and Thorne's face changed.

"Then what are you going to do?" he demanded. "Surely you've asked yourself that question. I tell you I want you. If you'll come to me without a divorce, well and good, only for God's sake think it over, know what you're doing. You love me, but do you love me enough to give up everything else? You must under-

DRIFT

stand the ostracism, the humiliation, that such a course means. For myself, I don't care, but for you—oh, Eileen, Eileen, I couldn't let you do that; I couldn't! To see you hurt, looked at askance. My dear, it would be unbearable!"

"It seems insignificant when compared with being with you," Eileen rejoined, but she knew Thorne was right; she had no courage for that.

There was a silence, and when Thorne spoke again, there was a different note in his voice. "Child!" he said, "little child! That's how you seem to me. I want to take you in my arms and take care of you, as I wanted to so long ago, just love and protect you and make you happy, and yet I have to ask you to do this hard thing; but don't you see, dear, it's the only way? There's no happiness ahead for us unless we have the courage to find what we want, to take it, to carve a pathway. You and your husband are not married. It's a mockery the way you live. The first day when I asked if you were happy I knew that you were not and that you were hiding it. One can tell these things. If you had been happy there would have been no room for me; I should have gone away after that first call. If I hadn't known this, felt it by the way you turned to me, I couldn't have taken you in my arms, couldn't have loved you as I do love you. We know it's all right between us two, that it had to be, but I want it to be all right to others too. I don't want to lie about the sacredest thing in my life, and I can't be content with seeing you occasionally; I want all of you, all your sweetness, all your time, all of yourself."

Eileen was crying. What could she say, what could she do? She couldn't do what he asked, she had not the courage. Stammeringly she tried to tell him of her humiliation, of her fears, but he was intent on something more that he wanted to say.

DRIFT

He took her hands. "Eileen, there's something I want you to know before we say any more. You ought to know all of me before you decide. I think I have never stopped loving you—I wish I could tell you now that I had been faithful to the memory of those weeks in Paris, but I am thirty-five and one doesn't live that long without caring pretty deeply, perhaps more than once. I've made the usual experiments, one that resulted rather badly and hurt; it was a good while ago and it is wholly in the past, but I can say this to you, there is something different now. As I look backwards I can see those others were—well—perhaps experiments is as good a word as any. I thought I loved you in Paris, but now what I felt then seems to me a boy's love, strong and passionate, but wanting only one thing—possession. Now, I want more, oh, so much more! I want you with me always, I want home, I want children, our children. I suppose it is something fundamental that rises in us as we grow older. We know that we shall die, and we want to leave our successor, our representative. Oh, Eileen, I think if I could see my child in your arms I should not ask anything more of life, or of God."

Eileen turned from him with a sharp cry.

"What have I said?" Thorne was bewildered. "What is it? Dear, tell me why you are troubled—what have I done? Isn't that what you want too? Isn't it? You would be happy, wouldn't you, if that could be?"

"I'm so tired!" Eileen pleaded, "so terribly tired! I can't talk any more, I don't know what to say to you."

"But you must have thought it out before I came. I don't want to press you, but surely you have some plan, some answer? You knew you were not playing, didn't you—at least after last week? I can't make it out, I don't understand! When you were in my arms, when you gave me your lips, wasn't that a promise?"

DRIFT

What else could it be. You're not going to tell me now that you can't come to me? Eileen, don't do that—I know it's hard. I know there are all kinds of difficulties, but I'll wait, I'll do anything if you'll only trust me, if you will have the courage. Say you will! Say we shall be together!" He had her in his arms now, pleading, frightened, all his sureness of tone gone. "Eileen! Eileen!" He held her from him and tried to make her look at him. "Eileen! why don't you speak? Tell me, why don't you?" and Eileen, sobbing, could only beg him to let her think—to give her a little time.

"Of course, of course," he assented, "all the time you wish. I'll go away, I'll do anything; only tell me now that you will find a way, that you love me enough to do this thing for me. That is all I ask now—but I must know that, don't you see that I must?"

As he held her, Eileen longed to give him the promise he asked for. Everything in her seemed to cry out for the comfort of his presence, his care for her—and yet—and yet—oh, why couldn't they be happy as they had been, why couldn't her love her and be with her and not ask her to break up everything in her life? In her heart she knew she would not do this, yet what would life be without Thorne?

He let her go and turned from her. "I think I have said everything there is to be said. It is for you to decide. I cannot beg, I will not. If you come to me, I shall do everything in my power for the rest of my life to make you happy. If you do not come, I shall not see you again."

He had spoken the words she dreaded. "I will go now," he said. "What word have you for me?"

"Will you come back tomorrow? I want time to think."

"You have had time," he said, "and I see now that you have thought it over and you have decided—against

DRIFT

me. What use would it be for me to come back unless you tell me now that you will help me find a way for us to come together? That is all I am asking you now, but you make me understand that you will not do this. I came today, full of faith. I was determined that we must be frank, must talk over our situation and decide together what should be done. Gradually that faith has faded. I think that you love me, but you do not love me enough. Well, I shall have to find some way of bearing that knowledge. Will you tell me before I go what you do want?"

He looked at her curiously, for the first time without any desire, any kindling. It was as if her lack of response had shown her to him in a new light to which he must accustom himself, to see clearly. It came over her that this man who loved her might come to look upon her with different eyes.

"You are hard!" she said, "hard! You ask me to come to you, to give up everything for you, to hurt my husband, to cause misery and distress to others, and because I hesitate, because I want time to think, you doubt my love for you."

"Were you surprised at what I have said today?" he asked. "I think that you were not. I think that you knew what was coming and that you had already decided—to do nothing."

Again the man's words showed her his thought of her,—of the course she had pursued. "I love you! I love you!" she cried. "Don't leave me, take me in your arms! I'll do anything you wish, only give me time!" But Thorne made no move towards her.

"Do you mean what you say?" he asked. "I did not expect to have to beg for your consent. I thought that was given when we were together that night last week, when we knew we loved each other—but today has shaken my faith. I am afraid that you don't want me,

DRIFT

I mean as I want you, that you aren't willing to give up anything for my sake. Are you? It would be ghastly to have you come and then—regret." All the joy that had lighted his face when he came had gone. He spoke now dully, his words falling with extreme slowness. "I think perhaps you are right," he went on, "we had better not talk any more now. Perhaps I have pressed you too hard. I have no wish to do that—I suppose I took too much for granted; after what came to us my thoughts travelled far and swiftly, but I will try and be patient. You can think over what I have said. I will not urge, you must decide alone without my presence. From the way you spoke just now, I realise it was an impulse that made you consent, not something that you had decided was necessary and inevitable. I can't let you act on impulse, this is too big, it is our whole lives we are deciding, and we must do it clearly. I think that I had better go now; there's nothing more to be said, is there? If you really decide, send for me. Otherwise, I shall not come. But remember, if you do send, it will be definite; I cannot come to you again—like this."

He looked at her a moment and then left her without touching her. It was as if he had no real thought of seeing her again, and this was his farewell!

Eileen sat as he left her, motionless. She was hardly thinking. It seemed to her she could bear no more. She had had a little happiness and now it was over, for she knew she would not go to him, and he would have no alternative. What was it he had said—"If I could see a child of mine in your arms I would ask no more of life—or of God. We know that we are going to die, and we want our successor—our representative." So, it was not herself he wanted most! She was angry at the bitter riddle. Was it necessary that she should bear again all those months of weary

DRIFT

misery? No, no, she could not—and she could not give up all she had. Her world, foolish as it was,—she was important in it, its flattery was sweet. And John? What would he say if suddenly, out of the courtesy and freedom of their peculiar relationship, she should go to him and say, “I want a divorce.” No, she could not, she could not; but what would the days be without Thorne, without those hours spent with him that illumined all the rest?

It was nearly eight when she heard John let himself in and go upstairs to dress. She remembered there were guests coming and hurried to her room.

Late that night she wrote a note to Thorne. “I want to talk to you. Do not doubt me, come to me.” As early as possible the next morning she rang to have it sent. A half hour later she received one from him and tore it open thinking it an answer. “I have been thinking all night,” it read, “and I know that you do not love me. I have fought back the knowledge, but in going over your words I can no longer cheat myself with the hope that you will come. I could make you; perhaps, ten years ago I would have tried to, but now I cannot risk your regrets. I am leaving for California at once. I want to remember the golden hours we have had together, when I thought there was hope. Robert.”

She made enquiries as to her note. “It has just come back,” the maid said. “James said the gentleman had gone away and to ask you what he was to do.”

CHAPTER XXVI

WHEN Spencer Crockett saluted young Love by a kiss on Helen Tucker's brow that March afternoon in Eileen's drawing-room, his feeling was one of awe and fear. "She is too sure, too happy," he said to himself afterwards. "It is defying the gods; they will be cruel."

Had Helen known of his fear, as, at that same hour she sat hand in hand with her lover on the crowded suburban train, she would have laughed, yet that night, that radiant night, was the happiest one she was to know. Next day there had come the warning,—the letter from Anna Lee, and although after that Helen knew happiness, never again could she be wholly free from fear.

Spencer Crockett saw her seldom during the next few years. Their paths did not naturally cross, but he often had news of her from Eileen and remembered his sense of foreboding. Something that he did not know was possible to him stirred in his elderly heart: was it love? He did not know, he knew only that he longed with a passionate desire to save her from pain and suffered because he could not.

Helen and Augustus Lee were married a month after the night of the walk by the sea, the night she had

DRIFT

looked at herself in the glass rejoicing that she belonged to him. After Anna Lee's letter, Helen had been desirous the marriage should take place as soon as possible. Happiness should save Gus; she longed to give it to him.

Martha Tucker had some savings, Gus's father and mother made an allowance, a small apartment, far uptown, was possible; they thought it heaven and asked no more.

Eileen Templeton's wedding gifts had been numerous and odd. One of them was the wedding journey. On account of the expense they decided to have none, which Eileen said was "terrible." She had other plans for them, nice plans, proper plans. If one may give objects, silly, costly objects of wood and metal and stone, why should one not give a little happiness? Helen and Gus regarded her helplessly. When Eileen took to her method of special pleading, it was always difficult for those to whom she addressed her reasonable remarks. She would love, she said, to think of them for a month in some lovely place, far, far off. There must be a river and a wood of course, or would the sea be more to their liking? For herself, she hated the sea, it was so melancholy; she hoped they would like a river and the deep, deep woods. Did thoughts come to her of those first weeks at the Farm, when she and John had been happy?

She had her wish. For a month, at a little inn in the midst of a "deep, deep wood," the lovers forgot the world in a dream of happiness. One month of supreme happiness Helen Tucker had—joy such as the gods give to their chosen ones; it was to be followed by years of pain,—the pain that is known to those who love under the shadow of fear.

At a later time, when they asked her questions, Helen could not remember when her first anxiety was aroused.

DRIFT

It was all so vague, so uncertain. She took herself to task for the doubt.

It was near the time for their return when Gus went to sleep one afternoon after lunch and Helen could not rouse him. He wanted to be let alone, he said, please to go away. She sat in the sitting-room of the inn and waited, hour after hour, but he did not come. Towards evening, she stole out to their "trysting place." They had a lovers' game of pretending to meet by stealth at the "Great Oak" or the "Haunted Elm" while angry parents pursued to capture and sunder them.

She sat down to think it out. Was this *it*? She had no name for the shadowy horror.

In the morning Gus was as usual,—adoring and gay. She was afraid he would think that she had wondered and made various laughing allusions to his "laziness" and how lonesome she had been.

Long afterwards he told her that during the months immediately succeeding their marriage he had fought with all his strength to keep down the desire for the drug and that fear lest she discover his weakness constantly haunted him. When they were engaged he had promised himself that he would stop, he knew that he could if the incentive were strong enough; he loved her, if she were with him he had believed that he could prevail over the longing that beset him. If he had not believed this, he would not have let her marry him; but this he said at a later period, when he was undergoing profound abasement.

She must have acted well, she thought, to deceive him, for she knew from the first. There was not a shadow that crossed her husband's face, not a thought in his mind, that did not react to the uttermost core of the woman who loved him.

For a time there was happiness in the little apartment. It was only at intervals that the drug took pos-

DRIFT

session of him. Helen gave reasons to herself for anything that he did that was strange, constantly struggling to push back knowledge, refusing to let it in. Gus was tired, every man was irritable when he was tired; what if he did not come home sometimes, resenting her alarm at his absence; were men to give an account to their wives of every moment of their time? So it was she tried to still the aching sense of fear.

They had been married a little less than a year when Constance came, tiny Constance with her blue eyes and wistful face. Father and mother watched over the delicate life in a very ecstasy of anxiety, until it gradually flickered into a steadier flame than seemed possible at first.

For some months after the baby's birth Helen was more at ease about Gus. For a long time she was sure he had kept the hateful desire away, or at least had not yielded to it. He could not have been more tender and his pride and delight in the child were a joy that made Helen's eyes shine. He would come running up the two flights of stairs that led to the apartment, banging open the door with a "Hello! hello! where are my two?"

Helen was happy, radiantly happy. She was more beautiful than she had ever been. Could Spencer Crockett have seen her then, he would have kissed her twice. She believed that the trouble was over forever, that happiness had conquered. For a little time the world was fair, then came the storm that racked and tore and beat upon everything about her till she seemed to cower among ruins.

Constance had been ailing. She was so delicate that the slightest indisposition made Helen's heart stop with fear. The child was fretful and neither she nor the young nurse girl could still her little moaning cry. Gus had been "irritable" in the evening and very exacting. Because of her anxiety about the child, Helen

DRIFT

had answered sharply, asking him not to speak to her again. He had left her then to go to bed and she carried the baby into the kitchen so that he should not be disturbed.

It was after midnight when he came in search of her, his face sullen. "You'll wear yourself out," he said, "let Annie take her. I want you."

"No, no, Gus, please go back to bed," she said, "I'll come in a little while. She has fever, I'm frightened."

"I tell you I want to talk to you," he said and his eyes were hot. "You must come. I can't sleep with that everlasting howling going on, there's something I want to talk to you about—for Heaven's sake, can't you stop it?" He almost shouted as the child's wail mingled with his words. He tried to take her from Helen's arms to give her to Annie.

Every instinct in the mother rose; she held the child close. "I will not come!" she said. They stood facing each other; the young nurse girl shrank back, terrified.

Gus stared at her; his eyes grew narrow and cunning. "There's music in our room," he said, "queer music, it comes from everywhere, all around, from under the furniture, it mixes with the crying, I can't sleep. I want you to come to see if you can hear it."

She followed him then, aghast; Gus had said strange things before, but never anything like this. She lay down by him and talked to him, telling him that he was tired, that the child's crying made him nervous and imaginative,—perhaps there had been someone playing a piano somewhere and it came through his dreams.

"No, no!" Gus protested, "I wasn't asleep, I couldn't sleep, I heard it all,—all around,—it came from everywhere and it wouldn't stop,—it was terrible music." He hid his face, putting his hands over his ears.

"Foolish, foolish boy!" she spoke as she spoke to Constance, "go to sleep now anyway, I'm right here."

DRIFT

He fell asleep at last, holding her hand while she lay, hour after hour, looking into the dark. Every now and then she would hear Constance's cry and Annie's voice crooning; would the girl keep her warm and remember the medicine at four o'clock?

Gus turned in his sleep and groaned as if in pain. She tried to loosen her hand as he moved, but he clung to her. "Helen! Helen!" he said, "Helen! Help me, oh help me! I'm so far away."

All the next day he lay in a kind of troubled stupor; it was far worse than ever before. Helen asked the doctor who came to see Constance to go in to see him and was terrified after she had made the request.

There was little said. Gus, after an angry look and a muttered protest, made no further sign that he heard. The doctor asked a few questions, looking keenly at her. Gus lay quiet, his face turned away, his lips drawn. Helen's heart bled for him; the shame of acknowledgment was as bitter to her as to him.

That night they had a long talk. He begged Helen to help him, to have faith in him, to give him faith; without her he could do nothing; with her, he could conquer it, he knew he could—because she loved him. Over and over he asked her to tell him that she loved him. What had he said the night that Constance cried? Would she forgive him? Never, never could he forgive himself. He loved her so, she and Constance were his world, his whole world.

She soothed him as she could; it was awful to her to be the witness of his shame. An immense desire to battle with him and for him, to make him conquer because of her help, arose within her.

He drew her to him. "Helen, Helen," he cried, "don't stop loving me, don't give me up! I need you so!" She held his head to her breast. Over and over she told him of her faith in him, her perfect faith. They

DRIFT

were so happy, they loved each other so, it would be all right, this dreadful thing must not be let come in.

They talked for a long time, clinging to each other. Gus told her how he had tried, how he had struggled to keep from taking it, to keep her from seeing the effect; the relief, oh the relief, to have her know, to have her help! He did not know, nor did he ever know, that her first discovery had not been that night.

They arranged a plan. She was to have charge of the morphia. Gus was to have a certain amount, decreasing slowly. He was to come to her for the injection and she was to control the dose. The doctor, who had spent anxious thought upon the difficulty of the new "case" presented to him, was doubtful, but Helen was sure it would be possible.

Helen opened the little case Gus brought her and took out the needle,—so that was her enemy, that tiny thing! It seemed incredible it could work such harm; she locked it away.

It was only a little while afterwards that she saw Gus one night put his arm quickly behind him, to hide the little scar she had not made. Conquering her fear, she took hold of his wrist and laid her finger on the place, looking at him for explanation.

"You're a fool!" he said, and pulled away.

Next day came the agony of shame, the despair, the outpouring to her of the thoughts that tortured him. If only he could die before she grew to hate him. Would she always remember that he loved her? She must not doubt that, whatever came. He muttered the words, "And each man kills the thing he loves, by all let me be heard. The coward does it with a kiss. The brave man with a sword!" He laughed loudly and ended with a groan. "It's a damn bad rhyme, but it's true! It's true!"

Sometimes there would be weeks together when she

DRIFT

knew he was struggling; she could see the marks of the effort on his face, in his eyes as he looked at her, dumbly. Passionately as she desired to help him she could do little; he resented any allusion. She had given up her custodianship of the little instrument, it was no use.

For one thing Helen was profoundly thankful—her mother did not know. Gus seemed to have a power of pulling himself together, of appearing natural when other people were about, that he could not sustain when they were alone. She did not guess how many there were who watched with aching hearts her efforts to conceal her trouble. Martha Tucker came often, but it was in the day time, when Gus was at the office. She believed Helen supremely happy. Her prayer was answered.

Helen thought of the phrase "possessed by a devil." It seemed as if there were an alien presence of incredible malignity, outside of, working independently of its victim, always watching its chance. At times this "presence" was strong enough to enter in and give battle, to defeat all that had been her husband. At such times the Gus she knew would vanish, he would be changed to another person, possessed and evil. After awful distress the "devil was cast out" and Gus would return to her. Then there was no one in the world like him,—the passionately tender lover, the gay companion, the beautiful, joyous faun. In spite of all, there were happy times.

CHAPTER XXVII

STAMPED upon her brain, influencing for months her every thought, Helen was to remember the afternoon on which she told Gus she was going to have another child. Constance had been fretful and Helen was weary trying to distract and amuse her. She longed for Gus to come home, longed to be told that all would be well. She wanted the comfort of his sheltering arms and she was afraid, terribly afraid. For some time he had been himself, but each night she held her breath; she could tell almost before he came in how it would be.

She heard him open the front door and enter slowly. She ran to him, putting her arms around him, holding him close, trying to ward off what she feared, praying it might not be, not to-night.

“Oh Gus,” she said, clinging to him, “Gus dear, listen, listen to me. We are going to have another child, and I am so tired, oh so tired. Help me, help me!”

He pushed her from him. “It isn’t true, it can’t be true.” He looked at her with a curious, hard look and cunning came into his eyes. You’re saying it because you think—because you’ve got an idea—you think it will make me—”

“No, no!” she cried. “It is true. Oh Gus darling, take me in your arms,—I love you, I need you so terribly! Oh, don’t push me away, I can’t bear it, I

DRIFT

can't." But he only stared at her. She crouched down on the lounge then, sobbing wildly, uncontrollably, her handkerchief to her mouth, trying to stop.

