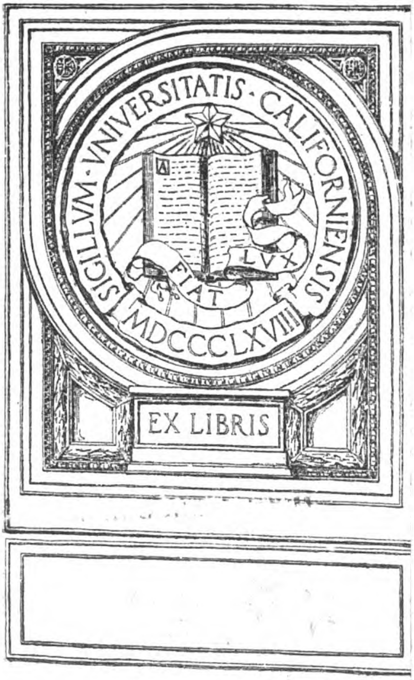
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

https://books.google.com

Google


SIGILLVM · VNIVERSITATIS · CALIFORNIENSIS
LVX
FIAT
MDCCCLXVIII
EX LIBRIS

LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

A POPULAR JOURNAL
OF GENERAL LITERATURE

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

VOL. LXXXII.—JULY TO DECEMBER, 1908

PHILADELPHIA
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
1908

COPYRIGHT, 1908, BY
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PRINTED BY J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA, U.S.A.

AP2
L54
v.82

CONTENTS

About Good Health . . . *Elbert Hubbard* . . . 441
Amendment of M. de Chirac, The . . . *H. C. Bailey* . . . 747
Anatomy for Beginners . . . *Thomas L. Masson* . . . 763
Angel of Happy Hollow, The . . . *Luellen Cass Teters* . . . 466
Apple, The . . . *Inez G. Thompson* . . . 245
Beneficent Scrap-Basket, The . . . *Caroline Ticknor* . . . 639
Big-I and Little-You . . . *Augusta Kortrecht* . . . 730
Blessed be the Builders . . . *George L. Knapp* . . . 126
Bull-Heads . . . *Edwin L. Sabin* . . . 243
Business Philosophy . . . *Warwick James Price* . . . 617
Celebration of National Importance, A . . . 509
Child of a Widow, The . . . *Lucy Copinger* . . . 335
Cupid—and a Call . . . *Edith Morgan Willett* . . . 483
Deported . . . *H. C. Stickney* . . . 367
Destiny of Rip, The . . . *Karl von Kraft* . . . 231
Disaffection of Adelaide, The . . . *Laura Simmons* . . . 356
Dream, The . . . *Mabel Nelson Thurston* . . . 618
Food for Reflection . . . *George Wetherill Earl, Jr* . . . 614
Fudge . . . *Clifford Howard* . . . 118
“God Have Mercy on Us” . . . *Edith Robinson* . . . 587
Great God News, The . . . *Will Levington Comfort* . . . 342
Half-Disabled Folk . . . *J. Madison Taylor, M.D.* . . . 253
Investigation at Holman Square, The . . . *Nevil Monroe Hopkins* . . . 257
Irish Courtship . . . *Seumas MacManus* . . . 739
Jewel of the Seas, A . . . *Jessie Kaufman* . . . 385
Laughing Cynicisms . . . *Minna Thomas Antrim* . . . 366
Leper Valley, The . . . *Will Levington Comfort* . . . 105
Literary Spirit in the Modern Magazine, The . . . *Robert Adger Bowen* . . . 383
Little Saint Thomas . . . *E. Ayrton-Zangwill* . . . 609
Lone Huntsman, The . . . *Joseph A. Altsheler* . . . 496
Man Who Was Horse-Crazy, The . . . *Caroline Lockhart* . . . 759
Memories . . . *Fannie Heaslip Lea* . . . 375
Memory of Pickett's Brigade, A . . . *La Salle Corbell Pickett* . . . 481
Misogynist in the Making, A . . . *Blanche Goodman* . . . 595
Moulding of Men, The . . . *Herman Scheffauer* . . . 382
Moulding of Men, The . . . *Dr. A. L. Benedict* . . . 765
Nativity, The . . . *Charles L. O'Donnell* . . . 713
Optimist, The . . . *Ellis O. Jones* . . . 512
Our Inland Empire . . . *Day Allen Willey* . . . 69
Patchwork Lady, The . . . *Dorothea Deakin* . . . 92
Pendleton '01 . . . *Karl von Kraft* . . . 80
Pin-Head, The . . . *Caroline Lockhart* . . . 452
Plea for an American Peerage, A . . . *Clifford Howard* . . . 637
Plea for the Soil in Literature, A . . . *Sarah D. Upham* . . . 254
Predigested Fun . . . *J. B. E.* . . . 125
Psychical Gymnasium, The . . . *W. P.* . . . 127
Quarrel, The . . . *Kate Jordan* . . . 237
Racial Pot-Pourri on the Isthmus, The . . . *Herbert Dunlap* . . . 489
Random Thoughts . . . *Minna Thomas Antrim* . . . 746
Remediable Nuisances . . . *René Bache* . . . 255
Road to Gretna Green, The . . . *Dorothea Deakin* . . . 129
School-Mother, The . . . *Owen Oliver* . . . 443
Second Quality . . . *Mrs. John Van Vorst* . . . 1
Service of Fear, The . . . *George L. Knapp* . . . 460
Seven Days . . . *Mary Roberts Rinehart* . . . 641
Sister to Jimmy, A . . . *E. Mirrielees* . . . 220
Socrates . . . *Jennie Brooks* . . . 329
Some Guides I Have Known . . . *Horatio C. Wood, M.D.* . . . 630

263976

Contents

Stage and Morals, The . . . . . *W. Dayton Wegefarth* 767
Thackeray's Substitute . . . . . *D. K. Janowitz* 123
Thing, The . . . . . *Will Levington Comfort* 717
Tradition of the French Stage, The . . . . . *Mrs. John Van Vorst* 602
"Truly" Christmas, The . . . . . *Edwin L. Sabin* 755
"Truly" Thanksgiving, The . . . . . *Edwin L. Sabin* 584
Tyranny of Parents, The . . . . . *Jane Belfield* 381
Viper, The . . . . . *Will Levington Comfort* 513
We and the Weather . . . . . *Edwin L. Sabin* 638
Woman Suffrage in America . . . . . *Annie R. Ramsey* 101
"Yankee Snob," The . . . . . *Caroline Lockhart* 75
Zelphine in Warwickshire . . . . . *Anne Hollingsworth Wharton* 360
Zelphine's Wedding Journey . . . . . *Anne Hollingsworth Wharton* 225

POETRY

Alien . . . . . *Pemberton Ginther* 236
Ballad of Galway, A . . . . . *Ethna Carbery* 116
Chevalier of the Rocking-Horse, A . . . . . *Nancy Byrd Turner* 256
Christmas Lullaby, A . . . . . *Blanche Elizabeth Wade* 738
Criticism . . . . . *Helen Talbot Porter* 495
Defiance . . . . . *Robert Hamilton Kelley* 459
Desire of Service . . . . . *Stephen Tracy Livingston* 727
Echo Consolatrix . . . . . *Florence Earle Coates* 608
End of the Road, The . . . . . *Edwin Carlile Litsey* 359
Gentle One, The . . . . . *Elsa Barker* 334
Hannah, Mah Honey . . . . . *Margaret Belle Houston* 380
Inexplicable, The . . . . . *Stacy E. Baker* 91
Jesus Unto Mary . . . . . *Chester Firkins* 728
Leaves . . . . . *Charles L. O'Donnell* 594
Little Boy Baby's Prayer, The . . . . . *S. M. Talbot* 758
Lullaby, A . . . . . *Amy Churchill* 355
Memorial . . . . . *Sue Jauss Bieber* 488
Memory, A . . . . . *Sue Jauss Bieber* 68
My Knight . . . . . *Mabel Urmy Seares* 366
October . . . . . *Roscoe Gilmore Stott* 440
Out in the Fir-Blue Hills . . . . . *Mary Byerley* 636
Silence . . . . . *Mary Gertrude MacMahon* 252
Song of the Mountain, A . . . . . *Robert Loveman* 601
Sonnet of Spousal, A . . . . . *George Herbert Clarke* 712
To Shakespeare's Mother . . . . . *George Herbert Clarke* 640
Unparadised, The . . . . . *Isabel S. Mason* 768
Viol and Harp and the Reedy Bassoon, The . . . . . *John Russell Hayes* 482
Wiggly People, The . . . . . *Mazie V. Caruthers* 613
Wind of Fire, The . . . . . *Charles L. O'Donnell* 79
Wood Call, The . . . . . *Isabel S. Mason* 124

VOL. LXXXII NUMBER 487

LIPPINCOTT'S

MONTHLY MAGAZINE

JULY, 1908

SECOND QUALITY

BY MRS. JOHN VAN VORST

I.

IT was eleven o'clock. Archibald Harris seated himself in one of the yellow iron chairs on the Casino terrace. He had arrived the night before at Monte Carlo on the first holiday he could remember to have taken for years. Fifty, in excellent health, rich with millions, free, he was accompanied by a secretary, a courier, a valet, and a retinue who could serve his comforts. Yet the prospect of an idle hour before lunch brought with it a feeling of loneliness. Mingled with his curiosity and admiration, as he watched the pageant of pleasure-seekers drift leisurely up and down before him, there was a touch of resentment. The sea-lined horizon, the palms, the dazzling sunlight, the fresh air, set him in a sociable mood, and the unanswered question that rose to his lips left him melancholy with a dawning contempt for money.

Who, he asked himself, were his friends? Whom did he know? What was the use of being rich if he had no acquaintances?

For six months this problem had been bothering him. It had taken the form of an impelling ambition, it had brought him abroad, it had led him as a magnet to Monte Carlo. It showed him restless, susceptible, arrogant, or humiliated by turns. There were moments even when it caused him to regret the late Mrs. Harris's death, but at the apotheosis he invoked she appeared in the too, too solid flesh. He had been attached to her, deeply attached, but in a filial manner, as to one who,—in the lonely days after his arrival in New York from the West,—had meant home to him. Years older than he, rich, and a

Copyright, 1908, by J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY. All rights reserved.

widow when he married her, his sentiment for her was yet of a kind which precluded in his own mind the thought that he could have married her for her money only.

Moreover, money—he was growing convinced of it hourly—was nothing, a bauble, a mere accessory, a means for adding to the ease of life, but in no way the price of what was really worth having.

To be sure, when he had married Mrs. Harris—fifteen years before her death—she had been surrounded by a large number of acquaintances, but ill health, increasing peculiarities, a falling-off in the parties at the Fifth Avenue house, had gradually narrowed the circle, and Harris realized, as he brought it under his appealing scrutiny, that it was reduced now to a few protégés, a few obscure "hangers-on." This patronizing of people, he had always held to be a weakness of Mrs. Harris—she had paid for the education of more failures than any woman in New York. Somewhere he had stored away a collection of terrifying miniatures painted for their patroness by the unsuccessful; his wife had had herself "done" on porcelain, canvas, in beaten brass, and with other new processes whose simplicity was held out as an inducement for those wishing to learn rapidly.

Among the number there was, however, one protégée who promised a harvest for the seed scattered on barren ground. This special unfortunate had become a baroness. She was at Monte Carlo now,—Harris had seen her name in the papers,—and he considered her affectionately. She was the possible point from which he might swing his social compass. The Baroness indeed appeared in his mental picture of her like Aaron's flowered rod, showing to him a way out of the wilderness. And though he had not the Baroness's address, Monte Carlo was small, he was sure to run across her, here perhaps, on the terrace, he thought, the very morning of his arrival. She had originally been a governess, placed by Mrs. Harris as companion in an Italian family. In her letters to her benefactress,—Harris recollected them distinctly,—announcing her engagement to a scion of the Italian household, she had not mentioned that her intended was the offspring of an illegitimate descendant. This they had discovered later. She had merely referred to him as the "Baron," as though a natural sequence were: governess, companion, baroness. Now as he thought of her Harris's heart warmed:

"She was a dear good girl!"

And this phrase half murmured into the little glass of bitters gave him courage. His mental intimacy with the Baroness seemed to explain his presence at Monte Carlo, and her devotion to his late wife justified the impulse of gratitude which stirred in him. With this rise in his spirits, he began to enumerate other things not in his disfavor: his own honorable, though modest, record as a broker previous to his marriage with the wealthy Mrs. Harris; his membership in several leading American clubs; his personal resemblance to one of the English dukes, which had delighted Mrs. Harris. . . .

Startled at the sound of a voice by his side, he turned, almost giddy, with a sure feeling that it must be the Baroness. The voice was speaking in pretty, broken English:

"I beg your pardon! I see no osser table . . ."

Not observant at any time and somewhat dreamy in his present mood, Harris had not been aware of the manœuvres of a lady at the next table. After dropping her parasol and handkerchief in a nervous manner, she had overturned a glass of madeira which was trickling accommodatingly over in Harris's direction. The lady whose voice it was that had interrupted his perplexities lifted her ruffled skirts high in the air and spanned the little lake with her slender ankles. She sought refuge by the stranger. With the chivalry of the American, surprised at no feminine caprice that deprives him of his rights, he rose.

The lady cried out, seating herself:

"Oh, I beg! Don't leave, for zen I cannot stay—I can't drive you hoff zees way."

She lisped and was knowing and simple, bold and timid, at once. Harris's embarrassment kept him standing until she had added with an enchanting exclamation of pity:

"Oh, pardonne me. . . . You don't know me. I am ze Princess Carivanna."

Harris dropped back into his chair with a single move.

"Princess!" he exclaimed, uncovering his head and remaining uncovered. She made little, bird-like, guttural sounds, adjusted her petticoats, settled herself with her gloves and parasol on her knees, and smiled irresistibly up at him. To all of this he found no farther response than a second "Princess!" repeated in a tone of adoration for the very word.

"It is very tiresome of me," she twittered, "to spill zis. I ought to have taken him earlier before so many peoples come on ze terrace. All ze tables is so crowded. You excuse?"

Harris had extracted a card from his wallet while she talked. He held it out now, murmuring her title fondly and mixing his own name up with it. (She caught his name with wonderful quickness—as though by second sight, he might have remarked had he been observant.)

"American, of course?" she queried.

"Yes," he answered, wondering whether it would be well now to speak of the late Mrs. Harris.

"You have been long at Monte Carlo?"

"I only got here last night."

He hesitated, not knowing whether to call her "princess" or simply "madam," as he had heard that queens were called.

The question he dreaded most followed the moment's silence:

"And you have many, many friends—zat is sure?"

Harris smiled at his sudden companion.

"I'm expecting to meet a very old friend—a lady I've known intimately. . . ." There was a vague feeling in his mind that knowing one friend intimately was almost equivalent to having a quantity of people with whom one was slightly acquainted. The Princess raised her eyebrows, and Harris announced:

"A baroness friend of mine," as though this were some especial brand of friend.

"The Baroness. . . .?"

"Benoni—Benoni."

"I know her! But very well. What a coincidence!"

The Princess's exclamations were full of animation, and Harris enjoyed an inward satisfaction that penetrated his whole being.

"You're not an American, too, are you?" he asked when they had exchanged mutual cordiality concerning the Baroness.

"I?" the pretty woman answered. "Dear me, no. It would be hard to tell what I am—I have leeved in so many places. I suppose I may say zat I am cosmopolitan."

It seemed natural to the American that a princess should have a quantity of mother countries, since the ordinary man has only one.

"And the Prince,—Musshier le Prince?" he asked, wishing immediately that he had said something else; this was too familiar, he knew.

"Ze Prince?" she echoed, lifting her eyes heavenward. "My poor husband, my dear, dear husband. Let us not talk of him, I beg of you. Zis subject is too sad!"

From a gold bag hanging on her wrist she drew a fine, gauze handkerchief and brushed it across her eyes, adding in a smothered voice:

"Since five years I am zus. . . ."

Harris was distressed.

"I am sorry," he murmured, "very sorry indeed, to have awakened such memories. I hope you will pardon my thoughtlessness."

"Do not feel badly," she smiled through her tears. "One must learn to face ze world and not to wear ze heart on ze sleeve, as zay say in your countree."

Harris was murmuring to himself:

"Brave woman, brave little woman! I'd no idea a princess could have so much feeling. . . . It seems to be going all right. We humans are a good deal alike, the world over, I guess."

"Shall we walk a little?" his companion proposed, putting up her handkerchief and smiling at him.

"Delighted, Princess," he responded, beginning to feel as though he had been part of a royal retinue for years. He could imagine himself relating to his former broker friends, on his return home, upon what familiar and easy terms he was with nobility.

"They are a good sort," he could hear himself saying. "I got on with them splendidly."

The Princess set the pace, the slow, strolling pace which Harris, walking alone, could never have fallen into. Her dress rustled over the flag-stones, she held a tiny parasol between the sun and her eyes, she spoke of the scene that lay before them, making personal her admiration for the sea, the palms, the magnolias, comparing her tastes and dislikes with those of the American, chattering about trifles, discussing their mutual friend, the Baroness. Suddenly she became serious, and the attitude of Harris changed from tickled contentment to gravity and attention.

"Oh!" she said tragically, "it is so hard, so very hard, for a woman, ze true woman, to live alone in ze world, unprotected, at ze mercy of . . . of . . ."

Harris's eyes were wide open and expectant; the Princess resumed her phrase and concluded:

"At ze mercy of everyzing."

"Yes, I see—of everything," rejoined her sympathetic listener. "I wonder if you would find it so trying in America? Women there are . . . well, I don't know just what there is about them, but they 're different. They don't seem to need protection exactly. They 're more independent."

He sighed as he found this adequate word.

"I guess that 's it: they 're more independent."

She lifted her hands with a gesture surprised and shocked.

"Mr. Harris!" she exclaimed. "When one is princess? It is not ze same: *noblesse oblige.*"

He could have bitten his tongue out, but it was too late. He determined not to speak again. So long as he only bowed and smiled, things seemed to run smoothly.

She went on:

"And America is so far off, and ze people are so very rich. It take so much moneys to live zere, I could never do it."

Seeing Harris's concern, she added:

"Zis is a dreadful question, zis money. I never sink of it but he keeps me awake all night . . . But here I speak like I have always know you . . ."

Harris pantomimed to her the pleasure he took in this mark of confidence on her part, and she went on:

"All zat I have I give it to my son, my child. I not tell you I have a leetle boy. When he have finished his study I have nozzing!"

The word "nothing" she accompanied with gestures which denuded her of bracelets, brooches, necklaces, rings, leaving her, to the obedient imagination of her spell-bound audience, very much in the garb of an Eve. The questions about the Prince which rose to his lips he hurried into the abyss prepared too late for his other blunders.

She sighed heavily:

"You say nozzing. I see zis subject not-interest you. You have so much money, you cannot understand . . ."

And with this sentimental taunt she tactfully turned the conversation, leaving Harris to dwell freely on the financial situation. It was a new kind of suffering for him. He found he could regret as much not speaking as having said the wrong thing. He could never revert to this topic again. His chance for being actually useful to a noble had come and gone and he had missed it. His regret was almost tragic. He was a fool and deserved to get no further on the social ladder. Looking straight at the Princess with a smile, and thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets, he said:

"Why, Princess, money is such a little thing!"

Little indeed compared to the rude apprenticeship he had served for his share. The Princess was melancholy.

"Money may be a leetle zing," she sighed, "but ze lack of money is a big affair."

"You would n't think so if you could see our New York brokers a lively day on the Exchange. A mere game . . ."

But just here Harris caught sight of the Baroness, his Baroness, the protégée of his late wife. She was with a tall, dark man, evidently her husband, the Baron.

"Excuse me one moment, Princess. I believe that 's the Baroness Benoni, right over there . . ." And he hurried towards the couple. They exchanged greetings, and then, in a proud moment, Mr. Harris brought together a Princess and a Baroness.

"We were just speaking of you," the Princess twittered, "Mr. Harris and I. You have not been here long?"

The Baroness turned her pretty eyes towards the Baron.

"We are never long in any place," she said. "Last autumn it was Constantinople, this winter Egypt, and to-morrow . . .?"

The Baron seemed weary.

"We can't look so far ahead as to-morrow."

The Princess had turned her little parasol so that her face was enveloped in a becoming shadow. The American gazed at his friends as the two women fell at once into the easy, flippant manner of those whose lives are all leisure, whose home is a cosmopolitan hotel, north in the summer, south in the winter; who retire for sleep only, and whose debts, of all that concerns them, are alone kept from the gaze of the inquisitive multitude.

To Harris, who watched them, they seemed deliciously women of the world.

"Have you found many friends?" the Princess asked.

With a gesture which warmed the American's heart, the Baroness held out her hand to him.

"We have found Mr. Harris. He is a very old friend!"

"Zat I can understand," said the Princess, with a tone of voice which brought almost a lump into the American's throat.

The Baron broke in languidly.

"The Countess MacBride is here. One of your compatriots. We ran across her last night with a new protégée."

"Don't you know her?" the Baroness queried.

"She's an American, too?" Harris asked, as though the chance of compatriotism might make him seem more at ease.

"Yes, she's from Detroit. She has Miss Endicott with her—Endicotts' flour mills—a great heiress, of course."

"And a trifle unsophisticated," added the Baron.

"Perhaps Mr. Harris knows them? The Countess is a wonder. Only an American could manage with the small fortune she has, to own a Paris house near the Bois, and to wear the sort of clothes she does!"

Harris, while he listened, was contemplating some plan whereby, without seeming too eager, he might entertain the Princess. Seeing that the Baron was making preliminary moves to break up the group, he hastily proposed a dinner for that night at the Casino. The ladies accepted, and, having hesitated a moment, he added:

"I'd be pleased if you'd bring your friend the Countess along, too, and that young lady who's with her."

"The Countess will be charmed, I'm sure, and Miss Endicott also," the Baroness twittered.

As he watched the ladies to the end of the terrace, he thought, with almost a groan of contentment, how rapidly, during one morning, he had advanced in a new, brilliant, and to him hitherto unknown and coveted, social world.

II.

The morning following the dinner which Harris had given with success at the Hôtel de Paris to bring together his new acquaintances, and himself be presented to those of his guests whom he did not know, dawned clear and bright in the succession of dazzling days whose brilliancy acts as a magnet for the leisured class of Europe and America.

Harris was closeted with his secretary, Rudolph Van Motte. The American, clad with the precision of a man to whom business hours early in life have made dressing-gowns impossible, was persistently questioning Van Motte; his manner was impatient. He paced back and forth on the side of the room where the windows opened on a broad balcony, letting in across the scarlet carpet a path of gold. When he flashed in and out of the light Van Motte could see that his patron's face was troubled, and, as had always been the foreigner's habit at the approach of distress, he steeled himself with the armor of indifference behind which the heartless, impelled by self-interest only, pass through life unscathed.

Van Motte was a Belgian. He had been for years in the employ, as secretary, of one rich American or another who seemed always to be working harder than he. To appear listless and at ease, a man of the world and at leisure, was Van Motte's manner of explaining to society in general that chance held him momentarily in a position to which he had not been born. Penniless and in debt as he had been when Harris picked him up in New York, his threadbare clothes even then had a cosmopolitan elegance about them, his manners a certain finish which, from the start, had made it seem that, of the two, it was Harris who had need of the other. Now Harris was saying:

"You never told me that you knew her!"

"Who, the Princess Carivanna?" repeated Van Motte in a drawling intonation which was accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders. He looked closely at Harris, however, as though with his narrow eyes to detect how much the American had discovered of any former friendship between the Princess and himself. The gray eyes answered that Harris was unsophisticated; the motive of his present perturbation was worldly vanity, as his second exclamation announced:

"It 's just a chance, then, that I met her! You might have never mentioned her. We might have finished our stay here without my knowing her, if I had n't run across her on the terrace!"

He stopped short in the block of sunny air and looked indignantly at Van Motte. The secretary had risen and was gathering up the open letters and papers from the table where they lay with the remains of a continental breakfast, served on a tray now half hidden under a heap of crumpled napkins. His shoulders went up again in a shrug and, laying some stress on the title, he said:

"I did not know the *Princess* was here."

Harris it was who appeared apologetic.

"Well, if that 's so, I suppose you could n't do much more than I could—just trust to luck! She's a lovely woman, though. What eyes!"

He rolled over and over between his fingers the cigar which he had taken from a gold case on the table.

"My, what eyes!"

The secretary was not responsive. He said:

"I promised the Countess MacBride, whom we met last night with the Le Forts, to render her a little service this morning."

"Quite right," Harris nodded.

As certain American fathers of the rough diamond type look towards their daughters to form social relations for which they are themselves unqualified, so Harris depended upon his secretary—young, a gentleman, well-dressed, fluent in several languages, travelled, and acquainted with one princess at least—to accomplish the intermediary acts which could precipitate his intimacy with the smart set.

After an inquisitive pause, Harris said:

"She's only a countess, is n't she?"

There was the suggestion of a smile about the corners of Van Motte's somewhat sensual mouth as he answered:

"Yes, only a countess; a title she bought herself. She proposes writing a book of memoirs on her varied experiences in European courts. No doubt she has plenty of material, but she hardly knows how to put it together."

Harris was all attention.

"I see," he said; "you can help her get her notes into shape." And, his mind evidently dwelling on the subject, he asked: "She's been at a lot of courts, has she?"

"I shall be able to tell you more after this morning's séance," was Van Motte's departing response.

When he had gone Harris repeated several times to himself:

"So he knew the Princess . . ."

And, though the waiter came in and removed the breakfast tray, Harris, undisturbed, murmured again:

"And now he's doing literary work with the Countess."

III.

The Countess, when Van Motte was announced, sat by a flickering wood fire in her improvised boudoir. About her were scattered the morning papers. Folded snugly in an ample tea-gown of rose-colored satin, she half reclined against the cushions of her high-backed chair. Her feet were clad in bed-room slippers, but her hair was carefully dressed. The curling-irons had left their wave upon locks that were streaked with gray at the sides, where nature had asserted herself over the golden untruths of a coiffeur's artifice.

Beside this woman who suggested her experiences with the world as her tea-gown suggested its use by her—through a lack of freshness—Miss Endicott appeared like the rosebud whose contact so far has been with wind and sun alone, nature's caresses to further her sweet blooming time. She sat on a stool placed opposite the fire. Her face, like the substance of a camellia, was devoid of any line. No habits of thought, neither gaiety nor melancholy, had traced their course about her eyes and mouth; one expression followed another as though each were giving its first touch toward moulding a countenance which was yet all hope, all seduction; which, in a word, was youth.

It was the Countess who spoke. Her tone was irritable.

"Our names are not in the papers!"

"I don't care a bit," Olivia Endicott answered her.

"But you should care. It is ridiculous . . . people of our social position . . . not even mentioned."

"We don't have any better time when they put us in the society column."

"And your father!" cried the Countess. "He will think I've done nothing for you if we are not at least cabled on Sundays!"

Miss Endicott laughed.

"Poor papa!"

The servant had announced Van Motte, and the Countess made a preliminary move toward getting herself ready to receive him.

Olivia put her hand on the older woman's chair.

"Don't go yet. I want to ask you something. Mr. Van Motte can wait. He is a foreigner, they don't mind, they are always waiting for something—to be decorated, or to inherit a fortune, or to get a position under the Government, or something else that does n't depend on their own effort."

The Countess paid little attention to the American girl's outbursts against foreign ways of doing things. She had watched the insinuating charm of Europe sap the patriotism of more than one Yankee, and she relied upon time and their present surroundings to make Olivia feel, soon enough, that she could never live again on the other side of the Atlantic.

Miss Endicott went on:

"I am going at eleven to walk with Ralph Rutherford. Do you mind?"

The Countess shook her head.

"You know my feelings, dear child, upon the subject. Especially at Monte Carlo I can't think of letting you walk alone with a man, and a man you only met three weeks ago."

"But Mr. Rutherford is an American!" Olivia pleaded. "I am not in love with him, and I would n't marry him even if he asked me."

"Asked you!" The Countess's polished finger-nails flashed as her hands went up in the air. "He has n't three thousand a year to bless himself with. He would never have the audacity to propose to you!"

The emphatic remark raised the youthful spirit of contradiction in Olivia; she answered as though slightly offended:

"It would be no dishonor if he did propose. The Rutherfords are as good a family as any we have in America."

"The question is not who his people were, but what your reputation is going to be. Nothing would justify me in letting you do so foolish and compromising a thing. Ask him to tea if you like. I fail to see what interest you find in him, but there is no especial harm in his coming to tea."

Olivia said nothing further. It was not about this matter that she had meant to consult the Countess when she had detained her instinctively a moment before. There was something more important of which she wished to speak, but the time had passed. Their chance disagreement on a trifling subject, as so often happens with women, had placed them out of harmony on all subjects. Olivia let the Countess go without speaking. Then she drew from between the leaves of a book on the table a note whose few words written in a large handwriting covered half a page:

CHARMING MADEMOISELLE,
May I come early and see you, alone, before tea this afternoon?

She read the signature: "Henry Le Fort."

Exasperated still at the Countess, and with the nervous decision of a pure-minded child who yields to temptation, she wrote hastily at the desk which stood between the windows:

DEAR MR. LE FORT,
You may come early this afternoon. I shall be alone at four.
OLIVIA ENDICOTT.

She rang for the servant, sealed the note, and sent it.

There was nothing wicked, she argued to herself, in receiving alone a married man, and it was perhaps more "conventional" than taking a walk with a young American.

Between luncheon and three o'clock the Countess changed her mind several times as to the disposition of her afternoon. She was piqued because Olivia did not wish to drive with her, Olivia was distressed lest the Countess remain at home, ashamed that she should want to be alone, and surprised, as soon as the Countess had actually gone, at her sense of relief.

"I can't be going to do anything very wrong," she reasoned, "or it would make me unhappy."

Dressed in a close-fitting dark blue gown, she had kept on her hat since morning. With a hat on, it seemed to her that her reception of Le Fort had more the air of a chance meeting than of a premeditated encounter. The foreigner's first question when they had exchanged greetings was upon this subject:

"Why have you on your hat? You are not planning to leave me at once, are you?"

"Oh, no," Miss Endicott laughed. "It 's an American fad. We wear hats in America all the time except out of doors."

"I don't like your American fads," Le Fort answered. "There is always some puritan reason back of them for mortifying the flesh."

Olivia was seated in the Countess's high-backed chair, Le Fort in a low fauteuil opposite her. Both elbows rested on his knees, his hat and gloves were on the floor beside him, his anxious face was full in the light. It was a face which reflected the love of pleasure. The eyes were intelligent, the mouth weak, and the other features were saved, by youth, from the vulgarity which the exaggerations of time would put upon them. Le Fort had neither income nor fortune, yet he was a man of leisure. For Olivia, as for other women, he had some subtle charm which made the few hours she had spent with him in their half-dozen meetings stand out with the intensity that sentiment gives to the recollections of a woman's memory.

But Le Fort did not propose to discuss the merits of puritanism. Looking directly at the girl, he said:

"It 's stupid to be indoors weather like this. Suppose we go for a stroll before the sun sets? I 've watched you so many times when you were unconscious of it, walking with others. It has been one of my dreams to take you to some of my favorite haunts where the common herd does n't penetrate."

His voice was agreeable, as though it had been long trained in amorous undertones. Miss Endicott responded quickly to his suggestion:

"I can't ever walk with you alone."

She expected him to urge, protest, insist, argue that she was an American, independent, and that no one would observe her. But he smiled and said:

"You shall do with me what you please, mademoiselle. You shall decide how much I may see you, and when, and where."

Olivia wanted to thank him! It was he that would protect her against himself. She was relieved of that burden which the homage of an American man places upon the conscience. For the first time in her sentimental annals, it was the man, not she, who assumed the responsibility for both. Like one who has long pulled up stream, she rested upon her oars, drifting deliciously with the tide. She did not start even a commonplace topic of conversation by way of making more impersonal the moment's silence which followed Le Fort's last remark. When she looked at him half timidly, half trustfully, it was upon her hands that his eyes rested. She changed their position, and laughed:

"Don't embarrass my hands! There's nothing so awful as shy hands, like the ones you see in country photographs."

"Your hands are exquisite," he said, obeying, however, her caprice.

"They are useful, any way!" she cried.

"But not cruel?" he asked.

"Cruel?"

"Yes. Promise me that you will never do any harm with them?"

She took his question gravely: "Why, what harm could I do?"

"The heart of a poor man . . ." he began, following these few words with a hasty declaration. . . He had thought of nothing but her since he met her, his feelings could not be mistaken, he could no longer deceive himself . . . She must know it, he . . . But Olivia, after a moment's dismay, interrupted him violently:

"I forbid you to speak to me of love!"

It was on Le Fort's lips to respond: "Then why did you let me come to-day?" but he controlled himself. It was his first experience with an American girl, but he was long practised in conquests of the weaker sex, and women, he believed, were in all countries the same.

Olivia, nervous, angry, pleased, not knowing what to do, went to the door and opened it as though she had been waiting for the Countess, who entered at this moment, accompanied by Ralph Rutherford.

Greeting Le Fort, the Countess rang for the tea, which was served. Then, pulling listlessly at her gloves and hat-pins, she recollected that the two men had not been presented.

"Driving in the wind makes one dull," she apologized.

Rutherford shook hands with Le Fort, and then made a pretense of helping Olivia. She was flippant with him. It amused her to show Le Fort with what nonchalance she could treat certain men. The conversation was trivial. Le Fort proposed to the Countess that they all meet after dinner in the gaming-rooms at the Casino. Rutherford was included in the invitation, but he gave as an excuse for not accepting, a previous engagement to dine with friends, which would keep him late into the evening. A trifle annoyed that he should refuse, Olivia wondered who the friends could be. She promised herself to be nicer to Rutherford as soon as Le Fort had gone, and, regretting her manner of a moment before, she tried to start a more serious conversation. But Rutherford had risen and was already taking leave.

IV.

For a week Harris had entertained somebody at lunch and somebody at dinner every day. The Le Forts were glad participants of all social functions. They were, it was understood, living on the remains of Madame Le Fort's fortune, which had been considerable before her marriage with Le Fort, whose extravagant tastes were very costly. His wife—an English woman by birth, years older than he, and much in love with him—was apologetic that what had been enough for her should be insufficient for this husband, who to assuage her seeming mortification permitted himself to make frequent inroads upon her capital. She had begun already to wonder what they would do when it was gone. The thought wore upon her; her pretty, oval face was a mass of fine little lines drawn hither and thither about the eyes and mouth as though each were trying to find some way out of the difficulties which had brought them there.

The Princess, Harris felt, was growing almost to be a friend. Of the Countess MacBride he was less sure. Van Motte was with her regularly in the mornings, at work on her European memoirs. He described these séances as delightful; and Harris, as he listened to the accounts of the Countess's worldly success, felt that a certain mundane glory was reflected upon him from the brilliance of this compatriot.

The Countess seldom entertained. It was her theory that one must either go out or receive. "The best hostesses," she explained to her young charge, in defense of this revolutionizing of hospitality's formulæ —"the best hostesses are intolerable guests. The habit of entertaining makes them hypercritical. They go out merely to see how badly others do things. Those who are constantly being entertained, like myself, make an art of it. That is why people always want them."

Harris—and it was perhaps of him that the Countess was thinking —fell very naturally into the category of those who make better hosts than guests.

He had a private dining-room in his sumptuous hotel apartments, he supped at one café, lunched at another,—never alone. It was his dream to take a villa, and have his newly made friends with him under his own roof, but Van Motte urged that he wait until the autumn,—when, with the season, the intimacies would be more mature, —and then install himself for September at the Italian lakes. He was enchanted at the idea, because it gave perspective to his social adventures, which, did he not lay some future claim upon these people, he feared might come to an end as they had begun—suddenly.

While awaiting the moment propitious for organizing his Italian house-party, he obtained Van Motte's approval of a plan to take the Countess and Miss Endicott, the Le Forts, and the Princess on an all-day excursion to Cap Martin. Leaving the practical arrangements to his secretary, Harris set out for the Casino, hoping there to find some of his friends with whom to talk over this scheme.

Drifting on the outskirts of the gambling throng, the Princess was the first of his acquaintances whom he descried. He watched her with content: she was unmistakably pretty. The pale color of her gown became her. A long ostrich plume trailed its soft tendrils over her dark hair and rested against her neck where her somewhat open dress left it uncovered. In contrast to the diaphanous material of her gown and the exposure of her throat, she had a mantle of ermine draped nonchalantly over her shoulders. Everything she wore and the air about her when she moved were heavy with perfume. Harris was pleasantly infected with the odor sometimes for an hour after he had left her.

More than once he had noticed, and always with surprise, at how short a distance from the tables the crowd seemed to be free from their magnetism.

"They 're like a whirlpool," he had thought to himself: "you can float in safety to a certain spot, then you get drawn in and the struggle begins."

Bowing to the Princess, he began:

"You 're not much at this sort of thing, I guess, are you? I 've never seen you play."

She smiled up at him. It was a temptation to provoke from him a generous offer such as his compatriots had made her before. "I 'll stand your losses, you take my gains." But the Princess to-night preferred studying the American; he was beginning to interest her.

"Zis evening," she said, "I no feel ze mood for gamble."

As she answered, she drew him deftly toward a corner of the room, where there was less confusion. The rhythmic click of the roulette-wheel, the monotonous coaxing of the croupier's voice, the coming and going of the curious, the flippant, the inveterate, sounded only like a distant accompaniment.

The cosmopolitan woman was not quite herself with this honest, awkward American whose heart was the purest gold of all that metal which made him desirable. She assumed with him a modesty which restrained the impulses of her greater experience. She treated him with the delicacy that a *roué* might show in courting a girl of eighteen. It was in this way only, she instinctively felt, that she could appeal to Harris.

The millionaire, flattered as he was at being with one of her title, little used to society of any sort, made fitful attempts at conversation which in no manner furthered the Princess's intentions.

"I think we 'll have fine weather for our excursion to-morrow," he remarked. "Everybody 's accepted. I guess it 'll be a nice party."

Concluding that it must be the seclusion she had sought which was intimidating to Harris, the Princess started again toward the crowd, whose bedlam might be more conducive to confidence. She addressed her companion:

"It seem a little lifetime since we meet on ze terrace. So much has happened! But I zink always of zat morning."

Harris, touched by the tone in which she spoke, murmured: "You 're too kind, Princess."

She went on:

"Yes, zat morning I speak to you of my boy, my poor boy, and of ze anxieties I feel."

"I 'm sure I was only too pleased . . ."

Profiting by a moment when the passers forced her irresistibly against the American's arm, very close to him, she asked, looking up at him:

"You get my letter zis afternoon?"

"No. What letter? When? Did you write to me? Where did you address me?"

"At ze hotel."

An expression of uneasiness came over her face.

"I send my note by messenger at about five zis afternoon."

With the rising ire of one who has been cheated out of a right, Harris shook his head.

"There 's some mistake. Was the note important?"

She lowered her eyes, quickening her breathing as though moved by the confession she was about to make.

"You can be sure zat I no write wisout I have somesing important to say. I ask you to come and see me."

"You did?"

"Yes, alone, to-morrow."

"To-morrow 's the excursion." Harris was distressed.

"We don't start till eleven."

As she said this she caught sight in the distance of Van Motte moving toward them steadily through the crowd. Hastily she added:

"Come in ze morning. At ten. I must speak to you."

The emphasis she laid upon the words, her excited manner, stirred Harris to the demonstration of sympathy he was going to proffer when Van Motte casually joined them. The Princess indicated to Harris that he should not refer before Van Motte to the miscarried letter. They were further distracted by the arrival among their group of the Countess MacBride and Miss Endicott. The Belgian secretary and the Princess wandered toward the door.

Once on the terrace, in the uncertain light and shadow of the flickering electricity, Van Motte assumed an air of authority with this woman. He spoke rapidly and in French.

"It was I who opened the letter you sent to Harris to-day. I shall do the same again. You may explain it to him in any way you like."

"What right . . . ?"

Her phrase was cut short by Van Motte.

"The right that you are not free. There is no question of *marriage* with this American!"

Her attempted protestation was broken by an outburst from the man. She was afraid; they might be seen, heard; she begged him to be prudent. From her manner he saw how far she was in his power, and after a few moments of silence in which they walked to the further end of the terrace he said:

"This American is a child. Get out of him what you wish, use him as you see fit, lead him where you will, but remember that if you do more I shall expose you."

"Rudolph!"

The tone of her voice was supplicating. It irritated Van Motte by its suggestion that he would not carry out his threat.

"Yes, I shall make known to them all your story. I shall not spare a detail."

Placing her arm through his, she whispered supplicatingly:

"Rudolph, I love you . . . You can't forget . . . Don't threaten me in this way."

"I am not in a tender mood," he answered brutally. "This affair has exasperated me. Moreover"—he changed his tone—"I have been losing heavily at *trente et quarante*. I am in debt seventeen thousand francs. If I don't find them before to-morrow night I shall be ruined, in every way ruined."

In the midst of her distress an expression of hope crossed the woman's features, that instinctive hope which illumines the most miserable woman when she perceives that she may be of use to the man that maltreats her. Even in the uncertain light of the terrace, Van Motte's victory was visible. In as short a time as was decent, he let himself be persuaded to accept this money from his companion, and Harris's Princess set herself to thinking how in twenty-four hours she could put her hand upon so large a sum.

Van Motte, having made sure of his ends, attempted the words of tenderness for which a minute before she had begged. It was she now who repulsed him.

"Leave me, do please. Go back to ze rooms, I insist. I shall return home. I must be alone—I wish it."

While the Belgian found her carriage, she waited, her ermine drawn close about her. When Van Motte had placed her in the coupé and closed the door, he leaned through the open window, holding her hand to his lips. Her delicate head reclining against the white collar of fur, she looked, in the obscurity of the carriage, like some sombre portrait by an old master.

"Good night," she repeated. "Good night."

Having lighted a cigarette and puffed at it awhile, his head in the air, Van Motte strolled back in the direction of the Casino. He was content, as one to whom—his moral sense holding no place—all things come easily.

V.

THE day planned for the excursion was ushered in from the East by a violent wind-storm, followed before the morning was many hours old by a fitful, capricious fall of rain which seemed to be chasing imaginary enemies with the intention of drowning them. It swept madly around corners, halted a second, and then threw itself in angry waves against the sleek, clean pavements. The streets were deserted, and the town put on an air of propriety and dullness which made it appear like a repentant child who has returned to her provincial surroundings still decked in the bedraggled garments of a city life.

The few people whose duties took them out were natives. On sunny days they passed unnoticed in the crowd, but under the downpour the cosmopolitan centre seemed to have become again a village whose silent streets echoed to the sound of wooden shoes, whose mild sea air wafted to peaceful ears the tolling of church-bells.

The Cap Martin party was postponed for a week.

No floods, however, kept Mr. Harris from calling upon the Princess at ten, as had been arranged the evening previous. He spent half an hour with her, and another half-hour trying to remember their conversation and to record it verbatim in his diary. She had seemed nervous, her distress had touched him; he had questioned her as to her purpose in sending for him, her evident embarrassment.

"It 's not your boy who is giving you trouble, is it, Princess?"

She had shaken her head at this, and her answer was one which he wrote on a line by itself in the diary.

"I asked you to come because I have friendship . . . more than friendship for you."

Harris hoped that he had n't appeared too awkward. He would have given anything to be able to kiss her hand as he had seen Le Fort touch his lips to Miss Endicott's fingers in a way that meant everything and was irreproachable. Almost at once, however, the Princess had put him at ease, choosing for this end an infallible resource: she had asked him a favor.

He gave up trying to describe in the diary how irresistible her manner was, and how exquisite she looked in her gown of rose-colored silk and lace . . . He simply recorded her words:

"If you were any but an American, I could not ask you zis favor. No foreigner would understand. An American not take advantage. He is gallant enough to sometimes treat a woman as a friend. It is only ze Americans and ze nobility for whom questions of money do not exist."

Harris, put thus upon his honor as a man and an American, had been admirable in his chivalry. He remembered only confusedly his impressions: his sense of justice outraged that a princess should be in need; his feeling of security now for their future friendship; his hesitancy at this moment to express any sentiment; and, above all, his comfortable assurance of equality, and a peculiar tenderness toward this woman who had placed herself in his power by needing him.

Showing that delicacy which in the self-made American's nature is mingled with vulgar traits as gold-dust is scattered through common soil in certain river-beds, Harris, on leaving the Princess, had sent her a box of carnations—her favorite flower. As she lifted out the long-stemmed blossoms somewhat sceptically, she found, hidden among them, an envelope. It contained Harris's card and seventeen one-thousand franc notes.

Mingled with a touch of mockery at the simplicity of the American who, as though money were the least of all things, gave impulsively what others, far cleverer than he, parted with only as the price of an exchange, this cosmopolitan adventuress found in her heart an unmistakable admiration. His guilelessness that came through ignorance of the particular sort of evil for which women are responsible in the world appealed to her more than the cunning of the cosmopolitan who knows all things and believes none.

During this rainy day wherein Harris profited to bring his diary up to date, Miss Endicott and the Countess indulged in an afternoon's seclusion, such as fair weather occupations prevented.

The Countess had grown up in the same town with Olivia's father. The town had become a flourishing Western city, and the development of Mrs. MacBride into a woman of the world—of "two worlds," as the local papers worded it—had been no less marked. She had married an elderly man who had left her a widow at thirty-five, with an income sufficient to live in Detroit. Everybody had supposed that she would marry again. She came abroad, took a house in Paris, travelled in the East, became converted to Catholicism, installed herself upon the highway of charity; she gave largely to those works whose patronesses' names she hoped to see printed next her own in monthly reports, while waiting to see them appear later side by side in society notes.

All this cost more than living in Detroit. The deficit in her income was made good by friends who speculated for her. Any scruples which might have troubled her conscience regarding the infallible success of her investments were silenced by a feigning on her part of total ignorance concerning all business matters.

"So long as things go all right," she often repeated with a naïve smile, "I ask no questions."

Mr. Endicott, proprietor of the flour-mills, multi-millionaire, was among those who saw in this arrangement of Mrs. MacBride's nothing more than the chivalrous opportunity to help a widow. He had made it seem to her a philanthropic undertaking that she should let Olivia, his daughter, accompany her on one of her transcontinental trips.

"It'll be a charity to my motherless girl," he had explained. "She has real social talents. She ought to see more of the world than she ever can in Detroit. You're interested in good works. You just let me know your pet charity, and we'll call things square."

With her funds in this way augmented, Mrs. MacBride had become so beneficent as to have conferred upon her by Rome the title of Countess. Mr. Endicott, proud at the turn affairs were taking, had sent his daughter across the sea to join this woman who, he thought, was a credit to Detroit.

Olivia found it hard to make friends with the Countess and to confide in her. The opinions of the older woman seemed to take from any subject upon which she expressed them the freshness and life. Olivia felt as though she brought new material to this old hand only to see it turned into ready-made garments of the size that everybody can wear. With the egoism of youth, the American girl was sure that no one had ever been quite in the position she was: between Le Fort and Rutherford. The latter attracted her when she was away from him, and as soon as he appeared she became exasperated. Le Fort, whose presence had an irresistible charm, left her always in a state of revolt and attempted resolution never to see him again. She could not speak of this to the Countess, in whose life the romantic side counted for nothing. She knew in advance what the Countess would say: she would not approve of Le Fort, because he was married, nor of Rutherford, because he was poor. It was not a decision that Olivia wished for; the time had not come yet for a decision. What she wanted was to talk over the situation with some one who would discuss the various incidents of the past three weeks and predict for the future, analyzing her influence upon these two men. Above all, she did not want to hear put into words her own belief that she was acting a dangerous rôle.

Miss Endicott enjoyed the imprisonment caused by the rain: her companion chafed under it.

"If this sort of weather lasts," the Countess repeated, "I shall want to be getting back to Paris."

Her house had been rented for the winter, but the tenants had left in March. She continued:

"Moreover, I prefer setting the lead, to following it."

"You don't think of leaving this week?" Olivia's tone was anxious.

"We can't. We have accepted Mr. Harris's invitation for Monday; that will bring us to the first—quite late enough for the Riviera."

The girl's expression was troubled.

"Don't fancy," her companion laughed, "that we are to be long separated from our faithful attendants! They will all appear before we have been a week in Paris. Paris is delicious. I shall have the pleasure of initiating you in all my haunts."

Miss Endicott made no response. After a time she asked:

"What day do you think we shall leave here?"

And when the older woman, half annoyed at her insistence, had fixed upon the day following Harris's party, it seemed to Olivia that a decision had been made which precipitated in her mind a multitude of smaller decisions.

VI.

Ralph Rutherford had not made love to many women. Yet there was, in his manner with the fairer sex, something which gave them a flattering impression. He had had a delightful mother: one whose delicate nature was strengthened by compassion, and whose force of character was enlivened by her keen understanding of humanity. She had been indulgent and an idealist, the sort of woman whose innate comprehension of men and things serves in better stead than learning. The companion, the consoler, the guide—such Rutherford had found her. And thus it was that his fair friends in general felt something in him more than ordinarily gracious. Thus it was that Rutherford had made love to few women, seeking the ideal, believing it to exist.

He and Harris were stopping at the same hotel, and the younger man, for this reason, had drifted into an acquaintance, almost a friendship, with his compatriot. They had talked together in the noise and confusion at Monte Carlo, and at Harris's request they had more than once chatted for an hour before dinner in the latter's apartments.

"You know just about everybody, don't you, Rutherford?"

This was one of the questions early put, and Harris, as he asked it, had an expression of tender admiration for the man, so young, who had been born with friends.

"It's nothing to inherit money," he continued, "but to have a social set ready-made, to be dropped right down in a circle of your own—that's worth-while!"

Rutherford, fearful lest he might be asked to give his opinion on Harris's acquaintances, spoke of money.

"It's nothing to inherit money, you say, without the rest. But you can't imagine how trying it is to . . ."

He stopped short, astonished at the readiness with which he drifted toward a confidence. "There is something in the simplicity of the vulgar," he thought, "which makes discretion with them seem trivial."

Harris repeated:

"What's so trying?"

And Rutherford, with a frankness which no friend had yet inspired from him in so short a time, told Harris his situation:

"For several generations the Rutherford fortune has diminished. We have been gradually going to ruin. Bad management, I suppose, recklessness, I don't know what. When my mother died I found that there would not be enough left—bread and butter aside—to protect even the house and keep up the property which has been ours since Colonial days. I have put them up for sale, Mr. Harris. Can you realize what it means? Not to be poor—I don't speak of that; but to see your own belongings pass into the hands of others, to lose sight forever of all that was associated with your childhood and with your parents."

Harris followed with absorbed attention. Rutherford, sensitive at his hasty confidence, mistook his companion's attitude for pity. He added quickly:

"Please don't think this in any way an appeal. I have spoken to you because we were discussing the trials of life."

Harris, as though following out some train of thought, asked:

"I think you told me your father died when you were a child?"

"Yes."

"You are quite alone, then?"

"Yes."

"Well," he concluded, "you are too young to stay single. I guess you'll have to marry."

Rutherford winced.

"I have nothing to offer a woman. No poor girl could marry me, and I should hardly ask an heiress to be my wife."

He laughed as he said this, and Harris was struck with the charm of his expression. There was something melancholy in his eyes, offset by the strength of his fine chin and mouth. Like many older people who have failed of romance in their own lives, the millionaire was attracted by the possibility of love which every young person presented to him. As Rutherford pronounced the word "heiress," the image of Miss Endicott flashed through Harris's mind. Pleased with his penetration, he murmured to himself that Rutherford did n't dare ask that girl to marry him because he was so poor!

Rutherford, who had risen and walked the length of the room, faced Harris as he turned.

"You say it's nothing to inherit a fortune, Mr. Harris. I believe that depends very much upon how you have been brought up . . . I've got plenty of friends, no doubt, but—they're almost a humiliation in the present condition of my finances. It isn't work I mind, you understand," he added hastily; "I enjoy the idea of one day being an architect, and I don't a bit hate the hard work at the Beaux Arts, but there's something false in the position of any man who is a victim to changing fortunes—whether for better or worse."

Harris chuckled:

"It's better to have a picture without a frame than a gilded affair with nothing to put in it!"

After this repartee he went to a corner table, from which he produced two glasses and a bottle of whiskey. He mixed a drink, and again he watched admiringly certain tokens of breeding in the younger man. Resentful as a rule of the confidential attitude, Rutherford now seemed inclined to talk freely of himself and his past, his family, his discouragement.

And Harris, later left alone, continued the comparison which he was establishing between the poor American and himself, murmuring to himself:

"He can't marry that girl because he's too poor. And if any one ever marries me . . . it'll be because I'm too rich."

He pulled from his pocket a watch, touched a spring in it, counted the strokes as its clear little chime sounded the hour. Then he rang for his valet. Passing before the mirror, he touched the bell. The light which blazed from crystal candelabras on either side of the chimney caught Harris's attention as its mellow rays mingled with the silver in his hair. How white he had grown! How heavy the lines were in his face! How like his own father he looked!

The resemblance as he studied it was a shock to him.

He had had more than an ordinary affection for the man whose name he bore, yet it was months, years perhaps, since he had thought of him. He recollected him now with all the vulgarity and commonness of their early surroundings. Willingly he would have disclaimed the memory, but there was something tenacious in the image. Between the deceased parent and his pretentious son there was a breach wider than death. Yet as Harris contemplated the likeness he was moved.

Past memories sped like withered leaves across his mind. His present worldly position, his ambitions for the future, to both of which his father's presence, had it been possible, would have struck a fatal blow, seemed suddenly an irrevocable disloyalty. Gradually he became possessed by the yearning to be a child again and with his parents. He longed to revoke each vain decision in his life, to tear away the barrier which made him now a stranger to his dead.

The valet knocked and entered.

Harris was still before the mirror, but the appearance of the correct man-servant distracted his master. He gave orders hurriedly. At eight he had guests coming for dinner.

It was not until he had been some time with his friends in the perfumed warmth of his palatial dining-room, and in the lively confusion of their merry-making, that the chill produced by the voice of bygone memories left him.

VII.

HARRIS was delighted with the arrangement he had made for driving his party over to Cap Martin. He believed that he had shown tact and propriety: the Princess, the Countess, Van Motte, and himself were to be stowed away in one landau, such as the royalty use on gala days; the Le Forts, Rutherford, and Miss Endicott were to be trundled in the close proximity of a second carriage.

Early in the morning Mrs. Le Fort announced by letter to Harris that a sudden migraine would keep her prisoner during the day. And when Rutherford appeared in riding breeches, asking his host's permission to act as postilion for his guests, Olivia and Le Fort were left to drive over the Corniche *en tête à tête*. To be sure, it was what Olivia had most desired: to be all day alone with this man; though what his power over her was, she could hardly tell. He was more chivalrous than American men, and yet she knew that he was not as sincere. He seemed to be her absolute slave, but she was confident he would not do for her what Rutherford would. It was in small things that the foreigner paid her court. She felt with him that life was less important than the caprice she might invent to let him prove his devotion. The American, on the other hand, never let her lose sight of the truth; almost tragic in his sincerity, he was capable of refusing her a banal request for some reason of justice or principle. She would have sacrificed Le Fort for Rutherford, had it been necessary to choose between the two, but so long as both were there, she contented herself with approving inwardly of her compatriot and amusing herself with the foreigner.

The day was warm. The ladies in their pale-colored muslin gowns appeared, under the fluttering shadows of their parasols, like so many tropical birds in the sunlight.

Le Fort's feelings were very different from Olivia's as they prepared to take their places side by side in the carriage. The *piquant* of this affair to him was that it should be a secret. Thus the prospect of a whole day in which he was to have her with him as though it were a natural and not a stolen pleasure, disconcerted him in his plan of conquest. He saw no way whereby he might benefit in such a situation. Any marked attention on his part could only complicate matters by attracting the suspicion of the Countess, whose naïve confidence was too propitious to be jeopardized. Moreover, a long day in which the American girl listened to his half-hidden declarations might surfeit her. It would, at all events, not have a stimulating effect upon the imagination. In order that Olivia might think sentimentally of him, in order that he might charm her by the gallantry of his indirect love-making, he concluded that there must be a third person, and that third person a woman, in their carriage.

Harris, perceiving Le Fort's hesitation, proposed to the Princess with disinterested courtesy, a place in the landau with Olivia. She accepted with the smiling acquiescence that characterized her. Le Fort seated himself opposite them. The horses sprang forward and the party was under way.

There was not a breath of wind blowing. The sun, round and ardent, mounted patiently a cloudless sky, devouring the shadows with its midday rays. The warmth of the air, the intensity of the light, gave the impression of sluggishness; the sea itself was torpid. Its slow, monotonous waves, changeless, unbroken, moved back and forth against the shore. The sharp sound of the horses' hoofs against the hard roads rang out to the accompaniment of their collar-bells. As the carriage passed, the dust took life and rose from under the wheels; it rolled lazily along and shattered itself upon the rosemary and broom bushes whose branches were freighted with the gray powder.

Olivia, having several times rearranged her wraps, became petulant about the heat. It gratified Le Fort to see that she was piqued. The Princess, as always, smiling and gracious, attempted several topics of conversation. Le Fort's responses were followed by silence.

"Driving always makes one drowsy," Olivia volunteered.

Gay with that sort of cheerfulness that reserves its reaction for hours of solitude, the Princess laughingly rejoined:

"I zink we are hungree. Mr. Harris start us very late. It is already after twelve!"

She consulted a tiny watch whose jewels flashed in the lace of her gown. Le Fort sought Olivia's eyes and said to her:

"I believe that more can be suggested by silence than by words. There are so many expressions we become accustomed to long before they can have meaning for us."

He turned to the older woman as though she might better understand him. Olivia, who had been *distraite,* watched him closely as he took his gaze from her. He went on:

"The three banal words, for example, 'I love you,' are worn threadbare before we use them. They have been too often on the lips of others. They are less eloquent than certain silences."

With a graceful movement the Princess tossed her head. Olivia, however, answered seriously:

"I don't agree with you. One may have heard hand-organs grind out celebrated airs all one's childhood, but one's emotion is none the less great the first night one goes to the opera and hears real music. It's just the same with love," she said, "or, at least, I should think it would be."

Le Fort did not carry the argument farther. They were approaching the point of land among whose trees nestles the Hôtel du Cap Martin, where they were to lunch and spend the afternoon. A light breeze had sprung up; it ruffled the metallic waters, disturbed the sun's image on their surface. Already several white clouds had made their appearance on the horizon.

Under the *marquis* of the hotel the party assembled for a moment, exchanging news as to the drive over. Harris looked proudly at his guests; his heart swelled with inward satisfaction.

Lunch had been ordered in advance, but while the ladies retired to repair the disorder that wind and dust had caused in their delicate toilets, their host occupied himself with adding further luxuries to the menu. The table had been spread on the terrace facing the sea. Its blue waters shone luminous through the dark trunks of the umbrella pines which rose, straight and slender, from the red earth beneath to a summit through whose slanting boughs the wind made its whispering way.

When Harris's party had seated themselves, Olivia alone of them all seemed restless. The sound of the breeze in the tree-tops, the sight of a far-away horizon where sky and ocean, under the haze of a nuptial veil, kissed and were one, stirred in her memory impressions left there by the contemplation of similar scenes on the Western lakes where she had lived. There was an incongruity between this pleasing aspect and the trivality that surrounded her in the name of refinement, civilization. It was to the charm of the latter, however, that she yielded after a moment's revery. The outcry of hunger was general. On the white table, the hors d'œuvres rested like autumn leaves upon a parterre of snow—crimson crevettes, purple beet-root, dark, moist caviare. The wine was poured, red and gold it flashed in the transparent glasses. With his black coat and white apron, the *maître d'hôtel* superintended the presentation of each dish. There was a murmur of conversation broken by outbursts of laughter. Harris's guests talked of everything and of nothing, oblivious of past and future, dwelling upon the present only, wherein they might eat, drink, and be merry.

When coffee and liqueurs were served, Harris decided inwardly that he had never been so happy. The Princess, taking a small case from the gold bag on her wrist, lighted a cigarette, and announced that she would remain with the men to smoke. In an agreeably reminiscent mood, the Countess confided, *sotto voce*, to Van Motte, certain episodes which discretion forced her to withhold from her written memoirs.

Rutherford, tall and handsome in his riding clothes, had risen. Le Fort, seeing this, had turned at once to Olivia.

"If you like," he said, "I will take you down through the woods to the shore."

With a touch of coquetry she asked:

"We can go alone?"

"By all means."

"Then come."

It was she who led the way, now following the path, now leaving it to speed more swiftly over the rocky descent. Half-way down she stopped and listened:

"Did n't you hear somebody call?"

Le Fort, out of breath, shook his head. This excited the girl's merriment.

"I 'll have pity on you," she said, choosing a spot that was fit to sit upon and showing it to Le Fort. He waited until she had settled herself, her skirts drawn about her, then he threw himself at her feet. Warm from the chase, she took off her hat and tossed it to the man. The wind lifted her hair from the temples whose moisture had caught its fine tendrils.

"I hate the heat!" she cried.

"And me?" he asked, turning so that he could look directly at her. "Do you hate me?"

"What a silly question!"

"Well?" he repeated.

"I like you, of course, or I should n't be here."

Le Fort put out his hand as though to cover one of hers. She drew away. He was puzzled. What, he asked himself, was to be the outcome of this mutual attraction? Did Olivia's familiarity with him mean nothing but her desire for conquest? Was her resistance merely the perversity of a spoiled child? She had done a dozen things which from a married woman he would have taken for encouragement. She spoke as though her experience were great—indeed, she seemed proud of it—yet any allusion to this on Le Fort's part stirred her indignation. He believed that she was more sentimental than passionate, and that he could more readily rouse her pity than her ardor.

"Come," she said to him, "we have n't much time. I want to see the ocean."

And she started again on her downward course. He rejoined her only at the water's edge, where she stood among the rocks, facing the wind, which blew against her light dress as though it sought to model in all its delicacy the lithe, young form.

Aware that the noise of the breeze as it rushed past them, the lapping of the waves, the immensity of the horizon, were carrying the girl at every moment further from him, Le Fort drew her into a niche under the rocks. Like a statue suddenly clothed she seemed transformed in this shelter. Her dress fell limp about her, her hair lost its classic rigidity. She looked at Le Fort bewildered. He had not taken his hand from her arm.

"How beautiful it is here!" she cried.

"How beautiful you are—you!" he repeated. "I see nothing else, Olivia!"

"Don't, I beg of you." She shrank from him. He persisted:

"Have pity on me! Put an end to my torment—you see that I love you—you must perceive it. Give me only some slight proof that I am not indifferent to you."

She shook her head. Her eyes, full of tenderness, met his. Catching her hand, he pressed it against his lips, murmured to it his declaration, and, lifting again his face fraught with emotion, he turned to the girl:

"I have come too late. There is some one to whom you have already given your heart."

"No, no," Olivia protested; "that is not so!"

But Le Fort let her hand drop and carried his own across his brow as though in pain. It seemed to Olivia, in her distress and agitation, that unless she made some demonstration this man who pleased her as no one ever had would slip from her, be gone beyond the reach where she might recall him and make him feel at least her tenderness for him.

"How blind I have been!" he murmured. "But how could I know?"

There was something definitive in his tone which awakened Olivia's despair. She held out her hand close to his arm, then let it fall.

"Can't you see?" she asked. "Can't you understand?"

Le Fort shook his head without looking at her. She came closer to him. He appeared so miserable.

"You must n't care for me. It 's wrong, you can't love me."

"But I do love you;" and his words sounded low and musical; words swift and ardent, that sped as the wind had a moment before, searching, telling, persistent.

"Hush!" she whispered, drawing closer to him, appealing to him. "It 's wrong to speak to me in this way."

"Because you love some one else?"

"No, no," she reiterated. And then, struggling to speak what was in her thoughts, she heard him say:

"I have been insistent, indiscreet, but I was blinded. Hereafter——"

The power to reason was slipping from her. The arguments that had restrained her, those they concerned, and all the rest of the world, counted for nothing before this irresistible, impelling attraction.

"Hereafter, what?" she cried.

And to the beautiful image which Le Fort's eyes caressed as he spoke, he said solemnly:

"I shall not force myself upon you."

He had hoped that she would allude to his wife, that she would speak of the bond, that he might show her how light a thing it was, that he might wring from her some promise as to a future in which conditions would be changed. But her silence disconcerted him.

Returning to the conviction that pity was more prompt than love in the heart of this young girl whose familiarity he had mistaken for experience, he spoke again of leaving her; there was something in Olivia's expression between passion and the exasperation of the spoiled child. Touched and excited, he went further than he had meant in his promise of renunciation.

"I had hoped only," he said, "for a word of encouragement, to hear you say that you might some day learn to love me. This is unexpected. We have been together so constantly. It seemed natural—how could any one be with you and not love you? I did not think that you were like other Americans: a mere coquette—a flirt, as you call it. Ah, Olivia!"—he hid his face from her. "You have not realized what my feelings were or you would not have done this! Now added to the . . . horror . . . of my life, I have this new burden to bear."

Olivia hesitated.

"Come!" he cried. "Courage!" and, holding out his hand, he added:

"It is best for us to see nothing more of each other. I could not endure the thought that between us there was another man—a man whom you care for. Ah, no; not that!"

"Don't!"—she was by his side. "Don't say that again. You know it's not true."

His eyes, distressed and searching, met hers. Simply and with an impulse that was almost childlike, Olivia lifted her face to his, resting against him an instant, waiting. And as his lips touched her cheek she sprang away, darting from the cave where they had stood, starting upward over the narrow path. Le Fort, under the spell of this embrace, watched her, half dazed. He could see how flushed her cheeks, how brilliant her eyes, as she called back to him:

"Don't follow me! Don't! I forbid you!"

Climbing, falling, losing her way, she ran on, dropping at last on her knees and bursting into tears.

The hotel was within a few hundred feet. She could hear the sound of voices—somebody was singing—and from another direction came the noises of a stable, the clanking of chains and harnesses. They would be going back in a short time to Monte Carlo; she must compose herself for the long drive. The whole world and everything that might happen in it seemed insignificant and foolish compared to the tumult raging within her heart. Her life was ended, of course. Or had she just begun to live? Where was Le Fort, and what would they think had become of her?

Suddenly she caught sight of Rutherford coming toward her through the trees. Of course he knew everything; he must have seen her. She had never been more miserable; she had never been so happy.

"They sent me to find you." Rutherford's tone was natural, he was not a comedian, evidently he knew nothing. "The carriages are ready," he went on. "Mr. Harris wants you to have a cup of tea before we start back."

When she had joined the others Le Fort made some banal remark to her about having missed the path. Then they took their places again as in the morning, trundling backward over the broad white corniche. But her wonder and astonishment had changed to fatigue. She longed to be alone, to weep away with tears the memories of this memorable day.

VIII.

After their five weeks' sojourn at Monte Carlo, the Countess and Miss Endicott had taken the Southern Express which brought them to Paris early one morning toward the end of April. It was Olivia's first visit to the French capital. The Countess, who had been almost a year absent from her home, looked forward with physical enjoyment to regaining possession of her own belongings. At the train a man-servant in livery met the ladies and took charge of their luggage, after placing them in the carriage which was waiting. In the corner of the victoria there was a cushion which the Countess shook into place. It was the only cushion that exactly fitted her back, and she had been separated from it for ten months. The comfort of it suggested other forgotten luxuries, which made the subject of her conversation as they drove down the Rue Lafayette from the depot, crossed in Rue Auber, and, after spanning the boulevard from the Opéra to the Madeleine, turned into the Champs Elysées.

Olivia scarcely heard her companion's material effusions. She was attentive to the charms of the city. The morning air was damp and fresh, the sunlight was dazzling after the long night in the train. The streets glistened under the stream of the sprinkler's hose. The mechanical sob of the tramways mingled with the cries of the street vendors, the cracking of whips, the rumbling of wheels over wooden pavements. Between the Place de la Concorde and the Arc de Triomphe, which appeared against a misty sky, the chestnut trees made a splendid cortège, their royal *panaches* of snowy blossoms offsetting their mantles of green. Olivia felt herself exultant. This was the Paris of which she had dreamed all her life. Every new impression was mingled with a vague sentimentality. She was at that moment of her existence when each to-morrow holds all the possibilities for whose fulfilment youth must go hostage. The Countess, on the contrary, had reached that age when certainties are better than hopes. It would have been difficult for her to thrill at anything; above all, she wanted to be comfortable.

The Countess's *hôtel* was situated in one of the side streets near the Arc de Triomphe. The perpetual movement of carriages passing to and from the Bois de Boulogne sounded to her like the murmur at her very door of a festive throng. This noise kept her company when she was alone. It gave her at all times the feeling that she was really "living" in Paris society.

Her house, though small, had a pretentious entrance. A liveried man-servant sat ever in readiness at the right of the porte cochère to receive whatever callers the Countess might have. They were heterogeneous, her friends, of all nationalities and every social condition. She asked whomever she met to have tea with her on her following day at home. The transformation of her salon was continual. The vacancies left by those whom she no longer cared to see, or by those who no longer cared to see her, were filled again by the more recently made acquaintances.

When the ladies had been a week or more settled, the Countess had resumed all of her Parisian habits. She had her own hour with the coiffeur, the masseuse, the manicure. She took her Wednesdays at home as she did always in the spring. With Olivia she went every morning to the Bois before lunch for a diminutive "constitutional." From two until three the Countess rested, and before tea came an hour of visiting, and after, a late drive in the Bois.

It amused the Countess to watch Olivia's enthusiasm.

The first dinner to be given by the Countess was under discussion in her boudoir, where she and Olivia took their morning breakfast. The Countess had before her on the table the cards which had been left since their arrival.

"We shall have to ask Mr. Harris," she said.

"*Have* to? Don't you like him?"

"And I shall have the Baron and Baroness Benoni," she continued, counting on her fingers. "Mr. Rutherford, I suppose. Van Motte, of course! I forgot him. That makes seven. The Princess makes eight. Oh, Le Fort and his wife—she has such beautiful pearls. With two extra men we shall be twelve."

As she said Le Fort's name Olivia sprang up. The color had flushed into her cheeks, and she wished to hide it from her companion. Since the day at Cap Martin she had not seen the Frenchman. When he had called to bid them good-by at Monte Carlo she had feigned a migraine. He had written twice, she had not answered. She had determined not to receive him.

Now, without turning from the window where she stood, she said eagerly to the Countess:

"Please don't ask the Le Forts!"

"Not ask them? How absurd! They were with us perpetually at Monte Carlo. We met Mr. Harris through them. We have been inseparable for weeks, we give our first dinner in Paris, Mr. Harris comes to it, and they are left out? You are unreasonable. It would 'make a scandal,' as they say here. You have taken a dislike to Le Fort," she concluded, "but when one goes out in society, my child, one must learn to have no feelings which one cannot hide."

Olivia had turned. Her hair was like a halo through which shone the morning light as it came from the east, golden, caressing the round curves of her throat, losing itself in the soft folds of her pink dressing-gown, following in luminous rays the lines of her slender figure. There was anger, revolt, in her expression. Her eyes seemed a trifle blind, as they become in the swift emotion preceding tears. It was the short moment of rebellion, intense, desperate, against circumstances which made the wrong she wished to do appear in the light of a worldly duty. In open resistance to temptation she would seem ridiculous, and in secret warfare how long, she asked herself, would her strength hold out before the subtle tactics of the foreigner?

IX.

At the angle of the Avenue de l'Alma, Van Motte, turning into the Champs Elysées, came upon Mr. Le Fort. He was in evening dress, and Van Motte concluded that he must also be dining at the Countess MacBride's.

"And Mrs. Le Fort?" he asked.

"She will be there," Le Fort rejoined with a shade of irony. "I came on foot in order to avoid one of the discussions that generally take place in the carriage on the way to dinners."

The evening was warm, and between the fading reflection of the sunset and the freshly lighted gas the obscurity of the streets was somewhat bewildering. Van Motte hazarded a question:

"Mrs. Le Fort is jealous?"

He put a comprehensive note on the last word.

"Yes," Le Fort answered him; "jealous, scenes all the time."

"Yes? But not about Miss Endicott?"

Le Fort was laconic. For some time they walked on under the chestnut trees, whose broad leaves, motionless in the still air, seemed outspread to catch the rays reflected upward about the street-lamps. In this artificial illumination, to which the dusk gave a mysterious value, the avenue appeared to be hung with links of emerald and gold.

Van Motte, oblivious of the night and its beauty, was curious about his companion. When Le Fort showed his conjugal irritation the moment seemed favorable for a confidence.

"You 're not," he said tentatively—"you 're not really in love with Miss Endicott, are you?"

Le Fort looked at him directly and then shrugged his shoulders, adding:

"I believe she 's in love with me."

His companion's answer was decided:

"You don't know Americans."

"In what way?" Le Fort asked.

"American girls. You can't compromise them as you can French girls, who have no liberty. They are free. It never occurs to an American girl that a married man——"

Le Fort put in deliberately:

"One can divorce."

Van Motte raised his eyebrows, making no other response. Presently, when they had threaded their way through the carriages moving hither and thither towards the Bois and swathed in the dust and confusion that characterize at all hours the Place de l'Etoile, Le Fort said:

"You know Americans thoroughly, don't you?"

"Fairly well," was the reply. "I have been eighteen months with Mr. Harris."

"And it goes?" There was a certain sociability in Le Fort's tone which expressed his feeling that he and the Belgian were companions in a similar effort to get what they could out of the naïve Westerner from over the seas, whose money was a small price to pay in exchange for a little worldly wisdom and position.

"*Goes!*" Van Motte exclaimed.

They had reached the Countess's porte cochère, but the secretary detained his companion a moment to tell him with a contented laugh that broke into his phrases and once or twice interrupted him:

"*Goes!* Why, Harris signed a check yesterday for the stables of Baron X.; and, my dear man, Harris will *run the Grand Prix!*"

It was toward the end of the Countess's dinner that Mr. Harris himself announced this bit of news to his companions at table. There was a murmur of surprise and interest. The Countess, who had relaxed her somewhat anxious features into a contented smile as the success of the dinner began to declare itself, now leaned back in her chair; she unfurled her white ostrich-feather fan, and as the ladies hummed with questions for Harris's new hobby, she waved the plumes back and forth on their amber sticks, composing to herself a notice of this dinner to appear in the society columns of the *Herald* the following morning.

Olivia was less at ease. If Le Fort by walking to the Countess MacBride's had avoided the scene of jealousy which he felt to be pending, Mrs. Le Fort had escaped none of the bitterness which this scene implied. At the moment of their arrival, Olivia, having gone into the hall to give an order, overheard an appeal from Mrs. Le Fort to her husband: her name was mentioned in a tone she could not mistake, and she had only time to draw quickly behind a curtain as the Le Forts passed her on their way to find the Countess in the salon.

In an instant the glamour which had enveloped this affair for her vanished. Her sentimental feeling for Le Fort was replaced by one of repulsion and anger; it was her pride which raged against this man who could let her become the subject of a jealous discussion between himself and his wife. His wife! She was jealous! Jealous of her, Olivia! She must think, then, that Olivia was in love with Le Fort? How dared she? It was ridiculous, preposterous! Olivia would show her plainly and rapidly enough her mistake, and if there were any suffering caused by her brusque change of manner it would be on Le Fort's part. Then perhaps his wife would see who it was that cared! She was indignant, offended. But when on her return to the salon Le Fort had spoken a few words to her in his low, insinuating tone, the feeling of giddiness took possession of her, irresistible, imperative, as it takes possession of one who approaches a precipice.

At dinner, she had scarcely dared look at him, and when coffee was served in the small salon where the men were permitted by the Countess to smoke, she devoted herself to Rutherford, drawing him with her into a corner and urging him to talk about his work in Paris.

Harris was the object of more attention even than before. This sudden association with the Baron X., his sudden entrance upon the turf, his brilliant introduction to the sporting world, put a new value upon the already precious American. He had hitherto been more or less monopolized by the little coterie who had so readily formed themselves about him at Monte Carlo; the Baroness Benoni it was, with her husband, who had selected Harris's hotel for him in the Avenue de l'Alma, and furnished it before his arrival, so that upon reaching

Paris he had but to make out a check in this lady's name, and take possession of his home. Each one of Harris's friends pictured him in this fresh connection as slipping possibly out of her grasp, and thus each redoubled her gaiety, content at having got the start ahead of others, and fairly confident that her flattering familiarity and good humor would always be preferred by Harris to the formal restraint of the strictly correct circles.

When several of the Countess's guests had left, she took Van Motte into her boudoir, where she consulted him regarding the publication of her memoirs. The Princess, thus left alone with Harris in the salon, coaxed from him the little note-book upon which she had seen him jot down that part of his life that business did not compel him to remember.

"I may?" she asked, looking up at him with an irresistible smile, the note-book half open in her hand.

"I have no secrets," Harris responded, flattered at her curiosity. "You won't find much that is interesting. There are no mysteries in my life, Princess."

He was pleased, and more pleased when the Princess, with something he thought childlike in her manner, asked if he would not take her some night to the Café de Paris and some night to Armenonville, with a party, of course. When these distractions had been arranged for and noted in the small book, the Princess, with a little air of pouting, as though nothing but what Harris could give her would make her quite happy, asked:

"Since you are going to be such a great horseman, you will surely drive us in a coach to Auteuil and to Longchamps?"

Harris jumped forward in his chair.

"Drive four? I can't do it. I don't know how, and it's too late to learn between now and the Grand Prix."

He found her adorable to have proposed it.

She said persuasively:

"But Mr. Van Motte—he drives four as he does everything, to perfection."

There was a glance of understanding and gratitude exchanged between the Princess and Harris's Belgian secretary, and when the Countess returned, a few moments later, she was asked to be one of the party whom Van Motte was to drive out to the races.

Rutherford, as he strolled homeward, disinclined to return within doors, reflected on the Countess's guests and upon Olivia's manner, which had become so suddenly friendly to him.

"She is so different from the others," he thought. "I wonder if she realizes it? If she does, she must suffer." It seemed to him as though she had turned to him instinctively that night, feeling that there were things which she and he understood and which the others did not perceive. She had asked him even to take her out of town—to Versailles or St. Cloud—some day soon.

"The Countess won't approve," she had said, "but you're an American, and I can go where I like with Americans."

It pleased Rutherford to suppose that it was not because of his nationality only that Olivia felt she could go with him where she liked. Yet at the bottom of his heart there was a touch of bitterness. He was troubled, and he walked far on into the night, for he could not get Olivia out of his thoughts, and he believed that she had no right there. He was falling in love with her. Indeed, he admitted that he *had fallen* in love with her, the first time he saw her. He was penniless, and she was an heiress . . . He was not even sure that he ought to see her again.