Gus stood over her. "You ought not to have let it happen," he said, "it's bad enough as it is with Constance crying all the time. We mustn't have another child, I tell you. I can't work any harder than I do, can I? Can't you do anything?"

Helen got on her feet. "You mean, you mean——?" she gasped—as if she could not speak, "you mean—kill the child? Our child? Kill a little baby? Oh, God!"

He took a step towards her. "Go away," she screamed. "You aren't my husband. I never want to see you again. You're mad, mad! You want to kill my little baby." She fell again upon the couch with dreadful sounds, and after watching her for a few moments, Gus went out and down the stairs.

Where he went she did not know. Something seemed to have broken in her brain. She was afraid he would come home and hurt Constance. He had hardly noticed the child for a long time, except to complain when she cried.

The next day dragged itself by. In the evening Gus came home broken and ashamed. She could hardly bring herself to speak to him; he seemed to her like an unknown person in Gus's semblance. Gradually his dreadful distress won her tenderness; they talked for a long time, he pleadingly. She went to sleep in his arms, trying to make herself believe what he said to her. She longed to believe him; he seemed confident. Perhaps all would be well. As before she made excuses for him—the terrible "presence" had had possession of him when he spoke.

For a little time he was his old self—gay, charming, ignoring all that had taken place. Helen grew a little happier, but she was very weak and

DRIFT

the care of Constance was oftentimes more burdensome than she would acknowledge. The one maidservant was woefully inefficient and the young nurse but slight help. She thought of her mother's quiet management of the cottage; everything was pleasant and comfortable there, why couldn't she do things that way? She tried to keep house well and dress for dinner every night and plan that all should be attractive for Gus's sake. The effort was telling on her strength; her cheeks were white and her step dragged. Martha Tucker was concerned, but thought that the child's birth would make her well.

The next few months were the bitterest of Helen's life. Often for several days she did not know where Gus was, except that he seemed to be regular at his office. She could not imagine how he could do his work, for he was under the influence of the drug practically all of the time. It was not until after that she knew of the leniency of his employers. Knowing that he had a young wife and child, they had allowed him to remain when every one in the office was aware of his trouble. His mates tried to do what they could to help him. It was little enough; he became furiously angry if any one spoke to him on the subject, making absolute denial.

She warned him that her confinement was near, but when it began he was not there, nor could she find him. Nurse and doctor cared for her and a boy was born, sturdy and well. Helen was profoundly thankful. She had a superstitious fear, born of old wives, tales, that the child would suffer by reason of her distress before its birth. They laid the little warm bundle in her arms; and some hours after the father came, looked at his son and stumbled to his room.

In the morning Martha Tucker appeared. Why had

DRIFT

she not been sent for? She could not understand.

"He came so quickly, Mother darling," Helen whispered, touching the soft down on the baby's head, "there wasn't any time to do anything." The nurse gave a quick glance. She had wanted to telephone, but Helen had told her no.

Well was it for Martha Tucker's tranquillity of mind that Josiah had a slight ill turn, keeping her at home for a few days, and so unaware of Gus's condition. Helen was thankful for her mother's absence, but longed for the comfort of her care.

The nurse and the doctor held a consultation with the result that the doctor attempted to talk with Gus, to be met with a fury of anger. Matters between him and his wife were their own concern; he would come to Helen's room when he chose and in whatever condition he chose.

The doctor was routed for the moment and took counsel with the nurse as to whether anything further could be done.

"Mrs. Lee is keeping it from her family," the nurse told him, and he nodded. "She can't do it much longer. I never admired anybody so much, the way she takes it, I mean, but it's killing her slowly—and those darling children!" The nurse turned away; it was most unprofessional to be affected thus.

That night Gus did not come home and Helen made no inquiry about him. She felt very weak and tried not to think. She wanted to rest and get well as soon as possible for the baby's sake.

The boy's sturdiness was gratifying after Constance's delicacy. He roared for his food, drank it greedily and went to sleep all in a normal fashion. In a few days Gus pulled himself together; he was very proud of his lusty son, devoting himself to Helen with passionate tenderness.

DRIFT

One evening he was sitting by her. "Helen!" he said suddenly, "Helen! you do believe in me, don't you? You know it's going to be all right? I've learned my lesson. I wanted to tell you. I'm so glad for him—the baby—so glad." He bent his face down. "Forgive me, oh, forgive me. I was mad that night."

It was the first time he had referred to what he had said. Helen did not know that he remembered; it was terrible to her to find that he did. She longed to believe in his stammered promises that it would be "all right," but something was broken; she could only listen with a profound pitifulness in her heart. She knew that it was but a matter of a little time, some night next week perhaps, or the week after, when he would come home sullen and without speech; or what was worse, try to conceal his condition by wild gayety. If he would admit it, ask her to help him! But he would not, he would keep up the awful farce of pretending to be natural. It was all familiar to her, every phase, everything he would do; how could she have faith?

"Gus, dear," she said, holding out her hand to him, "if you'd only let me help you—if you'd only acknowledge when—when you are in trouble." Never in all their talks did they speak more definitely, the reference was always veiled, as if the vagueness of phraseology helped to make the fact less definite.

He loosed her hand and rose, turning away. "You don't believe in me any more," he said. "No wonder that you don't, I can't expect you to, but please believe this—that I'm glad for him. Tell me that you do believe that."

Yes, Helen believed that, and in her tenderness she soothed him. Nevertheless, in spite of herself, it was torment to her every time she saw the child in Gus's arms. Never, never could she forget what he had bade her do.

DRIFT

The baby was named Josiah, which caused the elder Josiah the greatest satisfaction, although when informed of the honour by Helen, his comment was grave.

“It is a serious thing to bequeath one’s name,” he said. “One feels one should be an example. I fear I am not an example.”

Helen pulled him down and kissed him. She was holding young Josiah at the time. “Dear, dear Father,” she said, “you shall teach your namesake the beautiful things you taught me.” She stopped a moment and added, “Weren’t those happy hours we spent together in the dear old study? I look back on them with such pleasure and gratitude to you. I learned so many things that I treasure, that have helped me since. I think I can never tell you what you taught me; I didn’t know myself at the time, but I know now. It was so much more than I realised—you call it philosophy, don’t you? I mean the power of seeing far ahead and far back, of looking at the world and history and everything that happens as a part of something very big that we cannot understand. It makes little things, like personal griefs, seem unimportant, makes them bearable. One remembers that other people have had heartaches, and the world has gone on just the same, and so one doesn’t let one’s own little ache blot out the beauty and splendour that there always has been and that must continue. If one can only hold on to the vision, to the belief that it is there. I’m not saying it very well, I’m afraid, but I think that is what you taught me. I wanted to say this to you, I was thinking about it the other night, thinking what your teaching had meant to me.”

Josiah Tucker’s face was illumined. The hours they had spent pouring over the authors that he revered and loved had been very happy ones to him. She had proved intelligent—an apt pupil—quick to appreciate the aus-

DRIFT

tere beauty of the paths where he had roamed so long. To hear her speak as she now did of their hours of study together gave him profound pleasure. As she concluded he looked at her keenly. He knew what she meant, but he was puzzled and concerned that she had discovered the need of "philosophy." What could be troubling her when all seemed fair?

"You have put it very well, Daughter," he said. "If I have been able to teach you the philosophy you describe, I am well content. You have given me happiness by speaking as you have. I thank you." He bent to kiss her and then, with a wary forefinger, attempted a caress on the soft cheek of Josiah second. The baby squirmed, puckered up its countenance, struck out right and left with its wee fists and ended in a mighty yawn. Helen hugged him to her. "Some day you shall teach him philosophy, too," she said, "but not yet, not yet!"

On the way home Josiah thought of repeating Helen's words to his wife, but she was planning happily for a summer's visit, wondering where they could put the children; he would not intrude his anxiety upon her pleasure. Perhaps he was fanciful—Helen had always seemed happy; it may have been a mood. He wondered why she had spoken so gravely.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IF Helen saw little of Eileen during these years, it was not Eileen's fault. She made frequent visits to the apartment and sent many invitations, but after a little while the visits were not returned and the invitations were declined. Helen was always glad to see her, always cordial, but something had come between them—the old intimacy had disappeared. There was too much that had to be withheld; their talk was only of passing things.

One day Eileen said, "I haven't seen Gus for a long time. Can't you both come to dinner with us some night? All alone, I mean, so we can have a visit?"

The question came at a time when Helen was most perplexed. She had evaded Eileen's plans for her many times before, but this was direct; it had better be met.

"No, dear," she said, "please don't ask us. Gus is working very hard; he is always terribly tired at night."

Eileen went home, puzzled and unhappy. Helen might at least come to see her. She was hurt. Was Helen so absorbed in the babies and Gus as to let their old friendship go? She resolved to make another effort, but before the time came she had found out the truth and was aghast.

It was Spencer Crockett who told her. In his con-

DRIFT

nection with the Uptown Club, he saw the architects often. Mr. Brewster had told him. They were keeping Gus on, partly because he had so much to do with the plans of the club that he was indispensable and also for his own sake. They hated to give up hope for him, but he had been so peculiar that it was increasingly difficult. Mr. Brewster thought there was little chance that he would pull up.

Eileen was dazed. She went to see Helen the next day, hoping the opportunity would come for a word of understanding, but Helen guarded her secret well; Eileen felt she could say nothing.

Afterwards, it was strange and painful to Helen to find how many people knew of the trouble she thought she had been hiding. When those who loved her asked her why she had not told them, she had no answer.

As spring came Martha Tucker pled for a whole summer with "her babies." They must all come to the cottage, she said, little visits were not enough. Augustus could fit up the barn for a studio and plan beautiful houses.

Martha Tucker was fond of Augustus and proud of him; she hoped he would come, but the babies she must have, she would not take a denial. Helen did not know how to answer. She longed to be with her mother, to be comforted and cared for as only her mother could do, but she felt that it was impossible. She made demur on her father's account, remembering the quiet preserved for Mr. Tucker's communion with the spirits of the past; but for once in her life Martha Tucker ignored this consideration. "I want you all," she said, "we'll manage; it will be good for your father."

Helen thought constantly of her mother's plan. To have the blessed peace of home, to have her mother's help with the babies, it would be heaven. She wondered how it could be managed.

DRIFT

Gus himself solved the difficulty. He was planning for his vacation a Western camping trip with some of the men from the office. Helen wondered if they knew and what would happen, but she was too worn out to have any sensation but one of thankfulness. She hoped the trip would help him; she could do nothing, perhaps others could.

On the Sunday before he was to leave, Gus brought his "harem," as he called it, to the Island; five trunks, one perambulator, one ice box, one nurse, two youngsters, and one wife. He checked them all off carefully, pronouncing the list "correct and accounted for." He was "himself," full of his old gay pranks and nonsense. Martha Tucker adored him.

Gus said he had heard that young infants could support themselves by their toes like monkeys. There could be no better time than the present to try the experiment. Young Jo kicked and gurgled and reached out his arms to be taken in the human way to which he was accustomed. He was taken and tossed and kissed, and held upside down and called a "monkey anyway" to the great delight of Constance, who danced about calling, "My turn, my turn!"

The day was almost a happy one. If there was effort on Gus's part, if in his heart he was profoundly hopeless and sad, no one but Helen knew.

At dusk they started to take a walk across the meadow by the path that led to the sea. Gus was to leave in a little while. As recollection swept over them, both became silent. There was no use of promises, of telling each other that they knew all would "come right"; those things had been said between them too many times. Down by the shore Gus turned to her and held out his arms. As he held her gravely, passionately, it came over them that they had known great happiness—the pain could not blot it out. Something

DRIFT

of this Gus tried to say on the way home. Helen held tight to his arm. "My husband, my husband," she said.

To the surprise of all, the classicist not only made no objections to his altered household, but showed signs of new life. He would come forth early in the afternoon and sit in the garden observing his grandchildren, much as a scientist studies new and unknown specimens. He seldom ventured to address them, and when he did it was with a gravity and courtesy that impressed little Constance deeply. "Father's teaching her manners," said Helen.

Martha Tucker was happy. She asked nothing further of life. Josiah seemed to have discovered that there were human beings on the earth and was pleased with the discovery. They interested him—he turned to her for sympathy in his enjoyment.

Two golden months went by, and in the early autumn Martha Tucker died quietly in her bed at night. Helen was bewildered; it was as if she could not understand. Her young spirit rebelled with a great rebellion against the awful irrevocableness of death.

It seemed that Josiah Tucker could not grasp any more than Helen what had come to be, what they were without. On the night after the burial Helen heard him stirring. Suddenly a great cry broke across the stillness of the night. "Martha! Martha! My wife! Martha!"

She went to him, sobbing, trying to give him comfort with her tender words. "Martha! My wife! Martha!" Again his voice was raised as one demanding, and yet a third time the cry rang out loud, insistent, ringing. It was as if he would make high heaven hear—"Martha! Martha! My wife!"

Helen, terrified, left him to summon help. She thought his mind affected, but when she returned he

DRIFT

spoke naturally. "I thought there might be some answer. Many people believe the spirits of the dead are near for a time. I wonder if that is so?"

He grew calm at last and never again after that night raised his cry.

The days at the cottage went slowly by. Outwardly, life resumed its wonted course. The summer gave way to early autumn, the maples were turning yellow. Josiah Tucker grieved silently. He could not read. Helen would find him wandering about the house at strange hours, or sitting in her mother's chair by the fire. He tried to take up work on his book of long ago and brought out a great pile of manuscript, but after a few days it was laid away.

One morning, putting a handkerchief over his head and taking a basket, he went out into "the garden," the little patch of colour and sweetness Martha Tucker had cared for. He explained he thought the flowers must be missing her; he would try to do for them what they needed. He weeded and clipped all the morning and came in flushed from the September sun. "In the garden of the Hesperides," he said, "I think tending could not have been required; it seems fatiguing."

As winter approached Helen wondered what she could do. It seemed impossible to go back to the tiny apartment. Her father needed her. He would come and ask what he could do that would be of assistance to her, making the offer when she was busiest; then he would wait about, hoping she would soon be free to talk to him. She could not leave him alone for the winter at the cottage; Constance needed ceaseless care, and Gus—what could she do about Gus? She had not seen him for over two months and he had written only twice; she did not know what he wanted her to do. He was so sensitive to the children's crying, how could she

DRIFT

manage? She tried to plan, but the way seemed too difficult.

Little Jo was her one comfort. He never exacted anything at all, only laughed with delight when she picked him up for a quick hug and looked a little solemn when he was dumped down again. He would have liked more playtime with his beautiful mother, but since the world seemed arranged that way, he considered that adverse comment from him was not likely to alter it. He was not Josiah Tucker's namesake for nothing.

Helen was glad that she had been insistent about the name Josiah. She would not acknowledge that she had been afraid Gus's name would be suggested. With a strange feeling she watched the child grow more and more like his father—the father who had said he must not come. As the boy splashed in his tub, the shape of his sturdy little frame, the peak of hair at the back of his neck, the way he laughed out, suddenly, gleefully, all bespoke his father. Oh, what would come, she thought, what would come?

She remembered the night he was conceived—if only she could be sure about Gus! He had been angry that evening—some trifle had gone wrong, and he had suddenly blazed up in one of his strange fits of fury. Finding that everything she tried to say only seemed to make matters worse, she left him and went to bed, after a while to sleep. Towards dawn she awakened to find Gus reading. He had not slept, he said, he could not. He had been thinking that he ought to go away. He was not fit to be with her.

His bitter self-reproach brought out all her yearning tenderness. How could she have slept while he was suffering and she loved him so? They had come together in a passionate embrace, for the moment utterly happy, utterly lost to everything save each other: afterwards, she had remembered.

DRIFT

After trying to think what to do, Helen wrote to Gus. She asked him to promise to put himself under the care of a physician, only if he were willing to do that could she come back to the apartment. Another winter like the last one she could not face. She wrote earnestly, her whole soul in this last effort to try to save him. She wondered how he would take her proposition; never before had she let him see that the strain was too great for her to bear. She posted her letter herself and calculated the days until an answer could come. She waited and waited, but no answer reached her. She did not know what to think, what to do.

After consultation with Anna Lee, it was arranged that, for a few months at least, Helen should remain with her father. Anna would keep house for her brother at the apartment; Gus might come to Staten Island for Sundays when he could.

It was Anna's proposal, and Helen was profoundly thankful to accept the offer. She knew now that she had no influence with Gus. Sometimes she thought her presence was only an aggravation, reminding him of obligations he could not fulfil; perhaps Anna could help him.

Helen wondered that Mrs. Lee had consented to Anna's plan but she accepted the offer with unspeakable relief. Anna would be good to Gus, the children must be cared for as well as her father, and nowadays she had so little strength!

When Gus came, he accepted the arrangement without protest. The veil of pretence had been thrown aside. He acknowledged that the drug had him in its grip. At times he was humbly desirous to try and find some means of cure, at others defiant in his belief that he could cure himself. He resented bitterly the fact that others had lost faith in him. The only reply to her letter Helen had received was a bitter word, "I tell you

DRIFT

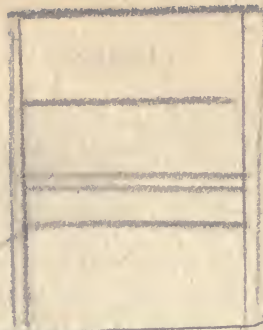
it is under my control; I could manage myself if you would only stop trying to interfere.”

The winter had its tranquil hours. The quiet of the country was comforting. Anastasia, the faithful, mothered her and Josiah and the children with entire impartiality and devotion. Her father read to her in the evenings; again they lost themselves as they wandered in classic groves.

On Christmas day Gus came to see them, with presents for the children, but they were shy and would not come to him. Mr. Tucker absented himself, fearing he would not be able to play the comedy of courtesy. When Gus had been there only a little while, he rose, saying he thought he had better go back to New York. Helen could not speak. He kissed her and went away. She watched him walk down the hill—he walked slowly, like an old man; his head was bent. Before the turn in the road he looked back and then went on.

Suddenly intense realisation came over her: that man going slowly away was her husband, the man to whom she had given the passion of her youth, her love. Something in her stirred that she thought was dead; she could not let him go like that, she could not. Throwing a cloak around her, she ran down the hill, calling, “Gus, Gus, come back, don’t go like that!” He turned and took her hands. “I love you,” he said, “don’t forget that.” In spite of his protests she walked with him to the station, trying to tell him what was in her heart. She would come back, if only——

He stopped her. “I am glad you said that,” he said, “but you see I must protect you from myself. Go now, go back.”



CHAPTER XXIX

IN the spring Gus disappeared and when found, after ten days' search, was pronounced insane. He was not violent, but the doctors advised a sanatorium and restraint for a time. He would not consent, and appeared so natural that proof was required before a commitment could be obtained. Helen was summoned to appear. As she was starting to go to New York, she received a letter from Gus's mother. Mrs. Lee considered that Helen should have been able to persuade Gus to give up the drug in the first days of their marriage and reproached her for remaining away from him during the winter. That was the reason undoubtedly, she said, for the final breakdown. Now she wished Helen to give favourable testimony, as she would, of course, be the principal witness. Helen reread the letter on the way to town. What could she do?

The Judge questioned her kindly, Gus's father now and then putting in words of encouragement. Josiah Tucker stood beside her. Gus, her husband—the lover who had given her all the joy her life had known—sat opposite, his eyes fixed on her as she told of his unaccountable fits of anger, of strange things he had said, of threats that he had made. Of the night when she cried out that he was mad she did not speak. Several times she interrupted herself to add, "But that was only when he was not himself! Most of the time he was

DRIFT

so good to me, so tender! We were happy; it was only sometimes—please understand that, please understand!”

The Judge broke in, “Yes, Mrs. Lee, we do understand, of course, we do; do not fear.”

Finally it was over. Josiah drew her hand within his arm to lead her away, but she stepped near to Gus, lifted her eyes to his face, and held out her hand, not knowing what he would do.

He took her hand, held it a moment, and raised it to his lips, his eyes still fixed upon her face. She cried out then that she would go with him; he was her husband, he needed her; they must let her go. Oh, why had she left him!

Gus put her gently from him and shook his head. Her father took her hand. “Daughter, Daughter,” he said, “remember they are waiting for you, Constance and little Jo. They need you.”

Father and daughter journeyed back to the cottage in the late afternoon, taking the end seat in a crowded train to be unobserved. The air was sweet with the promise of spring. When they reached the cottage the children were asleep. She was glad of that; she was afraid that they would know.

Helen crept to her room and sank down beside her bed. “Oh, God, let me die tonight,” she said, “there can be nothing more after this.”

But there was something more. Little Jo laughed through three more months of his baby life and died. One day he was playing with clover blossoms on the grass and the next lying still, his round little face almost smiling, one fist under his chin as he always slept.

Helen was quiet. She made no moan or outcry, but she would let no one touch him but herself. To Josiah, she said, over and over, “He was such a happy baby,

DRIFT

always happy. Don't you know how happy he always was?" She wished that she had played with him more, he loved so to be played with. The short life had been perfect just as it was. Now it was over, it was not right to weep for him; he was safe, he could not—nothing could hurt him now. Over and over she told herself this.

It was Anna Lee who journeyed to the sanatorium to tell Gus of the child's death. Shortly after his commitment Gus had written to Helen not to come and see him, "until I am better," he said. "I would rather that you remembered the beauty and glory we have had. I don't want you to see me here."

Anna felt that Gus must be told at once of the child's death. "You know, much of the time he is quite rational; he would want to know," she said, and Helen had assented.

The two had come of late to have an affection for each other. Only recently had Anna discovered that her childish warning letter had been received. She was comforted by Helen's assurance that she understood the sturdy honesty which had prompted her to send it. Now, as then, Anna felt that what had come to be, sad as it was, should be told to the person whom it closely concerned. She set forth on her errand.

As the cab she had taken from the station turned in at the gate of the sanatorium grounds, she thought, as she had thought before, "What a pretty place!" The buildings stood on a hillside, and there were shrubs and flowers and vines. It was only when she was close to the door that she saw the iron bars.

Gus was sitting in his room looking out of the window. He rose to greet her with an expression of pleasure, his arms held out. Anna went to him. "The baby is dead," she said. "I came to tell you."

There was no change of expression on Gus's face. He

DRIFT

stood and looked at her. She was a little frightened.

"Don't you understand?" she said. "I mean little Jo, your son, is dead. I brought you this." She held out a picture to him, a kodak of Jo, toddling across the grass, a flower in one fist.

Gus took it and looked at it. "My son—my son is dead," he said in a low voice. "Yes, I understand."

Again he looked at her, "My son, it was, that could not live? Was that what you said?"

Anna nodded. She did not know it would be like this. Perhaps she ought not to have told him, perhaps it would do him harm! If he would only cry out, but he stood before her silent.

After a moment he looked up. "And Constance?" he said.

"Constance is all right. She's been strong and well this summer." He made a little sign of assent and sat down to look out of the window again.

"Don't you want to have me tell you about it—about Constance?" Anna faltered, but he seemed not to hear, and after waiting for a time she left him, looking out of the window, the kodak picture in his hand.

As cold weather came on, Constance drooped, and the doctor was anxious for a winter out of doors. He suggested Florida, but Helen thought California would be better. There were Tucker cousins there whom it would be pleasant to see again. The doctor assented—yes, California was excellent; the child would undoubtedly gain rapidly.

Josiah Tucker had no thought at first of leaving his habitat, but Constance's lip trembled during the discussion. She turned pleading eyes to her mother. "Oh, but I want Granddaddy to go, too," she said. "Who'll there be to play with?" Helen gathered the child in her arms.

DRIFT

“So do I want him,” she said. “Run now and whisper in his ear that you want him to come with us.” Constance flew across the room.

“I want you, Granddad,” she said, “and you must come.”

Josiah blinked a little, cast an eye around the library and capitulated—whispering to the child. Constance ran back to her mother. “He will, he will!” she cried.

Next, Anastasia lifted up her voice in a great protest. She to be left all alone? Certainly not, she would die of lonesomeness. What would “the children” do without her? Nobody else could cook things the way they liked. The “children” were Josiah and Constance. Anastasia treated them alike. Helen smiled.

“I don’t know how we are to do without you,” she said, “but it’s out of the question, I can’t possibly afford it.”

“Is that all?” Anastasia’s large face broadened with pleasure. “Isn’t it years and years I’ve been waiting not to heave coal in stoves for six months straight and then shiver? They say there’s flowers all winter in California, and geraniums twenty feet high. My sister was there once with the lady she works for. Wouldn’t my wages pay the fare? I don’t need any wages, Miss Helen, dear. Indeed I don’t. Don’t leave me here to die of lonesomeness without you. Your father,—why he’s that particular,—I have to stay to take care of him!”

Helen wavered. She knew the offer was genuine, but ought she to accept it? What a comfort Anastasia would be! They could have a little cottage perhaps, with geraniums “twenty feet high.” “The children” would be cared for and perhaps she herself would be able to get back a little strength.

She put her arms around Anastasia’s neck. “Oh,

DRIFT

how glad I am I've got you," she said, and Anastasia blubbered with joy.

A dreadful thought haunted Josiah's mind. After a few days he spoke of it. "What if the house should burn down?" This was a poser. Helen considered. Fire insurance would be of no avail; the books were irreplaceable, the marginal notes were the work of a lifetime. The simple Anastasia was visited with another idea. "There's lots of reading in this house," she said, "wouldn't there be some one fond of learning like yourself, sir, would like to take care of the house for the sake of the books? I'd teach 'em to blow 'em off so they wouldn't be usin' no rags to dust 'em with."

Helen clapped her hands. "Anastasia, you're a wonder!" she said, "I know the very people—the Halberts, the high school superintendent, you know. They're just married, they're boarding now—why, they'd love it. What a wonderful idea!"

Josiah looked alarmed. There were other dangers than fire. "Would they—do you think?" he began, but Helen was at the telephone.

"Mrs. Halbert is delighted," she reported. "They'll be over this evening."

Josiah spent the afternoon fingering and patting his treasures, taking a volume down to glance it over, putting it back with a sigh. What would happen? A winter in a strange place without these companions—it was hard to think about.

He was made happy in the evening by Mr. Halbert's reverent handling and intelligent questions. It was a very great privilege, he said. He would take care that Mr. Tucker should not regret this kindness. He insisted upon paying a modest rental and all was shortly arranged. Anastasia beamed with satisfaction and importance. She felt that she was really looking after "the children." Miss Helen's cheeks must get red again

DRIFT

and her eyes bright out there where the geraniums grew twenty feet high.

On the day before they were to leave, Anastasia climbed upstairs to find Helen. She bore a card which she held gingerly, using the corner of her apron as a shield for its impressive whiteness. She said that there was a nice, kind-looking gentleman downstairs to see her. She hoped Miss Helen would go down, it would do her good. He was a nice gentleman. He said for her not to come down unless she wanted to, to be sure to say that, but it wouldn't take a minute for Miss Helen to fix her hair; she would go down and tell him.

Helen read the card with surprise: "Mr. Spencer Crockett." She had not seen Crockett for years.

"I heard from Mrs. Templeton that you were in trouble," he said. "I came because I couldn't help coming. I wanted to tell you how much I longed to help if I could."

Helen was touched. She had never credited the sardonic picture-lover with so much feeling. For him to journey to the Island to tell her this upset all her previous ideas of him.

Something of this thought she put in her reply. Spencer Crockett smiled and winked. It was not mocking as of old; it was tragic, as if some impish devil danced about and would not even let him talk to the woman he loved.

"No, there is nothing you can do," Helen told him, "nothing anyone can do, but I can't tell you how touched I am by your coming. No one could have better friends than I. That is the wonderful thing about sorrow; it shows you—what people are—what they long to do—for you. Every one wants to help me, but they can't, they can't!" She stopped, trying to keep back the tears.

Helen rarely cried; but a remembrance swept over her

DRIFT

of the afternoon Crockett had kissed her because she was in love, and she broke down. "Oh, Mr. Crockett," she sobbed, "Mr. Crockett, forgive me! I don't often give way, but I remembered——"

He bowed his head. "Yes, I remember, too," he said, "I like to remember. You have had great joy, you are glad you had—that time, aren't you? Some people go through their lives and never know what it means to love like that. Try and think of the happy times. It is all one can do, isn't it, when one is suffering?"

Helen put out a little, groping hand. He took it and held it, and the passionate sympathy that possessed every part of him seemed to flow to her through his quiet touch. Helen looked up, trying to smile. "Oh, how good everybody is to me!" she said. "Everybody, but——" She broke down for a minute—— No, no, she would not say that, would not think it, Mr. Crockett would understand—it only seemed sometimes almost cruel, almost a mockery, to have every one else— She stopped again. Crockett talked to her and soothed her, the depth of his own feeling teaching him what words to use. He learned what a "wonderful friend" Eileen had been, and found himself winking rapidly. He could not understand Eileen.

PART IV

CHAPTER XXX

ON a January morning, Lynn Medway, called in the newspaper art criticisms "one of our rising young painters," sat at breakfast in the blue-and-white dining-room of his studio apartment, reading his letters. Opposite, was his wife Jane, pleasant to look upon. From her well-coiffed head to her buttoned boots, she was trim—ready for a busy day. On his left sat his little daughter Laura, and on his right, his two sons the twins, Billy and Baxter. No twins were ever more unlike. Jane Medway lamented that Billy had no soul, whereas Baxter had too much.

At the moment both boys were occupied with oatmeal and cream, while Laura, a fairy-like little creature of six, sat watching her father. She had opened the ends of his letters neatly with a small silver knife laid by her plate for the purpose and was now waiting to see if any of the contents were likely to prove interesting. Whenever there was something exciting her father would whisper it in her ear, while she listened with an expression of importance. She would then clamber down to run on a tiny embassy to her mother, communicating the secret with equal seriousness. It was then at Jane's discretion to make public announcement. Billy was apt to remark, "Oh, pshaw! is that all?"

There was one unoccupied place at the table, which was presently filled by Carol Medway, the painter's sis-

DRIFT

ter, to whom Laura stretched forth a small hand in greeting.

"You're late," she said, "but it's all right. Father hasn't told me anything yet." The young girl stooped to the low-voiced communication meant to convey proper awe of any news to come and left a light kiss on the child's fair head.

"I know I'm late," she said. "I washed two dozen brushes after I got home from the dance last night, and then dreamed I was ready to go to work and they were all dirty. I call that hard."

Lynn Medway looked up with a laugh. "You're the most painstaking art student I ever saw, Sis," he said. "You'll win out. Chuck your brushes in with mine. Jim'll wash them."

"I think I like doing it myself," Carol replied, "although not at three A.M." She took her coffee from Jane. "I love all of it, everything in the studio, even washing the brushes."

Carol Medway had come recently from her home in Ohio to be her brother's pupil and was excited by the adventure. She was a keen and ardent admirer of his work—a tribute that did not come amiss, for as yet he was understood by few.

It was before the days of post-impressionism, but Lynn Medway and a few others were in a kind of friendly rebellion against the methods of their immediate predecessors. They intentionally aimed at more decorative effects and were lavish in the use of brilliant colour. They held exclusive exhibitions by themselves and were the objects of both laughter and tears.

At the request of Spencer Crockett, Medway had recently submitted for the consideration of the architects and the building committee, a series of designs intended for the decoration of the principal room in a new and luxurious clubhouse then building.

DRIFT

The Uptown Club, as it was called, bid fair to rival all of its predecessors in beauty and perfection of equipment. The physical welfare of the members, from the marble baths to the electrically wound clocks by each bedside, was all arranged for; their mental needs were to be supplied by a well-selected modern library in rich and harmonious bindings; now Spencer Crockett considered that their souls should be fed by the contemplation of a rare and disturbing beauty.

Crockett had been having one of his joyous, mad spells over Medway's work. He called him the "painter of dreams." A month before, he had pounced on a small picture at a dealer's; flown to the painter's studio, there to wonder delightedly; bought more than he could afford and was now at the stage where he was alarmed lest Medway should catch a cold and die before he had set down in colour that which was within him.

He talked, dreamed, and moved in a world peopled by Medway's attenuated figures with their subtle colourings, their wistful faces, their poetic, tragic gestures.

Ardently Crockett desired that Medway should be given the commission and the club have a "lounge" unique in beauty.

The designs were daring: the theme, love scenes from the Bible. Medway had a theory that the mythology of a people was the fountain head of its art, and he had tried to express in these pictures all of the sumptuous beauty and legendary significance that the stories themselves had for him. The architects as well as the club authorities were puzzled. Love scenes and Biblical scenes seemed equally unsuitable for the adornment of the "lounge" of a club. If it had to be the Bible, why in thunder couldn't the fellow have chosen Jacob and his coat or something like that?

The committee sat gravely about a table and considered. Crockett had gotten himself made a member of

DRIFT

the building committee to further the ends he sought. Inwardly he was raging; outwardly he wore only a slightly pitying air, as who should say, "Poor moles! Poor moles!"

The committee regarded the design for Ruth sleeping at the feet of Boaz. There was lavish use of gold, the figures were indistinct, all was dim—a night scene. Ruth lay—a lovely, brown, almost nude figure—young, unconscious, chaste. All that could be seen of Boaz was a brown face peering from an oriental mass of colour. In an undefinable way, the whole picture breathed a delicate voluptuousness. "Confound it!" said the chairman of the committee, "the thing is more sensuous than if it were painted in the old way and yet for the life of me I can't see why." "Always thought Boaz was a noble old party," said another, picking up the sketch, "turned her over honourably, didn't he, to the next of kin? Comes along a painter chap five thousand years after and blasts his reputation—damned unjust I call it—might as well—" he stopped.

While the club authorities "considered," Medway stormed and refused to alter his designs by "one jot or tittle."

The matter had hung fire for some time, so it was with a smile that Medway beckoned Laura to him after reading a brief letter from the architects—Brewster & Knoll.

The child gave an excited "oh," after he had whispered the secret, burrowed her head against his breast for a moment and with a little laugh of delight ran quickly to her mother to impart the news. Jane Medway took the little girl on her lap; her eyes were shining. "Oh, Lynn, I'm so glad!" she said, "I knew they'd see reason. Boys, what do you think? Father's to do the Uptown Club decorations after all!"

"Whoop!" said Billy, seeing that some sign of rejoic-

DRIFT

ing was expected, while Baxter inquired, "If I'm awfully quiet, may I watch you paint?"

Carol Medway clapped her hands. "New York's progressing," she said. "You'll be famous, Lynn, I'm mighty glad."

When the twins were duly rubbered, provided with lunch, kissed and started for school, Jane Medway went to find her husband. He was reading the Bible in a kind of ecstasy, and hailed her, waving the book. "Listen, oh, listen!" he shouted. "Did you ever hear anything so gorgeous?"

"My beloved is white and ruddy,
The chiefest among ten thousand.

His head is as the most fine gold,

His locks are bushy and black as a raven.

His eyes are like doves beside the water brooks;

Washed with milk and fitly set.

His cheeks are as a bed of spices,

As banks of sweet herbs.

His lips are as lilies, dropping liquid myrrh.

His hands are as rings of gold set with beryl:

His body is as ivory work overlaid with sapphires.

His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of
fine gold:

His aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely

This is my beloved, and this my friend,

O daughters of Jerusalem. . . .

I opened to my beloved;

But my beloved had withdrawn himself and was
gone.

My soul had failed me when he spake:

I sought him, but I could not find him;

I called him, but he gave me no answer.

DRIFT

The watchmen that go about the city found me.
They smote me, they wounded me;
The keepers of the walls took away my veil from
me.

“Oh, what’s the use trying to write poetry after that? What’s the use trying to paint it? How are you ever going to get it *down*? ‘My beloved is white and ruddy’—‘His body is like ivory-work overlaid with sapphires!’ Jane! Jane! I’m mad to attempt it, but it’s going to be done! Why, just think of the superb things lying there forgotten! It’s wicked.” He seized a piece of charcoal and began sweeping in lines. Jane knew the mood. He must be alone to work.

“I believe you think the Bible will perish and be lost utterly unless you rescue it on canvas,” she said. “I’ll go right away, but I had to come and tell you how happy I was.”

Medway dropped his pipe and charcoal to take her in his arms. “That’s the nicest part,” he said, and Jane Medway threw back her head for his kiss.

It was a year later that Lynn Medway proposed to Jane, his wife, that they have a studio-tea some afternoon to celebrate the completion of four of the panels, those illustrating the Song of Solomon. There were to be twelve in all, and the various people interested in having the club finished by a certain date were greatly dissatisfied that all were not in readiness.

There had been a number of interviews on the subject productive of little except rasped nerves. Jane Medway voiced her indignation at the crassness of committees in expecting work like Lynn’s to be turned out at any given date. “They are lucky if they get them in ten years,” she said. Medway bade her to be sure and invite the committee, to “calm them down.”

On the afternoon of the tea, besides the puzzling

DRIFT

Biblical scenes, there were several new portraits. Medway's portraits were as odd as his other work, with accessories and backgrounds only he could produce. His sitters seemed to become merely a part of his, Medway's scheme; an effect not always to their taste. If any suggestions of dissatisfaction were ventured upon he became Whistler-like in his reluctance to part with his treasure. One portrait called "Allegra" was startlingly different from the rest; it represented the child Laura, with her nimbus of yellow hair—a lovely, spiritual thing; another was of Spencer Crockett, who came to hear the comments, chuckling inwardly as people glanced from him to the picture and back again.

On the day before the tea, Crockett had been calling upon Mrs. John Templeton and had told Medway he would like to bring her to the studio. Eileen's love of beauty attracted him; moreover, it would be interesting to see the effect on Medway's work of coming in contact with Eileen. He knew from his post of observation that such contact was apt to produce unusual results. What would a portrait of Eileen by Medway be like? Rather an idea—that.

As he sat in front of her tea-table he pictured her in various poses. She rose to greet some newcomers; the long lines of her slim body with the clinging stuff of her dress following every curve, seemed to him very lovely, very paintable. She had on something of grey—soft and filmy—with black fur on it and jewels of moonlight blue; certainly she was good to look upon.

Of late years Crockett had come to believe that nothing was of supreme importance but the creation of a fine picture. He would admit, upon compulsion, that other arts had a certain place, but for him painting was the highest expression of the impulse to create beauty. He had become an ardent collector and loved to show

DRIFT

his pictures to people who knew what they were looking at and even, provided their comments would be honest, to those who did not. Crockett said no one was honest after five years of age.

Better than showing them, he loved to go alone and turn the canvases this way and that to get the best possible light, to study and pore over them, trying to find new mysteries, new beauty, discovering for himself deeper communion with the artist soul who had given him such delight. People often wearied him; his pictures never; moreover, people had a horrid trick of getting old and not so agreeable to look upon as they had been, whereas pictures were perennially young, perennially fair—the one great joy in his gay and lonely life.

Much as a spectator watches a play unfold, Crockett had watched Eileen from the time she was a little, mysterious, elfin girl to her present position of magnificence. He had always had a curiosity to see what would happen next and a sense of disappointment that nothing as yet had. Her artistic completeness was a joy to him, but there seemed something more needed to make the picture satisfying. Lately her eyes had a look in them—Crockett did not ask what caused it—he merely observed.

The whimsical picture-lover was one of the few people in her world for whom Eileen felt an affection; yet curiously, she was not at all sure that he was fond of her. He came to see her often, was always ready to fill a place at dinner or perform any other friendly office, but his air was detached and impersonal. He had a disconcerting way of making her talk more unreservedly than she intended; she would wonder afterwards why he had looked at her with that little, faint smile, that preposterous wink.

There were those who asserted that Crockett's wink was not uncontrollable.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE room was full when Eileen and Crockett came in, and they were warmly welcomed by Medway and his wife. As Eileen studied the pictures with absorbed attention, Medway studied her; for Crockett, in love with his new fancy, had drawn him aside to tell him of his plan.

“She is extremely interesting, of course,” Medway observed, “but have you any reason to suppose that she wants a portrait?”

Crockett made some slight rejoinder with an airy gesture. He had set elemental forces in motion and considered that he might stand aside.