X.

Harris was in love.

The whole meaning of life now was summed up for him in this assurance, he woke up to the thought of it, he dressed himself as he believed a man in love should dress; he looked at himself in the glass and murmured to his reflection:

"I love her, I love her desperately."

But the expressions which he was able to give to this dawning passion were exhausted by him in the hours of solitude. When he found himself with the Princess he trembled lest she should suspect something of his feelings and consider him indelicate. Moreover, this tenderness and sudden desire to please had come late to Harris, as he himself often reflected. He was awkward, ignorant, he had not made love to any woman since the young days of silent courting when, in the moonlight, he had held his arm about some girl's waist, with no further eloquence to plead for him than an occasional pressure of the hand. With the Princess, he felt that he must say something all the time, and, not yet knowing what to say, he showed his devotion by spending upon her all the money that propriety would permit.

Harris made an elaborate toilet for his coaching party to Auteuil. He would have been glad, once dressed, to have Van Motte's opinion as to the correctness of his get-up. But seeing Van Motte these days was quite out of the question. He was on the go from morning until night. Indeed, Harris had observed to him that he was as much of a "racer" as Tenafly. Yet from morning until night Harris heard nothing but the Turf discussed. Van Motte and the Baron X., he reflected—half joyous, half abashed at the fact—were making a regular sport of him.

It happened to him frequently now, on entering one of the restaurants or cafés where everybody is known, to be pointed out and designated in a whisper as "the rich American whose little mare Tenafly is getting all odds for the Grand Prix."

Harris's feeling of gratitude to the little mare Tenafly was more than a vague, dim sentiment of thankfulness that she had made him a sport; he was definitely indebted to her for helping along his courtship of the Princess . . .

It was not until his party were all seated on the coach that Harris began thoroughly to enjoy himself. There was a slight humiliation for him in being yet unable to drive his own four; but he concluded that, free as he was, on the seat behind Van Motte, with the Princess at his side, he at least had a charming opportunity for devoting himself to this lady.

The heavy vehicle turned into the Champs Elysées, where the rumble of its wheels, the clinking of its chains, mingled with the general murmur of equipages upon whose brilliantly lacquered surfaces and glistening steeds the sun shone dazzling.

The crowd grew more packed as they approached the Auteuil race-course, and Harris's eyes, trained already by the expeditions he had made with Van Motte to the same scene of festivities on occasions less brilliant than this celebrated Drag-day, scanned the rows of four-in-hands already drawn up near the *pelouse,* and his inward satisfaction was great. There was nothing that could equal his irreproachable turnout.

Though the Baron X. had linked his arm within the American's as soon as they approached the *pesage,* this notable sportsman did not seem eager to meet Harris's friends. Each time that a presentation was mentioned, the foreigner deftly turned the matter in such a way that Harris, when he was left alone, felt bewildered. And bewildered he was also about another matter . . . A hundred times in the afternoon, at the *pesage,* in the shady nooks back of the *tribune* where he rested between races, in the open sunlight on the *pelouse,* he asked himself if this were the place and the time to show the Princess something of his sentiment for her. His decisions for and against a declaration varied, but his courage continued unequal to the ordeal.

"We have got the summer before us," he thought, "and September at Lugano. Great heavens!" was his inward comment at this prospect, "it's marvellous how happy a man can be when he once gets the swing of it."

As for Olivia, she had never been so happy.

She had never seen together so many smart-looking people. The women as they trailed their exquisite gowns over the soft green turf appeared to her like fairies in an enchanted garden. Everybody was occupied with betting, with horses and jockeys. Nobody seemed to feel as she did about the brilliant beauty of the scene. The grand-stand looked to her like a magic valentine, with one vista after another of beauty so mysterious and so artificial that it threatened at a moment's notice to vanish, and was meanwhile, for this reason, more alluring.

XI.

Olivia had not seen Le Fort alone since their return from Monte Carlo. Two months had slipped by in the agreeable confusion of worldly pleasures and amusements. She hardly knew whether she regretted or was relieved by the circumstances which made it impossible for her to be alone with this man who was ever present in her recollection. They were frequently together, at the Opéra, at the Races, at one of Harris's Armenonville parties. In these meetings which had no character of intimacy, Le Fort arranged always to tell Olivia in an undertone what his feelings for her were. These whispered messages, spoken with a caressing tone and so rapidly that Olivia hardly knew whether she had understood, were what she cared about most in her life. The rest was anticipation of the moment when Le Fort in spite of obstacles was able to tell her something which she half regretted, and which made her each time feel that she must take some definite decision against him.

The suggestion mentioned by Le Fort to Van Motte on the evening of the Countess's dinner had not once occurred to Olivia as a possibility. She had not heard him pronounce the word "divorce" with an intonation that implied for it his own approbation; so it was perhaps the very hopelessness of the situation which, for her, had a melancholy charm and permitted her thoughts to dwell with a certain self pity on what she considered a desperately unfortunate love affair. It was because the Countess had at last perceived something of this affair that she permitted Olivia to go one day with Rutherford as she had planned, to St. Cloud. She consented indifferently, languidly, as though she attached no importance to anything any one could do with Rutherford.

"He is perfectly well bred," she admitted, "but so limited, my dear. A man without money—what can you expect? His conversation cannot be very interesting. If you want to take tea at the Pavillon Bleu, there is no reason why you should not. It is harmless and bourgeois enough."

So it was one warm afternoon, towards the middle of June, that Rutherford responded to Olivia's somewhat peremptory summons. When she came into the little salon where he waited in the sunny obscurity of a room whose shutters were closed against the sun's radiant rays, he looked gratefully at her.

"How good of you!" he said.

Olivia contradicted him, shaking her head.

"No, it was n't good of me. I wanted to go. We never get away from the city. The whole spring is gone without my seeing it."

She was drawing on her long white gloves, she melted into them her slender wrists, she pushed the fullness upward towards her sleeve. Rutherford watched her. When she had stroked the soft suède into place she let her arms fall and looked at him.

"Shall we go?" she asked.

She insisted that they take the boat. She had never been on the *bateaux-mouches,* and it was what she wanted most to do. Rutherford was somewhat uneasy at bringing her thus into contact with the throng of hard-working people who crowd the deck of the fleet Seine ferries, but her simplicity he saw made her oblivious of the dusty, toil-worn laborers, the "little people." They caught sight of her, in her exquisite gown of pink batiste, her hat of black plumes, and her parasol of pink, as one beholds an orchid or some flower that is natural and beautiful.

Leaving the river at St. Cloud, Rutherford and Olivia had soon climbed the long, roughly paved hillside and entered the park. Olivia was delighted. It was really a park, this St. Cloud about which she had heard so much. It was really a forest; it was almost like America. Why had she not come before? They must return often now that she had found the way.

"I'm afraid you won't be in Paris long enough to come often," Rutherford said to her. "Why, the season is almost over. You will be going to Aix or Deauville or some place with the Countess."

"Yes," she assented; "I suppose we will have to go to Aix in July. I shall hate it, it is so hot, and just like Paris."

Rutherford had found an old stone bench, and he proposed that they rest.

"I don't need to rest," she said, "but I'd just as soon sit down. It seems thousands of miles away from a city here. You can't believe that Paris is right there;" and she pointed to a break in the beech trees beyond which appeared the horizon of the populous town, at this distance silent and enveloped in the haze from countless chimneys, whose smoke blended the innumerable homes into one vast gigantic field of masonry.

When Olivia had sat down on the stone bench, Rutherford sat beside her on the grass.

"You can't imagine," he said, "how becoming that green light is to you."

And he covered thus his desire to look at Olivia, to look not only at her eyes, but to watch and study her. Every turn of her head, every gesture, the roundness of her waist, her slender throat, the grace of her whole being, breathed for him a charm ineffable.

When Olivia turned her gaze from the far-away city to her companion, he was still looking at her. Hastily he said:

"And in August? Have you any plans for August?"

"We are going with Mr. Harris coaching over the Simplon to Lugano. But I thought you were coming, too?"

His eyes met hers questioningly.

"I am asked," he said.

"Do go," she urged, with a tone so friendly and so devoid of sentiment that Rutherford felt as though she had added: "It can't make any difference to me whether you come or not."

He planned promptly a bit of diplomacy. Was he jealous—could he be? he asked himself. Aloud he said:

"I don't care much for some of the people Mr. Harris has asked on his party."

Rutherford believed that, added to the pink reflection which clouded about Olivia in the soft folds of her dress, there was a touch of deeper rose color in her cheeks as she asked quickly:

"Which people don't you like?"

"The Le Forts." He pronounced the name slowly, and then after a moment he added: "Not both of the Le Forts. I think the wife is all right."

The color was dyeing crimson the cheeks over which it spread. Rutherford went on:

"The man, too, may be all right, only I don't care for that sort."

"What sort?" Her tone was hard.

"I don't think Le Fort is a good friend."

Here Rutherford threw from him the blade of grass as though it were something heavy that disgusted him.

Olivia shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't know anything about him as a friend. The Countess MacBride and I could hardly consider him more than an acquaintance. He is amusing," she added—"more amusing than the average."

She was thinking of the day at Cap Martin. She remembered Rutherford's expression as she had come upon him under the trees near the hotel. That he should be vaguely jealous in an undefined sort of way, she did not object, but if in reality his remarks about Le Fort were the outcome of a suspicion founded on what he had seen or heard, then she resented his manner, which was much too pointed for one who, as she put it in her rapid mental summary, "did not even care for her."

"One does n't have to make friends with every one," she said, trying to provoke Rutherford to a further criticism of Le Fort. Her companion smiled at her, and, coming over to where she was, he asked if he might sit by her on the stone bench, and then he said:

"I hope you will make a friend of me."

"Yes, of course," she responded, reseating herself with a sweep of her pink skirts on the end of the bench, opposite the man.

"I mean a true friend," he said. "The kind of a friend who would do anything, and be ready to serve you to the end."

"Americans are so different," she began.

Rutherford waited, and then:

"Better or worse?"

"Neither. They 're so awfully safe!" she laughed.

"And Frenchmen?" he asked, piqued at being put in the category of the harmless.

"Foreigners are all villains, of course," she said. "That has been decided long ago, but they do treat one as though one were a woman, and not as though they had never seen anything but boys and men."

"Is that what we do?"

Rutherford was amused, seeing that Olivia was giving something of herself in this unconscious avowal of her preferences.

"Oh, Americans!" She stopped and laughed. "You don't count, do you? Americans think it is uncivilized to treat you as though——"

"As though what?"

"Oh, I don't know." And she seemed to regret. Her brows were puckered, and she did not see how to put what she wanted to say. "As though one were not intended to be made love to; as though it were sort of tragic and unnatural to tell a woman that they love her." She turned to him, her head thrown back, one arm outstretched and balancing her parasol upon its pointed tip which she had sunk into the ground. "There is nothing tragic about it, is there?"

"It depends——"

Olivia did not let him continue.

"You are just like the others!" she cried. "It depends, it always depends!"

"And with foreigners," Rutherford corrected himself—"with a foreigner it does n't depend?"

"No, not exactly. Foreigners don't seem to classify every woman except the one they marry as 'impossible' and treat her as though they did n't even see her."

"Then we 're very much in the wrong?" asked Rutherford, with something that was like physical pain at what Olivia was saying.

"I don't know whether you 're wrong. You 're just different."

She was surprised at the ease with which she talked to this man, knowing him not to be in love with her.

"I don't believe—in fact, I 'm sure," she said—"that I should n't want an American to make love to me unless he really loved me."

"Whereas the others?"

"Oh, they are so clever! They mean nothing they say, and they say it so deliciously."

Rutherford was raging inwardly, raging against the men who had dared to say anything to Olivia, against the influence which surrounded her and of whose perfidy she was unconscious; raging against his own longing to protect her as he loved her, and against his inability to speak; against his poverty which forbade him the right even to show her how he cared for her. The outcome of this sudden intrusion of discouraging thoughts upon his mind was an exclamation that sounded almost like a groan. Olivia looked swiftly at him, and the color mounted to her cheeks as she saw in the eyes that met hers an expression which seemed at the same time to judge her and to appeal to her. This worldly emancipation of which she was growing proud, since it permitted her to live with greater familiarity and ease among those who constituted her *milieu,* seemed, as she thought of it from Rutherford's point of view, something to be regretted, something insincere, that diminished her in his esteem.

She got up from the stone bench and pulled her parasol from the hole into which she had driven it.

"It must be late," she said. "I want to go back to Paris now."

"We have had no tea!" Rutherford exclaimed, conscious suddenly, by the lengthening shadows, of how quickly the time had passed. "The Countess will think I have taken bad care of you. I am afraid she won't trust you to me again."

Olivia answered nothing. Her pink gown trailed its light flounces over the moss and underbrush in the path as they walked on. When they came out into the open road, she gathered up her skirts and struck out quickly, setting the pace for Rutherford. She did not look at him again. He was telling her about St. Cloud: how the people had burned it during the Commune, how beautiful it was, how the Emperor had lived there with the little Prince Imperial. She only half heard him. She was thinking that his way of looking at things was different from hers; that he had been brought up in the East and she in the West, that his family was an old one—one of the oldest in America—and that hers—what was hers? Her father was the only person she had ever known in her family. Where were the others? These reflections had been started in her mind by Rutherford's exclamation before they turned homeward, and by the expression in his eyes as he had looked at her; she had seen him, it seemed to her, for the first time then. Something had gone out from her to him in that exchange of glances. She was under an impression of having been with him for years and of finding it natural. She wanted to know about him—all about him.

"You see," he was saying, "the Prussians stormed the place right and left, they even pillaged it. There"—he stopped and pointed to the crest of the hill—"that is just where the château stood."

She knew that he talked of the Prussians and the château because he did not wish to speak again of personal things. He seemed in spirit a thousand miles away from her. Why had this alienation come just when she wanted to know him? Awkward in all she tried to say, she was only the more troubled by his courtesy.

The Countess had sent the coupé for her; it waited at the bridge. When she was seated in it she held out her hand to Rutherford.

"I've had an awfully nice afternoon," she said.

His hat was lifted, and with his hand he brushed back the hair from his brow. There was something weary and at the same time impatient in his gesture. She started to speak, then she nodded good-by again, and as the horse sprang forward, she said:

"I didn't mean those things I said about Americans and Frenchmen. It was awfully silly of me. Please forget them."

When she had driven a little way she looked out through the tiny window at the back of the carriage. She could see Rutherford walking down the quay with a long, regular step, as though he were thinking deeply about something. Then the carriage crossed the bridge, turned up the Cours la Reine, and she lost sight of him.

The sun, now setting, showered gold from the skies, the waters of the river moved in its dazzling reflection, there was an odor of acacias, heavy and penetrating, which reached Olivia as they approached the Bois. The side streets through which they made their way were still deserted, the distant roar announced the homeward rush of the innumerable equipages which had made their tour of the Bois before depositing their fair occupants at home in time to dress for dinner.

Olivia felt herself momentarily apart from this band of pleasure-seekers. In the vacant avenues she realized a new loneliness which had not before touched her. She had been homesick for her father, for Detroit, now there was something else in her heart. . . .

XII.

TENAFLY had won the Grand Prix.

Six weeks in advance Harris had had his tables engaged for dinner at the Ambassadeurs, and supper at the Café de Paris, on "Grand Prix" night. Now as he paid one more enormous tip to the head waiter of the former establishment, one more enormous bill for a rare menu and wines still more rare, he had—he recognized it with a touch of shame—a slight feeling of relief—relief that the "season" was over, relief that he could get away from Paris, relief that he was to be for a moment withdrawn from the whirl which, however proud and eager he was to be in it, used him up, bewildered him. He argued with himself, unwilling to let Van Motte know his state of mind:

"It 's not that I don't care for my friends"—and the photographs which bedecked his salon and sitting-room testified to his sentimental attachments—"but I never see anything of them. Even when they are with me, I 'm not exactly 'in it.'"

Again on this night of the great race, Harris felt a certain isolation among his guests. They had buzzed and hummed about him in congratulation, they had drunk to his health in his champagne—the best France could afford—and then, as usual, he had become a sort of spectator to others who, as it were, directed his party. He blamed himself for what he considered his fault. "Americans," he thought, "don't know how to amuse themselves. They either burn the candle at both ends or else they act as though the only functions they had ever attended were funerals."

For a time it had been enough for him to see the Princess enjoy herself with others. Now he had an obscure jealousy with regard to her. Van Motte was too attentive; it was quite unsuitable for a poor secretary to flutter about this lovely noblewoman as he did.

Moreover, Harris wished to be alone with her.

She had asked him once to take her for supper to the Café de Paris, and he had made bold, with an audacity that amazed him, to plan on this brilliant night of his victory at the race-course to sup alone with the titled lady. As his dinner party dispersed she gave him her hand.

"It 's understood then," he said. "Eleven thirty at the Café?"

"How good you are," she smiled at him. "Always planning for our pleasures!"

And long before eleven thirty, Harris was installed in a chosen corner of the small triangular restaurant.

The head waiter hovered about him, helped him to compose the menu for his *invités*.

"Monsieur think one bottle of champagne enough?" The smile which showed his even, white teeth explained his allusion to the race.

"You thought I wanted to celebrate, I suppose?" Harris chuckled. He could not let go by this chance to acknowledge the triumph of which for many reasons he was proud.

"Oh, monsieur, what a horse!" The waiter shifted the napkin under his arm and crossed his hands, following his gesture with a eulogy of Tenafly which Harris would have given anything to word as well as this man-servant.

"Make anything on the race?" asked the American, looking about the room and speaking from the corner of his mouth lest any one should think he were not talking about food and in a natural way with a waiter.

"Oh, monsieur!"—he held up his five fingers. "We back Tenafly with our eyes shut. We back our *clients,* monsieur."

The servant left him. Harris looked at his watch. It was twenty to twelve. He wondered how much time he could allow the Princess without giving up hope.

Boldi, the Tzigane leader, perceiving his impatience, took advantage of it. Swinging his bow across the arch of his violin, he smiled, shook his head, lowered it so that his eyes appeared level with his flying fingers, and wrung forth, swaying and rhythmic, one of the negro melodies which Paris had adopted. Like a cardinal bird in a tropical forest, he flitted about as he played, bowing at last to make way for the Princess, who had arrived.

Harris's eyes opened wide as he saw her enter, not alone, but accompanied by Van Motte, Benoni, and the Prince Rovero. She had been driving in the Bois, she explained, throwing aside her wraps. She was very hungry, and she was sure, designating her companions, that "*ces Messieurs* must be too." To each of her remarks Harris made a mechanical response, beckoning the waiter, ordering the table enlarged, more champagne brought, more supper served . . . and when the little meal was spread for five, Harris had become again like the outsider among his own guests. The Princess, dressed in a gown of mousseline which shimmered and glowed in all the pink coral tints of the flamingo, smiled irresistibly at the American. She even made bold in a moment when the others were engaged in conversation to rest her hand insinuatingly upon Harris's arm, giving him to understand as much by her expression as by the few words she spoke, that it would have been compromising—but very compromising—for her to meet him and have supper with him alone at the Café de Paris.

There was less intensity in his remorse at this communication than there had been at his first awkwardnesses with the Princess. His feelings were somewhat like the preliminary shiver of the animal that has been rubbed the wrong way, the incipient reflex of the worm that begins to turn.

Yet his titled companion, in this gown that appeared like a flame whose ardor paled as it rose enveloping her, leaving uncovered her throat, upon whose snowy surface the shadows played under the broad, transparent brim of her feather-laden hat—the Princess seemed to him more adorable than ever. He looked at her and was able to say nothing, and with the fatal attraction of one who is made to suffer in an amorous attachment, he dreaded the moment of separation from his tortures, he wanted more than anything to know when he could be with her again.

XIII.

HARRIS's party had been several days settled in his villa near Stresa, on Lake Maggiore. As at Paris, it was the Baroness Benoni who had chosen the house for him and furnished it, getting everything in readiness for the host and his friends, who had driven four-in-hand over the Simplon.

Rutherford was the only delinquent. He had been on what Mr. Harris called "a goose chase" through Italy, with friends who found automobiling better sport than coaching. A trifle piqued at this defection on the part of the young American, Harris awaited eagerly his arrival, feeling that until he came there was something lacking to complete—to complete what? he asked himself,—the style or the romance of the party? There was a yearning for both in his heart which led him to confuse reality and his desires.

The ladies were assembled on the veranda, after *déjeuner,* in that somewhat exasperated mood that all women entertain when they have been long together. The Countess was taking a sun bath. Her head enveloped in a green veil, her back turned toward the lake, she sat in one corner of the porch, her attention wandering from the novel open before her to the conversation of the Princess, the Baroness Benoni, and Madame Le Fort.

The Baroness was saying:

"We shall get horribly tired of this place before the month is up."

"You think?" queried the Princess.

"I 'm afraid we shall get no exercise whatever," put in Madame Le Fort. "People never walk in places where there 's a lake. Have you noticed that?" she insisted with the Englishwoman's tenacity for making all agree with her about what she is alone to observe. The ladies had not remarked this peculiarity about lakeside resorts, and Madame Le Fort leaned forward and said again:

"But it *is* so, is n't it?"

"She 's the sort of woman," the Countess was thinking to herself, "who drive men distracted." And as though she had heard nothing she called out, shutting her book listlessly:

"Does n't somebody want to go for a walk with me?"

Mrs. Le Fort thought this an extraordinary coincidence, and she set about at once finding parasols for herself and the Countess.

The Baroness had letters to write, but the Princess was not many moments left alone, for Harris, as though he had been watching this chance, joined her. She smiled up at him in an adorable confidence and lisped:

"How delicious is Maggiore, and zis villa especially!"

"Really?" he exclaimed. "You like it? I 'd no idea you 'd care for this sort of life—so quiet—no gaiety—nothing of any sort much——"

"Ah!" she said, "a beautiful place, wiz friends . . wiz—*a* friend, —zis is not nothing!"

"That 's very kind of you," he said, beaming like a child.

He wore a blue serge suit which became him, and as he leaned against the porch railing, swaying back and forth with his hands in his coat-pockets, he looked almost boyish.

"Why not sit down?" she asked.

He pulled a chair up close to the *chaise longue* on which she was reclining, drew it away again a little, and then sat down on the edge of it.

"Did you mean that just now," he said, "about . . . *a* friend?"

"Surelee," she nodded sweetly.

"But you certainly did n't mean *me*, did you?" He hardly lifted his eyes to hers.

"Of course." Both her hands emphasized this protestation in a pretty gesture.

Harris looked down again.

"It seems more than four months since we met," he murmured.

"Yes, it seems we know each osser when we meet!"

"Do you remember that day?" He looked up at her and stopped.

"I remember so many! Which one?"

"That rainy day when we did n't go to Cap Martin, don't you know, and I came over to see you in the morning?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And do you remember what you said?"

The lady had slipped half way from the *chaise longue* and was no longer reclining, but seated upright, one hand on either end of her parasol.

Harris hung on her words. She stared innocently at him, smiling. It seemed to him all would depend on what she answered.

"Well?" she asked. "What did I say? I say so many zings."

His voice fell and there was a disheartened accent in his words as he said slowly:

"You don't remember . . . ?"

"Well?" she purred again.

"Oh, it was nothing," he blustered—"just some remarks you made about the nobility, and money, and Americans being lucky not to be hampered by questions of birth, and your feelings that there were days when you longed . . ."

"What did I long?" The smile did not change from her lips.

"Why, longed to be *free!*" When the last word came finally out it was almost with contempt, so contradictory were the sentiments of this man who half despised what he enjoyed without approval. Instantly the Princess's manner altered. She sprang up and exclaimed in a way that made Harris believe for a moment he had caused her some physical pain:

"Oh! Oh!"

Then as though mastering herself, she added, with a certain grace:

"Do we not all long to be *free?*"

"Oh, yes, of course; I don't mean anything personal," Harris murmured. "I suppose I was only alluding to the American idol."

"You mean," the Princess responded, "zat money is ze only zing zat can make one free?"

"Well, perhaps not just that . . . but if a woman accepts, for instance, the name of an honorable man who has money"—Harris thrust his hand into his coat, as though to give himself courage for the declaration he felt imminent—"if she accepts his name, you understand, there's a kind of freedom goes with it. I mean, it would make everything easier for the woman."

The Princess, too, felt a declaration imminent. She had never been so irresistible; she smiled, and balanced the parasol back and forth, gazing up at Harris with a babyish expression as though she understood nothing, and meanwhile her mind worked like lightning. If Harris asked her to marry him, she was lost—she could no longer use him—she must refuse his offer of real protection. He could not admit her encouraging him thus far only to meet his final advances with a rebuff. So, with an attractive little laugh which once more gave him the impression that he was an imbecile, she rose, and lazily drifted towards the door which opened onto the porch.

"We women," she twittered, holding the long French window open, "love ze mystery; we don't like sings too easy. We fear insincerity. But—you excuse. I have no time for ze discussion of such sentimental matters—I have promise myself to write to-day some dreadfool business letters. It is ze time soon for ze mail . . . You excuse?"

And Harris was left more bewildered at this very moment when with his declaration on his lips he had supposed the crisis to be imminent, the dénouement of his life about to be attained; he found himself—as he seemed, indeed, always to be finding himself—deserted by those upon whom he had fancied he could count the most. . . .

Harris's meditations were interrupted by the arrival of Rutherford, who almost threw himself into the older man's arms, with that exuberance which the young show to all when stimulated by the immediate prospects of seeing and being near the loved one. He had had an astonishing trip. There was no country like Italy, but Maggiore, and especially this villa, was more attractive than anything he had seen. He noticed nothing of the dazed manner of his companion, and Harris, half mistrusting that his guest would fathom at once the cause of his absent-mindedness, applied himself to the material attentions which he loved as host to shower upon his friends.

"It 's quieter here than in Paris," he exclaimed, smiling and offering his companion cigars and cigarettes when the coffee was served. Instinctively, with all his reserve, Harris hoped that the conversation would come around to sentimental matters, for he had confidence in Rutherford's youth and his worldly experience, as he had confidence in the Baroness Benoni's taste for house-furnishing. Rutherford represented to him his own untried chances, and, indeed, there was a certain generous determination on Harris's part, that whatever his own unfortunate destiny might be, the young American must be happy in his love affairs.

"So you 're glad to be here, are you?" he asked, smiling and slipping the cigar from his lips with his thumb and middle finger, which continued to roll the weed back and forth while he contemplated its glowing end.

"Glad? I should say so! I 've been horribly bored, to tell you the truth, with those friends of mine."

Harris looked gratified.

"I have n't been able to do a stroke of work."

"Work!" Harris exclaimed. "Did you expect to work?"

"I never needed to more in my life." Harris had the American distaste for dwelling upon any situation from which he saw no immediate issue—but he reflected on this last remark of Rutherford's.

And aloud he said with something like tenderness in his lowered tone:

"I 'll bet anything you 're in love."

Rutherford, as he looked up at this statement, found the older man's eyes resting upon him with a smile that courted approbation at the same time that it seemed to say: "I 've found you out. I knew it all the time."

"Well, yes," Rutherford answered. "Since you 've guessed it. I am in love, of course. I love Miss Endicott."

"I knew it. I 've known it ever since that first time we talked together at Monte Carlo."

"Is n't it miserable of me! I ought n't to be here. I should go off as far as possible and try to forget her. I 've no business hanging round in this way." He got up and set to pacing the room, throwing his hand out in an angry, half-desperate way. "I 'm a good-for-nothing pauper. I can't even work. I 'm haunted by her image. I see it when I 'm awake, I see it when I 'm asleep. It seems to plead with me, to reproach me."

He flung himself again into the chair where he had been sitting and held both hands to his head, resting his elbows on his knees. Harris, thinking of his own case, and finding the reflection apt, said with the accent that experience alone gives:

"Money is n't everything by a long shot. If Miss Endicott was poor and you a millionaire, there 's no certainty she 'd have you if she did n't love you."

"Oh, *love* me," Rutherford repeated, catching only at the last word of Harris's phrase. "I have no right to make love to her. Don't you understand it would be dishonorable for me to try to win her love. That 's why I 've got no business here."

He held out his hand to the older man and said:

"Help me to get away, to be a man, will you?"

"I 'll help you," Harris assured him, wringing his hand, and then, this resolution taken, Rutherford began irresistibly to talk again of his love for the girl. As Harris listened, the bright reflection which the light from without cast on the surface of his blue eyes grew clearer and more brilliant, before becoming blurred . . . "It is too ridiculous," he thought to himself, "to be so weak that you can't manage your own love affairs and have to weep over other people's." Rutherford wandered on from the expression of his love for Olivia which had so touched Harris, to a reiteration of his intention to work.

"Other men have made a way in the world," his companion assured him. "My personal opinion is that it 's harder to win a woman's heart than to earn a fortune!"

"But it takes so horribly long to get even a second-rate position, and I can't speak until I have something sure; that is the awful part of it. She does n't know I care for her. She has every reason to believe the contrary. I 've almost tried to make her, in fact. I thought I ought to—I don't mean that I think she cares"—he threw out his hand as though Olivia's feelings for him could be best described by the snap of his fingers—"but if she *did* care, *could* care, could be made to care . . ." He set to pacing the room again, then he stopped short in front of Harris, and with a pathetic, determined resignation in his voice he concluded:

"Why, I should be a doddering old man before she could ever know that *I* cared! Don't you see what a horrible position it is?"

"It 's not exactly a gilt-edged security," the American responded, pushing things around on his desk, making squares and triangles with the paper cutter and ink-bottles, as he was wont to do when some plan which had not taken shape was formulating in his mind. "It might be worse," he added, and Rutherford, who had gone to the window and was looking out toward the lake and its beautiful sloping shores and shadowy, far-away mountains, responded a word about the wonderful outlook.

"There 's something to be thankful for yet," Harris said in his optimistic tone. He had left the table and joined Rutherford, pleased that he had, withal, indirectly alluded to the beauty of the view. He stood by him for a time, watching the scene that lay before them and impressed them both.

"It 's not appalling, like the Swiss scenery," Rutherford was saying. "There 's something more intimate about it, and yet it 's absolutely silent here. You can't hear a sound except the water's lapping. What a place! Imagine it in the moonlight . . . and with the woman you loved . . ."

His host listened, smiling contentedly at hearing his own enthusiasm put for him into words. He slipped his arm through Rutherford's, saying, "There 's no use in getting too blue! Things may come out all right yet."

XIV.

It was several days after Rutherford's arrival that Olivia set out one afternoon alone for the lake, determined to go fishing. To Mr. Harris she explained that she had fished at home, that Maggiore reminded her of home, and that she adored fishing. Inwardly she recognized that her only reason for not doing what the others did was that she might be alone with the chance of seeing Rutherford. He had not come with them on Harris's coaching party over the Simplon. This had piqued her, and the expedition in consequence had seemed stupid and interminable. She had flirted more openly with Le Fort in Rutherford's presence because his indifference exasperated her. And the result had been exactly contrary to her expectations. She had supposed that he would be more, and not less, attentive to her, provoked by this attachment which she knew he disapproved—his very disapproval indeed gave an added piquancy to her adventure with the foreigner. This she realized only when she found herself for a fortnight's excursion in the open air, with no other spectator to Le Fort's attention than his wife, his jealous, his stupid, pitiful, jealous wife. It was the feeling of disgust gradually gaining upon her which made Olivia turn impulsively toward the thought of Rutherford.

She had donned a garden hat for this improvised expedition; its irregular brim was weighted with a wreath of roses, two velvet ribbons floated from under the crown. She caught one of them in her hand. In the other she held a pole, a tiny basket, and a book.

"Are you . . ." she hesitated, and Harris looked tenderly at this graceful form whose youth seemed to give life even to the inanimate clothes that partook of the wearer's ineffable charm. She began again, getting this time further with the question that she wanted to put: "Are you *all* going over to see the ruins?"

"No." Harris waited a moment. "The Princess is going, and the

Countess, and Van Motte said he'd serve as guide. He knows the place, I believe. But the Le Forts will be here, and Mr. Rutherford," he added, "in case you catch so many fish you don't know what to do."

Olivia wandered down through the gardens to the water's edge. Here she threw the bait into the water with the basket that contained it, she slipped the pole into the long grass, and then she settled herself into a spot where she could be seen from the boat-house, and with a pretense at reading she laid a book open on her knees.

"Now," she thought, "if he does n't come, it is because he hates me . . . He saw me start, he knows exactly where I am. If he does n't follow, it's because he does n't want to be with me. There's no reason why he *should* want to be with me, only . . ." A crackling in the bushes near by changed her meditation. She waited. Then she turned her head . . . It was only a sound of the wind in the trees . . . She made herself more comfortable, and, leaning against a tree by which she had chosen to seat herself, she half closed her eyes as though the lids were freighted with the golden light from the blue heavens above. The sound of the water lapping against the little sloping dock of the boat-house reached her; the line of the mountains against the sky, the wood-covered hillsides, the moving shadows—it seemed to her that she was at home, on the northern lakes—but between the high arched horizon and the melodious waters there were the little pink villages, foreign, mysterious, lodged here and there among the trees like sunset clouds that had caught at the twilight hour, among the green foliage, lingering there, clinging there. There was something in this mingled landscape that made Olivia homesick.

"It's the villages," she thought; "it's as though strange people had come and settled on my own lakeside."

She turned her back toward them, settling on the other side of the tree with a vision only of sweeping lawn and rose-hedges over which the roof of Harris's villa appeared. But in the nearer foreground stood Rutherford, his hat lifted.

"How you frightened me!" she cried.

"Did n't you see me?"

"No."

"I've been there by the hedge for an age, looking at you."

"How horrible! How could you know where I was?"

"I watched you start from the house. Have you caught many fish?"

He lifted her fishing-pole from the long grass where it lay. Olivia shook her head as he held it out to her.

"I did n't want to fish. I only came down here because I was bored. I wanted to be alone."

"Does that mean I can't stay?"

"No," she pouted; "I don't mind you. I did n't want to go and visit ruins, and I did n't feel like seeing a lot of people." Then, smiling at Rutherford with a certain humility so unlike her ordinary manner, she said:

"You 're not like the others. You 're different."

Rutherford had arrived with a certain provision of courage, expecting the lady to be as usual, somewhat severe, and prepared to retaliate with a certain flippancy, if not pride. This sudden unbending on her part disconcerted him. There was something so adorable in the expression of her eyes as he caught sight of them under the rose-laden brim of her garden hat . . . He sat awkwardly down by her side and asked her, as a tired bank-clerk might ask a Saturday to Monday girl, if she were enjoying her stay at Maggiore. She responded with an insinuating accent that some parts of it had been delightful, and Rutherford then proffered this information about himself:

"My visit 's about over. I 'm going back in a few days to Paris."

Olivia did not answer this remark. Why should she? What difference could it make to her whether he went back or not? But presently, when they had talked for a time in a banal manner about other things, Olivia said:

"Why do you return to Paris in September? It 's just the loveliest time here."

"I have to begin work again."

"Nobody works in September," she stated. "That can't be your only reason. Is it?"

"One reason 's enough, they say. Nobody ever has two reasons for doing a thing." He looked at her, she was so young, so lovely. He longed to tell her that he adored her. Her very seriousness in questioning him about himself added a new charm to what already pleased him absolutely.

She wanted him to be frank. She felt his reticence, and little knew from what cause it proceeded.

"Well, then," she said, turning about so that she could look directly at him, "what is the *real* reason for going away?"

"The real reason is . . ." He began slowly, not knowing whether to tell her. After all, it was no dishonor to be loved—but he finished his phrase by a generalization: "The real reason is always the same, no matter how doddering or how miserable you may be . . ."

"I know!" she interrupted him. "I knew all the time. That 's why you did n't come on the coach with us over the Simplon;" her tone was becoming indignant. "The real reason 's a *woman!*"

Rutherford drank in this denunciation like nectar. He would not for anything have contradicted her. Her eyes were brilliant, they flashed at him an unspoken reproach.

"Yes," he said; "that 's the reason—a woman, of course. That was why I did n't drive over the Simplon . . . on account of a woman!"

"I knew it!" she cried. "I knew it all the time;" and she turned away from him and leaned hard against the tree, grinding her shoulders into the rough bark.

"I don't see why you came here at all!"

"Are you so sorry as that?"

"No," she hesitated; "I 'm not speaking for myself. I was only thinking about you;" and archly she added: "Don't you see, you 're wasting your time?"

Rutherford raised his eyes quickly at these words. Were they addressed to him as a warning?

He sought from her expression to determine; but her mouth and brow portrayed the same indefinable mixture of flippancy and pique as when she had first spoken.

His suffering was augmented. Oh, to tell her everything! It was for this he yearned. The pride which had steeled him in the early days of his love, he could no longer summon to his aid. Harris's contempt for money was affecting him subtly . . . but, even with money out of the question, Olivia would never care for him!

"Well?" she queried, as though she had expected an answer to her last question.

"Well?" Rutherford responded. "Nothing."

"Nothing?" she asked. "You don't seem a bit interested. I have a confession at the tip of my tongue."

"Yes?"

"Yes, about the Simplon."

"Oh!" There was a shade of disappointment, discreet, unobtrusive, in Rutherford's "Oh!"

But Olivia mistook it for indifference. In her hastened breathing there was something of wounded pride that this man should show so little interest in her, and something that was only the emotion of being with him and of longing to have him understand her . . . love her. Yet she was unable to say what was on her mind. She only shook her head.

"I wanted you to know," she said in a low tone, and leaning toward Ralph so that he could breathe the sweet freshness that exhaled from her young throat, "after that silly conversation at St. Cloud, I wanted to say that I hate Frenchmen now."

Rutherford realized that this meant for him a victory. She was wiping away for him, with a sweep of that perfect little hand which lay so near his now, all rivals, the rivals that might have caused him uneasiness. Yet he dared not speak; something of the old Puritan restraint, the long-time cultivated respect of honesty and money, tied his tongue. Olivia's millions stood, rose like a vast, a powerful wall between them, strong enough to keep him back, and far too formidable for her to scale. Indeed, she could not catch even a glimpse from above of Rutherford's adoring attitude. She mistook, as though imperfectly she perceived, his reserve for indifference. She suffered, and he suffered: he because of yearning to fold her in his arms and to tell her that he was strong and brave enough to face and fight the world and stern necessity for her; and she because she longed to come close against him where she might feel at last the enveloping shelter of love's haven, where words are superfluous to the pure understanding that comes with mutual trust and adoration.

Something of the bond that fluttered and wavered between the two without finding its definite base was expressed by the silence which indeed spoke for the two lovers, spoke coaxingly, allured and led on their thoughts, averted for them all obstacles, bringing them fast to that moment whose supremest eloquence is abandon in a first embrace . . .

But just here the sound of voices reached them; moving figures were distinguishable through the branches that swayed in the sun.

Rutherford sprang up . . . He called himself back in reality.

"They 've come back from their sight-seeing," he said. "We 've been fishing, have n't we? Have we caught anything?"

The voices came nearer. Olivia could distinguish that they were looking for her. With a desperate little gesture she cried:

"I did n't come here to fish! I came because I wanted to be alone, because I hoped that you would come and find me!"

She had risen and was looking about in the grass for her handkerchief and gloves, so that the man could not see her face; and, having gathered up all her possessions, she turned again to him:

"I wanted to be with you. It was awfully silly of me"—she lifted her eyes to him—"because I 've only bored you!"

And then, with an expression that Rutherford could not forget, she left him, half running, to regain more rapidly the Countess and Harris, who were drifting slowly towards the water's edge, with the idle contentment of those who have returned home after a long afternoon of sight-seeing.

XV.

Lost between a dream and hazy reality seen through the drifting smoke that curled upward from his cigar, Harris was half dozing in his study when the door opened with a rush, closed again, and Olivia's slender silhouette appeared against the wooden panels. One hand was behind her back as she held the door-knob, hesitating:

"May I stay a moment?"

Harris sprang up, threw away his cigar, dusted the ashes from his coat, and shook himself as though he could not quite believe his eyes.

"I did n't mean to disturb you," she began.

"I am delighted, Miss Olivia;" he was dragging a big chair for her toward the open window.

"Mr. Harris——" Her tone commanded attention. He dropped the chair, and she took her place in it, sitting quite on the edge, framed by the green leather arms between which her slender figure appeared fragile, elusive, in its gown of muslin.

Harris, too, seated himself and crossed his hands as he did when prepared to hear some story which was to lay claim upon the inward supply of human sympathy which he had long ago hoped to exhaust,—believing it to be, in a business man especially, a weakness.

He fitted his fingers together and, bowing slightly over them, he looked up and asked:

"What is it, Miss Endicott?"

"I 'm dreadfully unhappy!" she exclaimed.

"Unhappy?"

"Yes—and I 've got no one to speak to. The Countess would say it was my fault, and the only person I could tell anything to does n't care for me."

"Ah!" There were several different inflections in Harris's "Ah!" and Olivia might answer any she liked. She chose to defend herself.

"It is n't my fault. I can't help it. I 've done everything I can. Perhaps in the beginning I might have acted differently, but I did n't understand; I thought all men were alike . . ."

"I 'm sure it was n't your fault." Harris could say this heartily while waiting for enlightenment.

"Yes, but you don't know," she hurried on. "It 's about Mr. Le Fort I 'm talking. You see, he 's been making love to me—dreadful love!" she added.

"He has!"

"At Monte Carlo"—Olivia seemed determined to tell everything—"it sort of amused me. I thought it was just like an American—it did n't mean anything."

"Scoundrel!"

"But here, and on the Simplon—oh, I don't know what he wants!" she cried. "I think he wants to divorce Mrs. Le Fort. It 's horrible—horrible!" Her hands fluttered in emphatic little gestures of distress. "And I know Mrs. Le Fort is miserable, and I don't care a bit about him. Oh!" Shaking her head, she looked at Harris. "I don't see how I can possibly stay here any longer."

"Why! Why!" Harris thrust his hands deep down in his coat-pockets.

"You know how fond I am of you, Mr. Harris," she explained, troubled at the thought that he might think he was responsible for her perplexity. "I love to be here. But it's so humiliating, and that is n't all—I 've only told you half."

"I 'll ask Mr. Le Fort to leave." His cheerful accents suggested that this was his sure solution.

"No, no!" Olivia reiterated. "That 's not the real reason."

"It 's reason enough. Any dastard in his position, to make love to a young girl, when his wife 's under the same roof . . . !" Harris clenched his fist. "Why, he ought to be throttled!"

"Yes, but even if he were throttled"—a shade of a smile lit up Olivia's eyes—"it would n't do me any good—I 'd be just as unhappy as I was before."

"Well . . ." Her host was mystified.

"You promise you won't tell? I have to speak to somebody . . . It 's on account of Ralph Rutherford that I 'm unhappy." The color mounted slowly and dyed her cheeks. When they were flaming she said deliberately: "I 'm in love with Mr. Rutherford. He does n't care anything about me, and I can't possibly stay and see him any more. It makes me too miserable." Her face she again buried in her arm, and this time Harris had no doubts. She was weeping. Yet, hidden from her, he let a smile traverse his features, a smile of victory and satisfaction. These tears of Olivia's were of the sweeter sort—like the fresh drops of a spring shower they fell on the sun's way to make a rainbow of promises. They seemed of no consequence to Harris. Already his mind was at work on the reconciliation of these two unfortunate lovers. Even his outraged sentiments for Le Fort took a sickly hue as compared to the warm glow of this prospective happiness.

Olivia, averting her face, and occasionally brushing her handkerchief across her eyes, asked in an appealing note:

"You won't say anything to anybody, will you?"

Taking the hand she impulsively outstretched to him, Mr. Harris smiled.

"You can count on me."

"And you 'll understand, won't you, why I don't stay any longer? I can't explain to the Countess exactly, but Le Fort is reason enough for leaving, is n't he? And then," she added, some of her merriment regaining possession of her and giving a melancholy charm to the sad visage, "if only the man I loved and the one who loved me were the same; but they 're not, and that 's almost too much for any one, is n't it?"

Her host, reverting mentally to his own case, was tempted to generalize on the anguish of sentimental complications, but he looked again at the face lifted toward his, so fresh, so exquisite, breathing out in its lineless fairness the imperative claim of youth to be happy. It was no time to think of himself.

"Of course I'll speak to nobody;" and here he shook the hand she had left in his. "But you're meant to be happy. And you shall be!" Then as though unwilling to dwell upon this thought, when Olivia had left him, he added once alone:

"Confound Le Fort! I wish that fellow were out of the house!"

XVI.

It was Sunday. The Countess, looking through the Baedeker, had found that at Sutra there was a Protestant Church, and thither on the warm September morning she proposed to accompany her charge. As the sail was an agreeable one, her suggestion met with approval from most of the party, who volunteered to go with her on this expedition. Alone in the large, cool house there remained the Princess, Van Motte, and Harris, the latter closeted with a voluminous mail just received from America.

"I shan't need you," he said to his secretary, who appeared at the door when the party were under way.

Recently indeed he had had little need of this employee. As it happens, when jealousy is at work, or when ingratitude presents itself, a certain feeling of repulsion had replaced the master's former friendly sentiments for his Belgian. Van Motte, confident of being indispensable to Harris, heeded little this indifference, doubting not that the time would shortly come when his employer would again call upon him as of old.

Seeing Van Motte come out of the study empty-handed, the Princess, from a corner of the salon where she had installed herself, called to him:

"Rudolph!"

Perceiving her, he joined her, kissing her hand as he took his place in a comfortable armchair.

"Did he not go to church?" she queried.

Her companion with a tone that denoted irritation exclaimed:

"Did *he* go? He? There is only one he. What he does is all that interests you . . ."

A soft, guttural sound was the only answer, somewhat like the indulgent call of a bird to the reluctant member of its flock.

"Rudolph"—the woman spoke in French—"it is not fair for you to reproach me. What have I done?"

He was sullen.

"What you have done is not to keep to the arrangement that existed between us. You have gone wide of the mark, in spirit and in letter."

She coaxed him:

"Rudolph! We have this little moment together . . ." Her gentleness as she spoke augmented the man's irritation.

"You have been disloyal, you 've played your game with utter disregard of honor—of me."

There was that in his angry accents which warned her no conciliation was for the moment possible. And having once understood that the interview was to be serious, she moved forward on her chair and scrutinized her companion, speaking excitedly and in great haste:

"You reproach me now, you, you! What have I not done for you? When I first heard of this Mr. Harris, when I first saw him at Monte Carlo, you were more absorbed in me than you were in mere . . . money-making—speculations, call it."

"Yes, that 's a good name for it," he muttered.

"You were ready, as you expressed it"—she emphasized her words with impulsive gestures—"to make all you could out of Harris, but I was your first thought, your first interest. The rest was only a means so that we might be more together, have more liberty, more happiness. Then when we came to Paris,—gradually, what happened?"

He looked at her with a certain scornful curiosity.

"Well, what did happen?"

"You were always with the racing men, the *sports*, with 'Tenafly.' I saw nothing of you; Harris could not lay hands on you. I was neglected, he was there. Was it not natural that we should be together? And now you wish to reproach me with this!"

"It 's not for your being together I reproach you. It is your intentions, your disloyalty."

"You speak of an agreement," she cried, "but what woman ever made an agreement that no man should ever fall in love with her? Could I help it if Mr. Harris cared for me? Is it so very unnatural?"

In a pretty movement of appeal, she held out her hands. Van Motte caught one of them and kissed it, while the expression of the Princess softened at this momentary truce.

"You should not be angry with me," she said, "if I was piqued at your neglect in Paris." With a conciliatory stroke, she let her fingers caress Van Motte's hair and neck. "Mr. Harris," she went on, smiling, and breaking her sentences with a gentle sweep of her hand across Van Motte's brow and eyes—"Mr. Harris was not the sort of man with whom one could *flirt*. This was in a way your protection. Don't you suppose that he would have been horrified, but really horrified," she laughed, "if he had supposed that I wanted to flirt with him?"

"Perhaps not as horrified as you think."

The Princess drew her hand away, and the Belgian reiterated.

"You don't know in what light you have appeared to Harris. That is not the question. It is your attitude that exasperates me, that outrages me." He grew more violent, rising and walking about. "I won't have it. You understand? I will not have it."

"Have what?" Perfectly calm, she settled back in the sofa, her arms crossed before her.

"Have that—whatever your feelings toward him—Harris should have arrived at the point of being jealous, and jealous of me! This is clear enough indication as to the power you have exerted, or tried to exert." At the very sound of his own words, Van Motte's anger seemed to accrue. "I won't have it!" he cried. "You are making me ridiculous! And back of all this cajoling, what is there? Nothing but lies! Yes, lies. What do you fancy Harris would think if he knew the truth? Harris the innocent, the honest, the American? His very hair would stand on end if he suspected that . . ."

Still perfectly calm, the Princess stated slowly:

"He would n't suspect. That, at least, is the benefit of his ignorance."

"Suspect? I imagine he would suspect if I *told* him."

"No," she said; "not even if you told him, he would believe nothing against me."

Van Motte drew back, looking with scorn at her. Her emotion marked only by a slight quickening of her breathing as she said:

"You don't believe things against a woman you are ready to marry to-morrow if she would have you!"

"*Marry* you?" Van Motte laughed. "Why, but there are proofs! You don't suppose that if I told him the absolute, undeniable truth, he would still prefer his blindness?"

"When blindness means love . . . it is hard to open its eyes. Mr. Harris more than loves me: he wants me to be happy. He is ready to do anything I ask. He has told me in a hundred ways I need but give the sign and he will make me his wife . . ."

"Treacherous to the end!" Van Motte cried. "And you let him believe there is some chance perhaps of this comedy, this perfidy?"

"I don't know." The Princess shrugged her shoulders. "It might not be so bad. If you continue in this attitude toward me, who knows? Perhaps I could accept the American . . ."

"That we shall see." Van Motte's tone had an ugly ring. "We are two to play this game!" And in an instant, as though some fiendish motive of vengeance and exasperation impelled him, he left the salon, crossed the hall, and, rapping at the study door, he called:

"Mr. Harris!"

The Princess had risen. Distractedly she looked about her as though for some means of escape from the impending scene. The door had opened, and, bewildered, Harris, who answered, was drawn by Van Motte into the room, where at first he did not perceive the Princess. At his gaze of inquiry, Van Motte pointed to the woman.

"Before things go any further in this farce," he cried, "there is something you must know; and as there is no one else here who can or who will enlighten you, I 've assumed the pleasant undertaking." His lip curled scornfully.

As though instinctively to protect the woman, Harris put himself between the Princess and Van Motte. But the Belgian, moving behind him, pointed at his companion.

"Listen to me," he cried. "You have received a stranger here under false pretenses. You have been betrayed in a manner almost ridiculous. There is no telling to what length this comedy might have been carried if I had not been here, fortunately, and able to inform you of what was going on . . ."

"Oh, coward, coward!" the Princess reiterated under her breath. Harris's voice thundered indignantly:

"Explain yourself!"

Van Motte's tone at this sudden command changed, and he said very deliberately:

"This woman"—Harris was still standing between the two, one hand extended toward the Princess—"this woman"—Van Motte pointed to her—"has endeavored to entangle you in some matrimonial combination."

Almost lifeless, the Princess fell back upon the sofa.

"She has just told me herself that you have made clear to her your desire to make her your wife, and her intention of perhaps accepting you. It seems only fair," Van Motte pursued, heedless, "you should know that she has a husband, a living husband, that she is not divorced and not a widow, that she has simply left her husband because he is ruined; abandoned him in some hole of a place in Poland while she waits for him to die. But he is n't dead yet. Let her deny it if she can!" He nodded his head like a madman over these last words.

The American, whose attitude had been defiant, was shaken as though an electric shock had swept over him. Very slowly he turned his eyes toward the Princess.

"Can you," he asked—"can you deny this?"

She made no answer, and again he was shaken by a shock that appeared to contract his features. He reiterated his questions. The

Princess's head, bowed upon her breast, moved, spoke the "No" she dared not utter.

Harris lifted one hand heavily and pointed from Van Motte to the door. The hard, metallic ring of his voice was the only indication of the inward upheaval which left him in appearance calm.

"Not later than to-night," he said, "you shall have left here. You may call upon the servants to help you. As for me, don't show yourself again in my presence, and as to the woman," he said, not addressing her directly, "her cleverness will aid her in finding some . . . new . . . lie out of this. It is unnecessary that . . . my friends here should . . . know her . . . story."

And, walking slowly and with difficulty, he left the room.

XVII.

Van Motte's sudden disappearance that night was explained under the head of "business." He had gone presumably to Paris for his employer. The Princess, having announced her departure for the day following, had also taken her leave of the Maggiore house-party.

Harris, closeted in his room, the door closed and bolted so that nobody could reach him, proceeded deliberately to tear up the two photographs which, since Monte Carlo, had been on his mantelpiece wherever he happened to find himself.

"There!" he exclaimed, throwing the fragments onto the hearth, and setting a match to them. While the flames purred and fluttered about the darkening image of the Princess, he threw several letters on the pyre and a few flowers, dried and faded, which he produced from a table drawer.

"What a woman!" he murmured. As he leaned his head against the old-fashioned chimney-piece, he turned over the little heap of ashes with his foot.

"I was too old!" he repeated. "I should have known better. Any man in my place would have been sorry for her, fascinated by her . . ."

His thoughts reverted to their first encounter on the Casino terrace, and a recollection of his worldly ambitions came to his mind. Thrusting his hands into his pockets, he laughed to himself, and then out loud.

"What a fool I was!"

The smile on his lips changed to an expression of humiliation.

"She meant no harm. The fault was all mine. She could hardly have resisted such an easy prey."

Under the tip of his polished boot he crushed the blackened paper which had unfurled in the flames and lay scattered on the red-tiled fireplace. Pursuing the dark forms that sped like shadows at the approach of his foot, he brought them one after the other under its weight.

"There!" he cried. "So much for that experience!"

Instinctively, with that optimism which characterized him, at this moment his thoughts reverted to Rutherford.

"I guess I know what his feelings are pretty well. Rutherford 's as much of a greenhorn as I am," he reflected. "He needs *enlightenment*. If I don't tell him Miss Endicott loves him, nobody will, and he 's got to know it before he leaves here."

With the prompt decision that characterized him, he seated himself at his desk and pulled brusquely a sheet of paper from a *classeur*.

"My dear Rutherford . . ."

He began to write . . . Then he hesitated.

"There 's no use in being complicated . . ."

"She loves you," he continued. *"She told me so. If you don't ask her to marry you, you are a fool."*

"I guess that 's plain," he chuckled, and ringing for the man-servant, he ordered his message carried at once to Rutherford, wherever he might be.

Yet in spite of his first peremptory dismissal of the thoughts that he defied, the old feelings stirred in him again. He fancied he heard the voice of the Princess in the hall . . She seemed to be standing before him as he had seen her at the Café de Paris, in her flame-colored gown. Again it was by his side on the coach that he perceived, under her parasol and nodding plumes, the dark, appealing eyes, the smile which for so many months had been his recompense for all the trifling efforts that made up his existence.

He rang again, and to the man-servant who answered his summons he stated peremptorily:

"I shall not be here for luncheon. Say to the Countess MacBride that I have been called over to Bellagio on business."

It was late in the afternoon when Harris again unbolted his door. After the long hours of seclusion in his room he came forth into the light of the upper corridor as one half-dazed. Feeling his way along toward the stairs, he heard from below the voices of his guests.

"They 're in the parlor, I guess," he concluded, deciding mentally that he could pass through the hall unnoticed, to his study. But suddenly what he heard arrested his attention. He stopped on the stairs and listened. It was the Baroness Benoni who spoke.

"He 's always been ridiculous," she said. "This is only one more adventure to add to the list."

"But I *don't* see"—the voice was Madame Le Fort's—"how poor

Mr. Harris could ever have been taken in by such a person as the Princess."

Her husband responded to this:

"The funny part of it was his cringing admiration for her nobility. The way she had of saying to him: '*Noblesse oblige*' . . ."

"Did n't he *know* she was n't a Princess?"

Harris climbed down another step and hung forward over the banisters.

"What does he know, poor thing?" the Baron Benoni queried. "He has n't even a notion of the value of money, and he 's supposed to be a business man. Why, what do you suppose it cost him to furnish his Paris house?"

"Oh, don't tell that," his wife's voice protested.

"Why not? He gave us a hundred thousand francs, and the only pity was we did n't ask for more, for we 'd have had it."

"And the Princess would have had him if her friend had n't interfered . . ."

Le Fort's melodious laugh added insolence to the remark.

"Do you *really* suppose he is such a simpleton as he seems?"

"My maid"—it was the Benoni who responded—"says he is swindled out of his eye-teeth by the servants here."

"He 's such a dear, vulgar old thing, he fancies nothing can be good unless he pays an enormous price for it."

"Van Motte must have made a pretty penny out of him," Benoni added, calculating what the Baron X.'s stables had cost the American.

"But it *is* so comfortable here, we *are* so nicely seen to, it *would* be a pity for him to suspect how we feel about him." Mrs. Le Fort's peevish notes brought Harris down to the foot of the stairs with a bound. There he paused to hear Le Fort rejoin:

"He won't suspect us when he does n't suspect himself. If he had any idea of what real society was . . ."

Here the conversation was interrupted by the brusque entry of the gentleman in question, somewhat to the consternation of his "friends."

"Come!" he cried, looking from one to another of the assembled group. "Enough! I have heard every word you have spoken for the last ten minutes."

The ladies moved restlessly. Le Fort had not courage to lift his eyes.

"You say," Harris turned upon him, "that Harris, the ridiculous, the ignorant, the vulgar Harris, does n't know what real society is . . . Perhaps not. But he knows what a cad is. Come!" he cried. "Out with you, every one of you! You, and you, and you"—he pointed to them successively. "You may be 'nicely seen to' and 'comfortable' in the America's villa, but his hospitality is no longer yours to command." As he spoke, he rang the bells on either side of the chimney. He gave orders calmly:

"Have everything made ready for the evening train. Mr. and Mrs. Le Fort and the Baron and Baroness Benoni are unexpectedly called back to Paris."

Le Fort started forward, there was a murmur of protest from one of the ladies and a sound of tears in Mrs. Le Fort's direction. Le Fort said without lifting his eyes:

"You have taken us somewhat by surprise. We are hardly prepared for this."

"How much do you want?" Harris had pulled his check-book from his pocket and was fitting the tip of his stylographic pen. "Harris has n't a notion of the value of money, but what do you suppose it 'll cost him to 'make it possible' for you to get away from here? Now, *to-night!*" The violent tone of his voice as he uttered these last two words sent Le Fort to his feet.

"One is hardly prepared to be sent from the house where one is visiting."

"No," Harris rejoined scornfully. "I suppose you are n't vulgar enough to have any ready money about you for emergencies!"

Signing the check which lay under his pen, he flung the bit of paper toward Le Fort.

"Fill in the blank!" he cried. "It 'll make another good story to add to the collection. What it cost Harris to 'empty' his villa!"

Le Fort picked up the check.

With a final glance at him, Harris said:

"Remember that unless he pays a big price for it, Harris does n't think a thing can be good. Make your departure as good as gold . . . Here, you poison the very air, you . . ."

Whatever torrent of abuse had welled up within his heart, he checked it, and, keeping his bewildered and sarcastic dignity to the end, he regained his room and flung himself into a chair by the window, his head bowed on his arm.

An hour later Harris still had not moved. His body it seemed to him was made of lead, his brain remained dazed, and from time to time only he repeated to himself, shaking his head:

"Rotten! Rotten! Second quality—all of them. What a collection! What a failure!"

He rose at length and slowly opened the window onto the garden, as though to let in fresh air upon his empoisoned thoughts. In the maelstrom of memories he clutched with hope at one idea only; perhaps, in spite of all his own suffering and disappointment and disgust, he might see Olivia and Rutherford happy.

Up by the rose-hedges toward the white road where presently his guests were to wend their northward way, he caught sight of a pink muslin gown trailing its pretty lengths over the green lawn.

"It's Miss Olivia," he murmured, and he moved so that he might see better. "And Rutherford's with her—God bless him!"

Here a gentle rap at his door was followed by a whirlwind entrance of the Countess.

Not supposing that so much excitement on the lady's part could proceed from any cause except a knowledge of the scandal among his guests, Harris mentally commented: "Of course she knows; she's probably come to plead with me on account of the Benonis."

Aloud he said:

"Come in; sit down, won't you?"

She fluttered from one chair to another, choosing a sofa.

"I suppose you know, then?" Harris asked.

"Know!" she cried. "I have been half-distracted."

"And all in a day," he continued, inviting some word of condolence from the distracted lady.

"All since lunch!"

"Since . . . in the last hour, in fact."

"Oh, can't you do something to help me?" she appealed.

"I was just going to ask you the same thing."

"What will her father say?"

"Father?"

"Yes, of course he will hold me responsible."

"You?"

"Why, Mr. Harris, you don't seem to grasp the fact that Rutherford has n't a cent."

"Oh!" And to this distracted exclamation Harris added inwardly: "She does n't know at all." Then, seeing her expectant gaze fixed upon him, he lent himself to this cherished topic.

"What of it, if Rutherford has n't got a cent?"

"What of it that Olivia is madly in love with him? They have been gone from the house since lunch together. She is perfectly capable of engaging herself to this man! Can't you understand my position?"

"No—that is, yes, of course."

Harris's eyes wandered stealthily toward the rose-hedges and the two figures perceptible at the end of the garden.

"Why do you want to separate two young people who are in love?" he asked. "Love is the only thing worth having . . ."

"Oh!" she protested. "You talk like a college boy."

"No," he answered; "I talk like a man who's found out a few things by experience. I guess I've missed my aim, Countess, about as wide as any one."

"Don't say that," she murmured affectionately, seeing that Harris was moved himself at his own words.

Again his eyes turned towards the window.

"Love," he repeated, "is the only thing worth having. The rest is second quality."

"Yes, but frankly," his companion exclaimed, "poetry aside, what do you suppose that Rutherford will ever amount to? Architecture is no sort of an occupation for an able-bodied man."

"Rutherford amounts to something already in my opinion." Harris caught himself quickly. "Not that my opinion 's worth anything, but Miss Olivia's is,—you say she's madly in love with him. That speaks pretty well for him."

"But what right had he to make her in love with him?"

"Where was love ever governed by the right to love?" Harris put the question appealingly.

"I don't mean sentimental rights," the Countess answered. "I mean plain, ordinary, material rights."

"What would you call a material right to ask a girl to marry you?"

"Oh, I don't know." She lowered her eyes and pouted as though it were hard to fix so delicate a point.

"Yes, but at about how much would you estimate this right?"

"Why, I should say any man had the right to propose if he had . . . well, say eight hundred thousand or a million." She made an appealing gesture as though she had been confiding to Harris.

Once, twice, he strutted up and down the room, his hands thrust deep in his pockets. Then he turned, facing her, and said deliberately:

"Well, Rutherford has a million. Or he will have as soon as I can make the deeds over to him."

The Countess could not speak for a moment. Then she burst out with a flow of remarks which had the effect of boring Harris. He waved his hand at her to keep still, and then with this preparation he drew her toward the window and pointed to the garden's end.

"Look!" he said.

She babbled on: "I must hunt them up and tell them the news."

"They don't need to be told any news," Harris murmured to himself; "they 're there together down by the roses. It 'll be time enough to tell them the news later. They don't know we can see them."

"It does n't look," added the Countess, growing interested, and peering to the right and then to the left—"it does n't look as though they had waited for anybody's consent."

"No," Harris rejoined, his face relaxed into a smile which illumined the kindly blue eyes. "No, he 's holding her parasol, and . . ." He moved again. "It don't seem right to look . . . She 's got her arm through his."

"She has," the Countess affirmed, her tone softening.

"I feel as though their happiness," he went on half to himself, "would purify the whole house."

"Look!" The Countess touched his arm.

"Hush!" her companion whispered. "They might hear us. He's going to . . ."

"Yes, he is . . . !"

And in the warm September light, between the grassy lawn and the roses, Harris and the Countess watched the slender figure in its gown of pink enfolded by two strong arms which held it close while Rutherford bent and touched his lips to Olivia's.

The Countess sighed.

"What will Mr. Endicott think?"

Harris, oblivious, shook his head.

"They're right. Love is the only thing worth having."

And the Countess, half tenderly, added:

"The rest is second quality."

◆

A MEMORY

BY SUE JAUSS BIEBER

THE hour, the lane, we two together;
The flock of little hills a-tether
Like sheep in fold
By bars of gold,—
We laughed in June's most magic weather.

We laughed, for fields were floods of clover,
No cloud but one small hand might cover;
Yet joys too dear
Oft hold a tear,
And sweetest hours are soonest over.

This wrinkled rose my hair adorning,
Its faint fair flush decay a-scorning!—
I placed it there
Against my hair,
Just as you placed it that June morning.

OUR INLAND EMPIRE

By Day Allen Willey

◆

DRIVE the range steer up to piles of bunch grass and the sweetest timothy that makes fragrant the hay-field. Quick will he bury his muzzle in the grass, munching every dust-covered spear of it. Instinct tells him that the little tufts springing here and there from the dry soil are worth cropping to the very roots. The bunches may be a pace apart on the bare ground or half hidden by the sage bush of the arid land, but the white face finds every spear—to him a daintier morsel than the rich herbage of the Blue Grass country or alfalfa itself. Thus, a thousand cattle thrive—fatten—in a region that to the tenderfoot seems incapable of keeping the life in a rabbit; for a few mouthfuls of bunch grass contain as much nourishment as a stomachful of the finest hay.

So men have driven herds through tortuous mountain passes, over plains from which the alkali dust enveloped human and animal as in a mist. Hundreds of miles have they urged their stock, well knowing that a bunch grass ground meant riches, perhaps life, to them. In the days before the wire fence turned the West from a land whose people knew no bounds, into the so-called cattle ranch, the bunch grass hunters were many and bold. Even the frowning parapets of the Cascade Mountains defied them in vain, and thus it was that the Inland Empire had its beginning.

Where is it? Few, if any, of the geographies contain even the name, and the place where the map should indicate it is as yet largely a blank of the yellow tint which the map-maker is fond of using when he indicates one of the earth's waste places. Yes, the Inland Empire is something new in the world. It is the newest civilization in the United States. Begun but yesterday as the years go, the geographer and the map-maker have not yet caught up with its progress. They have not kept pace with its settlement. Places where already towns have sprung up in the wilderness are yet unmarked by dot or circle. The ways of steel by which thousands are yearly entering the new land are but partially shown by the zigzag streaks of red or black denoting the march of the railroad builder. And thousands of square miles still colored with the yellow of desolation are the sites of field, orchard, and garden yielding an abundance to reward the toil of the husbandman.

There came a year in the history of the Pacific country which the older ones of western California and Oregon still tell about—a year when the streams turned to beds of gravel and sun-baked mud, when even the trickling of the springs where they gushed out of the wooded mountain slopes was no longer heard. The country had dried up. Then, as now, the valleys of the Pacific coast formed a great grazing ground, but the green shoots had turned to brown and the cattle were dropping to the earth—"bone-racks." The stockmen as a last hope turned eastward and sought a way through the Cascades into the great basin which the Indians said lay to the east. They succeeded in getting through the rifts here and there amid the rock barriers and found that it was as the Indians said—but what was better, they found bunch grass, and there they decided to stay. Those who had women-folk went for them and brought them through coulee and canyon to form a nucleus of the civilization, but as late as thirty years ago, when Illinois and Indiana were old to us, when even Kansas and Nebraska were peopled by the tide of immigration from the East, only ten families lived in the country a hundred miles west of the present city of Spokane, and this community which has to-day nearly a hundred thousand within its borders contained but one abode of the white man.

Thus did the Inland Empire come into being. Its pioneers were from the land in sight of the Pacific, but they do not stand as types of its Americanism, much as they have achieved. The settlement has been due to several human movements. The tide of migration across the continent in recent years has been divided into two waves. One moves from Europe, New England, and older Middle States into the so-called "grain belt"—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. The other wave, strange as it may seem, has set westward from these commonwealths. It is the one which has done so much to create the second or last West—to obliterate the frontier. In the settlements in eastern and southeastern Washington, the man with whom you talk tells you how the land and crops compare with those "back in Iowa or Minnesota." He knows all about the first West—the West as the Eastern man still terms it, though it is now the heart of the States. Some of the grayheads can recollect old York State and away down East, but the multitude who have gone beyond the Rockies were born on the prairie. As children, they did their part in reclaiming the wilderness. Men and women, they have been trained in the easiest and most practical methods of agriculture in a new land. They know from past experience the best sites for homes, and the dwellings which are most economical, yet comfortable. They are quick to note which crop will make the most money, whether the climate and soil favor fruit or vegetable, if the land needs irrigation. It is not strange that they should be changing the face of the land so rapidly, since they know well how to do it.

To realize at least something of the bigness of this Inland Empire, let us follow the Columbia, which forms a part of its western boundary. Those of the Northwest still call this the "Oregon," a name which is far more appropriate since the mighty river traverses fully a thousand miles of the Oregon country in its course from the snow-covered summits of the Canadian Rockies to the sea. The Oregonian remembers that it defines the northern limit of his State, but on its way southward it forms a bend truly majestic in its proportions even as seen on the map. The territory which it partly encircles is the "Big Bend" country—the western section of the Inland Empire, which has for its eastern neighbor the Palouse country, reaching far south even to the valley of the John Day River in Oregon. Nearly hemmed in by the Rockies on the east and the Cascades on the west, here nature has created a great basin which is a little world in itself. In it are plateaus extending a hundred miles and more, valleys now known to be of the greatest fertility. Much of the surface of this great basin is as level as a table; consequently the traveller may be startled to come upon a crack in the surface a thousand, sometimes two thousand, feet deep, for here and there are coulees where the Columbia and other water-courses in past ages literally ate their way into the bowels of the earth and have left these gaping fissures as a sign of their power. There are a hundred thousand square miles of this Inland Empire. It encircles five of the largest counties in the State of Washington, not to say the region which it embraces in Oregon. It contains mines, forests, and from them those who have entered it are extracting riches as well as from the tree and shoot. Well can it be called the Inland Empire, for into it have come three hundred thousand men and women within quarter of a century, and thirty thousand more are yearly swelling its army of toilers.

The man of the East who has not been beyond the Mississippi and is accustomed to the congestion of humanity in the older States may smile incredulously at the clause that here is an empire. The West, however, is a country of big things. Its people are known not by numbers, but by achievements, The very bareness of the Great Basin has been a challenge to them to get what they could of value of it—to make good—and they have made good for every year they have forced the soil, the mines, and the forest to contribute a hundred million dollars in value to the nation's wealth—over three hundred dollars to every inhabitant; and this in a region which, as we have said, has been so lately penetrated by the white man that it is still almost a blank on the modern map. Obviously, the majority have followed the vocation of their fathers and look to the soil for sustenance. There are plains and valleys where a natural abundance of moisture renders the earth fertile, and there are tracts of land which frown with continual drouth. They have taken up their abode on both. Where moisture was needed they have dug the irrigation ditch and drawn water from lake and river. This is why the traveller through the Wenatchee valley sees a rural panorama from the car window that is in strange contrast to the barren plain and hillside east of the Rocky Mountains. Here the turning of the waters upon the earth has been as the waving of the magician's wand. What was but yesterday unfit to produce anything of value to human kind yields so bountifully that the wants of the people hereabouts are not merely supplied, but carloads and steamboat-loads sent to the markets of the East and the coast cities. Orchards of trees laden with peaches, apples, plums, and a dozen other fruits form a vista reaching for miles. There are patches of melons and cantaloupes. Nearly every variety of vegetable can be seen in these "truck" gardens. In harvest time one notes the golden seas of wheat, the rich green of the alfalfa, the West's great fodder crop. But it is not merely a landscape of nature. It teems with life. Here the plow is turning up the earth for a new crop, there the harvester clutters through the grain, making a great swath in the golden sea. Along the highways come "strings" of wagons, each drawn by four or more sturdy horses and laden with the products of the soil, which fill not only the car but sometimes an entire train. There are fleeting glimpses of homes whose exteriors hint at the comforts and conveniences within.

True, in all of the Inland Empire cannot be seen such vistas, but the beautiful valley we have cited is merely one illustration. In the country adjacent to Spokane, which has been well termed the Metropolis of the Inland Empire, are pictures drawn by nature which duplicate it. Go through the Palouse Country and miles beyond even the sound of the locomotive whistle you will also find plain and valley literally throbbing with human life. One title given this great basin is the "Bread Basket of the Northwest." It is not inappropriate, for already the people of the Empire have begun feeding the millions of the Orient. Not a little of the annual crop of forty million bushels of wheat finds its way to the cities of Portland and Seattle and Tacoma, where the steamship and sailing ship are waiting with empty holds to carry it across the Pacific, even around the Horn to Liverpool. In one year ships have sailed through the blue waters of Puget Sound, carrying away from Tacoma alone six million dollars' worth of the grain harvest of the Inland Empire. And back beyond these grain-fields of the frontier you come across the cowboy of the Northwest. We have read about them in poetry and fiction in the Texas Panhandle, on the plains of New Mexico, and amid the foothills of Montana, but the ones in this Oregon Country can as skilfully throw the lasso or break the bronco as any of their fellows, and the cattle they round up run into the thousands, even tens of thousands, for the herds which the bunch grass hunters drove through the passes of the Cascades have multiplied many fold. Nor must we forget that the sheep on the ranges of the Inland Empire are so numerous that they furnish much of the yearly wool clip of the country.

Here are questions that naturally arise: What kind of men and women are they who have entered this last West? There is no need to go into history to find the answer, as much as history might make the tale attractive. If we chance into but a small corner of this territory—even a single city—we can get an idea of the vigor which is such a trait of their character. Focus the lens of the camera on one of its boulevards. As the negative develops you see the asphalt pavement, the stone sidewalks, the electric lamps, the flower-beds, terraces, shrubbery, forming part of the setting of a home which vies in dimensions and architectural features with mansions seen in Eastern cities—but this is not all of the picture. At the side or forming the background is the dark line of the forest. Start from the post-office or the shopping centre, and within a mile, perhaps, you can see houses set on hill and in valley so surrounded by the woodland that they are but partly visible. True, it is not the original forest—that was cut off long ago, but it has never been cleared, and is now covered with another growth of the fir or cedar—living towers of green, too graceful to be imitated by the skill of the landscape architect.

The up-to-dateness which characterizes this newest civilization of the country is one of its most interesting features. Whether in town or in country, modern ideas prevail. The standard of culture in the East has not been fully attained, but the means are at hand for applying the finishing touches—for polishing the surface. Schools and colleges have been built and provided with the best equipment and instructors that money can secure. The piano is heard in the humbler dwelling as well as the mansion. Art already has its many patrons. A man may buy a thousand-dollar vase or painting merely because he is proud of the embellishment of his home, but if he has rubbed against the rough side of the world too much to have had leisure to know its real value, his children are learning to appreciate it.

To tell the life stories of a few of the men who have drifted hither and become citizens of the Inland Empire would suffice for an article—yes, a book may one day be written which the reader will find far stranger than fiction. What changes has the first man who settled on the site of Spokane seen! But they are not more varied than his own career. When the yellow lump picked up on Sutter's Creek caused men to cross the continent ahorse and afoot in the quest of gold, Mike Cowley was old enough to become one of the would-be argonauts. The fifty dollars borrowed from his aunt in old York State soon dwindled to nothing, yet he managed to work his way to the coast, only to be disappointed in his search for wealth in the mines. But a few dollars came to him by working as clerk. He spent them for goods which he packed to the mines on a cayuse and sold for double their cost. Then he took out two cayuses and then a train of them. His hundreds swelled to a thousand dollars and more. With the news that silver had been found in the Cœur d'Alenes of Idaho, Cowley was drawn into the rush of adventurers to the new El Dorado, but took a pack train of goods with him. Coming to the ford of the Spokane River, Cowley saw the need of a ferry and returned from the mining camp to build a barge with which he poled the would-be miners across the stream. Meanwhile he opened a general store and traded beads and gunpowder for furs with the Indians. There he stayed and watched the city grow from a cluster of cabins to its present proportions. But as it grew Mike Cowley grew with it. To-day he is a bank director, merchant, real estate owner, and his check is good for a half million.

It has been a land of money-getting, but with the money has come the home, the school, the church. So the Inland Empire has a future before it—a future on which as yet we can only ponder. As the children of the prairie folk took up and finished the civilization which has brought to the heart of the country not only prosperity but culture and a high standard of human life, the children of this empire will be fit to accomplish as much for Americanism. But as we have said, only a small corner of this wilderness has yet been claimed for the white man, for we should remember that those who thus far have entered it are so few in number compared with the crowded East that despite the rapid migration they equal but a tenth of the population of Massachusetts. They are actually fewer than the inhabitants of the tiny commonwealth in New England which could be set down in the limits of a single county of Washington? Of course, there are waste places that will always defy the energy and skill of man to extract from them anything of value, but here is a territory vast in its dimensions which will some day be the centre of industries which may give the Inland Empire as conspicuous a place among the great productive regions of the New World as is occupied by the cotton land of the South, the grain belt of the Central West, or perhaps even the orchards and gardens of the Golden State itself.

THE "YANKEE SNOB"

By Caroline Lockhart

◆

MAJOR HEYWOOD, riding down the sandy road which wound among the South Carolina pines, shifted the position of his shotgun and reined his horse before a notice tacked to a tree, and many emotions were depicted upon his high-bred old face as he read the words which already he knew by heart:

No Hunting Allowed on These Grounds
Trespassers will be Punished to the Full Extent of the Law

So the Northern Gun Club had bought and posted this land also! It seemed to the Major that the hateful muslin rag was nailed on every tree in the county. What ground this club of wealthy Northern sportsmen had not bought, they had leased, so there was scarcely an unposted acre left in the vicinity; and to the Major each new lease or purchase was a personal affront. Would the Yankees, he wondered—they never had ceased to be "Yankees" to Major Heywood—the accursed Yankees pursue him to his grave? Rebellion had been running in the Major's blood all morning, and this new notice made it run hotter and swifter.

"Come on, Steve," he said peremptorily to the ancient negro who walked by his stirrup, and he touched the old white horse with his heel.

The negro was staring blankly at the bit of muslin, the significance of which he knew as well as his master.

"Bettah look out, Massa Dick. Dem Yankees hab you tuck up!"

"Hold your tongue!" the Major replied sharply, and Steve mumbled an apology as he followed into the woods, on the forbidden ground, where the Major never had failed to get up a covey of quail.

"Dar dey are, Massa Dick—dar dey are!"

The dogs came to a point in a clearing, and the Major rode in to the dried grass, getting a fine right and left as the birds went up.

"You suttinly is good, Massa Dick, you suttinly is!" The negro's voice was full of pride and enthusiasm. There was satisfaction on the Major's face as the well-trained dogs brought the birds and laid them at his feet.