So it came about that Mrs. John Templeton, driving home wrapped in soft furs against the cold, thought about the strange golden pictures she had seen, as Crockett intended that she should. He enjoyed her exclamations of pleasure as he sat beside her. She continued to think of the pictures all of the evening, describing them to John. She must take him to the studio, she said.

During the next few days various plans formed themselves in her mind to obtain some part of this new beauty for her own. She summoned Crockett for a consultation, but he had no suggestions to offer, except the possible purchase of a picture, and Eileen wanted more than a picture. As she talked a plan was born.

DRIFT

She would have some tableaux, beautiful beyond any that had ever been given before—Medway should design the pictures, costumes, backgrounds, all. What could he not do, if he would?

Crockett drummed on the arms of his chair. "Will he do it, I wonder?" he said, and was amused at Eileen's look of surprise.

"Let's go ask him now," she returned, "it's only six." In a short time the two were again being borne along to Medway's studio.

"Yes, Mr. Medway is at home," the maid replied; she would go and tell him.

Eileen's ideas had been developing rapidly on the drive. Crockett now warned her, if she wanted to secure his services, she had better let the young painter understand that he would have a free hand.

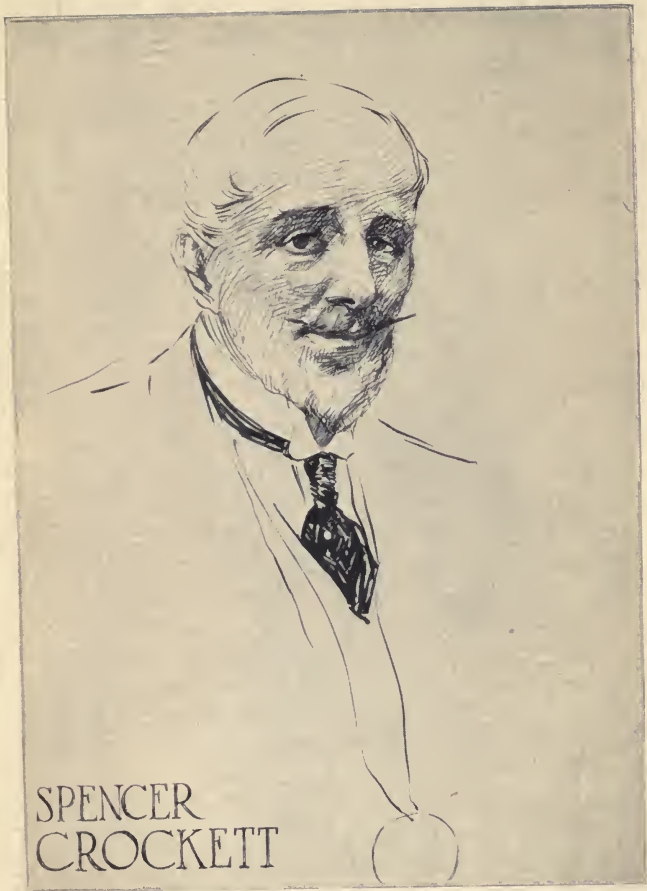
Medway appeared shortly and Eileen had got as far in her explanation as "I thought to give some story or legend in a series of pictures, an old Norse saga perhaps, or some oriental wonder tale—" when he broke in.

"How about Antony and Cleopatra?" he said, "with yourself as the queen?"

"Oh!" Eileen looked at Crockett, "oh! could I? I never thought—" She was startled and embarrassed and excited, and the two men found her radiantly lovely.

"So you will do it then?" Crockett threw in. "I told Mrs. Templeton, in case the idea did not strike you favourably, you were not easy to persuade."

"It strikes me very favourably." Medway's eagerness was almost as keen as Eileen's. "It will be great fun to have live human beings to work with instead of being obliged to wait and paint them; only a bit more intractable, eh? I hope they will do as they are told,—make everybody understand that!"



DRIFT

Eileen waved that difficulty aside. "Oh, they will," she said, "if you will really do the planning and directing. Will you?" She was still incredulous, and Medway was amused by her air of a suppliant.

"But, you know," he said, "I'll be tremendously keen on having them good. Rather a nice idea, that—to do your darndest to make a perfectly beautiful picture that will last only for a moment and perhaps, if it is beautiful enough, forever, in the memory of the people who see it."

"All any of us have when we're dead," observed Crockett. "I have some fine ones stored, if so be it I am allowed to keep them. One will be of Mrs. Templeton at this moment."

Further talk followed of what scenes should be given. Medway thought the consecutive outlines of the story should be presented, and spoke of the necessity of different settings and costumes. "Pompey's Galley," "A Plain Outside the Walls of Alexandria." Crockett suggested the accompaniment of a reading of some of the lines "so old Shakespeare might not be wholly lost sight of, the way the Bible was," but this was vetoed by the other two. Crockett announced that he would henceforward hold his peace, predicting that they were letting themselves in for an ungodly amount of trouble. This remark passed unheeded also.

Things were not going entirely as Crockett planned; but, he reflected, the ways of the gods were inscrutable, often obscure to the sight of man. He would await developments.

During the talk Jane Medway came in and was hailed as Charmian. Seven o'clock struck and Eileen rose, gathering her long cloak about her.

"How soon can it be?" she asked, and was crestfallen when Medway named a date two months off.

"Great works of art are not born in a day," remarked

DRIFT

Crockett. "I wish you two joy of your undertaking. I shall fold my hands and see what happens."

He enjoyed Eileen's excitement on the way home, commending to himself Medway's quickness in selecting her as the central figure in his decorative interpretation.

For the next few weeks, ancient Egypt lived again. Medway became so absorbed that he forsook Ruth, and Rebecca was left holding her pitcher with no hand. The committee was outraged. Jane Medway was deputed to explain, but what she was to say was not made clear to her; she was to keep everybody "as cool as possible until the tableaux were over." Medway did not propose to have his present plans interfered with.

One day, Crockett, dropping in at the studio, found him actually working on the panels. He seemed to have been having compunctions as to the delay. He would like, he said, to get them out of the way. "There was a chap named Lee from Brewster & Knolls, seemed to think the Uptown Club was the most important thing on earth," Medway mumbled as he painted, "made me visits once a week, just to see how the decorations were 'getting along,' he said. The man developed into a pest, but he was so engaging you couldn't throw things at him. What do you think he did once? Made me promise I'd have the blamed things all done in six months! Made *me* promise! He hasn't come lately."

"No, nor ever will," Crockett spoke slowly, his mind going back to the afternoon he had bade Helen good-bye. "He married a beautiful girl, a very beautiful girl, a few years ago. It's a sad story—I think he was a faun, only a faun."

Medway was not listening and Crockett said no more.

As he walked homeward, he wished that he could see Helen again. He wondered if she had come back from California and decided to find out and ask if he might come. Perhaps there would be something that he could

DRIFT

do; she had seemed glad of his visit before she went away. He cherished his love for her, acknowledged that he did so to himself: in his own eyes it ennobled him—to care so much. To love as he now loved surprised him almost as much as it would have surprised Helen, had she known. He had always watched the torments and ecstasies of others with a detached wonder; his own previous love affairs had been conducted with a cool delicacy calculated to leave no sting, but this was different. He asked nothing for himself, all that he wanted was to serve her. With all the pain, he was glad that he could love like that. Strange that it should give him satisfaction to see his plans in regard to Medway and Eileen progressing. It was too bad there had to be so much pain, but that was the way Art was born. It would be a great picture; it would live long after those who had suffered to bring it into being had ceased to be. It must be painted, no matter at what cost.

There were, of course, innumerable difficulties with the rehearsals for the tableaux; the actors didn't arrive, and when they did they would not heed. Medway was impressed with Eileen's good humour. His own temper was uncertain, but his wrath at the maddeningly casual ways of the participants melted before her graciousness. Moreover, she was an actress. It was amusing to see her turn from Cleopatra's murderous fury to greet smilingly some late comer's apologies.

She and Medway supplemented each other's ideas with quick understanding. Her sense of form was as quick as his and she was better at seeing what must be eliminated. Often he would say, "Go ahead now—you group the others." She was learning under his guidance and found joy in the hard work involved. Her imperial manner of commanding what was needed was a delight to him, it was so in keeping with

DRIFT

the part that she impersonated. In designing her costume for the court scene Medway had observed, "I wish there could be a train of peacock's plumes!"

"Why not?" said Eileen. "Are there not peacocks?" In due time a long, straight piece of the strange fabric appeared—shimmering, iridescent, a glory of green and blue. No one but "the young man at John's office" knew how it was obtained or the awful cost, and the entertainment had by that time caused him so many shocks, the peacock-feathered garment was but one more incredible item. As he added up, his thoughts travelled to the girl he wanted to marry. They could set up housekeeping he remarked to himself, if they had the price of that one shimmering garment. Medway admired it so rapturously Eileen told him that "after the show" he must have it for a studio "property."

Finally the lovely accessories were all in readiness, the actors as well drilled as they were ever likely to be and the date of the performance drew near.

About midway in the rehearsals someone had suggested that tickets be sold and the proceeds devoted to charity; so a hall was rented, which was "found more convenient anyway," and tickets sold at twenty dollars apiece. The plan was not wholly to Eileen's liking, but her conscience had been pricking her in regard to a good many neglected committee meetings, and this seemed an easy way of squaring her obligations. She agreed, telling those who were anxious for the plan that she would defray all expenses, as she had intended. Everything they could make would therefore be clear gain to the charity selected—a most pleasing idea the committee thought. To the very great surprise of those advocating the benefit plan, there was some difficulty experienced in finding a charity willing to accept the proceeds. One superintendent in his letter of declination made the enigmatic statement that his

DRIFT

organisation was "too advanced." Finally a struggling Day Nursery, badly in need of a new building, agreed to accept thankfully any moneys that might be forthcoming and so the matter was arranged. The programme for the tableaux had a frontispiece of a wan-looking infant being received by a neat nurse in uniform at the door of a flower-bedecked Nursery; on the opposite side the same infant, fat and rosy, was being handed back at night. It chanced that Medway did not see the programme until the night of the performance. He picked one up and his expression was queer. He turned to Eileen for sympathy and found her smile of appreciation consoling. "At *our* show!" he said. "Good God, who did it?"

"I told them just to go ahead, and evidently they did," said Eileen. "I'm so sorry!"

Finally came the last dress rehearsal.

"'Nothing is lost that is born with tears,'" quoted Spencer Crockett, coming in upon a dejected assemblage in gorgeous and eccentric array. He joined John Templeton, sitting in one of the boxes, and watched one or two scenes.

"Must be awe-inspiring to have your wife look like that," he observed, seating himself, but John's lips did not relax. It was conveyed to Crockett that he hated the whole thing. Crockett was sorry; he liked John, liked him very much indeed, but he was, there could be no doubt about it, rather stern at times. Why not simply enjoy the beauty before him? Was not that, after all, the really important thing?

It was the scene in the palace where the messenger brings to Cleopatra the news of Antony's marriage to Octavia. There were perhaps one hundred people on the stage, arranged in geometric symmetry of attitude and grouping. The queen had just struck the messenger down and stood above him, her hands against

DRIFT

her breast, palms outwards, her face sharply in profile, her feet straight. Her body was wrapped in a thin tissue of brown and gold, her hair cut straight around the neck; on her head gleamed a fan-like head-dress of jewels with a gold serpent coiled around her forehead: from her shoulders fell the robe of peacock's plumes. Every line, every colour in the picture, seemed to accentuate the fury of the queen.

As the curtain fell, Crockett clapped his hands like a madman and then, chilled by John's silence, left the box to find more congenial company. He expressed anxiety that it could not possibly be so beautiful, so perfect, on the following night, but the performers assured him that it would. "I'm sure we've posed for that scene one thousand times," Iris remarked.

The next day, Crockett, dropping into the studio, found Medway in a state of despair. Nothing, nothing had been right! The whole thing would be an utter failure; he had been a confounded ass to let himself in for such a thing. Mrs. Templeton was a wonder. If it hadn't been for her he would have thrown it up. He stormed about while Crockett smoked and smiled.

Finally the evening came. The audience was beautiful in itself, gay and bejewelled and soft of scent. Five minutes after the hour announced, the doors were closed and the lights put out, a temple bell boomed out its slow-ringing notes, and the curtain parted on Antony and Cleopatra.

Behold them! The great Egyptian, the great Roman, Immortal Lovers! Face to face they stand, the figures in direct profile, challenging, mad, glorious; behind them the golden sands of the desert—a far, green oasis; the winding, serpent shape of the yellow Nile.

Eileen had said to Crockett weeks before, "More beautiful than any tableaux ever given before." She was not wrong. Each scene was dominated by one colour

DRIFT

combined with gold and black. The arrangement of the groups was formal in the extreme and the lines as subtly calculated as the colour to bring out the dominating idea.

The climax was reached in one scene representing Cleopatra on the city wall watching for Antony. On the ledge of brown stone, her women gathered below, crouched the woman Cleopatra, eager for her lover. No queen now, only the sinuous, passionate creature, wild for Antony's arms. The pose was odd, the body relaxed, leaning back, all the desire in the eyes. The costume Medway had designed, a close-clinging corselet of green from the armpits almost to the knees, and below a pleated skirt of gold gauze, leaving the feet bare, showed every curve of the lithe body. As the picture was slowly flooded with brilliant golden light, as from a setting sun, there was the tribute of a moment of perfect silence, then wild applause. On and on went the tumult of clapping hands and demanding voices, but the vision would not come again; it was gone forever.

At the end of the evening there were several hundred delighted and astonished people, several hundred more exceedingly tired ones, and twenty thousand dollars for the Day Nursery. During the intermission an engaging nursery infant, bescrubbed and becurled, clad in "rompers" and wearing a wondering expression, had been steered gently about among the audience, holding out a porringer, into which contributions were liberally poured.

Eileen was very happy. Her "show" had succeeded beyond her expectations, and deeper than all the rest was a delicate sense of excitement in Medway's presence. They had hardly met alone, or spoken to each other on any other topic than the pictures, yet something had sprung into being, unacknowledged, unexpressed, pre-saging unknown things.

CHAPTER XXXII

CROCKETT, from his eerie, whence he watched the ways of men, noted how Medway turned at the sound of Eileen's voice, noted the look in his eyes as he watched her and thought to himself, "What a picture that will be!"

Going to see Medway a few days later, he found him in a temper. His "love-scenes from the Bible" had lost their flavour; he was stale on them, he could do no more. The chairman of the house committee had paid him a call that morning and suggested a time limit to the accomplishment of the series. He had even hinted something about payment being contingent on this date. Disgusting lot! He would never have anything to do with clubs again, never!

Crockett allowed him to fume until he had soothed himself in the process, putting in an occasional appropriate word of agreement; and then made known the purpose of his call. Would Medway paint a picture of Mrs. Templeton in the scene watching from the city wall, without the other women, of course, only the figure of the queen?

Medway swung around from his canvas. "Do you think—do you think she would let me?" he said.

He looked very boyish and eager and beautiful as he stood there before Crockett. Carol Medway insisted

DRIFT

that her brother "looked the part" too well. He had a great scorn for long hair or pointed beards, or any insignia; nevertheless, his intense eyes, his curved, supercilious mouth, the scornful lilt to his head, proclaimed the artist.

"I'd love to do it," he added. "Jove, what a pose!" He took a bit of paper and sketched the scene, then hunted up the colour design he had made for the tableau, holding his hand over the group of waiting women in the lower half. "I believe you're right," he said.

"You never conceived a finer picture, just as a piece of decoration," Crockett told him. "It ought not to perish, but do you suppose you can actually do it in paint?"

That afternoon Crockett was sitting at Eileen's tea-table waiting for others to go to broach to her his plans. He was saved the need.

There was Munro, splendid to look upon, who had taken the part of Antony, also Octavia and Diomedes and Cæsar and various lesser lights, all congratulating themselves and each other on the success of the entertainment.

"Mrs. Templeton, you ought to be painted as Cleopatra," some one remarked. "You were so wonderful! It is wicked to lose that vision."

"Yes, in that watching scene on the city wall," chimed another. "That was the loveliest of all." Crockett smiled to himself—the faintest little thin smile, much like Buddha's watching in his shrine above him.

"Would you pose for Medway?" Crockett asked her after the others had gone, and Eileen, with a quick leap of the heart, said, "Yes—oh, yes."

Next day, the *deus ex machina* of art was at Jane Medway's tea-table, making himself agreeable. Jane had not enjoyed the tableaux. For one thing she was worried about the club decorations. She was of a hum-

DRIFT

ble nature, worshipful of her brilliant husband, and anxious to advance his success. She was generally uncritical of what he did, but the weeks that he spent in designing and rehearsing the tableaux seemed to her foolish, and deep down in her heart was a little aching pain that she hated to admit was there.

When Medway came in, Crockett hailed him joyously. "Your brown queen will pose for you!" he said, and caught, as he turned, Jane's quick look. "Ah, that's too bad!" he thought.

Medway was all eagerness. "That is good!" he said. "We'll have the city wall as you said, and by Jove, we'll call it 'The Brown Queen.' It was a bully picture, wasn't it? She understands it isn't a portrait, an order, I mean? She won't want it? If I could once get her on canvas as she was that night, I'd never be able to part with it."

"There was nothing said about a portrait," Crockett assured him, "but you'd better make it clear. You ought to do something fine, Medway."

Jane added an expression of pleasure and then remarked that she would find it difficult to find time to pose, and had the others been consulted?

"We're going to leave the waiting-women off," Medway told her, and went on outlining to Crockett how he planned to improve on the tableau design. Characteristically a few moments later, he was in his studio making sketches,—little graceful studies of Eileen's head, of the relaxed hand, of the forehead and eyes with their look of the passion-possessed woman waiting for her lover.

Crockett's plans were succeeding better than he hoped, but there was a cheque in store. The next time he saw Eileen she confided to him that John did not approve of the plan for the picture. She was rueful about it.

DRIFT

"He didn't say anything at all when I told him," she said, "so I knew. Perhaps I had better not."

Here was a difficulty! Crockett suggested to Eileen that he would dine with her any time in the future that she wished to ask him. She named a date and asked what he was going to say to John, but Crockett would not reveal his methods.

"I don't know yet," he said, "but I want to see you painted by Medway. I am sure John's objections aren't serious."

When the evening came, he sought a moment after dinner, when the rest of the men were intent on a discussion and took a chair near his host's.

"Will you pardon a very intimate thing I want to say?" he began and went on without waiting for permission. "I have known Eileen since she was a baby, you know. She is grievously disappointed now at your objections to the picture of her as Cleopatra. She would not have told me except that I rather forced the acknowledgment. Medway is a genius; he'll make something splendidly worth while. Almost a pity it should not come into being, isn't it?"

A hard look had formed itself on John's impassive face. "I made no objections," he said.

"Didn't you?" Crockett's surprise was manifest. "Then why did she tell me she must give up the plan?" He saw that his host was intensely annoyed and fearful they would be overheard. He turned to the general talk.

After the guests had gone, John went to his wife's dressing-room door and knocked. He had been smoking and thinking downstairs, and decided that he had no authority to interfere with Eileen if she wished the picture, wished to pose for it. In his own mind he knew that it was convention, not reality, that was at the root of his opposition; merely a feeling of reluctance that his wife, his property, should be so portrayed: not

DRIFT

the instinctive protection of something precious, something loved.

"I am sorry I seemed unwilling about the picture of Cleopatra," he said. "Of course, do as you want to. You were lovely in the costume. I think I was rather weary of the whole subject of the tableaux—when you spoke to me, I mean."

Eileen held out her hand. "I am so glad you don't mind," she said, and they bade each other good-night.

She could not sleep. She was excited and happy and afraid. What would the next few weeks hold?

Lynn Medway came to see her, very simple and direct in his expressions of delight at the prospect of the picture.

"Crockett calls it 'The Brown Queen,'" he said. "I'll make something good, I think. I can't tell you what it means to me, your being willing to pose. It is an awful task, you know. You won't want it when it is finished, will you?"

Eileen laughed. "From the way you speak it would not be much use if I did."