"I presume you know you are poaching," said a cold voice, and a pair of steely Northern eyes looked into the Major's own.

The Major's face flamed, his thin nostrils dilated, his handsome eyes blazed.

"B'gad, suh, I know nothing of the sort!"

"You saw the notice, and you know the law."

"I care no more for your law than I care for your notice. If you want satisfaction, suh, we'll step off ten paces and you shall have it, suh. My grandfather and my great-great-grandfather shot over this strip of pine-land, and when I stop shooting over it, it will be because I am too old to hold a gun. Good day and be ——— to you, suh!" The Major gave his horse a vigorous kick, and, stiffly erect, rode further into the gun club's grounds.

The old negro, also, straightened his bent back and with a dignity as near like his master's as possible he shambled beside the Major's stirrup.

From this day the Major hated the members of the Northern Gun Club, the "Yankee snobs," with a savage, personal hatred; and the members, in consequence, grew to dislike the belligerent old "Rebel" who persisted in trespassing on their property. They had no conception of the bitterness in the Major's heart, or any real understanding of its cause. They knew him only as a hot-headed old fire-eater who refused to remember that the war was over.

The famous Heywood plantation had been in the path of Sheridan's Raiders, and before they had razed it to the ground the common soldiers had invaded the house, slashing the priceless lace and camel's hair shawls of the women with knives and sabres, and dropping eggshell china on the floor to "hear it ring." Not one incident or insult of that terrible day was ever forgotten or forgiven by a Heywood. From one of the richest slave-owners and planters in the State, the Major had become, perhaps, the poorest of the whites of gentle birth of the surrounding neighborhood; for he never had been able to adapt himself to the conditions which followed the war. It was not because he had not tried—ah! how he had tried!—but the business instinct was not in him. He had long since given up hoping to retrieve his fortunes, and had become convinced that the best he could expect was a bare living for himself and his wife, and for Steve, his body-servant, who had grown up with him in those dream days before the war.

Their only source of revenue was the rice and cotton fields which they plowed in early spring with the Major's old white saddle-horse; and when the crops from these two fields were short the scratchings of the wolf became painfully distinct.

The ill-feeling between the Major and the members of the gun club did not abate as the season progressed. In fact, it was rapidly reaching a climax, for Disston, one of the most influential members of the club, and the one who had first encountered the Major on the club's preserves, was strongly urging the arrest and prosecution of the Major as a warning to other "natives" who obstinately ignored the notices.

They had no difficulty in obtaining further evidence of the Major's guilt, for whenever the gentle, white-haired lady whom the Major worshipped expressed a desire for birds, she had them; and, knowing nothing of the feud, enjoyed them, congratulating the Major gaily upon the marksmanship which betrayed no evidence of failing eyesight.

Disston, at the gun club, finally had his way, and it was decided to arrest the Major the day following.

That night Steve awakened the Major to tell him that the old white horse was dying. The Major, sick at heart, worked over it till morning, and then it died in spite of all their efforts.

The death of the old white horse was more than a misfortune,—it was a tragedy. They were to have commenced plowing the rice field for the spring planting the following day. The Major could not borrow a horse from neighbors well nigh as poor as himself, for every beast that could pull a plow was in use. In the black hours before the morning came, it seemed to the Major that there could be nothing ahead but starvation, or public charity, and he shut his teeth hard to keep back the groans. He must smile, he told himself, that the gentle, white-haired lady whom he worshipped should not realize how desperate was their situation.

Steve wept aloud and called upon the Lord for help, inquiring in a vehement prayer what He meant by taking their horse before the rice was in. Behind the barn, where the Major's wife could not hear, the Major and Steve discussed the situation.

"It's the only way, Steve, the only way."

"Yas, Massa Dick, de on'y way."

"Go over and borrow Judge Ridgely's ox long enough to take the plow to the field, and I'll meet you there."

"Yes, suh." Steve touched his ragged hat and shambled across the road.

The sun was high and hot when Disston reined his horse and stared into the Major's rice field from the club side of the fence. His steel-blue Northern eyes expressed astonishment; then a frown gathered upon his clean-cut, immobile face. Disston had the reputation of being brusque to the point of rudeness, among those who knew him but casually. He even had been called a snob by persons of toadying proclivities whom he wilfully ignored. In business he was stern to harshness. Undoubtedly his personal popularity was confined to a limited circle, though his wealth gave him prestige and power.

A growth of ragged bushes now hid him from view, and he listened in growing amazement to the conversation on the other side of the snake fence.

"'Deed, Massa Dick, I jes' kain't do it! It's gwine to brek dis ol' heart to hitch you to de plow! Lemme try again—mebby I's rested now." Tears were streaming down the negro's face.

"Hush your noise, Steve, and keep the plow straight. This field's got to be plowed, and you've done moah than your share already." The Major adjusted the strap across his chest and bent to the work, while the unwilling negro walked behind in the shallow furrow, whimpering and protesting as he held the plow upright.

"'Fore Gawd, I wusht I'd died 'fore I eber seed dis sight! Oh, Massa Dick, lemme hitch in, now, please lemme hitch in!"

"Hold the plow deeper, Steve!" panted the Major. "Hold the plow deeper!"

"Oh, Massa Dick, I kain't bear to do it! I kain't bear to do it!"

The perspiration was streaming down the handsome, aristocratic old face under the wide-brimmed planter's hat, and the breath was coming in gasps between his parted lips, but still the Major toiled on, straining and tugging at the plow like a beast of burden.

"By Jove! I can't stand this!" burst from Disston, and he sprang from his horse and fairly tore his way through the "cat-claws" and bushes into the rice field.

The Major halted and stiffened when he saw the man who had called him a poacher and practically ordered him from his grounds.

"Major," said Disston as he lifted his hat deferentially, "I want to apologize to you for what I said to you that day in the woods. I did not at the time know who you were. I've been wanting ever since to ask you to forgive me for my bad manners, and to ask you to come and shoot over the club's grounds whenever you feel so disposed. I should like to be friends with you, Major, if you can overlook my mistake."

The Major's face softened. At once he became the gracious Southern gentleman who could be nothing less than generous to a penitent enemy.

"Don't mention it, suh," he replied with his quaint, old-time dignity. "Perhaps I was ovah hasty myself."

"And I came to offer you my horse as some little compensation for my bad manners," Disston continued. "I am going North to-morrow, and if you will take him and use him as your own in my absence, I shall feel that I am really forgiven." No one of Disston's associates would have recognized the arrogant financier in the man who now with winning voice and smile urged his high-bred hunter upon the old rice-planter.

"Oh, Massa Dick!" burst from Steve, his face radiant.

The Major stroked his white imperial a moment, that he should be sure of his voice before he replied:

"I have said, suh, that no gentleman could be a Yankee, nor any Yankee a gentleman, but I will take your horse as an evidence that I have erred. We are friends, suh!" And the young Yankee and the old Rebel shook hands across the shallow furrow of the rice field.

THE WIND OF FIRE

BY CHARLES L. O'DONNELL

THE Wind is in the trees, shaking the shade of the oaks over the struck grass.

There wakes in the heart of me a feeling of kinship with the Spirit of the Wind.

Something of elemental force, a spark of primeval fire,

Quickens in my breast against which the Wind flaps its great white wings.

Strength and heat, passion and old desire, out of the ashes grow scarlet.

But the Wind stops blowing; the eagle Wind circles into some vast, far eyrie,

While the inward blaze drops down and the garnet ashes grow gray at the fireside of my soul.

The Spirit of the Wind is the Spirit of Fire, making the hearts of men pentecostal with flame.

PENDLETON '01

By Karl von Kraft

❧

"YES," sighed the girl; "it has all been very lovely."

Jim Pendleton merely stared with big, unseeing eyes out over the bay. These two, standing apart from their fellow-passengers on the incoming liner which was doing its last mile up the Bay of Naples, heard not at all the ecstatic clamor about them, nor took in a tithe of the unearthly beauty of sea and shore in that July afternoon light.

"But," continued the girl after a pause, discerning that the young man had perfectly sensed her unuttered thoughts, "you see, we have known each other only just during the voyage, and—and—I 'm sure it would be very—irregular." For the fraction of an instant her eyes twinkled.

"Irregular!" he gasped, shocked into a posture of half-surprised, half-indignant protest. "Irregular! As if——"

"Now, don't, please!" she broke in earnestly, laying a slender browned hand upon his sleeve with a touch at once steadying and soothing. "You see—or, rather, you won't see—there are things—and folks—to be considered—and"—again with the slightest possible twinkle, though a discouraging tone of finality rang in her voice—"I 'm really not sure I like you well enough. Of course—I think—now, please, *please,* don't try to make up my mind for me to-day. But don't look so cut up, either—London and September are n't far off—and then—we 'll see!" She smiled up at him brightly.

"Oh, of course I can wait—if I must," he flung with something like petulance; "though it 's mighty tough to be put off in this fashion, and have to leave you behind at Naples besides. Two kinds of hard luck at once are too much."

He leaned on the rail, his chin boring into his palm, gazing into those changeful depths over whose color-gleams a thousand poets have raved.

Nancy regarded the sturdy young American at her side. It was a toss-up between tears and smiles. She was really moved by the halting eloquence of Pendleton's pleadings, yet, by contrary mood, her tense feeling almost demanded expression in mischievous laughter. In fact, she scarcely knew whether this was a genuine love or merely a shipboard sentiment; so, partly from a wisdom beyond her years and partly from that world-old conservative force—indecision—she put off the crisis.

"I sort o' knew it was coming," the young man grinned ruefully. "But I'm not half sorry I tried. I feel a lot better, now that I know—that you know—how I feel—that is—oh, pshaw!" He laughed at his own confusion, and so did Nancy. "Anyhow, don't you think for a moment that I've surrendered," he went on after an instant. "I've just begun to fight;" and Pendleton shot forward a square, determined jaw.

"That will be fun," laughed Nancy, wonderfully brighter now that she had won the first skirmish—without actually routing her favorite enemy. "I dote on a fight! Always did. I think it's in the family. My grandfather"—but the hurry of landing preparations cut off further talk.

The liner was now at anchor, and a fascinating bedlam of beggars, coalers, hawkers, serenaders, and, as Pendleton literally put it, "divers others," held Nancy wide-eyed until the lighter carried the Mannings—Nancy, her mother, and "kid brother" Ned—off to the Customs, where Pendleton's experienced help smoothed away all difficulties and soon sent the little family bowling along toward their bay-front hotel.

An evening call, and walk *en famille* in the Victoria gardens, gave him no chance to reopen the one question with Nancy; and, Naples being an old story, the next morning found Pendleton perforce alone on his way to Rome.

During Nancy's twelve days in and about the southern metropolis her dreams had come true—dreams that haunt with delightful persistency the girlish mind: the vision of a journey beyond the seas to the lands we so aptly call "the Old Country"; and that other, more tender dream, of an enfolding, satisfying love. Mingled with her now self-confessed surrender Nancy felt a certain joy in having delayed the day of open capitulation, but in the meantime her heart sang to a lively measure.

And now the period of her stay in Naples had come to an end—but what matter? There still lay before her the Eternal City, the Florence of Dante and Savonarola, the Venice of Dreams, and all Europe—to say nothing of London with Jim Pendleton in September!

By grace of the Forbes Fellowship in Architecture—won in his senior year at Elm University—Pendleton remained in Rome a week, then gradually made his way north, intending to settle down to a year's fellowship work in the cathedral towns of the continent and Britain.

When at length he reached Venice, his stay was unexpectedly prolonged. A rift had appeared in that side of the grand old Campanile which faced the Clock Tower, and the engineer in charge of the investigations having shown Pendleton no little attention, he decided that a study of the massive column would amply compensate for the shorter time he could spend in Germany. Besides—supreme reason—it must be nearly time for the Mannings to visit "The Queen of the Adriatic," and Pendleton's breath came quickly as he thought of the possibility of meeting Nancy before the time appointed.

So he haunted such places as new-comers would be likely to visit first. He crossed the broad Piazza San Marco and the Piazzetta a dozen times daily, developed a great desire to traverse the court of the Ducal Palace, visited the Accademia frequently, and enriched a pair of gondoliers by meeting every express arriving from Florence. As for the big hotels, he pestered the clerks until even his liberal gratuities no longer made him a welcome inquirer. It must be admitted that Pendleton was rather forlorn.

But one brilliant moonlight evening he found Nancy and her mother seated at one of the little iron tables in front of the Florian Café, taking ices with some American friends. To discover Nancy was enough, but to find her in such kindly mood was heaven. Time had done what his wooing could not accomplish.

For the three extra days which Pendleton had heroically set as the limit of his stay, he was her devoted cicerone, and enjoyed the freedom commonly incident to tourist life.

When the last night came the full moon was glorifying the dream-city, and full moon in Venice is a foretaste of realms celestial. Then for lovers there is no place but the Grand Canal, where, amidst the passing of swift shadowy gondolas, kindred spirits may still be alone.

Jim and Nancy sat silently for a long time as the swaying gondoliers swung their *barca* forward with that peculiar soft, silent, lilting motion which is half of the gondola's charm. The deep shadows lying sharp against the ghostly marble façades, the ethereal moonlight dancing upon the rippling canal, the solemn glory of the night—broken only by the musical cries of the gondoliers and the distant strains from the concert floats—all combined to cast a spell over the young girl whose heart was, even more fully than she knew, responding to the call of love.

Gradually they neared the serenaders and joined their gondola to the mass of floating craft. Ah, how passionately rang out the voice of the tenor as he sang of love; and the shrill yet appealing soprano—how tragically penetrating was her song as it told the loves of Leonardo and Beatrice. Ever of love they sang, ever of love!

And so, on such a witching night, Nancy at length made reply to the world-old question, slipping her warm soft hand into Pendleton's and pressing her round shoulder against his. The lovers scarcely noticed that after a time their *barca* had left the group of other gondolas and was slowing making its way back toward the Molo. What ineffable content! What serene, lofty understanding! What assurance of unending bliss! What compassion for all sorrow!

"You must tell me," Nancy shyly whispered, "all about yourself—all that I do not know—and, again and again, all that I do. Begin—begin—yes, at your college days. I don't believe you ever told me even the name of your college, though I seem to have known you always."

"There is n't much to tell, Nancy," he said, kissing her hand fondly. "Most of my commonplace life you already know. The future—that will bring the real thing!"

"Yes, Jim dear, it will, I know; I feel, somehow, that you are written down for big things."

"Sweetheart," he said happily, "if you'll always help to make me be and do my best, perhaps that best may be something worth while."

She nestled her brown head close to his big shoulder. "Ah, my dearest, my dearest, your love makes me feel as big—as the dear old Campanile!" She laughed tenderly.

He kissed her again and again. No one remembers the gondolier in Venice!

"That old palace front," said Jim at length, "reminds me of the old Dorm at Elm."

"What, is Elm your university?" she cried in delighted surprise. "Now that I think of it, I do remember seeing you—that first rainy night out of New York, you know—wearing a big sweater, and I noticed that you had won your E. I wonder if you knew my——"

"Why, yes—did n't I tell you?" he interrupted eagerly, ignoring her half-formed question. "Bless your dear heart, I'm almost as proud of the old Varsity as I am of the best mother that ever lived! Elm! I wish I could tell you—I will some day—of all the bully good times we fellows used to have—and of some of the tough times too," he added with a sigh.

Nancy suddenly shivered.

"Let me see—what—was—your—year?" she said slowly, fighting for self-control.

"Why, what's the matter, Nancy? What is it? Are you chilly?" He drew her to him slowly and looked anxiously into her face. Its vague, troubled expression, as foreign to her own bright look as midnight is to dawn, pierced his heart as with a dagger-point.

"Oh—nothing—Jim; only an unpleasant memory. But—you have n't answered my question," she persisted, still speaking with difficulty.

"Nineteen one, the best class of the twentieth century, we proudly called it." He forced a laugh, striving to conquer the foreboding which seared his heart.

"Jim—I am ill! Please have the rowers hasten; I must get back at once. There was—some—other—Pendleton—in—your class, Jim?" she gasped. "Tell me that there was, dear Jim, tell me!" Her voice was an agonized whisper; her face, in the flooding moonlight, shone tense and wan.

"Darling, I don't understand you! No—why—I was the only Pendleton—but how can that affect you? You can't mean—oh, Nancy, are you so very ill? For God's sake, tell me what you mean!" And then, as she did not reply, "Why won't you explain?"

The gondola had already reached the Britannia, and the handsome young oarsman who assisted Nancy to alight crossed himself and muttered a prayer as the sick, twitching pallor of her face revealed the struggle that lacerated her soul. But not a sound could she utter. She was dazed and numb.

Up the steps they staggered together, Pendleton clutching Nancy's arm till at another time she must have cried out for pain. His compressed white lips told of the nameless fear that was choking out his life. In that moment he lived an eternity.

At length, when Pendleton had seated her in the garden, Nancy wearily lifted her face to his. Its tearless pathos sickened him. He could have died for the privilege of bearing her pain, and she would not speak! Signing for him to leave her, she faltered, "I must be alone now, Jim. To-morrow—early—at St. Mark's."

And so Pendleton left her.

The sacristan of St. Mark's mildly wondered who was the haggard young visitor, the earliest to enter the great central portal of the solemn old cathedral on that July morning. Indeed, he looked not unlike a certain gay young fellow who had recently given him many a silver lira in exchange for such favors as the potent official in charge of a world-famous basilica could bestow upon those whose wish it was to study its art or its architecture. But this fellow—he was of quite different mould—wretched, despairing, unkempt—pouf! it mattered little! As for himself, he could find more of interest in the tearful little *signorina* whom he had just admitted to the cathedral through the Porta della Carta, and who even now was praying in the Cappella di San Isidro. Holy Virgin, how beautiful, yet how dejected, she looked! A foreigner also, perhaps. But these foreigners, they were all half demented! And the old man shambled away mumbling, leaving Pendleton vainly awaiting the arrival of Nancy—even while, unseen by him, she was pouring out her bruised heart in incoherent torrents at the altar of a little chapel just inside the southern entrance.

Once within the cool and shadowy sanctuary, Nancy overwhelmingly dreaded having her doubt of Jim's integrity turned into certainty. As she reviewed the secret charges at Elm University against "Pendleton '01"—known as yet to only a few of his classmates—she longed for the gates of silence to be lifted, but to hear from his own lips a confession of his guilt would have frozen the spring of her life. No—she could not face the crisis just yet—a little longer she would pray for strength and—yes, that was it, that Jim might prove his innocence.

Nancy had been taught that prayer to the Virgin was akin to idolatry, yet she yearned this day to unbosom herself to that Benign Mother of Sorrows, whose own riven soul had once wailed, "Was ever grief like unto mine!" But then, as quickly, came a shuddering revulsion. How could she breathe into any ear the shameful story of her woe? All her being besought an answer to the one vital question: What should she do with her misery? So intense was her struggle that she forgot where she was—forgot that she had come by appointment to meet her lover, to hear his own voice tell her the truth. Again and again she had assured herself that he was innocent; but then there were the facts. Ah, it seemed too true that Jim, her adored Jim, was confessedly a thief—worse, a wretched traitor to a trusting friend and college class-mate—and that friend Nancy's own foster-brother. Could misery—and shame—be greater! Why seek longer for an explanation; had she not consumed the night in torturing efforts to explain away his guilt? Had she not again and again rehearsed to her throbbing heart every shameful detail, hoped against hope until the black certainty had been forced upon her? Oh, why must she herself confront him with the terrible accusation! How had her idol fallen! And yet she loved him—ah, dear God, how she loved him! That was the bitterness of it all. Had her soul been less fully his she could have—but it was all there before her in hideous detail. Her Jack, her more than foster-brother, her childhood's comrade, Jack Newell, had worked hard two years in competition for the Forbes fellowship, at last completing a thesis which the few who had seen it felt must win the coveted honor, together with its emolument of travel and residence abroad. And then, when too late to rewrite, the manuscript had disappeared as completely as by enchantment. And the only man who knew where Jack had kept his thesis—the only man whose room-key was afterwards found to match that of Jack Newell's—the only man who was *known* to have been alone in the corridor of Old South the evening the manuscript disappeared—and the man to whom the Forbes fellowship was finally awarded—was Jim Pendleton!

For fully an hour Pendleton wandered uneasily in the vast old cathedral, vainly trying to settle his thoughts upon the intricate tracery that adorned the Byzantine domes, or the marvellous brazen embellishments of the lattice, lamps, and lecturn. He could only dwell upon the riddle of Nancy's actions. It did not occur to him to connect his present troubles with the recent scandal at Elm. But four men knew of the trouble, and none of them—but it could n't be that.

Repeatedly he passed a hooded figure, apparently in the conventional peasant garb, kneeling in the dim, cool shadow at one of the side altars in the Cappella di San Isidro. He did not suspect that the tearful devotee was Nancy. That she, the daughter of a Protestant home, could find solace for her woes in preferring her petitions at a Roman shrine never suggested itself to his mind, any more than that she should keep her appointment in a cloak so different from her accustomed garb as unwittingly to constitute, in the religious light of the cathedral, a veritable disguise.

And so the tempest of doubt and torment raged alike in the breasts of both. Tortured, consumed, his parched lips fairly blood-streaked, his hands aching from their clenched intensity, his whole attitude declaring his poignant distress, Pendleton wandered back to the choir and mechanically turned to gaze down the superb length of the venerable basilica.

Suddenly his eye caught the vision of a familiar form just leaving the church by the main portal to pass out to the Piazza San Marco. His heart gave a choking bound. The little penitent was Nancy! He knew the direction which she must take—she would pass under the shadow of the Campanile and, traversing the length of the Piazza, enter the hotel gardens. He rapidly made his way to the entrance, where he stood for an instant in order to accommodate his vision to the brilliant glare of the external world.

At that moment a portentous roaring, as of the breaking up of a titanic ice gorge, smote his ears. The earth leaped to meet the skies. A great cloud of stifling white dust filled the air, and, thundering, hurtling from its superior height, the column of centuries, the historic Campanile, came crashing to its fall.

Pendleton crouched in stricken horror. On the very spot he had that instant vacated, the Great Golden Angel that had stood for four hundred years upon the apex of the mighty Campanile fell and lay, almost unbroken, at his feet.

For a moment a dreadful hush pervaded the scene. Neither voice of man nor flutter of pigeon broke upon that ghastly stillness. It was as though in the mighty fall all the world had been destroyed and he only was left to view the ruin. Then arose a wail as from the entire city. From the hundred shops that belt the Piazza rushed the terror-stricken tradesmen, gesticulating wildly, clamoring with tears and groans to know if Venice, their dear island city, was now to sink to the depths of the sea, whence, centuries gone by, she had arisen, stone upon stone, to be the pride and the glory of the world. A moment, and thousands had gathered from their near-by homes, the hotels emptied themselves of their guests, and the broad Piazza was thronged with frenzied multitudes shuffling with nervous tread upon the thick deposit of disintegrated mortar that covered every stone like a sickly white shroud.

Pendleton, a horrible fear tugging at his heart-strings, now rushed about in search of Nancy, though he knew in his heart that she must have perished in the very climax of the cataclysm. Now he pressed inquiries upon excited Italians. Now he tore madly with his hands at the pile of ruins to disentomb his beloved. Now another fear gripped him, for in the far corner of the Piazza a tumult was arising and the people with one accord rushed toward the narrow avenues that led to and from the square on every side, in a wild rush to find egress.

"San Marco is falling!" "Venezia sinks into the sea!" "Save yourselves!" "Make for the Islands!" "Over the bridge!" "To the gondolas!"

The populace was mad with fright. The thousands which had, but a moment before, hastened from every quarter to witness the havoc, were now pressing incontinently to escape the threatened doom. To the fear-stricken pallor of their faces the fine mortar dust, rising from beneath a myriad trampling feet, added the phantasmal ghastliness of a Wierz canvas.

Pendleton found himself caught in the swirl of raging humanity—and thanked the memory of foot-ball finesse. Setting his teeth, he squared his shoulders and, digging his heels in the rough joints of the pavement, leaned back against the howling, clutching mob, and thus succeeded in keeping his feet until he was carried with the throng under the Clock Tower, into the shopping district of the Merceria, and thence into a narrow side street.

He dimly recognized how hopeless it was to search for Nancy then. Even if the relentless masses of tumbling brick should have spared her, what could he hope from the brutal delirium of this trampling mob? Life was worth very little to him now. Half dazed, he pushed through the crowd to rescue whom he might. Just to his left he heard the piercing cries of a little girl. "*Madonna mia!*" she wailed after her shrieking mother who was being forced away. "*Madonna mia*, come back. Do not leave me so!"

He threw all his strength into the struggle. Reaching over the heads of the people he was just in time to catch the little one as she was falling beneath the hurrying feet. He perched her upon his shoulder and made for the nearest wall, from which coign of vantage he was able to pass her on to a pair of strong arms that reached down from an overhanging balcony. Just before him an aged crone was gasping for breath. The crowds pressed wildly upon her. His sturdy arms rescued her also. And so performing prodigies of strength—all the while almost unconscious of everything but the blinding grief that had taken all the color and joy out of his life—he moved about, until at length comparative quiet came upon the crowd—until the people learned that the threatened general disaster was really not imminent.

Gradually he worked his way back to the Piazza. He searched every shop, he poured questions upon dulled ears, he investigated the débris until the soldiery forced all back and workmen began to erect a fence about the ruin—but all without the slightest trace of Nancy.

It had not occurred to him until that moment to go to the Britannia to see if she might have returned to her hotel. So thither he ran. There was little comfort there, for he met Mrs. Manning and Ned just emerging from the hotel garden, bent upon the same hopeless mission of search.

As Nancy emerged from the cathedral, she was halted by an excited officer of the Guardia Municipale, who forbade her passing by the Campanile, which, he said, might fall at any moment. The square had already been quickly cleared, and instead of traversing the Piazza San Marco, as Pendleton had divined that she would, Nancy found that she must turn to the left into the Piazzetta, and pass along the façade of the Ducal Palace, in the direction of the grand canal. This she did, resolving to take a gondola from the Molo to her hotel.

She had scarcely reached the Piazzetta when the splendid column of brick and marble, which for centuries had reared its height three hundred feet in air, sank upon its foundations with a mighty expiring groan. As by a miracle she had escaped. Sick with fright, and in the double despair of her heart, she flew down to the Molo. Without asking help from the astounded old *ganziere,* who was wringing his hands in terror, nor noticing that there was no gondolier in charge, she leaped into the nearest craft. By some mischance it was unfastened, and in a moment had drifted out into the canal.

All Venice was hastening to the scene of the catastrophe. Who, then, should heed the despairing gesticulations of a wild-eyed girl floating in a gondola upon the broad highway of water?

Nancy sank to the floor of the boat in horror. "Jim! Jim!" she wailed, "why did I doubt you? It can't be true that you were so mean and low! If it's true, how can I love you so? It's not true, Jim, it's not true!" And again a paroxysm of tears and lamenting cries.

Suddenly there flashed upon her memory that forgotten fact of her engagement to meet Pendleton in St. Mark's that morning. Why had he not met her? She remembered vaguely her own hesitation, but then why had he not come to her? She could not now remember why she had left the church. Then for a moment her mind grew clearer. Could it be that in this hour of general cataclysm his love too had failed her? Ah!—she knew it now—that would be more awful even than the stain upon his honor to which circumstances pointed so directly. In that moment she was ready to forgive—rather, to believe him against the world—if only Jim were safe by her side.

Safe? Why—what new horror! What if he had come to meet her and had been crushed beneath the falling tower! She leaped to her feet with such violence that the fickle gondola nearly pitched her into the waters. But she made her way unsteadily back to the little platform on which the gondolier stands to propel his craft.

There was no oar. And even though there were, how could she handle this cumbersome weight. The full force of her helplessness smote her as with a physical blow.

And all the while the gondola was drifting farther and farther out into the deserted Lagoon.

For a time Nancy was unconscious of all that passed around her. Again, she pictured her beloved lying in agony beneath the falling bricks. Still again she imagined him by her side, and then she poured into his ear assurances—endearing assurances—of her changeless faith in his honor and love.

But unconsciousness at length came to relieve the overwrought mind, and Nancy fell back among the cushions under the protection of the black silken awning.

How long she drifted she never knew. It was days after when, in a scrupulously clean little chamber, her surroundings all strange, she wakened to consciousness. Aided by such sign language as she could command, the oval-faced peasant woman whom Nancy found at her bedside managed to explain that she had been found drifting in the Lagoon and had been taken to the cottage where she now was.

It somewhat mitigated the grief of Mrs. Manning and Pendleton to learn that, owing to the successful efforts of the Guardia in clearing the space immediately surrounding the huge column just preceding its collapse, no one had perished beneath the Campanile. But where, then, was Nancy? Pendleton dreaded a fate worse than that of burial beneath the shapeless ruins of what was once the pride of Italy. With Nancy alone among a people whose brutality differed in no respect from that of any other mob acting under the frenzy of physical fear, what had he to hope?

In those anxious days Pendleton came very near to Mrs. Manning, who began to look upon him as on a son to whom she could confidently commit the future of her daughter—if, indeed, that dear treasure should ever be restored to them. But the mother did not know of the barrier of suspicion that more effectively separated them than could her disapproval. From Pendleton, the difference in names had effectually concealed Jack Newell's relationship to Nancy.

Daily, the searcher haunted the *Procuratie* and at last a glimmer of light rifted the clouds of his hopelessness. A boatman, the officials learned, had picked up a delirious girl, lying in a gondola drifting near Chioggia, far to the south of Venice. Apparently she was a foreigner, and perhaps, said the *Procurateur,* the *signore* would find this to be the *signorina* for whom he was searching. At all events, he could have a member of the *guardia* to go with him to Chioggia and see.

Not daring to raise the hopes of the mother by telling her of this remote clue to Nancy's whereabouts, Pendleton set out as fast as the steam launch could carry him, and in due season arrived at the blue and white stuccoed cottage of the boatman, Giuseppe Tombini.

"Ah, *carissima Signorina,* do not weep," pleaded the kindly little Maria, Giuseppe's girl wife. "The *sirocco* has ceased to blow, and to-day, if the Holy Virgin wills it, my Giuseppe shall visit Venezia and seek for the *Signorina's* mother—and perhaps he may also find the *Signore* Pen—Pen—how is it that the *Signore* is called?—of whom the *Eccellenza* spoke so much in her fever dreams? Ah, these fever dreams! Do I, Maria, not know how terrible they are? One sees everything—everything! When the *picciola bambino* was but a month old——" and so the simple hearted child prattled on, unmindful of the tears that slowly coursed down Nancy's wan cheeks.

For an hour she had been lying awake in the little chamber, just off from the one living room in the boatman's cottage, looking far out over the waves of the Adriatic as they danced so merrily in the morning sun—as though never a repining heart throbbed in tortured human bosom. Her fingers nervously plucked at the gorgeous flowers on the chintz coverlet. With returning consciousness came a feeble reassertion of her young strength and a rush of impatient protest against her helplessness, but an effort to arise only emphasized this condition.

With that singular disregard for simple expedients which often follows when the mind has received a great shock, Nancy did not inquire for quicker methods of communicating with her mother, but resigned herself to awaiting the result of Giuseppe's journey to Venice. All the horror of the past three days trooped in fantastic procession before her aching eyes. She tried repeatedly to connect all the occurrences which had transformed her so suddenly from the happy betrothed to the lost lamb who had wandered far from shelter and love. But all efforts to reconstruct her shattered consciousness resulted only in added distress. Fragments, indeed, of recent happenings stood out, painted with painful clearness. But how to trace, in her late terror of doubt as to Jim's integrity, in the awful fall of the Campanile, and in the weird, distorted memories of her efforts to reach her hotel—how to trace in all these the way to her present situation, neither her own conjectures nor Maria's voluble but rather unintelligible suppositions could teach her.

Of one thing, however, she was certain: if only Jim were here——

At that moment she thrilled and thrilled again, until it seemed as though the keen pain of delight would rend her heart for very joy—and dread. Jim had come! She knew it—knew it as love often discerns the approach of love, not by any physical sense at all, but by that impalpable something we call spirit.

He entered her chamber as gently as a mother approaching the couch of her slumbering first-born. Fair, like a crushed flower, Nancy lay as though asleep—eyes closed, limpid tears glittering on her long lashes.

Pendleton stood for an instant regarding her, all the longing of his soul struggling against his fear of awakening the sleeper. A sweet, half-weeping smile began to play about her lips. Nancy opened her eyes.

For a few moments neither moved or spoke. Then, "Jim!" whispered a faint voice, "Jim—I don't understand it all, but—I love you."

In a moment the big boyish head was pillowed on her bosom. Kneeling there Pendleton kissed away the tears from eyes that had lately wept more than their meed. And there they both remained long, to search the past and the present for answers to the riddles with which that trickster, Fate, had beset their loves.

But perhaps Fate's strangest prank of all was that, on the very morning when Pendleton set out to find Nancy at Chioggia, he received by registered post a precious package from his American attorney. It contained the ante-mortem statement of an envious classmate, fully confessing the theft of Jack Newell's thesis, and exposing the degenerate cunning by which he had succeeded in falsely stamping the theft upon Jim Pendleton.

◆

THE INEXPLICABLE

BY STACY E. BAKER

TALES have been told—but who of ye are wise
To read the story in a mother's eyes!

THE PATCHWORK LADY

By Dorothea Deakin

❧

ALL the freshness and grace of spring were hers. The blue of the March sky in her eyes, the color of pink almond blossoms in her cheeks. All the sunshine of the world was in her smile, and she was not for me.

"You must be mad!" cried I disgustedly. Indeed, I could n't understand her. Primula fidgetted with her white furs. The violets I had given to her fell to the ground. I picked them up and fastened them sternly in their place again with a large pin. I always carry a pin.

"Listen," I said; "let me put the matter plainly." There is something about a woman's brain which makes it impossible for her to see anything in a sane and wholesome light. "Setting sentiment aside——"

"But that 's a thing you never can do in this world," she broke in wistfully. "Life 's a perfect sea of sentiment."

"Quite so," said I. "And you 're trying to drown yourself in it—and me too. Let *me* be your lighthouse, Primula. Let me show you the way to dry land."

"But I never *could* learn to swim," said she sadly. "I 've given up trying."

I kept my temper.

"Look here," said I gently; "we love each other—you and I. It is fate. We were made to make each other happy——"

"Or unhappy." As usual, she took the darker view.

"I want you—you want me. Tommy Mainwaring *does n't* want you. He 's absolutely unworthy of you. He 's jilted you, to all intents and purposes. He only wants the joys of the bottle and——" I hesitated a moment, but finally decided not to spare her—"and the Patchwork Lady."

Primula turned away with a sob, but I went on:

"You made a foolish promise to his mother——"

"His dying mother, Edmund."

"And the more reason why it should n't be kept. It was inexcusable to work upon your feelings at such a moment."

Primula turned quickly to me with such a wonderful look that I—well, I was almost ashamed. I am not often ashamed. "We loved each other then," said she. "She depended upon his love for me to keep him—well, to keep him——"

"Has it?" I asked grimly, but Primula disregarded my question, and went on steadily:

"'You are a good girl,' she said to me. 'A boy needs a good influence if he is to come unspotted through the world. He needs an ideal. Keep him up to the high water mark of yours, and I shall not fear for him.'"

I frowned at her exalted tone, and the sight of her glowing face maddened me.

"She said a lot of other things," Primula went on quickly. "She said that Tommy needed a guiding star more than most people."

"He does," said I, "as much as any one I know. But——"

"And I promised. I said that if every one else in the world abandoned him, I would cling to him still. I said that, unworthy as I was, I would try to do as she wished, and the bare thought cheered her up wonderfully before she died."

"Well?"

Her face fell.

"I did try; I have been trying ever since——"

"You have," said I grimly; "for five years, quite unsuccessfully."

"I have never once lost an opportunity of carrying out her wishes. No one's last request could have been respected more, and yet——"

"Go on," I said.

"It was all wasted," said she wretchedly. "I used to think he was listening at first, and then he'd suddenly break in and say something light and frivolous about my eyes or hair or lips that had nothing to do with anything."

"Eyes and hair and lips," I sighed as I looked at her.

"And then," she pursued, "*that* stage passed, and he only got angry and told me for God's sake not to preach. And I never lost my temper, indeed I did n't, and I was always tactful, and yet——"

"And yet?"

"He used to make me cry often with the dreadful things I heard about him. Only last month I was crying fit to break my heart, and he just said, 'For the Lord's sake, Primula, swear at me, throw a plate at me, if you like, but don't weep over me any more!' and slammed the door and went out of the house without another word."

"Young hound!" The tears standing in her eyes at the bare memory infuriated me. "And you can devote your life to a man who behaves like this!" I cried.

"I shall never abandon him," said she.

"He makes you a laughing-stock," cried I. "He 's always at the feet of the Patchwork Lady now. Have you seen her? She well deserves her name. She dresses in a thousand colors, all of the brightest. She wears a golden wig, and the red and white of her cheeks is—well, it 's red and white. She earns her living by singing comic songs in the third-rate halls. I believe she dances too. She has the rudest stare and the loudest laugh and the worst manners——"

"Poor Tommy," said Primula softly.

"Poor fiddlesticks!" cried I sharply. "He has only himself to thank. He likes low company—always did. He was always more at ease in his shirt-sleeves, with a hammer and a saw and a chunk of wood, than he was in your drawing-room. He 's galloping just as fast as he jolly well can down the road to ruin. He 's taken a first-class single in the down express——"

But Primula's eyes only lit up with a brighter light. She drew a deep breath.

"It 's not too late to save him yet," said she.

"He 's lost his situation," said I, with heat. "He 's cut by every decent person in the town. He 's not been sober for a month. His father has cast him off. He goes about looking like a tramp——" I stopped abruptly at the sight of her inspired eyes, her sweet parted lips.

"He has one true friend still!" cried she. "Edmund, if I sacrifice my whole life to do it, I will save that boy."

And she went indoors and wrote a little earnest note to that effect, telling him that she forgave him all, and asking him to come and see her. He did n't answer the letter. He did n't come to see her. I was not surprised, considering what I had heard.

For the Patchwork Lady held him fast in her painted toils, and flaunted openly through the town, dragging in her wake the willing captive of her bow and spear.

"I am told that she drinks even more than he does," I told Primula. It was, of course, my duty to tell her what I heard.

Primula sat down at the table and hid her face in her hands.

"They drink together," said I. It was only right that she should know. How silly she was to cling to that absurd promise! I hated false sentiment. There was I, certainly the best match in the town, fretting and longing for a girl who undoubtedly loved me, and would, but for Tommy Mainwaring, be glad to marry me. The thing was incredible.

Suddenly, as I stood and watched her, she rose. I never saw such eyes to shine as hers.

"I am going to see the Patchwork Lady!" cried she enthusiastically. "I 've had an inspiration."

"What!"

"I am going to tell her what she is doing."

"Primula!"

"I am going to appeal to her better feelings."

"You must be mad. I don't suppose she has any."

"I am going to beg her—if she loves him—to let him go."

"She 's more likely to let him go if she does n't love him."

Primula shook her head and told me that I did n't understand a woman's heart. I certainly did n't understand hers.

And so she called on the Patchwork Lady, who lived in a squalid lodging in Cinderland Lane, and I waited for her outside with angry impatience, so utterly did I disapprove.

The Patchwork Lady was ironing out an old pink silk skirt when Primula was shown in, and when she saw the girl standing there, tall and slim and beautiful in her white furs, she dropped the hot iron and said something Primula never cared to repeat to me.

"I have come to you as woman to woman," Primula began bravely.

"If it 's charity," said the Patchwork Lady, hastily snatching at a blue and white beaded bag, "I can't give more than half a crown. I 'm nearly broke."

Primula was rather surprised at this, because when she had been collecting for the Society for the Amelioration of Superannuated Town Councillors, she had never been able to get more than two shillings—even from the very biggest houses. And the Patchwork Lady had n't even asked what it was for, or if it was deserving.

"I have not come for money," said Primula earnestly. "I have come to ask you to relinquish a human soul."

The Patchwork Lady glanced uneasily at the door and pushed her golden hair out of her eyes. It was then that Primula saw that it really was her own hair, though probably dyed.

"What are you getting at?" she demanded fiercely.

"I want you to let Mr. Mainwaring go."

"Let him *go?* Go where?"

"Send him away from you," Primula pursued earnestly. "Give him up. He has lost his situation—he has disgusted all his friends——"

"Poor sort of friends his must be," said the Patchwork Lady, with a meaning sniff.

"Do you care for him?" Primula asked softly.

The Patchwork Lady picked up the iron which had been slowly scorching a hole in her dusty carpet and held it near her rouged cheek to try the heat; then she asked Primula if she had n't better mind her own business if she wanted other folks to mind theirs.

"It is my business," said the girl boldly. "I want to save him."

The Patchwork Lady regarded her curiously and muttered something to the effect that it was like her cheek.

"Oh!" cried Primula. "Let me implore you to listen to me. You can't be *all* bad. No one can be all bad——"

"Nor yet all good," said the Patchwork Lady grimly, ironing hard, with a cool iron. "That 's a cert."

"Send him away," Primula begged.

"Why?"

Primula flushed.

"You must see," she said, "that while he is under your—your spell, he is deaf and blind to all better influences."

"Meanin' yours?" the Patchwork Lady suggested thoughtfully.

Primula ignored this.

"If you love him, I implore you to give him up."

"You do, do you?" said the Patchwork Lady. "If *you* loved a man, would *you* give him up to a better influence?"

Primula grew pale. How could she explain that a better influence was impossible? "The cases are so dissimilar," she faltered. "I hope I should try to do what was best for him."

"Do *you* love Tommy Mainwaring?"

Primula was silent.

"Are *you* the girl he was engaged to?"

"Yes."

"Are you the girl who used to treat him as a black sheep when he was as steady as any young man in the town?"

The Patchwork Lady had put down the iron and stood with hands on hips, regarding Primula with a strange smile. Then she hastily turned and drank something out of a tumbler on the mantelpiece and smiled again.

"Are you the girl who nagged at him morning, noon and night?"

"Oh——"

"Are you the girl who preached and worried and drove him to things he 'd never have thought of if you 'd met him with a smiling face and trusted him and believed the best of him?"

"I—er—I——" I never knew what Primula replied to these impertinent demands. She does n't know herself.

"If you *are* the girl who did all this—and I suppose you are, from your pretty face and your bright eyes—oh, yes, he 's often talked to me about your face and your eyes—if you 're that girl, you may take it as a sure thing it was you who drove him to the devil, not me."

Primula grasped the chair-back to steady herself.

"I ought n't to have come," she faltered as she turned to go. "I ought n't to have come here to be insulted. I——"

"Yes, you 'd better go," said the Patchwork Lady. "Because, you see, you never had no right to come, unless you loved him, and if you 'd loved him you 'd have believed the best of him from the beginning instead of the worst. You 've got a lot to learn."

Poor Primula! She came out to me with her lovely eyes swimming in tears, and I thought it only right to ask her if it had n't been a lesson to her. And she said that her path was beset with thorns and pitfalls, but that she meant to go on treading it, however painful it was, rather than the primrose one we had both heard so much about.

When she got home she wrote to Tommy and told him exactly what she had undergone for his sake, and would n't he come and see her and they would try to forget his sins together? And Tommy did n't come.

She wrote again the next day and the next, and with every letter, as she grew angrier at his silence, her tone grew more forgiving, angel that she was.

And yet Tommy kept away.

I heard the news first. Every man in the town was full of it. I rushed off to break it to Primula with a joyful heart. At last I should be able to persuade her to listen to me.

"Tommy 's done it this time!" cried I, as I came up to her in the garden. She grew white.

"What—oh, what *more?*"

"He 's eloped with the Patchwork Lady. I knew he would."

Primula's cheeks were painted suddenly a distressed rose. Her eyes shone.

"Where to?" she asked. I stared.

"What does it matter where to?" cried I joyfully. "It 's enough that he 's gone, is n't it? You 're free now. Darling, don't you see that you 're free——"

Primula shook her head.

"I shall never be free," she said sadly. "I am bound by fetters of honor to help him—to reclaim him——"

"But suppose he 's married her? It 's just the kind of wild thing Tommy Mainwaring *would* do."

Primula shook her head.

"That will make no difference," she said surprisingly. "The greater his need, the more I must keep my promise. The harder the task, the more I must n't shrink from it."

"But you can't go on being a guiding-star to another woman's husband."

"I must rescue him before it is too late," said she sorrowfully. "I shall never forget the way that dreadful woman spoke to me."

"But he 's gone away——"

"I must find out where he is. Even to the uttermost parts of the earth, Edmund, I must follow him and bring him back."

"Well—by George!" said I, and indeed I was flabbergasted. But Primula was quite in earnest, and I had to set to work to find "clues"—a more distasteful task I leave you to imagine. She was a wonderful girl. I said as much to Jack Holgate when I met him that evening and tried to pump him about Tommy, and he said he did n't wonder that Tommy had cut and run if she was like that. But Holgate is a man absolutely without ideals. He also said absurdly that Tommy should never have been put in an office; that he was a first rate artisan spoiled. He said absurdly that if his father had allowed him to take up cabinet-making, as he wished, he might have been a different man. He said that it was n't the drink and the Patchwork Lady that had done for him so much as this twopenny halfpenny false gentility; and Primula's sermons. I was thoroughly disgusted with him, and when he told me that the Patchwork Lady was quite a good sort when you got to know her, I left him in displeasure.

No one knew where Tommy was. No one knew where the Patchwork Lady was. They had disappeared as completely as if they had never been. And Primula advertised to "T. M." that all should be forgotten and forgiven.—P. And no reply came. Yet she was still as iron to my entreaties.

"I promised to save him," was always her answer.

It was a year and a half before we heard of them, and then quite by accident, I heard through a man travelling in beer that he had seen Tommy in Irminster.

Reluctantly I told Primula. The joy of battle leaped once more into her eyes—joy of the reopening of the battle for Tommy's lost soul.

"You 'll come with me to Irminster, won't you?" she cried.

Of course I said I 'd go. What else could I say?

"How are you going to set about—about what you 're going to try to do?" I asked vaguely.

"I shall appeal to his higher feelings," said she promptly.

"Ah, you 've done that before, have n't you?"

"And the memory of his mother."

"I see."

"I shall tell him that the past shall be wiped out forever directly the new leaf is turned."

"And the Patchwork Lady?" Primula was silent.

"We must try to catch him alone," she said at last in a distinctly doubtful voice, and I—well, I wondered.

Irminster is a smutty little town, but there is one green and begardened suburb, and this was where we found that Tommy lived, after fruitless inquiries at the police station and the Hippodrome. We learned their address quite accidentally from a greengrocer, where Primula bought some pears.

In nervous silence I followed her up a brick-paved cottage path between sweet-williams and hollyhocks, and when she knocked at the door I hung back. When it opened, I gasped. For it was a pretty, fresh-faced young woman who let us in with a surprised laugh, and then smiled at us in a friendly fashion. "Come in," said she. "I 'm expecting him home to tea."

In bewildered silence we followed her into the comfortable house-place. A kettle was singing on the hob; there were rose-colored geraniums and musk on the window-sill; a large tabby cat slept on the black and red hearth-rug, and a pink and white baby with a daffodil yellow patch of hair gurgled conversationally in a wooden cradle in the chimney corner. It was the conventional cottage home of the stage.

Could it be the Patchwork Lady? There was no rouge now—no patchwork. What fairy godmother had been at work to produce this attractive young person in the fresh blue cotton gown, with eyes to match it, and such pretty, bright, glossy hair?

The table was laid for tea—high tea, it seemed, with chops now keeping warm on the bright fender. The Lady—Patchwork no longer—caught up the baby and held it out to Primula.

"We 've called her after you," she said amazingly.

Primula, quite speechless, sank into a chair, and the Patchwork Lady put the little creature back in its cradle. "She 's got her father's eyes," she said irrelevantly. We looked at each other—at the geraniums and the canary and the singing kettle and the tabby cat. It was an amazing picture.

"Tommy?" I asked slowly.

"Seems odd, does n't it?" With a queer little laugh she turned to Primula. "And your doing, all of it."

"*My* doing?" Poor Primula.

"Remember that day you and me had words?" the Lady asked brightly. Primula was silent. "You 've not forgot the day you came to try and save Tommy?"

"No—I—I 've not forgotten."

The Lady laughed softly at the sight of our thunderstruck faces. "Lord, what a turn you gave me!" said she frankly. "After you 'd gone I sat there and never moved for a whole blessed hour. You 'd left me something to think about, you see."

"Oh!"

"Yes. It had never struck me before that Tommy was worth saving, and when I came to think it over, it seemed to me that if he was worth saving to a slip of a girl who did n't care a pin for him and thought him dirt beneath her feet, he was worth ten times more to me, because I—well, I liked him, you see."

"Yes, I see," said Primula faintly.

"How to do it?" said the Patchwork Lady gaily. "That was the question. Preachin' and cryin' over him was worse than nothin'. You 'd proved that."

"Oh!" said Primula again.

"So I thought and thought." She put the brown teapot on the hob to warm. "And then it came to me like a flash.

"'Don't try to save *him,*' said I to myself. 'Ask him to save *you.* You want it quite as bad——'"

"By George!" said I weakly.

"So I chucked the tumbler of whisky into the fire there and then, and when he come in I asked him to help me to give up the drink. I said I was n't strong enough to do it alone. And he—well, he likes me, you see."

"I see," said I.

"And we came here and were married, and Tommy saw that I could n't give it up unless he gave it up, too, and so we—well, we both chucked it. He never touches now, not even on a Saturday, and he 's got a job cabinet-making and earning three pounds a week. And now there 's Baby. Tommy thinks the world of Baby."

"I see," said Primula again. She rose with dazed eyes and walked towards the door. There she turned unsteadily and said "Good afternoon" and that she thought we would n't wait to see Tommy. In dignified silence she preceded me down the little brick path between the wallflowers and the hollyhocks, and I saw when we were out in the road again that her blue eyes were full of tears.

I was surprised, I must admit, because I was in such excellent spirits myself. Little as he deserved it, I could n't help feeling pleased about Tommy. I considered her attitude very carefully before I spoke.

"But you *have* saved him, after all," I said diplomatically, after a moment's thought. "The Patchwork Lady was only your instrument. And now he 's safely saved and out of the way. Why, Primula—dear——"

"Don't!" Her voice broke with a sob. "Not yet. It 's all so terribly sad."

I stared at her. I shall never pretend to understand a woman again.

"Sad?" I asked blankly. "What is?"

"Everything," she said in a tone of dignified sorrow. "What do you think his poor mother would say if she knew that he had come to this?"

And I—well, I really did n't know.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN AMERICA

By Annie R. Ramsey

◆

WHEREAS, Dr. Woodrow Wilson is reported as saying that where women have the ballot very few of them vote; therefore,

Resolved, That we call attention to the fact that the Colorado Secretary of State says 80 per cent. of Colorado women register and about 72 per cent. vote, the Wyoming Secretary of State says 90 per cent. of the women in Wyoming vote, and the Chief Justice of Idaho and all the Justices of the State Supreme Court have signed a statement that the large vote cast by the women established the fact that they take a lively interest.

AT a recent meeting of the College Equal Suffrage League of Massachusetts, at which Radcliffe, Smith, Wellesley, and Boston University were represented, the foregoing resolution was adopted.

That the cause of Woman Suffrage has a large and constantly increasing number of staunch supporters among college women, there can be no doubt; yet other women—many of them prominent ones—have declared themselves unalterably opposed to it in principle and in practice. What will be the result of this interesting campaign which has been waging now for more than half a century?

History must be the basis of any prophecy as to the outcome of the demand for woman suffrage, and in rehearsing the story of the movement one is amused and surprised at the number of old prophecies met. They once stood like giants in the path and proclaimed themselves as the reasons against woman's appearance at the polls, and as the dire consequences thereof, but when boldly approached most of these giants will be found to be tame bugaboos or kindly, harmless old fellows who have gone sound to sleep in the midst of the din. Yet it is in combatting these old prophecies that we shall find the basis for the new.

As far back as the second of July, 1776, two days before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the State of New Jersey changed the wording of the enfranchisement clause of its Provincial Chart from, "Male free-holders worth fifty pounds," to, "*All inhabitants* worth fifty pounds," thus giving the ballot to men and women alike.

So it can readily be seen that the inception of the Woman Suffrage movement in this country antedates the birth of the Republic.

It is true that in Colonial days, and under the laws of the time, there were very few women worth fifty pounds in their individual right, and those who were belonged to the aristocratic class. As a consequence, in their thirty-one years of voting they used their power oftenest in favor of the Federalist party. But democratic principles and ideas became more and more firmly rooted, whereupon the property qualification grew very unpopular. When in 1807 the Democratic party were victorious at the polls, a new law was enacted, by which only white males whose names were on the list of State or county as having paid a poll tax were allowed to vote, women and negroes being disenfranchised.

Many decades passed before any concerted movement was made to enfranchise women. In 1847, Lucy Stone, a graduate of Oberlin College, began the lectures she gave from coast to coast on the subject of Woman Suffrage, and from 1850 to 1861 conventions of women, derided, nicknamed, often over-zealous, and sometimes ridiculous, met annually and "agitated."

After the turmoil of the Civil War died away, the issue of Woman Suffrage was revived in several States, notably Kansas, but Wyoming was the first to enfranchise women, in 1869. Since then Colorado, Utah, and Idaho have followed its example, the women in those States possessing suffrage at all elections upon equal terms with men. In addition to these many States have granted partial suffrage to women.

It must be borne in mind that many hidden causes were working to this result quite as surely as the one open cause of the desire for justice. It would take too long to recite the gradual changes of the position of women in the industrial, business, and professional world, or to follow in detail the slow improvement of her legal status. By economic exigencies, by the introduction of luxury, by the invention of labor-saving machines, women have been forced forward and thus made more fit and more free to enter public life.

Therefore the army of suffragists has been largely recruited in the last fifteen years from the most intelligent and reflective part of the community.

When such a stage is reached in any movement founded on a plea whose abstract justice is admitted, it is certain that the end will soon be attained, and it is no particular foresight which prophesies that woman's suffrage will eventually be tried. When it comes the years of "agitation" will seem to have been as the rush of an express train, although so many workers have grown weary or died in the waiting for it.

With this commonplace but comprehensive prophecy there are four minor forecasts which will delay the day and alter its tendencies when it dawns, and the best way to present them is to cite the arguments the Antis have used for years.

The first of these is that women will not vote when they get the ballot, because the majority of women do not wish to vote. No, of course not! Who does want to vote just for the sake of voting? But give a woman something to vote about and she is not slow in doing it. Here are the facts: For thirty-nine years the proportion of women of Wyoming who voted has consistently increased. This proportion, as ascertained from actual inspection of voting lists, in three successive elections, was ninety per cent. of the resident women and eighty per cent. of the men. And instead of the number of male voters falling off in consequence of the voting of women, the male vote increased, and far exceeds the proportion of men voting in Massachusetts.

Whenever there has been a vital issue women have taken an active part. What woman does not wish to vote against the city "improvement" which lessens the value of her property, and does no good to any but the dishonest politician who proposed it? What woman would not vote on the questions of better water, better gas, better sanitation, on the conduct of the schools, the cleaning of the city's streets, the making and keeping of its laws of health, and its government by honest men?

The second prophecy is that once the poll habit is formed, the house and the children will be neglected. Yet it does not appear that a man neglects his shop or office in order to vote: why then should a woman take a different stand in regard to her business?—for assuredly home-keeping and child-training are the business of all women happy enough to possess a home and children.

This second prophecy is not borne out by the women of States possessing part or all of the franchise. Wyoming women are not distinguished for their poor domestic arrangements and their unhappy husbands and children, nor are those of the British colonies of New Zealand and Australia, which have fully enfranchised the women. Surely it is only fair to judge a principle by the success of experiments.

As a third prophecy, we are told that the effect of the ballot given to woman will be the degradation of her character.

Is it possible that thinking about politics is so degrading? How have men escaped contamination? Are reading and discussion upon themes and schemes of *good* government so pernicious that no woman can approach them and retire unsoiled? What we say among ourselves and in our homes might surely be said on a slip of paper with as little harm to our morals.

Do the prophets mean that going to the polls on election day is not merely disagreeable, but degrading? It has been claimed that the coming of women to the polls has improved the condition thereof, and that now, with the Australian ballot in use, there is little that is disagreeable in the process of voting.

The prophecy may be founded on the fact that voters are not exempt from military and jury duty. Priests—who do not even give sons to the State—are practically so exempt; and doctors rarely sit on a jury. And women to-day follow the drum as nurses quite as faithfully and fearlessly as their brothers, the chaplain and the doctor.

The fourth argument—perhaps the truest and most to be dreaded—is that when suffrage is granted to women the flood-gates of ignorance and folly are opened; that the vast majority of women are uninformed, and not informable, on political subjects; that they cannot be taught to think both clearly and largely, that they will be the followers of the most successful intriguer and ward "heeler." So they may, for a time, and I would respectfully submit that in these things they would closely imitate the men they know best, and each class of society would but enlarge its ranks. Very little else could be looked for at first if every woman fit or unfit rushed to the polls; but the mass of women is being slowly educated. The subject of this education and uplifting has been one that for thirty-five years has engaged the energies and occupied the thought of earnest women at the top of the social scale, and the result must tell in future generations. It is only sane to judge the future from the past when trying to forecast the fate of a movement which for more than three generations has been rolling up an ever-increasing snow ball of reasons and concessions.

There is hope in the fact that responsibility educates. Intelligent women can see no reason why the vote should be denied them any more than it is denied intelligent men because there are some of each sex who are unworthy and unfit. Most earnest thinkers, to-day, believe in an educational qualification, and this applied to men and women alike would help the whole body politic.

This is not a plea but a prophecy, and I cannot more forcibly remind you of this than by a condensation of the old prophecies with their refutation into the form of a recapitulation.

1. Woman's suffrage will be tried; perhaps not soon, but in no very distant time.
2. It will not destroy the home, and woman's work therein.
3. It will not degrade woman, or produce any very great change in her character.
4. It will not fail because of woman's indifference.
5. It will not overwhelm our present government by a great tide of crude and ill-considered opinion. It is far more likely, for a while at least, to bring strength to reform and life-blood to vital issues.

THE LEPER VALLEY

By Will Levington Comfort

❧

I.

THIS is a tale of victory, and the victory was Robson's. He was a small man, with a strangely unattractive face, but he had a strong and sizable heart. Robson was so poor that he could cater to none but his mental appetites; consequently there had grown upon him a habit of repressing the physical man. All in all, nothing better can happen to a full-gifted male than to pass through a seven years' war with poverty. It makes his flesh firm and white, his brain fine and sensitive; it toughens his mouth, so to speak, so that no drunken Fate can craze him afterward with a curb; and, in a man like Robson, it fosters an innocence, the adornment of seers and children, which preserves the manner of integrity throughout the inevitable disclosures of the years. He was a preacher in embryo and twenty-four years old when he beheld the star of his manhood.

Robson was walking very slowly through the brilliant afternoon and the crowds of the city street. A large, dry book was pressed tightly between his ribs and elbow. The sun drew out the shine and the underlying green from the tightly-buttoned black coat which had lived with him through the college course now nearly ended. His head was slightly bowed. His brain was moving in coolness and rhythm. A tall young woman passed by him, walking with ease, but swiftly.

She did not touch him. He did not recall even that there was any fragrance from her garments. Orientals would explain that their auras mingled for the instant, the meaning of which is adequately covered in five thousand ancient volumes, largely Sanscrit. The fact is that as Robson glimpsed the stranger's profile all that was big and untried in him fell into slavery. Furthermore, the sleeping giant within the young ascetic broke his enchantment. The man followed the woman.

Only vaguely in the next half-hour was he conscious of departure from the pristinity of his life-purpose, so deeply was he tranced in the single aim of being near her. The stores had given way to stately residences and dusk was beginning, when she felt his presence and looked back. As a bird-dog comes to a point, his body turned rigid, so that what might have been a mere suspicion on her part became a certainty. She quickened her steps and presently entered one of the homes of lesser impressiveness. The shades were quickly drawn in the lower front windows.

A smothering solitude crept over Robson; and in his stress, he took chances which no world-wise beau would have dared, to learn her name and her church. It was not that the form of religion entered into the romance, but before the street-door closed upon her, the inner giant had demanded to see her again and pointed out this way. He found the house of worship; dreamed awhile in the portico her form was wont to darken; meditated upon the stones which held the mystery of her tread, and all the time an incandescent street-lamp on the corner fizzed and sizzled in a shining cloud of insects. At last, before her house on the way back, he offered up in the darkness the eternal homage of his heart, a pure and a vast thing, the hidden treasure of which many a sorrowing woman dreams.

The long walk back to his own lodging left no impress upon Robson's brain. Until the following Sunday, he merely breathed and dredged into his books. . . He was in the church before her, but did not need to turn to know when she entered, for he felt again the psychic arousing. Then sounds went from him, and in his eyes nothing manifested but the girlish shoulders and the light waving hair—an ineffable fragment.

In the singing, she turned about slowly, found him, held him, held his heart still. The hundredth man would have called her very beautiful. Her look was slow, but marvellously intent, without scorn or fear or hate. It was as if the strange girl divined the whiteness of his character and put him apart in her mind from the menaces whose eyes thread the city streets. Again and yet again he came. Always, she ventured a glance at him. He was made acquainted with the rector and others, and might have met her in the usual way, but something deep forbade him to seek this boon. It was not timidity alone; rather, it was all so exquisite to him that the thought of the commonplace of a third coming between was harsh enough to prevent.

Robson asked so little. The Sunday hour renewed his inner life. He became a larger and more vital creature than the pale master of self-denial who had led his class earlier in the semester. Indeed, he had fallen into a heritage of visions. His mind came to know wonderful moments of responsiveness to the rhythm of silence. He was led to the eternal fountain of the mystics whose name is Solitude. In the giant sweep between humility and exaltation, something within the man hearkened to strange, far harmonies.

His student days were ended in honor. It was the last Sunday in June, his last Sunday in the city. The thought had grown into the point of action—that she was brave enough to walk and talk with him, if he asked her. She had come alone, and her manner was restless toward the end of the service. There was no time to speak, since she hastened past him on the way out, but with a glance that caused him to shudder lest he misinterpret the significance. In the street she turned in the direction opposite from her house. Robson dared to follow. Far ahead of the others, she halted at last and waited for him to overtake her. To Robson it was the moment of ages.

"I thought—you wanted to speak with me," she faltered.

"Yes."

"And why—please?"

"Because you have made me think such wonderful things."

"Oh, tell me."

Robson hesitated. "It is strange," he said softly. "I don't know if I can quite tell you, unless it is to say that you have opened—all that I have in the way of a treasure-room."

She smiled a little and explained: "I felt that I could not bear it any longer—not to know what you mean. You see, I was n't afraid of you, except a little—at first. And now please tell me about yourself and about the wonderful things—I have unlocked."

Robson told her how he had studied, told her cheerfully how poor he was and something of the dreams which had come to him, since she had passed him on the crowded street—dreams of a valiant work, a perfect sacrifice—with her to come to when his head was bowed with pain. His brain had put off all hamperings and moved with nimbleness and accuracy, its productions falling nicely turned and colored from his tongue.

"I have never raised my eyes to a woman but you," he said in a low voice of devotion, "and you complete me. You give me the zeal to lift empires."

Her heart beat tumultuously. It was all heart-truth to her. She had brought out the values of the man, which was sweet realization. And something had gone from her to work this miracle, something for which there was no word yet, but she missed it now. The blood left her lips and the truth was tight about her heart, but she did not have time to speak before he said:

"It is wonderful to me that you gave me this chance to speak. I meant to ask you for this walk. Next Sunday, I think, will be my last in the city, and I am to have the pulpit in a North-end mission. I dared to think that—you might come."

She answered eagerly: "Yes, I will come. And is there a chance for you being asked to stay there?"

"No, it is just a courtesy which one of the professors secured for me. Where my real work shall begin—I cannot tell yet. And since—since I have known you, the thought of a little church-home to begin with and a steady rise to larger spheres—has lost all its savor. I want to do something great, something terribly hard, and do it cleanly—without a cry. I want to show you the strength you have given me and make you glad."

She stopped and faced him, her hand falling lightly upon his sleeve: "It may not make any difference—I don't want it to—but I must tell you, Mr. Robson, that I am engaged to be married."

He drew back from her. His face, slightly uplifted toward the sun, lost its light and strength and color in the gray of death, as dawn-gray wipes out the beauty and character of constellations. His lips moved, but no sound came. He tried to smile, but it hurt her like a whip.

"Oh, I pity you so, but I had to tell you," she said brokenly. "I wanted to be a help to you, if I could not be a wife!"

He conquered the lines of his mouth before words came. "Believe me, Edloe," he whispered, "until to-day—sleeping and waking—I have crushed out of my mind the thought of being married to you. It was too high a hope for me, and it seemed like defiling a pure sanctuary—until I had come into your life. But to-day—to-day the woman of you—crept into the very heart of me! . . . Please forgive me for saying that. I shall not wound you again!"

By common impulse they had turned back and the church was but a little way before them. Words came fitfully.

"It will not harm—that I love you," he whispered suddenly. "It must not, because to change that is beyond all the powers of me. But I shall go away. I shall do that cleanly and without a cry. Only—only you will not come to the mission next Sunday?"

She saw the fury of his battle in the clenched fingers and the thin white lines of his lips. She was fascinated, but wounded to the heart.

"Don't you want me to come?" she asked pitifully.

"All my work is for you," he answered, and his strange, ardent face bent forward, "but I was thinking that the first audience might take my fighting strength."

She held out her hand with a brave smile. "I must go now, Mr. Robson. I want you to think wonderful things, and I shall always believe that you are doing wonderful work."

He spoke, released her hand, and turned away, but the mental martyrdom she had read in his eyes at the last almost made her cry aloud his name. He was striding away at terrific speed when her brain unfolded his last words:

"Across the world—you shall feel my blessing night and morning—my Fulfilment!"

In the shade of a vast-limbed elm, by the side of the little mission in the North-end, Edloe stood the next Sunday morning. She dared not look for his face, lest he see her, but she heard his voice, his words. . . . Robson was bigger and finer than she had dreamed. . .

There came a moment toward the end when her control would have broken had she listened longer. The whisper came from her heart of hearts as she sped away:

"How should he know that I have a great and terrible thing to do and that I must do it—cleanly and without a cry?"

II.

THE Pacific liner, *Manchu,* had touched Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki on her way out, and was crossing the lower edge of the Yellow Sea for Shanghai. It was evening and summer, and a tropic breeze came over the moon-flecked water from the spicy archipelagoes below. Mrs. Crane sat forward on the promenade-deck, alone and restlessly eager, believing that she was close to her journey's end. It was a strange journey, but the biggest thing her life had brought her to do—her keystone venture. There had been an eight-year hiatus since the awakened Robson had fled from her in the thrall of ardor and agony.

Marvellously, the young preacher had complicated her life. She had held to the earlier romance, because it was her way to hold, but Robson had dulled the flavor of it; and from the same personality, in memory, had emanated a high-light which shone upon the sorrowful limitations of her wifehood. That one hour with the pale dreamer had implanted in her rich mind perennial emotions, pure white blossoms of devotion, and—in all honor she could not deny—rare brief flowerings of passional crimson.

Then, in the zenith of her womanhood, emancipation had come, and across the world she had started to find her soul's mate. Her first and her last duties behind were well done. Her conscience was unwhipped; the most arbitrary conventionalities observed. In the keen, wise eye of the world, Mrs. Crane had departed flawless—and desirable.

In the year of freedom, before she set out on her journey, the woman had been unable to communicate with Robson, because he was severed from his church and without address. There was little of tenuity or of basic value in the varied reports which had come to her, but the tales united in the single item that he was back in China—if he still lived. His itinerary, covering the years, had begun with a mission to India as a light-bearer under the auspices of his denomination. There, it was vaguely reported that his mind had undergone some mysterious transformation which caused his expulsion from the church; also that he had journeyed up into the Himalayas with a Hindoo lama. After years, an outcast from his countrymen, Robson was said to have descended from the roof of the world and been seen by white men in the heart of China.

Mrs. Crane stepped ashore from the river-launch in Shanghai and made her way at once to a religious-book concern. The vast floor was roomy and darkened for coolness, since the noon-hour was near. The orient had dulled the dollar zeal of the establishment and broken the lashing haste of things. It was an hour before one of reckonable authority came in—a rotund American of ripe age and short breath. He sat down before her, panting.

"Robson—Robson?" he repeated jerkily. "You can't mean, madam, the heretical young person who made trouble for us in India?"

"I think possibly—that is the man."

"Bless you, no, we have no authoritative word of his whereabouts. You see, officially, he is dead to us—so to speak."

"You have made that quite clear to me."

He held his breath until he reddened, before answering: "I might add that the entire connection to which he once belonged has been forced to doubt his sanity."

She could scarcely breathe in the old man's presence, but managed to say, "You spoke as if you might have some unofficial word—of him——"

"Let me see," he replied, with maddening deliberation: "the *North China News* published here had word of him a few months ago. Ah, yes, it was in April. I was resting in Japan, and the paper was mailed to me."

Mrs. Crane arose. "Then I can find it in the files," she said swiftly. "The office is——"

"In Hankow road. I shall send a Chinese boy to direct you."

She thanked him almost incoherently, and the head of the book concern was left with a problem to mystify many sleepy, sultry days. . . . Twenty minutes later, at the offices of the *North China News,* a native in immaculate garb handed her the files of April, and one by one, with an aching heart, she turned the sheets, huge as luncheon-covers. It was found at last, an article from the Tienshankwan correspondent, rock-tight and bitter with a Dead Sea bitterness. The story recalled Robson's desertion in India for the faith of the idolaters; discussed the phases of his insanity and proclaimed that the news of the whole matter was imbedded in the fact that Robson had been seen again with the old lama by British traders far in from Tienshankwan. He seemed to be starving, the column stated, but asked no alms. His feet were bare and travel-bruised, and his clothing was a motley of Hindoo, Chinese, and European garments. Again his sanity was brought severely into question by the herald in Tienshankwan. Ill from the pressure of the whole dead East, quivering from the torture of the prints, the woman swayed from the newspaper office into the strange road, thick and yellow with heat.

She engaged passage in a coasting-steamer for Tongu the next day, and on the morning of the third day thereafter boarded the Pekin-

Tienshankwan Express on the *Chinese Eastern.* Alone in the first-class compartment, she watched the snaky furrows of maize throughout seven eternities of daylight, until her eyes stung and her brain revolted at the desolate, fenceless levels of sun-deadened brown. Out of a pent and restless sleep, at last, she found that a twilight film had cooled the distance; and she beheld the sea on her right hand, and before her the Great Wall—that gray welt on the Eastern world, ancient when Christ came, rising into the dim mountains and jutting down into the sea. In an inexplicable moment of mental abstraction, as the train drew up in Tienshankwan, the soul of the weary woman whispered to her that she had seen it all before.

At the Rest House, Mrs. Crane found the correspondent of the *North China News.* He was an unlovely Englishman of pegs and chits, poisoned by China and drink. . . . Oh, yes, he remembered the "renegade missionary. Good story, that." Yes, the man Robson was heard of from time to time, but never seen, since the Chinese kept him hid. Possibly dead; certainly mad.

"I have commissioned the traders to find out more about Robson for a further story, and, oh, yes, by Jove!" the voluble one added, with a trace of long-forgotten spirit, "that reminds me: a boy with the traders did bring in a story. The renegade is in the leper colony at Sungkiang. No foreigners ever go there. Even the traders themselves stop at Langcheng, three leagues this side of the leper colony."

Mrs. Crane stepped back from the creature before her, whom she hated too deeply to allow him to witness the crush of his words. "When does the next party of traders set out in the direction of Sungkiang?" she questioned.

"In two or three days. You don't mean to try to accompany them?" he asked with a cub's bluntness.

The woman did not answer. The countenance before her assumed an aroused look. "It will be hard—possibly perilous—for a lady! Robson is one of them. He would n't be in the colony if he had n't got it."

She fled to her room. By the wide open window she sat for hours, staring at the Great Wall in the moonlight. She saw it climb through the white sheen which lay upon the mountains, and saw it dip into the twinkling sea, like a monster that had crawled down to drink. Tienshankwan was as still as the depths of ocean. The whole landscape was as real and as intimately hateful, as if this had been her country, as if she had been one of the Mongol builders in a past life and had been murdered by the lash and the toil.

The purest substance of tragedy had evolved in her brain. Across the years, across the world, he had sent imperious thought-forms calling for her. So mighty had these been that all barriers were destroyed, and she, in the supremacy of her womanhood, had found herself free to seek him. . . . Was it all a girl's dream? Had powers of evil consummated a heinous mockery to test her soul, because her soul was strong? . . . She could bear it if he were a leper, but if his mind had gone back to the dust——

The pictured thought drew forth a stifled scream. The lamp in her room was turned low, and the still, windless night was a pitiless haunt. Crossing the room to open the door, in agony for air, she passed the mirror and saw a dim reflection—white arms, white throat, white face. She turned the knob.

The clink of glasses on a tin tray reached her from below with the soft tread of a native servant; then farther the click of billiard-balls, and a man's voice, low but insinuating, its very repression an added vileness:

"Damme, but she's a splendid woman—and out after that gone-wrong missionary——"

She crashed the door shut and bolted it against the pestilence which suddenly filled the hall. . . . In shame and terror, she knelt again by the open window. The Wall was still there, sleeping in the moonlight. It steadied her and something of that which had kindled the soul of Robson—the stuff of martyrs—came back.

III.

AMONG the British traders journeying in to Langcheng was the Boy, and the woman's heart went out to him, for there was cleanness in his gray eyes, and you could not think of taint and look at his cheeks, still ruddy under the tan. As they mounted, he searched her face with the guilelessness of a child and the valor of a man. He rode beside her, and the air she breathed was pure. The traders, too, were brave men and respectful, for life in the open had held them sweet from the curse of Asia.

Of course the saddle was torture to her, a cumulative torture with the hours, but it was only physical, and night bore down with the sleep of healing, from the twilight of evening to the twilight of dawn. Strange huts she slept in, and they left scarcely a memory. The journey melted into a strange composite of cool mountain winds; brief, warm showers which released the fragrance of the valleys; humans in dim doors and upon the highways, held, as she passed, in tableaux of freezing horror; suffering, sunlight, sleep. And always Mother China unfolded greater vistas of hills, fields, huts, and glowering yellow faces; always the Great Gray Wall arose and descended on the right of them, and always the Boy smiled and served.

So ages passed, but the traders said it was the fourth day. They would reach Langcheng in the evening—Langcheng, the end of the traders' route, and three leagues from the leper colony of Sungkiang! . . . Dusk of the last night of her journey, and sleep stood afar off from her, like a horse that had tasted freedom and loved it better than threshed grain. Langcheng, by the yellow river; the Wall in a waning moon! Her senses were startled by the vast, unheard-of city, with its tens of thousands who knew no other place, moving to and fro in formless shadows, in utter blackness, in the red-lights of the shops. She knew now what the men meant when they talked of the smell of China. . . . She saw a maiden carried to her lover on the shoulders of a giant. The feet of the maiden were like thimbles, her face white in the moonlight, and her eyes like pearls.

Then, one by one, at last the lights went out; the sounds ceased and the fetid warrens became inscrutable mysteries, not like Earth at all, but like a nether plane. Only the Boy was real and beautiful to her, sleeping still as a babe across her doorway. He kept her brain from devouring itself with images of Sungkiang, her lover and the animate dead. Once, in the last assault of the hours, she groped for the Boy's hand, lest she scream. Eagerly but gently his fingers closed upon her own.

"You must go with me to-morrow to Sungkiang," she whispered.

"Yes, of course I will go with you," he answered. "You need not be afraid. This is the sleepiest part of China. Any way, I would take care of you."

In the dawn, she kissed the Boy's forehead, so lightly that he did not wake—the Boy who would take care of her against Asia.

In mid-afternoon, their native guide paused at the verge of a steep declivity, and pointed down into a radiant hollow, evenly rimmed by the mountains on every side. A lake gleamed in the bottom of this finger-bowl of the gods, and moist tropical perfumes were borne softly upward with a far sound of bells—faint as the tinkle of water falling upon thin metal. And bold in the heights to the right, the sunlight played upon a rectangle of the Wall.

"Pay the native and we will lead the horses down," said the Boy. "Sungkiang is below."

"But are you not afraid?" she asked huskily, dropping a handful of taels into the palms of the guide.

"No, if it was catching, I 'd have got it long ago. China 's full of it," he responded manfully.

And together they went down into the fragrance. She could feel her heart; she could feel her soul. Yet, three nights of perfect sleep had steeled her for the last; and, too, the enchanting beauty of this delve in the world sustained. . . . It was like a child laughing alone in paradise—that sound of the bells in the vast silence.

The thatches below were trimmed and even. There were spaces between them, and from the heights, these spaces had the clean look of a brown polished floor. There was depth and purity in the green of the lake, and the little temple, in the midst of its gardens, was white as Truth.

They were in a swept and shaded village. The woman was walking swiftly toward the temple, her lips parted, her eyes feverishly bright. The huts seemed deserted, save for those who could not leave. The Boy glanced curiously into the doorways, but the woman saw nothing but the temple gate.

A voice reached her at last, the voice that had echoed through her inner consciousness since the summer morning when she stood outside the mission window. . . . His back was toward her; the people whom she did not see, save as a factor of the scene, were upon the earth before him, and he was intoning in their own tongue. Swiftly she ran now.

His hand was raised in the sunlight. It was slender, nervously responsive to his emotion—but whole, whole! A little way off, she halted, inspired by a glimpse of his profile. . . . It was the face of the man who had climbed to the roof of the world, lived through ice and flame; it was sun-darkened, storm-bitten, gaunt from suffering under the irons of self-repression, mystical in its manifestation of a cosmos within. It was the face of an exile who has felt the hate of man, the love of woman, and the presence of God. And it was whole, *whole.*

He turned suddenly, and she held out her arms. His face went back to his people with the lines of death upon it. He dismissed them and stood with head bowed as they went their way toward the gate. Then, when the temple court was empty, he turned his face toward her again, doubting his eyes and his reason. It was the look of a man who feels that he is rallying the forces of his brain a last time.

"It is I—Edloe," she told him pleadingly. His garments were pure white, and he was like unto a god in her eyes through the power of self-mastery which was graven in the lines of his face. He approached, timidly touched her wrist, drew his fingers slowly down until she locked them in her own.

"If you want me," she faltered, "I have come to stay and help you——"

For the first time, he spoke to her: "I could not believe at once—so much of my days were dreams of you—that you, the woman, had come, and not a vision." His voice quickened suddenly: "But, my dearest in life, this is a leper colony!"

"Do you think I did not know that when I came?" she demanded. "Do you think I care for that?"

His eyes turned to earth. "But you are so beautiful," he whispered. "Blessing your name, I have been through all. It means nothing to me that my end should come like my people's here. I have given the rest of my life to them—to Sungkiang—but you, *you*, are so beautiful. . . . This is a man's work——"

"And a woman's," she added.

"Until the end——"

"Until the end—cleanly and without a cry," she finished.

In the fulness of his strength, the man resisted a last time. "Edloe," he said steadily, "there is no name for my love which bids you go back—now!"

The woman broke down. "I only want this valley—and you," she said unsteadily. "Did I not seek you over the world? Please don't make me go away. . . . I want to stay, because I am very weary, and I thought that this was the end of my journey."

Whispering, he led her into the temple gardens at the edge of the lake. The water was glorified in the sunset, and by the stones of his doorway the drowsy lilies drank the last rays. Magicians of ancient and wondrous patience had conserved the verdure and mastered the flowerings. There were none but flawless leaves and none but classic blooms. The pebbles on the shore had been touched into mosaics, and the vines which fixed the coolness in the stones of his dwelling had seemingly been guided unto perfection by fingers in the night. Out of love his people served him; out of love they had charmed a fountain from the ground near his doorway; placed sounding-shells to lure music from the dropping water, and forced Emperor roses lavishly to arise and shelter and perfume his bathing-place.

"All these things my people have done for me, Edloe," he said, "and I asked, when I came, only to share a hut with the least of them."

In the arbored doorway, he stepped aside and bowed her entrance. Undiscernible and far within, a figure moved to and fro without sound. At last the woman remembered and turned her eyes back. The Boy had waited afar off by the edge of the lake. She called to him, saying that here was food and resting-place for the night. The Boy replied that the guide was waiting; that the traders would start back from Langcheng in the morning; and that, if all was well with the lady, he would go up the trail.

"Yes, it is well with me, my Knight of Asia," she said softly, drawing him closer. "And because I am rich, I want you to take this——"

He stepped back quickly, but she caught him and changed the purse of gold warm from her breast to his hand.

"And this," she said laughingly, as she kissed his cheek, "my blessing, too!"

Later, for an instant on the up-trail, she saw him, leading his horse; and still above, the Wall rimmed the world and caught the last touch of day.

With a heart that was singing, she turned back to her home in the gardens of the temple, and a marvellous voice came out of the deepening twilight:

"My Fulfilment!"

Afterward, when the candles blazed, the figure came forth from the dwelling, the figure of the Hindoo, so ancient and withered that his standing alone was a miracle.

"Beloved," said Robson, "this is our teacher, our priest."

And then in the great sweetness which overcame the range of time, they listened to the music of the fountain in the pure ardor of the lilies.

On the summit, the Boy stared down at the lights which pricked the darkness, stared down into the Silence which brooded upon the Leper Valley.

◆

A BALLAD OF GALWAY

BY ETHNA CARBERY

THE market-place is all astir,
The sombre streets are gay,
And lo! a stately galleon
Lies anchored in the bay.
The colleens shy and sturdy lads
Are swiftly trooping down
To greet the Spanish sailors
On the quay of the Galway Town.

But Nora—golden Nora—
What matters it to you?
There 's joy—long time a stranger—
In your gentle eyes of blue;
And wherefor deck your ringlets
And don your silken gown
For a crew of Spanish sailors
That stroll through Galway Town?

Said Nora—golden Nora—
And her laughter held a tear,
"I don my silk and laces
Because my love is near.
Among the Spanish crew is one
Should wear a kingly crown,
Although he walks a landless man
To-day through Galway Town.

"Look forth! See yond, his dusky head
Tower high above the throng.
Oh, brave is he, and true is he,
And so my lips have song;
For he's no Spanish sailor,
Though he wears the jerkin brown;
But he's Murrough Og O'Flaherty
Come back to Galway Town.

"He fought in Spain's red sieges,
And holds a Captain's place.
Ah, would his arm were raised to strike
In battles of his race!
But his boyhood saw with bitter grief
Iar-Connacht lose renown,
When the Saxon crushed his valiant clan
In the streets of Galway Town.

"To-night will be our wedding,
With a holy priest to bless;
Shall we remember Cromwell's law
Amid such happiness?
While my true love's arm is round me,
Should they come with fighting frown,
His sword shall cleave a pathway
For his bride through Galway Town."

Then up the street stepped Murrough,
And down stepped Nora *Ban*.
Had ever sailor fairer love—
Sweet, sweet as summer dawn?
Their glad lips clung together—
"Such bliss old grief must drown.
God guard the faithful lovers,"
Prayed we in Galway Town.

Oh, far across the water
The good ship's speeding now,
And Murrough Og O'Flaherty
Stands tall beside the prow;
And Nora—golden Nora—
A bride in silken gown—
Hath sailed away forever
From her kin in Galway Town.

FUDGE

By Clifford Howard

◆

WHEN Mrs. Deggs pressed the box of fudge into my hands I said, "Thank you." I always say, "Thank you," when anybody gives me anything. It is a habit that was spanked into me while I was yet quite a child. Once, when I was about ten years old, my Aunt Rebecca gave me a slap on the ear and said, "Take that, now!" and I said, "Thank you."

So it was with Mrs. Deggs's gift; I accepted it, not because I wanted it, but because of my polite weakness. In the first place, I don't like fudge—it makes me sick; and in the second place, I don't like it done up in a shoe-box. This was quite a big shoe-box. It was labelled "Calf, 9½ D," and I judge it held about six pounds of this washy sweetness.

To be sure, Mrs. Deggs meant well. She was prompted by a kindly desire to repay me in a small way for my influence in securing a position for her son Ham in the street-cleaning department. I once asked her how she had come to give her boy such a name as that, and she told me that his real name was Hammond. Poor Ham! He will always be suggestive of the lunch-counter, whichever way you look at him. When I called on the commissioner at the City Hall and told him I had come to see him about Hammond Deggs he seemed a trifle surprised, but said he would be pleased to do what he could for me, as he was himself quite partial to ham and eggs.

I was very glad to be able to help the old lady and her Hammy, but I should have been better pleased had she not thought it necessary to go to the trouble and expense of making me a shoe-boxful of fudge. I could n't hurt her feelings by declining it, nor did I like to suggest that if I was expected to tote that box home in broad daylight I should prefer to have it wrapped up. So I merely put on a smile of lively pleasure and said, "This is most kind of you, I am sure. And did you make it yourself?"

She said, "Why, yes, of course; and I made it especially for you. You like fudge, don't you?"

I said, "Indeed I do."

I always tell such bald-headed lies when I am driven into the field of gallantry. Of course I should have replied, "How can there be any question about my liking what you have made, Mrs. Deggs?" Unfortunately, however, I can never kindle these dainty prevarications at the proper moment. The only time I was ever inspired to give utterance to a sentiment overreaching the commonplace was when somebody's grandmother apologized for stepping on my toe and I said, "Pray don't mention it, madam; sweets to the sweet, you know."

Mrs. Deggs tied the box with a heavy cord. It looked like awning-rope, and I think it was made up of three or four lengths fastened together. At any rate, it was uncommonly knotty. I tried to forget to take the box with me as I was leaving; but Mrs. Deggs would n't let me. She said, "Dear me! you must n't go without your fudge!" and I gave a little jump of surprise and said, "Well, I should say not!" And accordingly I started homeward with this unsightly cargo of home-made confectionery attached to me.

I am not what you would call a proud man. I don't mind, on occasion, carrying home a modest package or even a basket of grapes or something of that sort. Once I carried home a watermelon. But when it comes to a naked shoe-box, and a shoe-box of abnormal dimensions, I can't but feel that my dignity is sore pressed, and particularly so when I happen to be attired in my formal afternoon apparel, including a cane.

It was useless to attempt to conceal the box anywhere about my person. The best I could do, after a painful effort to button my coat over it, was to tuck it lengthwise under my left arm and press it hard against my ribs. To be sure, this gave me a decidedly stiff, not to say paralytic, appearance, and I believe it did n't do the candy any good.

However, I determined to get away from the candy as soon as I was safely out of Mrs. Deggs's affectionate sight. So, when I got to the end of the block I casually dropped the box down the basement stairway of somebody's house. I think this would have been all right if there had not been an idle colored woman in the basement, looking out of the window. In view of the fact that I walked on quite unconcernedly as the shoe-box clattered down the iron steps, she probably thought I was losing it and did n't know it. At any rate, by the time I was around the corner she came puffing after me with the shoe-box.

"Hi, mistah!" she shouted. "You done drapped yo' shoes!"

If there had not been a policeman sauntering down the street, I think I should have run. At least, I should have disputed the ownership of the box. As it was, however, I took back the box without undue parley; merely asking the black scullion if she was sure it was I who had dropped it. She said, "'Deed I is, boss. I done seed you drap 'em; an' 't ain't ebry pusson would take de trouble to fotch 'em back; 'deed, dat 's de trufe; 'specially when dey 's got a ole man home wot kin wear 'most any size shoe. I'm got a misery in de back, too, an' dose am pow'ful heavy shoes to run wif, dey sure is."

I gave her the dime she was bidding for and walked on.

This time I carried the box lengthwise, by its cord, and allowed it to swing carelessly by my side, as though I did n't think about it, meanwhile casting about for a place to forsake it. But there were too many persons on the street and the package was too amazingly big and suggestive to be chucked quietly to one side, *en passant*, without exciting comment. At one place I drew up to a fence and looked over into the garden on the other side. It was overgrown with rose-bushes and honeysuckle, and I thought this would be an ideal spot to unload. But no sooner had I stopped, under a pretense of enjoying a view of the garden, than three or four other men came up to the fence and looked over, too, and an old gentleman passing by held up his cane and said to us, "Don't you pick 'em; don't you pick 'em!"

So I turned away and incidentally allowed the box to fall into a barberry bush outside the fence. Three boys and a bill-poster and two ladies saw me do it; otherwise, I believe I should have got away. The bill-poster and the two ladies held me up, while the three boys plunged into the barberry bush and fought for the honor of restoring the box to me. They did not ask for any reward, but as they had acted in good faith and had all scratched themselves to the point of crying, I handed them each a dime in return for the box. However, if the ladies had not been present, I am afraid I should have kicked them.

I am naturally nervous and quick-spirited, and all this was very disturbing. To be afflicted with a half-peck of unmarketable fudge is trouble enough, without the mortification of advertising its uncivilized envelope. Indeed, I could not help feeling greatly discouraged.

A little farther on, however, my prospects brightened. I came to an alley. Never before had a dirty alley appeared so balmy. I slid into it with the accustomed grace of a slop-man and beheld at once a back-yard gate standing partly open. What more could I ask? I went up to the gate and peeped in. The first thing I saw—in fact, the only thing I saw—was a dog. It was a bow-legged dog, with the most distressing face I have ever seen on any domestic animal. I said, "Come here, Fido," and I think that is where I made my mistake. I don't believe that that kind of a dog is ever named Fido. Anyhow, he would n't let me put my fudge in the yard. In fact, he would n't let me put it anywhere. He bade me go back where I came from; which I did, without wasting any time or any remarks about it.

Then it occurred to me to give the box away. Perhaps, I thought, somebody might be very glad of a load of fudge. So, when I came upon a couple of painters in smeary overalls raising a ladder against the side of a house, I stopped and casually inquired if they ever indulged in confections. One of them said, "I don't know what you 're talking about, brother;" and the other one said, "Yank her up about a foot more, Jake;" and then, after tying the rope, they both went clambering up the ladder without paying any further attention to me.

I judged from this that I had not been altogether tactful. It occurred to me, also, that it was a mistake to offer candy in this off-hand fashion to adults, especially strange adults. Accordingly, I crossed over the street to where some boys and girls were jumping about on the sidewalk.

I sauntered up to them and said, "Hello! Playing hopscotch, are you?"

They all stopped and looked at me. Only one of them—a little girl—seemed to have any manners, and she said, "No, ma'm; it 's hop-skip-and-a-jump."

I said, "Is that so? Well, well." Then, smiling like a Santa Claus, I held out the shoe-box. "Here," I said, "is a lot of nice candy for you all."

Evidently these children were not accustomed to getting candy by the box. A couple of peppermint sticks or a bag of gumdrops would probably have proved more home-like and inviting. At all events, this six-pound offering did not seem to appeal to them. It may have been the shoe-box that scared them. I don't know. They certainly did not take to it very cheerfully. In fact, they did n't take to it at all. As I advanced with it they all backed off, and one little fellow ran into the house.

Then the tallest boy of the group, his cheeks spattered with freckles, doubled up his fists and growled at me. I said, "See here, my boy, what 's the matter with you? This is fudge—candy—nice, home-made candy—a whole boxful. Don't you want it?"

He gave his mouth a stretch to one side and said, "Aw, go on with your old fudge! You 're crazy!"

I let him know that that was not the way to talk to a gentleman, and in return I was told to go chase myself; whereupon, probably fearing that I was going to throw the box at them, the whole crowd of youngsters scampered off.

This decided me to get on a car and go home with my fudge. I could give it to my mother, or feed it to the chickens, perhaps. I had walked these three blocks in the hope of losing it before boarding an avenue car, with its fashionable afternoon traffic; but it seemed to me now that it would be more wholesome to swallow my pride on a street-car than to be making a spectacle of myself on the open highway.

I was fortunate in getting aboard with a number of others, so that I did not attract any special attention; and when I took my seat I managed to hide the box pretty well by placing it close beside me. I thought once of letting it fall out of the window, but the sash back of me was closed, and I did not venture to open it for fear of stirring up attention. Then, after a little while, a large man got in and came and sat down on the box. I did not see him in time to get it out of his way. The bursting of the lid made quite a noise and aroused general interest. The man was extremely apologetic as I pulled the deformed box from under him, and he said he hoped he had not hurt the shoes any.

I said, “Oh, that ’s all right! Have a piece;” and I tried to lift up a corner of the cracked lid.

He said, “No, thanks,” and went out and stood with the conductor.

I retied the box into shape and found that it was not so badly damaged as it sounded. I held it on my lap, and everybody looked at it. If the passengers had laughed or even smiled a little, I should have felt comparatively easy. But they did n’t. They were not that kind. They sat bolt upright, as serious as a congress of tobacco signs, and kept very quiet. I could feel them staring haughtily at the box and then at my feet. Nobody said a word, but the atmosphere was charged with contempt and frigid indifference. In return, I endeavored to assume an attitude of lofty *sang-froid* by drumming lightly on the box with my fingers.

Casting about for some means of relieving my embarrassment, I discovered that there was space under the seat, and after a moment or two I stowed the box down there, out of sight. It was evidently the right thing to do, for the passengers stopped looking at me and I quickly regained my composure.

When I got off I left the box behind. Only one man in the car noticed it, and he came after me with the box. He was a dilapidated, trampish-looking fellow, with a sad eye and a rubber collar, and when he caught up with me half way down the block he said, “Say, cap, if you don’t want these here shoes would you mind passin’ ’em on to a poor man? I seen you did n’t take much ’count of ’em, and I thought mebbe they was old ones and you was goin’ to chuck ’em away anyhow. ’Tain’t nothin’ to me if they is wore out some. When a feller ’s down on his luck, anything does, d’ ye see?”

I said, “Keep the box if you like; it ’s all the same to me;” and I fished into my pocket and handed him a quarter.

He said, “God bless you, cap,” and I said, “That ’s all right; don’t mention it;” and then I gave him another quarter and walked off as fast as I could.

THACKERAY'S SUBSTITUTE

By D. K. Janowitz

MANY American readers of Thackeray have wondered how he was able to write so graphic and correct an account of George Warrington's escape from Fort Duquesne, and his journey through the wilderness to the banks of the Potomac,—as Thackeray had never seen the magnificent valley through which his gallant hero fled after his daring escape. It will be a surprise to many people to hear that Thackeray did not write that chapter at all, but that the well-known author John P. Kennedy did. This is the story as Colonel John H. B. Latrobe once told it:

Kennedy was at a dinner in London, with Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, Wilkie Collins, and other celebrities. The dinner was over, and the guests were settling down to the wine and cigars, when Thackeray, who was entertaining the company with his wit and satire, suddenly stopped, and, taking out his watch, exclaimed:

"Gentlemen, I must leave you. I hate to go, but I must. I have promised the printer a chapter of 'The Virginians' to-morrow morning, and I have n't written a line of it yet. The printer is inexorable. So, wishing you all another meeting when I can be longer with you, I bid you good evening."

Thackeray had almost reached the door when Kennedy called him back and said:

"Perhaps I can write the chapter for you. What are you going to describe?"

The great novelist seemed a little surprised, but, being a perfect man of the world, said:

"Kennedy, you are extremely kind, and gladly would I let you write that chapter for me, for I hate to leave a jolly party."

"Then don't," all the company cried. "Stay with us, and let Mr. Kennedy write the proposed chapter."

"I 've half a mind to let you do it, just for the fun of the thing. It is a chapter chiefly of description, giving an account of George Warrington's escape from Fort Duquesne and his journey to the Potomac."

"If *that's* what you are writing about, I *can* do it, for I know every foot of the ground."

"All right, then," said Thackeray, resuming his seat at the board. "Let me have it early to-morrow morning."

Mr. Kennedy withdrew, and, going to his hotel, wrote the fourth chapter of the second volume of "The Virginians," and thus it happened that George Warrington's narrative of his flight was so accurate as to the topography of the country through which he passed.

THE WOOD CALL

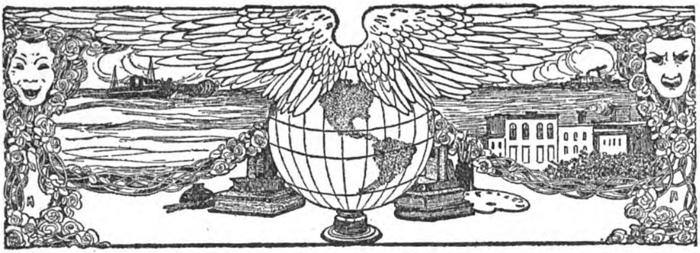
BY ISABEL S. MASON

OH I 've been away in the woods for a day,
With the scent of the grape-bloom, bewildering, sweet;
And the sun through the trees dripped its gold in the breeze,
Lacing over the moss for my world-weary feet.

The high-hole's sweet note from his golden-strung throat
Splashed and rippled the jewels all liquid along;
He answered the tone of my heart from his own,
A silver baptism of benison song.

There Beauty unfurled the delights of her world;
Like a banner soft floating it gleamed on my eyes,
From Claytonia that lay like pink stars o'er my way,
To the azure that blossomed the ambient skies.

Oh, I 've been away in the woods all the day;
I have eaten the lotus of dreams, and I know
That the wild note that blew where the grape-blossom grew
Was the mystical pipe from which Pan used to blow.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

◆

PREDIGESTED FUN

OF course, boys are not the same as they were—well, no matter how many years ago. Will any one maintain that the dessicated, predigested fun of a "boughten" sled can equal the delirious joy of taking belly-bumpers on your own home-made flyer? The runners and top were cut out of a "store box," the half-round iron exchanged by the blacksmith for your long-hoarded pennies, and the holes drilled in the metal after it had been heated red hot in the kitchen stove. Can the predigested fun of a store toy gun compare with the delightful hours of the "comp'ny," marching with the mimic weapon you made out of a block of walnut wood and three feet of gas pipe? What is a two-dollar boat worth, anyhow, when a fellow thinks of the laborious joy of hacking his own rakish craft out of a beam end, fitting it with sails made from mother's worn-out apron, and keel-finishing it with a strip of lead from—a neighbor's roof!

Just call up the images of all the precious things we boys used to make and see if the newest, shiniest, costliest thing that ever came out of a toy-shop will not—now—hang its head in shame when confronted with the homely, home-made article. Shinny stick from a twisted gnarly root in the old grove; "piggy" and bat both cut from the same broom handle; injun knife fashioned from a rusty barrel-hoop set in an oaken grip; baseball made from our own savings of yarn and elastic and covered with leather from the blacksmith's old apron (he wondered where it got to); catcher's glove, father's worn-out

Sunday dog-skin, fresh stuffed with tender grass every day for the game—and a hundred other boy-made playthings—who would sell them for thrice their number in store stuff?

To be sure, now and then a present brought home from the city would make our eyes dance and our hearts thump, but all the same, the whole cherished collection of fishin' rod, and hickory bat, and wooden sword, and water-wheels, and wind mills, and bows and arrows, and—and—why, of course they were better than—shucks, the boys of to-day are mollycoddled too much by predigested fun!

I *did* see a boy the other day who was snooting his own hooks, and punching holes in an old kettle to make a bait-can, and making a hickory tip for his rod, but—well, I guess boys are n't the same as they used to be years ago! J. B. E.

BLESSED BE THE BUILDERS

IF I were going to write a new series of Beatitudes—which is the aim of every ambitious scribbler—I should begin it thus:

Blessed be the Builders.

Blessed be the Builders; the men who have conquered the wilderness, and put the mountains under their feet, and set their watch-towers in the midst of the sea. Blessed be the Builders; for they are the salt of the earth.

We have had enough of warriors. The only good end they ever served was to protect us from other warriors. We have had enough of bigots, trying to fetter the world with the gyves of dogma. We have had enough and to spare of the gilded fools of royalty. But we have never had enough of the Builders; and we never can.

When we trace the progress of human kind from its raw beginnings in the Mid Pleistocene to the twentieth century, we are mainly occupied with the work of the Builders. When we trace the periods in which the race went backward, we are largely busy with soldiers and kings.

Blessed be the Builders.

They have tamed the wild beasts; and taken tribute for man from the rocks of the earth.

They have broken the lightning to harness; and made fire and water lie down together that men might be served.

They have made gardens in the desert; and habitations for men in the sandy wastes.

They have cleared the forests, and drained the swamps, and gathered food from the land that brought forth pestilence.

They have pierced the mountains for their highways; and taught the rivers to walk in unaccustomed paths.

They have bound the continents with bands of steel; and the oceans with webs of copper.

They have given us temples instead of creeds; homes instead of thrones; cities in place of deserts.

They have had their faults, I know. They have spared neither themselves nor others. They have counted life less than work. But they have got the work done, and it was our work. They have paid themselves from the treasury of the earth, and have not stinted. But they have labored, and they have labored for us.

They have builded up faster than kings and warriors could tear down; and the gain is civilization. They have said to the bigot: "Thou shalt not!" and to the sluggard: "Thou shalt!" They have made houses of justice that kings might cease from troubling; and they have tied the warrior's hands with golden thread.

Whatever their cost, they have earned it a thousand-fold. Blessed thrice blessed, be the Builders! George L. Knapp

THE PSYCHICAL GYMNASIUM

THE other day I heard two friends discussing an absent third. "The truth is," A. was saying to B., "C. is just the subject for Mental Healing—or Mind Cure—or Christian Science—or Suggestion—or New Thought—or whatever you choose to call it. But the trouble is," she added sententiously, "the people who need it the most are the last to apply it to themselves."

The next day I chanced to be present at a meeting between B. and C.

"What a pity it is that A. can't benefit by some of her own higher thoughts," C. deplored. "She is always preaching her doctrines but never practising them."

B. and I exchanged a look, and when we were presently left alone together B. expressed herself as very much amused by the "human nature," as she called it, displayed by C.

"I can't understand being so self-deceived," she confided to me with her most Pharisaical manner. "Now, I have entirely cured myself of discordant thinking by breathing deep and constantly reiterating that I am in harmony with the music of the spheres." (If I add that B. is renowned for contentiousness and carping criticism, am I only illustrating in person the current discrepancy between practice and belief?)

The fact remains that we are all more or less sprinkled nowadays with sundry mental and psychical essences. The atmosphere is alive with new thoughts which are as old as the everlasting hills. We are all trying to fit the lock that opens the secret of the universe, by means of patent keys devised with all the art and craft of spiritual locksmiths, whether genuine or bogus. "Why?" is the question half the world is asking and the other half trying to answer, for speculation has its victims on a spiritual plane no less than on Wall Street. Libraries are circulating psychical treatises more absorbing than novels, and we sit up till midnight not to find out whether the hero married the lady, but to discover in how many instances mountains—both real and imaginary—have been moved by faith.

As we read the uplifting Gospel which each new prophet offers us as the only genuine Truth, we are confident that henceforth we are going to live on a higher plane. Hypnotized by the writer's eloquence, we feel our petty trials and our trivial ailments sinking into insignificance. While we are reading we are so lifted above the delusions of a material world that if the cook should suddenly rush in red-handed and give warning (I can think of no more nerve-racking calamity) we could face her with philosophic calm and murmur to ourselves, "If the red slayer thinks he slays, he 's very much mistaken." But if we suddenly shut the book that has so exalted us, our higher thought is too often pressed lifeless between its pages and we fall from the heights to the depths. Our spiritual wings are too undeveloped for us to soar alone.

Why cannot a psychical gymnasium be founded for the exercise of untrained souls, weak wills, and unbalanced judgment? We send our bodies to a gymnasium, or in some way train our limbs and our muscles for the work expected of them. Why not do as much for our spirits? How glorious it would be if our wills could be strengthened by lifting weights off people's hearts, if our judgment could learn to balance pros and cons, and our minds could be taught to jump deftly from one subject to another!

Cannot some Carnegie of the soul rise up and endow psychical gymnasia so that our spirits may learn to be lighter? Some mechanical device for broadening the sympathies, some electric apparatus that might be resorted to for warming hearts. It would not even hurt the average imagination to be stretched a little by believing things which at first sight seem incredible. Perhaps eventually it might become as elastic as that of the White Queen, who boasted to Alice that she had believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.

How inspiring would it be if our intelligence might juggle with ideas, and Higher thought might take aerial flights without falling; above all, if nerves could be taught to relax their hold on unessentials sufficiently to drop their own plural and turn to nerve!

W. P.

VOL. LXXXII NUMBER 488

LIPPINCOTT'S
MONTHLY MAGAZINE

AUGUST, 1908

THE ROAD TO GRETNA GREEN

BY DOROTHEA DEAKIN

Author of "Georgie," "The Wishing Ring," etc.

I.

TORMENTILLA grew in a scrambling fashion, half in the ditch and half out of it; and caught the quick eye of a fellow-traveller with its bright color.

"What a dear little red flower!"

The girl picked a gay bunch of it and pinned it into her blue pinafore—for the singular garment she wore looked more like a pinafore wholly wanting in frills than anything else. It was a kind of half-fitting blue linen tunic, showing clearly the vigorous lines of her spare, boyish figure, and giving perfect freedom to her swinging walk. It hung by shoulder-straps over a white blouse. She was not handsome, certainly, and very brown altogether; in her hair and eyes and skin. Her face was square, and her large eyes set in her face at an angle that was almost Japanese. Her mouth too was large and almost as red as Tormentilla itself, and she wore her heavy hair hanging in a long, thick pigtail over her shoulders. Her simple straw hat was pushed forward over her eyes, and it was only when you were as close to her as Tormentilla was, that you noticed the miserable, moody look they held. She swung down the two miles of long white road from Malinder House to the little town which sat at its gates and worshipped it, and you saw, if you watched her closely, that one way was as bad as another to her, and that she only walked

Copyright, 1908, by J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY. All rights reserved.

at all to kill her thoughts and dull some deadly pain. It seemed too bad that such pain should sear a young heart which had until quite lately demanded, found, and taken its pleasure and its joy of life as a right.

An ancient weather-prophet, scanning the cloudy gleam of the sky with an owlish pretense of wisdom, jumped at the opportunity of making a remark as she passed by his little white gate.

"Young woman," he said, "are you aware that you're wearing a common weed in your gown?"

"It's rather a sweet little thing," she said, smiling as she touched it caressingly with her finger-tips. "What do you call it?"

The ancient beamed at her.

"If you'd a axed any one else in this nayburudd," said he with delight, "they could have guv no answer. Tormentiller is its name. It is a humble wayside branch of the great Potentiller family. I am a member of the horticultural society of this town, and of three botanical societies in the nayburudd."

"How nice!" said she politely. "Tormentilla. It's a prickly sort of name—a nettlish name—is n't it?"

"Much more suitable name for a creature that's a torment to itself and every one it comes in contact with," she murmured miserably as she went on her way.

At the corner where the road to Four Meadows branches off to the left, a long black and white house rose on her right hand. It was an excellent imitation of the old timbered houses proper to the county, and she stopped to read the brass plate on the gate.

"So this is where Dr. Cogwheel lives," said she.

She walked into the surgery and sat down on a round cane chair. The back number of the *Autocar* which she took up seemed to distress her in some unaccountable way, and her eyes filled with impatient tears as she gazed out of the window at the neat bedded-out designs on the lawn, in scarlet geraniums and blue lobelia and prim, round, gray-blue saxifrage like dolls' cabbages.

"Gracious, what a deadly hole!" she murmured dismally, and flung the *Autocar,* with a vicious twist of her wrist, at an irritating bluebottle in the window. "Shut up, you buzzing little wretch!" she cried, and the bluebottle did shut up—forever.

Then suddenly a clear, fresh voice in the passage caught her ear, a rustle outside the door, a smell of violet scent. She hated scent. The door opened and a girl came in with a rush; a radiant, dazzling vision for moody eyes, one would have thought. A girl like a primrose, in a white dress with a little green flower on it; a girl with soft, light, bright hair and sea-blue eyes shadowed by dark lashes;

a girl with a complexion like apple-blossom and a smile which drew Tormentilla to her feet in a hurry, with a glare.

"Dr. Cogwheel?" she asked sharply.

The vision dimpled and laughed.

"Oh, no," she said; "I'm so sorry I'm not, but I can't help it, can I?"

"Can I see him, please?"

"I'm afraid not. It is most unfortunate, but he had a patient who would insist upon seeing *him* instead of one of the assistants. So inconsiderate, we thought, but the man was dying, and what could father do?"

The dimples and the coming and going of the apple-blossom in those young cheeks were so awakening of distracting memories to the girl in the blue pinafore dress that she could hardly bear it. She did not answer, but stood devouring the face before her with eager eyes, her heart beating frantically.

"I'm afraid I'm only Audrey," the beauty murmured, with a touching confidence which was the last straw. "It was an angina case, you see, and he had to fly off in the middle of breakfast to the other end of the world, because the man's relatives insisted upon it. Can't you give me a message for him?"

"Please ask him to come to Malinder this afternoon."

"To Malinder?" Audrey raised her dark eyebrows. "But where? This is all Malinder. I'm sorry I'm so stupid, but I'm afraid I *must* ask for details, although I hate to worry any one."

"Malinder House. There is a lady there who is rather ill."

"A lady? Mrs. Gramper?"

"No, Miss Green. She is lodging with Mrs. Gramper. She would like to see Dr. Cogwheel this afternoon," she said briefly, throwing back her head and turning to go.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Audrey apologetically, with an appealing smile. "It was very impertinent of me. Do please understand that I only wish to be able to explain as much as I can to my father. Doctors naturally like to know things, you see. It's very troublesome of them. I quite see that. And people are so averse to telling anything, aren't they?"

"Miss Green is an old friend of Mrs. Gramper's last situation"—the pinafore girl's ready powers of invention startled herself—"and I'm her niece."

"Then you are——?"

"Yes," said the other shortly, for she found Audrey's sweetness almost suffocating; "I am——" she hesitated, but only for a moment—"Tormentilla Green. Good day."

Audrey held out her hand.

"I am so glad you came," she said. "We shall like to call upon Miss Green, if we may. Mrs. Gramper was at Coltsfoot Hall, before, was n't she? Are you really related to Sir Diggory? Mother will be charmed. I can't tell you how pleased mother will be if she can do anything for Miss Green. I only hope she is n't seriously ill."

Her pretty, *empressé* manner, her delicate and apparently genuine concern, her wide, appealing blue eyes, her little rosebud of a mouth, her easy, friendly manner, were too much for Tormentilla. She took the delicate little hand Audrey offered and shook it limply.

"There are so few nice girls in Malinder," said Audrey sadly; "I often say so to mother. 'Dearest,' I say, 'the world is so empty, is n't it? A true friend is so rare.' Father says in his cynical, manly way that no womanly women ever makes a real friend, but mother quite sees. It will be such a pleasure to know you."

"Thanks so much," said Tormentilla brusquely. "Good-by. Please tell Dr. Cogwheel."

"Oh, of course he shall know—the very minute he comes in. I will wait for him on the doorstep. Literally I will. Would you like to see the garden? What a dear little red flower you are wearing! What is its pretty name?"

"Tor—it's a kind of a sarsaparilla," said Miss Green's niece hastily. "And I think perhaps I'd better get back to Greenie now, if you don't mind——"

"Greenie!" Audrey broke into her pretty, girlish laugh. "How perfectly sweet of you to call your aunt that! Mother would never stand it for an instant from me. Would yours? Or father. They insist upon the most old-fashioned respect. So quaint of them, is n't it? Do yours?"

Tormentilla's brows blackened. "I should never want to try anything else," said she gloomily, and went home.

The great, ugly Italian house looked like a prison to her as she ran up the grass steps of the terraces to it. She slipped in through a side door and down a long, cool, painted passage to a wide, large-windowed room looking out to the rose-garden. It was a pretty room, with yellow, painted walls and oak beams; a room which seemed to hold the sunshine long after the sun had gone in.

A little gray lady embroidering something in delicate colors, by the window, looked up with a welcoming smile as the girl came in.

"I've only coughed seven times," she said as Tormentilla flung herself into a rocking-chair. "I'm really much better. If you would only allow me to treat this as an imaginary cold, I know it would cease to exist. These things are more influenced by one's imagination than——"

Tormentilla laughed, in spite of her gloom.

"Don't talk Christian Science to me to-day, Greenie. I can't stand it. If you want to make me believe that your imagination can make you sniff like that, and lie awake coughing all night, I simply won't—so there! And the doctor 's coming to see you this afternoon anyhow. It 's a beautiful world. Cheer up!"

"Is it wise?" Miss Green's cold had weakened her usual cheerful view of life. "To ask strange doctors in if you wish to remain——"

"In ambush," the girl said lightly. "Oh, you can be *too* careful, and, besides, I have told the man's daughter that I am your niece"—she tossed her straw hat at a sandy kitten on the window-seat—"Tormentilla Green. It came to me as an inspiration this afternoon. Is n't it a mumpy-frumpy name, Greenie dear? A pricky, spiky, disagreeable name. It 's a suitable name for a creature who only lives to be a torment to everybody and everything. Oh dear, oh dear! How I hate it all!"

Miss Green looked up at the miserable voice and dull, hopeless eyes.

"Something fresh has happened," she said with conviction.

"Yes, I 've seen a girl; a pink and white girl, more like Dolly than you would have believed possible; and sweet, too, cloyingly sweet, like her, with all the same little tricks to catch approbation. Not quite the same—well, the same complacent, self-satisfied look Dolly has, but the same appealing, pretty manners that other girls have to suffer for."

Miss Green put down her embroidery and regarded Tormentilla with anxious affection.

"If only you would accept this trouble more calmly," she said anxiously; "if only you would realize that it is really better to move with the stream than behave like a puppy on a chain. I assure you that every cloud has a silver lining. There will come a time, Sandy, when——"

"Tormentilla, not Sandy!" said the girl sharply. "And you can't comfort me with proverbs. You know by experience that you never can."

"When honest worth will triumph. Beauty is but——"

"Don't!" Tormentilla brought her rocking-chair violently forward. "Don't tell me that beauty is only skin-deep, and that handsome is as handsome does, and that I must cultivate a beautiful soul, because I simply won't stand it to-day, so there!"

"I never for a moment thought of suggesting the impossible!" cried Miss Green warmly, much hurt. "I was merely going to say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and that I 'd several times heard people say that you looked almost handsome when you were flushed and excited by violent exercise."

"Thank you, Greenie," Tormentilla murmured sadly; "you *are* comforting. I 've never known any one quite as comforting as you. If that 's the case, I 'd better spend my days on a trapeze, perhaps, or play hockey all the year round. Who knows but I might even get a reputation for beauty, if my health and strength held out, and my bones kept intact?"

"Beauty is——"

"If you say it is a curse, I shall go upstairs and howl!" the girl cried. "Greenie dear, you would never have thought a year ago that I was the kind of girl to waste all these months crying for the moon, would you? But don't, please, tell me that beauty is a curse, because I know—no one better—that it 's nothing of the kind."

"If you will give me time," said Miss Green, with dignity, "I will finish by saying that beauty is a rare and priceless gift, and that if you go on fretting in this absurd way you will lose all pretense of it. Besides, mere goodness, which can always be cultivated by the stupidest of us, is not by any means to be despised."

"I 'd rather have a flower face than a heart of gold, any day in the week," said Tormentilla gloomily.

"You have n't the remotest chance of developing either, but you can cultivate happiness if you go the right way to work. You think about yourself all day long. Here you are, at eighteen, allowing your first, your very first, trouble to——"

"That 's why it 's so dreadfully hard to bear. If it was the twenty-first, I might have learnt how."

"Nonsense! You will never get over it till you give up thinking about it. You must try to make others happy if you want to be happy yourself. I know it 's not a pleasing idea, but——"

"If only you would n't talk like a copy-book, Greenie dear." The girl rose from her chair, slipped to the ground at Miss Green's feet, and laid her tumbled head on the embroidery.

Miss Green carefully disentangled her silks from the brown plaits.

"My dear," she said slowly, "we shall be here a long time if you keep to your plan of staying until Doreen's wedding——"

"I can't go home before; I simply can't." Tormentilla's eyes filled with tears again.

"No, I don't suppose you can, but I was going to say that the only way to get over a grief is to go out of your way to make things better for other people. I assure you that it 's the only way."

"But if I spend money, if I do dull charitable things, people will guess that——"

"I 'm not talking about district-visiting and gray flannel petticoats and local philanthropy," said Miss Green hastily. "But an extraordinary number of opportunities crop up for helping people if one only looks out. And then you wake up one fine morning to wonder how you could so soon have forgotten to be miserable. You find that your broken heart is n't broken at all, and——"

"Are you speaking from your own experience, or just repeating some reverend person's helpful words?"

"From experience," said Miss Green gravely.

The girl leaned her elbows on the window-seat and looked out. "I 'm not sure that you are n't right, after all," she said with a little laugh. "You do make me see things in such an interesting light. It will be rather fun. I will look out. As you say, there are sure to be opportunities. Malinder may be full of unexpected joys, for all we know."

Something in her tone alarmed Miss Green.

"But, my dear," she said quickly, "I was n't proposing an exciting new game. It was hardly as 'fun' that I recommended you to try to help others——"

"No, I know you were n't," said Tormentilla thoughtfully. "But you never can tell where your lightest words may fall and blossom, can you? And I 'll look out, I promise you, Greenie, that I 'll look out like anything." She flung back her plait and stood looking at Miss Green with a happy, expansive grin. Her little white teeth gleamed between her red lips, and even if she was beginning to feel rather worried about the possible effect of her words, Miss Green met her gaze with affectionate pride.

"You know you really are quite a handsome girl when you laugh like that," she murmured with a twinkle in her eye.

"Ah, now you 're talking," said Tormentilla gaily.

II.

"Every one thinks it such a sweet name," said Audrey, with modest pride. "It 's in Shakespeare, you know."

"It 's not at all a suitable one for you," Tormentilla said abruptly. "Audrey was a great, lumping, thumping country hoyden. And you——" She stared at the girl reflectively. Glowing and smiling, and as pink as a rose, in a charming summer frock, Audrey sat beside her in the other corner of the wide window-seat; her little bright head leaning back against the brown casement curtain; her little, slim, soft hand playing with the cord.

"*You* are n't like *that* Audrey," Tormentilla pursued. "She was much more like me: big and hearty-looking, you see, and quite plain; while you——"

"Oh, but you must n't say such things. Not *plain,* really. You always look so quaint, I think, in that charmingly unconventional dress," said Audrey pleasantly. "I said to mother only this morning, 'Dearest,' I said, 'is n't Miss Green—the young Miss Green—quaint? I do hope she will wear the same dress when she calls this afternoon,' I said, and mother said, 'Oh, yes.' Really, she did."

"I should n't like to think that I looked quaint," Tormentilla replied hastily, with some annoyance. "I should n't like to think I looked anything so silly. I wear it because it 's so comfortable—for no other reason. I like to be comfortable."

Audrey's lovely blue eyes were full of admiration.

"Oh, I see you have ideas," she said. "And that 's so unusual in girls, is n't it? How splendid of you to be able to live up to—to anything! I *never* can. I 'm always hopelessly like other people, and that 's so *tiresome,* is n't it?"

"You 're extremely like my sister Dolly," Tormentilla remarked thoughtfully. She might have added that Audrey was also rather silly, but the girl was so pretty, so charmingly dressed, so graceful and elegant, and, above all, so flattering, that her silliness was rather lost sight of. It was not her words, somehow, which flattered, but her eyes, her intent, enthralled expression, her concentrated attention, the constant, diffident appeal of her smile.

She took Tormentilla's empty cup, refilled it, and threaded her way back through the crowded room with a graceful dexterity which Tormentilla, who would have knocked over at least two tables and collided with half a dozen chairs, could not but admire and long to imitate.

"It 's lovely of you to say I 'm like your sister," Audrey said, as she sank into her seat. "Do try that almond cake. It 's a cake I 've always been going to make and never have somehow. I think every woman ought to be able to cook, don't you? It is such a womanly accomplishment. Is your sister Dolly like you?"

"She is more unlike me than you would believe possible for any human being," said Tormentilla sharply, "in every possible way. She 's lovely. There have never been two opinions about Dolly's loveliness. And she gets everything in the world by the way she looks at you, and by the helpless way she holds her hands. And she uses her advantages in the most unscrupulous way."

Audrey dropped her dark lashes on her rose-leaf cheeks.

"Oh, but that 's not quite nice, is it?" she asked gently.

"It 's not always quite nice for other people." Tormentilla's eyes were moody with memory.

"You don't think that I 'm like your beautiful sister in every way?" Audrey asked anxiously.

"I don't know you yet. But you certainly take more trouble to be nice to *women* than Dolly does. I 've noticed that."

Audrey beamed again.

"No one could help wanting to be nice to you," she said softly. She shot a quick glance at Tormentilla out of the corner of her eye, and then looked round the room. Her mother was busy with the tea-table and Mrs. Flanelle's account of a delightful new book. Miss Cotton was telling Mrs. Hay the tragedy of her poor Dalmatian, and Miss Green was obviously quite happy in making an interested third in their discussion.

"You look," Audrey murmured wistfully, "like the kind of girl one can trust. Like a girl who spends her whole life in helping others——"

"It's because I'm plain you think that!" Tormentilla cried fiercely. "People always take it for granted that you have a sweet, helpful nature if you are n't pretty. It is n't fair."

"No," said Audrey sadly; "I beg your pardon. It was your eyes. Did n't you know what speaking, sympathetic eyes you have? One knows at a glance that you will always understand. There are so few people who understand."

Tormentilla was silent. This was not like Dolly. Dolly never asked for sympathy; Dolly never told anything she could help. And she remembered Miss Green's words, "Try to forget your grief in helping others." Here at the first appeal she was deliberately trying to escape, to turn her back upon real suffering. Tears in a girl's eyes meant deep suffering to poor Tormentilla from her own bitter experience and her deep ignorance of the world. The fact that this girl who was so like Dolly in looks should yet in many ways be so utterly unlike her softened her still more. Dolly got all she wanted; Audrey obviously did n't.

"You don't look so very unhappy," she said slowly, "not generally, I mean. I should have thought you were the kind of person to be as happy as the day was long."

"Don't misjudge me," Audrey murmured piteously, "because I try to be brave before the world. Don't you see that one has to smile sometimes even if one's heart breaks as one does it?"

In spite of herself, Tormentilla grew interested.

"You see," said Audrey wistfully, "I can't talk to mother about it, and that is so hard. I always think one ought to confide in one's mother before any one, but she sides with father in this almost entirely. 'Darling,' she says, as she has always done when we differed, 'it hurts me more than it hurts you.' But I can't quite see it in that light, can you?"

"No," said Tormentilla, with warm sympathy; "I should think not. It's simply silly." Her heart softened still more to those misty blue eyes. Dolly's eyes were very blue, but she had never seen them through a mist of tears, and Tormentilla had a very tender heart.

"I'm afraid I shall only bore you," said Audrey, with a mournful sniff.

"Don't cry," Tormentilla said hastily. "It would be so very awkward if you suddenly burst into tears here. I do wish you would n't cry. Could n't we go into the garden or somewhere?"

Miss Cotton's clear voice reached them across the room. "Yes," she said, "over the garden wall. A sponge. A sponge soaked in gravy. My poor beautiful ate it, of course, and you know what happens to you if you eat a sponge, Mrs. Hay?"

"No," said the lady in tones of rapt interest. "I have had so little experience, I am afraid."

Miss Cotton arranged her neat veil round the violets in her toque, and Tormentilla watched her with fascinated eyes, listening intently. "Well, it swells." Miss Cotton spoke impressively. "It swells and swells and swells, till you die at last in great agony. My poor Mafeking's agony was something that I hope you will never witness. A vile deed, Mrs. Hay. Worse, far worse, I think, even than the rats and the plaster of Paris, and that is bad enough."

"Oh, infinitely!" said Mrs. Hay. She was obviously burning with curiosity, but ashamed to show any further ignorance.

"Please tell us what you mean about the rats," Tormentilla asked eagerly. She stopped as she was leaving the room, and only regretted that she had already missed so much of this exhilarating subject.

"You put it for them to eat dry." Miss Cotton turned sharply round. "And it makes them thirsty. You place a bowl of water in an accessible spot for the trusting little creatures to drink out of, and they drink and drink and drink——"

"Dear me! How dreadful! Who does?" Mrs. Cogwheel was here drawn in, and the exciting conversation became general.

"The rats," said Miss Cotton impressively. "And when the water gets to the plaster of Paris inside them, you can guess what happens."

"No, I can't," said Tormentilla candidly. "What?"

"It forms a paste and hardens. And as it hardens, the rats die in horrible tortures. It's a terribly cruel world, Mrs. Cogwheel. And now I must really tear myself away."

"Mother, dearest"—Audrey rose from the window-seat as Miss Cotton disturbed the room—"I am going to show the garden to Miss——"

"Tormentilla."

"Miss Tormentilla. What a charmingly original name! I think it's so delightful to have a name that no one else has, isn't it, mother?"

"Most," said Mrs. Cogwheel amiably; always happy to agree with anything.

"A most musical name," said little Mrs. Flanelle, who had an artistic soul. "It brings all kinds of memories of the south—of Spain—of orange groves, of——"

"Yes," Miss Gee broke in brightly. She was extremely well informed, and had taken in an encyclopædia from the very beginning. "It is a kind of floury cake. The Spanish peasants subsist upon it almost entirely, I believe."

"How wonderful of them!" Mrs. Flanelle murmured. "We are so complicated and tied down by custom in our meals, aren't we?"

"A national dish like the oatmeal of the Scotch, and the potato of the Irish," pursued Miss Gee triumphantly.

"But surely you must be speaking of the tortilla?" Miss Green ventured, without a smile.

A dark, slender girl, a Mrs. Standring, who had come in late and had been sitting in a corner almost in silence, met Miss Green's pleasant, serious gaze suddenly with a mischievous smile from a pair of very beautiful dark eyes, but she made no remark.

"Do you know," Mrs. Flanelle admitted in a troubled voice, "that I thought the tormentilla was a kind of wild, savage, beautiful dance, full of mystery and madness and poetry and southern love——"

"Brought on by the bite of a dreadful spider"—Miss Cotton paused at the door to join in with joy. "That's it, of course, Mrs. Flanelle. The victim goes mad, and dances and dances and dances until—well, you can imagine the end."

"I can't, really," Mrs. Cogwheel said kindly.

"Ah," Miss Cotton sighed, "he dances until at last in frenzy he sinks exhausted to the ground and expires. Good-by, Mrs. Cogwheel. You have so cheered me up. I haven't enjoyed anything so much since poor Mafeking died."

"But the sound, the beautiful, sonorous sound, of the name," Mrs. Flanelle murmured. "It makes one dream of—oh, unutterable things."

Lise Standring, still half hidden in her dark corner, spoke at last, and Greenie didn't like her tone when she heard it.

"Of roses," she suggested slyly, "and moonlight, and love's young dream, and Bianca among the nightingales, and Venice in a gondola, with the water rippling against the bows, and the song of the Neapolitan fishermen—'Ave Maris Stella,' isn't it?—and passionate southern love, mystery, madness, death——" She stopped for breath and laughed a little.

Mrs. Flanelle took another piece of cake.

"How you bring it all back to me!" she sighed in perfectly good faith. She gazed at the open window through which the two girls had disappeared. "Has your distinguished-looking niece any Spanish blood in her veins, may I ask?"

"Not a drop, I'm thankful to say," Miss Green replied in some haste. "I wonder where she is, by the way? It is quite time——"

"Oh, leave her with Audrey a little longer," Mrs. Cogwheel implored. "Audrey is so *charmed* with her. She is so delighted to know her. These fresh, spontaneous friendships between young girls are so—so——"

"So unusual?" Miss Gee suggested briskly.

"No—no," Mrs. Cogwheel sighed for some reason known only to herself. "So—so——"

"So short-lived?" young Mrs. Standring asked in a quiet voice.

"So beautiful," said Audrey's mother softly.

Mrs. Flanelle turned her dreamy, dark eyes upon Miss Green. "Tell me," she said, "why your niece was christened by that stormy, suggestive, southern name? What *is* a tormentilla, after all?"

"It's a little, insignificant weed," Miss Green replied shortly, "a little, common, English wayside, scrambling weed, without any pretensions to distinction, and, in my eyes, quite without beauty. It has a tiny scarlet flower, and belongs to the great potentilla family."

Miss Gee scented a rival.

"Then," said she, with playful forgiveness, "I was very nearly right in the beginning—for the potentilla is the staple food of the poor Italian peasant—is it not? Italy—Spain—a trifling difference."

Miss Green met Lise Standring's eyes again.

"Don't tell her that she means polenta," the girl said under her breath. "She's rather a malicious person. Don't make an enemy of her if you're new in Malinder. Malinder is full of pitfalls for the unwary." She rose and shrugged her shoulders—Miss Green noticed how extremely tall she was, and how extraordinary graceful for her height. She looked down at the little gray lady with amused, puzzled eyes. Greenie was not quite a Malinder type.

"Shall we go into the garden and look for your niece?" she said pleasantly. "I would n't interrupt Audrey in one of her really enjoyable moments for the world, but if you are waiting for your niece——" She led Miss Green through the wide, modern hall to the garden, by a side door. "Mr. Bromsgrove's coming," she whispered as soon as they were alone. "The new vicar. I saw him through the window. I can't endure the man. He gives me the creeps, and I was glad to escape. Is n't this a pretty house? Extraordinarily advanced for Malinder. You know we still look askance at *l'art nouveau* in Malinder. Those chests are rather fine, don't you think? You 'd never guess that they were not really as old as they look. And that spinning chair! Audrey would *love* to spin, she says. I wonder——" There was something a little bitter and malicious in her voice, and yet, looking at her little, dark, lovely face, Greenie could not bring herself to believe that it was a mean or spiteful one. The girl looked soured, disappointed, bored, but certainly not mean.

At the end of a long pergola, up whose bare wires the Crimson Rambler rambled, slowly it seemed, and most unwillingly, they met the two girls: Audrey sparkling and excited, Tormentilla flushed and bright-eyed. Greenie, as she shot a glance at her, was glad to see how pleased and interested she looked.

"Do you know, Greenie," she said, as they walked down together afterwards, "that this kind of thing is an absolute revelation to me."

"What kind of thing?" Miss Green asked sharply. She obviously distrusted Tormentilla's thoughtful moods.

"All these people living their lives in Malinder with nice little at-homes and garden parties and dinners and all the rest of it. I never realized that there *could* be anything between the deserving poor—and us. It was horribly narrow of me. Of course in books—and one must have seen them walking about. But one never realized that they *existed.* Mother——"

"They don't exist to her," Greenie said. "I am sure she would prefer that they did n't exist to you. My conscience pricks me, Sandy, when I remember how strongly she will disapprove of the intimacy——"

"They 're rather nice," Tormentilla said softly. "And my happiness is much more important to you than *her* disapproval, is n't it? Besides, all men are brothers—you 've often told me that. And Mrs. Cogwheel's house is charming. The tea-table silver was Queen Anne, was n't it? And much prettier than Aunt Raspington's, and the old oak was quite as beautiful——"

"Only a good deal of it was humbug," said Miss Green drily, "and the Raspington oak has always been at Raspington since the house was built. There 's four or five hundred years' wear between them; that 's all."

"But does n't it seem queer to you? I 'm awfully glad to find that Malinder is full of interesting people and interesting lives, besides the shops and the suffering poor. And I might never have known."

Miss Green looked as if she devoutly wished that she never had known.

"Already," Tormentilla said, tactfully changing the subject, "I have found one way of being useful. Audrey Cogwheel told me the secret sorrow of her life yesterday, and I am going to cure it if I can. I assure you I have strong hopes."

"Crossed in love?" Miss Green asked sarcastically.

Poor Tormentilla's face flamed. Her eyes filled with smarting tears, but she said nothing.

"I mean," said Miss Green hastily, "that she looks such a pretty, happy, spoilt girl, and her troubles are almost sure to be purely imaginary. Sandy dear, you know I was n't thinking of——"

"I know," said the girl, trying to smile. "Greenie, life won't always be such a desert, will it? You always say that clouds will be sunshine to-morrow, and I 've never known you to say anything else that was n't true, so I must believe you, must n't I? That 's the best of never lying: you do get believed at important moments. And poor Audrey—well, it was a confidence, you see, and I promised to be as secret as the grave. She 's very lovely, is n't she? And terribly like Dolly when she 's happy."

"She 's not at all the kind of girl *I* admire." Miss Green's voice was cold. "Now, that lovely dark creature with the little hat full of rosebuds——"

"Mrs. Jack Standring? I did n't see much of her. Audrey says she is rather a dear, but dreadfully quarrelsome. She does n't get on with her husband."

Here Miss Green laid down her embroidery with some agitation.

"Sandy, I must beg of you not to allow yourself to be dragged into these unsuitable discussions."

Tormentilla laughed.

"I 'm nineteen," she said, "and full of common-sense, and I won't gossip if it distresses you, but I thought perhaps—you never can tell—I thought if I got to know her better I might be able to help her too."

Miss Green gasped. Her advice was recoiling upon her with a vengeance.

"May I ask," she said firmly, "if you propose in your youth and appalling ignorance, to try to act as peacemaker between that young woman and her husband?"

"I may have opportunities," she murmured. "And did you see that nasty, sleek clergyman—that Mr. Bromsgrove, the man who got all those people into trouble at Greenrose, the man who father said had a gift for finding out things? I 'm going to watch him. He shan't upset everybody here if I can help it. When a wolf comes to shepherd sheep—oh, I expect I shall have lots of opportunities."

And poor Miss Green could only hope that she never would.

But there the conversation ended, and the next day Tormentilla took out her bicycle and rode down alone to the Cogwheels'.

She found pretty Audrey in the drawing-room.

"Mother is at the Helpful Endeavor, with Miss Cotton," she said softly. "She was so sorry she would miss you. 'Dearest,' I said to her, 'Tormentilla is coming'—you 'll let me call you by your beautiful name, won't you? And she was furious with the 'Helpful' for happening to-day. But you 'll wait to see her, of course. Do stay with me as long as you can, because I 'm in the most broken-hearted state."

The little catch in her voice melted Tormentilla's tender heart.

"Has there been anything new?" she asked quickly. "And I really would n't cry here, if I were you, because the servants will see you when they bring tea in. Won't you—could you wait till afterwards, do you think; when we are in the garden?"

Audrey dabbed at one eye with a little flimsy handkerchief.

"I will if you like," said she wistfully, "but it 's a cruel, cruel world." She shook out her pretty, frilly skirt. Her gown was as pale a pink as the exquisite flush of her cheek, and her bright hair caught Tormentilla's eye, bringing at once an unwelcome memory. She was a girl with the grace of spring.

"If only Michael were different," Audrey said sorrowfully.

"Perhaps you would n't have fallen so much in love with him if he had been," Tormentilla suggested brilliantly. "You sometimes find out that the most glaring faults were quite—quite *endearing* when you 've lost them forever."

Audrey dropped her eyes.

"It is n't that," she said softly; "he is perfect, of course, in my eyes. I have put him on a pedestal from the first. But my father can't be expected to be so blind to his faults as I am, can he? And then, even if he was n't a black sheep, he is quite poor. Father is extraordinarily mercenary at heart, although he is so kind. He won't hear of my marrying a man who can't keep me in comfort. He will look upon the total absence of prospects as an iron barrier. It seems rather paltry, does n't it? And Mr. Standring, Nigel—the eldest brother, you know—is so comfortably off. It 's nothing to father that he 's a vegetarian and all wool and every unpleasant fad you can think of. I said to mother only the other day, 'Dearest,' I said, 'would he like it himself?' And mother quite saw. Sometimes I feel I would rather die than marry a man who lunches so persistently on a bean and a brazil-nut. Yet I can't disobey father."

"You can go too far with obedience," Tormentilla said quickly; "and it 's your own long life you 've got to live afterwards, not your father's. Why does n't Mr. Kenworthy get some work to do?"

Audrey sighed.

"He does n't like work very much," she said; "he 's been in several situations already, and they've none of them exactly suited him. He's so often the round peg in the square hole, poor darling. He was to be an engineer, but the early-rising—six, you know, or worse—tried him dreadfully. And then he went in for chemistry, and he could n't stand the fumes. You could n't expect him to, could you? He seriously thought of taking up medicine and looked to father to help him on, but the examinations are so frightfully stiff that he knew from the first it was quite hopeless and did n't waste his time on them. And, as I said, he's had several posts in Malinder, but—well, he was born on a Friday, and you know what an unlucky day that always is."

"I see," said Tormentilla thoughtfully. "You'll have money, I suppose?"

"Oh, no," said Audrey softly; "I am quite penniless."

"Then who'll have your father's money when he dies?"

"But he is n't going to die." Audrey looked up with a shocked face. "I should n't like to think he would ever die. Please don't suggest such a thing."

"Everybody dies some day," said Tormentilla sharply, "and it would be much more sensible if your father gave you a good comfortable *dot* and let you marry your own love *now*, than spoil your life, and hoard up his gains. He'd be quite sure that you were n't wishing for his death then, you see."

Audrey sat up and studied her animated face with some interest.

"I'm afraid you have unusually strong opinions, have n't you?" she asked anxiously. "Mother thinks it rather a mistake—you don't mind my saying so, do you?—in a young girl to have strong opinions. I said to her only the other day, 'Dearest,' I said, 'Tormentilla is so downright and sincere, and she has ideas—really she has,' and mother said, 'The less ideas a girl has before she's twenty-five, the better.' And that was very biting from mother, was n't it?"

"Look here," said Tormentilla sharply, "do you love him?"

"Oh, of course. I dream of him incessantly, and I can think of nothing else. I am miserable when I don't see him, and wretched when I do. If that is n't love, what is?"

Tormentilla told herself doubtfully that the same disease would naturally show different symptoms in different minds, and she spoke hesitatingly.

"I thought that when people who loved each other were together they were always gloriously happy," she ventured. "I've always heard so."

Audrey sighed.

"Yes," she said; "but that's only at the beginning. That's before they quite know, I think; and the feeling gradually goes when they are absolutely sure. Then, you see, they realize so deeply the awful tragedy of life without each other, that they can never forget it for an instant. And there 's something about love which makes you quite certain that only the tragedy can be yours. Like Romeo and Juliet, you see, only quite different."

Tormentilla's experience found a grain of truth in these vague sentiments, but she pursued her theme.

"Do you love him better than anything else—father and mother and worldly wealth and trifles like that?" she demanded.

"Oh, much!" said Audrey. "That 's the pity of it, as I told mother. 'Not wisely, dearest,' I said, 'but too well.'"

"Does he love you enough to take you without your money?"

Audrey looked shocked. "Of course!" she cried. "I 've always told him that my face was my fortune, and he quite realizes it. The first thing he ever told me was that he loved me for myself alone."

"Then, why not marry him?"

Audrey looked sharply up. "Marry him?" she said. "But how can I, if father——"

"Never mind your father," said Tormentilla abruptly. "Run away."

"Run away!" Audrey's eyes lit up.

"Yes, run away," Tormentilla pursued doggedly; "if you really consider the world well lost for love and all that kind of thing, prove it."

"It 's a perfectly fascinating idea," Audrey murmured admiringly.

"Elope." Tormentilla was quite carried away by her enthusiasm. "You are twenty-one. You can do as you like. Take matters into your own hands. Your father is too fond of you to hold out long, I 'm sure, and your mother is always kind. She 'll plead your cause when it comes to the point."

"It 's a beautiful thought," said Audrey dreamily, "to miss the wedding and the dreadful cake and congratulations and presents and all the superficial flaunting show, but I 'm afraid it will never occur to Michael."

Tormentilla rose impatiently.

"*Make* it occur to him!" she cried. "Next time he asks you to marry him, tell him you will. If he asks when, say, 'Now.' That 's all."

"But it would n't be quite nice, would it?" murmured Audrey in her flower-like way.

"*Oh!*" Tormentilla strode across the drawing-room and opened another window. "You do have your rooms hot," said she. "Do you mind if I open this? I think I can talk better in the fresh air."

"Please do," said Audrey. "It 's so charming of you to be so candid. I've always admired it from the very beginning. I said to mother, 'Dearest,' I said, 'isn't it splendid to find a girl who is so sincere and yet nice as well?' And mother said, 'It is indeed.' But won't it be rather draughty if both the windows are open at once? Mr. Bromsgrove was saying only yesterday that fresh air came straight from heaven, but that a draught was most dangerous."

Tormentilla turned from the window quickly. "Do you see much of Mr. Bromsgrove?" cried she curiously.

"Yes." Audrey's eyes fell again. "He is a great favorite with mother and father. And sometimes I am afraid he comes rather too often. It makes one wonder what he comes for. And Michael is so horribly jealous. It is natural that he should be, of course, because, you see, poor darling, he isn't the same *persona grata* in the house."

"Do you like him?" Tormentilla put the question like a challenge.

"Yes, quite; but only as a friend, naturally. He is so clever, isn't he? So much depth of character. 'Still waters run deep,' I said to mother only the other day, about him. And mother said, 'Yes, indeed.'"

"Ugh!" Tormentilla made a face, but the dejected grace of Audrey's attitude reproached her. Here was a fine opportunity to help two lovers to happiness, and all girls were silly in one way or another, she supposed. She must overlook such trifling imperfections as these. If it was not going to be an easy task to override these maidenly prejudices, why, so much the better. The more obstacles in the path, the better was the thing worth doing.

She got on her bicycle in high spirits and rode home.

Young Mrs. Standring, wandering disconsolately round her beautiful garden the same afternoon, was thinking very much of these two; of Audrey's sudden affection for the pinafore girl, as she called Tormentilla, and of poor Michael Kenworthy's hopeless love affairs. She had heard a great deal of those love affairs, and the young man so obviously preferred now to spend his time talking them over with her, instead of trying to get work, or even to see the beloved object, that she was growing uneasy. She had, in fact, begged her husband that very afternoon to take her away for a holiday. She was beginning to think it would be wise. It was because she loved her husband and wished to prevent annoyance to him, rather than from the wish to spare another person pain and humiliation, that she wanted to go away now, but it was no good. She had tried and failed. Things must go on and take their chance. Afterwards, if there should be a row, it would be a great comfort to feel that she had—for once—done her best to prevent it.

It was in this pleasant state of mind that Michael Kenworthy found her at six o'clock when he came in to talk about Audrey. She smiled at him, however, with a smile which completely transfigured her sulky little face, and Michael began to cheer up at once.

His eyes were luminous as he looked at her. She had been so kind to him. Hour after hour she had listened to his ravings about Audrey; had sympathized with his poverty, calmed his jealous fears, prophesied the best, and, of course, he was fond of her. He ought to be, but she could n't help feeling that a moment had almost come when their friendship should be weakened by absence, and now Jack had refused to take her away.

"Where is Audrey to-day?" she asked.

Young Kenworthy was a fair, clean-shaven youth of twenty-four or so. His enemies said he was a rolling stone, and his friends that he was wanting in application. As for his prospects, Audrey's cruel parents had found them quite invisible to the naked eye, and, taking an antiquated and prejudiced view, had forbidden even an engagement.

"What is Audrey doing to-day?" Lise asked kindly.

"I don't know," the young man replied sadly. "I never see her now, unless I meet her here. And there 's your confounded brother-in-law—I beg your pardon, but *you* don't like him either, do you?"

"Yes, I do," said Lise sharply. "Of course I am fond of Jack's only brother. You must n't say such extraordinarily incorrect things about me. And if Audrey loves you, Nigel's existence does n't much matter, does it? I don't think Audrey likes his curious habits and the way he—well, she 's a little tiny bit of a *gourmande,* is n't she? It 's in the family, rather, and——"

"She has a fairylike appetite," Michael said quickly, for it was a trait he had much admired in her.

"Yes, of course"—Lise smiled a little. "That 's just it, and it has to be tempted. Michael, honestly, *do* you think any one's fairylike appetite would be tempted by the things Nigel eats? Braised spinach and carrot cutlets and curious imitations of meat of all sorts. Can you really be jealous of him when you think of him as a man who calls you 'dear lady,' and wears sandals?"

"He does n't call *me* 'dear lady,'" said Michael warmly. "And I 'd like to see him do it."

"He is prosperous, of course," she went on in slighting tones, "but he does n't *spend* his money. How can an all-wooller and a vegetarian enjoy life? They *can't.* They 're too busy counting the times they masticate their dreadful foods to enjoy their meals. And they would n't let their wives dress in the delightful way Audrey does, because they have theories about women's clothing. Awful rational theories, you know, and balls and theatres are tabooed because of the exhausted air, and artificiality of the pleasure they give. Such dancing as Nigel approves of must be taken under 'God's blue sky,' illumined by the twinkling candelabra of the blessed stars. Nigel often says so. Imagine it! If you've ever danced on a well-rolled lawn, you'll be able to guess what the kind of field-dancing Nigel would approve of is like. And in sandals, of course. Fancy Audrey giving up her Louis heels and her nineteen-inch waist. Oh, I am sure, quite sure, you have n't the slightest reason to be jealous of Nigel."

Michael laughed, then sighed.

"You're very comforting, Mrs. Standring. You always manage to cheer me up, but you won't mind my saying that if I really have no grounds for jealousy, I'd rather it was because she cared for me than because she disapproved of his infernal Mother Goose habits. Of course any girl would rather marry a man than a Miss Nancy—it's only human nature—but I wish Audrey's only reason for refusing him was because she could n't find it in her heart to give up *me*."

Lise sighed.

"You ask too much of any woman," said she. "There are always a hundred reasons for and against *everything*. I am sure this is much too complex an age, in spite of what Nigel says about the simple life, to allow a girl to make an important decision which might influence her whole life's happiness, for an old-fashioned, humdrum reason like that."

"*You* are n't like that," said he, watching with his clear gray eyes the changing expression of her animated face, and the quick, expressive gestures of her little brown hands.

Lise raised her dark eyebrows with a curious little smile.

"No?" she said. "My dear boy, I am more complex than anything you ever dreamt of or imagined. I never did anything from a simple honest motive in all my life."

"I sometimes think," said Michael earnestly, "that you are n't very happy. It does n't seem quite fair. It is too bad that you, who are so sympathetic, should be so much alone in your own life. I never met any one before who understood me as you do. Even Audrey does not quite understand the deeper side of my character. Until I met you—oh, if I *could* only make some return to you for your perfect sympathy. I am afraid Standring is n't *worthy* of you."

Lise, who had been leaning back with a strange little smile hovering over her lips, sat up suddenly here, with amazed eyes. But the mad youth rushed on to his destruction.

"I don't think your husband can understand you as I can," said he boldly.

Lise broke into a sudden sharp little laugh.

"My dear boy," she said, "you must n't make remarks about my husband if you wish me to remain your friend. There is no question about the perfect understanding between Jack and me. We adore each other. In every single instance that I can remember since we were married, we have thought as one."

III.

"CHARMING, is n't she?" Miss Cotton beamed at them over the big pale blue bow of chiffon at her throat. Her large, sheep-like face shone with its usual expression of cheerful sadness. "I always think it such a pity," she said gently, "that Mrs. Standring does not live happily with her husband. My housemaid, who is a cousin of her cook, tells me that they have *words* constantly. Her temper is most passionate, and he is a remarkably amiable man. But, then, she is so elegant. I always think Mrs. Jack *most* elegant. It 's a pity that young men fall in love with her so—so incessantly, though, is n't it? Beauty is always such a snare."

"Young men always have fallen in love with lovely faces"—Tormentilla was sitting by the open window, looking at the dark woods beyond the park, and she burst in here with a bitterness straight from her heart—"and always will."

"Ah, yes!" Miss Cotton sighed and smoothed her chiffon. "And Time is cruel to youthful loveliness. I always think Time is so cruel, don't you? But it 's extremely trying for her husband, and I am sure one of her own great troubles, though I sometimes think that if she was n't quite so caressing in her manner to the other sex, it would be wiser. 'My dear boy,' for instance. I always found it so dangerous to call a young man 'my dear boy,' have n't you?"

"I have never tried it," replied Greenie coldly.

"Of course, if he is *really* a boy," the visitor pursued, "he merely regards it as an insult. But when a little older? And young men are so easily influenced, and they are so sure to suffer for it. Inevitable, is n't it?"

"I expect it does them a lot of good."

Tormentilla was getting more interested in the conversation than Miss Green liked.

"Yes, that 's what *she* thinks. She regards her influence as chastening and a necessary part of a young man's education, but her husband naturally does n't see it in the same light. Of course he knows his wife is devoted to him, there 's no doubt about *that,* but he does n't like to see any one unhappy—such a sweet trait in him, I 've frequently thought. 'The candle and the moth' is what he calls the kind of situation which is constantly arising."

"Tormentilla," said Miss Green persuasively, "I 've left the darkest shade of the mauve filoselle upstairs in my bedroom. Might I trouble you, my dear? Your legs are younger than mine."

"Yes, Greenie, but it's under your chair. You've just dropped it on purpose, haven't you? I don't suppose there's a word of it true, Miss Cottons, is there?"

"Cotton," amended that lady sadly. "You are so frank, aren't you? I always admire frankness in the young. So fearless and free. And what a fortunate thing that the family are not at home!"

"The family?" Miss Green looked up still more surprised.

"The Earl and Countess. How nice for you to have this charming mansion as a home! Very fortunate that Lord Malinder is away, I call it."

"Yes, it is, rather," said Tormentilla quietly, with a side glance at the confused Greenie.

But after their visitor had gone, Tormentilla relapsed into thoughtful silence, and Miss Green became anxious. The girl rose at last and hunted for her straw hat.

"I'm going out," said she briskly, "to return Mrs. Standring's call. You needn't come. I rather want to see her alone. I am interested in her, and I want to form an unbiased opinion."

"But, Sandy——"

"Tormentilla," suggested the girl.

"Do you think you ought to hobnob with Tom, Dick, and Harry in this way? Your mother——"

"It's fortunate for me that mother isn't here." Tormentilla's mischievous smile was not particularly reassuring.

"I know you won't go if I ask you not to," Miss Green went on persuasively, but quite without conviction.

"And I know you won't be so unkind as to ask me not to, when I'm just beginning to follow your advice and take an unselfish interest in others—will you? One mustn't think only of oneself, Greenie, you see. And I'm quite capable of forming a proper judgment for myself. You often told me so. And you admire Mrs. Standring tremendously. You've said so from the very beginning, haven't you? Mr. Standring's got a most interesting brother, who is in love with Audrey. Her parents want her to marry him, but he lives the simple life and wears sandals. I've never met any one who lived on nuts before—except at the Zoo, of course—and I'm keenly anxious to see him."

She hastily put on her hat without looking at a glass and swung out of the room with her usual free and boyish stride. Miss Green made no further suggestion, and, indeed, dared not. She was honestly too glad, after their winter together of tears and despair, to find that the girl was cheering up, and taking any interest in the outside world, to mind very much what steps she took to drive away her trouble.

And Tormentilla went out through the big hall, past the ghostly shrouded armor, and down a passage to a side door leading onto the terrace. If "the family" had been at home, the veranda would have been gay with bright rugs, and chairs, and dozens of large, soft cushions. Now there were two chairs, hers and Greenie's, and even a tea-table, but it was n't very gay.

Tormentilla sighed as a sudden memory of another veranda, in another county, clutched at her heart. That was the worst of her kind of trouble. Everything you saw or touched, every other word you heard, every smell even—the roses and sweet peas—the stables where there was only Gray Poll eating her head off and getting fat, the sweet-briar bush at the corner of the perennial border, the freshly cut hay—everything brought a memory to stab you like a wicked little knife.

"The country 's even worse than London in some ways," she said as she ran down the terrace steps to the upper lawn. "If only I could have kept out of *their* way, things would certainly have been easier in town."

She ran down a second flight of steps. The lower lawn was bordered by the wide rose walk which led directly into the bluebell copse and the park itself. It was not a legitimate way to the high-road, but all ways were legitimate to her, and she climbed the little fence at the end of the copse gaily. A gardener talking to a keeper in the distance watched her disapprovingly.

"Privileged, *she* is," the keeper said. "The Lord knows why. Climbin' hedges with a decent gate within hearing, as she do! Mr. Grimes 'e says let her be, an' I am lettin' 'er. But the way she 's been brought up 's something shockin'. It is that."

"Aye," said the gardener. "In the gardens it 's the same thing. Pullin' the roses off in her brainless female way, instead of bringin' a pair of scissors or askin' me for my knife. Treadin' on the beds all over. 'Take no notice of 'er,' says McGregor; 'she 's to do as she likes.' Lord! It 's something chronic."

Tormentilla strode along the high-road with her arms swinging by her side, her square, boyish shoulders thrown back. She was not satisfied yet with the way Audrey was yielding to her influence. She was beginning to find that it was not nearly as easy to do good to people as she had at first supposed. It was extraordinary, when you came to think of it, that people should show such absurd reluctance to being made gloriously happy. And she felt that she had come now to a dead-lock. Nothing more could be done until she had made the acquaintance of Michael Kenworthy. Then perhaps she would be able to show him how easily he could save his beautiful, unhappy Audrey from his vegetarian rival. People were strangely wanting in imagination sometimes.

She found Lise alone in her cool green drawing-room, half asleep in a corner of a big, luxurious Chesterfield. She was really glad to see Tormentilla, and made the girl sit down beside her. It was refreshing to see this frank, healthy young face and the clear eyes, and Lise dropped her indifferent, sulky manner and suddenly determined to make herself agreeable.

They talked amiably of nothing for some time until Tormentilla's passion for getting to the horses got the better of her.

"You 're a friend of Audrey Cogwheel's, are n't you?" said she abruptly.

Lise was silent for a minute, and her eyes darkened.

"I used to be," she admitted.

"She 's very sweet, is n't she?" Tormentilla's tone was curiously at variance with her words.

"Very sweet indeed—oh, certainly she 's very sweet."

"It 's a pity she 's so unhappy, is n't it?"

"Is she unhappy?" Lise asked coolly. She crouched in the corner of the sofa, and her little face looked just like the face of a spoilt and sulky child.

Tormentilla stared at her. "She told me you *knew*."

"How long had Audrey known *you* when she opened her heart in this way?" Lise asked with a harsh laugh.

"I 'd seen her three times. It was rather quick, but then she 's not like other girls, and her trouble is wearing her out. She 's told me so several times."

"She would," said Lise softly. "Do go on."

"And, then, perhaps I 'm rather outspoken myself," Tormentilla added doubtfully.

Lise laughed a little.

"*No!*" she said. "Well, do you know, I rather guessed that. Audrey told you about poor Michael, I suppose?"

"Yes. It *is* awful for them, is n't it?"

Lise was silent.

"You know," Tormentilla said earnestly, pushing back her hat and ruffling up her hair to meet Lise's eyes with a frankly troubled gaze, "I want to help those two, *tremendously*."

Lise stared at her, still in amused silence.

"I have a trouble of my own, you see," the girl went on earnestly, "and I 'm most anxious to drown it. I can't tell you how extremely anxious I am to drown it. And there can't be a better way of drowning a selfish sorrow, can there, than by doing something to make some one else happy?" Her cheeks flushed; she seemed half ashamed of the sentiment as she uttered it.

"It's a popular idea," said Lise wearily. "I don't know that it's much good practically. You see, generally things turn out so differently from what you expect, especially the things you do for other people. And perhaps what *they* think they want most is n't always what is most likely to make them happy. There are such a lot of points to consider before you embark on an altruistic career. I never got beyond the considering point myself, and I'm not qualified to advise the youthful enthusiast. But, my dear little girl"—her voice changed with bewildering suddenness and became caressing and soft; her face lost its sulkiness, and her cynical smile grew quite tender—"my dear little girl, I am very sorry to hear that *you* are n't happy. At seventeen—or is it eighteen?—the world ought to be an enchanted garden, with a key of pure gold hidden in a place where you are quite sure to find it. By all the laws of fairyland——"

"The world is n't fairyland, though, is it?" said Tormentilla in regretful tones. "And I am nearly nineteen. I did n't know what unhappiness was till last year. Last year, you see——" The simile fascinated her, and she went on: "I found the garden and the key too, and then——"

"Yes?" Lise's voice was irresistible, her changed face extraordinarily sympathetic.

Tormentilla went on: "I lost it again, I suppose. At least, a serpent came into the paradise and—and—and swallowed it."

"It's wonderful, is n't it," Lise murmured, "how that serpent always manages to find the way?"

Tormentilla glanced at her in nervous silence. She had never told any one but Greenie so far, and Greenie had never quite understood, although she had of course been very kind and sympathetic. Lise would understand everything. She knew that by her soft dark eyes and lovely voice.

"I hardly know you," she said doubtfully.

"That is n't quite true." Lise did n't attempt to take her hand or to touch her. She had none of the usual tricks. She never asked for a confidence. If people insisted upon confiding in her, well and good; if not, she was not going to try to make them.

Perhaps it was because of this that Tormentilla's love of reticence was suddenly lost in those dark eyes.

"Last year," she said, "in town, you know, there was a—a person who was always coming to see my—my relations. Not me, of course, because I'm not out. I should have been this year if——I've three sisters out, you see, and although two are engaged, neither of them is married. And Doreen's lovely—really lovely. She's rather like Audrey Cogwheel, only always pleased with herself. Every one in the house thought the person came to see *her*. No one found out for a long time that the—that the person was always losing the way and finding the school-room instead, and when they did find out there was a tremendous row, because he was rather an important person, and it had been decided by my—my relations that I was to be kept back till Vic and Peggy and Dolly were settled. So they packed me off to the country with Greenie. And then the person found out where I was, just as easily as he had found the school-room, and he used to motor over to see me, and we—we got terribly fond of each other. It 's extraordinary how fond you can get of a person, if you let yourself go."