"Well, you see," Medway was serious, "I am attempting a big thing. I am going to paint the East and Cleopatra and you. If it's good, it will be the biggest thing I have ever accomplished; if it's bad, it can't exist, that's all."

"I see," said Eileen, "I promise not to lay claims, and I don't think my husband will." A little pang came to her. She knew what John thought, but she had chosen not to heed. It was not quite fair of him. All through the excitement of the tableaux he had held aloof, sometimes for days she hardly saw him; no, certainly he would not want the picture.

There was a matter about which Eileen wished to speak to Medway that embarrassed her greatly. It concerned what he should be paid for his services in

DRIFT

connection with the tableaux. She had besought Crockett to find out for her, but Crockett, with a malicious glee, declined the mission.

Nothing had ever been said on the subject, Eileen hoping that it would come about naturally; but it now seemed that some understanding must be reached. After that first talk at Medway's apartment she had asked Crockett on the way home about an honorarium. "Don't worry," he had replied, "Lynn Medway's prices are high and getting higher rapidly. He'll charge you a fortune for this."

As Medway rose to go, she summoned her courage. "Mr. Medway," she said, "I want to say something to you. You know there must come an hour of reckoning."

Medway stared. Her words startled him profoundly, they came too near something he had determinedly put out of his own mind. "Yes?" he said.

Eileen stood looking down into a teacup. Her aspect was as one convicted of guilt. "Well, you know, Mr. Medway, you've spent a lot of time on the tableaux; as for the rest, there's no expressing the beauty, the wonder of it all, what you've done, I mean." She came to a full stop and looked at him helplessly.

"Yes?" he said again.

"Well! We've got to talk business some time, haven't we?" she burst out in a kind of desperation.

Medway's expression changed suddenly. He broke into an amused laugh. "You mean, what do I want to be paid?"

"Yes," said Eileen, "that is exactly what I mean. I don't see why it is so funny. It seemed to take you a long time to understand. I was very uncomfortable."

"It did," said Medway. "You were so very delicate! You began with such portentous words! 'There must

DRIFT

come an hour of reckoning.' I was alarmed, I was truly," and merriment again seized him.

"Well, what *do* you want to be paid?" said Eileen, laughing with him.

"I'll tell you," said Medway in a low voice, his face grave again. He drew his chair close to hers. "But you needn't feel that you must send it all at once or right away. I know the other expenses have been very heavy, and you've been tremendously generous. Take a year or two if you like."

Eileen looked at him with a queer expression. She was not used to being teased, and this seemed very much like it.

"But tell me what it is—how much, I mean."

Medway put his face close to hers. She caught the faint tobacco scent of his coat, and her breath quickened. He was almost touching her. He prolonged the moment, for the nearness caught him. "Nothing," he whispered and sat back, laughing.

Eileen took to stammered protests.

"Now, let's be serious," said Medway. "Forgive my nonsense, but you were so enchanting in the way you approached the horrible topic, so different from the club committee! I couldn't resist. Now I'll explain all. When you and Crockett went off that afternoon I resolved to charge you a fabulous sum. I knew it would be no end troublesome and take everything I had in me to give to make it go. Well, now I feel differently. I've learned a lot that I'm glad to get hold of, and I've had a mighty good time. It's all been bully, hasn't it? I'm so glad you asked me, so awfully glad!" He held out his hand and Eileen put hers in it. He glanced keenly at her as he released her hand. She had a few more protests to make.

"If you're uneasy, give the cheque to the babies," he laughed. "When shall we begin? Tomorrow? No?"

DRIFT

The next day? Good. You'll come surely. I'll be ready." He had her hand again and kept it. "And the best of it all is knowing you," he said.

Medway had the city wall of Alexandria in readiness when she came—tremulous and excited.

Jane Medway and Sophie dressed her in the Cleopatra costume. She felt curiously unclad in the morning light of the studio. She was soon to discover that posing to be painted and posing for a tableau were very different things. Sitting in the angle of a wall with one foot under you and a passionate look in your eyes can become quite agonising. Eileen looked very strange and young, coiled up on her perch. Her supple body yielded itself instantly to any suggestion of Medway's as to position. "Oh, what a model!" he thought, "what lines!" The slim beauty of the one little brown foot and ankle visible made Jane Medway wince.

Finally everything was ready and Medway began to draw. Eileen sat motionless. She wanted to do what he expected of her, wanted to please him. Sophie took out a little bag of sewing materials, moved her chair to the far end of the studio, and with one inscrutable look at her mistress fixed her attention upon her needlework. After a moment or two Jane Medway withdrew and the minutes went slowly by. Every now and again Medway would step back from his easel and squint at her sharply across his charcoal. A spider let itself down from the ceiling and waved about, seeking what it might devour. Finding nothing it hauled itself up again and was no more seen. Eons went by, then more eons; eternity was near. To her dismay Eileen felt two tears form themselves under her eyelids, brim over and roll down her cheeks. She was terribly ashamed and hoped they would pass unnoticed, but two more came and then a sniff.

DRIFT

“Good Lord,” said Medway, “you’re crying! What is it?” He was all concern and the alarmed Sophie sprang to assist.

“It hurts,” said Eileen, releasing her left foot and holding on to it, “hurts awfully. I don’t feel at all queenly and I’m so cold!”

“But why didn’t you get down?” Medway asked in deep concern.

“I thought I was to keep still,” said Eileen; “can I get down right in the middle like that, before you stop?” She looked up, starry-eyed.

Medway had an impulse to take her in his arms to comfort her. It seemed the only thing to do, but there was that damned maid.

As for Eileen, she was thinking that if her foot was going to hurt like that all the time, she never could do it; besides, she was very cold. Life had not fitted Eileen for the endurance of pain and cold.

Medway was full of compunction. He called himself a brute and a blackguard, a thoughtless ass, feared she would never come again—what must she think of him? When Eileen became assured that she could move at will and heard orders given for more heat to be turned on, she was happier. After more extravagances from Medway and protests from her, they agreed upon posing two minutes at a time to start with. Assuring him that she was “all right now,” she climbed back onto the walls of Alexandria and drooped into Cleopatra.

Those hours in the studio were curious ones for Eileen. It was years since she had had so much time to think. Posing became easier after a little, and as she sat there day after day in perfect quiet, she became conscious of being in the presence of a power that attracted her intensely, while it won from her a deep respect. Medway worked. He seemed to forget the world, forget her, forget everything. As in the early

DRIFT

days of her marriage, she saw that a man's work may be more important to him than a woman. At first she could not understand; then it came to her that although he hardly answered when she spoke and often seemed as if unaware of her presence, nevertheless, it was that unspoken thing between them that was driving him and that was making her sit hour after hour, aching and stiff, to give him what he needed from her.

Sometimes he would paint very little, only look at her gravely, thirstingly. Sometimes Eileen would hear him muttering,—“God, if I could get it down!” Well was it for those two that the grave and sedate Sophie, representing the great “thou shalt not” of the world about them, sat sewing in the corner. In spite of her guardianship the old primitive flame was gathering strength as this passionate lover of beauty stood watching the delicate body, the lighted eyes of his “brown queen.”

CHAPTER XXXIII

NOTHING is lost that is born with tears," Crockett had quoted. The words came to Jane Medway's mind as she lay, face downward, on her bed, praying to some power to tell her what to do, how to act. She told herself she was glad of Medway's absorption, glad of his delight in the picture; if any one else could give him what she could not, she was glad of that, too, but oh the ache, the dreadful ache! Since their marriage, she had shared everything that he had done, each phase of hope and despair and doubt; she had sympathised with his difficulties, rejoiced with him at the final accomplishment and now—she was shut out! Even bitterer than the knowledge of his new passion was the feeling that she had no part in this new creation, this picture that was so fine a piece of work, the high point of his genius.

It was as if there were a child, a beautiful, wonderful child, who had a right to live, who must live; another woman had given it to him because his desire had gone out to her with all the fresh strength of love, new-born. A picture was like a child, she thought, there must be joy, ecstasy, labour and bitter pain, only why had she to suffer? If she had only known, if she could have gone away! How was she to go through the days?

Carol Medway said nothing, but Jane knew the girl was troubled. They spoke of the picture and its

DRIFT

progress, unwilling to admit that there was any reason for not doing so, yet neither paid those little, happy visits to the studio that had been a part of the love scenes from the Bible. They were afraid.

And Medway himself? If he thought of Jane, it was only for a moment. She was as usual, he supposed. If he wondered about her his mind was soon at rest; she made no sign, no outcry. Day and night his thoughts were with his "brown queen," for picture and model had become one. He dwelt apart, moving in his dream-world of beauty—the beauty of his own creating. Only the child Laura seemed able to reach him. She would climb into his lap and burrow her fair head on his breast, crooning her little love song, and he would hold her close and be glad of her unquestioning companionship.

The picture was nearing completion. No one had been allowed to see it and great curiosity was expressed.

One day as Eileen rose to go, Medway protested. "Oh, Mrs. Templeton, I can't let you go now! Please give me another half hour. Take a rest for a little, but don't leave me! I'm a brute to keep you posing so long, but don't go, please don't go, I need you so much!"

There was that in his voice that told Eileen his desire was not for the picture but for her. "Very well," she assented, "I'll send Sophie home for lunch. She can come back to dress me." Medway gave her a quick glance.

The quiet Sophie rose, rolled up her work, got into her jacket and disappeared. There was silence while Medway painted, seemingly wholly absorbed. After a quarter of an hour Eileen gave a little sigh.

"Oh, mayn't I rest?" she said. "If you knew how tired my knees were!"

Medway looked at her, but said nothing. Then he put down his palette and brought her wrap, assisting her

DRIFT

down. She dropped onto the couch and shut her eyes.

"I've wearied you!" Medway's voice was low, "but I think you're glad, aren't you? We've made something, you and I, made it live and it's good! Do you remember the day I told you that I was going to paint the East and Cleopatra and you? Well, I've done it; you've been wonderful! I don't know how to say to you what it means to me—the picture—your giving yourself—giving me the joy of it!" He took her hand, and, kneeling beside the couch, put it to his lips and held it there. "I love you," he said, "I love you, love you, love you, and I've longed to say it every day you've come. Don't say anything! Don't answer! I know all the things you ought to say, but just for a moment, let me touch you, let me find rest; I am weary, too."

His head was on the couch beside her, her fingers against his lips. It was infinitely sweet to have him there, to feel his groping touch—tender, beseeching.

After a time, neither knew how long, Medway raised his head. "You haven't said all the dreadful things I was afraid you would say. You don't mind my loving you—you're glad?" His hands tightened.

"I think I don't understand." Eileen was trembling. "Hadn't you better go back to your painting? I'm rested now; I can pose again."

"I will," Medway's voice was gentle. "I'll do anything you say and please know this, I am not asking anything of you. I'll promise not to. Just let me love you; be good to me! I am so happy."

She rose quickly, her thoughts in a tumult. "Yes, yes," she said, "please go on painting now."

She took her pose, that strange pose that seemed to typify all the languor of the East. Medway picked up his palette, but he painted little. His eyes rested with a shining light, now on his picture, now on the woman it portrayed. When he took her hand at part-

DRIFT

ing, his clasp belied his words, "I will ask nothing of you." His touch asked everything.

The next day Eileen sent word that she could not come and passed a restless morning. The next day it was the same. In the evening came a note from Medway, "Please come!" it ran, "I want you; I can do nothing without you. I will be good. I long to know if you are happy—too—as happy as I. I think that you are. Come!"

The next morning she went, trembling. Medway looked at Sophie and then sharply at her, and became formality itself. He painted quietly and steadily, giving her a word now and then as to the pose, and humming lightly to himself. Eileen was miserable. She posed a long time without resting and grew wretched from fatigue. Medway was polite and suggested that they end the sitting. So this was what he called "being good." How dreary it was!

The next day, setting her lips a little, Eileen told Sophie that she would dress at home, that she need not go with her to the studio. Sophie looked up. "Yes, madam," she said.

The French woman had watched what had come to be as she sat at her sewing; she had watched Medway, and she was afraid. She had been with Eileen since she was a little girl and all a lonely woman's affection went out to the delicate, careless young creature she cared for. Now she had a fierce desire to protect her: shield her from ill. Something of this was conveyed to Eileen in the touch of her hands, and the sense of constraint in the woman's watchfulness acted as a spur to that impatience which was pushing her forward to something that she knew was fateful. Sophie's stern look was disturbing. Her arms stole around the woman's neck and she pulled her face down. "Old silly!" she said,

DRIFT

“don't you go imagining things and fretting; it's all right.”

Sophie dropped down beside her. “Oh, Miss Eileen,” she said, “can't I go? I'd better go! Let me, please!”

Eileen pushed her away and rose. “No! I said no, didn't I?”

Medway glanced behind her as she entered the studio, but he said nothing. He took her cloak from her gently and turned and faced her—his eyes gleaming. Eileen stood before him, slender, brown, her eyes bent down, one hand on her breast to still the beating—the young queen—Cleopatra. He looked at her and suddenly she was in his arms, his kisses were on her throat, her hair, her breast. “You came!” the whisper was a shout of triumph. “You came! You are mine, mine, mine! Tell me, when shall it be? When will you come to me? Tell me—I want you. My God, how I want you! I want you now!”

Eileen struggled in mad terror. Oh that grasp, that terrible grasp! He must let her go; she seemed powerless—he was so strong. “Tell me, tell me!” he insisted. “When—when will you come?”

Victoria's vow flashed across her brain. With a cry she forced herself and stood before him, quivering, panting like a mad thing—caught.

Medway fell back. “What is it?” he said. “Why do you look like that? I've hurt you?”

“No, no! It isn't that.” Eileen's voice was hoarse. He came a step nearer and she cowered back. “Don't touch me!” She almost screamed the words.

“I won't.” Medway put his hand to his forehead, “but I thought you—you came alone; the other day you seemed—what is it? Oh, what is it?”

Eileen sank down upon the couch; she felt sick and dizzy, as if this were some horrible dream from which

DRIFT

she must waken in a moment. Medway walked to the other end of the studio, hesitated a moment and then came back and stood in front of her. A curious thought came to him as he looked at her bent head, her broken attitude—Cleopatra before Cæsar— So! he might paint her again!

He gave a short laugh and Eileen looked up; there was terror in her eyes. "I want to go away," she said, "go away from here."

Medway stepped to the door. "You are free to go," he said.

"But the picture?" Eileen faltered. "Whatever happens to us—I mean, whatever we do—that—mustn't suffer—I want that to be finished—I'll do anything." She was crying.

Medway's anger softened. He could understand this, at least. I have hardly painted on it for a week," he said. "It is practically finished. I kept you because—well—because I couldn't let you go, I suppose. I thought— Fool! Fool! Fool!" Again he gave that short, ugly laugh; then he walked to his easel and stood looking at the picture. "It is good," he said.

There was a silence. "Well, you are free to go," His face was white and his voice dull. "What hinders you?"

"The car?" Eileen tasted the dregs.

"Oh!" Medway rang and gave the necessary directions; again there was silence. Eileen longed to speak, but she could not. She was not afraid now; she knew that he would not touch her against her will, but that look on his face! She did not know that he could look like that.

In a moment the car was announced. Gravely he held her cloak and bowed his head as she passed out of the door and down the stairs.

The picture, "The Brown Queen," was exhibited at

DRIFT

the spring exhibition and excited the wonder and admiration of a bewildered world.

"Old Medway's gone ahead of us all," said one fellow-artist, "we might as well acknowledge it."

"We'll see the influence of that picture during the next year," said another, going back to his absorbed study of the wonder of colour that proved an enchantment to painters and laymen alike.

The figure—eager, expectant, languidly on fire, was bathed in a golden glory of sunset light. It shone and radiated and gleamed with light—the light of the East, the comments. Crockett was not without bowels of queen.

"He has given her a soul," some one said, and when the question came, "Who? Eileen or Cleopatra?" there was only a smile for an answer. Were there those who guessed something of the cause of the surpassing beauty of the picture? If so they held their peace. Enough that it was.

Spencer Crockett came each day to worship and hear the comments. Crockett was not without bowels of compassion. He was sorry for Jane, very sorry; as for Medway, his hurt would mend, he would go through hell, of course—but—he had the picture. It was hardly to be expected that Jane would find that much of a consolation. Crockett wondered about Jane. Keenly ambitious as she was for Medway's work, was her ambition impersonal enough to brook episodes like this—inevitable episodes? It seemed to Crockett that he and Jane alone knew the secret of "The Brown Queen," better even than the two who had created it. He knew that Jane hated him. He was sorry for that.

Medway hardly went near the exhibition. He spent most of the time in his studio, although he painted little. He wrote letters to Eileen, some pleading, some bitter. Then he would read them and furiously destroy them,

DRIFT

getting up to wander about the room where her presence lingered. One day, in default of the picture, he hunted up the sketches and studies, and pored over them, turning away with a groan. Desire gnawed and tore at him—to seek her out, to make her yield, to force that lithe, beautiful body to turn to him. He knew that he could, but something held him back. He had been too deeply repulsed; he could not forget her fury of recoil. He believed that she would answer his passion with equal strength; why was it not there?

Early one morning, before any one could be there, he went to the exhibition rooms and studied the picture. Yes, it was on the canvas; had he painted only what he believed to be, not what was? He would not believe it; he had made some misstep, had been too impatient; he should not have frightened her and so lost everything. Fool, fool that he had been!

The days came and went, and Medway did not know how they passed. He was very wretched. Jane ministered to him as she could and hid her thoughts from him and from every one.

When the exhibition was over, there came a request for the picture to be sent to a neighbouring city. Medway answered the letter curtly, saying that it must be returned to him, an edict which caused concern and regret to the authorities. An emissary was sent to remonstrate and received short shrift. "Tell them to send the picture here," he said.

He could not have told why he wanted it, for he knew it would mean only more intense torment of longing. Nevertheless, it represented to him hours of such happiness, such passion of creative joy, that the very canvas was to him infinitely precious. He wanted his treasure returned. When it came he sat long before it. He had put into it a great passion, a great desire—unfulfilled.

DRIFT

It was some months later when one day, late in the afternoon, Medway came to his wife's room and knocked. She was sitting sewing by the window. Jane Medway looked up with a little smile and held out her arms. Medway threw himself on the floor at her feet, putting his face down on her knees. His words were inarticulate. Jane pushed the hair back from his forehead.

"Don't talk, dear," she said. "Don't feel you must tell me anything. I understand it all, understand it so well! You are suffering and my heart aches for you. Perhaps I can help; I'd like to."

Medway found her hands. "Is it true? Is it true?" he said. As the minutes passed over those two sitting together in their room, where there had been great joy, there came a silence, a healing silence. The man rested prostrate, the woman bent over him. It was blessed to her to touch that rough head again. The room grew darker and the lights of the city shone in—the lights of the great city—as they shone into many windows where many other human beings were enacting in their turn the old story of love and pain and infinite desire.

After a while the child Laura came to the door. "I want to come in!" she called. Medway opened the door and picked her up, holding her to him. In a moment Jane stole away and left them together.

A day or two afterwards, Laura came to the studio door, grave of mien. "I have a letter for you from Mother," she said. "It is very im—important. She said I must give it to you myself, not let anybody else. Here it is."

She fixed her eyes upon him and waited. "My dear, dear husband," it ran. "This week is the boys' Easter vacation and they are dreadfully restive in the city, so they and I are off for a week of green fields. I've explained everything to Nannie about Laura, but don't

DRIFT

let my blessed baby get lonesome for mother, will you? We'll be back a week from today. I'll wire, of course. Love, Jane."

Medway sat down, the note in his hand. Laura climbed into his lap. "Father," she whispered, "Mother told me to comfort you. Why did she tell me that? Shall I sing to you?"

During that week Medway painted a picture, Out of a mist shines a face, a child's face with eyes that see beyond. The picture is called "The Comforter."

In the autumn Crockett had a brief line from Medway saying that he and Jane with the child Laura were sailing for Paris, where he had taken a studio. The boys were at school. The New York apartment was let for two years. Would Crockett please explain to the club committee that he would work on the decorations as he was able to? He would hope to finish them in the course of six months or a year.