"Yes," said Lise, with her funny little grimacing smile, "is n't it?"

"And we got engaged, of course, but quite secretly, because it was so much more fun, and we wanted to enjoy it thoroughly before there was a row. And then—Doreen—Dolly——" Her voice broke into a little angry sob.

"Well?"

"Dolly took matters into her own hands. You see, she 's always been so much admired and petted that she thought it was enough to be seen and heard, to win anybody's undying affection."

"Did it put her on her mettle to find out that it was n't enough?" Lise asked gravely.

"Well, Dolly 's fiendishly clever when she thinks anything 's worth it, and she began to study his tastes. He 's fond of outdoor things, you see, and Dolly began to pretend that she was, too. She hardly ever rides, because she is so nervous, and her hair comes out of curl; and she does n't care for motoring, because of her complexion, and she 's afraid of getting fat. She says outdoor women get so hard and coarse-looking. But she deliberately went in then for everything he admired most. He only fell in love with *me* because I was a good sport. He always said so. I had no other—attractions." Her voice broke with a despairing little sob. Lise was watching her curiously.

"And—and she 's lovely to look at—like porcelain; her eyes are blue, deep sea blue, like Audrey's. She 's sweet too, cloyingly sweet, like a pink fondant, the kind you think you 'll like when you take it, and then you wish you had n't. He did, but it was too late. He found himself engaged to her before he quite grasped it, and his engagement to me did n't matter at all, you see, because no one else knew of it. He 's had so little experience. It all came of an accidental kiss when he was off his guard. He was miserable directly he realized what he 'd let himself in for, and rushed to tell me and throw himself on my mercy. Of course I gave him his freedom like a shot when he told me, and I went away with Greenie to Provence all the winter, and this summer I persuaded my—I persuaded mother to let her bring me here."

"I'm glad you came here," said Lise kindly.

"Do you know," said Tormentilla seriously, "that I could n't bear to look at Audrey at first, because she reminded me so of Dolly. It is only since I found out that she was unhappy that I changed. It makes me love people to find out that they are unhappy. Dolly *never* was. She had only to walk once round her bedroom—it's perfectly lined with looking-glasses, you see—to be absolutely radiant for the day. That's the worst of it. She does n't care for him; she only wants his money; and——" she stopped suddenly—"his money to spend on frills."

"He's rich, then, your Prince Charming?" Lise asked. Tormentilla opened her eyes.

"Why, he's the D——" She stopped in confusion. "He's a sort of a millionaire," she said feebly; "and to know that the ugly—or, rather, the lovely sister does n't want him for himself alone only makes it all the harder for Cinderella, does n't it? You see, *she* only wants him, and not his millions at all. Oh, you must admit that it was rough on Cinderella."

IV.

The Browning Society had relaxed its brows and descended into the common world again while it had tea. Mrs. Cogwheel looked happier so, and Audrey and Mr. Bromsgrove waited upon the other guests with baskets of cake and elegant sandwiches.

"I am always *so* hungry after Browning," poor Miss Cotton said eagerly. "It takes so much out of you, don't you find, Mrs. Flanelle?"

"After that magnificent passage—you know the one I mean, because I could see a question trembling on the tip of your tongue, after that—I think it was the first longest in the poem—I forgot everything. I could no more have told you what I had for lunch than I could have flown, Mrs. Cogwheel. Browning does inspire so at these moments, that I actually loathe the sight or thought of mere food. Yes, I will have another scone, Audrey, my dear. No sugar, thank you, Mr. Bromsgrove. Mrs. Cogwheel, who really is that girl with the interesting Spanish name?"

"What I wonder," said Mrs. Hay firmly, "is whether she is quite a nice friend for our girls. Vera has taken to her in the most surprising way. She says she is so *sincere.*"

"But Vera always was very original," Mrs. Flanelle said pleasantly; "such an uncommon girl, I always say, and so unconventional. She ought to write. I always think she ought to write."

"Sincere girls are generally disagreeable girls, are n't they?" Mrs. Cogwheel said mildly. "Not literally, I mean, but if you've ever had a candid friend, or what passes for one, you'll know what I mean. Of course, sincerity in the abstract is a beautiful thing, but one can be *too* outspoken, don't you think? But I feel sure Tormentilla is an excellent friend for Audrey. She is a relation of Sir Diggory Grouse, I believe, and Audrey adores her, don't you, darling?"

"She is so sweet," said Audrey softly. Quite by accident, she stood where the golden light from the colored glass panes at the top of the casement windows fell upon her hair, and crowned her, as Mr. Bromsgrove said afterwards to her mother, "like an aureole." Her eyes, he remarked at the same time, were blue stars in her flower-like face. "And you know, dearest," her mother added as she repeated his remarks afterwards, with her usual good-night kiss, "he is not only a really good and pious man, but intellectual as well, which is so *rare*. And his taste is beyond all—well, you heard him on Sordello, and one need say no more. A man who could see such things in that great poem—things you and I could never have dreamt possible for it to hold, sacred, beautiful, hidden meanings—Audrey, I ask you."

"Yes, indeed," said Audrey, raising her flushed and lovely face from the pillow. "And do go, dearest, won't you? I *am* so sleepy."

But at the Browning tea, she had stood there in her childish, simple way, ignorant, of course, of the vicar's rapt gaze, while Lise in her usual corner had watched her narrowly.

"Tormentilla is so sympathetic," Audrey said. "And she has ideas as well, which makes it all the more wonderful. And she is so bright and encouraging. She gives one new heart with her courage." Here she looked away out of the window and sighed. "She almost *makes* one take one's courage in one's own hands and——" She stopped suddenly, met Mr. Bromsgrove's eyes, and blushed adorably.

"So breezy, is n't she?" Miss Cotton murmured. "I always think she is so extraordinarily breezy for a young girl."

Mr. Bromsgrove put his cup away and sat down heavily.

"May I ask," he said slowly, "what you know of this breezy young lady's family and—er—antecedents?"

"Oh, nothing whatever," Audrey replied promptly. "But that makes her all the more interesting, does n't it?"

"A touch of mystery gives a charm to anything," Mrs. Flanelle said, as she drew on her long gloves. "I quite agree with you there. I always say to cook in the mornings, 'Cook, I leave it to you. Don't, *don't,* let me ever guess at what we are to have for lunch, for it spoils everything so. And when it so often turns out to be chops, I think it is unreasonable and sordid of my husband to be annoyed, and I always tell him so. What *would* life be if there were no dark secrets?"

Lise giggled, but her temper, too, was rising.

"Much better worth living, would n't it?" she said sharply. "And she is a dear child; a simple, unspoiled little school-girl. There is nothing mysterious about her. Miss Cotton has told us that her aunt is a cousin of Sir Diggory Grouse, and that Tormentilla is here for change of air after a rather severe attack of influenza. She lives in London."

Mr. Bromsgrove coughed.

"I should advise you to make careful inquiries about this young lady before you allow your daughter to become intimate with her," he said, smiling in his courtly way at Mrs. Cogwheel, and every one was much impressed, and more curious than ever.

"Her clothes are most extraordinary," Mrs. Hay said eagerly; and Miss Gee nodded.

"It is the uniform of some home, I feel sure," she said with authority. "Of course I cannot say what kind of a home, although——"

Lise laughed outright.

"Nonsense!" she said. "You talk as if she'd come out of a reformatory. It's only the child's physical culture dress that she's wearing out because it's so comfortable."

Meanwhile Tormentilla was taking steps. Audrey's unhappy, pale face haunted her. That two lovers should be separated by such trifles as a disapproving parent, exasperated her. She felt that she would have made short work of her father if he had raised objections to *her* choice. Audrey had no courage, but "I'll give her courage," she told herself. "I'll buck her up. When I've put the thing to her in a clear light she'll understand what she's doing. She does n't even seem to realize how much she has at stake. With so much—her whole life's happiness, in fact, hanging in the balance, she must be taught to see—made to realize. If I could only give her more grit!"

And she longed, she burned, to meet the beloved object, to point out to Michael Kenworthy his clear duty; to show him what he was in such deadly danger of losing. But although she knew him by sight, he had never yet been introduced to her.

She had been invited to join the Browning Society, but had politely declined. She was afraid she was n't clever enough, she said, and Lise, who was going merely to kill time, laughed and told her that she envied her her sincerity. "Audrey thinks this man intellectual because he has started a society to expound Browning," she said. "I think it is so insulting to a poet to expound him, don't you?"

Tormentilla agreed, and all that afternoon she wandered about the park and the lane without a hat, for it was a breezy, glorious day and the sun was not too hot. She trespassed once more in the plantation, and had an interesting interview with a pretty little housemaid who was leaning over the hedge, crying her eyes out, because some one who had faithfully promised to be there had n't come.

"The new parson 's been at him," Minnie said sadly. "He 's been threatening to speak to Mr. Groves if he wastes his time here instead of looking after the young pheasants over the other side of the park. And Mr. Groves would turn him off as like as not if he knew."

"He would, would he?" Tormentilla said softly. "Mr. Bromsgrove had better keep to his Browning, I think. Where is Mr. Groves?"

"He 's talking to Mrs. Gramper now. He 'll be going home to his tea presently."

"Look here, Minnie, you 're not to cry any more. Don't take any notice of that man. He can't turn William off. You shall meet your sweetheart as often as you like—only—only if I were you, I 'd choose another place. Why not the orchard? The cherry orchard. It 's a perfectly ripping place for a girl to meet her sweetheart in! It is really."

Her earnest voice brought a look of amazed delight to Minnie's dark eyes.

"You don't think it 's wrong, then, miss? You 'll not tell of me?"

"Tell!" said Tormentilla sharply, tossing her plait back. "I don't tell."

"Wish you may die?"

"Wish I may die?" Tormentilla repeated in surprised inquiry.

"Wish you may die if you tell, I mean," Minnie explained. "It 's what we always say about secrets."

"Oh, I see. I wish I may die if I tell, then." Tormentilla did n't smile. "Minnie," she pursued gravely, "you don't seem to understand. Love is a beautiful thing, a sacred thing. If you have a lover, and he is true to you, you are the happiest girl in the world. Don't listen to anybody else. Stick to him and marry him when he asks you, and never, never give him up."

Minnie's eyes grew radiant, but they quickly clouded again.

"I doubt father 'ull sauce if I lose my place," said she gloomily.

"Never mind what your father says," Tormentilla pursued eagerly. "It 's your happiness, not his, that 's in the balance. And you shan't lose your place. William shall not lose *his* either. And now run and tell Mr. Groves that Miss Green is waiting to speak to him in Cherry Lane."

"Like her cheek, too," said that gentleman to himself, when he got his message. "Them as wants to see me as bad as all that must wait till they get the chance."

Mr. Groves was a most gentlemanly man in his shooting parties, but he occasionally unbent when his family were not at home. "Lettin' rabbits out of the traps as if she owned the whole estate, when a man's back 's turned an' all. Likely."

Tormentilla waited half-an-hour in Cherry Lane, and picked a bunch of wild roses to give to Greenie. At the end of the half-hour she grew impatient and began to think of tea, and it was then that she saw coming towards her from that end of the lane which led into the Malinder road the young man Michael Kenworthy. His cap was in his pocket, so were his hands, and his fair head was bent dejectedly as he walked along. His eyes were moody, his mouth sulky, and he won Tormentilla's heart at once by the dreadful unhappiness of his manner and mien.

"I must take the bull by the horns," said she at once, and boldly introduced herself. He looked surprised, but his surprise at this frank introduction was as nothing compared with his surprise at the remarks she went on to make.

"Audrey has told me everything," said she boldly.

Michael eyed her suspiciously and his spirits seemed, if anything, to sink.

"Oh, she has, has she? How frightfully interesting for *you!*"

"I want to help you," said Tormentilla candidly. She was, in fact, dying to. "I can assure you that I can help you, if you 'll only give me the chance."

"No one on God's earth can help me now," he remarked with bitter gloom, and Tormentilla felt as if she could have shaken him for the way he revelled in this certainty.

"On the contrary," said she briskly, "I can, if you 'll only behave like a man, instead of a maundering poet."

At last she had succeeded in rousing his interest, it seemed.

"Can you?" he said. "You seem quite enthusiastic about us. I wonder why."

"There 's only one way open to you now." Her passion for getting to the horses had taken the bit in its teeth now.

"And what way's that?" He regarded her suspiciously as he spoke.

"The way of Gretna Green!" she cried magnificently. The announcement appeared to deprive him of breath for a few minutes.

"The way of what?" The horror in his tone was refreshing.

"Gretna Green. Why don't you carry her off and marry her? That was the way you wooed your wife in the youth of the world. How changed men are! Elope!"

"I never thought of that," he admitted truthfully. "By George!"

"Isn't it time you did think of it, then?" she asked in an exasperated tone. "Oh, if I were a man!"

"You might feel quite different about it if you were," he suggested brilliantly. "You never know. You forget that I haven't a penny in the world. It's a minor detail, of course, but still——"

"What does *that* matter," cried Tormentilla heartily, "if you love each other? Besides, her father has enough for you both. He'll have to keep you both, of course, if he's put to it. And he'd be sure to find you some work to do then."

"Would he, do you think?" Was it a mistake on her part to think that he regarded this possibility with disfavor? "But even then——"

"Oh, don't be so prudent!" cried the girl. "It's always a hopelessly unbecoming virtue, especially in a lover. I can lay my hands on a hundred pounds, which I'll lend you with pleasure if you'll only buck up."

"Can you, indeed?" His voice was full of frank envy.

"I shall *love* to lend you a helping hand," Tormentilla cried eagerly. She looked very jolly, he thought, as she stood there, her red lips parted, her brown hair flung over her shoulders.

"It's awfully good of you," said he, much flattered. "I'm sure I don't deserve such——"

"I would help *any* lovers," Tormentilla said earnestly, "to take their fate into their own hands. I *adore* courage, and you must put up with poverty at first for each other's sake. Think of Audrey in a dear little cottage, with roses climbing up the walls and nodding through the windows. It's a beautiful idea, love in a cottage. Think of it."

He did think of it, yet obviously the rapturous thought seemed to give him very little pleasure.

"Roses creeping through the window, and poverty bursting through the door," said he sadly.

"Bread and cheese and kisses!" cried she to encourage him.

"Water coming through the roof and rats in the cellar," said he.

"Oh, I *do* wish you would n't talk like an old woman!" Tormentilla was getting impatient, and quick action was essential in this new and exciting game. "I never met any one less—less ardent. Run away with Audrey and carry her off and marry her, like a man. Hire a postilion and a post-chaise and everything necessary, and then come home and face the music and Audrey's father like a soldier and a gentleman."

"By George!" Poor Michael ruffled his hair in amazement. "The girl must be crazy."

"Bosh!" cried Tormentilla in her breezy way. "I 'll help you —I 'll show you the way. Look upon me as the turning-point of your lives. It 's at this moment of your eventful career, you see, that Pippa passes."

"If you fling Browning at my head," said the wretched youth, "on the top of everything else, I shall go mad. I came out here to *avoid* the Browning society."

"So did I," she cried gleefully. "That ought to be a bond. Browning bores me. And Mr. Bromsgrove gets on my nerves. Shake hands on it."

Solemnly he shook hands, and it was at that moment that a big scarlet motor-car grunted unexpectedly down the little lane towards them. They had to step back hastily into the ditch to avoid it. The driver had the sun in his eyes, and could not see their faces.

But Tormentilla saw *him*.

V.

Yes, Tormentilla saw him. Crushed back against the hedge, with a white face, she watched the motor make its grunting way slowly down the narrow lane. Michael Kenworthy studied her face in some surprise. There had been plenty of room for the car to pass them.

She had uttered a name sharply, with a quick indrawing of her breath, and the car had been so very near to the pair it had forced into the hedge that the driver must have heard it. Yet the sun was in his eyes, as I have said, and he could n't possibly have seen their faces. He went on down the narrow lane, and at first Tormentilla was too dazed to notice that he was gradually slowing off. But Michael noticed it. In fact, he was beginning to grasp the situation altogether.

"You know the man?" he asked, with a half smile. "He is slowing down. Looks as if he were going to stop. He *is* going to stop. *Has* stopped, in fact. I 'm beginning to think I 'd better make myself scarce. Good-by. Thank you very much indeed. I suppose I *had* better go, had n't I?"

"Yes," said she, with a desperate effort to regain her self-possession. "Do—do go, please."

Her anxiety to see the last of him was not flattering, but he understood that this was not a moment for mere manners, and disappeared round the corner before the owner of the red motor had come up to her. He was an experienced youth. Something in the poor girl's eyes perhaps had told him that the best thing he could do was to leave her now.

She was still leaning against the hedge when the stranger reached her. Greenie's little bunch of wild roses was pressed to her breast. Her wide brown eyes gazed at him with a frightened, reproachful stare. Through her parted red lips her breath came quickly.

The motorist was a short, stockish young man, very broad in the shoulders and ruddy and weather-beaten in the face. He had small, twinkling blue eyes and light, closely-cropped hair. He wore no goggles, and his big coat and ugly cap were of a distinctly sporting cut. But his face bore a curious complexity of expressions at that moment, joy and distress in almost equal proportions predominating.

"Sandy!"

"Leave me alone!" She spoke childishly, petulantly, and her mouth grew sulky and hard. "I've been trying to forget all about everything all this time—it's just like you to come and spoil everything when I was beginning to take an interest in doing good to others, and finding some peace of mind. It's just like you."

"Just like me? Oh, Sandy!"

"Just like the hatefulness of everything. When I was beginning to lose myself in other things, and beginning to be happy again."

"Happy? Oh, Sandy!" The deep reproach in his tone infuriated her. Her eyes blazed.

"I suppose you think no one could possibly be happy without you? How like a man! I *was* beginning to think of other things and other people. And now—now you come to Malinder and wake up all the grisly wretchedness of everything. How like a man!"

He plunged his hands into his big pockets and planted his feet far apart with an attitude of dogged determination.

"Look here, Sandy," he said, "you mustn't speak to me like that. I won't have it, I really won't. I won't be bullied. I will explain everything. You didn't give me a chance before. I've behaved like a hound, but I admitted that before, and I'm ashamed to have to confess that I didn't know what I was doing. I lost my head. I can't understand it. It's a thing I've never done before in my life, and yet I wasn't drunk. And you know what Dolly is—I hadn't time to draw back—to explain that I'd lost my head—before she'd told your mother and Peggy and Vic and everybody. It's the most extraordinary thing I've ever done in my life. I'm sure I never lost my head with you."

Tormentilla's cheeks flamed. She turned on her heel and walked off down the road.

"No," she said in a half-choked voice; "that 's just it."

"Sandy dear!" He followed her, but his hands were still in his pockets, and he did n't attempt to touch her. "Sandy, you 're a woman. You can't possibly understand that a man can be so weak when he loves some one else all the time."

"Don't call yourself a *man!*"

"You need n't insult me. I 've enough to bear as it is. If I 've done wrong, I 've got to pay. There 's Dolly, you see."

Tormentilla stopped and turned sharply.

"Don't speak of my sister like that," said she. "Don't be a cad as well as—as everything else that 's horrible. You 're engaged to the prettiest and most fascinating girl in England, and you ought to be satisfied. You *are* satisfied. If you 're pretending that you are n't happy, to console me, you can just save yourself the trouble, for I don't believe a word you say. I never shall believe anything you say again. I 've often heard people say that all men are liars, and I know that it 's true."

"You can't know it of many of 'em yet," he remarked moodily.

"You need n't be coarse. You would n't make silly jokes at such a moment as this"—her voice broke—"if you were n't radiantly and gloriously happy."

A more convincing picture of unutterable woe than he presented at that moment it is difficult to imagine.

"Happy! Oh, Sandy!"

Tormentilla's color faded; her steady gaze faltered, her eyes fell, and the color came back to her cheeks in a rush. There was something very convincing, I suppose, in the utter misery of his expression.

"I think I 'd rather that you were happy," said she, slowly dropping her hands as she turned away. Greenie's dog-roses, already wilting in the sun, fell unheeded to the ground.

The young man laid his hand on her arm appealingly.

"No one else will ever make me happy," he said. And the foolish child's heart leaped at his words, but still she bravely tried to steel herself.

"Go away, please," she said quickly. "Won't you get into the car and go away again?"

"I *can't* leave you like this, dear." His voice was unsteady.

"But you must—oh, indeed, you must. You belong to Dolly now, entirely, you see. And you must n't call me 'dear.'"

"Let me stay a few minutes longer. I have n't seen you for such a terribly long time. It was perfectly devilish that I was n't able to. And when I thought you might be fretting, perhaps——"

"*Fretting!*" This was too much. The tears came at last, hot and uncontrollable, but as she had turned away from him he did n't know. He went on eagerly.

"Sometimes," he said miserably, "I feel as if I could never go through with it. I can't sleep for more than seven hours at a stretch now; upon my honor, I can't. And often—much oftener than you 'd think, I simply loathe the sight of food. It 's awfully rum."

"Rum!" Tormentilla's choked, disgusted voice broke in as she remembered her own long, sleepless nights and months of pure misery.

"And, you see, I can't get out of it now. I simply must go through with it. Everything 's settled. I 'm in it up to the neck. If I could only see a way of getting out of it honorably——" His voice choked and he stopped.

Tormentilla was silent for a few minutes, then with her back still turned she said in a low voice:

"The only possible chance would be if a claimant should arise and prove beyond a possibility of doubt that you 'd been changed at birth. If you were he, and he was the Duke of Lavendale, don't you know, Dolly would be almost sure to throw you over!"

The young man started.

"It 's a nice idea," he said slowly, "but I 'm afraid it 's not a thing to build on."

Strangely enough, the possibility seemed anything but cheering.

"I suppose," she suggested timidly, "you would n't care to *invent* an impostor, would you?"

The Duke—he looked much more like a groom—gasped.

"I 'm an Englishman," he cried in some haste. "And a man of honor."

Tormentilla looked at him gravely.

"True," she murmured. "I 'd forgotten that for the moment, I suppose. When is the wedding to be?"

"The seventeenth of July. You—you won't be there, will you? I 'm afraid your mother will make a fuss if you are n't, but—no—I 'm hanged if I *could* stand that——"

"It is n't a question of what you can stand. And I 'm not going. Mother can rage till she 's black in the face if she likes."

"Sometimes," said the young man gloomily, "I feel inclined to put an end to the whole beastly business. Dolly 's only marrying me because I 'm a good catch. She 's had an eye to the main chance from the cradle. And it 's not a nice thing for a chap to feel that he is n't loved for himself alone—now, is it?"

"No."

"And I 've always felt that *you* would have taken me if I 'd been a travelling tinker, Sandy dear."

"You 've no right to feel any such thing!" cried Tormentilla sharply.

"I believe," he continued gloomily, disregarding her words in the contemplation of his own wretched plight, "that I *shall* put an end to everything before it 's too late. You 've no idea how perfectly awful I feel sometimes."

She was silent now, and stooped, half-blinded, to pick up the roses. *His* feelings. That was all he thought of, then. *His* misery.

"It 's a rotten, rotten world, Sandy dear."

"You know," she went on at last in a low voice, "I think Dolly *must* be fond of you, or she would—she could n't—I think perhaps you are wrong about her. You must n't, you really must n't, talk about—about putting an end to things. You 've got to go on now and be as nice to Dolly as you possibly can. She—I don't really, honestly think she could help loving you when she knows you as well as I." She dropped her flowers again, sat down suddenly on the bank at the edge of the quiet little lane, and covered her face with her hands.

"Sandy dear, don't! For God's sake, don't cry! I can't stand it. It 's too much for any man to stand, it really is."

His voice, injured, desperate, stung her.

"Let me cry," said she hoarsely. "It 's the least you can do now—to let me cry in peace."

"But *how* can I let you cry when I—— Oh, this is awful! Sandy, I shall have to take you in my arms and kiss you in a minute——"

"There is n't the slightest necessity for that, thank you," poor Tormentilla said with dignity and a wretched little sniff.

Nevertheless, he did it. Sitting beside her on the bank with his arm around her, his face pressed against her soft hair, things seemed suddenly much easier to bear, less complex, and, in fact, quite different in every way.

"I shall always love you best, Sandy."

"You must n't do anything of the kind."

"How can I help it? It 's Fate that manages these things. You 're such a good sport, so different from other girls. I 've never, never been dull when I 've been with you. And you 're such a dear, and so unselfish. You 're not a bit like her. You don't fascinate a man, and take his breath away, and——"

She raised her head from his shoulders and pushed him fiercely off.

"I know I don't," she cried. "That 's just it."

"But you 're always there, somehow. You 're so straight and jolly and true——"

"A good deal too true," she said bitterly. "Truth is always dull to a man. I read that in a book the other day. Men prefer deceit."

"Books are all lies," he said conclusively. "Don't you take to reading, Sandy dear; it makes people muddle-headed, and cynical, and analytical, and all that kind of nonsense. The less you read, it seems to me, the clearer you see things. And you don't understand me quite. These others like Dolly—they come and go, and bewitch and exasperate and always tire one in the end, but with you—well, whatever happens or goes wrong, the little quiet feeling at the back of everything, that you 're always there, makes the difference."

But this was more than she could stand.

"I 'm not always there," she said sharply. "I 'm not there now. Dolly 's there for ever and ever and ever. You can go on being fascinated by her, and having your breath taken away by her now for all your life if you like. And please, please go. Oh, I wish, *I wish,* you had n't come! Why—why did you come?"

"I did n't come to torment you, Sandy, indeed I did n't. I 'm on my way north. I had to come through Malinder, and I remembered that you were here, and turned down the by-lane to see if I could get a glimpse of you in the grounds. Indeed I did n't come on purpose."

"Oh, did n't you!" She rose at last and fumbled for the unfortunate dog-roses. "Then it 's perfectly hateful of you to tell me so. Please go back to your car. I 'm going the other way. No, you shall *not* kiss me again, never, never! What do you say? Say good-by? Good-by, then, and good luck to you, and health and happiness to the lovely br-bride."

She went hastily down the lane and turned the corner before he could speak again. Half-blinded by her tears, half-exultant at the discovery that he still cared, Tormentilla walked headlong into the arms of a portly gentleman in velveteens, who was strolling leisurely by.

It was Mr. Groves.

"Hold on a bit," said he facetiously. "Look where you 're going, will you? I 've come for them few words you were wanting, miss. Better late than never, I dare say."

VI.

Mr. Bromsgrove had entered upon his new duties with much zest. He kept his weather-eye open to some purpose, and his black list grew, and grew, and grew. He was finding out a thousand things in which his noble friend, Lord Malinder, was being deceived.

Already he had strong suspicions that Macpherson had illegitimate and lucrative ways of disposing of the garden produce; he had found out beyond doubt that the keepers were regularly making money out of the game by an arrangement with several well-known poachers to be out of the way at critical moments. There was a story of the way Lord Malinder's grooms made a sovereign out of every livery which was put down to their master's account.

It was in this larch plantation the day before the meeting of the Browning Society that he had found the pretty, dark-eyed hand-maid in white streamered cap and apron leaning over the hedge, talking to an under-keeper. Mr. Bromsgrove wore india-rubber heels, and he came up to the two very softly. This picture of idle happiness was too much for him.

"Child," he said sadly, making her jump with his unexpected appearance, "go back to your work."

"Yes, sir." The poor little thing—she was really charmingly pretty—flushed and edged shyly away.

"What is your name?"

"Minnie, sir; Minnie Clegg. Please, sir, I 've finished my work. Mrs. Gramper sent me out to get a breath of fresh air."

Mr. Bromsgrove clasped his hands behind him.

"Fresh air," said he, "is one of our most precious heritages. Why not pop on a bonnet and shawl and run over to see your mother?"

"I 'm afraid I could n't find her, sir. Mother 's dead, six months," Minnie sighed, "and father 's working at Mainwaring. He 's in the gardens there."

Mr. Bromsgrove frowned.

"In my Sunday schools," said he, "the first thing I teach the young women is to refrain from answering back."

William, the keeper, here burst into a sudden rude laugh, and choked with the effort to smother it. I don't think Mr. Bromsgrove heard him murmur that "they 'd learn a deal of Scripture at that rate." I hope he did n't.

"Do not bandy words with me," he said. "Run back to the house and ask Mrs. Gramper to send you upon an errand into the town. Some wools to match for her excellent knitting, or an order for buns at the confectioner's, but not—not this idle wandering in the byways and hedges."

Minnie, poor child, had given a frightened look at her sweetheart and fled.

At first Mr. Bromsgrove had found a helpful friend in this bailiff, who had his own good reasons for regarding the natives with a deeply disapproving eye. But they did not, I am sorry to say, agree for long. You see, when it was a matter of their backwardness in paying their rents, Mr. Bromsgrove remembered suddenly his Christian charity and intervened mildly on behalf of his sheep as a shepherd should. To do him justice——

"Poor souls," said he, "give them time, Mr. Grimes. Let us not turn these lambs roofless to the cruel world. Let us rather succor them in their hour of need."

"Rot!" said Mr. Grimes briefly, for he knew the habits of the lambs in question only too well. "Wages are good enough. Too good, I call 'em. Why, I ask you—why should they blue half of 'em in in beer?"

"Blue 'em?" asked the vicar. "In beer? Blue 'em, Mr. Grimes?"

"Spend fifty per cent. in malt liquor," Mr. Grimes explained lucidly, "if you'd rather put it that way. And there's that fool Pransom, at the Mallows Farm. Makes me grind my teeth to think of him. He's ruining his land. Never puts a bit of anything on it from one year's end to another. Farming to leave all the time, *he* is. Criminal, I call it. I'm going to put up his rent now, and *make* him leave."

"Oh, my dear Mr. Grimes!" the vicar murmured in shocked tones. "A most Christian family! Mrs. Pransom is the most helpful of all the farmers' wives with the schools and the mothers' meetings. Let me beg of you to deal gently with your weaker brethren——"

Here Mr. Grimes, who was a decent fellow enough, left him in some haste, and asked of the sympathetic hedges as he rode along was he bailiff of the estate, or was Bromsgrove. And the Vicar with a sigh went home, knowing well how difficult the path of the good man is always made for him.

One more name for his black list. So Grimes was grinding down these wretched creatures and turning them out from their happy homes like shorn lambs into the cold and cruel world, as his idle prejudices and heated fancies prompted. The Earl should know the way his tenants were being treated.

But Tormentilla, who was also possessed with a passion for good works, knew first.

It was a glorious afternoon a week later that the Vicar took his soft hat and his ebony stick with the silver top, and set out for a walk. A glimpse of poor Minnie hanging about Cherry Lane cheered him up. Minnie's solitude at this hour was only one of the fruits of his zeal.

When he met Groves later on at the turning into the Malinder road, he stopped and waved his stick in a friendly salute. Mr. Groves lifted his hat.

"I am gratified to note," said the Vicar, "that you have altered the—the beat, if I may call it so, of our young friend William. That is very well done, Mr. Groves."

Mr. Groves's manly face darkened; and then he smiled a little.

"I can't take no orders from you, sir, I'm afraid. No one but Mr. Grimes is in hauthority over me. William was doin' very well where he was. Them young birds in Cherry Gully wants a deal of watching. William's as good as a minder of the chicks as ever I had. 'E's more good at that than leading an active life, is William."

Mr. Bromsgrove sighed.

"I explained to you," he began, "the reasons I had——"

"Let young folks enjoy themselves," said Mr. Groves, pleasantly twinkling. "Live and let live. I only wish I was twenty-two again, with a young woman a-waitin' at the stile for me! We're getting no younger, Mr. Bromsgrove, sir, you and me. Youth is the spring-time of life, I heard you remark from the pulpit on Sunday, and I says to my wife when I went home to my dinner, ''Ow true!' I says. And she smiled at me so unexpected—we having had a cold dinner—that it fair softened my heart to all them young things as we see about us, sparrers, and lambs, and calves, as well as the kittens by the fireside. And I've made up my mind to let William a-be."

"Ah!" said Mr. Bromsgrove sadly. "Is that indeed so? I shall be writing to the Earl next week. I am afraid, Groves, that if you disoblige me in this way——"

"Little Miss Green 'ull perhaps say a word for me, too," Mr. Groves remarked innocently, dropping his gun and leaning on it with an amiable smile.

"Little Miss Green! Do I understand that that young person has been influencing you to set aside my wishes, then?"

"Well, she did drop an 'int that she was interested in the young woman's 'appiness," he murmured.

"Groves," said the Vicar sharply, "that young person will get into trouble. She will get *you* into trouble. She—I feel sure—she is not by any means what she pretends to be."

"She 'inted at that, too," Mr. Groves said; then evidently regretted the admission. "A fine, free, well-set-up young lady she is," he said firmly. "And I'm now going home to my tea, sir, if you please. Good afternoon."

Mr. Bromsgrove walked quickly on, his anger rising. So this girl was setting him at defiance and interfering with him. She was undermining the character of the Earl's faithful servants, was she? Well, she should see in time—she should certainly see. But he strolled sadly along the Malinder road, plunged in deep thought, with his eyes on the ground, and he made a mental addition to his black list.

So sad he was, so dispirited and disheartened, that he did n't hear a light, quick step behind him, and when a sweet, fresh, girlish voice broke upon his gloomy ear it made him start.

"I am glad," said Audrey with a pretty blush, turning to him a face as sweet, and sweeter, than the June afternoon. "I 'm going to take a little pudding from mother to poor old Miss Greebs in Lavender Lane."

"A pudding?" Mr. Bromsgrove playfully lifted the basket-lid. "Delicious! I should like to steal it. Did you—but of course you did n't make it yourself?"

"Oh, but I did," said Audrey modestly. "I feel somehow as if it is only a shallow pretense of charity to take things to the poor that are made by cook, and I told mother so. 'Dearest,' I said to her only half-an-hour ago, 'even if it is a little too solid, it was made with so many loving good wishes that I really think I ought to take it.' Don't you think so, Mr. Bromsgrove?"

"Certainly," cried he warmly. "The spirit—the spirit is everything. The will is better, far better, than the deed."

"Oh!" Audrey turned her sea-blue eyes upon him trustfully. "How wonderfully clear you make all these puzzling questions! You seem to turn night into day, you do really. I said to mother: 'Dearest, does n't Mr. Bromsgrove turn night into day?' And father said he hoped not, and that he supposed I meant that you turned light into darkness, and I told him that I meant that as well, but mother said, 'Oh, yes.'"

"I am going to visit this poor creature myself," Mr. Bromsgrove said softly. "It is my habit to drop in and say a few cheery words, quite secular very often, from time to time. I should like to carry the basket with this wonderful pudding if you will allow me to."

Audrey turned a surprised and grateful look upon him.

"Oh, will you?" she said. "It will make all the difference if you will. I 'm rather mizzy to-day, I am afraid. You will find me very dull company. But you know, don't you, that when one is unhappy, one cannot always talk cheerfully, however hard one tries to hide one's misery?"

Mr. Bromsgrove straightened his back and pulled himself together. He was beginning already to feel himself a new man.

"Misery?" he said, inclining his head to meet her troubled gaze. "Unhappy? You?"

"Oh, yes," said Audrey sorrowfully; "I am the most unhappy girl in the world."

"Tell me," said Mr. Bromsgrove gently, and indeed he wanted to know.

"Oh!" Audrey caught her breath as she spoke. "It is n't a thing one can talk about. But you—you are different. And to keep it hidden away eats into my heart and nearly kills me. Somehow I always feel that I *can't* talk about it. But you will understand. Oh, I know you will understand perfectly."

"Tell me," said Mr. Bromsgrove again. "I am sure I shall understand."

VII.

Tormentilla's new peace had deserted her again. Even in doing good to others she found no comfort now, but she meant to go through with her scheme for saving Audrey, of course, and she was n't going to let the Vicar break poor Minnie's heart. She was in love with love—even the miseries of it—and she took all lovers to her heart and cherished them. She longed to help Audrey and Michael, and even young Mrs. Standring—even Lise should come under her wing, if she would. What a pity it was that she did n't agree with her husband!

Tormentilla could n't at first see any possible way of helping *her*, but she would look out, and the time would surely come. Lise fascinated her. It is true that she could n't quite understand or approve of the callousness she had shown about poor Audrey, but she did not despair yet of getting her to help with the great scheme.

She called one afternoon to lay further siege, and it was a great blow to find her giving tea to her brother-in-law, that curious Mr. Nigel. Lise was curled up in her usual corner, but she sprang up when Tormentilla was announced and greeted her affectionately. She told her afterwards it was as if all the windows had been suddenly opened to a north wind. Tormentilla was n't quite sure, when she thought it over, whether to take this as a compliment or not.

The little, white-faced vegetarian was eating some of his favorite biscuit, and drinking milk and water.

"I have been telling Mrs. Standring," he remarked pleasantly, "that she has spoiled this cool green room with all those red roses. A few Madonna lilies, dear lady, or a pot of Spanish—not the German ones; they are too flamboyant. Red roses are—well, they are not for *nous autres*."

"I love red roses!" Tormentilla cried in amazement. "They 're my favorite flower."

"Youth, vandal youth," said Mr. Nigel pleasantly. "Red roses and waltz music and chocolate creams. They come together, and together they go. Red roses, dear child, may be pleasing to the untutored eye, but they are not art."

Lise opened her mouth to speak, then shut it suddenly.

"Dear lady," said her brother-in-law. He walked slowly up to her, retreated a few steps, then advanced again. "Do say what you were going to say."

Tormentilla laughed out with childish enjoyment.

"I expect Mrs. Standring was going to say that beauty—and art too—is in the eye of the beholder. It's one of Greenie's favorite remarks, and it's extraordinarily comforting. I think *any* flowers would look sweet in the pretty, soft spring wood kind of color of this room. Grass is green, isn't it, and leaves and things? The flowers go with them all right."

"No, no." Mr. Nigel tiptoed round Lise's tea-table, daintily picking a strawberry and dipping it into the cream in his place before he made a sandwich of it. "Nature is crude, vulgar; you will see these things in a clearer light some day. Lise, I will, if I may, go and find Jack. I didn't know he was at home, but I just caught a glimpse of him in the garden."

Lise laughed when he had gone.

"We don't quite sympathize with his views, Jack and I," she explained. "We dined with him the other night. He has a lovely house, you know, with hardly any furniture in it, and the kind of chairs that make you wonder why they are there. I never felt so much inclined to sit on the floor in my life. And the dinner! He's a vegetarian, you see, and my husband is always extremely hungry, and we neither of us could get enough to eat. Luckily I'd ordered a good supper, something solid, to be ready for us when we got in. It was a most curious meal, and you can't imagine anything less satisfying. We began with stuffed green peppers. They weren't really half bad, and we would both have eaten more of them if we'd only known what was to follow, but there was no menu and we left it all, unfortunately, to Providence. The soup was cream of green corn, but so salt that we couldn't touch it. Nigel has trained himself to eat quantities of salt, to make him live forever, though why any one should wish to do *that*—— Nut cutlets came next, with tomato sauce. They were quite—well, quite interesting, only Jack loathes tomatoes and always has from a child, and I think Nigel might have remembered it. We grew desperate, and we made so much too much of the braised bananas in our hunger and despair, that we felt quite ill all the evening and have neither of us been the same since. But one had to eat something. And Nigel doesn't drink wine, you know. Jack really felt that he needed a glass of wine with that dinner, and you can't wonder, but it was no good his saying so when there wasn't any in the house, and we drank lime juice and toast and water alternately, and he says he is never going to dine with a vegeterian again as long as he lives, although he really is devoted to his brother."

"Mr. Nigel Standring is very pale and weakly-looking, considering how beautifully simple his life is," Tormentilla said in wondering tones.

Lise laughed.

"He came to talk about Audrey," she said. "He means to marry her, you know. Though why he should want to marry such a little doll——"

"I don't think she's a doll," Tormentilla said slowly. "I've known dolls myself, and I can see the difference. A doll does n't feel. Audrey feels things *most intensely*. She often says so."

"Yes?" Lise smiled incredulously.

"And that is why she is so wretchedly unhappy now."

"I'm not sure that she would wish to be anything else. I've known Audrey longer than you have, and I'm not sure that she does n't revel in her own misery."

Tormentilla was silent. She did n't like the sneer with which Lise spoke. She did n't understand how any person who pretended to be a friend of the poor girl could be so callous. Her tender heart was stung rather cruelly.

Lise, generally so careless of the effect of her words, looked up and felt almost sorry.

"My dear, don't think that I am a hard-hearted brute. I used to be fond of Audrey, too—rather too fond perhaps. And I wept with her over her troubles last year as copiously as a friend should. But—well, you'll see for yourself some day. I'm not going to poison your mind against her."

"Of course I can see that she's rather silly," Tormentilla answered slowly. "But she's so pretty and so kind, and at present I'm rather anxious to help some one to be happy. It seems a pity that everything should go wrong for want of a helping hand," she finished wistfully.

"How do you mean to help them?"

"I have begun," the girl answered eagerly. "I've put in the thin end of the wedge. I've taken them separately and tried to buck them up."

"To what?" Lise asked curiously. She rose, shook out the soft folds of her pretty yellow dress, and crossed to the window to stand looking out on the garden with her hands behind her.

"To take their fate in their own hands."

Lise turned her head quickly.

"My good child, *what?*"

"To elope, of course."

"Elope!"

"Yes," said Tormentilla firmly. "As long as Dr. Cogwheel remains obdurate, nothing else can be done. Audrey has n't a penny of her own——"

"Audrey, then, has been painting her father as the stern parent?"

Tormentilla stared at her.

"Oh, well," Lise said sharply, "never mind that. And Michael? Does he jump at the Gretna Green suggestion?"

Tormentilla looked doubtful. "Well, no, he did n't exactly *jump* at it," she replied. "In fact, he seems to have grown almost faint-hearted with this long opposition. Poor young man, you can't wonder, can you?"

"I suppose not." Lise was rearranging some of the despised red roses. "What did he say when you put the question?"

"Oh, he seemed to see all the difficulties in a most unloverlike way. He really was terribly crushed and unenthusiastic."

"He was, was he?" murmured Lise, with a doubtful face. "And what did you say to him to cheer him up?"

"I said a good many things," Tormentilla replied frankly. "I know I impressed him, and I think I must have bucked him up a good deal more than he would admit."

"It must have been a most thrilling interview." Lise's head was still turned away. "I wish I 'd been there. You think they are in love with each other, those two?"

Tormentilla had no doubt about that.

"Oh, deeply!" cried she. "Why, the attachment has lasted for more than three years. It 's undermining Audrey's very existence. She has told me so constantly. And Mr. Kenworthy has long been in such a state of mind that it has been quite impossible for him to settle down steadily to any work. I think," she added wistfully, "that it 's rather beautiful to see two young people forgetting the whole world in their love for each other, don't you?"

Lise did n't laugh.

"You think, then," she went on in low, deliberate tones, "that Audrey is the kind of girl to consider the world well lost for love, and all that sort of thing?"

"Indeed I do. And I respect her for it more than I can say."

Lise was touched by the girl's enthusiasm.

"And you think Michael loves her—enough?" she repeated. "Enough to run off with her in this gloriously mediæval way? You think he will brave the world's opinion, suffer all his friends to call him a fortune-hunter, endure the sneers of everybody, for Audrey's sake?"

"Oh, I'm *sure* he'll do that!"

"And what about money? Michael has next to nothing, you see."

Tormentilla laughed joyously.

"That's where I come in!" she cried. "I'm going to help them there. I can lay my hands on a hundred pounds at any time, you see, quite easily, and they'll go off and have a delightful honeymoon, and then come home, fall on their knees at Dr. Cogwheel's feet—not literally, of course, but you see the idea—and confess all. They'll ask for his blessing, and he'll be so glad to see Audrey back safe and sound, that all will be forgiven."

Lise smiled.

"It's very good of you to give them the money," she said.

"Oh!" Tormentilla cried lightly, "I can always lay my hands on a hundred pounds."

"Honestly, I hope."

Lise came up to her, still laughing a little, and she bent the softened gaze of her black eyes on the girl's glowing face, and tucked two splendid Duke of Edinburgh roses into her blue tunic.

"My dear," she said with a kind little kiss, "you've won me over to your scheme, heart and soul. If it's only to please you, I'll lend a helping hand. I think—I'm almost sure that I have it in my power to help you in the most important way."

"And what way's that?" Tormentilla asked, with frank curiosity.

Lise shook her head, so, much cheered, Tormentilla went home, but before she got in something happened to damp her spirits considerably, even to infuriate her.

Now, there is a wooden stile leading from the plantation into Cherry Gully, and, sitting on the lower step of the stile, her face hidden in her apron, she found poor Minnie once more, plunged evidently into an even deeper depth of gloomy despair.

"What on earth is it now?" she asked in a tone of quiet exasperation, for indeed she thought she had settled this business satisfactorily for once and all.

"It's 'im," said Minnie hysterically.

"Him?"

"Yes—the minister, miss. He wishes me to be transferred to Greenrose. Them was his very words to Mrs. Gramper. He objects to me and William walking out. He says we're too young, and ought to turn our minds to other things for years before we think of such nonsense. I only want William. I don't want no other things. He passed a lot of remarks to Mrs. Gramper, and upset her dreadful. Why can't he let us alone?"

"Upon my word," Tormentilla cried wrathfully, "this is too much! Minnie, don't be a little duffer. You can't get the moon by sitting down and howling for it. I never saw such a girl to cry in my life. Cheer up, and don't worry about Mr. Bromsgrove. I 'll deal with him."

But Minnie shook her head sorrowfully.

"He 's a very determined gentleman," she said, "and he says he takes a fatherly interest in William and me. I 'm sure I don't want no father but my own, and as often as not he 's been more 'n mother and me could manage. I don't doubt as it 's all for our good. But—but—I can't get along without 'im nohow, and he can't get along without me. And we can't help it, can we, miss, if we are so young? I 'm nineteen past. Mother were married when she was seventeen. Why can't he let us alone?"

"He shall let you alone," said Tormentilla grimly.

Behind the Cogwheels' garden a long apple orchard lay, and behind the apple orchard a little weedy lane which led only to a field of meadow grass still lying uncut.

One afternoon the same week Audrey put on a hat—a simple garden hat only, made like a Victorian bonnet, with pale pink roses under the brim and chiffon strings—and slipped across the orchard to keep an appointment with her own true love, Michael Kenworthy. To do her justice, it was the first for a long time, and, as usual—or, rather, as had frequently happened—he kept her waiting.

When he did come it was with a gloomy mien and laggard step. Audrey was leaning against the stile, holding her bonnet-strings with either hand, like a village maid waiting for her shepherd boy, and the face she held up for his kiss was so young and fresh and lovely that his heavy heart warmed, in spite of itself. She took one or two of the flowers from her sash—they were a present from Nigel Standring—and put them in his coat with a smile.

"Thanks awfully," he said. "They 're very pretty. What d' you call them?"

"Oh, Michael! Have you forgotten already?"

He laughed uneasily, evidently trying to rack his brains for the memory which had certainly escaped him.

"Don't you remember," the girl said softly, touching the sweet fluffy heads tenderly with a little pink finger, "that sweet sultan is your favorite flower? Why should I wear them indeed—why should I wear any flowers when I 'm so unhappy, except that it reminds me of you?"

"Does it really?" He looked pleased. "I 'd forgotten that I said that. Are these sweet sultan? I thought somehow that roses, red roses, had always been my favorites. They 're so different, are n't they?—so far above all other flowers. A deep red rose in full bloom is like—it 's—oh, it 's life and love and happiness and June and youth and—oh, everything worth having, don't you think?"

"Oh, yes!" Audrey's eyes were starry indeed as she raised them to his. "And it 's so ridiculous to say that they are crude, is n't it? How wonderfully you put it! But then, no one ever understands or puts things as you do."

The darkening load of care on Michael's young brow seemed to lift a little, but he steeled himself and a half-formed resolve in his soul spurred him on.

"Audrey dear," he said, "I asked you to meet me to-day because I wanted to speak to you seriously. I want to say something which may sound even brutal to you, but you are so young—so young and ignorant of the world, and I am a man, with a man's knowledge, and I 've come to the conclusion that it 's my duty to speak frankly to you."

How could he go on when he met that blue alarmed gaze?

"I 've been a selfish brute," said he, looking away from it. "I 've been behaving like a mean hound, because I loved you."

"*Loved* me? Oh, Michael!"

"Because I love you," he amended hastily, after a quick side-glance. "But I 've come to my senses at last, thank God!"

"Oh, Michael," she cried in distress, "I 'm so *sorry*."

"No," said he sadly; "don't be sorry. We 've had our dream, dear, and we must wake up."

"Oh, Michael! But why?"

He looked with a hunted glance up the green lane.

"Because I am ruining your life," said he. "And it is n't fair. You ought to marry a rich man. You will never be allowed to marry me. Your father will never give his darling to the black sheep, the ne'er-do-weel, the rolling stone, the vagabond."

He lingered over his speech as if he loved it. He dwelt upon these epithets as if he gloried in them.

"Oh!" Audrey cried. "He never called you any of those dreadful things. He never once called you anything worse than ineligible. And mother—the expression mother always uses is 'unfortunate.' 'An unfortunate youth,' she says you are. How can you be so unjust to them, so cruel to me?"

"They are right," said Michael cheerfully. "And I deserve it. I deserve that, and more. But I have still some principles left. I have still some glimmering notions of right and wrong, and the time has come for me to prove it."

"Oh, Michael! What terrible things you do say! You never,

never said any of these dreadful things about yourself to me before. *How* you have changed!"

"I must give you up, Audrey."

"Oh!" She looked very much puzzled. "But you did that long ago. And so did I. We were obliged to, were n't we? And we were obliged for the sake of others to meet as friends before the world. We decided that, too, years ago. There's nothing new in that, is there, dear?"

Michael shook his head firmly.

"We must go through with the thing thoroughly to the bitter end," said he. "We must meet no more. You must try to forget me."

"Oh, Michael! When you know you would n't like it if I did!"

"Like it?" said Michael hastily. "Does the criminal like the hangman's noose? Does the ox like the butcher's knife? But I must do it, dear, and you must help me. You must learn to turn a laughing face to the world, and some day, years hence, you will marry some sensible, prosperous, plodding person and be calmly contented—if not happy."

"Oh, Michael, what an unspeakably unattractive idea!" Audrey cried, with much real distress in her voice. "And what a pity to spoil everything when it's all so settled and comfortable!"

"Comfortable? You find it comfortable, Audrey—this racking misery of indecision, this hopeless, fretting suspense? This——"

"Oh, not comfortable, of course," she amended hurriedly. "But resigned, Michael—surely we are both more *resigned?*"

He turned with a start and eyed her curiously, but she met his gray eyes with her innocent, serious gaze and disarmed him.

"You must n't give me up," she said wistfully. "I want to know that you are near me; to feel sure of your love for ever and ever and ever. Don't *you?*"

Michael in despair turned away again.

"Everything is so peaceful," she said softly. "We are friends, dear, as well as lovers, and you are mine. If I want you, you are there. It is—it is the greatest joy and comfort to me sometimes to feel that I have you to turn to, whatever happens. And when I think of your great love, how you have never for an instant swerved in your allegiance since the day we met—it helps me to bear my hidden sorrow almost bravely."

She shot a quick look at him as she said this, and he, sharply turning again to look at her, met it with a faintly heightened color.

"You think too highly of me," he murmured.

"Oh, no! I could n't do that. And even if we *are* separated so cruelly, we still in our hearts cling to each other, don't we?" Audrey pursued earnestly.

"I suppose so," said he with a sigh.

"We can't help being constant. It's our misfortune, not our fault, that we love like this. Constancy isn't a virtue, Michael; it's only a folly. It's not human nature to be constant, you see, but we are different, you and I, and we must—we must just dree our weird. You aren't like other men, dear."

Michael was silent. As if he didn't know that!

"And I'm afraid," she faltered, with a catch in her breath, "that I am not quite like other girls."

"No"—Michael spoke with conviction. "You certainly aren't."

VIII.

Tormentilla, who was gradually gathering the fates of these lovers into the hollow of her capable brown hands, felt that it was a great thing to be so sure of Lise, and a great surprise to find that she had changed so quickly. She had seemed so indifferent before, perhaps a little amused, and at certain distressing and disconcerting moments almost jeering. But there was something in her manner, now that she had at last surrendered, which brought conviction and confidence.

"There's something almost alluring," Tormentilla told herself, "in the way she suddenly becomes nice. Her eyes get so soft and melting, and she puts her funny little head on one side and looks at you so sweetly and kindly, that you feel you would do anything in the world for her. And yet good, too. Why does everybody say such horrid things about her? They say she leads her husband a dog's life. I'm sure he looks calm and contented enough."

She was walking along towards Malinder, her hat pushed back because of the heat, and suddenly she heard behind her the sharp hoot of a motor. And common as they were on that road, used to them as she had been for years, they had played such a big part in last summer's tragedy that even now the warning note struck hard at her silly heart. Last year it had always meant, in quiet, sleepy Greenrose, that her lover had rushed over from London to see her. Now—

"Sandy!"

The scarlet motor drew up beside her, and he jumped out. She had a better control of herself this time.

"You are simply wicked to come again," she said, trying to hide the shining welcome of her eyes.

He laughed ruefully as he tore his thick glove off.

"I was afraid you'd forget me," he said, "and that's the truth. You said before that you were nearly forgetting me, and I couldn't stand it. The thought was hateful to me. I had to come over. Sandy—can't I come and see you sometimes if I treat you like a brother?"

She laughed reluctantly, but her beating heart warned her.

"I won't torment you. But I want to know what you 're doing. I want to know how you pass your days out here in the wilds. I told Dolly I was coming to see how you were getting on, and she did n't mind a bit."

"What did she say?" Tormentilla asked curiously.

He looked thoughtful.

"Oh, she laughed and said, 'Don't spoil the child and make her ill with chocolates.' I had to bring some token of brotherly affection after that, had n't I?"

He dived into the car and brought out a huge brown packet. Tormentilla's eyes lit up. All the joys of last summer seemed to be coming back to her, and yet—

"It is n't right," she said slowly. "It 's all wrong. We don't want to be brothers to each other."

"I want to be friends with you," he insisted, with a little laugh. "Come for a run with me, Sandy, for the sake of old times. I 'll behave irreproachably. I am afraid you are consoling yourself. Who was it you were talking to when I found you? I must know exactly what you are doing with yourself all the time."

Tormentilla hesitated. Her conscience warned her fiercely.

"You said you were employed in good works. Can't I help? Don't let any one else help you. I can't bear it."

His ruddy, beaming face disarmed her, his jolly, pleased, boyish voice gave her confidence and raised her spirits to a feverish pitch.

"That young man was a perfect stranger to me ten minutes before you came," she said obscurely, "and I am interested in a scheme—a scheme that concerns him. I wonder if you could help him? He wants help badly."

"How?" His face showed his deep distrust of anything connected with a young man.

"He has never had a chance. He wants some one to take him up."

"Can't he get a policeman to do it? Why does n't he break a shop-window or smash a lamp?"

She giggled with a quick access of cheerfulness.

"You 're as witty as ever!" said she. She looked at him doubtfully. "If I thought you would be useful, it might perhaps be justifiable to go with you."

"I 'm sure to be useful. Try me."

"The end sometimes justifies the means," she murmured with a last effort to deaden that stupid little voice and stop it throwing cold water on this entrancing suggestion.

He laughed triumphantly.

"Jump in, Sandy. I 've got a coat of Dolly's that she left in the car yesterday. You 'll be as warm as toast. Don't waste the shining hours."

Tormentilla sprang in with a defiant air, and scrambled into the white coat. She found a veil in the pocket, and tied it over her hat.

"Let 's see how fast she 'll go!" she cried. "She 's a Rosinante, is n't she, this one? As soon as we 're out of the town we 'll give her her head, won't we? You 'll be pulled up, but you can always pay afterwards."

"Oh, yes, one can always pay afterwards," said he cheerfully. "By Jove! it *is* good to be alive to-day."

When Lise had once made up her mind to help Tormentilla with her daring plot for the happiness of the two lovers, she felt it rather a relief than otherwise. Michael was a kind, affectionate boy. She had found him useful and companionable, and since he had given up wailing over his lost love, he had n't bored her at all. But she could not conceal from herself that the aspect of the case was now changing rapidly, and her experience led her to foresee discomfort for herself, and displeasure for Jack. Her sympathy and patience for the love-lorn youth were going to be ill-rewarded if she was n't very careful, and she did n't want to annoy Jack. So she set her wits to work as to ways and means of helping the enthusiastic Tormentilla, and came to the conclusion that the best thing she could do was to speak kindly and firmly to the young man Michael. So she wrote a little note in her scrawling, untidy hand asking him to come and see her at home when both Nigel and Jack had a committee meeting which they were bound to attend, and spent the half hour before he was due leoparding, as Jack called it, up and down her pretty drawing-room. Against the deep, soft, mossy green of the carpets and curtains, Lise looked, as Michael told her when he came in, exactly like a nymph or a dryad or something in a wood.

"I *am* rather like something in a wood," she admitted with a laugh, as she held out her hand. "I 'm a young woman in a dilemma, and I want to talk to you, Michael, very seriously indeed."

Michael's face fell.

"I do wish you would n't," said he, "not to-day, anyhow."

"To-day," said Lise firmly, clasping her hands round her knee and watching him intently.

He set his teeth.

"Look here, Mrs. Standring," he said desperately, "I 'd rather you 'd talk about something else, I would really. It is—well—*painful*, you see, horribly painful, to have the past raked up just now. I want to try to forget what I have suffered. I can sometimes, especially when I 'm with you, lay it aside and be almost—almost cheerful."

"I see; Audrey, then, is the dreadful memory?" she asked maliciously.

"You are laughing at me. I meant that last terrible interview with her father, of course, and the way he insulted me; but it is n't like you to laugh at me, Mrs. Standring."

"I sometimes think it would have been better if I 'd always laughed at you," Lise remarked coolly. "It might have spurred you on."

"But I don't understand you." Indeed he did n't, and the look of pained surprise on his face deepened.

"I might have encouraged you to behave like a man."

Her tone, cold, cutting, indifferent, stung him. The contrast between this new cruelty and her old kindness and sympathy seemed almost more than he could bear. He did n't speak, but gazed at her with amazed horror.

"I don't believe in wrapping up my words," she went on, "or in breaking things gently or in any kind of diplomacy in a case like this. To put it simply, I think it 's time you gave up behaving like a coward, and did something. Don't you?"

She smiled at him suddenly as she asked the question, and her smile left him more bewildered than her extraordinary remarks.

"For two years—or say a year and a half—you have been wringing your hands and moaning at fate, you and Audrey, and doing absolutely nothing at all to further your wishes. Have n't you?"

She smiled again.

"What *could* we have done?" Michael asked in a low voice.

"What *could n't* you have done?"

Lise smiled coolly.

"It is n't fair," the poor boy cried hotly—"it is n't fair of you to say such things. You 've never spoken to me like this before. If you felt so—so strongly about it, why did you go on listening to me, and sympathizing all the time, and agreeing—yes, agreeing, Mrs. Standring—that Fate *was* against us, and nothing *could* be done?"

"I have n't the slightest idea," said Lise calmly. "I suppose I never thought it over seriously. I just said what you wanted me to say, because I did n't like to see you so wretched. The real issue did n't seem to matter, if I could manage to cheer you up for the moment, and that 's the solid truth."

It was.

"For the first time," she pursued softly, "I 've thought the matter over calmly in all its bearings, and I 'm quite convinced that the best thing you can do now is to lose no more time, but——" She stopped and laughed.

"What?" His tone was full of sullen apprehension.

"Arm yourself cap-a-pie, mount your gallant gray, pick the girl up, and ride off with her. One word at her side, and one voice in her ear—I forgot the exact words, but the end of it was 'They'll have fleet steeds that follow,' and so they would if you borrowed our new touring-car, would n't they? But you've heard of young Lochinvar before, and I need n't enter into any more explanations. Do as they did in the golden youth of the world, and carry off your bride. Take the first turning to Gretna Green and——"

"You must be mad!" said poor Michael. "And what do you all mean by throwing the detestable habits of the abominable past in my face like this? The world is past its golden youth now, and grown sensible, and I'm glad of it."

"Not at all," said Lise composedly. "You love Audrey—passionately, deeply, unswervingly. You've often told me so. She loves you—devotedly, in the same unquestionable way. She's often told me that. She's told quite a number of people that. Run off with her like a brave knight of old. Don't stand any nonsense from mercenary parents or vegetarian rivals."

"You talk like a book." The disgust in his tone made her laugh at him, but his manner of receiving her advice showed her that she had changed her tone with him only just in time. She had been playing with fire. Of course she had suspected it for some time, and even if it was only a slow smouldering, at best a feeble, flickering flame, it was quite time it was put out with a little cold water. And exposed to Audrey's winning ways—oh, he would soon return to his allegiance. She was giving the best possible advice.

"Even to buy chain-armor and a gallant gray," Michael remarked slowly, "one requires crowns—or ducats or whatever you use to buy the silly things with. You know that I have n't the money for such —such manliness."

"Work!" said Lise unfeelingly. "Get something to do, and stick to it. It's time you earned your own living instead of dreaming all day about your wrongs. Oh, I've no patience with you!"

Michael rose in dignified displeasure.

"I've noticed that," he said sadly, "and perhaps I'd better go. I don't wonder that I've exhausted your patience, Mrs. Standring. You've been very good to me, and I won't trespass on your kindness any longer. But"—his voice broke a little—"that *you* should speak to me like this! That *you* should tell me to go and work!"

"It's time some one told you." Lise spoke hastily and cruelly, but at the sight of the tears standing in his eyes, she softened a little to him. Perhaps she had been rather too fierce.

"Sit down again, Michael," she said more gently. "I know I'm a nasty old thing, but I really do want you to listen to me. My dear boy, don't—now, don't go off in a rage with your best friend."

He sat down again.

"I've noticed," said he gloomily, "that people always call themselves your best friend when they want to say something especially unkind. But go on—don't spare me; my back's broad enough."

"Quite," Lise admitted, with an admiring glance. He really was a finely built young fellow, and *very* good at games.

"You see," said she quietly, "I want you to marry Audrey."

He drew a deep breath.

"You want me to marry—Audrey! You! My God! what a terrible world it is!"

"On the contrary," said Lise, with a little nervous laugh, "it's a very lovely world. Look at the sun on those sweet peas over there, and listen to that cock thrush in the copper beech. And pray, why should n't I want you to marry the girl you love?"

Michael said nothing. What indeed could he say, except perhaps in his breath a private word concerning the thrush or the sweet peas?

"Marriage," said Lise gravely, "is a blessed state. Some one in the Bible or somewhere else said it, so it must be true. I want you to be as happy—I want all my friends to be as happy as——"

"Well?" he asked gloomily.

"As I am." Lise spoke lightly. "My good boy, don't look so glum. You can borrow the money for the desperate first step, and then throw yourself gracefully on the mercy of the hard-hearted parent. Or, rather, let Audrey do that. She'll manage it better. Dr. Cogwheel is very rich indeed, I believe. His profession—but there, you know as well as I do that it's only a pleasant hobby to him, and that his assistants do all the work. He does n't spend a sixth part of his income—Jack says he's sure he does n't. And he adores Audrey. Even if he did n't, do you suppose her mother would let her want? Not she. It only wants one bold step, and your happiness is insured for life."

Michael buried his face in his hands, so his joy at the prospect was hidden from Lise.

"Cheer up," she said, "for, you see, as well as having Audrey with you for ever and ever, which was once your only dream of happiness—you've often said so—your future will be assured; and you must admit, my dear boy, that your present prospects are, to put it as mildly as possible, precarious."

He looked up fiercely.

"I'm not a fortune-hunter!" he cried. "Believe anything else of me, but don't believe that. Money is nothing to me—nothing."

"But Audrey is. You 'd have her into the bargain to make up for the injury to your pride involved in the spending of her money."

Her light tone exasperated him; made him desperate; and he rose and laid his hand on the back of his chair with a white face.

"I 'm going to tell you the truth," he said, and Lise too grew pale at the sight of his changed manner. She had gone too far. She had been tactless, scornful, half in fun all the time. Instead of helping Tormentilla, she had hindered her; or, rather, she *would* have hindered her if she did n't quickly undo her work. And besides that, if she once let Michael say what he was going to say——

"Michael," she said slowly, raising her black eyes to his with an imploring sadness, which bewildered him even more than her unkindness had done, "I 'm afraid I have not been quite frank with you. I have a selfish reason for what I ask. Don't you see that it might be very good for *me* if you married Audrey?"

"Good! For you? Good for *you,* Mrs. Standring?"

"Yes. Good for me."

She looked at him steadily.

"I should like to be able to tell my husband that you were married," she said gravely. It had suddenly occurred to her that she could n't do better than treat him with perfect honesty and sincerity.

But Michael's face changed. He colored a little, and his moody eyes lit up.

Lise went on, carefully choosing her words.

"My husband does not approve of your friendship with me," she said. "He does not believe in your love for Audrey. He says you have got over it. He says that you don't come here to get my *sympathy,* but because you——"

She stopped suddenly.

He came and sat down in the other corner of the window-seat.

"What—what can you mean?" he asked eagerly.

"He says you come to see *me.*" Lise stopped again, half-frightened, for even now she might only have let loose the flood-gates.

"Is he—he is n't *jealous* of me, Mrs. Standring?" His awed tone allayed the anger his words would have aroused.

"Jealous! Oh no! Jack 's never jealous. He is so absolutely sure of my love, you see. It is his perfect confidence and trust in me that makes our home such a happy one. Absolute certainty of a person's unswerving affection always makes a home happy, Michael, remember that. But he says it is cruel of me to allow you to come so often. He says it is n't fair to you."

"Cruel? Not fair? How?" His face fell at her words, and Lise saw that she was going the right way to work at last.

"Yes. He says I am playing with your young affections; that I am leading you on, to put it vulgarly. He says I am treating you as the cat treats the mouse. He says I am like a lighted candle, and that you are one of the silly moths. He laughs at you for allowing yourself to be taken in by my wiles, but, all the same, he likes you, and he does n't want you to singe your wings."

"Good heavens!" The fury in his face cheered her up tremendously. This was all right.

"Of course it's all the most absurd nonsense," Lise pursued lightly, "and I often tell him so. You love Audrey devotedly—as devotedly as she loves you—while as for me, I simply glory in your constancy. It's so unusual in a man, you see, and so fine of you to allow yourself to be original. It's the quality I most desire, and that is why I have always looked up to you so in every way."

Michael straightened his shoulders, and his anger began slowly to melt away under the warm, affectionate look she gave him then.

"You are n't the kind of man to fall in love with a woman who adores her husband," she proceeded adroitly, "a woman past her first youth." (Lise was twenty-two.) "You are too strong and manly and reliable for such weak, degenerate nonsense. And it's because I want to show Jack that I'm right when I explain to him what a fine character you really have, that I've been taunting you in this apparently heartless way. I want to go on being proud of my friend. I want him to take his life in his own hands and model it to his own will. You are n't the man to sit down and cry for the moon. You've only been *pretending* to do it, because you were afraid of being selfish and plunging Audrey into poverty. But now is the time for you to strike, and strike boldly."

The deluded young man, carried away by her enthusiasm and touched by her trusting confidence in his inherent nobility, flushed as he rose, and gave her his hand on it with a reckless little laugh.

"By George!" said he. "You've made me feel a new man. There's no one like you for putting new heart into a chap. I believe you are right, after all."

"I know I am," Lise answered, with a little sigh.

IX.

It was young Osgood who shot the bolt from the blue. He had just come down from Oxford, and was not as well versed in the latest gossip as might afterwards be expected of him.

"What a fortunate thing it is for Micky Kenworthy," he remarked to Mrs. Cogwheel in a distinctly envious tone. "Some men do fall on their feet, and no mistake. There's that chap been hanging about, waiting for the heavens to fall, as a ripe plum to drop into his mouth, and, by George! it *has* dropped."

Dr. Cogwheel raised his head with ill-concealed interest.

"A plum?" said he. "Young Kenworthy? How?"

"I don't know. I wish I did." Harry Osgood laughed ruefully. "He's just got an appointment at some place in the Midlands. The sort of thing a decent, hard-working man might work and wait for ten years, and then not get."

Mr. Bromsgrove asked pleasantly what the new post could possibly be for which young Kenworthy was fitted.

"Some kind of a land steward or agent, I believe," Osgood said. "An assistant, merely to carry out the orders of the present competent man. He's to get five hundred a year for his job. Just riding round and making remarks on the crops and the weather when the air is too damp for his chief, who happens to be rheumatic. He won't have to do any head-work at all. Merely physical exertion of the lightest kind. Man need n't use his brains from one year's end to another unless he likes it. The post's ideal."

Audrey's eyes were on the edge of her plate, but she said nothing.

"Ah!" Mr. Bromsgrove murmured softly and sadly. "This is good news for you, dear child."

"That he is going away?" She raised her innocent eyes. "Oh, how can you?"

"That his prospects are so good."

"You think he *will* go, then, and leave me?"

"Only for a time," he answered playfully. "And then I shall be called upon to officiate at a pleasing ceremony. If," he continued gently, "to some amongst us the ceremony proves heart-breaking, who is to know it."

"Don't," said Audrey gently. "I shall, of course. I wonder if it's true. I wonder if he will accept it."

"Well, that's the queer part of it," Osgood admitted. "He's most rum about it. I was with him when the offer came. It's from the secretary of the Duke of Lavendale, and it's a genuine thing undoubtedly. But Kenworthy flung it across the room when he'd read it, and said he wished people would mind their own business. He said——" Osgood stopped suddenly.

"What did he say?" Miss Cotton asked eagerly.

Audrey's eyes were still hidden by her lashes.

"He said several things," the young man replied hastily. "I left him in a most extraordinary frame of mind, I can tell you. But I think he will accept it. He seemed to regard it as a grim duty. Five hundred a year and nothing to do but smack fat cattle on the back, and pot at rabbits. Duty! Rum idea."

"Now, if he'd actually been looking for work"—Mrs. Flanelle carried on the conversation in wondering tones—"he might *never* have found it. How like life this is!"

"It's just like the young man who starved in a garret," said Miss Cotton vaguely. "He lived on crusts and drank water rather than degrade himself by doing something quite paying and dull, and sold every rag and bone he had. Then in despair he starved, and starved, and starved until——"

"Yes?" said Lise kindly.

"Until at last, in an agony of mind, he swallowed his better feelings and wrote the required pot-boiler. After that, of course, his fortune was made. Life is so bitter, is n't it? But the cases are quite dissimilar, for I'm sure Mr. Kenworthy has never done anything of the kind."

"Darling, was n't I reading something aloud to you about the Duke of Lavendale the other day?" Mrs. Cogwheel turned to Audrey thoughtfully. "What could it have been?"

Audrey smiled back at her with bright affection.

"Oh, yes, dearest. In the *Queen*. He's engaged, you know, to Lady Doreen Greenrose. She's the third daughter of our Lord Malinder, of course. It's a most romantic engagement. They've loved each other from the very cradle, and all the things are being made in Paris, except the Irish lace, and she's having that made in Ireland simply because the Duke has estates there. It's so sweet of her, is n't it, to think of the poor lace-workers with their cushions at the cottage-door?" She turned to Mrs. Hay with her pretty smile. "I said to mother at the time, did n't I, darling?—'Dearest,' I said, 'only a really noble nature would have thought of that at such a time!' Father asked in his sceptical way, 'Where else could it come from?' but mother thought as I did. She did really."

"I wonder why they never come to Malinder," Miss Gee said bitterly. "I think they ought to, if it's only to open things and show themselves. But they only come to shoot, and then none of the ladies are with them, and men, however exalted in rank, are never much to look at."

"The other day," remarked Mrs. Hay, "I heard Miss Green say that she had met Lady Alexandra, the youngest one. She liked *her*, she said."

"At a bazaar, no doubt," Miss Gee suggested. "These great ladies are civil to almost any one when it's for a good object. Martyrs to the cause, they consider it. There's nothing narrow about our aristocracy."

"Well, when you come to think of it in its true light," Mrs. Flanelle remarked dreamily, "they can be but ordinary flesh and blood, can they?"

"I thought Lady Alexandra was still, figuratively speaking, in the school-room," Mrs. Cogwheel said doubtfully. "In Provence, somewhere, with governess and tutors. Naturally, not at a common convent school. Somewhere near Arles. Or is it Avignon? One of those old-world towns, I feel sure. I hear she is the plain one, but still—— And I dare say she's nice. They very often are. Like the ugly duckling. Audrey used to love the story of the ugly duckling when she was a child—did n't you, dear?"

It really was a wonderfully interesting dinner party for Malinder, and Lise took Audrey aside in the drawing-room, and lost no time in carrying on the campaign.

"I'm so glad, dear," she said smoothly, "that the barriers are to be removed at last."

Audrey shook her head.

"It won't be any good," she said sadly. "Father is so prudent. He will insist upon waiting to see if Michael keeps the post. I know he will. And Michael won't keep it. He never does. You must n't let me dwell upon it, Lise. Don't let me live in a false paradise. I am learning to bear it and be resigned. Don't fill me with new hopes only to be dashed again."

"You have n't much faith in your lover," Lise said, with a curious quick look at her. "Are you getting over your—dream?"

Audrey sighed reproachfully.

"I don't change," said she sadly. "I only wish I did. Constancy is n't a virtue; it's only a folly. It is n't human nature to be constant, but, then, I'm different, I suppose. One learns to see things as they really are when one is unhappy."

"Audrey!" Lise came close up to her and tucked her hand under the girl's round arm. "If Michael came like a bold knight of old and carried you off willy nilly to Gretna Green, what would you do?"

Audrey's eyes lit up with answering enthusiasm.

"I should *love* it!" she cried. "But he never will."

"You would n't listen to your conscience then?"

The girl's eyes fell.

"I could n't if I were carried off by *force*," she said. "It would n't be my fault then, would it? I often say to mother, what a pity it is that we don't live in the good old days! And father says he likes glass in the windows, and hot and cold water laid on, and electric light. He's hopelessly modern, I am afraid, but mother said, 'Oh, yes.'"

"And you would n't scold your bold knight afterwards when he could n't buy cloth of gold and diamonds for you? You'd forgive the daring lover?"

"Oh, one likes a man to be a man," said Audrey, with true womanly feeling.

And then Lise enlarged upon her subject.

Tormentilla began to glow with the feeling that success was almost inevitable. Here was Michael fixed up with a comfortable and lazy job, consenting like a lamb to the plans for his welfare; not enthusiastically, certainly, but then he never was enthusiastic; there was Audrey on the verge of consent, frankly acknowledging already that the idea charmed her; that it would break her heart to let him go away without her; and there was Lise a staunch ally, gallantly keeping them both up to the scratch. All her plans were going well. Mr. Bromsgrove had had the young keeper William removed to Greenrose, it is true, but that in itself had given her a triumph, for she had agreed with Groves that it was best for him to be out of the Vicar's reach, and had persuaded Mrs. Gramper to arrange with the housekeeper at Greenrose, who was even more of a comfortable old dear than she herself, to take Minnie as a still-room maid. And Mrs. Banks loved a love story almost as much as Tormentilla did, so those two would be happy, and Tormentilla told herself that if they were true to each other a little longer, she would take care that their love story had a happy ending. William should be promoted, or at least his wages raised, and she herself would give away the happy bride.

They had not yet fixed the date of the elopement.

Audrey, however, was already buying quantities of new clothes on the strength of it, to her mother's delight. The fact that her daughter was shaking off her gloom, and taking a rational girlish interest in the really important matters of life, cheered her immensely, and she said as much to Lise, who would, of course, understand how thankful she and the child's father would be to see her happily settled with Nigel's excellent income.

"We are so glad young Kenworthy will be out of the way," the good mother went on, "although I am afraid he is n't more likely to keep this post than any of the others, even if it *has* fallen so miraculously from the skies."

"You think not?" said Lise amiably, but afterwards, when she talked to Tormentilla about it, she confessed that she had misjudged Audrey. "I thought I understood her," she said doubtfully. "I thought she *would* take Nigel in the end."

"But you said that you knew she would never swallow the nuts and beans," Tormentilla reminded her. "And the rational dress, did n't you?"

"I know I said that. But what I really thought was that she would keep him dancing on a string till he was driven to such a state of desperation that she could make any conditions. Audrey 's very clever, you know. And yet now she seems quite happy at the idea of this romantic, runaway love-match. She can't be the mercenary little wretch I thought her, after all."

"I never thought she was *mercenary!*" Tormentilla cried warmly. "She 's too simple and loving and gentle to think of money. I have sometimes thought her rather silly, and hated myself for being so unkind and uncharitable. She can't be really silly, you know, or she would n't have this depth of feeling, this true, disinterested love for a penniless lover."

"No-o," Lise admitted thoughtfully. "I give her up. She 's certainly extraordinarily sweet-tempered. I should n't wonder if they *were* very happy, after all."

Tormentilla looked puzzled. A happy life was bound to follow, she had always supposed, on a love-match. No novel that she had ever been allowed to read had so much as hinted at anything else, but then, she had n't had time for much novel-reading, and Greenie and her mother had generally chosen her fiction for her.

"Who is this friend of yours who is to lend them his motor for the honeymoon, and help us so generously with the dark scheme?" Lise asked curiously. Tormentilla hesitated. It would n't do to tell the truth, she supposed, if——

"His name 's John Edward," she said at last, and this was quite true. "He 's quite pleased to help. He 's a very old friend."

"I see." Lise asked no more.

Tormentilla would have liked to take Miss Green into her confidence, but she felt somehow that it would n't do at all. There was something about the way Greenie had been brought up that prevented her from seeing things in a true light. There was a Middle Victorian atmosphere about her which thwarted her judgment in some curious way. She was compelled reluctantly to admit that Greenie was better left in the dark. And I think she was wise.

It was a week before she saw John Edward again, and then she met him tearing boldly up the drive to call on Miss Green with a message from Tormentilla's mother.

"She won't approve of you for coming," said Tormentilla quietly. "You 'd better not say you 've seen me. She regards you as an unprincipled scoundrel."

"So I am. One of the worst," he admitted with obvious satisfaction.

"Is it a real message from mother, or are you pretending?"

"Pretending," he confessed with a smile. "Sandy, I wanted to talk over our plans. I waited an hour the day before yesterday and never got a glimpse of you. Something *had* to be done."

"You know you ought n't to come."

He looked injured.

"You don't want my help in the Gretna Green scheme any longer, then?"