Spencer Crockett was a deeply dissatisfied man. He had done that which was distasteful to him in a desire that beauty should be born. Well it had been, but what good did it do him? He could not see it, did not even know where it was. Eileen had made no comment when he went to see her for the express purpose of telling her of Medway's note, but he remembered her expression. Had she been hurt, too? He reflected that her face had something it had lacked before. Had Medway played Pygmalion? He wondered what had happened.

Worst of all, one side of the club lounge, otherwise complete, was calcimined a patient drab, waiting for the decorations which he, Crockett, had so warmly advocated. He was obliged to listen daily to crass opinions and inane jokes about the four panels already installed.

There were times when Spencer Crockett thought

DRIFT

“The Brown Queen” had cost too dear. Moreover, he was uneasy as to the fate of the picture. Would he ever see it again? Would anybody?

He need not have been concerned. Medway would no more have let harm come to it than to Laura, nor would he part with it, in spite of extravagant offers. When it was painted Crockett had had the temerity to suggest the Metropolitan, to which Medway had replied, “When I’m dead perhaps, not before.” It hung now in his Paris studio. He stood before it daily.

In the sober watches of the dawn, Crockett decided that henceforth he would confine himself to pictures already painted.

CHAPTER XXXIV

EILEEN could never remember definitely what happened during the weeks after the scene in the studio. She went about as usual, got up in the morning, dressed, went out and talked; returning, she went to bed and got up again the next day, all as she had done.

One day she met Victoria Lenowska on the street. The two stared at each other and Victoria would have passed on, but Eileen would not let her. She held out her hand.

"I'm glad to see you again," she said, "I'd like to know how you are. Won't you come in here and talk to me?"

Victoria assented with a queer smile and Eileen led the way to a near-by tea-room. They had the place almost to themselves, and Victoria seated herself with an air of assurance and picked up the card. Eileen wondered why she had invited her and for a moment there was silence. Victoria broke it.

"I don't know why you wanted me to come," she said. "I suppose you wanted to find out whether I did or I didn't—well, I didn't."

"No, that wasn't it at all," said Eileen. "I was very lonely. I wanted somebody to talk to." The answer was the truth, but it had a peculiar effect upon Victoria.

"Is that so?" she said. "Is that so?" and fell to fiddling with her teacup.

DRIFT

“Yes, it is so,” said Eileen, “but it doesn’t matter especially. Won’t you tell me what has happened to you in the years since we met? Mr. Martin said you’d ‘fight your way through.’ ”

“Did he say that? Did he?” Victoria looked excited. “That’s something to hear after all this time. I’m glad you told me that.”

“Well, haven’t you?” Eileen’s voice was winning its way. “You look as if you had.”

“I’m straight, if that’s what you mean. I didn’t go on the streets, though I couldn’t tell you for the life of me why not. I guess I was just afraid—after that one dose of *man* I got, young! It was enough to cure me—of wantin’ ’em—I mean.”

Eileen reflected that Victoria’s genius for direct speech remained with her. She rather wished that she had resisted the inclination to invite her, but the memory that Victoria had declined a visit from her at the hospital had never been effaced.

“Did you ever see your stepfather again?” she asked.

“Never—nor my mother either! I wanted to show ’em I could get along without ’em—that I wasn’t done. I dare say that was at the bottom of the way I worked. I’m forewoman in a box factory now. It wasn’t easy, but I’m gettin’ there. You know, it’s sort of interesting seein’ what you *can* do—bracin’ yourself against all the things and all the awful people that’s tryin’ to down you—workin’ against you. It’s like a game—seein’ who’ll come out on top—you or the other fellow. Well, I must be goin’ now. Thank you for the tea.”

She rose and held out her hand awkwardly. “I’m sorry you’re lonesome,” she said.

“Oh, don’t go yet,” Eileen begged, “I want to hear more. It sounds so worth while, so splendid, what you’re doing, I mean. It makes my life seem idle and foolish. I’d like to do things—people that are working

DRIFT

as you do are happy, aren't they? I'd like to earn my living, but how can I?" She spread out her hands.

Victoria looked her up and down and grinned. "You couldn't," she admitted, "and I guess you wouldn't want to long. You'd crumple up and take to the other thing—you're pretty enough to, and soft enough—at least to look at. What makes you lonesome?"

"Because I'm alone."

"Well, you don't have to be alone, do you? Are you married?"

"Yes."

"What's he doing?"

"You mean his business?"

"No, no!" Victoria laughed. "What's he doin' with women, I mean, leaves you lonesome? What you done to him—first?"

"Why first?" Eileen's voice trembled.

"Oh, well, I suppose I've no business to ask, but you volunteered you was lonesome, you know. If you want a man, for heaven's sake get one, but don't go 'round tellin' everybody you meet on the street you're 'lonesome.' That's so darned silly!" She looked at her watch. "I've got to go now, I'm late. Excuse me if I've been rude. Thank you again for the tea—it was good. Good-bye."

Eileen went with her to the door of the restaurant and stood a moment watching her stride down the street. The interview had been extraordinarily distasteful, yet curiously she wished Victoria would not go away. So! it was 'darned silly' to be lonesome! She wondered what was the impulse that had led her to make the confession to a woman.

In a moment Victoria came hurrying back, holding out her hand. "Say!" she said, "I forgot something—always do forget 'em, I guess—manners. I want to say thank you for your going with me to the hospital that

DRIFT

time. It must 'a been horrid for you. Don't suppose I remembered to say the proper things, don't remember much of anything except a feeling I'd never do *that* again—an' I haven't! Don't suppose I'll ever see you again; I was so afraid you'd be gone."

"It was nice of you to come back," said Eileen, "but why shouldn't we meet again? I'd like to."

Victoria grinned sideways. "Oh, well," she said, "it wouldn't be worth while, would it? I'd forget my manners every time, sure, and I guess manners are your strong suit. Good-bye. Don't be lonesome, but if you are, don't talk about it."

In the early spring Eileen told John she was very tired and wanted quiet. She would go to the Farm for a while; there were many things needing supervision.

The round of spring entertainments had become intolerable. She thought constantly of Victoria's words. How dare the woman come into her life again with her sneers about being lonesome, when it was she, yes, she and no other, who had caused her to be lonely. She wished that she knew where she lived so that she might go and tell her this. Why had she been such a fool as to let Victoria say all those things, saying no word herself of all the misery her wild "vow" had caused. "If you want a man, get one." The brutal phrase stayed in her mind. She wondered what had happened to Robert Thorne.

Eileen spent most of the summer at the Farm. John came up occasionally for Sunday, and as before, when she was troubled, she turned to him, relying upon his care. They took long walks on Sunday afternoons, sometimes talking over the past. They had become friends, concerned for each other's welfare, thoughtful, considerate; but with the limits and barriers that friends interpose.

DRIFT

At midsummer Mrs. Templeton died. For some weeks John had been concerned about her failing strength, but the last illness was short. Eileen came into town and tried to be of use, but there seemed nothing for her to do. Julia Templeton, in her grief, wanted John's attention. Eileen hardly saw him.

On the evening of the day of the funeral, she tried to tell him that she understood his pain—that she longed to be of some comfort, some use. He thanked her almost sternly. It was as if he did not want her to speak in that way. "It is much to have in one's memory, a life like that," he said, and that was all.

It was some weeks after that he came to the Farm and then could stay only one night. He told her that his mother had left a letter for him, marked to be opened after her death. Sometime he wanted to read it to her, to talk with her about it. Eileen saw that he had difficulty in speaking and asked no questions, wishing him to choose his own time.

He went back to town by the early train and after he had gone, she was given a note. "Dear Eileen," it read, "I wish that my visit could have given you some comfort. I am afraid that I am too troubled to be companionable. I wish that I could help you. You are too much alone. Why not ask Mrs. Ainsboro for a visit with the children? They would play about out of doors and you would enjoy her company. I will come up again shortly, John."

In the midst of his own grief he was trying to plan for her! The tears came as she read. Why, she wondered, had the few hours they had spent together been so full of constraint, of unreality? She wished that he would come oftener. The next time that he came she would try to express how deeply she appreciated his care and thought for her.

She had already asked Clara to stay with her in the

DRIFT

spring, but that much occupied person had laughed her regrets. "Can you imagine Tommy with no maternal hand over him?" she asked. Eileen had suggested the boys might come too, but it appeared that school was not to be interfered with. She telegraphed now: "It must be vacation, so please, please come and make me a visit for as long as you will stay. I want you terribly. Of course I mean all of you. Don't say no. I am very lonely."

Clara's answer came promptly. "Do you know what you are doing? There's Tommy and Philip and Toddles and Katie and me and Frank on Sundays—that makes a hundred. However, we are coming. Children wildly excited."

Eileen was excited, too. She took a trip to town and spent two days equipping the guest rooms with small-sized furniture. The coachman was to look out for a pony and wagon, and, if possible, secure a donkey.

The last statement of Clara's telegram proved true. A hundred small boys tumbled out of the motor, made deep and hasty obeisances and rushed off—the youngest, Toddles, squealing, "Wait for me! Wait for me!"

CHAPTER XXXV

EILEEN made pronouncement that no restrictions were to be imposed; the place, with all that was therein, belonged to the boys. Clara was aghast. "But what will happen when we get home?" she said. "I wired that you didn't know what you were doing and you certainly don't!"

Toddles looked bewildered but pleased; Tommy had to be assured about such a riotous prospect. "Do you mean we can play anything, anywhere?" he asked, "and never have to tidy up! I never was in any place like that before. Say, Phil!" Tommy's voice was piercing; "come on downstairs quick! She says we never need to tidy up. Come on and play train!"

Shortly a train made of chairs and cushions and overturned sofas obstructed the hall and wound its way out onto the piazza. "We never had such a large one," observed the Chief Engineer. "Can it really stay there all night and tomorrow?" He gave his nose a prodigious wipe with his sleeve as he spoke, bringing the maternal, "Oh Tommy!"

"Well, engineers always do that! I seen 'em," said Tommy.

"Saw them, not 'seen 'em,'" came the maternal voice.

By tomorrow the three were down at the farm-house

DRIFT

while the butler picked his way around the train with a worried air. Just before lunch he respectfully asked permission to replace the furniture.

"Ask Master Tommy," said Eileen.

Master Tommy was at the moment engaged in making a pen for the lamb in a convenient angle formed by the porch and the front step. He accorded permission readily. "I don't want the old train," he said.

The lamb was soon installed in its new quarters, and bleated mournfully at short intervals. Tommy was convinced that he could teach the lamb tricks if it would only "get acquainted." To that end, he pursued his occupations on the front steps, cultivating the lamb's confidence by occasional endearing words, and leaving a trail of disorder behind him. He had an ambition to teach the lamb to shake hands before Sunday. He was sure it would please his father to be so greeted.

As on the evening after the bazaar, Eileen watched the children with curious eyes—wondering, questioning. She was witness to many attractive scenes, and several turbulent ones. She watched Clara's management of her vigorous brood with admiration for her ability to respond to their varied and unusual demands. As Saturday drew near, she saw the children's excited preparations for their father's coming.

It was clear that Tommy had very special plans on hand in which Ainsboro was concerned. They had to do with a pile of planks, lying in the stable yard, about which he had made inquiries of Eileen, finally asking if they might be given to him.

"Why, yes," she said, "what for?"

"Oh, I dunno," said Tommy, "might be handy some time, you never can tell." The next day he added to the pile of planks a barrel, a discarded saw-horse, and a collection of nails and was heard to enquire of Philip if he had ever seen a pirates' raft.

DRIFT

"No," said Philip, "where is one?"

"Well," said Tommy, "there might be one somewhere, of course."

That night Clara asked Eileen if the lake was very deep.

"It certainly is," said Eileen. "Why?"

"Well, Tommy is meditating something," said Clara. "He's read three pirate stories and asked for his 'Robinson Crusoe.' He can swim of course, but I think I must make some regulations about the lake."

"I gave him some planks," Eileen remarked.

"Oh, did you?" Light broke over Clara's face, "then that's it. I sometimes wish he didn't put his literature so instantly into practice. I read him 'Excelsior' a little while ago, and he was lost all the next day. I was in town, but poor Katie was nearly distracted. When she found him, he had the cover of a pasteboard dress-box tied onto his chest, and two more pieces on his legs, that he said were 'greaves.' He had a long stick in his hand, and was sitting on the top of a hill, gazing at the sky. He was dreadfully annoyed at being fetched home, and said he supposed there was no use trying to explain. 'I was that scared,' said Katie, 'I couldn't think straight, but I had to laugh when I seen him sittin' there, in his pasteboard box, a gazin' upwards.' Well, I'm glad Frank's coming tomorrow. I'll ask him about the lake."

On Saturday Tommy enquired of Clara exactly when his father was due.

"Not till three or after," said Clara. "Why?"

"And what's going to happen then?" Tommy persisted.

"Why, I don't know," said Clara. She was reading at the moment and generally could reply to ordinary requests without stopping, but now she put down her book.

DRIFT

“Perhaps he’d like to go for a walk, she said, “would you like to come?”

Tommy considered. “‘Things must be shared to be fair,’” he remarked after a pause, “‘and we mustn’t any of us be selfish.’”

“I recognise the observation,” said Clara, “go on.”

“Well, you know, you’ve got Father all the time after we go to bed,” said Tommy.

“Oh!” Clara gave him a hug. “You funny duck! Why didn’t you say right out you wanted Father yourself? I’ve got heaps to do this afternoon; you children can take possession.”

Tommy still looked grave. “Thank you,” he said, and went and sat down alone in the garden. His plans required thought.

Shortly before three o’clock he sought young Philip, and haled him from an apple-tree. “Say, Phil,” he called, “how’d you like my new horse, the one that’s got its ear broken just a teeny bit, and the wagon?”

“Do you mean to play with?” said Philip, peering out.

“No!” said Tommy, “for keeps.”

“Oh Jimmy!” said Philip, scrambling downwards. “Where is it?” He landed at the foot of the tree in a heap with expectant eyes.

“Under my bed,” said Tommy, “with a towel ’round it. And there’s a lovely smooth place to run it on down by the stable,” he yelled, as Philip hopped away, somewhat crookedly owing to pulling up his stocking as he went.

Toddles was found idly gambolling with the lamb near the front door, a very dangerous situation. He would certainly descend with whoops on a playfellow.

“Say, Toddles!” Tommy’s tone was that of one confiding secret things. “Down in the meadow lot there’s heaps of black-eyed Susans. I seen ’em, I mean I saw

DRIFT

them. Katie knows where they are, don't you, Katie? It's no end of fun pulling the heads off 'em, I mean *them*. They make a kind of squeak." Tommy gave a portentous wink at Katie, who grinned, as Toddles, poor innocent, took the bait whole.

"Come on!" Toddles said, seizing his Katie, "where's Susans? Come on quick!"

Tommy watched them depart, on his face a smile of things accomplished. Then he turned to his mother and Eileen upon the porch. "They do bother around, you know, when there's anything important to be done. May I go down the road and meet Father? It's two minutes of three."

"Yes, but come here a minute first," said Clara, "your knee looks so queer! Is that a bruise?"

"Oh dear!" said Tommy, balancing on one leg to examine himself. "I inked it once, but the hole must 'a got bigger since! Do I have to 'go and change,' dear, dear Mother? Oh, *dear* Mother, don't make me go and change! Father'd just say 'never mind,' and laugh."

"All right, trot along, trot along, ragged one," said Clara. "It's all very well for Father to say 'Never mind' and laugh! Somebody's got to sew it up. Shoo!"

"You are wonderful with them," Eileen said. "How did you learn how?"

"Oh well, they're a kind of education in themselves," Clara answered. "One has to step lively to keep up."

One night Clara sat down to dinner with a funny expression. "Tommy says he won't say his prayers again until God speaks up and answers and Philip says he won't either. Toddles was in his bath or he'd have chimed in. He hates to be left out. Tommy says when you talk to grown-ups you almost always get an answer unless they're reading the newspaper and then you can if you wait. He likes it better that way. What's

DRIFT

to be done about it, do you suppose? Oh, Eileen, this soup is delicious!"

"You don't seem greatly concerned," Eileen remarked. "What did you tell him?"

"Told him he needn't," said Clara. "If you set dinners like this before me, I'll certainly put on pounds."

"Isn't he ever going to say any more prayers then?"

"Well, to tell you the truth," Clara went on, between mouthfuls, "they never said any until last summer, when Mother Ainsboro stayed with us. She told me she had worried about it a good deal and might she teach them. They were much interested for a while, Katie encouraged them with a song at the end, but lately they've been getting restive. Do you suppose I could have another plate of soup? It's a symphony of colour as well as flavour. Whoever would have thought of putting a slice of orange in cream tomato soup? Eileen, you're an artist!"

"I didn't put it in," Eileen laughed.

"No, but you secured the cook who did, and you're sitting there looking perfectly exquisite in a yellow frock at the other end of the table. It's all one."

"But what are you going to do about Tommy's prayers?" Eileen asked. "You oughtn't to be thinking about soup."

"Nothing at all," said Clara, "if he won't say them, he won't. I know my limitations. I'll let his father have a try if he wants to. Mother Ainsboro is such a dear! I'd like to please her. It's difficult though!"

"Don't you believe in the efficacy of prayer?" Eileen asked, thinking of Aunt Emma.

"My goodness, child!" Clara exclaimed, "don't be so solemn! I don't disbelieve in it. I don't know, but those jolly little pagans, interrupted in their romp, can't pray, it's ridiculous, making them! I do hate to hear them mumbling bad jingly rhymes to a far-off Deity

DRIFT

about making them 'good'! That's my job. I hope to teach them to be good along with their table manners and several other things, then let them forget the lesson once it's acquired. It does seem a long road though! I wish children could come into the world a little more finished, not leave so much to mother!"

"I don't know much about it," observed Eileen gravely, "but you sound very heterodox. I'm not surprised mother-in-law's perturbed. Is it permissible to converse with Tommy about his religious views? I should like to know what he thinks. You and Wordsworth disagree, don't you?"

"Go ahead," said Clara, "only don't tell him things, make statements, I mean. It's so pathetic, the way they believe everything they're told, and don't for mercy's sakes say anything about the prayers. I'm afraid it was a breach of confidence my telling you, only I thought you'd be amused. They are so adorable! You never can tell what they are going to do or say next."

"So I have observed," said Eileen, and Clara glanced at her with a queer expression, and spoke of other things.

If Clara had any deep purpose in her easy talk of the children, such as Eileen thought had animated her on the afternoon of the bazaar, she had attained her object. Eileen was fully conscious of her loneliness, nor did she now resent the idea that Clara wanted her to realise it before it was too late. Clara's affection was very real and deep.

Day by day Eileen watched the boys. They were so incessantly and ingeniously active that she was amused in spite of herself. Sometimes they were noisy and fatiguing, but at least, things happened! It was vastly better than loneliness and silence.

DRIFT

When Ainsboro came, she saw the light in Clara's eyes as the two strolled off together, forgetting her in the absorbing things they had to say to each other. Thorne's words came back to her, "But now, I want more, oh, so much more!" She too "wanted so much more," but how, how was it to be obtained? She thought over the years since she and John had married. She had not realised during those first years what marriage might be, might mean. She wondered if John had, if they either of them knew what they were missing.

She had never known how lonely she was until the winter Thorne had come, Thorne with his big ways, breathing the spirit of the West,—insistent, demanding. How wonderful those weeks had been! And he had gone and left her! Of Medway she tried not to think. A picture rose before her,—of herself, sitting with her hands twisted, trembling and ashamed, and Medway opening the studio door. "Well, you are quite free to go," he had said. How had he contrived to make her feel like that when it was he who should have been ashamed? She wondered how much Crockett had divined. Never, never must anyone know of that scene in the studio. After waiting for some weeks, and hearing nothing from him, she had written a little note. "Dear Mr. Medway," it ran, "I am sorry you misunderstood. I see that I was very wrong in leaving Sophie at home, and so making you think that I meant what could not be. I hope both of us can forget and be friends." Reading it in his studio, Medway threw back his head and laughed. "A letter from Cleopatra!" he said, and tore it across.

It was a night or two before the end of the children's visit that Eileen was turning over a number of new magazines on the library table, looking for something to read aloud to Clara, busy with her sewing. She tried

DRIFT

a story, but gave it up, then various sentimental verses.

“Seem to have heard thousands just like that,” observed Clara, threading a needle. “Isn’t there something else?”

Eileen threw the magazine aside, and picked up another. “One generally finds something in this,” she remarked; “they say the publication is in hard straits.”

She turned the leaves and started to read aloud a short poem, then stopped, too startled to pronounce the words. She read one or two other things, then saying that she was tired, bade Clara good-night, and went upstairs, taking the magazine with her. She wanted to read the poem over again to try and find out what it meant.

It was entitled, “Come!”

Come to me, my lover, come!
I will give as none other:
We have swayed
Mouth to mouth, knee to knee,
And the surge of desire
Gripped my muscles.

Your hands, swift and sweet,
Passed over my shoulders, my body,
Caressing, possessing:
My flesh leapt to your touch
With the fierceness you called.

Come! Come!
I will give as none other!
I will bear your child, your son:
There shall be sunlight in his eyes
And in his hair,
And over his spirit, great gladness.

I shall sing
When I feel in my body

DRIFT

Your child struggling;
I shall shout aloud
For the wonder and the beauty
And the glory
Of giving birth!

All night the words rang in her brain. "The wonder and the beauty and the glory of giving birth." There was a woman somewhere, many women perhaps, who had known joy like that! Clara, with her gay talk, busy at her mending downstairs, did she know what that poem meant? Oh, what had she missed? What had she missed? And now she would grow old and die and never know what it meant!

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE house was unbearable when Clara and the children had gone. Eileen wandered about trying to find occupation, trying not to think. Several times she drove over to a near-by town to watch progress on Aunt Emma's "Home," now nearing completion. The trustees had done their work well,—the place had no air of an institution. The land that Aunt Emma had indicated as suitable was wooded and hilly with sloping meadows; the cottages had been built so as to be out of sight of each other, each with a yard and garden. As Eileen walked about she thought of the provisions of the will,—“a Home where aged married couples could remain together.” She wondered if Aunt Emma had been lonely, if she had envied others who had life companions.

In the evenings she would sit in front of the fire in the library and think over the years that had passed since her marriage. Of the years ahead, she dared not think. She was not quite thirty, yet she felt that life was over—over before it was lived! As her thoughts travelled over the past, she remembered, on the night before she went to Helena House, talking with Aunt Emma about her mother. A phrase Aunt Emma had used came back to her. “Your father asked her to be

DRIFT

more than she was, and she just couldn't be." Her mother had been very unhappy and much alone; now she was repeating her mother's story—she was alone. Were all marriages like that? Had John wanted more from her than she had given him? If so, he had never told her, never asked. She recalled how she had tried to learn about the silk business, but he never seemed to want her to. Thoughts came to her of John's silent grief at the time of the child's death. She too had grieved, but it was not possible to go through all that again; he could not have expected it, and yet—how would it be now—if there had been children? She wondered where John was, she wanted him, wanted his companionship; they had been happy once, here at the Farm, perhaps they could be again.

Her thoughts went back to the first few days after their marriage. She had been afraid, but he had asked nothing. He had been gentle. The night that she had left him reading downstairs and he had come to her pleading and taken her in his arms—what did he want then? The poem came to her—"Come, my lover, come! I will give as none other." Was that what he wanted from her? "There shall be sunlight in his eyes and on his hair." Oh, if she could only forget those words!

After a week of wondering and brooding, she wrote to John, "Won't you come to me? I am so lonely."

John read the note the next morning and thought about it all day. It was many years since she had cried out to him. He telegraphed to her that he would come, and by evening was with her, greatly wondering, greatly troubled.

Eileen had spent the day restlessly planning how to say what she wanted to say. She had no idea what response John would make. He was invariably thoughtful and kind, but was there more? She was afraid. Oh why, why, why had she not seen, not understood?

DRIFT

When his telegram reached her she was glad. It was two hours before he could arrive; she must compose herself, must decide what to say. It would be difficult, but together they would find a way. John had always been so good, so steadfast! Happiness was possible, it must be possible, if they both determined that it should be.

She heard the motor turn into the driveway and ran downstairs. "John," she cried, "John! I am so glad you've come! I wanted you."

Something in his face stopped her. With a word of greeting, he went upstairs to dress, and the ancient convention of dining kept them on commonplace topics. They were served elaborately, they ate and drank as usual, observing every propriety; they talked lightly on various subjects—yet each knew that when the coffee tray was carried out, their naked souls would meet—meet at last. Truth—ruthless, unescapable, and dire, was waiting.

Eileen was the first to speak. All the confidence, all the hope she had been cherishing during the hours before he came had vanished with his greeting—yet deep down she still thought that she could reach him, that memory would be strong enough to recreate the hour that was passed. All the things she had planned to say fell from her; she went over to him and stood beside him. "John," she said, "we once loved each other. I see so many things now that I never realised before. I have been wrong—terribly wrong and mistaken. I want to try again. I want to be with you. Tell me if it is possible. Oh I pray, I pray it may be—if it isn't, I don't know what is going to become of me."

John did not speak for a moment and when he began, she interrupted, "Don't say there isn't any hope, don't! I know there is, for now I see where I have failed. I did not know at the time, I can't tell why it was or what

DRIFT

made it all go wrong, but I know, I know it can be different. Oh John, don't look at me like that—tell me there's hope, tell me you love me—that we can find happiness again! Tell me, you see what I mean. Oh John, I'm pleading to you—pleading for your love—don't you see? Haven't you anything to say to me? I want you, I want you!"

At her last words a terrible sound broke from him. It was as if in that one cry all the pain of the years that were past had found expression.

He rose quickly and walked away from her. "There is something that you must be told," he said, "that I must explain,—there is some one to whom I am pledged. She has been—everything to me. There are two children, my children." Then at Eileen's look—"Do you understand? We have lived together as man and wife for a long time. There is a boy, Jack—he is nearly three, and the baby—Nora. I love them—they are mine. I must do what is best for them now, and for their mother. It is all I can do, isn't it?"

Eileen took a little while before she said slowly, "Yes, of course, you must do what is best for them, and for their mother; yes—of course—yes, that is the only thing to do, of course. She is your mistress, isn't she?"

"I never think of her so," John answered. "She is very good to me and to the children. She is a good woman—and a charming one besides. My mother knew her. Do you remember I told you that I had a letter which she had left for me? I had it with me when I was here the last time, but I could not bring myself to read it—to tell you what I knew you must know soon; you seemed so sad that I put it off."

Eileen gazed at him. She was trying to take it in—that his mother knew. John went on:

"The letter was only what she had said when she was living. She was greatly troubled about our situa-

DRIFT

tion—more so than we were, I think. We were happy, and that seemed enough. She said it was cruel—to Margaret.”

He took a letter from his pocket with the inscription “For my son, John. To be opened after my death.” He unfolded it slowly, and his eye travelled down the page. “‘Present pain must be inflicted,’” he read; “‘it is a lesser wrong than injustice to those who are helpless.’” His face worked. After a moment he folded the letter, holding it out to her. Eileen made a little gesture of denial. She could guess what it said.

An image of Mrs. Templeton came before her—tall, stately, formidable, and she knew! John had made his mother aware of this hidden thing, he had brought his mistress to her—it was incredible. Why? Why? The poem flashed to her mind. Had that woman—had John’s mistress—“given as none other”? Was that why?

She heard John speaking as from far off. “You will wonder, perhaps, how it came about that I could act so against every tradition, every law, as we know law. I have sometimes thought there was a strange irony in my working so hard to secure law—in other directions. I believe there must come a time to every one when there is need to decide for oneself. One weighs—and then one does what one must—to live. The only question is, how? Well, I chose this way. When I was a boy I made a great renunciation. I gave up what I most desired. Later in life I came to believe that that renunciation had been of no avail, had been wrong. When I met Margaret I resolved that not again would I give up what was dearer to me than life itself. I have not regretted this decision. I think that is the only explanation I can offer. My mother understood—a little—I think. I don’t know how much. I always kept from her what my giving up music had cost me, that time as a boy, but I think she must have realised. Once

DRIFT

she said to me, 'I have come to believe that it is a very dangerous thing to urge another person to any course of action. I did not always think this.' It was this consciousness, perhaps, that made her so good to—Margaret."

It was increasingly difficult for him to speak. He looked at her now as if praying that she understand, that she spare him the need of further words.

"I think I see," Eileen said. "You wanted happiness—and you found it. We all want happiness—some of us don't find it, don't see the way, I mean, even when it is there—before us."

There was silence. To each the matter seemed simplified, almost stark. They had missed their way together. John had found what he desired; Eileen had not. Now what was to come?

Finally Eileen said, "I suppose you want a divorce from me. Perhaps you have wanted it for a long time, as your mother said. Why didn't you tell me?" Each word fell separately; her voice had the sound of broken strings.

"I have no grounds for a divorce from you," John answered. "It must be the other way. There are methods I understand of doing these things decently. I do not need to tell you that you shall be spared as much as possible."

"Yes, yes. Please don't say things like that, I can't bear it!" but John went on:

"I have no defence to make. I am 'guilty,' but as I told you just now, I do not wish anything that is done, undone. The human animal takes what it needs to live. I suppose it would sound to you incredibly banal for me to tell you that I still want to care for you as much as I can, as much as you will let me. You need some one you know, that's why—well, I've kept track of things—

DRIFT

you see—Oh, please believe me, Eileen, I am speaking the truth.”

Eileen looked up at this but he could not read her face. “Perhaps you will understand—sometime,” he said. “There are deep memories between us. Nothing can change that.”

“Don’t let us talk of the past, please! It will be necessary to decide what is to be done. What are your plans?”

“I have no right, of course, to ask comprehension—from you, yet I hoped that I could make you see—how it had come about—why I want to keep on caring for you.”

“Yes,” said Eileen, “I understand perfectly. You loved her and you wanted her. That is very simple. I wish that I had known, that is all. Please go on now. What is to be done?”

“Nothing for a little,” he said. “I must talk to Margaret.” John’s voice had taken the same dull tone as her own. “She is a force to be reckoned with. For us it does not matter—no ceremony could make our relationship more perfect—but in the world we live in, the children—what is to become of them? Are they to be punished? What can I do for them *now*?” He covered his face. In all the years, Eileen had never seen him give way; it was terrible to her.

“You said you wished that you had known,” John went on, “I don’t know why I didn’t tell you. I think I was afraid. I thought you needed me. This other was far outside. Margaret had nothing that was yours—nothing that you wanted from me, I mean, and she has been content to live alone seeing no one, and she has been happy. Yes—she has been happy.”

“But we must plan what to do, how to act.” It was the one thing Eileen seemed able to keep clear.

They tried to make plans but found it impossi-

DRIFT

ble. John did not know what to tell her; her thoughts were travelling over the past years, searching, seeking, for explanation—confirmation.

After a silence Eileen said, "I should like to see her, may I?"

"No!" Again there was silence. John considered. His first impulse had been furious dissent, but he was anxious to agree to whatever Eileen wished or asked. The request seemed to him incomprehensible, but after a moment he went to the desk and wrote on a bit of paper a name and address.

"It's an apartment," he said. "You'll think it's queer, but I love it. Margaret found it and arranged it as she liked. It is sunshiny and has a view of the river. I believe those were her reasons for its selection. You won't be able to imagine being happy in surroundings like that, but—well—Margaret wishes it as it is—that is all that is necessary, isn't it? It's been home to me." He looked quickly at her. "I didn't mean to say that. Forgive me!"

"Why not say it since it's true?" Eileen set her lips. The words had roused her to angry bitterness. She took the little piece of paper and stared at the address. "So! That is where your mistress lives?"

"Please do not use that word." John's tone was as sharp as her own. "However, I admit it, and I honour her for it—for what she gives. She is my mistress, but are you my wife?"

For a moment Eileen found no answer. "It is not my fault." She breathed the words and knew from his silence how he took the statement.

"Then I may go to see her?" She watched John's back as he turned from her to walk about the room.

"Why do you wish to see her?"

Eileen caught her breath. "Why? Why?" she

DRIFT

echoed. "Because she belongs to you—because she has everything that I have not."

John turned at this and stared at her as if he had never seen her before. "Very well," he said, "she has 'everything that you have not.' You may go and see her on one condition,—that you do not let her know that you know me or that you have any connection with my life."

"I had no intention of doing so. Did you suppose I wanted to make a scene—enact the rôle of jealous wife and reproach her? I assure you that was not in my mind. You can trust me to be courteous." Suddenly she remembered Victoria's sneer—"manners are your long suit." Would the woman never let her alone?

"Oh Eileen!" John cried, "Eileen! Don't let us descend to this! Do you think I am proud of my position in this affair? I am profoundly ashamed. Margaret has given me everything—everything a woman can give a man and she has done it grandly, proudly,—and I hide her away—her and my children! Can you imagine the torment, the intolerable torment of that?"

Eileen bent her head. Again there was a silence. Finally she said, "I shall go tomorrow."

"But upon what pretext?" John asked. "You cannot go to the door and say you want to talk to her."

"I shall find a way," Eileen told him and left him alone.

In a little while she heard him go away.

CHAPTER XXXVII

FINDING a way was difficult. Eileen thought of various methods, only to reject them. Finally she decided to go to the apartment and trust to the moment for giving some excuse for her presence.

The next day she went to the city. She dressed herself as simply as possible. What a queer proceeding! A man's wife going to see his mistress under a promise not to reveal her identity. "It is preposterous!" she said to herself, "horrible and melodramatic and unbearable." Yet something within her kept planning what she would say, how comport herself.

Actually before the door, her courage almost failed her. Why should she do this thing? She rang and waited. After a second Margaret came, Margaret,—who had "everything that she had not."

What Eileen saw was a tall woman, about thirty she thought. Her calico dress was open over a white, round throat. Her face was tender and serene. There was a moment's pause, then she said quietly, "What is it you wish? I am Mrs. Rankin."

"Mrs. Rankin," Eileen answered, "I have come on a matter of business. May I come in and see you?"

Margaret motioned to the sitting-room and took off her apron. "I'll come back in a minute," she said, "if you'll please excuse me."

Eileen entered the room, glad of a moment's space to



MARGARET



DRIFT

think. What she saw as she glanced around made her twist her lips into a wry smile. So this was where John came! He had said it was "home"!

The room was cheerful, certainly. The walls were papered in yellow, with a frieze of yellow roses around the top. The furniture was covered with figured chintz. In the window embrasures were flower boxes, gay with many-coloured blossoms. There were books about and photographs and magazines. Files of the "International Studio" and the "Geographic Magazine" were piled up on the table, where were also large picture books and a silk work bag. In the corner of the room was a violin and a pile of music near the rack. On the mantel was a tobacco pouch of faded embroidery. She had not seen it for years. Near it lay a little pile of kodak pictures. She picked one up—John! her husband! This was John—she couldn't take it in. Perched on his shoulder, its bare feet against his chest, was a laughing child. His hands were stretched out, holding the hands of the child. His face was turned and looking up, with an expression that she had forgotten John's face could wear,—so gay it was, so boyishly free of everything but the moment's joy. She remembered that radiant look on the evening they had first met and again during those few weeks at the Farm; but never since,—never for her. She laid the picture down; there were a number of others; she could not look at them.

As she replaced the photograph, Margaret entered, in a fresh dress of white, her ruddy hair plaited and bound about her head. "Yes?" she said and waited.

Eileen turned at her word, and through the open door by which Margaret had entered caught a glimpse into the room beyond. What she saw was simple enough,—two single beds of brass with fresh, white counterpanes, on either side a child's crib, one, the smaller, with high sides. It was unbelievable. She could not

DRIFT

bear it! All at once her self-possession forsook her. She had not thought the sight of the rooms where he—her husband—lived, where his real life was spent, would affect her as they did. The woman, Margaret, standing waiting, seemed only a part of the strange dream, not even the most important part. Those two little beds, one on each side, and she had called her “your mistress.” Was this the way a man lived with his mistress?

The silence was too prolonged. “Will you tell me what it is you want?” Margaret said, with a note of wonder.

Eileen pointed to the bedroom. “You have two children,” she said. “How old are they?” She almost stammered.

“Yes,” Margaret answered, “John, the boy, is two and a half, the baby is six months. Her name is Nora. Would you please tell me why you want to know?” There was a shade of defiance in the tone. Eileen took it to mean that was as far as questioning about the children might go.

“I have no children,” she said; “I had one once, but it did not live.”

“Yes?” said Margaret, and waited.

Eileen had a sensation of unreality that springs from too intense a realisation of actuality. She knew she must explain her presence.

“You will think I am very odd,” she went on, “but you see I am not a very happy person and I am very lonely. I should like to do something if I could for someone who is happier than I, someone with little children.”

“Isn't it usually the other way?”

“I suppose so,” Eileen admitted, “but I told you I was a queer person. I have a good deal more,—more money—than I know what to do with. If my child had

DRIFT

lived, of course there would have been an object, but just now there isn't any, and I thought perhaps if I could find someone who would let me—to whom I could—” Margaret's face warned her to stop.

“I'm not making myself clear,” she said.

“Oh yes,” said Margaret, “I understand quite well, and it's a very kind thought, but I don't need anything, if you're thinking of me. I don't know why you came to see me yet, you haven't told me.”

“Please let that go without explanation,” Eileen interrupted. “You, who are happy, couldn't you take me on faith, believe in what I say, I mean? You must see, I think, that I don't mean any harm to you or to your children. I'm just trying in my stupid, blundering way to help someone, someone who is happy, but it seems more difficult than I thought. Of course there are lots of ways to give money,—hospitals, charity societies and things like that, but I am superstitious. I thought if I could give some of what I don't need, what I find burdensome, to someone who would like and enjoy it,—I thought perhaps if I could find a woman whom a man loved very dearly who would like to have the means to buy pretty dresses to please him—why then—it would make me happier, to think about them.”

She was quite as much surprised by her own words as Margaret, who sat regarding her gravely.

Margaret's face wore an odd expression. “It's a queer thought,” she said, and rose to go to the other side of the room. Eileen thought she was going away. “I don't think my husband would like me any better in different dresses,” she said and swung around. “If I did, I'd buy them.”

Eileen tried to detect any sign of hesitation before the word. There was none, nor any self-consciousness. Evidently it was so she thought of John.

DRIFT

Margaret had remained standing and Eileen understood she thought that everything necessary had been said. She felt curiously helpless before this calm woman with her smiling air.

“But the children?” Her invented desire was becoming a real one; to help John’s children, unknown to him; what a strange thing that would be to do!

For the first time Margaret’s manner showed uneasiness. “My children don’t want for anything either,” she said. “Their father would not want me to accept anything from a stranger. Please don’t keep asking me. I am sure there are a great many women who would be glad of an offer like this. Why did you come to me?” She wished, evidently, to end the conversation.

Eileen rose. “I have come on a futile errand,” she said. “I must try somewhere else and there are so few happy people! It would be quite useless for me to give to anyone who was not; quite useless as far as helping me, I mean. I fear you must think me very strange. Perhaps I am. May I say one more queer thing to you before I go?” She held out her hand and Margaret put hers into it. “Be glad of this little apartment, be glad of this bright wall paper and be glad of those—those two little cribs in there and that you’re busy all the time; that’s everything, isn’t it?”

All of a sudden Margaret’s aloofness gave way. Her voice trembled as she said, “What made you think I was the happy person you were looking for? Tell me.”

Eileen was unprepared for the sudden, intense tone. “Aren’t you?” she asked, but Margaret was on guard again.

“Perhaps I am,” she said, “but how did you hear about me; what made you come here, I mean?”

“It’s too much like a child’s story book,” Eileen replied, “for you to believe me if I told you. I rang at the other five doors in the building before I came to

DRIFT

yours; none of the other women who opened to me looked happy, so I just said I had made a mistake. Then I found you and came in and you are sending me away just as lonely and helpless as I came." She heard herself saying the words with an amused dismay. So this was where her determination to see Margaret had led her,—to these ridiculous lies. Again she was swept by a dream-like sensation of unreality.