"I—we can't settle anything yet. There 's nothing to say," she cried recklessly, as she looked up and met his delighted gaze. "I shall only see you once or twice before you belong to Dolly."

He groaned.

"It 's unspeakable, Sandy, that you should be exiled in this trumpery little country town—shut out of all the fun. You ought to have no end of a time. Girls seem to, as a rule."

"Plain girls?" she inquired meekly.

"Plain!" He colored hotly. "You 're not plain. You 're better than pretty, with your jolly brown hair, and clear eyes, and the sporting way you take things."

She grinned at him; her own particular, wide, infectious grin.

"Don't try to pay me compliments," she said. "You can't. I never had more than one good point. I 'm a good sport. You always said I was a good sport, and I 've given up whining now for good. I 'm going to be a sportsman and set my teeth, and go through everything. You see, one can be a sportsman in everything else but one's silly feelings, and then get bowled over before one knows it. There was n't anything in my previous experience which helped me to bear —what—what happened last year."

He said something which she did n't hear, and it occurred to her that she was hardly behaving in a considerate manner to him in thus raking up these painful memories.

"Greenie says," she remarked cheerfully, "that life is n't one throw of the dice for me, and she 's very wise, though it is n't exactly the way one would expect her to put it. So I have given up crying for the moon, and I am *determined* to enjoy my life, in spite of fate."

He looked hurt. Indeed, she had expressed her resolve as frankly before him as if he had been a callous stranger. You can be too frank sometimes, he admitted to himself.

"I 'm doing my best," said Tormentilla cheerfully, "to look upon you in the light of a brother-in-law. I am carefully dwelling upon your—your worst qualities, and *especially* your *ludicrous* qualities. I am trying to remember every occasion on which you have looked ridiculous, and you would be surprised to know what a lot there are. It 's an enormous help, because you can't feel sentimental about a person for long, if you persistently study the comic side of his character, can you?" she asked earnestly.

"I suppose not," he replied shortly. He was not pleased. "I did n't know I was such a spectacle for mirth."

"Oh, but you are n't!" she cried in dismay. "Don't you see that it 's all for my good that I 'm trying to believe that you are? But there was the time Ladylove threw you into the duck pond in Calder Meadow, and the way you wear your straw hats on one side, and the kind of ties you used to have before Dolly took you in hand, and the dreadful checks you used to wear, and——"

"You are n't very kind to me to-day, Sandy." His tone of reproach cut her like a knife. He turned away, and threw back his rug, preparing to leave her. "Dolly has been flirting all the week," he said bitterly, "with a Serene Highness or something who came over here for the Royal Christening. He 's fat and greasy and more unattractive than you would believe possible. She can't see anything in him. I think she must be trying to make me jealous. She 's succeeded, at least, in making me ridiculous. It 's a pity *you* were n't there. You might have increased your collection of amusing memories. I 've been bothered no end about settlements and things. Life 's a perfect desert, and I came over here for fresh air and comfort. I always find comfort when I talk to you, Sandy. And now you meet me with jeers. I 'll go away. It 's time I went away."

"Oh, don't go away!" Tormentilla cried. "There 's heaps more to settle before you go."

Although in the main things were going so merrily, Tormentilla could not be quite satisfied with her success until she had done something for Lise. And it was through gentle little Mrs. Flanelle that at last she found her opportunity. Tormentilla met her one morning in the High Street with her two eldest boys and invited them on the spot to buns and milk in the nearest confectioner's. It had been a hot and dusty walk, and the Flanelles accepted with alacrity, and as they sat there at their marble-topped table, Lise Standring passed the window, her head drooping a little to one side, her mouth sulky and bored, her little tip-tilted hat and beautifully arranged veil almost hiding her eyes from them.

"Young Mrs. Standring," Mrs. Flanelle murmured over her cup of tea. Tea at every possible moment was as necessary to her life in those days as sentiment. "Poor young thing!"

"Why?" Tormentilla asked frankly. Every one was vaguely pitying Lise in those days, yet no one ever gave any definite reason except that she had a temper.

"Such a hollow, empty life! A mere butterfly existence, without the butterfly's simple pleasures."

"It is n't any emptier than most people's," Tormentilla said quickly. "She has heaps of friends."

"Friends!" Mrs. Flanelle shook her head. "Friends don't fill one's life."

"I suppose you mean that she'd be happier if she had children. She has her husband."

Mrs. Flanelle sighed and took an eclair.

"Now," Tormentilla said to herself, "is your chance. Find out what this awful tragedy is."

Mrs. Flanelle was kind, if she was n't very wise. It did not occur to her that she was talking to a girl of eighteen.

"You see," she said, "it was a marriage of convenience, and that is always such a mistake."

"Of course," said Tormentilla, much interested, "but she adores him. Any one can see that, and *she* does n't attempt to hide it."

Mrs. Flanelle drew down her veil and put on her glove.

"They were married," she said, "because his mother had once been in love with her father, and you must admit that that was an insufficient reason for a life-long tie."

"They need n't have done it unless they liked, I suppose?"

Mrs. Flanelle sighed.

"Money was involved," she said, "in some intricate way. I have not a commercial mind, and I will not attempt to explain. But rather than face the poverty which was the only alternative, they married. And then, without a moment's warning, the blow fell. She, young, beautiful, warm-hearted, and ignorant, fell in love with her husband."

"I should think that was rather a good thing, should n't you?" Tormentilla asked thoughtfully. "Do you like your little boy to mix the cakes on the counter when the girl is n't looking, Mrs. Flanelle?"

"Leslie, darling, if you don't stop, you shall be slapped when we get home. She has a terrible temper, you see, and she demands so much of him. His one idea is to be left alone. He only asks not to be worried. The parlor-maid has often heard him say he would give anything for a quiet life. Men are so selfish. He is so placid and phlegmatic and—dormant, you see. How can he understand or be worthy of the highly strung, nervous, sensitive, delicate creature he has won? A beautiful, tropical, wild bird in captivity, I compare her to in my inmost heart. A delicate, bright-hued exotic condemned to bloom in a cabbage-garden." Mrs. Flanelle sighed with excess of sympathy.

"I don't quite see why," Tormentilla said wonderingly. "I don't think they would be much happier if *he* was highly strung and nervous, too, do you? I should think it was rather a good thing he *was* placid and easy-going——"

"No. He exasperates her to the point of madness. She says she would rather live with a turnip in a hay-field, than with a creature so emotionless and difficult to rouse. The parlor-maid, who is my Janet's dearest friend, has frequently heard her make this remark. She often does things on purpose to annoy him. She has a passionate longing to make him feel *something*. And she is extremely attractive, you see, to young men. I should think she could be attractive to anybody if she liked; but she does n't always like. And when she does, it almost always annoys her husband—yet, somehow, not enough. She can't make him jealous. I feel sure she would stop quite satisfied if she had once made him thoroughly jealous. She has been trying to make him jealous of young Kenworthy, and as usual has only succeeded in annoying him. He thinks it such a pity that she should trifle with the affections of any nice youth, but only because he does n't like to see them blighted. Curiously enough, he has a much higher opinion of men than women, and he is devoted even to his brother, although he naturally deplores his extraordinary opinions."

"I see," said Tormentilla slowly; "Mr. Standring does n't know, then, that that young man only went to see Lise because she let him rave about Audrey to her?"

"He thinks that that is only a blind. He thinks she is playing a cat-and-mouse game with the youth. I have it on excellent authority."

Tormentilla wondered if the parlor-maid's unsupported testimony could be classified thus, but she did n't say so.

"I should like to be sure of my facts," she said slowly. "I always prefer to be sure of my facts. You think, then, that Mr. Standring is annoyed with Lise because young Mr. Kenworthy is so often calling at their house and having long talks with her? You think he does n't believe that young Mr. Kenworthy goes to talk about Audrey, and his own miserable, blighted state of mind?"

"Oh, no! He jeers at it. Leslie my own, when did you fall into that dust? It has been a most delightful rest. Such a thoughtful act, and we must go home with the mail cart laden—quite laden with parcels. Roy will have to walk, and that means carrying him, though how one can manage *both!*"

"Do you think, then, that Mrs. Standring looks so unhappy because her husband disapproves of this?"

"Ah, you see, she only lives for his approval. And yet she tries to annoy him—to make him feel. But he never will. I wish some friend would advise her to give up trying to make him. Really, I think things might be smoother so."

"It does look like it," said the girl slowly. She did her errands in the town, plunged deep in thought; and before she had finished them she had come to a firm resolution. Here was a way for her to do something for Lise. Something to make her happier, and even perhaps in the end to further the great scheme. She would go and see Mr. Jack Standring in his office at the works, and carefully and diplomatically carry out the new idea. The works, a great square of red brick buildings built round a quadrangle, lay a mile out of the town, and he was sure to be in at this hour of the morning. But when she heard that he was disengaged, that he *would* see her, she felt very nervous; uncertain of the order of her campaign; and almost wished she had n't come. He looked very large and smiling and self-possessed as she found herself in the round-backed, wooden chair opposite him, and the air of surprised expectancy with which he awaited her business made her plunge into the subject at once. He had considerately opened the conversation at once with a polite remark on the heat.

"I 've come to ask your advice," said she hastily. This was the diplomatic opening she had arranged beforehand, but she could not keep up the deceit, and rushed on with the truth.

"At least, it is n't exactly that, and we did n't mean to tell you till all was over, but as things turn out, you certainly ought to know at *once*, and that 's why I 've come."

He looked a little bewildered.

"You understand, of course," said she, "that I am speaking in the strictest confidence."

Jack laughed.

"You must n't swear me to secrecy till I see where I am," said he pleasantly. "It is n't fair. You may be an agent of the Camorra, or the Mafia, or something equally exciting and impossible to a well brought up English citizen. What is it that I am never to reveal?"

Tormentilla, studying his pleasant face and kindly eyes, came to the conclusion that he *was* to be trusted.

"You know, I suppose," said she, plunging into the matter, "that for a long time there has been a deep—a deep mutual attachment between Audrey Cogwheel and young Mr. Kenworthy?"

Jack looked surprised, and grew more attentive.

"I have heard of such an attachment," he admitted. "Why, certainly."

"You heard that Dr. Cogwheel, rolling in riches though he is, has forbidden any engagement on purely mercenary grounds?"

"Are n't you rather hard on the doctor?" he asked, with a surprised smile. "You can't expect an adoring parent to cast his only child to the wolves in that way. You can't found a happy marriage on the assumption that what 's not enough for one is bound to be enough for two, now, can you?"

For the first time it struck Tormentilla that this really could be called an argument. Weak, perhaps, but still an argument.

"That is n't the way to look at it!" she cried quickly. "When his daughter's whole life's happiness was at stake, he ought to have helped the young man to get a situation, or to have generously provided enough for their modest wants, himself——"

Jack shook his head.

"This is a point," said he pleasantly, "on which I plainly perceive that we shall never agree; and when you speak of modest wants, I rather think our beautiful Audrey is capable of getting through more filthy lucre in a shorter time than any one I know. But it depends, of course, on what one calls modest, and, to be quite frank, what are we getting at, you and I?"

He asked the question in such a good-humored and friendly fashion that Tormentilla was both charmed and disarmed.

"We are going to help them," she said boldly, leaning her elbows on the table, and framing her vivid, earnest face in her hands. "We are going to help them to run away."

Standring dropped the paper-weight he was playing with.

"I—I beg your pardon!" he ejaculated in amazement.

"Oh, *do* help us!" the girl cried enthusiastically. "We shall be so glad if you will help! We are a strong band already, but——"

Jack's face, suddenly grave, stopped her.

"Will you explain exactly what you mean?" he said.

Tormentilla began to grow frightened.

"They are going to elope," said she hurriedly. "We are going to lend them a hundred pounds for the honeymoon, and a motor—the sweetest Rosinante you ever saw—and a chauffeur who knows every road in Great Britain, and the young man has this good post to keep them in comfort afterwards. You 've heard about his new post? It is a glorious plan, is n't it?"

"Very," said Jack slowly. "Oh, very glorious! And Michael—how does he carry himself? Is he—I suppose he is overjoyed at the idea of carrying off his lovely bride in the teeth of all this opposition. Daring, reckless sort of chap, Michael."

"I should hardly have called him *that*," Tormentilla said doubtfully, "but Mrs. Standring has done wonders with him already, and——"

"What!"

"What?" she repeated, with a quick flush of red. Had she approached the matter delicately enough, she wondered?

"I beg your pardon, did I understand you to say *Lise* was mixed up in this insane business?"

"Insane!" Tormentilla rose with a scarlet face. "Mrs. Standring quite sees it in the only true light. She is most anxious for them both to be happy, and if he did hesitate because he did n't want to be selfish and tear her from her happy home, she showed him in the most wonderful way how wrong he was, and how love's young dream really was the most beautiful thing in the world."

"I see." He had fallen back into his placid, careless attitude, but his hand played more restlessly than ever with the tiger's head which was his paper-weight.

"We want *you* to help us, too." Tormentilla was not very sure of her ground now, but she thought that she must carry out her pretense a little longer, even though she had fired her bolt.

"We want you to lend us your motor-car to take Audrey and Lise to the place where the wedding is to be. I am going with the—with Mr. Kenworthy and the person who is lending the car for the honeymoon tour. Mrs. Standring is really interested, and *so* glad that they are both to be happy at last. She has had to listen to the stories of their troubles such a long time, you see, and will feel so relieved when everything is happily settled in the best possible way."

"Yes—oh, yes! Yes, certainly." He spoke absently.

"And Audrey leans on her for everything," Tormentilla pursued ardently.

"Audrey, then, is radiantly happy at the prospect of this elopement; of marrying a poor man?"

Tormentilla hesitated.

"Well, she 's good, you see. I mean, she has rather narrow principles. She 's had quite a war with her conscience about disregarding her father and mother, and so on; but her father and mother's approval, as we pointed out, won't be much good to her, will it, when she 's a lonely, broken-hearted old maid?"

Mr. Standring's office was divided from another by a ground glass partition, and he looked, before he spoke, at a shadowy, indistinct head moving to and fro.

"It did n't occur to you that Audrey at least might find compensations?" he asked quietly.

"Oh!" Tormentilla blazed at him. "How could anything compensate her for such a loss?"

He was silent.

"She was fretting herself into an early grave," Tormentilla cried; "she 's often told me so, and others as well. And *she* ought to know."

Still he made no remark, but as he glanced at that shadowy head in the next room he groaned a little.

"Do you want me to tell you what I think?" he asked sharply.

She did n't much, when she saw his face, but he proceeded:

"I think it is always—always, mind—a mistake to play Providence to other people. These things turn out badly enough if they 're left alone, but when they 're arranged for us, they 're—well, they 're infernal. I beg your pardon, but it is so."

Tormentilla thought of Mrs. Flanelle's story, and said nothing.

"Take my advice," said he, "and leave these two to mismanage their own affairs. Good God! child, don't court responsibility in this insane way!"

And if Tormentilla wondered as she left him whether she had n't done more harm than good, you cannot be surprised. But her intentions were excellent; and now, at any rate, he knew the truth about Lise.

"He can never suspect her of playing cat and mouse after this," she said with much satisfaction, "or of behaving like a lighted candle either."

X.

Lise was lunching with the Cogwheels. When Audrey took her up to her own room and locked the door, she guessed at once what she was to be shown. Audrey's sea-blue eyes were full of joyous interest.

"It 's rather an awkward kind of trousseau to arrange, you see," she said, "because one can't take very much luggage in the cars, unless one sends it on by rail, and that is so prosaic, is n't it? So wanting in imagination! But I 've got the sweetest motor-coat—only it has n't come yet. It had to be taken in a little in the back seams, but it 's a perfect dream: white cloth and sweet little tabs and the most exquisite paste buttons. Mother was charmed with it. She said it looked quite bridal. Poor darling, she little knew what she was saying, did she?"

"No," said Lise absently, gazing at a forget-me-not hat in Audrey's left hand. "Put it on, Audrey."

"It 's so charmingly simple," said Audrey, tilting it forward over her pretty, delighted face, "and with a veil it keeps on beautifully. One could n't go on one's honeymoon in a motor-cap. And I 've bought a dozen of the most ravishing veils. Mother is quite pleased. I am afraid she thinks Mr. Standring—Mr. Nigel, I mean—is going to take us out in his car again. It is most unfortunate that I have to deceive her, but a heartless mother makes a deceitful child. She has been cruel to us, has n't she?"

"Has she?" Lise asked slowly.

Audrey turned surprised, innocent eyes.

"She encouraged father," she said, "in the most barefaced way, and never showed the least sympathy for us. I often said to her, 'Dearest,' I said, 'you were young once yourself,—perhaps even beloved.' And she said that she had learned wisdom since then, though father says he doubts it. 'It hurts me more than it hurts you,' she always says. It 's her one excuse, and such a poor one! Still, she is my mother, is n't she?—and I can't help feeling miserable when I remember how deeply I have to stoop to deceit."

"Can you be ready by Wednesday, do you think?" Lise asked impatiently.

"Oh!" Audrey put down the girlish hat and counted on her fingers. "Is n't that rather soon?" she asked with a blush.

"Not too soon," said Lise coolly. "When did you see Michael last?"

"Oh, not for days! I 've had several letters from him, but I 've been too busy to see him. And he never mentioned a date."

"Well, if I were you," Lise pursued, smoothing out a crumpled leaf on the forget-me-not hat with her quick little fingers—"if I were you, I should make it Wednesday. Don't waste any more time. Things always get discovered if you leave them too long. I shall tell Michael that you consent to Wednesday. But you 'd better see him yourself about it, had n't you?" she suggested in some surprise.

Audrey sat down suddenly in a chair by the window, and Lise studied her carefully. There was a little smile hovering about her pretty lips, and her eyes were far away.

"She looks happy enough," Lise thought with some relief. "You 'll see him yourself," she repeated, "of course."

"Oh, do you think I really need?" Audrey asked softly. "I am quite satisfied to leave all the arrangements to you and to him. I shall have so much to do if it is to be so soon."

Lise was a little surprised, but, as she told Tormentilla afterwards, she never pretended now to understand Audrey. And she went home at four o'clock in a much more settled and comfortable state of mind than she had experienced for some time. She was, in fact, so pleased with herself and the world in general that she decided to put on a really pretty frock, a lavender muslin—Jack's favorite color—before he came in to tea. It was a charmingly pretty dress, very full and long and elaborately simple, and she picked a bunch of purple and white and lavender sweet peas to tuck into the pretty embroidered folds at her breast. And she parted her hair on one side, as he liked it best, a weakness she hardly ever descended to.

"I don't suppose he 'll even notice it," she murmured with a sigh, and her usual tendency to expect the worst. "And even if he does, I expect Nigel will drop in as usual and spoil everything."

She was right in her first surmise. He noticed neither the lavender dress nor the boyish parting of her hair.

"Oh, you 've come at last!" he said. "I 'm glad of that. I want to speak to you, Lise."

She raised her little pale face to him, and her black eyes filled with fear. Jack looked angry. She had so often tried, so often wanted, to make him really angry, but now—she did n't think she liked it much now.

He came up to her and flung himself into a chair. His lips were set and his eyes were hard. Lise was astounded.

"What is the meaning of this infernal tomfoolery about Audrey Cogwheel and Michael Kenworthy?" he asked. But Lise was too frightened to reply, too stunned even to lose her temper.

"I hear," Jack pursued coldly, "that you have encouraged, and perhaps even inspired, an absurd scheme of elopement for these two. Is it true?"

"Yes," said she hoarsely.

"Why?" He asked the question with a contempt which would have roused her to a frenzy yesterday. What had come to her? "Why?" He repeated it curtly.

Lise made an effort.

"Because they were in love with each other. Because there was no reason why two young people should have their lives ruined through a mercenary prejudice. Because——"

"Don't lie to me, Lise. Why are you helping them? What business is it of yours?"

"None," said Lise helplessly.

"I should think not. I wonder you dare encourage a mad plan which is almost sure to end in disaster."

"Not more than most other marriages," she answered slowly.

"Ours, for instance?"

She nodded.

"Perhaps not: but the mere fact of being in Purgatory yourself hardly justifies you in reaching out and dragging all your friends after you, does it?"

"I suppose not."

"I wish you would tell me truthfully what influenced you in this affair?"

Lise made an effort to show a proper spirit.

"Don't please speak to me like that," she said. "You have no right to speak to me like that. I did not—to be quite sincere, I began it thoughtlessly to please that little girl."

"The girl at Malinder—Miss Green?" he asked sharply.

"Yes, Tormentilla. She was so wrapped up in the idea, so determined to help those two lovers to be happy, so enthusiastic and unselfish and sincere about it, that she carried me away, and I promised to help her. Audrey had been weeping in *her* arms, you see, over her broken-hearted and shattered happiness, and they are very ignorant, childish, unselfish arms. Michael too had impressed her so much by his gloomy appearance and his obvious inability to settle down to work. She did n't know that the disability was chronic, you see."

She laughed a little in spite of herself, but her husband's eyes did not soften, and she hurriedly went on.

"She had made up her mind to help these unfortunate lovers to happiness at any cost. She is such a plucky, straightforward, trusting child, that I—well, I believe you 'd have wanted to help her yourself if you 'd listened to her. She idealizes all love, and lovers, in the most curious way. She is absolutely ignorant of life as it really is. How could I discourage her? And, after all, I think they stand quite a good chance of being happy on Mr. Cogwheel's money. I think Michael might be quite a different character if he were comfortably off."

Standring stretched out his legs and plunged his hands into his pockets, and Lise thought she 'd *never* seen him look so disagreeable.

"It did n't occur to you, I suppose, to consider Nigel in the matter?"

She started and grew pale. *Now* she understood.

"Nigel?" she asked disingenuously.

"Yes. Nigel would have married the girl if he 'd had time. The father and mother are most anxious for his engagement. Audrey was simply playing with him. It was merely a question of time. Nigel was sure he would win her in the end. And he 's simply mad about her. He says he sees her faults, but that he 's bewitched. He looks so thin and worried and miserable that I can't bear to see him about the place. He gives me the blues. He can't do a thing at the office. I wish to heaven he 'd leave the business alone while he 's in his present state of mind. He ate a mutton-chop yesterday for his lunch without noticing it. The waiter brought it by mistake, and he finished it to the bone before he found out. His state of mind when he 'd realized what he 'd done was awful. Looks upon himself as a kind of cannibal now, I believe."

"I should think it would do him good," Lise remarked shortly, and quite without sympathy. "I expect his state of mind has more to do with the dreadful things he lives on than with Audrey's cruelty."

Jack's lips twitched. Lise was almost sure he was going to smile, but he was much too full of moral strength for such a fall, and he pulled himself together.

"It 's not a laughing matter," said he. Her heart sank.

"Can't *you* get them to give up this ridiculous idea?" he demanded. Lise flushed.

"I should n't think of such a thing!" cried she. The fact that it had never occurred to Jack to be glad that Michael was going to be married drove her to the verge of despair. "And *I* had to sacrifice a good deal," she went on hastily. She realized with relief that her temper was now swiftly rising. "I had to lose one of my best friends."

"I thought you were tired of Audrey," he said indifferently.

Her black eyes blazed at him. "I did n't mean Audrey. I meant Michael. I shall lose a good, kind, affectionate, sympathetic, unselfish friend when *he* marries. I suppose you did n't think of that."

"You 'll find another idle youth to hang about and pour his ready sorrows into your sympathetic ear, no doubt."

Lise sprang from her seat. "Oh!" she cried. "You are unbearable. How much longer is this kind of thing going to last? How much longer am I to live this *life*—to endure this torture?"

Her husband watched her with puzzled eyes as she paced restlessly up and down in the old way, and he thought once more what a pity it all was. So pretty, so graceful, so impossible to live with in peace. He sighed as he watched her.

"About forty years, I expect," he answered sadly.

"I never do anything to please you!" she cried.

"Do you ever try?"

"You never understand me."

"God knows who could!"

She flung herself into a chair and buried her face in her hand. An old, old attitude. An attitude he knew too well.

"Lise," he said in a softer tone, "you don't like Audrey much, do you?"

She looked up in surprise.

"I wonder if you have been doing this to *save* Nigel."

"To *save* him." Her bewildered tones were answer enough, but he would give her the full chance of explaining.

"It is possible," he said kindly, "that you have realized the truth; that you have seen that she is n't good enough for Nigel, and want to get her out of his way. Was that it?"

Lise shook her head.

"No," she said; "it never occurred to me. Thank you very much for the loophole you 've given me, Jack, but I won't take advantage of it. I think Audrey is peculiarly suited by nature to almost any man. I think she will be able to make any man happy. She finds it as easy to make people happy as I do to make them miserable." A quick glance out of the corner of her eyes showed that her husband was quite untouched by this obvious truth. She set her lips.

"Jack," she said, "how long are we to go on like this?"

"For forty years or so, I suppose," he said again.

"No! I can't bear it. We must separate. You must go your way, and I'll go mine."

"Likely to turn out the broad path we've both heard so much about, don't you think?" he suggested lazily.

"Not at all," said Lise quickly. "We must take care that the paths don't meet, that's all. We stumbled into this marriage like a couple of blind children, and now——"

"Now we pay the fiddler," he suggested mildly. "Our relations having called the tune."

He understood Lise in this mood, and his bad temper had evaporated.

"If I had known," she cried furiously, "I would rather have——"

"Died?" suggested he, with an aggravating glance at her. "So would I. You have the devil's own temper, Lise."

"Temper!" she cried furiously. "Thank God I have *some* spirit! I would rather be a cabbage growing in a garden than feel so little one way or another as you do."

"You wrong me." Jack rose to ring the bell. "I feel, for instance, very strongly on the subject of this elopement. I can hardly tell you how strongly. And I would rather live with a thousand cabbages in a hundred gardens than listen eternally to a person who feels so much about everything—or says she does!"

XI.

THE day of the elopement was a glorious day. When young Osgood turned up instead of Michael at the appointed place and hour, Tormentilla, with her previous experience of the faint-hearted bridegroom, at once feared the worst. It is generally the best thing to do in these cases.

"You're a bit late," said John Edward, cheerfully shaking hands with him, without waiting for an introduction.

"But it isn't him," Tormentilla gasped wildly, without any pretense of grammar. As she studied his pleasant, manly face and firm mouth, she wished with all her heart it had been.

Young Osgood was very much out of breath, and the beautiful Rosinante made him almost speechless with envy.

"Kenworthy sent me to say——"

"Oh, what?" cried Tormentilla in agonized tones.

Osgood stared.

"To say he couldn't come——"

"Hallo!" John Edward looked sharply at the surprised youth. "But that won't do at all. We can't stand any nonsense of that sort. He's jolly well got to come, don't you know."

Tormentilla realized with a thrilling heart that she had expected this from the beginning.

Osgood gazed blankly from one excited face to the other. The only perfect chauffeur in the British Isles appeared also to awake from his apathy at that moment and take an interest in the conversation.

"Where is he?" Tormentilla demanded with blazing eyes.

Osgood felt sorry for Michael.

"He's round the corner, sitting on his bag. It's deuced heavy, you see, and he does n't feel very fit this morning. Lugged me out of bed to help him, and now he's resting on it till you come. He forgot to make any arrangements for his luggage, he said. Is this the car he's going touring in? He's a lucky beggar, I must say."

He walked round the Rosinante and examined it above and below, with his hands on his knees and his heart in his eyes. John Edward warmed to him for his intelligent interest, but the chauffeur looked as if he thought it was like his cheek. Tormentilla found herself hoping that the irreproachable one would n't regard Michael with an equally suspicious or unfriendly eye, or it might run a good chance of casting a blight upon this promising honeymoon.

They found Michael sitting on his bag round the corner with a cheerful smile on his face—"considering," John Edward said afterwards. And here young Osgood left them with ill-concealed envy. He had no idea of the real truth, of course, but any kind of a tour in such a car—in this weather—was too good to be true.

Michael, however, had, it seemed, a few words to say before they started. And he told John Edward how decent it was of him to give a chap such a helping hand.

"The fact is," said he, "that I've felt doubtful about the thing all along. I've been torn by all kinds of horrible doubts and perplexities. I've written half-a-dozen notes saying I've left the country for ever, and shall never be dragged back to it again alive——"

"Every one feels like that," John Edward remarked with scant sympathy. "It's a common symptom, and is generally dealt with by brandy and soda. Get in, man, or we shall be late."

"I want to tell you," said Michael, firmly pressing down his cap and enveloping himself in an enormous leather coat, "why I feel so utterly different to-day."

"It's the kind of day to make everybody feel different about everything," said John Edward sharply. "The air's like wine. Kenworthy, we really must get off——"

"There's no hurry," said the bridegroom-elect cheerfully. "Audrey will be late, too. She always is. And she always expects me to be, so that's all right. Before we start I must tell you how the whole world changed for me on Monday night."

John Edward helplessly gazed at Tormentilla, but *she* had no explanation to offer.

"You see," said Michael, leisurely changing his handkerchief from one pocket to another, "this was how it came about. I was sitting in my room, literally in the deepest depths of gloomy despair. I could see no light anywhere. I did n't want to be taken off in a motor and married; I felt sure that Audrey did n't want it either. The whole world revolved round us in a hideous mockery; we were being driven to the edge of a precipice; we were floundering in a morass; we were——"

"You 'll be precious late into the bargain if you 've got much more to say," John Edward remarked with some heat.

"And then," said Michael, with a delightful smile, "in a moment the whole universe changed. Jack Standring came to see me."

Tormentilla made a little gasping sound, and stared at him.

"Yes," said Michael; "Jack Standring came to give me a piece of his mind. He gave it—freely, I may say."

"What did he say?" Tormentilla cried. They were standing at the moment out of the chauffeur's hearing.

"He said a lot of things," Michael replied calmly. "He said I was going to cast a blight over a bright young life. And that 's the sort of thing that bucks a man up."

"What!" Tormentilla and John Edward again exchanged horrified glances. Their mutual fears for his reason grew fast.

"He said," pursued Michael, "that any man who took a girl from a luxurious home and plunged her into poverty was a hound. I saw at once that there was no other course open for me then——"

"Oh! Not——"

"Than to go on with it," he smiled cheerily at her. "I am not selfish, and I have my rights. If I was selfish, I should go on in the old way, allowing her to break her heart for me because I was afraid of the censure of the affluent."

His companions were speechless.

"He said that the girl was rapidly learning to forget me. 'That,' I said to myself, 'shall never be.' And said that if I left her alone she would in time transfer her affections to a worthier man. And I resolved," Michael cried triumphantly, "to show him that that, at least, was impossible."

"Did he say anything else?" Tormentilla asked in bewildered tones.

"Yes," said the young man; "he did. He said that if we did n't give up this mad idea, he should feel obliged to take steps himself; but as he appeared to think of it all as happening some time in the dim future, his threat did not trouble me. But you see now that I am at least heart and soul with the rest of you in this affair."

John Edward said grimly that he was glad of that, and they'd better start at once if they were to get there by midday. And he and Tormentilla discussed in wondering tones the extraordinary attitude of the happy groom. Tormentilla said she had never seen him so cheerful since she had known him, and was n't it a good sign? And John Edward admitted that it might be if he'd been sure that the youth was quite sane.

"I wonder what he's taken to keep his spirits up," said he, but there he wronged Michael, who had breakfasted on charred toast and innocent China tea.

They gave the Rosinante her head whenever they dared, and flew along the white roads with the wind ringing in their ears, and the sun shining on the blue canal over the hedge, and Tormentilla's heart danced, because it was such a glorious day, and because she was sitting beside the only person in the world who really mattered. The fact that it was probably for the last time was a sting, but only the kind of subtle sting which shows up the sweetness of the hour and makes it sweeter. Her brown eyes shone and her cheeks grew pink, she laughed at everything, and enjoyed it all, and the minutes flew with the miles, and hours with the minutes, until it was half-past twelve and they were on the outskirts of Fallingfleet. They were to meet Audrey and Lise outside the railway station, and then lunch at the "Unicorn" and be at the church at two o'clock. Lise was to take Tormentilla back in her car, John Edward to return to London by train. It was beautifully arranged. Michael turned around and smiled over his shoulder at them as they whizzed through the neat little suburbs of the town and drew up outside the railway station. Yes, there was Standring's car. And the girls?

Tormentilla jumped out and ran onto the platform. A tall figure in a light greeny-gray coat came swiftly down to meet her. It was Lise—*alone*. Her eyes were full of angry tears, and a bright red patch burnt either cheek, but Tormentilla, gay and excited, did not notice this.

"Where is the lovely bride?" said she, with an innocent little giggle and a wide, jolly grin.

Lise caught her by her arm and hurried her out to the others. She bowed absently to John Edward, who was never an imposing figure, and held out her hand to Michael with a little indignant sound.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "I did my best. Indeed, I did my best."

"What's the matter?" Tormentilla asked quickly, all her worst fears once more awakened. "Oh dear, do tell me what the matter is!"

"I could n't stop her!" Lise cried wildly. "I used every argument I could think of. The whole station must have thought us mad. I lost my temper much, much more thoroughly than I ever lost it before, and *nothing* moved her.

"'Audrey,' I said, 'you 've burnt your boats and must go through with it.' And she said she 'd not even singed anything yet, and was n't going to."

"But what 's she done?"

"I thought something was wrong, when I found there was no luggage in the car, and when she said she 'd made other arrangements I supposed she 'd sent it on by rail in advance to save trouble and make it lighter for the car. I little knew."

"*We* don't know anything yet," John Edward suggested politely. He wondered if he and Tormentilla had become hopelessly entangled with a party of escaped lunatics.

Tormentilla caught Lise by both arms and gave her a little shake. "I can't bear it any longer!" she cried. "What *did* Audrey do?"

"She went home by the twelve o'clock train"—Lise dropped her hands despairingly—"with Mr. Bromsgrove."

XII.

"It 's blessed to forgive," said Audrey softly. She stood in the middle of Lise's pretty room in her forget-me-not dress and forget-me-not hat, and a little bunch of forget-me-nots at her waist.

Lise scowled at her. There is no other word for her expression, and she would not even take her hand. Tormentilla was humped up on the window-seat in her old blue dress, a picture of sullen despair. And Audrey the culprit, who should have been so deeply ashamed, stood and rebuked them with a sweet and loving friendliness they little deserved. A spray of forget-me-nots fell from her belt, and she picked it up again.

"Myosotis," she said softly. "That 's its other name. *He* told me. It 's his favorite flower."

"He? Who?"

"Mr. Bromsgrove." Audrey blushed a little. "We 're engaged."

"What?"

"What?"

"Yes," said Audrey simply; "since *that* day. I shall always remember it. It 's quite a romance."

Lise sat down suddenly, and Tormentilla said something which no one heard.

"Won't you wish me happiness?" Audrey asked wistfully. "Even father's given in quite kindly, and when I confessed he said that he would have forgiven me if we had eloped, and have thanked his God that he'd been spared the expense of a wedding. But what a sordid ending that would have been! He didn't mean it. It was only his fun."

"Audrey! You told him that you had been going to elope with Michael?"

Audrey opened her blue eyes.

"Oh, not with Michael," she said slowly. "That would only have made things so involved, wouldn't it? And I couldn't sleep till I had confessed the truth to mother and father."

"They think that you had arranged to elope with Mr. Bromsgrove?"

"Oh, no—not exactly that either. I didn't go into details at all, but I said I should never expect to be happily married if I deceived *them*. And mother said that all was well that ended well, and she'd always felt sure that he would become a bishop in time. A bishop's wife has such a power for good, hasn't she? And he is so strong. I always felt the need of some one really strong to lean on, and Michael was rather a broken reed—even though he is such a dear. That's what mother said. And even father said, 'Thank God you've chosen a *man* this time,' although mother wasn't nearly as harsh as that. 'Dearest,' I said, 'Mr. Bromsgrove is a perfect rock of silent strength.' And mother said that silence was a great gift. I thought that was so true."

But Lise had hidden her face in her hands, and Audrey's blue eyes wandered to the garden outside.

"I think perhaps," she said, "that even if he'd been the other, it is all for the best that we didn't fly together."

"Who—what *can* you mean?" Tormentilla asked helplessly.

"He and I," said Audrey simply. "You see, dearest child, one can only have one wedding, and——"

"You can have more if you like," cried Tormentilla disgustedly, "if you weren't particular as to the means you used to get rid of Michael!"

"How dreadful your thoughts sometimes are," Audrey murmured in her innocent way. "One can only have one wedding dress, and one 'Voice that breathed o'er Eden.' It's so beautiful, I always think, and I do like to have a choral wedding, don't you?"

"Never tried it," Tormentilla said gruffly.

"And then, too," Audrey murmured, with her blue eyes still on the blue sky, "one would miss all one's wedding presents. May I sit down, Lise?" Her voice began at last to take a reproachful tone.

"Oh, please sit down." Lise turned away and crossed to the window in the other corner of the room.

"What I want to know," Tormentilla cried sharply, "is why you did n't tell us before?"

Audrey sighed.

"I wanted to," she said; "I often felt that it would be only kind. But I let myself be guided by some one who knew best. I bowed to the master-mind."

Tormentilla started. A dim suspicion lying dormant in her own mind strengthened itself considerably.

"He thought," Audrey continued, "that this was the best way. He said that a lesson must be taught. He said he was obliged to be cruel to be kind. And I thought that was such a beautiful thought."

"Are you mad, Audrey?" Lise asked the question without turning round.

"Oh, no—only perhaps a little inspired."

"Does it ever occur to you that you have treated poor Michael in the most shameful way?"

"Oh, no, never. It was very wrong of him, you see, to suggest such a thing. And I hope he will get over it in time. I sometimes think it 's quite possible. And one does n't often marry one's first love, Mr. Bromsgrove says. He is so wise."

"Very," said Lise.

"And then," said Audrey gravely, "constancy is n't a virtue; it 's only a folly, is n't it?"

Lise laughed. She admitted to Tormentilla afterwards that Audrey had been too much for her. "*You* thought she was romantic," she said, "and I thought she was mercenary. If she had been romantic, she 'd have married Michael. If she 'd been mercenary, she 'd have married Nigel. What on earth *is* she?" And Tormentilla said she did n't know.

But Audrey had not yet finished, and she trailed across the room, a drooping, lovely creature with pathetic eyes and appealing hands.

"You would n't judge me harshly if you knew my real motives," she said sadly.

"What in heaven's name *are* your motives?" Lise cried with interest, from the other side of the room.

Audrey sighed.

"Only love," she said, "and pity."

Tormentilla gasped.

"He has had a lonely life," the girl went on, "a hard life. 'Trouble,' he says, 'has hardened him,' and I am to be the softening influence of his future."

No one made any remark. What indeed could they say?

"He consults me," Audrey said, "on everything. And I him. We have been in perfect sympathy ever since I told him of my great trouble."

Still they were speechless.

"He tells me everything," she went on, "and this morning he showed me his black list."

Tormentilla roused herself from her bewildered stupor.

"His *what?*" she cried.

"His black list," Audrey repeated with dignity.

"Do you mind telling me exactly what you mean?"

"Not at all," Audrey repeated with simple pride. "Lord Malinder had a very high opinion of him, you see, and he entrusted him with a secret mission when he gave him the living, of finding out fraud and misuse of authority, and a lot of other things that I forget. He has a natural gift for finding out weak places in people and things, and all the time he has been here he has been looking out and discovering things, till he had made out quite a long list. His 'black list,' he playfully calls it, and I think it is such a good name, don't you?"

"Very," said Tormentilla grimly. "I never heard a more suitable—pet name. Go on."

"It was a most interesting list," said Audrey, "and there were all sorts of people on it that you'd never have dreamt of associating with hidden crime."

"I can quite believe it." Tormentilla's voice was almost sardonic. "Please don't stop."

"For instance, there was that nice Mr. Grimes, the bailiff, who has always such a pleasant smile when I meet him riding about on his fat gray horse. He used to give me rides on it when I was a little girl, and I quite liked him, but you never know, do you?"

"No," said Tormentilla. "Who else?"

"Oh, so many people! The head-keeper, Mr. Groves. I thought he was such a dear, and he always let me trespass when I wanted ferns and primroses and things for my botany class at school. And one of the under-keepers, and several of the servants at Malinder House, and quite a number of farmers, and one or two of the tradespeople even. All of them Lord Malinder's tenants."

"Was that all?"

"Oh, no." Audrey cast a quick little side-glance at her, and stooped to arrange a fold of the forget-me-not gown. "But I have such a bad memory. Do you know that the sight of that list made me feel quite sad?"

"It did, did it?" Tormentilla cried.

"Yes, would n't it you?"

"No, it would n't have made me *sad*. It would have made me—but go on."

"I did n't like it," said Audrey, meeting the girl's eyes frankly. "I confess that I did n't like it. And I said so frankly."

"That *was* noble of you!" Tormentilla cried sarcastically.

"Oh, no," said Audrey modestly. "I was quite open with him. 'Not one of us,' I said, 'is entirely without fault,' and he quite saw it. He is so broad-minded, you see, and he admitted it at once. If he did make one exception, he naturally would be blind to *my* faults just now, would n't he?"

"Very likely," said Tormentilla, drawing a deep breath.

"Yes," Audrey proceeded. "'We might have been the same ourselves,' I said, 'if we had lived amongst their temptations.'"

"Worse!" Tormentilla cried fiercely. "A thousand times worse."

"And so," Audrey finished, "I persuaded him to burn it."

"To what?"

"To burn it. Why not?"

"No!" Tormentilla stared at her and rose from her seat with amazed eyes.

"Yes." Audrey smiled her prettiest smile up into the girl's face. "'Let us burn it together,' I said, 'in memory of yesterday,' and we did. We made a little celebration of it. *He* called it a little celebration—with a fusee, and it took a long time, but it is rather a beautiful idea, is n't it, to cement our happy bond with an act of forgiveness? We mean to go on as we have begun, and to help each other. And he says that he shall allow all those people's sins to find them out, without *his* help."

Tormentilla groped for her hat, cast a half-blinded look of bewilderment at the silent Lise, and went home. She could bear no more.

She has often wondered since how she got through all the hours of that dreadful day, and remembers with a shudder still how she wandered drearily about the house and garden for hours and hours and found no comfort anywhere.

There was nothing left for her and Greenie but to pack up, extort permission from her parents, and go off to Avignon again.

Never since she had taken the name of Tormentilla had she so richly deserved it as she did now. "A torment to myself and every one else!" she cried, but in spite of that she knew it was n't fair. She had done her very best to make two apparently broken-hearted lovers happy by every means in her power, and they had themselves overthrown her scheme. How was she to know that they no longer loved? Even Michael had gone cheerfully off to his new post, of which he was quite undeserving, and which he was totally unfitted to fill, and although he had returned John Edward's check, with the exception of twenty pounds which he had already melted, and hoped to return to him almost immediately, he had behaved throughout in the most disappointing way.

You don't expect a jilted lover on the bridal day to remark with cheerful philosophy that perhaps it's all for the best, and had n't they better all try to put it out of their minds and order lunch?

John Edward had explained it all by saying that he'd known the man was mad from the first moment he set eyes on him, but Tormentilla found no comfort in that. Neither Audrey nor Michael looked upon her as a benefactress, or anything but a meddlesome little girl.

Then Lise—Lise, whom she really liked and admired tremendously—what had she done for her? In a foolish attempt to smooth matters between her and her husband, she had only made them far worse, and been the cause of a most tremendous row; perhaps widened the rift in their already cracked lute forever. Lise did n't seem to bear malice, it was true, but Tormentilla did n't suppose things would ever be quite the same again. In which she was undoubtedly correct. And then, when she got in that afternoon she had found a little round-hand letter on pink, gilt-edged paper, with a Greenrose postmark on the latter, which had seemed the last straw, and made her want to take Minnie by the shoulders and shake her.

> DEAR MISS TORMILLA,
>
> This is to hope it finds you as well as it leaves me at present, and please Miss I wish you had n't never got me this place. The work is too heavy, and there's no pleasing some people, and William has changed something cruel since we came here. He is walking out with another young woman called Ruth Heap, and when I ask him yesterday why he had changed so cruel, he said it was on account of her smiling face, and he preferred smiles to tears any day of the week.
>
> Please Miss Tormilla, I should like to come back to Malinder soon. There was a young man in the garden as was a true friend to me before I walked out with William.
>
> Yours respectfully,
>
> MINNIE.

Tormentilla could have laughed over this letter, if it had n't sent her into such a red-hot rage.

She stood at the window for a few minutes with wet eyes and an aching heart, then turned desperately to gaze at the pale-faced, red-eyed creature with untidy hair and a shabby dress who stared at her from the looking-glass. The old blue pinafore dresses had grown horribly shabby, and she wondered what her mother and sisters would say if they knew how she still clung to garments they had always condemned. She looked at herself steadily for a long time, and at last the doleful apparition filled her with disgust, and she pulled herself together with a little shake.

"You are n't pretty," she said fiercely, "but you need n't be a coward. White-faced thing!"

Even as she stared at the woe-begone, looking-glass Tormentilla, a little pink color crept into its pale cheeks.

"He fell in love with you because you were such a good sport. Do the sporting, then!"

The color in its cheeks changed from pink to red.

"I won't sit and howl for the moon any longer. If I can't be happy myself, I might as well try to please Greenie. I 'll put on the Ninon frock she 's always worrying about, and do my hair up. If only I could behave to everybody as if I did n't care!"

They used Lady Malinder's boudoir as their dining-room, a pretty little cozy room with big windows, and there they dined together every night, and were as a rule quite cheerful and often even gay.

Tormentilla's spirits rose when she had put on the fresh pretty dress, and the pearls round her neck, and she felt, as she ate an exceedingly good dinner, that if it was the last recklessness of despair, Greenie should never, never know it. She *would* do the sporting thing at last.

And after dinner they played piquet together, and if the time did n't exactly fly, it passed pleasantly enough for them both.

It was about nine o'clock that the world turned upside down. Greenie had gone upstairs to find her eternal embroidery, and Tormentilla stood on the terrace outside the open window, staring miserably across the ghostly, twilit lawns, giving way weakly in her first moment of liberty, allowing the unhappiness in her heart to come out and taunt her. And then she heard a door open in the room behind her, heard a surprised exclamation at the empty room, and turned to go in. But John Edward, in his clumsy motoring coat, came eagerly forward.

"Sandy! I 've brought a message from Lady Malinder. You 're to come home at once."

"What?" She stared at him with indignant astonishment.

"Come home? Why?"

"Because of Dolly, you see. She 's in a terrible way—Lady Malinder, I mean. Says she must have you all together at such a moment as this."

"Because of Dolly?" Her amazement deepened as she asked the question.

He stared; then flushed uneasily.

"Have n't you heard? Do you mean to tell me they have n't wired to you about it? They have n't left *me* to break it? Oh, Lord!"

Tormentilla grew as white as a sheet.

"To break what?" she asked faintly.

John Edward gave an angry little laugh.

"Dolly 's bolted," he said curtly.

"What!"

"Bolted. Cleared off. Eloped. While we were helping our own delightful runaways, she was carrying out a little Gretna Green scheme of her own with perfect success."

"But—how could she—alone?" Tormentilla asked vacantly. She did n't understand.

"She did n't go alone," John Edward said sharply; "she 's married the man I told you about—Mandelberg Mordenstein. At the very moment that our little disaster was taking place at Fallingfleet, they were getting safely married at some out-of-the-way East End church, and across the Channel before the orthodox letter was found on her pincushion. It was all beautifully arranged. Lady Malinder is frightfully upset, and I don't wonder. She begged me to come over and bring you home at once. It 's a tremendous blow to everybody."

"What does it mean?" The poor child had hardly grasped the news yet.

"Well, he 's a prince, you see, with royal blood of sorts. It must have sounded a very fine thing to Dolly. No one seems to have thought of telling her that it was almost certain to be morganatic. She 's kept so quiet about it too."

"Dolly always does keep quiet about her own affairs," Tormentilla said slowly.

"Well, she 's done it this time. And why did n't she ask me to release her and tell me she wanted to break off? It makes one look such an infernal idiot—a thing like this."

"I 'd better go and find Greenie." The girl moved away half stunned, but he laid his hand on her arm as she turned, and stopped her.

"Sandy—Sandy dear."

"Let me go to Greenie." She tried to free herself.

"Sandy, you are n't going to leave me now?"

She stopped, half frightened, wholly bewildered. He took her little cold hand and patted it with some remorse.

"It has been a most awful day. I 've broken it to you like an unfeeling, selfish brute; but it 's been an awful day. We 've all been so infernally upset."

"Yes," said she; "but I think I 'd better go and tell Greenie——"

"I've wanted to come to you from the first moment. I always want to turn to you for comfort when I'm unhappy, don't I?"

"Yes," said she again; "but I think we must go back to mother at once."

"There's no one like you, Sandy dear, and—don't you see? You don't seem to understand what this means to—to you and me."

She was quite silent. How tall she seemed in her white dress! How pale her face looked under her heavy brown hair!

"I'm half afraid of you to-night," he said ruefully, "you seem so grown up and changed. I was never afraid of you in the old blue dress, was I?"

She tried to go, but she did not, could not, speak.

He put his hand on her shoulder and drew her nearer to him.

"Sandy dear, you won't let me be taken away from you again, will you?" The childish helplessness of this pathetic appeal was too much for her. She looked up and met his eyes squarely, and to his joy her own jolly grin at last spread itself out to cheer him.

"I won't if I can help it," she said wistfully.

I think it was through the Malinder servants that the dark secret came to light at last. The only wonder was that it had remained a secret so long, when one remembers how Tormentilla, to frustrate Mr. Bromsgrove's evil designs, had been obliged more than half to confide in the head gardener and the head game-keeper—both married men.

It was at the Cogwheels' bridge-drive a month later that it was first openly discussed.

Mrs. Hay was frankly annoyed.

"I have always heard," said she—"in fact, it is one of my husband's most settled convictions—that the habits and morals of the aristocracy are beyond all—well, you must admit that they would never be tolerated for an instant in the upper middle class to which *we* belong, and which is, my husband often says, the bulwark of our country—the backbone of our empire."

"Yes, but how sweet of her to run about in her old blue linen pinafore, with her frank, unaffected ways, and be so nice to everybody," kind Mrs. Cogwheel murmured. "I said to Audrey directly I heard the news this afternoon, 'Darling,' I said, 'you would never have guessed that she was blue-blooded for a moment, would you? She was so polite and friendly and natural with everybody.' And Audrey quite agreed with me."

Lise laughed. Mrs. Flanelle, who had been busy sorting her cards, leaned eagerly back to join in.

"She might have been a milkmaid in a sunbonnet," she said. "I never was so surprised in my life, and it is such a relief to me to think that we had such a delightful talk together in Garland's the day she took the children in and gave them buns—all about——" She caught Lise's eye and reddened a little. "I little knew that an angel was entertaining us unawares," she finished hastily. "Shall I play to hearts, partner?"

All through the evening the play was interrupted by their comments, but then, as Miss Cotton remarked, one never expects bridge at a drive, and no one ever minds, except one or two elderly men, and if so, why come?

"But my heart aches for the thoughtless child," said she. "You never know what deception may lead you into when you once begin."

"You never know what anything will lead you into if it comes to that," Lise said coolly. "And if you never begin anything, you won't travel far, will you?"

Miss Cotton shook her head. "I'm afraid you are a philosopher," said she sadly, "and that is so risky, I always think, and so destroying to one's peace of mind. I'm afraid I am right. There was the Lord of Burleigh, you see—a similar case—and you remember *his* sad bereavement; and then the young Pretender, too, and Perkin Warbeck and Lambert Simnel—always such tragic episodes in history. I am sure it is better far to live an open life. I once knew a girl—a pretty girl, too—who masqueraded as a mother's help, and she was the comfort and right hand of a simple, trustful family for years. But truth will out, and I leave you to guess the climax when all was discovered."

"Who was she really, then?" Vera Hay asked with much interest. "What was there to discover?"

"She was a ballet-girl who had strained something permanently, which prevented her from pursuing her calling, yet allowed her to run up and down stairs a hundred times a day. No one would have known that she was n't a simple, modest English girl if they had n't been told, and she kept it up for years. I heard her mistress say with my own ears that Miranda would be a blessing in any home, and then—like a thunderclap—the end came. Did a diamond take that trick?"

"How?" Miss Hay was deeply interested by the story, and obviously bored by the game.

"Oh, she got engaged to a young man in tea, and she told the whole shocking truth to them all the day she left them to get married, when it was too late to do anything. Not the king of spades? Why, I thought that was played long ago. How stupid of me!"

"What did the tea man do?"

"Oh, *he'd* known from the first. But you never can tell what might not have been averted if she had not stooped to deceive, can you?"

No one could, but it did n't matter much, and a diversion came here; a little natural confusion brought about by the surprising second appearance of an ace of hearts, and it was not until it was finally discovered that Audrey had absently absorbed a whole trick into her hand a few minutes before, that any one remembered the real interest of the evening.

Audrey sighed as her partner frankly showed her what she had done with their score.

"You ought n't to make me play," she said. "Every one knows that I don't care for cards. They are so superficial, are n't they? I begged mother only yesterday to let me stand out and talk to any of the players who looked dull, and all this might have been avoided. 'Dearest,' I said, 'you know I always did trump my partner's trick and forget what lead had been called for, from my earliest days, did n't I?' And mother said, 'Oh, yes,' but that I ought to get more practice in the game if I am to be a clergyman's wife, and a real influence."

It was a most interesting drive. Every one said so. Even young Osgood, later on in the interval, when he was waiting on Lise in the supper room, told her that *he'd* had his suspicions too; for the man was so much like a groom that if he was n't one he could only have been a Duke.

"What a rum business it has been, has n't it? And Miss Cogwheel's engagement—that's queer, too. Do you know, I always thought *I* had a chance there. She seemed to think I understood her so well, and she's never been really understood before. She told me so."

Lise laughed.

"Oh, Harry," she said, "what a child you are! Does any one understand Audrey? We've all tried our best, but she's still a beautiful mystery. There's poor Nigel. He's left his business entirely to Jack, so that we've no possible chance of a holiday now, and gone abroad to drown his sorrows in the Mediterranean. He's so wretched that he'll eat almost anything without a murmur, and he has never said a word about the simple life since he heard the news. I'm afraid he thinks he might have won her if his habits had been those of other men, and regret is always so much harder to bear than remorse, is n't it?"

Osgood laughed. Audrey, coming up, caught Lise's last remark, and put her own construction on it.

"Oh, I hope she won't feel that," she said softly—"not remorse. One does n't want any of one's fellow creatures to suffer. As Percival said at the time, 'Uneasy is the head that wears a crown,' and I thought it such an apt quotation when I heard that Tormentilla was really Lady Alexandra Greenrose and Lord Malinder's youngest daughter, and that she was to marry the Duke of Lavendale almost directly. I feel more pity than anything else. She was an impulsive, misguided girl, Percival thinks, but I feel sure she acted for the best according to her lights. One can only feel sorrow if the lights proved to be but dim and smoky, can one?"

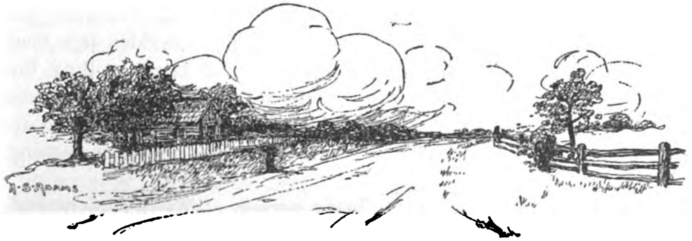
"She was a dear, unselfish child," said Lise warmly, "and very good for all of us, especially Jack and me. You treated her abominably, Audrey."

"You misjudge me"—Audrey turned away with a sigh as she spoke—"and events prove that I was quite right. But the thought of that poor girl driven to make a marriage of convenience is the only blot on my own happiness. Of course, her parents insisted upon it, when Lady Doreen ran away. Aristocratic parents are so hard, so despotic, I always think. 'Dearest,' I said to mother when I heard the news, 'if you and father had disapproved of my engagement I should have broken my heart;' and mother said at once that their one wish was to see me happy—she did really."

"But is n't it possible," Osgood asked in surprise, with a fleeting memory of Tormentilla and John Edward as he had seen them waiting so happily together in the narrow lane for the tardy bridegroom elect, "that they are fond of each other? They seemed very jolly together."

"I think it 's a love match," said Lise with a quiet little smile, for she alone knew the story of the Paradise and the serpent who had swallowed the key, but Audrey shook her head, quite unconvinced. She stood there, elegant and ethereal, with the lamplight shining on her golden hair—a spirit-girl. Mr. Bromsgrove said she looked like a spirit.

"Oh, no," she said wistfully; "in novels perhaps—or even on the stage; but not in real life. How can a duke expect to be loved for himself alone?"



A SISTER TO JIMMY

By E. Mirrielees

◆

THEY talked it over in Eleanor's room the night before. Nancy Wrigg had come in from her bedroom across the hall, filled with the missionary spirit, and, as usual when the spirit was upon her, she did not choose her words.

"It would n't matter if you had a scrap of talent," she adjured the recumbent Eleanor. "It would n't be so bad if you worked even. But, honestly, can you say you 've made one improvement this year? They ought n't to let you keep on at the studio, and if it were the League they would n't."

"Think of my homeless situation if they turned me out," Miss Burke defended herself. "Besides, I 'm their pet. I invented the sneeze, and it turned the life class green with envy. See here, Nannie, did I ever show you about the sneeze?"

"You might go in for vaudeville," Miss Wrigg commented. "I should think you 'd worry a little over wasting your time and money. I know I worried, and I really worked every minute I was in an art school."

"I may as well get up," mourned her victim. "But be accurate, honey, even when you abuse me. It 's Jimmy's money. I never had any."

Miss Wrigg got up, too. The toe of her walking-boot tattooed impatiently against the wooden rocker of her chair.

"I know I 'm cross," she apologized. "I 've been working. But, Eleanor, how can you stand having your brother pay your way year after year? You say he has only his salary. Suppose he should get tired? There is n't a thing you could do."

Miss Burke raised scandalized eyes to the ceiling. "Jimmy get tired of supporting his sister! It 's his chief joy. Besides, it 's good for him." She sat down before the mirror and began pulling the pins from her hair. "I take great credit to myself for Jimmy," she observed sweetly. "He has n't been able to acquire a single bad habit. I 've been a splendid expense to him ever since he began earning money."

"You probably have," Miss Wrigg agreed. "Well, I 've noticed when a person plays lily of the field for one time, Providence evens up the score at some other. What if Jimmy were to lose his position or have something happen to him?"

"Jimmy could n't lose his position—any more than he could ever find another if he did. He started in as office boy, and he 's grown into a piece of the business. And as for anything happening to him"—Miss Burke looked over her shoulder: Nancy's practical disapproval was always a provocation—"if anything did, he 's certainly made me out his life insurance," she ended, drawling a little.

"You 're detestable!" Miss Wrigg flung back at her. "Sometimes I don't see why I like you at all," she added from the threshold.

"Sometimes I don't fathom it myself," Miss Burke admitted. She got up laughing when the door closed. There was a picture of her brother on the mantel. She took it down and held it at arm's length in front of her.

"Your sister 's a bad lot, Jeems," she apostrophized the card. "Ask Nannie Wrigg if she is n't. Now, I suppose she 'll be wroth with me for as much as an hour."

She returned the photograph to its place and went on with her dressing. When she was quite finished she tapped at the opposite door.

"The butterfly is going out," she announced. "The bird of pleasure flutters on the wing. Do you approve of me enough to see if I 'm hooked up behind? It might be a comfort to my brother to know I did n't come to pieces on the streets of Philadelphia."

"You 're horrid," Miss Wrigg relented. "You pretend not to care about anything. I believe it 's a pose."

"Poise, not pose. You 've left out a letter," the other corrected her. "Good-night." She swept down the stairs, watching her light skirts fluff behind her.

It was late when she returned, and it was very late before she woke next morning. She was dimly conscious that some one had been tapping at her door for what seemed an interminable period; as she opened her eyes, she saw the door slide ajar and Nancy Wrigg's head come through the opening. She turned over at that and pulled the watch from under her pillow.

"Hello, Nannie! 'Cruelties' shut down?" she called in greeting.

"I got off for a while," Miss Wrigg answered. She shut the door and came across to the bed. Her practical, affectionate voice shook a little as she spoke. "I don't suppose it amounts to anything, but I thought I 'd come and tell you. It seems they 've had—some kind of an earthquake in San Francisco."

"They 're addicted to them," Miss Burke admitted. "Much of a one? What did the paper say about it?"

"It said—the city was under water. Of course it 's exaggerated."

Miss Burke sat up. "I want to see the paper," she demanded, and the newcomer fled to secure it.

When she returned her friend was sitting on the edge of the bed, feeling her way languidly into a kimona. She took in the flaring headlines at a glance. "I'll get back into bed and read it," she announced. "And I can't keep you from the 'Cruelties,' Nannie. Run along and rescue a deserted infant."

She pushed her consoler gently toward the door and closed it after her. Then she stood still for an instant with clenched hands.

"It's not true," she said under her breath. "*San Francisco!*"

After a moment she gave herself a little shake and began getting into her clothes. Nannie had not gone back to the "Cruelties." She heard her moving about in the hall and called to her: "Come on in, Nan. I'm nearly dressed. If you're really going to take a day off, we'll have breakfast downtown and go look at the bulletins. You know you'd be a dreadful temptation to the Philadelphia joke artist. This might be called a Quaker holiday."

"Oh, how can you?" cried Miss Wrigg.

She had occasion to repeat the exclamation many times during the day. The black speculation of the bulletins shook her so that she could scarcely endure Eleanor's show of indifference.

"But then she's probably just showing off," she forced down her rising anger, "and it is easier for her friends."

She made a brief expedition of her own before working hours the next morning and went in at lunch-time to give Eleanor the information she had gleaned.

"Was it Clay & Erlanger your brother worked for? I went to see Mr. Cory this morning—he ships for them—and he says there won't be a chance of their resuming. He says they always did handle too much stock for their capital. I did n't go because I was curious," she defended herself against the other's look. "I thought perhaps—Mary Orr was wired for from Charleston yesterday. Her sister was in San Francisco, and her mother had some kind of a heart attack. And I thought possibly her position—just till your brother gets started at something again——"

"I believe you are that valuable possession, a friend in need," Miss Burke jeered gently. "You're the best person in the world, Nannie, but would n't it be premature? I'll probably have a wire from Jimmy in a day or two: 'San Francisco destroyed. Sending increased allowance for nerve tonic,' and I'd hate to disappoint him." Her lips quivered a little and she put up her hand to cover them. "I keep thinking of the funniest things. Just while I was speaking I thought, 'Lotta's Fountain's gone,' and I believe I care more about missing that than anything—and it was the ugliest fountain on earth."

"I should think you'd care more about hearing from your brother," Miss Wrigg remonstrated. "I should think you'd be glad of the chance to help him. I would, and I'd send him word that things were turned about now, and all he'd done for me——"

Miss Burke sprang up from her chair. For the moment even her soft, lazy voice was sharpened with anger. "Oh, I *wish* you'd be still!" she cried shrilly. "I wish you'd go to your *own* room once in a while. I get so *tired* hearing you talk."

She apologized later for the outburst, but in such fashion that her friend was left uncertain whether she were more grieved or amused at her own loss of self-command; uncertain, too, whether her mock-humble application for the proffered work were from desire or as a form of penance.

Of one thing she was quickly made sure. Eleanor could do the work. And the dingy headquarters of the "Cruelties"—the same being the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children—set her off gloriously. Eleanor's manner too was as perfect as her appearance—a compound of enjoying interest and respect. Miss Wrigg, observing it, jubilated inwardly, and on the car going home passed on her jubilation to its object.

"You'll get on," she rejoiced. "You'll be ranking me in three months, and then they'll give you one of their big society positions, where all you have to do is to look nice and manage people. I hope you do stay with it, Eleanor. You haven't—heard?"

"The wires being still inactive, I have not. I told them at the house to send anything that came to the office. I knew you'd so love to hear from Jimmy."

"I would love to," Miss Wrigg admitted. In her own mind she was becoming painfully certain as to Jimmy. She glanced up at her friend from time to time, with a sort of indignant wonder at her density, and she rejected Eleanor's proposal that they "go somewhere" almost with horror.

"Well, I'm going," Eleanor assured her. "I've always heard the working woman was privileged to go out alone. I'm going to a ten-cent theatre. Look here, Nannie, do you suppose I'll have to take a vacation every month to spend what the 'Cruelties' pays me? I've only worked one day, and already ten cents looks as big as a dollar."

"It does make a difference when you work for it," Miss Wrigg agreed absently.

She heard Eleanor moving about in her room long after she herself was in bed, and found her already waiting on the landing when she emerged in the morning.

"I couldn't sleep," the girl owned. "Every time I closed my eyes

I saw that office. Oh, Jeems, Jeems! I think you might look out better than this for your sister."

"Don't!" Miss Wrigg cried. "Don't blame your brother!"

"Well, I don't blame him exactly, but it's inconvenient," her friend argued petulantly. "You need n't scold, Nannie. When you look shocked, you'd make a perfect sister for Jimmy. If you wore ready-made clothes, I'd think it was Jeems in disguise."

"Well, come on," Miss Wriggs terminated the conversation, and the two went down the steps, Eleanor's air of conscious injury folding around her like a garment.

It stayed around her, Miss Wrigg observed, even after they were at work, not indeed in the form of pathos, but in a tolerant patience of eyes and voice which rasped across her friend's taut nerves like a file.

"I won't go near her," the latter decided as the noon hour drew on. "If I do, I'll say something to be sorry for. I won't get within speaking distance——" and abruptly, the thought unfinished, she was flying toward the other's chair in the van of a blue-coated messenger boy.

Miss Burke watched their approach with no attempt to rise and meet them. She finished dating the card under her hand and signed her name in full in the boy's book before tearing open the envelope with which he presented her. When he had turned away she spread out the yellow sheet and slowly read its contents, forming each word with her lips:

Don't worry hunting new job nothing doing yet money later.

She passed the crackling sheet to Miss Wrigg with the curling lip of sisterly superiority.

"I'd know it was from Jeems without the signature," she commented. "Uses just his ten words and does n't waste any of them in telling me he's all right."

And, having commented, the third assistant of the "Cruelties" suddenly laid her head upon her desk and laughed and sobbed, and wailed aloud to the raftered ceilings.

It was, of course, useless to send an answer to a telegram headed simply "Oakland"; it was an extravagance to let that useless answer exceed ten words, and foolish to be in such haste as to waste one's lunch hour finding an office; but, in spite of all these facts, at twenty minutes past twelve the elderly woman operator at the Western Union leaned out from her wire cage to caress the arm of a tall, hysterical girl who alternately sobbed and chuckled while she scrawled the two lines of her message:

Don't worry yourself. Got job myself. Sending you a check the first.

ZELPHINE'S WEDDING JOURNEY

By Anne Hollingsworth Wharton

◆

KEIGHLEY, July 20th.

DEAR MARGARET:

You will wonder, when you read this letter-heading, where we are and why we are here. I wondered myself, because Walter would give me no satisfaction, having planned this little detour as a surprise to me. Only when looking over some post-cards at a stationer's and finding a lot of Haworth pictures—the Brontë house, the Black Bull, and the Church—did it suddenly dawn upon me that *Keithley,* as these remarkable Britons call it, is the Keighley which Mrs. Gaskell speaks of as an old-fashioned village on the road to Haworth. Walter's delight over my surprise and his success in "doing me," to be quite English, would have amused you and Allen.

This manufacturing town, grimy with the smoke of many worsted mills, is a prosaic enough entrance to the home of the writers of the most romantic and imaginative fiction of their day. Dull and gray as it looks after the rich verdure and bloom of Canterbury and the Kentish country, I shall always hold Keighley in grateful remembrance as the gate to a day of perfect happiness in Haworth. This is my real wedding journey, because it was all planned for me, and is a pilgrimage so entirely after my own heart; but before I enter upon Haworth delights I must tell you of a curious experience last night at the Commercial Hotel, where we are stopping.

Somewhere in the "wee sma' hours," I know not just when, I was suddenly aroused from a sound sleep by a loud and persistent knocking at the door, and a loud voice calling out something about an old gentleman who had no light and could not find his way to his bed. As this circumstance did not seem especially to concern us, we paid no attention to it until the voice again called out that we had turned off "the central switch," and the whole house was as black as a coal-mine. I then remembered that, when I turned off the electric light, I had noticed a number of wires crossing the room near the ceiling, and that we had been told that the spacious apartment that we occupied was the manager's room.

The old gentleman's dilemma was of so Pickwickian a flavor, and the whole affair was so amusing, especially Walter's wrath over what was quite our own fault, that we forgot our annoyance in the humor of the situation and began the day—for it must then have been after one o'clock—with a hearty laugh.

The next day, the one day we were to devote to Haworth, it was raining. We are inclined to think that it always rains in Yorkshire, the skies are so leaden. By eleven o'clock, the hour for one of the infrequent trains leaving for Haworth, the rain had ceased, but the clouds were still heavy and lowering. When, however, we saw the sombre little town quite two miles before we reached the station, upon its hilltop with dun and purple hills rising above it, just as Mrs. Gaskell described it, we concluded that clouds and gray skies best became Haworth. Its associations are certainly not of the gayest, when we remember the semi-tragic life of the three remarkable women who lived here, and their daily and hourly struggle with poverty and ill-health, while across their path was ever the shadow of the ill-doing of the brilliant, beloved, but weak and ill-governed Branwell Brontë.

We were travelling third-class to-day, for local color, and you will, I think, admit that we found it. A portly and red-faced man, still in that debatable land which we are pleased to call middle life, was talking quite earnestly to a companion in a language which we supposed to be Yorkshire, and which we managed to understand, even though I am not clever enough to put it on paper. We gathered from the stranger's remarks, interlarded as they were with some quite unfamiliar expletives, that he had not been pleased with his accommodations at the Commercial Inn at Keighley. Then, in quite plain English, he exclaimed, "When I came to the inn at one o'clock, it was all dark, and so, stumbling and batting about, I opened what I thought to be my door. A scream followed, 'Robbers! Fire!' Fortunately I recognized the voice of the manageress, and, quieting her alarm by telling her I had made a mistake, and that the house was as black as a coal-mine, she set about finding out what was the matter."

We were deeply interested by this time, and considerably disconcerted. The speaker's English was evidently a concession to our ignorance, as he was pleased to include us in the conversation.

"And what was it—fuse burned out?" asked the comrade.

"No, some fule of a woman had turned off the central switch. An American—I fancy they don't know much about electricity in that wild country."

"Where, oh, where did Franklin fly his kite?" murmured Walter.

"The manageress had gone to bed, I fancy, but where was the night watchman?" queried the listener.

"Sound asleep in the office. But did you ever hear of such a fule trick?"

Smothering our laughter, we acknowledged that we never had, and, to divert attention from my burning cheeks and confusion of countenance, Walter began to look over his time tables and to ask questions about trains to York. Among other papers and notes there fell upon the floor an introduction to the proprietor of the Black Bull in Haworth, which had been pressed upon us by our landlord at Canterbury. Our friend of the midnight adventure picked up the note, and, as he returned it, said quite civilly, "I see my name on the envelope. What can I do for you?"

Walter explained, and he and the host of the Black Bull were soon talking together, the latter informing our ignorance as to localities and distances, while I, the guilty one, the disturber of the night's peace, looked out of the window, and thought of the Brontë sisters, who so often walked these four miles between Keighley and Haworth, as there was no railroad in their time, and a hack from the Devonshire Arms was too great a luxury to be indulged in often.

As there were no hacks at the station to-day, we climbed up the hillside road, which is so steep that the stones are zigzagged to keep men and horses from slipping. At the top is the principal village street, on which stands the Black Bull, Branwell Brontë's favorite resort.

Our guide insisted upon our stopping first to see his inn, which is the quaintest and most individual that we have found anywhere, with its black oak and shining pewter, very much, I fancy, as it looked in the days of the Brontës. The daughter of mine host of the Black Bull, a pretty, rosy-cheeked lassie, at her father's suggestion, constituted herself our cicerone. A more intelligent guide we might have found, but none more willing or cheerful. Whether showing us the tablet to Charlotte Brontë in Haworth Church, or pointing out to us the windows of her room at the rectory, the little maid's countenance was wreathed in smiles, probably in view of prospective shillings. Her one idea seemed to be to take us to the Brontë Museum, but we preferred to linger near the house, which is somewhat enlarged since the Brontës lived here and now has, in front of it, a tidy little garden and lawn. Some flowers and shrubs have been induced to grow here where once a few straggling currant bushes struggled for existence on the bare strip of ground between the house and the churchyard wall. On the other three sides the house is set about with grave-stones. Across the street is the school-house, the church quite near toward the village, and beyond the street opens out upon the lonely moors that Emily Brontë so loved that she pined and grew pale and ill when away from them. It was the sense of liberty that the moors gave her that Emily delighted in, and here were the elemental forces that she longed to meet in nature and in men and women.

There must have been something of the primitive woman in these sisters, especially in Emily, whose free and untamed soul, as Matthew Arnold wrote,

> Knew no fellow for might,
> Passion, vehemence, grief,
> Daring, since Byron died.

Coming of a mingled strain of Cornish and Irish ancestry, both poetic and imaginative strains, the inherited tendencies of the Brontës were developed by the loneliness of a home where there were few visitors and no childish friendships. The sensitive and imaginative girls wrote weird and romantic dramas and acted them for the pleasure of their own circle, which included their father and their brother Branwell.

Although we had been told that the present rector of Haworth admitted no visitors, having doubtless been bored to extinction by curious tourists, I plucked up courage to sound the knocker, hoping, quite unreasonably, that some exception might be made in our favor, only to be met with an uncompromising rebuff administered in the expressionless tone of an official guide: "No visitors admitted without a letter of introduction." And so, having no letter, we were denied the pleasure of seeing the interior of the Brontë home, and above all the dining-room, that is so intimately associated with the life and work of Charlotte and Emily. Here it was, says Mrs. Gaskell, after their simple supper and their allotted task of needlework, in which the sisters all excelled, that they would walk around and around the table, their arms intertwined, discussing plans for school-keeping, teaching, and in later years the plots for their novels. The demure little elder sister combined with her soul of fire and her rich imaginative faculty a saving sense of humor and so much sweetness and domestic charm that she more than once made havoc with the hearts of her father's curates. The appearance and disappearance of her several suitors served to vary the monotony of Charlotte's life, but Emily and Anne were too painfully shy and reserved to indulge to any extent in recreations of the same sort, although Emily in childhood is said to have been the prettiest of the three, and we have Charlotte's authority for the statement that the curates sometimes "cast sheep's eyes at Anne."

Dear, gentle Anne Brontë, as her brother-in-law called her, seems to us a vague and shadowy personality. She was perhaps understood by no one except her bosom companion and confidante, Emily. Her life was passed at Haworth, to which place she was brought as a baby, only leaving home to fulfil the uncongenial task of a governess at neighboring country houses. It seems that only once did Anne go from home on a pleasure trip. The record is in Emily's diary in 1845.

> Anne and I went on our first long journey by ourselves together, leaving home the thirtieth of June, Monday, sleeping at York, returning to Keighley Tuesday evening, sleeping there and walking home on Wednesday morning.

This same long journey to York we had planned to make from Keighley this afternoon, had not Brontë associations absorbed us body and soul to the exclusion of everything else. Instead of the two or three hours that we were assured would be quite long enough for Haworth, we have given up the entire day to it, only returning to Keighley in time for a late dinner.

As we strolled across the moors back of the parsonage we recalled the description given by Mrs. Brontë's nurse of the six little creatures, the eldest but seven, who used to walk out hand in hand over these moorland paths. "I used to think them spiritless," said the nurse, "they were so different to any children I had ever seen. In part I set it down to a fancy Mr. Brontë had of not letting them have flesh meat to eat. It was from no wish for saving," she explained, "for there was plenty and even waste in the house, but he thought children should be brought up simply and hardily." And so for the fancies of a whimsical and eccentric father these high-strung, imaginative children, whose minds were always developed at the expense of their bodies, were deprived of proper food. Maria's and Elizabeth's frail constitutions, as you remember, yielded to the prevailing malady at Cowan's Bridge. The three remaining sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne, always more or less delicate, died under forty.

This was our first sight of the moors, which are less lonely now that so many stone quarries have been opened here than in the days when the sisters walked toward the purple black hills and the little waterfall that they loved. But even so, there is something weird and impressive about these long sweeps of slightly rolling country edged by a line of sinuous hills which stretch off into more distant reaches of upland, giving one a sense of boundless space. To-day a leaden sky hung low as if to shut in this barren treeless expanse from the outside world. Surely here were all the elements for tragedy, and as we thought of the parsonage with its surrounding gravestones, looking out upon this lonely upland, we did not wonder that the sensitive, impressionable Charlotte should have written "Jane Eyre" and "Shirley," or that Emily's wild, untrammelled imagination should have burned itself out in the almost inconceivable pages of "Wuthering Heights"!

After an indifferent luncheon at the Black Bull, we spent a delightful hour in the Brontë Museum, which is Haworth's memorial to its gifted daughter. Here are a number of letters and personal effects of Charlotte Brontë's, among them a silk gown with a bayadere stripe of plum color and brown. This rather dismal garment is marked "Charlotte Brontë's wedding dress," but we had it on Mrs. Gaskell's authority that the bride wore a white embroidered muslin and a white bonnet trimmed with green leaves, in which she looked "like a snowdrop," and so we were quite unwilling to accept the plum-colored gown, although ready to believe, as the card further stated, that "those who saw the wedding said she tripped along like a little fairy."

The fairy boots in which the bride tripped along we saw later in the house of a daughter of one of Mr. Brontë's parishioners. Such tiny boots they were, what used to be called gaiters, laced up the sides and made of a piece of the plum-colored silk. The fairy gaiters and a pair of stays, long and cruelly stiff as to bones, and about large enough in the waist for a robust doll, gave us a realizing sense of the fragile figure and small stature of the modest little authoress who went up to the great city of London to visit her publishers,—so simple and country-like with all her genius.

For some reason, the plum-colored gown and the tiny boots brought tears to my eyes, even more than the tablet in Haworth Church, to Charlotte, wife of the Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls,—perhaps because they made more real the brief period of love and wedded happiness that cast a sunset radiance over the shadowed life of Charlotte Brontë. In thinking of her now I find myself rejoicing over the few simple pleasures that came to the self-sacrificing daughter and devoted sister; her visit to her husband's family in Ireland, her liking for these new relations, and, above all, the joy that came to her from being cherished and cared for, she whose chief thought had always been for others.

Thus the day's experience that began with a laugh ended with a tear, and yet, taken all in all, I can remember no happier day than this, brimful, as it has been, with associations that turn the prose of life into poetry. It is late and so *au revoir.*

Your ever devoted

ZELPHINE

THE DESTINY OF RIP

A DOG STORY

By Karl von Kraft

"MR. CRAWLEY, you must get rid of that dog!"

Crawley said nothing. It was a habit of his when Mrs. Crawley had delivered an ultimatum.

"Ever since you brought home that splay-footed, drop-eared, yellow-barrelled pup this neighborhood has been seething with interest. I could stand the profane swearing of Ikeman's cats, and the squawking of Keller's chickens, while Rip is chasing them, but when he takes to dessicating my new white lace petti——"

"My dear," broke in Crawley, "I'm willing to part with him—but how?"

"Give him away, of course," sniffed Mrs. Crawley. "Nothing easier. You're always bragging about his pedigree."

So, the next day being Friday—and the thirteenth—Crawley began to give Rip away.

How that knowing pup scented the plot, I cannot conceive, but he must have divined it, else why did he spike Crawley's first gun by affectionately wiping his muddy hide on Mr. Wilkins's snowy flannel trousers just as the grateful Wilkins was about to receive Rip as a gift from his friend Crawley?

Crawley thought he caught Rip in a wicked wink, but he could n't be sure.

In the next block Crawley met his old friend Heywood. Just the man! Simple-hearted, benevolent Heywood. Only last week he had intimated his yearning for a trusty watch-dog—one that would be gentle with the several Heywood babies. Such a domestic treasure would find a good home, etc., etc.

Crawley greeted his friend enthusiastically, while Rip engaged a few fleas in an animated game of tag.

"B'lieve you wanted a dog, Heywood, old chap?"

"That's what I do, Crawley. Know of a good one?"

"Do I? Well! Here, Rip! Now look at that thoroughbred, Heywood. Do you think I'd part with a promising pup like that if we had room for him? Our—ah—lot's too small to give him exercise. You now, have just the place for a dog—fine yard, plenty of lawn, all that sort of thing, you know."

"Gentle? Safe with the kids, Crawley?"

"Look at him, Heywood. Ever see a milder little cuss for a well bred animal?"

Heywood looked—and gasped.

Rip was placidly reposing upon the front stoop of a house across the street which bore the sinister sign "Smallpox."

"'Nother day, Craw—Crawley," stammered Heywood. "Must meet 'gagement." And off he dashed.

Under his breath Crawley mentioned some unpublished facts regarding Rip's pedigree. He was prepared to make deposition that Rip smiled knowingly as, tongue rakishly lolling out on one side, he came loping up to his disloyal lord.

Crawley took fresh courage, however, as the spare figure of Theodore Hopkins, his old-time friend, punctured the horizon with its bony outline.

Crawley waited. So did Rip—at the utmost end of the leading chain which his master had now attached to his collar.

"Just the fellow I wanted to see, Hopkins," cried Crawley expansively. "I'm going away for a while"—he just thought of that—"and I hate to sell a blooded dog like that"—pointing with affectionate admiration to where Rip sat hungrily licking his drooling chops as he eyed a package protruding from Mr. Hopkins's basket. "Now," went on Crawley, a generous note in his voice, "if I could find a good home—a *good* home, mind you, Theodore, where my wife could be dead sure that Rip would meet——"

The fatal word added the last straw to Rip's load of virtue. He made a passionate dash for Mr. Hopkins's basket, which the owner had deposited just behind him.

With that attention to geometrical axioms for which Rip deserved to be famous, if not universally beloved, he made a straight line between Mr. Hopkins's attenuated calves for the veal in the basket. Naturally, he met with minor interruptions. Assisted by a diabolical banana-skin, Mr. Hopkins flung his gray-trousered legs violently into the pit of Crawley's stomach and himself sat down on Rip, the veal, and the basket.

With a lightning squirm and a suffocated yowl Rip upset his oppressor a second time and bolted for home—accompanied by Hopkins's veal—but not by his benediction.

Crawley painfully followed. Rip declined to be given away.

At the council of war in the Crawley home that evening the wife humanely declared against poisoning or drowning. Her spouse, in unusual rancor, intimated that her moderation was due to her not having tried to give the pup away.

"Well, let the boys sell him to-morrow. They may have the money for themselves," decided Mrs. Crawley.

Rip spent a profitable and hilarious Saturday morning playing with Billy and Ted. Never were his antics so enchanting and surprising. It is true, with painstaking zeal he investigated into the nature of those curious bulbs Mrs. Crawley had lately set out; he hobnobbed sociably with the Washburn's brindle pug, in the pansy bed; and had to be forcibly pried loose from the Sunday roast. But these little incidents merely toned him up for a good dinner of fancy pigeon (from an adjacent pen) and the afternoon walk (at the end of the humiliating chain) with the boys down-town to the bird and dog store, kept by a rotund German dog doctor.

Billy and Ted, following the unabashed Rip, boldly entered the shop. Rip was enchanted. So were the boys. Monkeys chattered, magpies screeched, cockatoos preened gorgeous wings, Angora cats snoozed peacefully, puppies gambolled; it was a regular Garden of Eden before the fall.

Alas, Rip was cast to play the serpent. And it may be admitted that he assumed the rôle with verve and dash.

"Wotch yer goin' to gimme fer this dog?" said Billy, as the dealer bore down upon him.

"Vat 's de matter uf him?"

"Matter?"

"Yah, he is seek, ain'd it? And I shall gif you sometings for him?"

The dealer stooped to lay hold of Rip, but he cleverly side-stepped the German's clutch.

"Yawk!" called the rainbow cookatoo just over Rip's head. The pup took notice.

"Funny thing, that," thought Rip, and looked at the bird disapprovingly.

"Want to sell 'im," said Billy. "He ain't sick; he 's got a pedigree. Wotch yer gimme fer 'im?"

"Yaw—awk!" said the cockatoo with a sarcastic leer at the yellow pup.

Rip did n't quite understand the remark, but he took it in fun, at any rate, and made a friendly snap at the cockatoo's flowing tail feathers.

Much to his surprise he got them, and with a blood-curdling screech down came cockatoo, perch, seed-box, and all. As Rip sprang out of reach of the threatening avalanche of tins, talons, and feathers he added to the general gaiety by upsetting a large aquarium with a terrific crash and splash.

Rip established a new in-door record as he tore the leading-chain from Billy's clutch and disappeared through the door.

"You pays me for dis, you young gheats!" roared the infuriated German, making a grab at Billy and Ted. But they squirmed free and soon were in hot pursuit of Rip—joined by an increasing mob yelling, "Mad dog! Shoot him! Mad dog!"

But Rip was not to be caught. By uncanny instinct he took a circuitous route, and by the time Billy and Ted had arrived in the back yard he was drying his aquarium-soaked coat—and leisurely eating a large fat gold-fish.

"There is nothing left," said Mrs. Crawley that evening after the boys were in bed, "but for you, Mr. Crawley, to take Rip out to the pond to-morrow morning while the boys are at Sunday school, tie a stone to his collar, and—I hate to say it—drown him."

She averted her face from where the yellow streak of adolescent homeliness lay prone upon the lounge, lazily blinking and dreaming of delicious stolen morsels and fights of delirious delight.

"Poor little beggar!" murmured Crawley.

"Mr. Crawley, don't you dare work on my sympathies! Do you know what that pup did just before supper?"

"No-o, my dear," faltéred the tender-hearted Crawley.

"Why, he pulled the roasting chicken out of the oven and laid it on Ted's clean shirt waist that I'd just done up. That 's what he did. You must get rid of him."

Crawley sighed—as much in painful anticipation of the job as from sympathy for the predestined Rip.

Sunday morning the pup was on his good behavior. No criminal about to be executed could have spent his last hours more sedately. When the boys innocently started for Sunday-school, unconscious of the last dire designs upon their strenuous play-fellow, he wagged his tail forlornly and—was it imagination, or did unshed tears really glitter in his soft brown eyes?

At length Crawley and Rip started, at funeral pace, for the pond. Mrs. Crawley secretly watched their departure with a lump in her throat, remembering how fluffily soft was little Rip, and how lovingly he nestled against her cheek, when Mr. Crawley had first proudly brought him home. Why, he was so small that he slept in her work-basket, and she could even now feel the rough little tongue as it lapped the milk from her finger when she taught him to drink from a saucer. She remembered how he would tag around after her, holding on to her skirts, getting under her feet and yapping in sheer delight—but Mrs. Crawley hastily turned into the house.

Only once her husband looked back as he led poor Rip along. He could see no relenting figure at the doorway, so he trudged heavily on.

At last they arrived at the pond. It was a balmy June day; the white-flecked sky was mirrored in the placid water, trees nodded their branches sleepily, the chirp of birds proclaimed holiday, June droned in the air.

Crawley and Rip sat down on the sunny side of a little wooded point which jutted out into the pond. In a few minutes Crawley was asleep. So was Rip.

By and by Crawley lazily awakened to the sound of hilarious shouts and splashing and laughter on the other side of the point. Rip was sitting up and looking pathetically at his leading chain, which his master still clutched.

"Hey, you fellers, come on in! Aw, ye dassent! 'Fraid babies, 'fraid babies!"

"Dast, too!"

"Naw, ye dassent. Ye *know* ye dassent. Watch me bring up a white stone."

Sounds of more splashing and puffing.

Crawley could not see the bathers, but he knew a little naked body was sinking down to the shallow bottom as two nut-brown arms waved above the unseen head.

Rip wagged his tail frantically. He knew what it all meant. Had n't he often been in swimming at this very sandy bottom with Billy and Ted?

"Wotch yer 'fraid of? Come on in! It 's slick."

"Shall we? Heh?" hesitated a voice from the bank.

"I don't care. Pop won't know," replied a second small voice.

Sound of clothes hastily peeling off.

Rip whined and tugged and wagged in a frenzy of desire.

"Guess we 'll go watch the kids, Rip," said Crawley as he arose. "We can attend to you after they 've gone away. *Your* little playmates, Rip, are in Sunday school."

Rip leaped for joy.

As they rounded the point two naked small boys were just ready to slip into the water.

"Billy! Ted!" gasped their astounded father.

With a frightened howl Billy darted for cover, but Ted, fairly paralyzed with terror, simply toppled over into the water and disappeared.

But Rip had broken away and was in after him in a flash, all before Crawley could wink his eyes.

In a second Ted came up, shook the water out of his eyes—and swam like a fish for shore, with Rip a close second.

"Well," thought Crawley, that evening as he puffed at his cigar on the front porch, "a pup that 'll—ah—risk his life to save one of the boys must have a chance to grow up to be a useful member of society. But I guess I 'll have to watch Rip a little closer during his puppy-days—and he 'll be all right."

No, the boys were n't spanked.

And Mrs. Crawley wondered what might have happened that Sunday when Ted fell in the pond—if he had n't known how to swim.

ALIEN

BY PEMBERTON GINTHER

WHEN twilight comes,
And all the fluffy, twittering birds are cuddled in their homes,
I wonder if the cuckoo's child
Feels strange among the rest,
And longs for her own mother's wing in her own mother's nest!

When midnight falls
Upon the glooming branches which flank the forest walls,
I think the baby owl who tries
To flutter helpless wings
Must tremble at those other nests so filled with sleeping things.

When morning breaks
And all the radiant summer world of tree and hilltop wakes,
I know that where the tiny roads
Beneath the grass-roots run,
A little eyeless mole is sick with longing for the sun.

THE QUARREL

By Kate Jordan

❧

"I'M quite sure of one thing," she said, with a cooing accusation, her head turned slightly from him, "and that is——"

"That I love you so terribly it frightens me?" He lifted the brown hand that had been playing with the pine needles and gently kissed its every finger. "Is that what you 're so sure of, Betty?" This as he laid the fragrant palm against his cheek. "Well, you 're right, dear—if that 's it," he said, with a long sigh of peace.

They were in the wonderful, soul-stirring silence of the Adirondack woods. The gold of the evening sky glittered above the pronged trees. Oars and boat-cushions, that had been carried, were lying in a heap near them. She was sitting on the ground, against a fallen pine. His head was resting on her knees. Other people did not matter to them. The wars of nations, political strife, the discovery of new genius, were all trifles. The world was a ball to be spun to their liking. For they were young and in love in the exalted yet besotted way that deifies that one fact and cheapens all others.

"But that is not what I meant, Bob." An excited breath broke on the words.

"Then it must be this—that you 're an angel, and that in marrying you I 'll be rewarded far beyond my earthly deserts." He smiled up at her, securely awaiting a warm contradiction.

Instead she began running a finger lightly across the line of sunbrown that slashed his brow. "That 's something like it. Yes, I think that expresses it exactly."

He laughed and rose to his elbow. "You vain, cheeky thing!" But she looked at him so accusingly he grew serious. "What 's up? What have I done?"

"It 's what you have n't done, Robert."

"Robert?" he echoed. "This gets tragic. What have n't I done, Elizabeth Ann?"

"Don't," she said, and frowned.

"Well, you look it as you sit there," he teased. "Yes, as you put your head up that way and set your mouth, you 're the living image—for the first time—of your awful, full name."

"It 's all very well to take it so lightly," she said, her gaze sad and searching; "but I'm not keeping things from you. I have n't had a past—and secrets."

"Thank God, no!" he said, his eyes warm, as he tried to take her hand again.

"But you—you have;" and the hand he wanted was shot behind her back. "The thing I'm sure of is this—*you have not told me everything.*"

He remained silent for a moment. "I don't quite understand you, dear. What sort of things do you want me to tell you?"

He saw she was very much in earnest. Her eyes were clouded, her face set under the light coat of tan, the breath strained in her long, full throat that rose above the boyish collar of her serge blouse.

"You remember the day after I said I'd marry you?" Her dignity bent a little and her voice melted at the memory.

"The day after? Not as well as I remember *the day,*" he said, a little reproach in the tone.

"You told me some things about yourself that day," she went on hastily—"some mistakes in the past that you were sorry for, some foolish things of all sorts—scrapes at college, and all that. I believed you had told me everything that mattered. I trusted you. I forgave you whatever you had done that was foolish. But"—the girlish tone grew surprisingly hard—"there are things shut in your heart that I know nothing of."

He stared at her, puzzled, and then laughed softly, as at a memory. He did not see her wince at the laugh.

"That's just what my dad said." He nodded.

"And what was the amusing thing your father said?"

"He treated me to some observations on the sex to which you belong, Betty. 'My boy,' he said, 'a woman is the most inquisitive of all living things. Eve began it, and every mother's daughter since,' said dad, 'takes after her. They have an intense curiosity about every slightest thing that in the remotest way touches the man they love. They are particularly keen about his past. The lady novelists are responsible for this—lady novelists believe that all men are walking sepulchres of dead sins,' said dad. 'You, my boy, will be questioned about that past. You're only twenty-six, and you have n't done anything very wicked, but you won't be believed. In fact,' said dad, 'I'm not sure that you'll be really popular unless you pretend to have some grave faults from which marriage reclaims you as a brand from the burning, because a woman, my boy,' said dad, 'would rather feel that she had had a hand in reforming a man by marrying him, than marry a Sir Galahad ready-made, who'd give her none of the credit——"

But Betty sprang up and brushed past him, leaving him sitting astonished among the pine-needles, staring at her.

"Don't tell me any more," she said, her voice shaking. "Your father's cynicisms are nothing to me."

He swung himself up by his wrist and faced her.

"Betty, what 's the matter with you? You 've been thinking of something all day." He laid his hands on her shoulders, but she brushed them away.

"Your father was mocking me."

"Nonsense! That 's just the funny way that dad runs on—dear old dad!"

"Yes, runs on—in his club window!"

"Why should n't he?" His eyes gave back a flash like that in her own. "What 's the matter with his club window? He 's an old man—sixty-two. He 's done with Wall Street, after thirty years there that have left me rich enough to give you to the full what your father has always given you. Why should n't he sit in his club, pray?"

"Laughing at holy things?" the girl demanded.

"He does n't. A woman's foolish fancies are not holy things. A woman's suspicion is not a holy thing. Her offensive curiosity is not a holy thing."

"Offensive?" she faltered. "Can any interest I take in you be *offensive?*"

"Yes," he said flatly. "If I had secrets that made my marriage to you wrong—secrets that could hurt you or any one else—I 'd be no better than a swindler who gets what he wants by appearing what he is not. Nevertheless, you keep doubting me. And as you have started this, I 'll tell you now that you have done something even worse—you have tried to make me betray other people to you."

"You are talking in riddles," she said icily. "I wish you 'd explain."

"Did n't you try to make me tell you all about why Harry Porter left college, why his engagement was smashed, why he bolted to the Klondike? Did n't you try to make me tell you all about my cousin Effie—that foolish boy-and-girl love affair of five years ago, and why our engagement only lasted a month? You know you did. But did I put you on this sort of a gridiron about Ted Black, that every one thought you 'd marry?—about Count Feydeau, who followed you from Paris? You know I did n't. I asked you if you loved me. You did. That was all that interested me. You see, Betty," he said, his voice very earnest, "there are things that should be sacred to each of us. Because I love you, shall I cease being a distinct creature, a man who can keep his faith with a friend? Now you know what I mean by offensive curiosity. Men hate it. They not only hate it—they fear it."

Bob's eyes had an unusual look. The boyishness was replaced by a grave, mature questioning, as if they gazed past Betty into the long, long years where they were to walk together.

"I hope," he said, after a heavy pause, "you 're not going to be one of those wives who open their husbands' letters quite as if they were their own."

Betty's face grew hot. "The wish implies a doubt that 's scarcely flattering."

"I 've heard from older men," said Bob miserably, "that some wives are like that."

"Doubtless they permit their husbands a like privilege, at any rate," she said, her lip curling.

"A man would n't want the privilege, nor enjoy it."

"Would n't care enough perhaps."

"Would care too much, and trust too much. Besides, I believe"—and an unthinking little chuckle broke from him—"yes, by Jove, I do—that the most important thing women get out of this is a feline sort of enjoyment in reading something not meant for them."

She gave him a long, bewildered, scorching look, and, catching up her sailor hat from the fallen tree, went from him so rapidly her skirts made a flurry of undulations about her feet. He left the oars and the boat-cushions, and was after her in a light, swinging run down the glade of the wood where the lemon-colored glitter poured as if from electrified metal.

"Betty!" He reached her and flung one bared, coercing arm about her. "Darling!"

"Don't," she said, wheeling on him. Her face, being pale, was ghastly in the unearthly radiance. "You despise women. You have betrayed yourself. And I thought you—but no matter what I thought. Your father's cynicism has not been wasted on you. You happen to have a *fancy* for me—that 's what you call it in your heart, no doubt—but I 'm nevertheless a woman—that poor, contemptible thing! According to your code—and the code of most men, I begin to believe—a woman can be laughed at and lied to——"

"*There!*" The word was like an imperative touch and stayed her. Bob's face was cold. "Don't say any more by way of description of me, if you please. I 'd like some facts instead. When was I proven a liar?"

"Deception is a lie without speech." The miserable words had a triumph of a sort in them. "You 'll have the truth. Yesterday afternoon when you were wrestling with Alan a locket fell out of your pocket." She watched him closely. "I saw what you did—heard what you said. You thought I 'd gone into the tent—I had n't—I 'd gone just behind the tree to get some twigs for the fire. I saw the locket fall open—there was a picture in it. Alan tried to snatch it up—you got it first—you kissed it and showed it to Alan, and you laughed as if you 'd done something clever. He asked you who it was—you whispered something—then you laughed again and said, 'Not a word to Betty, old man.'"

As her words rushed out, he grew intent, quiet. When she flung the last phrase at him with all the content of which her voice was capable, his gaze sank from hers to the ground. She waited until his silence became an answer. It was the only answer he could make, she told herself.

"Have you anything to say?"

He smiled a little wanly. "Your instinct was to doubt me at once?"

"Your own words to Alan——" she began, but he continued as if he had not heard.

"Your instinct was to doubt me at once," he said conclusively. "You did n't think the picture might be yours?"

"How could I? Alan said, 'Who is it?' Even the big, old-fashioned locket," she said bitterly, "I 'd never seen before."

"You did n't think it might be my mother's or my sister's; you did n't try in some way to reconcile what you saw with your knowledge of me," he said in a musing tone.

"Would I care if you kissed your mother or your sister? You told Alan *to say nothing to me.* Those words have haunted me—and your laugh! Oh!" she said in a burst of pain, "that 's how men keep pact to cheat women—with a laugh and a wink."

"That 's all, then," he said briskly, and yet with apathy. "Let 's get back to camp. It 's later than we thought. There—they 're calling us."

He gave an answering "Halloa!" and started rapidly toward the right. There was nothing to do but follow him. It was a flat dénouement to the tragedy in her heart. He had denied nothing—had only sought by a trick to place her in the wrong. She was so angry, so dismayed, she grew cold and weak. She did not try to keep beside him. He did not turn his head.

As they neared the white camps and the blazing fire of boughs, she weakened. She loved him so much! If he would only speak, only prove her really wrong, how glad she would be!

"Bob!" she called faintly.

He turned to her, and she saw his face serious and calm. He seemed older, a stranger, in a sense. Her own gaze struggled to be still obstinately proud.

"Bob, if you said what you did to Alan to tease me because you thought I 'd overhear——"

"I did n't," he said gently.

"Well, if I made a mistake in the words——"

"You did n't."

She looked at him helplessly. "Then, don't you see? I *know* it could n't be my picture, or Alan would n't have said, 'Who is it?' Nor your mother's or sister's either, since both are well known to him. Don't you see?" she said wistfully. "Have n't you anything to say?"

"Yes, I say this." He flung his arms wide in quiet, impressive despair. "If we can't trust each other—if our first instinct is *not* to trust each other—if we can't build our future on each other's love and honor—had we better go on?"

"You want to end it?" she faltered, with stiff lips.

Where they stood, the dusk was heavy. Their faces, revealed and shrouded in the leaping and falling of the gypsy fire, were like the faces of accusing phantoms. Bob heard a sob, bitterly fought against, break from her, and in a wild way her hands sought his, crushing a ring into them.

"It *is* ended," she moaned.

But he held her hands fast. "Answer me first." His lips were close to hers. "Do you trust me, Betty?" he whispered, with deep, penetrating tenderness. "Do you believe I love and honor you? Could I lie to and cheat what I love and honor? Are n't you first with me? Would n't I shield you against the whole world? Are n't you my saint and my good angel as well as my sweetheart? Could I love you better than I do? Could I need you more?"

"Forgive me, forgive me," she whispered, and their lips met. All the other kisses they had given each other were humbled by this one. It was big with soul, humility, and pardon—a sacrament.

They went on to the camp, hand in hand, in silence. They were on the heights that tower in some silences and from which the valley of ordinary speech must be reached deviously and slowly.

Hours later they were saying good-night. Betty was standing under the lifted flap of the tent.

"Don't you want to ask me something?" Bob said.

"Perhaps you'll tell me without my asking," she smiled, her eyes still penitent.

"You don't even want to know the color of her eyes?"

"Nor of her hair—unless you tell me yourself."

"Well, she has n't any hair," said Bob.

"No hair?"

"No hair—and only one tooth—and the tooth sticks out."

"Oh!"—she clasped her head in her hands in sudden enlightenment—"it's that hideous baby picture of me! That's what you were talking to my old nurse about that day when she came to see me—she gave it to you! It was nasty of her. Oh, Bob," she pleaded, "do give it to me, dear. It's so—*so plain.*"

"I like it," said Bob fatuously.

BULL-HEADS

By Edwin L. Sabin

❧

NO doubt there still *are* bull-heads. The best ones used to have habitat in the old mill-pond (or likely enough *you* called it the "slough," or the "crick," or "Mud Lake," or otherwise christened it "lake"), within nice trudging distance of "home." To catch them required a barefoot boy ten years old, a sore sole, a ten-cent cane pole fifteen feet long, a baking-powder can of dirt and worms commingled, a line tied to the pole's stiff tip, a vinegar-jug cork for a bobber, and a hook.

When along the bank a spot had been found not preëmpted by other boys present, and when the baking-powder can had been set down, and the line had been unwound from the length of the pole, and a rebellious worm had been slipped upon the hook, and worm, hook, bobber, line, and almost pole itself had been thrown with a plash into the pond (or the "slough," or the "crick," or the "lake"), and when the ripples and the derogatory comments aroused had somewhat subsided, then there was a jiggle to the cork, making ripples afresh. That is, if "they" were "bitin'" (a disposition of fishy mind most mysterious); and bull-heads usually were.

At the land end of the pole a boy, clutching hard the butt, rigid and intent, glares with bated breath at the symptoms; venturing only to utter a wild, raucous whisper, "I got a bite!"

Forthwith, while all the world gazes, at the proper psychological moment he upheaves with both arms mightily; and if he has been blessed by fortune, instead of merely incited, at the extremity of the fifteen feet of pole and the ten feet of line added thereto is hoisted high into the air, and terra firma-ward, three inches of bull-head.

Slimy and wriggly and wicked, the black imp jerked thus unceremoniously from the depths, small as he is compared with his captor, his captor's machinery, and the world about, handicapped also by adverse climatic conditions, nevertheless he puts up a fight for his life. He is slippery, he is elusive, he is indefatigable, his "horns" are outstanding with rage and as sharp as needles, and he has swallowed the hook! Oh, strenuous scene of dogged defense, on the one hand, and of scrambling offense, punctuated with "Ouch!" and "Gee!" on the other; and oh, sigh of triumph when at last, having disgorged from his cavernous gullet (so large for a beastie so small!), he is strung. Now in company with fellow unfortunates herded along the cord and tethered to the root or the stake at the water's edge, helplessly he gasps and sways his tail.

The sun burns, king-fishers cackle, dragon-flies perch upon the bobbers.

"How many you got?"

"Seven. How many you?"

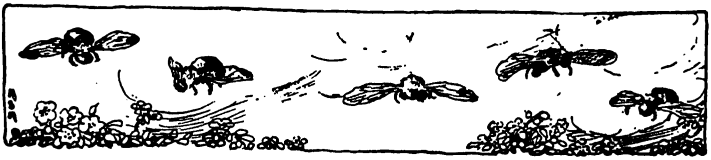
"I dunno." But, by the very tone and the evasion, evidently not seven—yet. However, hope springs eternal—and a chap can spit on his hook.

At last it is time to go home. And homeward trail anglers all, poles projecting far rearward, bull-heads, dejected and resistless, dangling in the dust beside. But not the least of them must be left behind; each must be exhibited, for the count. And in the count should be considered the big one who, after virtually having been caught, got away.

Of course, after depriving a bull-head three inches long of his head, the balance remaining practically is invisible to the scornful eye. Memory saith not as to the ultimate disposal of bull-heads brought home. Some the prowling cat found in the alley, among the discard; some swam and made sport for the household in a tub of water—until they, too, went the way of all things. Some certainly were eaten by *you*—mother or the hired girl having been propitious to the cooking.

But eating was the least concern. Bull-heads were invented to be caught; the disposal of them thereafter was of minor moment. They were fair prey, and outside the pale of the game-laws. It was boy against bull-head.

And as boys still exist, I presume that the bull-head, also, exists. Nature is attending to that. And some golden, humming day, during the season, from the middle of April to the first of September (the bull-head season, that is), chucking all trouting, bass casting, pickerel trolling engagements, and other such dilettantisms, I should like once more to sally hopefully forth for him (the bull-head, of course), allure him, outjerk him, pounce upon him, wrestle with him, be horned by him, "ouch" over him, finally string him, eventually home carry him—and show him to mother. Ah, what a boy for her to be proud of!



THE APPLE

By Inez G. Thompson

◆

"HOW is it," suddenly questioned Roza Hunfalvy, in their own tongue, "that one comes to be what is called in this country 'stylissh'?"

"Not easily," Sophia Grivicic answered shortly; and she was of an age that made the answer wisdom, not evasion. Her knitting needles were a shifting maze as she frowned down on them for a thoughtful second; then her small, black eyes looked straight at the bride of a month.

"You are the daughter of my husband's sister," she said tersely, "and it is right that I should know what trouble has come to you—this soon. And it will not be well for you to lie. I have four sons"—she held her spare form stiffly, in pride—"four sons who call no man master. They are *men*—those sons of mine. Yet when *I* speak—! It is right that a man be master in his own house—you understand? And perhaps, in the anger of a moment, he may strike heavily. That is to be borne. But if this Hugo Hunfalvy—if this husband of yours has gone beyond what is right for a husband, I have but to——"

"No, not that, not that!" cried Roza Hunfalvy, finding her voice.

"*What,* then, little-wit?" snapped Mother Grivicic impatiently.

"This," said the young one softly, but her hands gripped together in her lap—"this: that it would have been better for me, my aunt, had I died before I left Hungary. Hugo would have loved me and sorrowed for me—a little time—then. Now he is ashamed."

"S-st!" hissed Sophia Grivicic. Her needles stopped. "That is a word," she said coldly, "that may not be spoken—of us. When it is deserved—we know what is for us to do before another acts."

"I live," the girl said simply. "It is not the shame that a man may be rid of—no. It is a shame that came to him first through the eyes of another. Like this: it was at that place we all must pass, from the ship, before we enter this country—I do not know its name; but there are many men—soldiers, I think—who ask questions, questions, and look one over, and question, question, till one knows nothing clearly. And so I, nearly mad with it, am brought to a room. And beyond a gate I see Hugo. It is after three years. I think they saw how it was with me—those men—for the questions were quickly over, and they let me through the gate. And Hugo—holds out his arms to me. After a time he tells me to look up and speak to our friends, and I saw then Marie Beschitz and her brother Peter. She and I look at each other, and I say nothing; but she comes to me and puts her arms about me, and over my shoulder she smiles at Hugo. 'It is a little of home come to us,' she said, in a voice honey-sweet. 'I had almost forgotten the look.' And she touches my hair, my dress, my bodice, while I look at her—and at Hugo. I could see something die in his eyes, and he gets red. 'We can get other things for her soon,' he says, not pleased. It is the end of my happiness."

"It is not clear to me," objected Sophia Grivicic, puzzled.

"Wait. Then you come, my aunt, and two sons with you, and take me to your house. You are late and have not seen. I may not eat with you and show sorrow, so I smile and smile until my wedding."

"It was *not* a smile," muttered her aunt sourly. "I saw that; but you were young. Maids are so before the marriage day, when it comes near. Go on."

"So I am married," went on the quietly despairing tones, "and Hugo tells me it will make us more quickly rich to live together—Marie Beschitz and her brother with us—for Peter's money is with Hugo in selling the fruits. I say yes—and smile. So it is. We live together, and I cook the food and do all that is done in the queer house up high. I work—oh, very hard! But it is nothing if I am happy. But no, Hugo's eyes stay the same—something dead—and he looks from Marie Beschitz to me—from me to her—all the time, and scowls. Once he spoke to me alone, saying, 'It is all different here—men, women—everything. It is well to be like others. Here is money—go with Marie and buy such things as she wears.' I do not understand wholly even then. I shake my head and smile. 'No,' I say; 'not till we are more rich. I will do as I am for a time, eh?' and he grows tender and kisses me and tells me yes. I am happy for an hour. But next day he looks again at Marie Beschitz and then at me, and I see what comes in his eyes. He likes best the way *she* looks—what she has. He does not like the dress of our country. He is ashamed."

"Ah!" breathed Mother Grivicic, with menacing softness. "Yess?"

"In time I hear Marie Beschitz talked of by others of our country, who live in that place we live; and I come to hear that word spoken of her. 'Stylissh,' the women call her; and laugh at the young men who put money in Peter's hand—and Hugo's—because they wish to be near her, in the store, and she makes them to buy what they do not want. She laughs, too, and Peter, her brother—who is a great fool—and Hugo laughs a little. She is always laughing. And I listen and always smile. I think if she is 'stylissh' I do not care to be so. But—I must, my aunt. I *must!* They go to sit on the steps very late, when the nights are hot, and I hear her talking to make them all laugh—Hugo and Peter and all the rest—and I say I will not go—I am tired. They do not miss me. And they go on Sundays on the—er—'cars,' they call it—or to that place where it is green, with trees, like the country—in the middle of the city. Once I have been; but Hugo walked far from me, not speaking, his face red; and she—Marie Beschitz—looks back, with the young men about her, and laughs. At *me*—I know! So I do not go any more; but they go. I am not stylissh."

"Stylissh!" Sophia Grivicic exploded. "What is it? Tell me! The curse of—brr! Stylissh! Do not say the word to me again. Hear? It is to wear a hat of straw in heat and a hat of 'per-lussh' in the cold—tipped in this way or that or little or big, but never the same one for *two* cold weathers or two hot. That is *not* stylissh! There must be a devil's contrivance of bird's feathers and flowers made from rags—always different! That is 'stylissh'! Also to pinch one's body with a thing of steel and cloth, so that the breath stabs in the throat and hurts accursedly—and one dies in child-bearing—*that* is stylissh! To wear heels too high, and tip forward in walking, like a goose; to burn the hair with irons and drag it up high—s-st! *I* have never done so. I stay as I was."

"You were a mother when you came," argued Roza, "and there was no Marie Beschitz in your home. Times are not as they were, even here."

Sophia Grivicic knitted rapidly till her wrath cooled.

"You are not altogether a fool," she conceded at last; "but to know that I must look far back to my own youth. Had I been always seventy, you would seem wholly a fool. Men! Men and the love of men! Chase the wind, little one—you will catch that, too, maybe—and hold it! But, remembering what I was, I think of a time——" She drew her breath in sharply through her teeth—"of a time when, had there been such a one as Marie Beschitz, I would have taken her in my hands with the strength of ten and—sst! It is past. And so you would be stylissh? That is how women settle it now, eh? But *you* are not free—you must work hard all day; *you* have no time to dress so, and strut? What good will it do you?"

Roza flushed scarlet.

"I do not know," she answered sullenly. "I do not know how. But I am not ugly. There were four in Hungary in those three years——"

"Eh, eh?" taunted Mother Grivicic, with a cackling laugh. "Four, eh? Well done, little one! It is a good spirit—why have you shown none to Hugo Hunfalvy? You love too well—too easy. Pah! Well—four, eh? It is likely. Once I had such lips—and eyes—s-st!" She knitted silently for many minutes. "Well, we will see," she said slowly, dubiously. "It is not easy. I will call my grandson now to show you the way back to the place where food must be cooked for Marie Beschitz. Eh? Well——"

She stabbed her ball of thread with the slender needles, got up, and padded, in her soft shoes, across the brilliant carpet to the outer room. Roza Hunfalvy drew a sobbing breath, and two tears splashed down on her clenched hands. "We will see!" That was all it mattered to women who had done with loving. Well, if there was no hope peaceably—why, there were still women who might have the strength of ten; who could—— Something jarred heavily in the kitchen.

"Roza! Roza Hunfalvy! *Roza!*" It was a scream of terror. "Will I die here? Will you come? Help! All saints——"

Flat on the white-scrubbed kitchen floor sat Sophia Grivicic, her eyes distended, rolling, and fearful, her shrivelled brown face panic-stricken, her lips frothed over.

"For my sins!" she wailed, clutching at Roza's strong arms as they seized her. "Stricken! My legs are sticks—dead! A candle! I will give a candle of six feet and a half-foot in thickness. Hear me vow it! Help, Mother of Mercy! My sons—I want them. Call to my grandson, in the alley below. But first drag me—under the arms—easy! Where is your heart? Then send for them. My sons——"

Yet when they were ranged, huge and cringing, in line beside her bed, an hour later, she menaced them with her thin right hand.

"Four of you," she stormed, with surprising vigor, "four! And the agony of bearing four! And not one beside me in my old age. All of you gone, and three of you married to 'stylissh' women—but not a daughter have you given me! You and your big mustaches and your politics—I know you! Well, then, hear me! I will have this daughter of my husband's sister to care for me, and no other. One of you go to Hugo Hunfalvy and tell him so! I will have a doctor when I will—not sooner! You shall pay her—pay her all I say. You hear? And each night you shall come here, while I last, to look upon me. May the sight stay with you. Now begone!"

She closed her eyes and mouth with a snap, and they tiptoed out, sobbing, pausing in the kitchen to kiss Roza Hunfalvy's hand.

"You will stay?" asked the youngest, wiping his eyes with his scented pink handkerchief. "My mother would not have us to stay with her, since we were old enough to go—we made dirt, she said. So do not judge us. But it is not wise to tell her even truth when she wishes to say otherwise. You will stay?"

"It *must* be," murmured Roza, shy before his grandeur. "But—Hugo——"

"Oh, him!" He waved his hand. "You stay. My eldest brother will go to him."

The eldest Grivicic went, taking consternation with him, to the fruit store of Hunfalvy and Beschitz. He loomed before them, so unexpected, so gentle, with a terrifying gentleness, dispensing, as a man may whose position is assured, with arrogance and formality.

"My cousin, your wife," he said to Hugo Hunfalvy softly; and Hugo paled, with a swift glance toward Marie Beschitz, staring behind the counter—"she is to stay with my mother, who"—he choked—"is sick with her last sickness. You are willing?" he added briefly.

"All I have——" sympathized Hugo, with extended arms, his heart thumping with relief; and, overflowing with condolences, he followed the caller to the sidewalk, to make it seen that union-leader Grivicic recognized the tie of relationship by marriage, and had honored his store.

His willingness received an added impetus when he went that evening, dressed in his best, to pay his compliments to the invalid. For, ranged in line by the immaculate bed, were the four sons—the *four Grivicics!*—red-eyed and humble, making their prescribed visit; and on the other side stood Roza, quite one of them, administering a cup of hot chocolate, livened with brandy and piled high with cream. They—the four—kissed her hand as they passed out!

"And that youngest—that youngest cousin," Hugo grumbled, after he had witnessed the tenth repetition of this evening ceremony—"what has he to say, that he comes back again after once leaving?"

"Only that there is no need to spare money," she answered in surprise.

"Humph! He comes to kiss thy hand the second time," he said, with drawn brows. "I have seen——"

Roza looked down with a thrill of pure joy, waiting.

"Marie Beschitz," he began—she stiffened with the old smile—"she cries all day, and wastes good food and much money. She cannot cook! Our home is no longer a home, for dirt! Her hair hangs down her back now. It is well to do for one's people—but not too much. As for that young cousin——" He slammed the door and went, without a kiss. Yet Roza's smile, above the morning coffee, beamed down on the invalid like the sun.

"You can be happy?" groaned Mother Grivicic—but not harshly.

"Marie Beschitz cannot *cook!* Hugo told me." Roza sang it, sure of understanding; and the walnut-shell face on the pillow lightened swiftly.

"So?" she said laconically. "So-o!" And was silent. But on the morning of the next day she spoke briskly.

"I wish to see the wife of my second son," she said. "The one who is least a fool." And to the grand lady in purple silk who came, hastily, in obedience, her face apprehensively pale beneath the rice powder, she spoke long and privately. From that audience the wife of the second son rustled to the kitchen and stood for some minutes studying Roza Hunfalvy and nodding her head. At last she smiled.

"It will do. You are to come with me, child," she ordered sweetly. "Our mother says it. You may not ask why—yet. And she will stay alone till you come back—she *wishes* it," she warned, as Roza turned, in amazement, to argue with her charge; but the autocrat, overhearing, made it clear in a comprehensive harangue that her desires had been interpreted correctly, and that she *would* be alone. Did they think to do contrary? So Roza went into the babel of the streets with her gorgeous guide, hanging behind, overwhelmed and humiliated.

They came back at dark, chattering, fatigued, holding to each other with excited laughter, squabbling amiably and volubly—equals! And Roza Hunfalvy, with a dozen kisses at parting, ran up the many stairs, unlocked the door with eager celerity, and rushed through to the room of her patient.

"How, then!" snapped Mother Grivicic crossly. She seemed strangely breathless, and her bed was disordered. "There is no politeness in this day—could you not have spoken? What has come to you?"

"Oh, thou knowest!" cried Roza Hunfalvy in a voice of tenderness. "And it has come through thee—more than aunt—my mother! Look—look!"

Her shaking fingers had lighted a lamp by the bedside and another on the mantelpiece; and she caught them, one in each hand, and turned slowly about and about while Sophia Grivicic shaded her eyes and peered.

"My hair!" thrilled the girl. "You can put a finger deep between each wave—so deep! The irons did not burn! Hear my skirt—silk outside and another inside; and by day it is red—dark and shining, like the skin of a plum. And under that"—she laughed hysterically—"there are steels and strings which make the breath stab accursedly—but I do not care! And more—so much more to be sent to me—that I cannot tell you. I have no words! And my tall shoes—see? How they shine! I have a little foot. And beside this—'hatt'—I have another with a feather. Such a 'hatt'!"

"A hat," murmured Mother Grivicic, her head falling back on the pillows. "She says she has 'such a hat'!" She lay a second shaking as with an ague, and Roza, terrified, flew to put down the lamps; but suddenly Mother Grivicic laughed outright. "'Such—a—hat'!" she chuckled. "Saints!" And then she sat up strongly, swung about, and put her feet to the floor.

"A miracle!" gasped the girl, dropping to her knees. "A—miracle—or—death! Aunt—my aunt!"

"Be still, little-wit!" came the vigorous command; and Mother Grivicic stood erect, easily. "Pray that a judgment be not visited upon me—whatever my sin, it has been for you! You have kept the floor clean—and my sink," she added kindly, with a return to the matter-of-fact; "but the cups with the blue flowers and gold I did not wish handled. Still, you could not know. Let us have supper before my sons come."

"Th-there—was—no seizure?" panted Roza, struggling to her feet.

"No!" snapped Mother Grivicic, with scant patience. "Only a great need of help for thee—and too much love for Hugo Hunfalvy to make it possible to help thee easily! No, I had to do all—to lay like a corpse. S-st! But it was not much to do—only to sit down hard, and chew a bit of soap, and—yell! I am old," she added complacently, "but I have more wit in my finger than in all your young brains." Then, as she caught the girl's eyes, her face changed. "Thou hadst no mother, my—my daughter," she crooned; and they were in one another's arms.

The four Grivicics stood before their mother's chair when Hugo Hunfalvy sulked in for his nightly call. The three eldest, awed and shaken, were writing down the proportions and decorations for a votive candle, which she was dictating in minute detail; but the youngest stood with gleaming eyes fixed on the vision, bearing chocolate, behind his mother's chair.

A vision in plum-red silk that hugged maddeningly the outline of a trimly-compressed little figure; a vision whose head bore a wonderful coiffure, heaped and "ondulated," that crowned her radiant face and conscious, bewitching eyes; a vision that Hugo Hunfalvy recognized at last, with gaping mouth and tingling veins, as Roza Hunfalvy, his wife. True, she looked at him tenderly; but she seemed remote—transformed with a happiness not of his giving and beyond his power to disturb.

"You may well be glad, Hugo Hunfalvy," said Mother Grivicic severely, "that this daughter of my husband's sister is to return to you. We had one dish to-night, in honor of my healing—of pistachios boiled in butter—such as a man may hope for from few hands. Moreover, we had——"

"You had the joy of her presence," gulped Hugo Hunfalvy, daring to interrupt; and his eyes, as he looked at his wife, were pools of love.

"S-st!" Mother Grivicic stared approvingly. "Now, that—*that* was well spoken; but you look not overfed, in spite of cutting short the hearing of food. Well, to-morrow you have her back again."

"To-morrow——" Hugo drooped.

"There is much to do"—Mother Grivicic grew aloof and important. "She has gifts from me—in payment—which must be packed with care. You see her? Roza, come here. Look!"

Hugo Hunfalvy turned his hat about and about, and looked.

"Could you not come for a—a little walk," he ventured miserably —"a *very* little—while madame's sons stay?"

"She may," condescended Mother Grivicic, "and my youngest son will go also, and buy that—ize-cream, for the—er—treat. My son—?"

"Sure!" the youngest one agreed heartily. "I want to show off with Roza. I know a stylish place to go—little tables and all."

He held hat-pins for Roza while she pinned a marvellous pink and white hat on her black hair, with knowing touches and much coquetry. The four Grivicics beamed with pride in her.

"*I* will buy that ice-cream," said Hugo, in hot jealousy. "I shall have it to sell in my own store another year."

"If you sell it, Roza, I will buy often;" the youngest cousin ignored him flippantly.

"She will *not* sell," spoke Hugo, deliberately careless of consequences, his eyes turning from the youngest Grivicic to the other three, and not faltering. "I shall take nice rooms for us—away from Peter Beschitz and that woman who is not a woman—his sister; and Roza she shall keep house in those rooms for me—alone!"

There was stillness for a breath. Roza Hunfalvy's face was white and shining, her eyes coals. Mother Grivicic looked at her—and away.

"That is right," she delivered her fiat sternly.

"That is right, Hugo—my cousin," said the eldest son, then, speaking for all in his deep, soft voice.

SILENCE

BY MARY GERTRUDE MACMAHON

YOU could tell they were friends from their silence;
For an hour no voice had been heard,
But their souls spake in accents the stronger
Because of the need of a word.

When soul speaks to soul profoundest
Then language must ever fail;
'T is Music alone can interpret?
No! Silence will best tell the tale.

WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

❧

HALF-DISABLED FOLK

AMONG the diverse benevolent schemes before the public, few aim to give relief to a worthy portion of every community—the half-disabled wage-earners. Every hospital physician has a personal knowledge of those who, through no fault or only partial fault of their own, are physically unfit to compete with the strong and sturdy in the open labor marts, although eagerly willing to work. They cannot enter fully in that competition which is often so close that the margin of living is at best a narrow one. Often these partially-disabled folk are of an intelligence above the average; and many of them have received an education and training which would make their services of value, could they secure suitable opportunities.

For a large proportion of these unfortunates, the solution is small farming and kindred occupations. Every month such people come under my observation, and I always strongly recommend this form of work for them. As a rule, the results are most gratifying, and not seldom the patient is completely cured.

There are, of course, practical difficulties which must be overcome, for even "three acres and liberty" involve some capital, which these poor incompetents do not always possess. How can they avail themselves of these glorious opportunities? It is a healthful and ennobling form of life to till the soil and bring forth flowers, fruits, and vegetables; and while farming on a large scale would take more strength than these half-disabled folk possess, on a small scale the work is comparatively easy. Chickens and squabs are not hard to raise, and there is always a good sale for them, as well as for eggs. Money can also be made by breeding fine dogs or Persian and Angora cats.

Surely the kind-hearted capitalist can find no better use for the money he wishes to expend in philanthropic enterprises than to provide places of this kind, with the necessary houses and tools, and sell or rent them to that pitiful moiety of the community who are underdeveloped, neurasthenic, exhausted by exacting or unwholesome labor, or partially disabled by diseases of the nerves, or, last but most numerous and oftentimes the most worthy of all, the wage-earners who are known as "tubercular suspects."

Doubtless many plans for disbursement have already been devised by the trustees of the Russell Sage fund, the avowed purpose of which is to reduce poverty and ignorance. If they desire suggestions, here is one which I believe to be adapted to meet some urgent cases.

J. Madison Taylor, M.D.

A PLEA FOR THE SOIL IN LITERATURE

WHERE is rural life in modern fiction? With few exceptions, the yarns of to-day exclude the simple, homely rural life which is the very bone and sinew of our American civilization. The search-lights of fiction writers are being thrown upon every phase of urban life, from the Four Hundred with their thousand foibles and mirthless sophistication, to the meanest beggar and thief adrift on the streets. Every activity of city life—finance, politics, trusts, the evils of gambling and divorce—have crowded one another in swift confusion. We have been forced to gaze into the innermost chambers of cosmopolitanism, from the "Confessions" of the lowest criminal of the purlieus to those of Mrs. Wharton's drawing-room, who never forget that they are "to the manner born," even when wallowing hopelessly in society's quagmires. We have been ruthlessly dragged through the Jungle, the sweat-shop, the tenement, the opium-den. The stony hearts of corporation leaders, the perfidy of insurance magnates, the graft of machine bosses, have been laid bare to our already overwrought nerves and tired brains.

Only a few years ago the trend of fiction was quite in the other direction. Country life played an important part in the stories of the best writers—the Western tales of Bret Harte and Mark Twain, the simple, homely ruralism of the New England writers, the charming pictures of the old South, "befo' the wa'."

We are literally athirst to-day for the story of the little farm, the call of the birds, the gush of the spring as it bubbles up clear and untainted. We long to come closer to the men and women who draw their livelihood and inspiration from the soil. Simple, ignorant souls, you say, who never rise above the mediocre, whose hearts are not torn by conflicting ambitions—but who have time to live and learn the lesson of life as nature teaches it. They know at least what is meant by honest love, common honor, and the dignity of laboring with one's hands.

Throbbing with action, instinct with struggle, dealing with the great problems of modern life, the chief novels of the year have thrilled and stirred us. The wearisome tramp of the multitudes, the ceaseless rush for existence, the fetid atmosphere of the arena on which the toilers struggle, make us cry out for peace and for the earth as God made it.

The tired reader turns with relief from this artificiality to the refreshing pages of "My People of the Plains," "The Lake," and the Rebecca stories. Here are men, not types—not the abnormal products of a forced environment, nor weaklings dominated by the women with whom they are associated.

We all need frequently to return to the soil, to draw close to the valleys and hills and blue skies. There are so many of us living in crowded cities the year around who can afford to take frequent excursions in field and forest only at second hand. With this distinctly American environment there may arise a hero who is not simply a weakling, or a foil, but a man. Let us have in fiction another Michael, a character which towers above ordinary men as Wordsworth's shepherd, great of frame, keen of mind, "intense, frugal, apt for all affairs and watchful more than ordinary men." Let us be refreshed and invigorated as well as stirred and aroused to action.

Sarah D. Upham

REMEDIABLE NUISANCES

A PERCEPTION is dawning upon the people at large of the fact that certain kinds of nuisances, hitherto regarded as hopelessly unavoidable, are not in the least necessary.

It was said by an eminent scientist the other day that two-thirds of the diseases from which human beings suffer come from easily-avoidable causes. Among the most important of these causes, he mentioned the house-fly, the mosquito, and the common rat.

Until very recently it has been taken for granted that there was no possibility of escape from these three pests, which are bad enough when only the annoyances they cause are considered. But recent discovery has made us aware that they are carriers of many diseases —the house-fly of typhoid chiefly; the mosquito of malaria and yellow fever; and the rat of bubonic plague and various maladies attributable to filth.

If it be asked, What shall be done? the answer seems to be that important steps are now being taken, especially in New Jersey, toward the extermination of mosquitoes. The insects can never be entirely wiped out, but, most importantly by ditching and draining their larger breeding areas, their numbers can be reduced to such a point that they will no longer be a source of discomfort and serious danger.

As for the house-fly, the problem is comparatively simple. Practically all of these insects being hatched in stables, it is necessary merely to enforce local ordinances compelling stable-keepers to throw all refuse into closed rain-tight bins (to be emptied at regular intervals), in order to do away with them entirely. Within a few months, if this plan were systematically pursued, there would be no flies.

The rat is more difficult to deal with. Its habit of concealment and extraordinary fecundity render the extermination of the species out of the question. But government experts say that by the adoption of suitable expedients, and especially by the employment of the scientific "guillotine" traps, the numbers of these pestiferous rodents could be greatly reduced.

RENÉ BACHE

◆

A CHEVALIER OF THE ROCKING-HORSE

BY NANCY BYRD TURNER

BOOTED and spurred, we saw him mount,
Just as the light was dying.
He flung to his place with an easy grace
And sent his good steed flying;
Flutter of mane and clink of spur,
Into the shadows faring:
Some urgent need, some gallant deed,
Had called for such swift daring.

He must have finished the mystic quest
And come back weary-hearted,
For, bed-time near, we found him there
In the place from which he started,—
The horse beneath his burden still
A faithful vigil keeping;
And, arms out-thrown, face downward, prone,
The small knight-errant, sleeping!

VOL. LXXXII NUMBER 489

LIPPINCOTT'S
MONTHLY MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER, 1908

THE INVESTIGATION AT HOLMAN SQUARE

BY NEVIL MONROE HOPKINS

Author of "The Strange Case of Doctor North," "The Moyett Mystery," etc.

I.

HOW did I happen to pick it up? What strange impelling force prompted me to stoop and secure that folded bit of paper faintly visible in the light of a corner street-lamp? I was in a "tough" part of New York, and the streets were filled with belated working-men hurrying homeward, but I halted against the tide of humanity to read the note.

There was no envelope, and no name nor address. The writing simply ran:

> MY BELOVED ONE:
>
> How constantly I have thought of you to-day! You are my life—as deeply a part of me as the color is of the rose. To-night I shall pray to dream of you and feel your kisses upon my lips. I long for to-morrow, my darling, for you are the richest gift that fortune has in store for me. I love you—it is the cry of my heart, and within the shelter of those divine words I place the remainder of my life. I love you and am forever yours. Until to-morrow, dearest one, I am
>
> YOUR LONELY GIRL.
>
> JUNE THE FIFTEENTH.

I folded the note, wondering what I should do with it. Its mission might be the fate for happiness or misery of some man or woman.

Copyright, 1908, by J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY. All rights reserved.

I was very tired after a hard day's work, so, putting the paper into my pocket, I hurried to take the subway uptown.

A large gas-main had burst the day before near the corner of Houston Street and Avenue A, and adjacent to our company's cables, and I was thankful to leave the evil-smelling excavation surrounded by a still more evil-smelling herd of idle human cattle of nondescript make-up or nationality. Yet my own lot was at present only a peg or two higher in the great scale of life, for I was on my way to a second-story hall-room in a rather dingy house on West Sixty-fifth Street.

When seated in the car I took from my pocket the bit of paper I had picked up in that low, unhappy neighborhood and again examined the note. The paper was of fine quality and delicate gray in tint, but without monogram, crest, or street-number, which one might expect to find upon such tasteful and expensive stationery. I was particularly struck by the handwriting, which was that of a woman. It reflected culture, ease, and grace, and I wondered what such a note was doing in the slums of New York.

I examined the sheet more minutely and discovered in the left-hand corner the following number, finely and neatly written: 331. Perhaps part of a lovers' code, I thought, as I folded the paper and placed it in my pocket.

I closed my eyes for a moment and lost myself in thought. The finding of the love note so charming in its composition and execution took me back to a summer's day about a year ago, when I was working on telegraph construction for the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad. The Mayflower Express had been detained at the Thames Bridge pending some slight track adjustment, and I had swung myself below to a lower truss upon which I was to string our wires when I came alongside the observation platform of a private car attached to the end of the train. Seated there with a magazine in her lap was a young woman whose exquisite golden hair and deep blue eyes were second only to the high womanly character her features reflected. She was my perfect ideal of young American womanhood, and made a charming picture. Yet the obvious contrast between the world she represented and my present lot gave me a pang of unhappiness and homesickness.

I was dressed as a trackman in blue jean overalls and working-man's cap, and was tightening the nuts on a heavy iron bracket with a large spanner wrench. She watched me intently and without hesitation, as any woman might observe a mechanic, and appeared much interested in what I was doing. I felt subtly conscious of her approval and of her respect for the great class of men who work with their hands. There was a sweet and tender look in her eyes as I met them twice when I paused at the work, and I found myself wondering if they could possibly contain more than mere interest in the installation of the cables. I sighed at the wild absurdity of the thought. Again my eyes met hers, and, fanciful as it was, I madly allowed myself to picture a meeting of the hearts.

The Mayflower Express did not linger long—possibly thirty minutes in all—before it slowly began to move. As the car passed the truss I was working on, I looked into the girl's eyes and smiled faintly. My heart gave a bound as she colored and smiled also. I felt that she was leaving me forever. Suddenly, and only just perceptibly, she waved her handkerchief from the now rapidly departing car. I tore off my cap and brandished the heavy spanner wrench aloft until the glistening brasswork of the Pullman grew dim and disappeared. I tried to learn whose car it was and who she might be, but without success.

Life seemed unfamiliar and empty after she had faded away in the distance, and, deep in thought, I leaned on the heavy tool. I did not look forward to seeing her again. It was but a glimpse into another world. I knew she must have everything her heart could wish for—home, luxury, love, friends, and a fortune. She was undoubtedly some lucky man's sweetheart or wife—and often since that day I had found myself thinking of her.

At this stage in my meditations, I once more took the note out of my pocket and looked at the handwriting. Somehow it reminded me of the girl of the private car. Yes, the ease and grace of the writing reflected just such a young woman as I had seen on that Boston train. Again that unfamiliar loneliness swept over me, and the longing for a home with love and sweet contentment that can come to a man only when he takes the right woman by the hand for his companion through life. Although, as I have said, I was very tired and had but little money in my pocket, I obeyed a sudden impulse which led me to get off the train at Thirty-third Street and walk over to the *Herald* office.

"There is but a chance in a million," I said to myself whimsically when, later, I continued my journey home, "but I am glad to risk a quarter for love's sake." The next morning the following lines appeared in the paper:

> **FOUND**—a love letter. Owner may receive it by sending quotation to identify same.
>
> ALFRED HARKNESS,
> — W. 65th Street.

I read the advertisement over on my way to work and wondered why I had taken the trouble to insert it, for the person who had dropped the letter would in all probability never think of looking in the "lost" column of a daily paper for news of it. Then, even if he or she did happen to see the advertisement, it might be embarrassing to claim the note, for it might have been a factor in a clandestine love affair. What was such a note doing down there at Avenue A and Houston Street? Probably the man dropped it after taking it from its envelope. Yes, it must have been the man who dropped it, after receiving it in the mail. Had the girl lost the note, of course, it would have been in its addressed envelope. If I received any reply to my advertisement, I argued, it would be from a man. Thus I congratulated myself upon my reasoning as I went into an eating-place for breakfast. It was Saturday and I was nearly broke, so I trimmed my breakfast accordingly. I was feeling unhappy and dissatisfied with my lot in life when I paid my fifteen-cent check, and it did n't add any to my cheerfulness when I tripped over a pail of water upon the marble floor. My rising anger over the fact that the bucket had been left where people could stumble over it was tempered, however, by the sight of the woman at my feet. She was old and her hair was white. A pang of sadness went through my heart, for there was something about her that reminded me of my mother. She drew the pail in closer to where she knelt, and as I apologized and looked into her poor wrinkled face I realized that I ought to be better satisfied with my own lot.

An uneventful day's work upon the cables passed, and I left for the office of the company to get my pay. I was drawing only twenty dollars a week, but somehow this afternoon I felt rich with the four crisp five-dollar notes, and more contented than usual in my work. I hastened uptown to take my bath and change my clothes, with a thankful feeling that the following day was Sunday. Much to my surprise and interest, I saw lying on the hall table at the house where I had my room a note in a delicate gray envelope and addressed to me in the same refined, womanly handwriting of the love letter. I opened the envelope carefully for fear I might otherwise destroy some clue, and took out the note with eager fingers. The writing was brief and to the point:

> "How constantly I have thought of you to-day." Please return to A. L. Chalmers, University Club, City.

I was a little disappointed, for now I could not definitely figure out who had lost the letter, after all. Was she, through me, sending the letter to her lover, or was he writing for it, and was the handwriting, after all, a man's? No, that was absurd, for the letter was signed "Your lonely Girl." Perhaps the woman wanted the letter back and gave the name and address of some friend who would receive it for her. Yet if the writer had lost the letter, why should she go to so much trouble to get it back, especially as no name was signed? It appeared to me that she could have written the letter over again far more easily. Then there was that strange number, 331, in the lower corner. Possibly the fact that this number had been forgotten made it necessary for the writer to have it. Perhaps the letter was not a love letter at all, but a clever code among crooks who were planning some crime. No, this was even more absurd; the charming execution of the note was enough to insure a high-minded motive. I had worried quite enough about it, however, so, enclosing it in an envelope, I sent it as requested. The next day was Sunday, and I had time upon my hands to spend, so in spite of my resolutions to let the matter drop, I looked up A. L. Chalmers in the city directory. He appeared there as "Director C. R. N. J.," which I took to stand for the Central Railroad of New Jersey.

I have always possessed a strong passion for romance and mystery, and I was tempted to call upon Mr. Chalmers at his club or at his office on some pretext in order that I might look him over. I would not be able to give him my right name, of course, for he might connect me at once with the note episode. However, upon reflection, I saw the impropriety of seeking to learn anything further about the matter, for my willingness to insert the advertisement certainly did not entitle me to pry. I had simply endeavored to do a kind act in placing the advertisement, and it was now the duty of a gentleman to put the whole thing aside.

The episode was like a ship that passes in the night, the affair serving as a reminder that there were love and happiness in the world but at the same time emphasizing my own loneliness.

I was indeed lonely and literally struggling with the groundwork of my profession. I had been graduated from two engineering schools, but I had always held that the best way to obtain a complete mastery of one's profession was to begin at the bottom and work up. My work at this time was far from my liking, and at times I became discouraged, but not to the extent of seeking an easier berth and thereby abandoning my cherished plans. The fact that my father and sister were partly dependent on me for support did not serve to make it any easier for me, especially as they lived some distance away, and I could not very well bring them to New York.

II.

Monday was warm and sultry. As I stood in deep yellow mud at the edge of our excavation, fanning my face with my cap, I suddenly noticed a crowd collecting at the corner below, and saw a policeman striking across the street diagonally to investigate. A stout and excitable Italian woman was standing by the curb and frantically beckoning with both hands to a neighbor in a second-story window of a house opposite. Some poor devil had been hurt, I said to myself.

Then a boy came running up to me and asked for a "dipper of water to t'row on the lady what fainted."

Picking up a bucket of water upon which a long-handled tin dipper was floating, I hurried down to the corner where the crowd was congregated. The policeman, seeing my pail, pompously pushed a way open for me. When I reached the prostrate form and set down the bucket, I saw that a lean and haggard-looking woman was kneeling by the patient, rubbing one of her hands.

Imagine my feelings when I recognized in the unconscious girl the beautiful passenger of that Boston train! They were, to say the least, a painful combination of surprise, joy, and consternation. Of course I was for several moments in perplexity, for the rough and low surroundings, in which she seemed so out of place, made me doubt my senses. I took her handkerchief and gently applied some of the water to her face and forehead.

"Do you know who the lady is?" I asked the woman who had knelt by her.

"Naw, never seed her," she replied in broken English.

"Did she strike her head in falling?" I asked.

"Not strike head; drop right down easy like," the woman replied.

I handed a half-dollar to a fellow standing near and asked him to get me some strong smelling salts. He pushed his way through the crowd, while I bathed the girl's face and waited. He did not return.

"What a conscienceless scoundrel!" I said angrily between my teeth.

I was about to send for medical assistance when the girl slowly opened her eyes and looked at me. A startled, then puzzled expression came over her face, and then she sighed deeply. I stroked her hand softly, my heart beating like a trip-hammer. She closed her eyes again for an instant and then opened them. They were as deep and as blue as the heavenly skies above us. A faint smile crept over her lips.

"I—I must have fainted," she said. "You were very good to care for me."

"I'm so glad you feel better," I said. "I was beginning to be worried."

Her beautiful, appealing eyes seemed to search my very soul.

"Worried?" she queried, and closed her eyes for a moment, but presently she looked up at me again and took me in from my coarse working-man's cap down to my clumsy, mud-covered boots. Her brows knit a trifle.

"I feel much better now," she said. "May I sit up?"

A gong sounded down the street, followed by the rumble of wheels. The idle lookers-on turned to see a patrol drive up to the curbing. Two policemen came to the girl's side.

"Case of booze?" inquired one of the patrolmen of the other.

"Guess so," replied his companion. "She's able to sit up, it appears."

Ignoring me, they started roughly to lift her to her feet and to drag her to the wagon. She held on to my hand tightly.

"Don't let them take me to a hospital," she said. "I'll be all right soon."

"You can't lie on the sidewalk," said one of the policemen roughly. "You're blocking the streets."

"Oh, come, officer," I said; "the street is closed anyhow, so this young woman is not obstructing anything. She will be all right very soon. Besides, I have authority to block this street," I added, and I handed him a paper from the municipality, closing the street as a "public thoroughfare pending engineering work."

"Guess she'll not obstruct it much more than them cable reels, any way," replied the other patrolman, and with muttered exchange of words they left us.

I helped the girl to her feet. "How queer I feel!" she said. "I'm too dizzy to walk."

I guided her to a doorstep and spread out a pair of overalls which one of my men brought for her to sit upon.

"I'll drive the lady home," said a well dressed but rather sporty-looking man who had come up to my side. "If you'll come around to my office, I'll send for a coupé."

"Thank you," she replied, "but I prefer to wait until I am able to take a car."

"Too pious to ride with a gentleman, I suppose," sneered the stranger. "Perhaps you'll allow the greaser to carry you," he added, as he turned and walked away. I impulsively started to stop him and to draw him into an encounter he would have good reason to remember, but the thought that it might result in unpleasant notoriety for the girl made me pause.

"Don't mind him," she said sweetly and sympathetically, noticing the angry flush that swept over my face. "He is not worthy of your notice."

"It's mighty lucky for the bloke th' boss did n't take him up on that," said one of my men, a big, raw-boned Irishman. "I saw him do up a jay twice the size o' him once."

"That'll do, Mike," I said. "Go 'phone the office to send those extra lanterns for to-night." The crowd was losing interest now and was rapidly thinning out. I got hold of another boy, a merry-looking, red-faced lad, and sent him after some aromatic spirits of ammonia, which helped her not a little.

I was beside her on one knee, and the only spectators now were a little girl with two very long pig-tails, who was holding a rag doll;

and a very old man, apparently too feeble-minded to decide whether to move on or to stay.

"Won't you let me get you a cab when you feel able to start?"

"Perhaps. I believe I'd better not risk going home on the cars," she faltered.

She was looking at me as intently as the little girl and the old man were staring at her. I felt that she was trying to "place" me, being dimly conscious of having seen me before, but not knowing where. I was in turn very curious to learn something about her, and I quickly resolved to act the part of an ordinary working-man in the hope that she might, because of my greater simplicity, become more trustful and confidential.

"Perhaps I may send some telephone message for you, miss." I emphasized the word "miss." She looked at me earnestly for a moment.

"No, thank you. I'll let you get me a cab presently."

The feeble-minded old man shuffled down the street, and the little girl with the long pig-tails began to devote more attention to her rag doll, and then suddenly ran off, with no further interest in the cause of the excitement.

"Yes," I said to myself; "it is she, my beautiful ideal of the Mayflower Express. Is it possible that she remembers me?" She caught me gazing with admiring eyes at her golden hair and her lovely features.

"Pardon my unpresentable hands, miss;" and I took from her the little vial which she was still holding. She looked at me intently again, and I felt guilty, for it was undoubtedly the use of the word "miss" that deepened her gaze and her interest in me.

"Have you been employed here long—that is, in New York?" she asked.

"About a year, miss," I answered.

A faint smile stole about her lips, and presently she rose to her feet and stood leaning unsteadily against a railing.

"I feel quite myself now, but awfully ashamed, for I never fainted like this before."

"It is the heat. Will you walk along with me until we can find a cab, or shall I go for one?"

"I'd rather walk along with you than stay here," she said. A pretty color came to her face at this reply. My heart rose and sank. "Oh, if only such a girl loved me!" I thought to myself, and a feeling of utter hopelessness came over me. We had walked just a block when a hansom came in sight. There was a fellow inside who pushed his cane violently up through the trap in the top when he saw the girl with whom I was walking. The driver pulled up his horse suddenly, and the man alighted. My companion looked pale again, and, I suspected, was also somewhat annoyed.

"Who's your friend, Ethel?" said the man sarcastically, nodding towards me.

"I was overcome by the heat, and I fainted and fell in the street."

She showed her gown badly streaked with mud.

"This"—she paused—"workman has been a friend in need."

"Get in," said the man peremptorily, and he motioned to the hansom. The girl started to obey, then paused and tore a leaf from a book she carried.

"If you ever need a friend, call at this address and ask"—she was writing now upon the scrap of paper—"for this gentleman."

"What are you doing, Ethel?" asked her companion angrily.

She paid no heed to his question, but folded the paper and handed it to me.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Alfred Harkness, miss," I replied.

She glanced at me suddenly and started, then looked at the folded paper she had just handed to me, as if to wish it back again. She became greatly embarrassed; then opened her purse and fumbled within in search of something among the contents. Presently she offered me a coin.

My first inclination was to refuse it, of course, but I had but an instant to think, and when I reflected that such a course would hardly be in line with the part I had elected to play, I accepted it.

"Thank you, miss," I said, and touched my cap as she stepped into the cab, followed by the man. I met her eyes fully and deeply for an instant through the window as the hansom drove away. There was a smile upon her lips, a brighter smile than I had yet seen, but her companion was frowning darkly. Then I looked at the coin which I held and saw that it was a twenty-dollar gold piece. Then I unfolded the paper. There written in the same easy, cultivated handwriting of the love letter was the following:

A. L. Chalmers, Esq.
University Club
Fifty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue

III.

THE next morning I awoke with my mind full of the events of the previous day. I had seen *her* again, and I felt more deeply concerned over the matter than I dared admit to myself. At first I was happy, for my thoughts were only of her blue eyes and her golden hair; then my heart grew as heavy as lead. I was only a poor, struggling fellow, and she, probably one of New York's rich and fashionable set, as far from my feeble reach as the glorious sun above us. I looked at the gold piece. It was as rich and beautiful as her hair, and, like her, stood for sterling worth. I felt like a miserable cad to have taken her money even in the way I did, and yet for all the world I would not have parted with it.

Thus meditating, I almost forgot that I was due at work at a certain hour.

Another long day passed, and I was about to leave for our tool-wagon, there to remove my overalls and wash off the first layer of dirt for the trip up-town, when word was received to remain and oversee a night shift which was to push the work through until morning. This meant work for me until midnight, or until a night superintendent could relieve me, so I went to the telephone and broke an engagement I had made with a young doctor chum to go to the theatre.

There was a lunch-room a few blocks over, and I started out for the place with but little relish for my evening meal. The sidewalks, fire escapes, and gutters were swarming with scantily clad, dirty children, and the babel of their voices almost drowned the machine-like music of a hurdy-gurdy, out of which a stolid Italian was grinding tune after tune.

My companions at supper were a motley crew. One pale, thin man—I could not tell his nationality—sat immediately opposite me, and with him was a sickly girl of ten or twelve years.

"A dejected widower and his child," I said to myself.

They both ate pork and cabbage with apparent relish—and also with knives.

How different from this poor little girl's must *her* childhood have been! I was glad to get through with my supper of bread, corned beef, and poor coffee, and get out of the ill-smelling place. I lit a cigarette, and strolled leisurely back to the excavation, thinking of her, of my miserable surroundings, and of my own poor situation, but little dreaming of the developments that were destined to follow before the night was over.

When the night superintendent appeared, it was eleven o'clock, and I was very tired. Leaving the place for my room by cutting diagonally across the street, I felt some one just behind me, and, turning suddenly, I faced the man who the day before had driven away in a hansom with the girl of my thoughts.

"Your name is Harkness, is n't it?" he asked. "You were able to render a certain young lady some assistance yesterday afternoon."

"I was glad to have been on duty near the place where the lady fell, so that I could do what little I did to make her comfortable," I replied.

"Well, Mr. Chalmers has taken it into his head that he would like to see you," my companion said dryly. "You appear to be just leaving, but Mr. Chalmers is down-town to-night and asked me to find you."

"Does he wish to see me this evening? It is after eleven," I added.

"Yes; he is at Holman Square, and particularly wished that you return with me if I was able to find you."

"Of course I'll go," I replied, "but I don't wish any reward. I should not have accepted the money the young lady gave me this afternoon if I had had a moment to think."

My companion made no reply, but he looked unpleasantly sceptical, and we started off in the direction of Mr. Chalmers's office. We had turned and were walking down by the place where the girl had fainted. Two blocks below was Holman Square. We had left behind us the tenements and the now sleeping herd of miserable children. I was wondering what Mr. Chalmers's business could be at this hour in this low, deserted corner of the city, when I became conscious of the fact that a hansom cab was following us, a half block behind and on the other side of the street. I turned and looked back. There appeared to be some one against the far corner inside, but I could not make out whether it was man or woman. We turned at the corner of Holman Square, and I was attracted by the sight of a dingy gray stone building of great size but of forbidding appearance, which faced one entire side of the gloomy square. It was of a very rough, dirt-stained granite, constructed of huge blocks, mason's work of sixty years ago, and with heavy iron bars to all the windows. Although a gigantic warehouse of some kind, it looked far more like a prison. The glass behind the iron bars was dimmed with grime, and by the light from a neighboring lamp-post it was evident that the windows were thick with cobwebs and had been closed for years.

My companion ran nimbly up the steps leading to the entrance and took from his pocket a massive key. There was no sound except the clink, clink, made by the shoes of a slowly approaching horse upon the cobbled street. My companion fumbled a moment with the lock, then turned the key and pushed open the heavy door. The hansom cab slowly rounded the corner, and I got a glimpse of a figure within. As the cab passed the street lamp I noticed its number, 2704—why, I cannot tell, nor why I made a mental note of it.

"Come ahead," said the man's voice from within. "What the devil are you waiting for?"

I stepped inside. I am no coward, but I did not like the look of the building any more than I did that of my companion. It was pitch black within when he closed the heavy door, and I instinctively struck a match when I heard the lock click.

"Here, put that out!" shouted my companion, roughly knocking it from my hand and putting his foot upon the embers. "Follow me, and don't act like a baby."

"Very well," I said coldly. "Lead the way."

I was in for it now, and I clinched my fist ready for an emergency and followed. In the brief moment my match had burned I had noticed that the great building was filled with huge packing-cases, piled one upon the other and reaching all the way up to the rafters above, and that we must proceed down an aisle between them. My companion went on and on, made turns at three corners, crossed other aisles, and finally came to a stairway. I was about to protest at going any farther when I noticed a distant light between the cracks of the boarding above. We must have gone many hundred feet in all, and I was glad to see light again, however faint. I followed the fellow to the upper landing and through a rough door at the top. There was a space boarded off to form an ante-room, the light appearing to come from the main office within.

Pushing open the inner door, the man led the way into a large, roughly finished office, containing a heterogeneous collection of old-fashioned office furniture, packing cases, samples of merchandise, a great variety of personal effects, a lot of things belonging to a yacht, and innumerable filing-cases, stored on top of shelves and cases and in sundry nooks and corners. There was a spacious desk in one corner, over which hung a single electric lamp, the yellow rays from which shone through the cracks of the rude partitions.

An attractive and distinguished-looking man of about forty-five years of age sat writing at the desk. He laid down his pen and looked up with a frown at my guide and at me.

"Here's the fellow," said my escort carelessly, by way of introduction. "I met him just as he was leaving his hole to go home."

The man behind the desk rose and came towards us.

"You are rather late in coming, Lamar, but since you are here I will take the time to discuss the matter I spoke of at noon. Your name is Harkness?" he added, turning to me.

"Yes, sir; Alfred Harkness."

"You were of service to my cousin yesterday, I am told, and I am glad to have an opportunity to thank you."

"I was glad to be of slight assistance, sir, and trust she has felt no ill effects since yesterday."

Mr. Chalmers looked me over not unkindly for a moment, and then walked over to a far corner of the office, by a massive safe, and stood looking out of one of the dingy windows into the night. Suddenly he turned and asked abruptly: "Will you accept employment under my direction?"

I was so surprised at the unexpected offer that for a moment I could find no words with which to express myself. I noticed that the man he addressed as Lamar was frowning menacingly and nervously tapping his shoe with his walking stick.

"If there is nothing further I can do, I will leave," said Lamar bruskly. "I have an engagement."

Mr. Chalmers nodded his assent, and Lamar took his leave. I could hear his footsteps dying away in the far distance of the quiet building.

Why should Mr. Chalmers thus seek me out and offer me a position when I had done so little?

"I 'm already employed," I replied, "but if I can be of service, I shall be glad to consider any proposition that is in my line of work."

"You 're a practical electrician and foreman, I am told," continued Mr. Chalmers, "and I 'm in need of such a man. I 'll allow you twenty dollars a week, and I believe I can promise you permanent employment, with advancement, if you make good."

A grating sound near one of the heavily laden old book-cases attracted my attention.

"Nothing unusual, my dear fellow," said Mr. Chalmers, smiling, when he noticed my look of concern. "Only rats which share the warehouse with us. Come to see me here to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock, and in the meantime take my offer under consideration. That is all I have to say to you to-night, except to extend my thanks to you for assisting my cousin yesterday."

"Oh, it was nothing," I responded. "As for the other matter, I 'll give you my answer to-morrow."

I started toward the door. Mr. Chalmers appeared to be alone in the building, except for myself, and I felt so strangely attracted by his strong and yet courteous personality that I did not like to leave him by himself in the deserted warehouse. I somehow felt fear for his safety. As I was leaving, he offered me a cigar and walked with me to the top of the stairs.

"Turn to your right and go straight ahead till you see light from an electric lamp which I can turn on from here;" and Mr. Chalmers reached for a switch in the partition. "This light is over the street door, which opens easily from the inside."

I thanked him and descended the stairs, turning to the right as directed. I did not have far to walk before I saw the distant light. Quickening my pace, I was soon at the old-fashioned door I had entered with Lamar. It opened readily, and I stood for a while upon the steps outside and wondered—wondered what he wanted with me, what would be my duties, and what such a man as A. L. Chalmers was doing alone at this hour of the night in that great deserted warehouse. Should I accept? The pay was no more than I was already getting, and, besides, acceptance might interfere with my plans for acquiring experience in my profession. But then I thought of *her*. I might see her occasionally if I accepted, and the thought seemed to lighten the dark and forbidding surroundings as with a great flood of golden sunshine. Yes, I would return to-morrow, accept Mr. Chalmers's offer, and leave the rest to destiny.

I descended the steps and walked rapidly toward the nearest trolley that would take me up-town. Two policemen standing in a doorway appeared to be the only persons in the street as I turned the corner around which the hansom had driven.

As I walked, I pondered over the peculiar tangle of events in which I had become involved. Already I knew that I loved her, unreasoningly, with all my heart, and trusted her, yet through the blindness with which my wild love handicapped me, I had a dim premonition that there was something wrong—something mysterious and wrong, from the finding of the love note to the meeting with the solitary occupant of the great building at Holman Square. But in spite of appearances, nothing could be wrong where such a glorious woman and such a man as Mr. Chalmers were concerned. He had won my confidence as a man as had she as a woman.

When I finally got to bed I did not fall asleep for a long time, and it was broad daylight when my alarm clock aroused me with its noisy clamor.

IV.

On my way to the subway I bought a morning paper. Large headlines above the first column riveted my attention, and as I read a chill ran over me.

A. L. CHALMERS KILLED.

SHOT IN HIS OFFICE AT HOLMAN SQUARE.
NIGHT MEETING OF THE FIRM OF CHALMERS, HOWARD & BROWN
ENDS IN DEATH.

TWO BULLET WOUNDS THE CAUSE.