Margaret's expression had become a little anxious; she looked attracted and puzzled and was evidently curious. "I never heard of anybody who had such ideas," she said, "that wasn't sick."

"Well, and if I am sick?" Eileen broke in, "although not in the way you mean. I am quite sane, only very, very unhappy and in my search for comfort I sometimes hit upon strange plans and pursue them. Just now I have the wish to share what I have with a—friend. I think that is what I really want, at the bottom—a happy, gay friend whom I could talk to sometimes about happy things and so forget myself." Her tone was tremulous, soft, winning. Margaret frowned and Eileen pushed her advantage.

"I haven't any very definite idea," she said. "What I said about new dresses just came into my head. You seem to be everything that I am not,—busy, contented, serene; you have a home and children. I have a big house, a big, beautiful house with beautiful things in it, but it is terribly empty and silent and so I reach out—to you. Won't you grant my wish?"

"It is such an extraordinary one!" Margaret said, "I should certainly have to think about it." There came a pause and then Margaret's face lighted. "Why don't you adopt a youngster from the orphan asylum?" she said, "if your house is so empty? You might take two, to keep each other company. They're jolly little grigs, some of them; I've been there. I thought of doing

DRIFT

that once,—before—these came.” She beckoned vaguely towards the bedroom.

A peculiar vision of herself rose in Eileen’s mind. She remembered that afternoon at Clara’s and the three red gnomes,—it was the day before Thorne went away. There was the suggestion of a pause. “I’m afraid that is not practicable,” she said.

Margaret felt herself melting before that soft, pleading voice. She was amused and a little vexed. Why should she be taking thought for the occupation of this gracefully eccentric person who wandered about in pursuit of “happy people”? It was absurd; nevertheless she tried to think of some other plan to make the lady happy.

“Why don’t you travel?” she asked. “Sometimes I feel as if I simply couldn’t wait to see the things I want to see,—when I read about them, I mean. I’ve always wanted to visit the English cathedrals the most of all. Perhaps you do travel? Doesn’t that make you happy—to be able to, I mean?”

“Sometimes.”

Margaret was silent; she appeared to think there was no particular use of offering suggestions to a person who could travel and didn’t.

After a moment Eileen asked, “Won’t you let me see your children? I should like to. They sleep in those two little beds in there, don’t they?”

“They are out in the park,” Margaret said in a tone that showed she was still thinking. “About what you wanted,—I’ll tell you what I’ll do. It’s a funny idea you have, but you have told me and I imagine I understand partially. Sometimes I am happy,—I mean most of the time I am happy. If you’ll come again in a little while, say a week, I’ll know better what to say. Will that be all right?”

Eileen saw the scene,—John here in this gaudy room,

DRIFT

Margaret with him, close to him, caressed by him, telling him of today's interview, repeating her—Eileen's—fantastic explanations, asking counsel what to do about the melancholy person who had come to see her. The idea was intolerable.

“That will be all right,” she said, “and I thank you; and now I am going to ask you one thing,—that you will speak to no one of my visit, of what we have said.”

“I can't promise that,” Margaret interposed. “It would be rather like deceiving, not to, wouldn't it?”

So this was one of the reasons John cared for her, this frankness and simplicity. A sense of the completeness of his possession of this woman came to her. She gave him, then, every thought, and what did he withhold from her? Everything that had to do with fact, with outward circumstance. Probably he gave her all that had to do with spirit. She had always thought John inexpressive; was this woman content to accept only affection and caresses? It was impossible. The relationship had endured for some years. What was in her that held him besides the children? There must be something—understanding, community of thought; he had said their relationship “could not be more perfect.” What was it?

“Of course I cannot ask you to promise anything,” Eileen said, “but I am sure you will remember that my wish was you should not do so,—that, I think, will be a sufficient restraint. I will go now and I will come back in a week.”

Margaret protested. “No,” she said, “it would be useless, I assure you, for you to come back. When I spoke as I did just now I suppose I was—a bit sorry,—you seemed so troubled, but I really cannot do what you want.”

“Very well,” Eileen said. “Thank you for letting me

DRIFT

come in and for being so courteous. I shall always remember I have talked with one happy person."

She opened the door and turned to say good-bye. "Forget all that I have said." Eileen's voice was low and her words fell slowly. "Just be glad of being busy and of the bright wall paper and the two little beds." She turned and shut the door.

She did not see that Margaret's eyes were filled with tears.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

EILEEN had told John that she would stop over night at the house in town. On the way there she went over what had been said,—was there ever a more extraordinary interview?

As she entered her own house she looked about the stately hall, then went into the drawing-room; strange contrast to the rooms she had just left! She remembered Thorne's exclamation, "My word! does one sit down and talk here?" She wondered about Thorne. He went away believing she did not love him. Perhaps she did not, she could not tell. What had he been doing all these years? And when she sent Thorne away John was already—oh, it was incredible—unbearable!

And John? She tried to think out what had been his thoughts, his desires during the time before he met Margaret. How little she had understood! Since her visit to the apartment which John had said was his home, part of her resentment had faded.

She wanted to do what was best now, not to fail again. Her thoughts went back to the time of Aunt Emma's death. John had told her why she had not been able to reach him then. How kind he had been to her at that time, with this big new thing occupying his thoughts! She could not remember a time in the ten years since their marriage when he had failed her. It seemed very

DRIFT

strange that so much could take place of which she was wholly ignorant. She had never guessed, never thought there might be important things in his life apart from her. It seemed incredible that she could have been so unaware.

She was puzzled now what course to pursue, what was best to do. John would guide her; he would find the way and tell her what he wanted her to do. She had a wish to do something for the children. It had been born with her fanciful explanation of her presence; now it was real. She thought if she could make someone happier, perhaps she could find a way of living through the years ahead.

Finally John came and stood before her. He held his hat and walking stick in his hand. She looked up; they made no greetings.

"I have seen Margaret," she said, "and I think I understand. Tell me what you want me to do."

"Nothing; at least for the present. What is there to do? You are blameless,—it is I who am what the lawyers call the guilty party. I don't know yet what can be done. I can't ask you to take any steps. It may be necessary for one of us to go away for a time. I may ask you to do that—but—it all seems so crazy, the main facts are so simple, perhaps it would be better not to pretend, to proceed in the most direct way—I don't know—" He spoke uncertainly, holding himself to the bare statements. He longed to tell her that he knew what she felt, that he longed to help her, comfort her as he had so many times; but it seemed impossible to express anything but these ghastly plans. As she drooped before him with trembling lips, her whole attitude expressing her helplessness, the old tenderness arose in him, the desire to shield; but he knew that to make any move, to touch her or to say one word would seem to her merely grotesque.

DRIFT

She looked up at him. "I will wait for your directions. Please be sure that I want to do what I can,—what is best."

"Yes, I know."

There was a silence. The dusk was gathering outside. The great room was ghostly in its strange summer coverings—grey and black, all the colour gone. From the shadows around them rose, for them both, the troubled sense of all the tragic inadequacies and conflicts of the past, mingled, as in a web, with the lights of their happier days and the deeper luminousness of those fierce realities they had endured in the days when the child had been a hope or a memory. This could not be forgotten or escaped. It was there in the past; now it was over; their ways henceforward lay apart. The hour had over it a spectral light, from what had been and what was soon to be.

After a time, neither knew how long, John went from her, quietly, with no word. Only their eyes met as they made their farewell.

It was the next day and Eileen was alone at the Farm. She made no pretence of doing anything. She sat in the library, her hands in her lap, her eyes staring into the future. It must be lived—how?

A letter was brought to her from Helen. She opened it listlessly. At the top were the words "Read when you are alone." The hard silence that had been about her gave way and she sobbed uncontrollably and for a long time, until she was spent and weak. The letter fell upon the floor. It was perhaps an hour later when she saw it and picked it up to read.

"My Dear, I have written those words at the top because I am going to tax your friendship to the uttermost. Please bear with me through what will be per-

DRIFT

haps but a confused explanation, I want you to know how everything has come to be.

“First I want to tell you that I have begun to live again, more than that, I am happy; I, who thought life was over! I have fallen in love,—not with the wildness of the first dream,—that could never come again,—but very deeply and truly. It is hard to tell, dear, but the way is so clear to me I want you to see it too. I am going West soon, to be with the man I love. We shall have a home together, a real home, in the hills of California. Life is simpler and freer there than in the East. Father is to go with us, and Anastasia,—you haven’t forgotten Anastasia? Constance will be better for the change, she is strong and well now; but I must go back, so you will understand.

“I did not meet him until I had been out there a year. At first I didn’t want to see anyone, I was so tired! I was thankful just to sit in the sunshine and try not to think. Constance was better from the day we arrived. Anastasia took all the care of her and of Father, and me besides, so I could rest. California seemed to go to her head, I don’t know what I should have done without her, she was so cheery and dear. I was dreadfully afraid Father would be homesick, but he instantly betook himself to the Public Library. He was greatly disturbed about the books they had, or rather had not. He made so many demands they couldn’t meet, that they put him on the Board of Trustees, and after that he did all the work and was perfectly happy. It’s a wonderful library now, he made them burn up most of the books. We had a tiny bungalow with flowers,—it seemed like heaven. At first, when I used to cry all night, the beauty just mocked me, I hated it, but after a while the dreadful feeling passed and then I met him,—the man I love. That was six months ago. It did not take us very long to realise that we meant a great deal to each

DRIFT

other. Oh, Eileen, it was so wonderful to begin to live again, to see all the beauty, to be part of it, but it all seemed so hopeless! There was no possibility of a divorce. Father made inquiries,—the lawyers said there was no chance, especially now that Gus had been pronounced incurable. Isn't that strange? They said if I could prove a charge of cruelty before the trouble came on, 'when my husband was quite himself,' it might be obtained on that ground. I almost laughed. Poor Gus! always so tender and loving when he was 'himself'! What a hideous law! Perhaps you did not know that the doctors think he cannot get well? He has to have the morphine still, they were afraid to stop it. But even if he should, what difference could it make? Long ago the Gus I loved died,—killed, *murdered* by that horrible morphine. Oh Eileen, I wonder if anyone on earth can imagine what it is to watch the slow changing, the daily corruption in the person you love best on earth. Death must be merciful compared to it. I can speak of it now calmly; it has passed, but I am a different person, I feel infinitely sorry for him, but my love is dead. Even if he should recover mentally, we could not come together, we *could* not. His body is alive, but he is dead; it would be impossible,—terrible beyond words for us to be together. I never knew what that word 'alien' meant. He is 'alien,'—to everyone, most of all to me. I used to wonder if he cared for anyone on earth. He seemed as if turned to stone and yet there were times when he turned to me,—when all the old love came back and we were happy and had hope for the future. Then, suddenly, he would be aloof, apart,—putting me away. I could not reach him,—could not get him to talk to me. But that is all in the past. I want to tell you of the future.

“Have you ever been on the sea in a great storm? You go out on deck and everything is black, the wind

DRIFT

is loud and terrifying, the ship seems like a little bit of a tiny thing that the storm wants to destroy. Then, after you have somehow lived through a space of time, you don't know how, but you have, you open your eyes and the sea is quiet and blue and beautiful and there is the shore and green trees and hills and sweet smells of earth; and when you have reached the blessed haven of the land, you remember the storm and you are more thankful and more content because of it. Well, I have reached my haven. Thank God for it! It is such a blessed one. We wish we could be married,—the world makes it hard for people who are not. I would not be troubled were it not for Constance; but I have thought it all out. I have a right to do this, I shall be a better mother to her because of my happiness. I cannot live alone now, when I love him. It is going to be incredibly difficult to plan our lives in defiance of tradition and age-old custom, but we want each other and it is the only way. Do these seem to you wild words? Perhaps they are, but they are the result of long, long talks together and much thinking. We both believe this is the right thing to do.

“I have read this letter over. I haven't told you the name of the man who has brought me such great joy,—the name of the man I love. It is hard to tell you. It is Robert Thorne. I met him once, long ago, at your house, do you remember? I thought him very splendid looking and fine and big. I was looking in the window of a bookstore one day and I heard somebody say, ‘Why, it's Mrs. Lee!’ and there he was. I have wanted to write to you, but something has held me back. When I came home a month ago, we said good-bye without knowing if we were ever to see each other again. It was only two weeks ago I wrote to him that the lawyers here said there was no use making any attempt to get a divorce unless the law was changed. They said the fact

DRIFT

that I had 'forgiven' Gus and lived with him as his wife after I knew about the morphia would take away that 'ground for complaint.' Oh Eileen, did you ever hear of anything so preposterous? I had a letter from Gus's mother, begging me to do nothing in regard to a divorce; she feared the effect on Gus if I should. Robert came on at once after receiving my letter. We knew when we met that there was nothing else to do but this.

"He has told me that he knew you, that he loved you and asked you to marry him once long ago, and again when he came to New York that time. He says you did not love him enough, but I do, oh I do, and now he turns to me for happiness and I can give it to him! The world is very beautiful.

"I love you, dear. Write to me very soon. Helen.

"P. S.—Even with this long letter, I think there are one or two things more you will want to know. Don't think I am unaware of what an incredible thing, as it must seem to you, I am doing. Because I am happy does not mean that I do not know all the pain and difficulty there is going to be. Robert has a ranch, you know, where he used to live. It is about thirty miles from Los Angeles, such a paradise! There is a big house and we shall live there by ourselves, quietly, out of the world,—oh so gladly, out of the world! The world seems very little compared with reality. We have come to see that this is the only thing to do and Father sees it too. He is to be with us, you know. His library is to be installed as nearly as possible as it is here. Robert will be good to him; he admires him greatly. I could not have decided as I have if Father had not understood. When we told him he was at first greatly troubled on Constance's account, but he has come to see that, strange as her position will be, she will be happier. I have a feeling that because what we are doing is really right, people will see; they will not visit disapproval on a little child. Father

DRIFT

says 'Marriage customs have gone through many changes; there are few studies more interesting than to follow the evolution of this rite. In some countries, ours for instance, marriage is considered to have something of divine significance. This is particularly hard to explain when you consider the reasons which led to its institution.' Dear Father! He wants me to be happy and he knows this is the only way. Have I made it clear, dear, dear friend? I am so happy!"

Eileen laid down the letter. So! It was Robert Thorne who had made Helen happy—Robert Thorne.

CHAPTER XXXIX

WHILE Helen was writing her letter, her father was absent from home. He would be in New York most of the day, he said, there were a number of matters to be arranged; it was a serious thing moving a library, a good many books might be safely discarded, others were needed and California was a long way off.

The movements of Josiah Tucker that day were never known. When he died, almost his last thought was one of satisfaction that this was so. He went to New York and took another train out of the city to the place where Augustus Lee was confined. It was a small sanatorium on the outskirts of the village. Josiah knew that the patients who were well enough were allowed such liberty as was compatible with the treatment of their trouble; knew too that Augustus was fond of walking and was allowed to go about alone. Since Helen had told him of her plans, he had been a number of times to the town and wandered where he thought Augustus might be found, but up to now had not succeeded in seeing him. He did not wish to announce himself at the sanatorium.

Today, after about an hour, he saw Augustus walking towards him. There was no one near. He approached him with a word of greeting, afraid at first that he might not be recognised, but Augustus looked up with

DRIFT

something of his old grace and a smile of greeting as he held out his hand.

Josiah Tucker was disturbed by the change in him. He could not tell at first what it was. He did not look ill, on the contrary he looked in good health. What was it about him that was so strange? It was as if—ah, he had it now,—it was like the men changed into beasts of the old tale; the man was gone,—the soul, the spirit. The living flesh was there,—what inhabited it? Josiah did not know. He would find out today.

Their colloquy was brief, their words low. They clasped hands and parted silently, with eyes looking straight into each other's.

Josiah found his way back to the station; Augustus Lee, with bent head, walked back to the sanatorium, where he had been "committed."

They brought the evening paper to Eileen as she sat with Helen's letter in her hand. The servant laid it on the table beside her, lighted the lamp, mended the fire, pulled down the shades and went away. She was sorry when he was gone, she had meant to speak to him, to break the silence. She held Helen's letter over the fire. When it caught, she dropped it on to the flames, watching it burn and then turn black. The last words she saw were, "I am so happy."

She picked up the paper and read—

Suicide of the Talented Young Architect, Augustus Lee,
Until Recently Head of the Designing Department
In the Well Known Firm of Brewster & Knoll.

The notice stated that Mr. Lee had not been well for some months. He had suffered a nervous breakdown, brought on from over-work and was, at the time of his death, in a private sanatorium. "The act of taking his own life was a great shock to the authorities at the

DRIFT

sanatorium, where he was warmly liked. During the last fortnight he had shown improvement and hopes were entertained for his ultimate recovery. He took a long walk on the afternoon of his death and it is thought became despondent over his condition. Enquiry at the office of Brewster & Knoll brought the comment from Mr. Brewster that young Mr. Lee was a man of distinct ability. 'The Uptown Club must be credited to him,' said Mr. Brewster. 'The plans were made in our office, but the work is practically his.' Mr. Lee leaves a widow and one child, a daughter five years of age."

Eileen read the notice over again.

So! Augustus Lee was dead,—he had killed himself. Helen was free, then, to marry Robert Thorne. All the "difficulty" of which she had spoken was removed. Poor Gus! How handsome and gay he had been that afternoon, long ago, when Mr. Crockett had called him a faun! How much in love they were, and then afterwards, what pain! She remembered how, after they had gone that day she had heard the newsboys calling "Extry! Extry! All about the suicide for love!" how little she knew then what would be the outcome; she had been envious of their joy. Helen had been radiant; on fire and shining with a great, beautiful, burning flame! Then later,—Eileen remembered her face as she and Gus stood together after the wedding at the cottage and Helen's letter a few days after, dated, "From the Inn in the Deep, Deep Wood," where they had gone for love and each other. Yes, in spite of it all Helen had had great riches, and now—now—her eyes would hold again their shining look of inner joy because Robert Thorne loved her, because they would come together. The words of the poem that had haunted her came to her mind, "My flesh leapt to your touch with the fierceness you called"—was she to be tormented always with the vision the words evoked?

DRIFT

Her thoughts turned to Margaret, Margaret who knew what the poem meant; she saw her smiling in the doorway, calm, confident. John was with her now, talking low and intimately. They were planning together what they should do, how they should proceed, so as to spare her, John's wife.—She put her hand over her eyes as if to shut out an actual thing. She wondered how Gus had done what he had done. Upstairs in the drawer of the desk in her room was a small pistol, with a handle of mother-of-pearl. John had given it to her half in joke and taught her to use it because she had said that she was frightened when he went to the factory and she was alone at night. She would always be alone now, always alone, day and night.

With set face she sat staring into the fire. Gradually the flames died to flickering tongues that leaped up now and then, but gave no light or warmth. Slowly the red coals grew duller; the grey of the ashes overspread them, crept over them until all the glow was gone; there was nothing left but grey. Now and then a faint flicker of the fire that had danced so brightly an hour before curled up over a charred piece of wood, made a little crackling sound and went out. It was very cold. If she were found dead, John would be free to marry Margaret—Margaret who had arranged that room with the yellow roses around the top and the chintz! He would marry her and they would have a little cottage somewhere in the country with pink roses on the wall paper and babies, more babies,—John would have his wish. But what of his thoughts? Would they not turn to the woman whom he had worshipped with such an adoring love, who had left him lonely and who had died by the aid of the little pretty thing he had given her, taught her how to use; died by her own hand so that he might be free—free to pursue the course he thought would lead to happiness?

DRIFT

She arose and went to the desk and wrote—

Midnight, October 8.

“DEAR JOHN: I have thought it all out. This is the only thing I can do to serve you. Please do not grieve; I want you to be happy,—you and Margaret. I give you to her.
EILEEN.”

She sealed and addressed the letter, put it on the top of the desk and crept upstairs.

As dawn broke, a figure slipped into the room, making no sound; a tall figure wrapped in soft draperies, with long, dark hair and oblique eyes. The figure stopped and looked about, then approached the desk where a white envelope gleamed faintly through the grey light, took it from its place, carried it to the fireplace and raking back the ashes on the hearth, burnt it on the coals; then, looking about again, stole upstairs into a soft and comfortable bed. The pillow was wet with un-availing tears.



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