> A. L. Chalmers, senior member of the well known firm of Chalmers, Howard & Brown, and Director of the Central Railroad of New Jersey, was found dead in his office late last night. He had received two bullet wounds, either of which would have proven fatal. Mr. Chalmers had remained after his associates had left, and no one besides himself and the watchman, who was below, was supposed to be in the building at the time the shooting occurred. But one shot was heard, which statement is substantiated by two policemen who were near the warehouse at the time. Up to the hour of going to press, no further details could be learned.

I bought the other morning papers, and scanned them excitedly while the subway express was screeching along in the direction of the scene of my labors and last night's tragedy. On reaching the excavation, I gave certain necessary directions, then walked down to the warehouse on Holman Square. No sooner had I turned the corner than I could see great excitement without. A large crowd was moving about in front of the building, and several policemen were standing in the doorway. There were two powerful automobiles and a closed carriage by the curbing, and presently two well dressed men came out of the building and jumped into one of the automobiles, which dashed off at top speed. People came and went, and it was evident that the murder—if murder it was—had caused the greatest possible stir. I was more than sorry for Mr. Chalmers, who without doubt was a man of the highest type. It meant the loss of the new position I had been offered, too, and I sorely regretted this, for it ended, of course, all chances of seeing *her* again. So mournfully enough I went back to the excavation and there busied myself as usual.

It was a little after five when on my way to the restaurant I bought an evening paper. I was not prepared for the shock I received in the startling character of the news.

POLICE GET CLUES.

**IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS IN CHALMERS TRAGEDY.
INVESTIGATION AT HOLMAN SQUARE BEGUN. MISS WILMERDING MISSING.**

> **It has developed that Miss Wilmerding, the beautiful cousin of Mr. Chalmers, the victim of last night's murder, is missing. Miss Wilmerding, it is said, left her home late in the afternoon on the day of the shooting and has not been seen or heard from since. Neither her family nor the servants can account for her disappearance. A curious and mystifying phase of the case also lies in the fact that five bullet-holes have been discovered, two in the body of the victim and three in the woodwork, whereas several persons testify to having heard only one shot. Either of the two wounds in the body would have proved fatal. Inspector White's men are on their mettle, and the well known detective firm of Brant & Dale are also at work upon the case.**

The article ended by saying that the police believed it to be murder, and that arrests were expected hourly.

I returned to the tool-wagon stunned by this news, and had been but a few minutes at work when I was accosted by an attractive looking fellow about thirty years of age, who told me I was wanted at the office. We walked over and took the surface car to the headquarters of the Consolidated Electric Light and Power Company. The young man chatted pleasantly with me, and I wondered what his connection with our company might be. When I entered the office, the pay clerk brought out a pile of receipt cards. There were about fifty there with my signature on them, which the young man who had escorted me looked at casually. Presently he handed me a blank card, asking me at the same time to write my name, age, profession, and the names of the institutions where I was graduated. Without hesitation I wrote:

> **Alfred Harkness. 29 years of age. Electrical Engineer. Columbian University '01, George Washington University '05.**

He took the card and scanned it, then drew from his pocket a stamped and addressed envelope on which I recognized my own handwriting, and compared the two carefully.

"May I ask what you are trying to establish?" I inquired.

The young man looked at me a moment before speaking.

"There's no reason to be alarmed," he said. "To be quite frank, you are known to have been in Holman Square last night, and of course we leave no stone unturned in our investigations. I would recommend your coming quietly with me for a little talk with Mr. Brant. If you are in no way implicated, you had better follow this advice before the city men get you."

I was at first angry, but upon reflection realized that there were grounds for possible suspicion.

Mason Brant was by now undoubtedly deep in the case, and I did not fear from him the possible injustice or stubborn detention I was likely to experience from the city police if suspected and apprehended by them.

"I shall be glad to see Mr. Brant, and the sooner the better," I replied. A few minutes later we were driving rapidly in Mr. Dale's cab—for it developed that it was Robert Dale, of the celebrated detective firm of Brant & Dale—to their office, 12 East Twenty-fifth Street. We had some little time to wait, as Mason Brant was not there, being probably detained with some developments at Holman Square. I eagerly awaited the arrival of this man whose remarkable talents were so well known to me. He lived fully up to my estimate of him when he entered, with his broad shoulders and handsome, clear-cut features. Taking in at a glance my clay-stained boots, he exclaimed:

"Ah, I see you've brought Harkness, Bob—and that you have been waiting some time," he added, sniffing the smoke-filled room.

"Now come, old chap, tell me your story," he said to me, and as he spoke he drew up a chair close to my side, grasped my wrist, and took out his watch. I was too surprised to speak until, smiling, he let go of my wrist, with the remark that it was far from a criminal pulse. It was true that I was not the least excited. I had heard of the detective's great work in solving the Moyett mystery and other cases, and I felt that he would soon get to the bottom of things. I told him the entire story in detail, from the finding of the love letter to the moment when I left Mr. Chalmers. I even gave him the number of the hansom cab.

He made many notes in his book and then closed his eyes and leaned back in his chair for several moments.

"You have failed to tell me several important things," he said suddenly. "In the first place, why did you go so far out of your way to insert the advertisement in the *Herald?* Secondly, why did you favorably consider a position with Mr. Chalmers at the same pay you were already receiving, without even knowing the character of his requirements, and, again, why did you accept the money tendered you by his cousin when she revived from her faint?"

I colored violently, for I knew that my secret was discovered.

"It is now unnecessary for you to answer those questions," he quickly said, noticing my embarrassment, "but tell me this, had you ever seen the young woman before?"

I was if possible even more embarrassed at this question, but told him frankly that I had been prompted to advertise the love letter simply because its beautiful execution reminded me of a girl I had seen a year before.

Brant smiled and his eyes twinkled as he took from his pocket the love letter which had caused me so much concern. The sight of the handwriting made me both happy and miserable. He certainly could have lost no time in searching Miss Wildmerding's effects since her disappearance. I was surprised to hear him presently say, "O. K., Harkness. If you'll agree to come here to-morrow morning at 8.30, to be on deck at the coroner's inquest, I shall not detain you further."

I gladly gave my promise, never suspecting it would not be kept.

V.

A LOUD rapping on my door woke me a little after five the next morning, and I opened it clad in my pajamas to confront two detectives from police headquarters, one of them a short, thick-set man with a black mustache.

"Get into your duds," the latter snapped. "The inspector is anxious to make your acquaintance."

"All right," I said. "I'll be with you in a minute."

This summons by the police was not altogether unexpected, but my heart sank, and for the first time I felt nervous. Things were looking more serious for me than I relished.

I was detained for two hours before the inspector arrived. When I was taken before him, he was occupied with the telephone on his desk, and my thick-set escort waited until the inspector got through talking before he said dryly, "Harkness, Inspector."

"Take him to number 12," said the police official sharply, "and hold him for the coroner's jury."

"But one moment, Inspector. I have an appointment with Mason Brant at his office at 8.30."

"Guess your appointment is right here," he said sharply, and he took up his telephone again.

"This way," snapped my escort, and he led me to a small, badly lighted room with barred windows. I was in for notoriety now and was badly shaken. Evidently a race was on between the municipal detective force and the firm of Brant & Dale to run down the guilty party, and I was caught between the cross fires. The city men undoubtedly got wind of me through the fellow Lamar, to whom I had mentioned my address when he took me to the warehouse at Holman Square the night of the tragedy. How Brant traced me was as yet a puzzle.

I was more than relieved when my guardian appeared and notified me that it was time to start for the coroner's inquest. I had already planned to notify my friends and secure counsel in the event of my being detained after the inquest was over. But I worried not a little over my failure to keep my appointment with Brant, for I was strongly attracted by the fellow, and valued his good opinion. Still, I hoped I would soon have a chance to explain.

"Just think of it, Alfred," I said to myself; "yesterday you thought you knew what trouble was, but to-day you are under detention by the police, and all because of that miserable stray love letter." I consoled myself by saying that it was all in a lifetime, and I was comparing the huge, clipped mustache of the gaunt policeman at my side with the spray from an old-fashioned watering-cart when we turned into Houston Street.

A few moments later we drove up to the door of the now famous warehouse. I was hurried up the steps, through a great crowd of idlers, into the building where the brutal crime had been perpetrated. We passed down the long, narrow aisle between the packing-cases, turned the various corners, and mounted the steps to the office of the firm. The inner office, I noticed, connected with a large loft which I had not observed on my previous visit, and which was being used for the coroner's inquest. There were many persons awaiting the examination, and I was given a seat near the table arranged for the coroner, his physician and jury, the inspector and his assistants. I looked around for Brant, and was relieved when I saw him talking with several men in a far corner of the room. It was not long before the coroner arrived, the jury assembled, and the inquest was begun. From stray bits of conversation I overheard, I learned to my distress that Miss Wilmerding was still missing. Just before proceedings began, Brant came over in my direction, and I was relieved to catch his eye. He nodded to me, and I saw that he understood. The coroner rapped loudly upon the table with a paper weight, and everything quieted down. I found myself studying the different jurymen with a great deal of interest as they seated themselves and waited the opening of the inquest. I wondered, too, how they had succeeded in getting twelve such men together at such short notice and how they induced or compelled them to serve. Two or three of them appeared to be men of a most intelligent class. I was observing with secret amusement how completely one enormously fat member of the odd assembly grotesquely overhung, as it were, the chair he was sitting upon, completely hiding it from view, when the inquiry opened.

The first witness called was the watchman. The coroner was direct and business-like.

"Your name?" he inquired. At once a couple of stenographers made ready to inscribe the proceedings.

"Hal Collins."

"Where were you when the shots were fired?"

"In the doorway of the building opening out on Simms Alley—but let me say, sir, that there was but one shot, which was followed by a heavy thud."

"Did you hear any other sound?"

"Yes, sir; I heard Mr. Chalmers's telephone ring."

"Was this before or after the report?"

"Just before the shot."

"What do you mean by 'just before the shot'?"

"Well, about a minute, I should say. The telephone seldom rang at such a late hour, and I noticed it."

"Could you hear Mr. Chalmers talking?"

"No, sir, I could not."

"How soon after the shot did you hear the thud?"

"Within three or four seconds, sir."

"Do we understand you correctly," broke in a tall, gaunt member of the jury, "that your attention was first attracted by the ringing of Mr. Chalmers's telephone bell, and that the shot occurred about one minute later, followed almost immediately by the heavy thud?"

"That 's the way it was, sir."

"What did the thud sound like?" asked the coroner.

"Like a heavy man jumping or falling to the floor from a high position—the window-sill, for instance."

"What time was it, to the best of your recollection, when you heard this report?"

"About 11.45, sir."

"Were you alone at the time?"

"No, sir; Elias Traynor, the proprietor of Traynor's pawn-shop, had stopped at the door, and I was talkin' with him."

"What did you do after you heard the report and the thud?"

"I must have waited a few seconds before I moved, for I was startled to hear such a report come from within my building. Then, fearing for Mr. Chalmers, whom I knew to be upstairs, I started to investigate."

"You say the report was a heavy one?"

"Yes, sir; it sounded like a shot from a big pistol."

"What did you notice on going upstairs?"

"Nothing until I entered the office; then I saw smoke under the electric lamp, which was still burning, and the body of Mr. Chalmers leaning back in his chair."

"Did you hear any sounds, as of a person or persons leaving the building?"

"No, sir, not a sound of any kind. The floors are all bare, and I thought it very strange all was so quiet. I sprang to Mr. Chalmers's side and saw that he had received two wounds. Then I ran to a rear window, threw up the sash, and blew my police whistle, after which I telephoned a doctor and police headquarters."

"Did you say that Mr. Chalmers was seated at his desk when you found him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Could he have produced the thud you heard by falling back into his chair?"

"Not possible, sir; the thud was much too solid and heavy a sound for that. It shook the heavy rafters over my head."

"Did you search for the murderer at once?"

"I did, sir, and was soon joined in the search by the two policemen who responded to my call, and by my friend Traynor."

"You say you saw no one leave the building?"

"Only Mr. Lamar, but that was some time before I heard the shot."

"How long before the shot?"

"About half an hour—when I was passing in front of the building. Mr. Lamar got into a hansom and drove away."

"You say Mr. Chalmers was alone when you found him. Do you know of any one else having been in the building when he was shot?"

"I don't know, sir—I'm not sure. I saw Mr. Lamar and a man enter the building together about three-quarters of an hour before the shooting, and I saw Mr. Lamar leave a few minutes afterwards."

"You do not know, then, when the other man left?"

"I do not, sir."

"Would you recognize him again if you saw him?"

"No, sir; I did n't see his face."

My heart was beating violently here, for circumstances certainly put me in a bad light.

"Are you sure there was no one else?"

Collins thought for a moment. "There was no one else as late as this, but, now that I come to think of it, there had been a lady there, but she left before Mr. Lamar and the other man came."

"Do you know Miss Wilmerding?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Was it she?"

"No, sir; it was not."

"Did you know who the lady was?"

"I do not know her name, but she came quite often in the evening when Mr. Chalmers stayed late."

"Was the lady a stenographer or secretary?"

"Oh, no, sir. She was not that kind."

"How do you know?"

"Well, sir, I know she was only a friend. Mr. Chalmers had two secretaries."

"Was the lady young?"

"Yes, sir; like Miss Wilmerding—her style."

"When did the secretaries leave last evening?"

"One of them, Mr. Phelps, about half past four. The other, Mr. Roades, is away on his vacation."

"Would it have been possible for this Mr. Phelps or the young woman to remain in the building without your knowing it?"

"Yes, sir. The building is a big one, and rambling, as you can see."

"That will do for the present," said the coroner. "I wish to question Elias Traynor."

Mr. Traynor stepped forward.

"Your name is Elias Traynor?"

"It is, sir."

"Did you hear any shooting last night in this building?"

"I did."

"How many shots were fired?"

"Only one."

"Can you swear to this?"

"I can."

"What was the time?"

"It was just eleven forty-four."

"How do you know?"

"When Collins went into the building to investigate I looked at my watch."

"Did you also hear a heavy thud?"

"I did, sir. It was very pronounced."

"That will answer."

A policeman was the next witness.

"What is your name?" asked the coroner.

"Patrick O'Brien, sir."

"Tell me in your own language what you heard and saw last night."

"Well, sir, I was standing in a doorway with a fellow officer when I heard a noise like the report of a revolver from the warehouse. We were going down to the building when we heard the watchman's police whistle from one of the upper rear windows. We at once ran around back of the building and entered the alley door and climbed the stairs. Inside we met the watchman, who was using the telephone. We then searched the building from cellar to roof, but no one could be found."

The second policeman was then put upon the stand and testified substantially to the same facts.

"Did you see or pass any one coming from the building?"

"About ten minutes before the shooting a young man passed, but no one afterwards."

"Would you recognize this man if you saw him again?"

"No, sir. No particular attention was paid to him."

Here my heart sank, for I had been in hopes these policemen might have remembered something definite to assist me in case of need. The next witness was Dr. Green.

"Your name?" asked the coroner.

"J. P. Green, sir."

"Your profession?"

"Doctor of medicine."

"Tell us of your visit here last night."

"I was called up by telephone about midnight by the night watchman for Chalmers, Howard & Brown, and was told Mr. Chalmers had been shot. I hurried to the warehouse and found him dead. There were two bullet wounds, one having entered the brain through the eye-socket, and the other penetrating his body just over the heart. Either wound alone would have proved fatal."

"What did you do then?"

"I suggested to the watchman that Mr. Chalmers's partners be summoned, for I learned that the two policemen were notifying police headquarters."

Inspector Williams next took the stand. According to his testimony, he had arrived, with three of his men, about twelve forty-five, and had made a careful examination of the body and of the room.

"Did you discover anything of importance in your examination?" inquired the coroner.

"Yes, sir," replied Inspector Williams with pride; "I discovered the weapon with which Mr. Chalmers was murdered;" and he held up a heavy Colt's revolver, with an extra long barrel. "I discovered this about two o'clock in the morning, pushed 'way back behind a lot of rubbish in the crevice of the stone wall siding the alley, and not over twenty feet from where Mr. Chalmers's body was found."

The weapon proved to be a six-shooter, of forty-five calibre, with one loaded and five empty chambers.

"We also found three bullets sunk into the wooden partition just behind Mr. Chalmers's chair," continued Inspector Williams. "This morning Inspector White removed them himself, and they proved, on examination, to be of forty-five calibre and to fit this gun," and with his pencil he tapped the heavy revolver he was holding. "I have also to add," continued Inspector Williams, "that Doctors Osgood and Lane extracted two bullets identical with these from the body of the deceased a few hours later. All five are here for your inspection;" and he handed the coroner a pill-box containing the exhibits. "The revolver plainly shows powder marks, as would be expected from its recent use," he added, and it also was handed over for a more careful examination.

"You are excused for the present, Inspector," broke in his examiner.

The next witness was a gunsmith, who testified that the bullets were of forty-five calibre, and that they had been fired by the weapon found, but he was unable to account for the single report. He was inclined to doubt the accuracy of the statement made by the witnesses that only a single report rang out.

Mr. Howard, of Mr. Chalmers's firm, was then called and in a very excitable and nervous manner replied to the coroner's questions.

"State your name."

"Edward Lloyd Howard."

"You are a member of the firm?"

"I am."

"Were you at Holman Square last night?"

"I was here up to eleven o'clock."

"Were you and Mr. Chalmers alone then?"

"Yes, for about fifteen minutes after Mr. Brown left."

"What was the occasion of the night conference?"

"That is entirely the business of the firm, sir."

"Did the firm frequently have these night meetings?"

"The firm met at such times as it saw fit."

"When did you first hear of the murder?"

"When the watchman called me up on the telephone."

"Did you ever have reason to believe Mr. Chalmers had an enemy?"

Mr. Howard hesitated. "Yes, I have thought that Mr. Chalmers had several enemies, but none who would take such a course as last night's."

"Would you mind giving us the names of the persons whom you believe to have been unfriendly toward Mr. Chalmers?"

Mr. Howard hesitated again and appeared even more nervous.

"We are waiting, Mr. Howard. This is no time to withhold information that might possibly have a bearing on the case."

Mr. Howard nervously fumbled with his watch-chain. "This may have no bearing whatsoever, but——" Here he hesitated again. "I would suggest that you find Miss Wilmerding and ask her just where she was at the time of the murder."

I could have knocked the man down for his brutal insinuation.

"I asked for the names of persons whom you believed to be unfriendly to Mr. Chalmers. Am I to infer that Miss Wilmerding was unfriendly?—I need not use a stronger term, Mr. Howard."

"Not exactly unfriendly, Mr. Coroner, but"—here Howard looked nervously around before he spoke—"I believe the young lady felt more than platonic affection for Mr. Chalmers, that her visits to the warehouse were not purely in the relationship of cousins, and that Mr. Chalmers had recently found other interests. Do I make myself clear?"

"Quite clear, Mr. Howard."

I could have killed the cad, I was so angry by this time, and I even felt that the coroner, as common a man as he was, felt contempt for the manner in which Mr. Howard referred to Miss Wilmerding.

"I can only repeat, Mr. Coroner," continued Mr. Howard, "find the girl, learn her whereabouts last night, and I will wager you will learn something about the death of her cousin."

"Do you know any other persons whom you regard as having been unfriendly toward Mr. Chalmers?"

"George W. Dent, of Dent & Company, and Mr. Chalmers were not on good terms, but I cannot connect this man with such a crime. They were constantly conflicting in business interests. Mr. Dent has not only a sharp reputation in business matters, but also an ungovernable temper."

Suddenly I found myself wondering if Mr. Howard himself had been a friend or a secret enemy of Mr. Chalmers. Things seemed hopeless to me in view of the many possible relations and complications between the very members of this firm. While Mr. Howard was not at Holman Square at the time of the murder, could he have been instrumental? I only knew that I did not like the man.

"Who is Mr. George Dent?" continued the coroner.

"He is a well-known clubman and a business man of means."

"Was there ever an open quarrel between him and Mr. Chalmers to your knowledge?" asked the coroner.

"Yes, on several occasions."

"When did the last disagreement take place?"

"About a month ago. I came into the office and heard high words between Mr. Chalmers and Mr. Dent. Mr. Lamar was present, and I believe he struck Mr. Dent."

"Do you know what the quarrel was about?"

"I do not."

I felt instinctively that Mr. Howard lied.

"I should now like to question Mr. William Lamar."

Lamar took the stand, looking rather white.

"Is it true that Mr. Chalmers and Mr. Dent quarrelled and that you were a party to the unpleasantness?"

"It is. Mr. Dent and I have long been enemies—that is well known in New York—and when Dent made insinuations about Mr. Chalmers and a certain lady whose name I shall not mention, I slapped his face."

"What was the quarrel about?"

"It was a personal matter and involved a lady's name."

"That will do for the present, Mr. Lamar."

The coroner continued to question Mr. Howard.

"Your safe was found open. Is anything missing from it?"

"No. Mr. Brown and I found everything intact."

"Can you offer any explanation for Miss Wilmerding's disappearance?"

"I cannot."

"Did Mr. Lamar and a Mr. Harkness call to see Mr. Chalmers while you were there?"

"No."

The next witness called was Mr. Brown. He impressed me as a man of great force and power, and showed a serious determination in his face. He was quiet in his manner and spoke directly to the point.

"What is your full name, Mr. Brown?"

"Harold Harwood Brown."

"You are a member of the firm of Chalmers, Howard & Brown?"

"I am."

"What time was it when you left Mr. Chalmers and Mr. Howard together last evening?"

"About ten-thirty, I should judge."

"Can you not state definitely the time?"

"No."

"Do you suspect any one of being an enemy of Mr. Chalmers?"

"Yes. There was trouble between Mr. Chalmers and a laborer. The man proved to a thief, and was arrested and sent to jail. This was a little over a year ago. The man's name was Garland—Joseph Garland—and at the time he swore he would kill Mr. Chalmers when he regained his liberty. I have already communicated with the penitentiary and have received word"—here Mr. Brown produced a telegram—"that Garland was released a month ago."

"Do you know of any other person or persons who were unfriendly to Mr. Chalmers, or who had reason to desire his death?"

"No; I can think of no other person who would be likely to injure him. There are a number who might be said to have strong motives, but I suppose this might be said of almost any prominent man."

"What did you do when you came here last night?"

"I sent at once for his family physician, Dr. Osgood; then I conferred with my partner, Mr. Howard, as to putting the best possible detective talent upon the case. We telephoned the police again, and also the detective firm of Brant & Dale."

"Can you offer any explanation of the disappearance of Miss Wilmerding?"

Mr. Brown did not reply at once, but finally said: "No, I can offer no explanation for her absence at this time."

"Were they on good terms?—I mean Mr. Chalmers and his cousin."

"The very best of terms."

"That will do for the present, Mr. Brown."

The next person called was Mr. Chalmers, Senior. He was a handsome and aristocratic-looking old gentleman, and spoke with the force of a young and vigorous man, although he appeared to be greatly shaken by his son's sudden death and by Miss Wilmerding's disappearance.

"Your name, sir?"

"Herbert Chalmers."

"I presume you can offer no explanation of Miss Wilmerding's disappearance.

"Would to God I could, sir!"

"Was the young lady in the habit of leaving her home without telling the members of the household?"

"She was never known to do such a thing."

"Did she live with you?"

"Yes."

"Who else reside or resided with you?"

"My wife, Mrs. Chalmers, and"—here the old gentleman wavered in his voice—"the fine fellow some one brutally shot here last night."

"And he was——"

"My son."

"Did the young lady often come here to see Mr. Chalmers?"

"She came quite often, for she was interested in settlement life, and has been doing a noble work among the poorer classes."

"Was she on good terms with her cousin?"

"They were the most affectionate chums. She was writing a book, and my son was her critic."

"When was Miss Wilmerding last seen?"

"She was last seen leaving the house for a little shopping about four o'clock."

"Was she alone?"

"No, she was with an old friend of the family's, Mr. William Lamar."

I felt an angry and jealous passion sweep over me.

"Did Mr. Lamar give you any explanation?"

"No, but I believe he can tell you something."

Lamar then came forward, and the coroner asked:

"Mr. Lamar, can you tell us something of Miss Wilmerding's whereabouts yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes."

Mr. Lamar appeared nervous as he took the stand again, and my instinctive dislike of him was deepened without my being able to explain it.

"I will excuse you, sir," said the coroner courteously, turning to Mr. Chalmers, Senior, and he then continued to question Lamar.

"You left the Chalmers residence yesterday afternoon with Miss Wilmerding?"

"Yes."

"When and where did you leave her?"

"I left her about a quarter of an hour later at the Twenty-third Street entrance to the subway, as she informed me that she had some shopping to do."

"Did you see her again?"

"No; that is the last any of her family or friends have seen of her."

"When did you last see Mr. Chalmers?"

"Last night."

"What time last night?"

"About twenty minutes past eleven."

"Would you mind stating the nature of the business which required such a late call?"

"No. It was in connection with a workman named Harkness that Mr. Chalmers wanted to see."

"Did you bring this man here?"

"I did."

"Did you and he leave together?"

"No; I left them alone in conference."

"Do you know the nature of the conference?"

"Yes. This fellow Harkness had looked after Miss Wilmerding when she fainted in the street the day before yesterday, and although the lady paid him for his trouble, Mr. Chalmers, for some unknown reason, insisted that I find him and bring him here."

"So far as you know, then, Mr. Harkness is the last person to see Mr. Chalmers alive?"

"He is the last person to see Mr. Chalmers alive—or else in his death struggle."

I was boiling with rage at this fellow's brutal insinuation, and realized that I had just cause for the nervous excitement that I felt was taking hold of me.

"Have you any reason to believe that Mr. Harkness committed the crime?"

Mr. Lamar did not answer for several moments, and the coroner repeated his question.

"He was undoubtedly the last man to see Mr. Chalmers alive, or else, as I have already stated, in his death struggles, if he struggled at all. Men do not struggle much when shot in the head with a forty-five calibre Colt."

"When you left Mr. Harkness and Mr. Chalmers together, where did you go?"

"I went to my rooms."

"Did you drive in a hansom cab?"

"I did."

"Were you alone in the cab?"

"I was."

I felt that the man lied, but could not swear to the person I had seen in the cab having remained.

"Do you know what plans Mr. Chalmers had in mind in connection with Mr. Harkness?"

"I believe he intended offering him a position."

"Had the arrangements been completed when you left them?"

"They had not."

"So it is possible, in your mind, for a quarrel to have started after you left?"

"It is undoubtedly possible."

"Have you ever seen Mr. Harkness before?"

"Yes, the day before yesterday;" and he described his coming upon Miss Wilmerding and me after she had recovered from her fainting spell.

"Was this the only time?"

"Yes."

"That's all, Mr. Lamar;" and the coroner leaned over to speak with an associate who held a list of names. Mr. Lamar wrote hurriedly upon a sheet of paper and handed it to the coroner. I felt certain I would be called next, and keyed myself up for any possible ordeal. I was not mistaken; a moment later the coroner called my name. I rose and took the stand.

"Your name?"

"Alfred Harkness."

"You are connected with the electric company making the street repairs at the corner of Houston Street and Avenue A?"

"I am."

"Were you present when Miss Wilmerding fainted near your excavation the day before yesterday?"

"I was not present when the young lady fainted and fell, but I was with her a few moments later."

"Did you accept a fee or reward for what you did for her?"

I felt my blood boil within me again, and I could not speak at once. The coroner noticed my hesitation.

"Well?"

"Before I realized what had happened, I was holding a coin in my hand, and the young lady had driven off with this Mr. Lamar."

"What was the coin she gave you?"

"This information can have no bearing in the case, sir."

"I repeat the question," said the coroner sharply.

"I must decline to answer, then."

"You decline to state how much she gave you, do you?" The coroner's voice rang out sharply.

"Yes, sir; I decline to state."

There was a decided murmur throughout the room. I knew this last question was Lamar's work, and that he was forcing me to make a bad beginning. As I half expected, the coroner changed his question, and asked in a tone equally sharp:

"Did the young lady not give you a twenty-dollar gold piece?"

It was evident that Lamar had forced Miss Wilmerding, perhaps through a jealous passion, to tell him what she had given me, and I was gratified to see Mason Brant entering notes in his leather-covered note-book. Without him to rely on, I should have been desperate.

"I have already declined to answer this question."

"It would be to your benefit to reply to my questions," said the official dryly.

"I shall endeavor to reply to any others you may see fit to ask, sir."

"Was Mr. Lamar correct in stating that he left you alone with Mr. Chalmers some time between eleven and twelve?"

"He was."

"What was the nature of your conference with Mr. Chalmers?"

"He wished to thank me for the assistance I had given to his cousin the day before. He also appeared to be in need of a man with a knowledge of electrical engineering, and offered me a position."

"Did you accept the position?"

"No, sir; I told him I'd consider it and let him know at eleven o'clock to-day."

"What time did you leave Mr. Chalmers?"

"I should judge it was about half past eleven."

"Did you leave him alone?"

"Yes."

"Did you see or pass any person or persons in the building when you left?"

"I did not."

"Did you hear any shot either while you were still in the building or after you had reached the street?"

"I heard no shot."

"Did you see any one after you had reached the street?"

"I passed two policemen who were standing near a doorway when I turned the first corner on my way home."

"Did you go straight to your room?"

"No, I went into a cigar store and bought some cigarettes; then I went right to my room."

"You may take your seat, Mr. Harkness."

The next person called was Mason Brant. For the second time a distinct murmur ran through the room, and we all looked expectantly for the appearance on the stand of the famous detective.

"Your name, please?"

"Mason Brant."

"You are a detective?"

"Yes."

"Who employs you, Mr. Brant, and when were you retained?"

"I had a telephone call from Mr. Herbert Chalmers at midnight relative to Miss Wilmerding's disappearance, and about an hour later a second message was received at my office from Mr. Brown, retaining me in connection with Mr. Chalmers's murder."

"Have you made an examination of the body of the murdered man and of the room in which he was killed?"

"I have."

"Did you find anything of importance?"

"Yes, I have learned certain facts which I believe to be of direct bearing on the case, but I prefer not to divulge them at this time."

"What are your reasons for withholding your information?"

"It is contrary to my practice."

"Do I understand you to say that you have important information and that you decline to reveal it?"

"It would be my preference not too."

"Would your revealing it lessen the chances of apprehending the murderer?"

There was a noticeable pause following this question, when the coroner, leaning forward with increased interest, inquired:

"Did you not fully grasp my meaning, Mr. Brant?"

"Yes, I fully understood you, Mr. Coroner, but must inform you that some of my information, if made public, might prevent the apprehension of the guilty party."

There was a decided stir throughout the room at this reply, and I could plainly see that Brant's attitude was rather objectionable to the police officials present.

Mr. Brown and Mr. Howard immediately entered into an earnest conversation, and they were presently joined by Mr. Herbert Chalmers. In a moment Mr. Howard interrupted the coroner, who was about to put another question to Brant, and they talked together in low tones for several minutes. When the coroner spoke again I was not surprised to hear him say:

"You have been employed by Mr. Brown and Mr. Chalmers to solve this murder mystery, and to find Miss Wilmerding. Am I not correct?"

"You are correct, Mr. Coroner."

"I have to inform you that you are now directed to furnish any information you may have which, in your opinion, will not lessen the chances of your success."

"Since you and my employers take this position, I will state certain facts, withholding only such information as would in my judgment defeat our purpose."

"Proceed on that basis."

"Well, gentlemen," Brant began, turning to address his employers, "for one thing, the Colt's revolver which my official contemporary has shown you had nothing whatever to do with Mr. Chalmers's death; for another, one of the witnesses examined told a deliberate lie."

A wave of excited comment swept through the room.

"I believe I can prove both of these assertions to your entire satisfaction. A number of years ago," Brant continued in an even, well modulated tone, "I made a series of practical experiments on the penetration of bullets through the human body. This work covered a period of several weeks, and was in connection with the Courtney case, with which you are all doubtless familiar. Ample opportunity was afforded me in the dissecting-rooms of several medical colleges, and the weapons employed ranged from revolvers with short barrels and of small calibre to arms of the size and class exemplified by the one Inspector Williams now has in his hands. One of the puzzling features of the case has been the fact that though five bullets were fired, but one report was heard, as testified to by several witnesses. As for the two bullets found in the body, the single report could have been produced by two pistols being fired at the same instant by either one or two separate assailants; but this could hardly account for five."

I had not thought of the possibility of two bullets being fired at Mr. Chalmers at the same instant, from two separate revolvers, and I found myself picturing the absurdly remote possibility of an attack upon him by five men with five separate pistols all fired at the same instant, when Brant continued:

"I have in my hand eight cartridges of forty-five calibre, three made by the Winchester Repeating Arms Company, five by the Union Metallic Cartridge Company. They were found by my partner, Mr. Robert Dale, in the crevice where the inspector found the revolver, only farther back. The empty shells in the chambers of this revolver bear the stamp of these two well known manufacturers, and I am going to ask the permission of the coroner presently to conduct a little experiment with one of them here. Had the murder been committed with the Colt's revolver which has been found, the bullets would have passed completely through the body. I do not contemplate firing at the body of the victim, gentlemen, but I will produce evidence even more conclusive that this revolver was not used. Now, a clear examination of the partition shows," Brant continued, "that the three bullets which struck there and which have been removed by Inspector White were never fired by a modern rifled arm, for they all turned over in their flight and struck the partition on their sides, which is unmistakably shown in the wood. Had these bullets been fired by the Colt's revolver, Inspector White would never have dug them out of the partition, for from any distance within this building in line with Mr. Chalmers's chair, they would have passed clear through the partition and in addition through the planks of several of the packing-boxes which stand on the other side. I will now ask the coroner, his jury, and the police officials to examine this partition."

The examination was quickly made, only to verify Brant's statement. The three bullets had "tumbled," to use a term familiar to ordnance experts, and had struck broadside, as revealed by the oblong indentations in the wood of the partition, and had only entered to a distance of about three-quarters of an inch. A measurement of the thickness of the partition showed it to consist of planks one and one-quarter inches thick. Upon the return of the officials and jurymen, Brant requested permission to fire one or more shots at the partition from the Colt's revolver. It being readily granted, he loaded the arm, and, backing off from the partition as far as the size of the larger office would permit, took deliberate aim and pulled the trigger.

A loud report rang out, and a wreath of smoke went curling ceilingward.

"Now, gentlemen, I am sure you will find that this bullet struck truly end-on, and passed through at least three and one-half inches of wood."

A second examination was quickly made, and, instead of finding the wood mashed away as before, a clean, true, round hole had been made, through which one could look and see a second clean, round hole in the planking of a packing box on the other side. Upon further examination, it was revealed that the bullet had issued from the other side of the box and lodged in the plank of another case just beyond. The total penetration measured three and one-eighth inches. Two more shots were fired with the same result, one of the bullets penetrating exactly three and one-half inches of wood!

"If it were not disrespectful," Brant said, "I could pass a bullet clear through the body of the victim, striking it at any point that you might designate."

"There is no need for further proof, Mr. Brant," said the coroner. "I think we are all quite ready to discard the idea that the weapon used was that found by Inspector Williams."

"Since you've completely upset the only possible clue we had," said the fat member of the jury, who had made two unsuccessful attempts to rise out of the hidden chair before he stood upon his feet, "perhaps you will be able to throw some light upon the nature of the weapon which did kill Mr. Chalmers."

"I will do so, since I am directed to give up certain information at this time," Brant replied, "and I believe I can prove my statements. Mr. Chalmers was shot to death by a brass yacht cannon about two feet long, with a one and a half-inch bore, weighing in the neighborhood, with its mount, of two hundred and fifty pounds, and," continued Brant in a powerful voice that reverberated and penetrated every nook and corner of that great building, "I am going to ask Mr. William Lamar if the young man, Mr. Alfred Harkness, carried such a cannon with him when he was taken to see Mr. Chalmers last night!"

The statement that a cannon had shot Mr. Chalmers brought forth a score of incredible exclamations, followed by a burst of nervous laughter at his question to Mr. Lamar.

Mr. Brown, Mr. Howard, and Mr. Herbert Chalmers immediately sought one another and engaged in an earnest debate. They, of course, must have known of the cannon's existence, but had forgotten it and overlooked the possibility of its being a factor in the case.

"If he did not carry such a cannon," Brant continued after order had been restored, "and Inspector White's detectives did not find anything suspicious when they searched his room on West Sixty-fifth Street this morning, I am going to ask you, Mr. Coroner and gentlemen of the jury, to direct that Mr. Harkness be at once released from suspicion."

"Good! Good!" exclaimed one of the jurymen. "Show us the cannon and convince us it was the weapon used, and I am sure the jury will order Mr. Harkness's release."

"Come with me, then, gentlemen."

Brant led the way into the office and pointed to the massive book-case standing across the corner of the room.

"Pull that case out and look behind it and you will see the cannon."

The case was a big one, and piled up with articles of every description, so it was difficult to move. On top were numerous things belonging to a yacht. A handsome pair of port and starboard lights, a ship's compass, navigator's sextant and chronometers, a telescope, some brass blocks, and, leaning back from the case to the wall, chart cases, ship's clock, a set of signal flags, and some life buoys, all evidently the property of some yacht out of commission. They all had to be moved, as well as books, samples, and odds and ends of various kinds upon the shelves.

The jurymen put their shoulders to the heavy case and pulled one end out into the room. There, lying upon its back and pointing to the wall, was a good-sized yacht cannon in a heavy canvas cover. The four mahogany wheels were uppermost, and it took the united effort of the coroner and Inspector White to drag it out into the room and to turn it over upon its wheels.

I felt afraid Brant had made a blunder when I saw the straps and the canvas cover, but when they turned it over I was thrilled to see that part of the cover just over the muzzle was blown away, and that the canvas was blackened with powder-marks for some distance around the jagged hole.

"It is as plain as day," said Brant, "that this cannon was on top of the book-case with the other yacht properties, and that its recoil sent it backward on its wheels, when it turned a half somersault and fell upon its back behind the case, producing the heavy thud heard by the watchman and his visitor."

From the top of the case it certainly had deadly command of Mr. Chalmers's desk and chair.

"I guess you are about right again, Mr. Brant," said the coroner, "for there are two streaks the width of the cannon's wheels in the layer of dust on top of the case."

A close examination of the canvas cover revealed a piece of fishing line of red and yellow silk and about four feet long running out between the meshes of the canvas, just over the breach. The cover was then removed, to find the regulation type of pull firing primer. It was evident that the cannon had been fired by pulling this line, but from where?

A close search for more line was made, but without success, and it was evident that the cannon had been fired by some one hiding behind the book-case, or else by some one on the other side of the partition, as the line was just long enough to pass through the cracks in the boards.

Who loaded the deadly cannon with the five forty-five calibre bullets as slugs, hid the Colt revolver as a blind, and pulled the cord?

Further search of the top of the book-case brought to light a box of giant blank cartridges, such as were commonly used in such a cannon, and a score or more of firing primers. The cannon loaded easily at the breech, and was so simple in its mechanism that a child could have operated it. It was quite evident that the line could have been pulled by some one hiding behind a heavy book-case, but far more likely that the perpetrator of the outrage was on the other side of the partition and that he pulled the line through a crack in the boards. Had the murderer been behind the book-case, he or she—I paled at the thought—would have met with great difficulty in getting out. Had the line been pulled from the other side of the partition, however, the person committing the crime would have found it less troublesome to escape. Even though he could not have descended the stairs without encountering the watchman, he could have hidden successfully among the packing-cases on the same floor until the search was over, or else have made his escape through the roof. Yes, the murderer must have pulled the cord from the other side of the partition. There were more packing-cases piled up there, and a man could have lain in wait unseen for days had he wished to do so.

It was some time before the excitement incident to the discovery of the cannon quieted down and we returned once more to the inquest room.

"You made a statement, Mr. Brant," began the coroner when order had been restored, "that one of the witnesses told an untruth in connection with this inquiry. Are you prepared to state the person's name?"

"Yes, it was Mr. William Lamar. When he left Holman Square last night in that hansom cab he did not leave alone!"

Again intense excitement reigned.

Mr. Lamar sprang to his feet with, "Unless you prove that statement I'll——"

"Mr. Brant is under examination," cried the coroner, "and I will ask you to take your seat."

The clock struck twelve.

"The inquest will adjourn until two," said the chief examiner firmly, and further proceedings were arrested. Things had reached this exciting stage when I was courteously notified by the coroner that I was released and that with the others I was free to go out to get luncheon.

VI.

It was indeed a relief to be freed from suspicion and to get into the street again, for my nerves had been sorely tried. I felt that I could now throw myself entirely into the mysteries of the case, and that if I could get a short leave of absence from the Electric Company I might perhaps assist in finding Miss Wilmerding. It would be impossible to go back to my work for the company as things stood and with my mind so preoccupied, and I resolved to go over to the office, get a week's leave, and then offer my services, in any capacity, to the firm of Brant & Dale. Even if I could take a very small part in their work, I should be happy. I walked rapidly over to the company's offices, secured the leave of absence—but not without some little difficulty—and then set out to get my luncheon before returning to the place of the inquest.

I was walking rapidly back in the direction of Holman Square when suddenly a thought struck me and I stopped short.

"By Jove!" I said, "I believe I have been already of service. That cab number I gave Brant has been followed up!" I quickened my pace, for I wished to arrive at the place of the inquest before they convened again, so that I might have an opportunity to chat with Brant, relative to assisting him. I arrived twenty-five minutes before the hour. Little groups of men were standing around, discussing the various features of the case, but neither Brant nor his partner was visible. Collins, the watchman, was standing guard at the door of the office upstairs.

"Is Mr. Brant about, or his partner, Mr. Dale?" I inquired.

"Well, I guess not," replied Collins. "Men who work as rapidly as those fellows don't stand around waiting for anything. They 'll be here at two, I 'll wager, but not before."

I strolled into the inquest room and took my seat. There were quite a number back from lunch, and we sat silently waiting.

The short, thick-set detective who had taken me from my room strolled over to my side, and I was surprised to hear him say pleasantly, "I 'm glad you 're out of this, sir, for it 's dirty work."

I was greatly impressed by the fellow's change in manner. How sharp and unsympathetic such men can be in their line of duty, and how human and decent they can also be when one is not a suspect!

"Indeed, it is brutal work," I replied; "but what of Miss Wilmerding? Have you any theories as to where she may be?"

"We have our ideas," replied the man, "but we ain't talking."

I knew that he was trying to impress me as one having valuable information, but surmised that in reality his remarks were based on bluff, for effect.

Promptly at two the inquest opened again. Brant had come in several minutes before the hour and was talking earnestly with the coroner. Presently the latter rose and rapped for order.

"Joe Weber."

A little, weazen-faced fellow got up and took the stand.

"Your name is Joe Weber?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is your business?"

"Cab driver."

"What kind of a cab?"

"A hansom."

"What's its number?"

"Twenty-seven hundred and four."

"Were you here at Holman Square last night?"

"I was."

"What time did you come?"

"About eleven fifteen."

"Do you know Mr. Lamar?"

"I do, sir."

"Did you drive him here?"

"Well, not exactly, sir. I drove him and another gentleman to within three blocks of this building, when Mr. Lamar got out and told me to wait until he joined another man and then for me to follow slowly behind and wait in front of this building."

"You say another man. Was there some one with Mr. Lamar inside your hansom?"

"There was, sir."

"Did you know the other man?"

"No, sir."

"Did you drive Mr. Lamar later?"

"I did."

"What time was it?"

"About five or six minutes later, I should say—about eleven twenty, sir."

"Was the other gentleman inside when Mr. Lamar came out?"

"Yes, sir; he asked me for a match just before Mr. Lamar came out of the building."

"Where did you drive this strange gentleman?"

"To 833 Madison Avenue."

"Did you stop anywhere?"

"No, sir."

"Who paid you?"

"Mr. Lamar, when he reached his house."

"What time was it when Mr. Lamar got home?"

"It was about eleven forty."

"What did the gentleman with Mr. Lamar look like?"

"He had a gray beard and was slight."

"Have you ever seen him before?"

"Yes, sir; I have occasionally seen him at the clubs."

"Would you know him if you saw him again?"

"I think so, sir."

Mr. Lamar looked very much annoyed and appeared more nervous than ever when the coroner put him on the stand again.

"There appears to be some discrepancy between your statement that you left Holman Square alone last night, and the statement of the cab driver. Have you any explanation to give?"

"The driver lies; that is the only statement I have to make."

"That is sufficient, Mr. Lamar."

Mr. Brown, of the firm, was then put upon the stand again for a minute, and in reply to the coroner's question stated that the yacht cannon had stood upon the book-case for the past three years, ever since Mr. Chalmers put his yacht out of commission. Then he hesitated and seemed much embarrassed.

"What is it, Mr. Brown?" pressed the coroner, noticing his embarrassment. "You had something more to say?"

Mr. Brown looked annoyed.

"Yes, there was something I had in mind, but it can have no direct bearing, and it may serve to injure some one whom I do not believe to be connected in the least with this dreadful affair."

"Go on. We must take it for what it is worth."

"I would prefer not to mention the incident."

"I must then press you, Mr. Brown."

Mr. Brown's hand trembled as he took his handkerchief from his pocket.

"The incident is a small one, but since you insist and are entitled to the facts I will tell you that Miss Wilmerding and a young brother of hers borrowed the cannon and had it upon the front lawn last 4th of July."

"Was Miss Wilmerding familiar with its use?"

"Yes, she used to fire it when the cannon was on the *Katherine*."

"Was the *Katherine* Mr. Chalmers's yacht?"

"Yes."

"Did Miss Wilmerding use the cannon to celebrate last 4th of July?"

"Yes, she and her brother fired it a number of times."

"Who brought back the cannon?"

"I believe the gardener and the stableman carted it back and placed it where it was accustomed to stand, on the book-case. I remember this, for they forgot to put the canvas cover on again, and I heard Mr. Chalmers ask one of his secretaries to fix it up as it was before."

"Is this secretary here?"

"No, he went off for his vacation about a week ago, and has not yet returned to the city."

"What is this secretary's name?"

"Arthur Roades."

There was a slight interval in the proceedings, and quite a stir was produced when the coroner finally said, "I will now ask Mr. George Dent to take the stand."

A slight, well dressed man of about forty came forward. He wore a closely clipped gray beard, and his whole appearance indicated the successful man of the world.

"Is it true, Mr. Dent, that you quarrelled with Mr. Chalmers and Mr. Lamar about a month ago?"

"My difference with Mr. Chalmers was not in the form of a quarrel, sir," said Dent in a direct and straightforward manner. "My quarrel was with Mr. Lamar."

I looked at Lamar. He was frowning darkly, but made no move to interrupt.

"Were you on friendly terms with Mr. Chalmers at the time of his death?"

Mr. Dent hesitated. It was evident that he was much embarrassed by this question. "I was not an admirer of Mr. Chalmers, but I bore him no ill feeling," he said finally.

I somehow distrusted Mr. Dent's statement. It did n't ring true.

"Were you on friendly terms with Mr. Lamar at that time?"

"I had not spoken to Lamar for about a year. It is well known that we have long been enemies."

"What is the nature of your difference with Mr. Lamar?"

"See here, Mr. Coroner," Dent broke in sharply, "I came here unwillingly, as I know absolutely nothing that can assist you or your jury in detecting the perpetrator of this ghastly murder. Of my difference with Mr. Lamar, I have only to say that it is a personal matter of long standing, the nature of which is none of this jury's business."

Dent certainly had the full courage of his convictions, and I could not help admiring him for it. To my surprise, the coroner did not seem in the least angered by Dent's deportment, but calmly asked:

"Were you out in the hansom cab with Mr. Lamar last night, Mr. Dent?"

"That is a question I decline to answer."

The coroner jotted something down upon a tablet before him.

"Are you or are you not on friendly terms with Mr. Lamar now?"

"I have already informed you, sir, that I am not on friendly terms with Mr. Lamar."

"That is all I wish to know, Mr. Dent."

Joe Weber was then called again.

"Do you know the gentleman who has just been on the stand?"

"Yes, sir. It was him I drove away from here last night with Mr. Lamar."

"Are you positive? Can you swear to it?" pressed the coroner.

"Yes, sir, I can swear to it, although it was dark."

This testimony of the cab driver undoubtedly put Lamar and probably Dent out of the case, for they must have been well uptown, if not actually at their own homes, when the crime was committed.

Yet things indeed looked strange to me. The cab driver must have been mistaken, for what peculiar circumstances could account for those two bitter enemies driving about together? I was glad the problem was Brant's and not mine. I smiled when I thought of Inspector White's chances of solving such a tangle. The criminal was no ordinary man, and the relationships between the principals in this tragedy were far too subtle to be unravelled by any detective except just such an educated man of the world as Mason Brant. To me, the outlook seemed hopeless, as I believe it appeared to the acute coroner and the more worldly members of his jury. There was a long conference in low tones between the coroner and his jurymen, then the twelve men retired to discuss the case behind closed doors. After a two-hours conference, they returned with the verdict that "Mr. Chalmers came to his death by a yacht cannon fired by a person or persons unknown."

Thus the inquest broke up, and I reached the street with a more unsettled feeling than ever.

Where was *she?* I looked for Brant and Dale among the many persons leaving the building, but they had disappeared.

I was disappointed, and resolved to call at their office after I had procured something to eat.

VII.

It was about eight o'clock when I got up-town, changed my clothes, and managed to get through with my dinner. The various phases of the case were chasing each other through my brain, all of them ending in speculations as to *her* whereabouts. I shuddered at certain suspicions, and my heart grew cold.

"To-night I shall pray to feel your kisses upon my lips. Your lonely girl." The brutal insinuations of Mr. Howard returned to me again and again. Of course it was possible—everything is possible. Even *she* could have killed, if driven to extremes. "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned," and the girl's rage or jealousy might have reached an intensity that made her take life. But what a method! The person, man or woman, who fired that cannon had planned Mr. Chalmers's death days, perhaps weeks or months, ahead. I was at my wits' end, and the more I pondered, the more confused were my thoughts of her.

But where was the girl? Was she safe? After all, if her love for Chalmers had led to her slaying him, it could have been no cheap passion, and the girl was doubtless more sinned against than sinning. My heart warmed to her, and I started out for Brant's office in the mad hope that he could tell me where she was.

It had commenced to rain, and I quickened my steps and reached the office of the well known firm considerably out of breath, only to learn that both members of the firm were out. However, one of their assistants, Mr. Lacy, was in, and I asked to see him. Lacy, a very small fellow with jet black hair and eyes to match, came out and asked me into the office.

"It is very important that I see Mr. Brant to-night," I said. "When do you expect him in?"

The young man's eyes were very penetrating, and he showed a decided alertness and active nature as he looked me over. He was just the style of office assistant Brant would be likely to employ, I was thinking, when I was surprised to hear him say, "Neither Mr. Brant nor Mr. Dale is likely to be back to-night, Mr. Harkness, for they are both engaged upon some points in this case which will detain them for hours. I don't, as a rule, inform strangers of my employers' whereabouts when they are working up a big case, but I feel that I know you, Mr. Harkness, since Mr. Brant described you to me just before he left, and said that it was more than likely that you would call this evening, as he was compelled to leave Holman Square hurriedly without seeing you after the inquest."

"Mr. Brant did me a great service in clearing me of suspicion at the coroner's inquest."

The young man's eyes snapped violently, and I took it as a little nervous peculiarity he had.

"You are an electrical engineer, I am told. Have you a card?"

"Yes."

I took out my pocketbook and handed him my card.

The young man looked at it carefully.

"Alfred Harkness, electrical engineer. What is your address?" he asked. I took out my pencil and wrote the number and street on the card.

"Tell Mr. Brant I am anxious to see him at once upon his return."

"I surely will," said the young man, and I took my leave.

It was raining hard when I reached the street, and I buttoned up my coat and walked rapidly over to Broadway. I had always loved the reflected lights in the wet streets and pavements, but to-night they served only to chill my spirits, which were already well below par.

The evening "extras" were out with the usual scare-heads, and I bought them eagerly and stopped in a lighted doorway to read them. There was nothing new recorded, but I was much interested in reading the account of the coroner's inquest. There it was complete, printed from the stenographers' notes. How queer it all looked in print!

"Yes, sir; I decline to state." Indeed, I had the publicity all right!

I then found myself wondering if *she* had read it. All the brutal question stood out like spectres. Poor girl! She too was getting her share of notoriety, justly or unjustly. I was thankful that the love letter had not been produced at the inquest or been published. I found myself wondering who was the other woman the watchman had mentioned? Could she have been the murderer, or could she have been the cause of Miss Wilmerding committing the crime because of a jealous passion.

No, if I am anything of a judge of women, it was impossible for *her* to have planned such an act—for planned and premeditated it surely was; as carefully planned and as deeply premeditated as any crime that was ever committed.

But what does mortal man know about woman anyhow, when at times he does n't even know himself. Miss Wilmerding may have possessed a second self she knew nothing about until this strange circumstance arose. She might have done such a deed in the intensity of jealous rage, but not in a premeditated manner.

Yes, after all, the possibility of her guilt could not be denied. She might have loved Chalmers deeply, passionately, and have for some time felt that this other woman was stealing him away. Perhaps she had determined she would never give him up, and had loaded the yacht cannon and laid the cord, so that as a last desperate resort she could render this woman's victory a barren one, if things ever reached such a climax. The loading of the cannon was an easy matter. It only required the insertion of one of the giant blank cartridges, with its primer, which came all ready for use for saluting purposes. The dropping in of the five slugs upon the cartridge was but the work of a moment. Yet the pistol? No, the whole thing was too premeditated and too carefully thought out for any woman to have arranged it.

It was not a woman's work. But whose?

I ran quickly over the possible murderers and jotted the names down in my note-book. There appeared:

The released thief	Traced to a Maine town.
The two secretaries	One of whom was supposed to be away on his vacation.
The other woman	Who was she?
Mr. Lamar	Out of it. Up-town at the time.
Mr. Dent	Out of it. Probably up-town with Lamar.
Mr. Howard	Could have remained in the building hiding.
Mr. Brown	Could have remained in the building hiding.
Mr. Herbert Chalmers	Out of the question.
Some hired assassin	Name or whereabouts unknown.
Hal Collins	Possible.
Mr. Traynor	Possible.
and *her*	Mysteriously absent.

I tried to look at the list calmly and dispassionately and give an unbiased view. But reflection only made me the more miserable. Things looked blackest for *her*. No doubt the various detectives on the case were working over just such a list, only with *my* name added.

With all my meditation, one thing was certain, the guilty person or persons had planned things in order that they might encompass their victim's death in case of some desperate climax of necessity. The cannon may have covered Mr. Chalmers with its deadly charge for months, the murderer waiting for some specific time before he chose to secrete himself in the place which so well afforded perfect protection from discovery while he pulled the cord.

But I argued further—and the idea brought me a sense of relief—if Miss Wilmerding was driven to commit a crime because of jealousy, would she not have killed the other woman, and not the man she loved?

Then there was that mysterious telephone call, the thought of which brought back the old suspicions. It may have been the signal to the murderer hiding safely behind the packing-boxes, that Mr. Chalmers was at his desk. One could not see Mr. Chalmers from where the cord must have led, yet he could plainly have been heard talking. If it was *she,* perhaps it was the conversation over the telephone that decided her to end his life. Perhaps she spied upon him thus and heard the words which turned her love to hatred.

Who called Mr. Chalmers up? That was another mystery. Undoubtedly the person talking to him must have heard the cannon and Mr. Chalmers's last gasp. An idea crossed my mind. By Jove! I would go to the telephone operator and try to learn what number had called up the firm of Chalmers, Howard & Brown at the fatal hour last night. I had helped Brant once, and perhaps I could help him again. There must be few 'phone messages sent down-town at that late hour, and there was just one chance in a thousand that the girl would remember. Going into a drug store, I called up "Central" and asked for the address of the sub-station switchboard for that section of the city, and was soon on my way to the place.

Yes, the same girl was there, I was told, and after some demur I was permitted to speak to her. She had very noticeable auburn hair, and was reading what appeared to be a novel and manipulating numerous plugs at the same time. At my question, she cocked her head with the affixed receiver and glanced at me with a look of pity. Her deft hands continued to manipulate the cords and plugs.

"Say, mister, do you remember the number of your last meal ticket?"

There was a ripple of snickers and chuckles from the long line of girls sitting beside her.

"No-o," I said; "but——"

"'Tain't no use—no use whatever. Another chap with little bead-like eyes was here only a couple o' hours after the call, and I could not have told him any more than I could fly in the air."

There was another ripple of amusement, and as I saw it was hopeless, I hurriedly made my escape.

"That was a great success, Alfred," I said to myself when I reached the street, "a brilliant success."

It had stopped raining and a fresh wind was blowing up when I reached the street. Tired out physically and mentally, I wended my way to my little hall room, convinced that detective work was not so easy as one might imagine.

VIII.

In addition to several welcome letters from home, the next morning's mail brought me a note from my doctor chum, offering to do anything to help that I might wish. Then as I descended the boarding-house steps, I was confronted by a messenger boy with a note.

"Is there a Mr. Harkness here?" asked the boy.

"Yes; I am Mr. Harkness." I felt sure the note had something to do with the murder mystery, and I eagerly tore open the envelope. The message read as follows:

> Dear Mr. Harkness:
>
> I would like to see you at my office about eleven this morning, if you can find it possible to come.
>
> Faithfully yours,
>
> Mason Brant.

I had intended to go anyhow, but I was more than glad to get this note. Was it possible that he wished me to assist him in some part of the work? Indeed, I was eager to see him. I bought the morning papers, and read them and my mail at the breakfast table. I had been afraid that my people at home might have read the accounts of the Chalmers case in the papers and been shocked by seeing my name connected with it, but the letters showed that they were ignorant of my late ordeal. Now I could send them marked copies of the papers, and write that I was perfectly free from any suspicion. I read the paper over, hurriedly searching the columns devoted to the investigation at Holman Square for news of her. There was nothing of importance, only the statement that the police expected hourly to arrest the man who had recently been discharged from jail and who had sworn to take Mr. Chalmers's life when he regained his liberty. The police had cleverly tracked the man to a little town in Maine immediately after the murder, and it was expected that he would be brought to New York. The account closed by significantly stating that Miss Wilmerding was still missing.

Could Brant have had any news of her? Why did he send for me? It seemed a week since the disappearance of Miss Wilmerding, and yet she had been gone only thirty-six hours. How much had happened during that time!

I went down to Madison Square and sat upon a bench. My bench-mates were a dejected looking lot. Doubtless many of them had spent the night where they sat, and were without the price of a breakfast; yet they sat waiting—waiting for what? Such sights always made a deep impression on me, and I turned from them to look over the papers again. How should I kill time until eleven? It was now only a little after nine. Suddenly I thought of her home. Yes, I would walk up Madison Avenue and pass by her house. I felt that I should like to see where she lived. Where she lived! *Did* she live? I would go anyhow; it could do no harm. I strolled leisurely along until I reached the house, a very handsome gray stone residence fronting about sixty feet on Madison Avenue, with a court in front shut in by heavy, wrought iron gates. I strolled past and back again and looked up at the windows. I was tempted to ring the bell and ask if there was any news of her, and I think I should have done so had it not been for my appointment with Brant, from whom I felt sure I would learn something. As I walked back, I stopped in at the writing-room of one of the hotels and sent a line home. Then I started down to the office of Brant & Dale.

"Hello, old chap!" said Brant. "Guess I'll have to humor you this morning with a little good news, for I want you to do something for me."

"Give me the news—my time is yours," I said.

"Well," said Brant, and he looked very mischievous, "*she* is back;" and he emphasized the "*she*" in a most mocking manner.

"Really!" I said eagerly, for I knew it would be useless to try to hide my interest or my feelings from him. "Is she——" I hesitated and colored.

"All right," he supplied.

"And free from any complicity in the murder?"

"Absolutely," he replied. "She knew nothing of it till late last night, when she returned."

My heart was beating fast, and I felt ashamed of the vague suspicions I had unwillingly harbored.

"But where had she been?" I quickly asked.

"Only across in Jersey, to see an old school chum of hers who was very ill. She left hurriedly and telephoned Mr. Chalmers where she was going and when she would return. He was killed before he remembered to tell any one else in the family of her visit. It seems that she telephoned to Jersey from down-town late, learned that her chum was worse, and decided to go right over, without even returning to the house to get a grip. She simply called up her cousin and asked him to explain. Nothing could have been simpler. In the little Jersey town the papers did not reach her, and only by accident did she hear of her cousin's murder. She was much shocked and distressed, and took the first train she could get home."

"Have you seen her?" I asked.

Brant smiled. "Of course I've seen her. I was the accident that let her know of the murder. I went over to Jersey and told her."

"But how did you know where she was?"

Brant smiled. "You will know all in due time," he replied. "In the meanwhile, are you willing to help me in a few technical matters?"

"With all my heart!" I cried. "What can I do?"

"Find out what this is;" and he went to his desk and took from a drawer a small glass tube. I took it in my hand and walked over to the window, where I held the tube to the light and examined it carefully. It resembled the little glass portion of a spirit level, and contained an amber-colored liquid which flowed from end to end as I tilted the tube. Evidently the contents had been hermetically sealed in by melting the glass together at the ends in a blow-pipe flame.

"Be mighty careful of it," said Brant, "for if you broke it and spilled its contents it would greatly upset my work. Take it to some first class laboratory, have the tube carefully opened and the contents analyzed, and report to me as soon as you can. I've got my hands full, and so has Dale, so I will appreciate your help very much. Try to see the city chemist, or perhaps one of the professors at Columbia. I 'll see that you don't lose by it."

"Can you tell me where you got it and what bearing on the case it can possibly have?"

"Yes, but not now. All in due time, my dear fellow. So be off, and remember I count upon your handling this matter skilfully. When you tell me what the tube contains I will have other things I 'll need your help in."

Brant had picked up his hat and made for the door, while I wrapped the little tube up carefully in some paper and put it in a small box in my waistcoat pocket. I decided that I would take the little tube up to the chemical department of Columbia University, where an old college chum of mine was an assistant in the laboratories, so I walked over to Sixth Avenue and took the elevated. I wondered if Brant put special trust in me, or if he knew already what the tube contained and was only testing me before he gave me something of more importance to do. I occupied a seat at the end of the car until it reached Fifty-ninth Street, when an old lady got in. There were no seats left, so I rose to give her mine. Just then a large man with a heavy bag crowded past me in a hurried effort to get off before the train started, forcing me violently against the side of the doorway. A panicky feeling swept over me when I felt the box in my pocket crush. What of the tube? Was it safe? I started to take it out, when I noticed a most disgusting odor. It did not occur to me for several moments that the contents of the tube in my pocket were responsible. I recognized the odor as that of bi-sulphide of carbon. The smell soon filled the car, and people were craning their necks and putting their handkerchiefs over their faces, when I felt an unnatural warmth under my coat, and suddenly the cloth of my coat burst into flame! I slapped at it violently with my hands, but the flame persisted and spread in a most unnatural manner, throwing off great clouds of white smoke. What hell-born chemical compound did the infernal tube contain? I was terribly frightened, as were also my fellow passengers. The old lady to whom I had given my seat was frozen with amazement and fright in the corner. Two men came to my rescue, but their efforts proved as fruitless as my own. When the train reached the next station I was hurried off onto the platform, sputtering and flashing with fire, and throwing off great clouds of white smoke, and was trying to take off the coat and vest when the guard came running from within the station with a chemical extinguisher and wet me down from head to foot, amid the cheers and laughter of the passengers who crowded the windows of the elevated train.

I must have been a pitiful looking object as I sat upon the bench after the train had started off. When my heart-beats had come down to something near normal again, and I had gotten over my terror, I removed the crushed box and tube from what had been a pocket, and examined the remnant of the tube. There was a small end still containing a few drops of the liquid, and I hurried down the steps of the elevated station to a drug store, where I bought a vial and slipped the fragment of glass with the few remaining drops of liquid within. Every one I passed wore a broad smile, and I could see that the drug clerk had difficulty in hiding his laughter.

I hurried out again and looked about for a cab. Good heavens! what was happening now? The remnant of my fine blue suit was turning white in spots and streaks all over—evidently from the chemical stream. I got into the first cab that hove in sight and gave orders to drive to the university.

My friend Willis, short, thick-set, and pale, with his familiar gold-rimmed spectacles which always had appeared three sizes too large for him, met me in the laboratory, and I dropped into a seat, produced the vial, and told him the trouble.

"Ah! Yes, yes," he said; "the well known solution of white phosphorus in bi-sulphide of carbon. Not necessary to make any analysis. I have some here and can show you how it acts."

"Show me how it acts? This is no time for jest, Willis, but write me a statement."

"I will do both," he said, and he produced a fair-sized, amber-colored bottle containing a mobile liquid. I had taken off the remnants of the coat and vest I had on and hung them over the back of a chair. "Now," continued Willis, "here is the vital constituent;" and he showed me a wide-mouthed bottle containing, as he explained, water in which the sticks of phosphorus were immersed. They looked for all the world like sticks of lemon candy. He removed the glass stopper and with a slender pair of pincers deftly withdrew a stick of the phosphorus. It began to smoke immediately upon coming in contact with the air, and he quickly immersed it in a little porcelain dish full of water.

"I will need only a piece the size of a pea, Harkness," he said, and with his pen-knife he cut off a fragment under water. Then he poured out a little of the bi-sulphide of carbon into a test tube and dropped in the tiny fragment of phosphorus. "You will observe," Willis continued, shaking the tube gently up and down, "that the phosphorus—insoluble in water—is dissolving readily in the bi-sulphide of carbon."

The same disgusting odor filled the laboratory.

"Now the trick is done. Let us pour a few drops of the solution upon this piece of filter paper;" and, suiting his action to the words, he wet a piece of the paper with the fiendish stuff and watched. It was not many seconds before the paper burst into the same kind of a sputtering flame, accompanied by the same clouds of white smoke, that had characterized my accident.

"You see, old chap," said Willis, "bi-sulphide of carbon is not only a ready solvent for this phosphorus, but a very volatile one, evaporating rapidly when poured upon any body, leaving behind the thin film or deposit of phosphorus, which soon takes fire in the air, throwing off its peculiar white oxide in the form of smoke or product of combustion."

"It 's a beastly thing," I said, keeping at a respectful distance from the still sputtering filter paper. "Now, like a good fellow, jot down what you have told me, and I will be greatly indebted."

Willis went over to his desk and began to write his statement.

"Who had this, and what the deuce did he have it for?" he called over from his desk. "It is a nasty compound used for incendiary purposes."

"Will tell you all about it as soon as I know myself. Brant was the man."

"Brant—Mason Brant, the detective?" said Willis, turning around in his chair. "He knows all about the stuff, I am sure."

"Yes, Mason Brant. I 'm helping him in the investigation he is making at Holman Square—but keep this confidential."

"Did he find this tube there?"

"I guess so, but he did n't say. He promised to tell me about it when I made my report upon this——" and, being at a loss for a word with which adequately to express my sentiments, I merely pointed to the compound on the table. When I put the remnants of my coat and vest on again they evoked peals of laughter from Willis.

"You are covered with sulphate of soda, from the fire extinguisher. You look like a wet turkey that has lost half of his feathers and has been whitewashed in streaks! Sorry I 've no clothes here to lend you, Harkness;" and as I turned and walked toward the door he burst out laughing afresh.

"That 's all right, Willis, if it amuses you, only I fail to see anything so very funny in it." I was getting cross, and the recollection of the cab in front of the door reminded me that the analysis of the infernal tube was going to be a costly one. Back to Brant's I drove, paid the cabby, then ran up the steps and rang the bell. I was met by Lacy, who led me into the waiting-room.

"Mr. Brant telephoned for you to wait, Mr. Harkness. He 'll be back in a little while."

Presently Dale came in. He appeared to be much excited, and, with a nod to me, he picked up the telephone and called up the warehouse at Holman Square.

"Is this 4201 Canal? Well, ask Mr. Brant to come to the 'phone."

Dale waited and with his pencil drew a network of meaningless scribbles upon the blotter. It was very evident that he had come upon something.

"Hello! That you, Mason? . . . Well, I made connection all right. I've proved the origin of the thing to be as you suspected and that he signed the check. . . . What? . . . No. . . . Yes. . . . Absolutely sure."

I could hear the harsh rumbling of the telephone diaphragm against Dale's ear as Brant talked. He seemed to have considerable to say.

"All right, Mason. . . Yes, he's here. . . Wait, then. Hold the line." Dale turned to me. "Are you ready to state the contents of the tube Mr. Brant gave you?"

"Yes——"

I was interrupted by Dale, who turned to the 'phone again. "Yes, he has. . . All right, then. Good-by. He says"—Dale had turned to me again—"wait for him here. He will be up soon, and wants to talk with you."

Dale walked up and down the room like a caged lion. Was it possible that the firm was already "in full cry"? It would take Brant at least twenty or thirty minutes to get up-town, so with a word of explanation I slipped out and bought a sandwich and drank a glass of milk. On account of my appearance, I confined myself to a side street and sneaked back again to the office as soon as possible. Dale was still walking up and down when I entered, and I could plainly see that he was deeply engrossed. Presently he turned and faced me squarely, and a smile crept over his face.

"For Heaven's sake, what have you been up to?"

I briefly outlined my unhappy experience.

"Never mind, Harkness, you're all right. Brant said so, too, the day before yesterday."

"Have you seen Miss Wilmerding?" I asked, consciously blushing.

"Yes, Brant and I had an interview with her this morning."

"She was awfully crushed by Mr. Chalmers's death, I suppose," I said.

Dale looked at me quickly, and I saw a suspicion of a smile upon his lips. "No-o," he said quietly; "she was, of course, greatly shocked and grieved, but she was not at all prostrated in the sense you suggest."

"Then she was not in love with her cousin?" I hastened to ask.

"Not in the least. I fear you have allowed Howard's testimony to influence you too much."

"But the love letter—how do you account for that?"

"Ask Brant," said Dale, laughing. "Here he comes. He can tell you all about that—if he chooses to." The door suddenly opened and Brant came in.

"Hello, Harkness! I see you 've made that chemical test yourself. I 'm awfully sorry, old chap. Who bumped into you?"

"I don't know his name," I said, laughing, "but that does n't matter much." Then I told him the facts as they happened and showed him Willis's report.

"I thought as much, but the chemist's certificate will be necessary when the evidence is called for in court. You must add the price of your suit to the amount of your fee."

"All right," I said, smiling.

"What do you make out of this?" Brant said, taking from his desk a piece of paper, evidently a leaf torn from a note-book, for the left-hand edge of the paper showed that it had been perforated like the blanks of a check-book. I sat down at the table and examined the writing on the sheet, which was as follows:

> Let the capacity be expressed by C. Its resistance by R. Its inductance by L. The quantity at any time t. by q. and the current in the oscillator circuit by I, then by the following differential equation, we have the above stated thus:
>
> $$-\frac{d}{dt}\left(\frac{1}{2}\frac{q^2}{c}\right)=\frac{d}{dt}\left(\frac{1}{2}LI^2\right)+RI^2$$
>
> $$\text{or } L\frac{dI}{dt}+RI=\frac{1}{c}\int Idt$$
>
> $$\text{or }\frac{d^2q}{dt^2}+\frac{Rdq}{Ldt}+\frac{1}{Lcq}=0$$
>
> $$\text{or } TT\overset{''}{q}+Tq+q=0$$
>
> Where T is written for $\frac{L}{R}$, TT for CR and q and $\overset{''}{q}$ for the first and second time derivations of q.

"These are electrical calculations," I said, "and fairly stiff ones too. The work is of an advanced and practical character and has to do with condenser charges and oscillating currents. The person who made these calculations was well informed in electrical science."

"Can you tell me what he was driving at?" asked Brant.

"I can hardly do that," I replied, "except to say that he was working with electrical discharges of high potential and high frequency. I feel quite sure, however, that I can draw a pretty good line on what the investigator was doing if you can find a little more of the notebook."

"Perhaps I can find you something better to-morrow. Be here at eleven sharp to go with me to Holman Square. I have some work for you."

"All right," I said. "I will come gladly."

Brant turned to Dale, and in a moment they were in close conference, speaking in lowered voices. Just as I started for the door, I was surprised to see it open suddenly and there stood Mr. Brown, Mr. Howard, and Mr. Herbert Chalmers. They all three seemed to be greatly excited and brushed by me into the room without apparently noticing my presence.

"You 're just on time, gentlemen," said Brant, jumping up and looking at his watch, when I closed the door and stepped out into the hall, where the little fellow with the black, snappy eyes let me out to the street. The firm of Brant & Dale was certainly "in action," as well as the surviving members of the firm of Chalmers, Howard & Brown. A handsome landau was standing in front, probably belonging to Mr. Herbert Chalmers. I would have given anything to be permitted to stay, for my curiosity was aroused to a high pitch. Brant & Dale had undoubtedly telephoned for these three gentlemen and had given them some startling information. What could it be? Was it possible that Brant's plans had already matured, and that he had marked the man he wished arrested?

IX.

I MADE up my mind to take a walk in the afternoon and look in on my doctor chum, for the Chalmers case was worrying me a great deal more than I liked. It was about three o'clock when I started out, and, once upon the street, the desire to walk by her house again came over me strongly. My medical friend was soon forgotten.

What a remarkable thing fate is! I had little expected to see *her!* Yet there was a hansom in front of the house, and as I reached the gate I saw the slender figure of the girl, dressed in black, standing in the doorway. As she walked out of the court to get into the hansom she saw me, and a pretty color came into her cheeks. I instinctively took off my hat and stepped forward.

"Indeed, Miss Wilmerding, I am deeply distressed at your sorrow," I said. "Can I be of the least service to you?"

She held out her hand. "Perhaps you can. There are some things I should like to tell you, and if you have the time, perhaps you will drive down the street with me. Do you know that I was going to write you a note, *sir?*" I noticed that she emphasized the "sir."

I looked up quickly. She was smiling as I helped her into the hansom.

"It feels so good to be out. I have been in the house all day till now. My cousin's death was a great shock to me."

"I never met a man in all my life by whom I was so quickly and strongly attracted as I was by Mr. Chalmers," I replied.

"He was one of the best men that ever lived," she said simply.

From the girl's tone, it was plain to me that she had never loved him or felt more than a cousinly interest. It was also evident that she had read all the papers and knew of my visit to Holman Square.

Presently the hansom drew up to the curb, and Miss Wilmerding alighted.

"Wait here for me, please," said the girl, and she went into a store. When she returned, I jumped out to help her in again. "Drive toward the park," she directed.

There were many turnouts passing as we swung into Fifth Avenue, and she pulled a light veil down over her face.

"I don't care to have people think I am heartless, driving about so soon after my cousin's death, but I feel that I must get some fresh air," she explained.

"I am sure it is only common sense—the drive will do you good."

How altogether lovely the girl was! Then I thought of the love letter I had found, and a sudden jealous pang seized me.

"You are not taking too much time from your work, are you?" she asked.

"I have no work on hand just now," I said, smiling. "That is"—I hesitated—"I took a week off so I could do a few things for Mr. Brant."

"Yes, I know," said the girl. "He told me lots about you, and I heard him tell Mr. Dale that he was going to use you as an electrical expert in a day or two."

I colored happily.

"I do not know just what it was for," continued the girl, "but I am sure it is in connection with my cousin's death—possibly in connection with that mysterious telephone call."

I reflected ruefully upon the sorry attempt I had made to assist Brant in that direction.

"Is n't Mr. Brant wonderful?" she went on. "He came over to New Jersey and told me what had happened. In the two or three conversations I 've had with him, he told me and my friend Mrs. Elliott wonderful things, only I cannot tell them now. He asked such strange questions too. It seems as though he can almost tell what is in a person's mind."

As we drove along amid the carriages and automobiles, I longed to speak of having seen her a year ago on the Mayflower Express. But how could I introduce the subject? The incident had not been commented upon, and I felt that if she really remembered me the subject might prove embarrassing to her.

"You must have gone through a most painful ordeal at the coroner's examination;" and she glanced at me with a little look of regret that I had had such a disagreeable experience.

"Yes, it was unpleasant while they suspected me. But, thanks to Brant, I was not in that position very long."

When we reached the entrance to the Park, we drove on for some minutes in silence. Presently she pushed up her veil.

"I really need the air," she said. "I don't believe any one will criticise me for driving out here, do you?"

"I certainly should n't think so, and I would n't care if they did, for only very artificial, light-minded people could uphold such foolish and unnatural conventions."

The park was beautiful—a thousand times more beautiful than I had ever seen it, or deemed it could be. Life, too, was a thousand times more beautiful than I ever knew it before. It was some time before either of us spoke. Presently I turned to her to say some trivial thing, and when my eyes met hers I felt a thrill and was conscious of the fact that we held each other's eyes by the most wonderful attraction in the world.

"Do you remember seeing me before?" I mustered courage enough to ask.

"Yes," she said gently; "a year ago, on the Thames Railroad Bridge."

A violent crash ahead attracted our attention. An automobile had struck a closed carriage, tearing off one of the rear wheels and smashing the windows. Luckily bystanders had the presence of mind to spring at the horses' heads.

"I hope no one is hurt," said Miss Wilmerding as we drove on.

"Probably badly scared, that's all," I said. "I looked pretty closely as we passed, and nobody seemed to be injured to any extent."

We chatted on various subjects after that, and we must have driven for half an hour or more when presently she looked at her little pearl-mounted watch.

"Better turn here," she said, "for my uncle will be worried if I stay out much later."

I rose and pushed open the trap and instructed the driver. Neither Miss Wilmerding nor myself spoke for some time. I was thinking of the man to whom she had written that letter. Because of it I felt as if there were a barrier between us even greater than the mere fact that I was poor and a stranger. The girl appeared to be turning something over in her mind—something she wanted to say, or some question she wanted to ask. But she evidently abandoned the idea for the time, for she said, "There is always some trouble here in New York, is n't there? I do hope it won't be long before they arrest the murderer of my poor cousin."

"I don't believe it will, Miss Wilmerding," I rejoined. "I have great confidence in Mason Brant."

Neither of us dreamed how swiftly an arrest was destined to follow.

The hansom had emerged from the park, and we were now driving rapidly down Fifth Avenue. I told of the experience I had with the phosphorus solution in the morning and of the yells and jeers of the crowd on the cars.

"Poor fellow!" she said sympathizingly. "You've certainly had your share of trials in this unhappy tragedy, and you're a stranger too." She hesitated, as if about to say something more. I was certain Miss Wilmerding had something on her mind, and I was not mistaken. When we had pulled up at the curbing in front of the Chalmers residence, the girl looked at me and colored prettily.

"I have never thanked you, Mr. Harkness, for returning what must have appeared to you to be a very ardent love letter."

She jumped out of the hansom and dismissed the driver. Then she held out her hand. "I was going to write to you," she said, "and thank you when I found out you were——" she hesitated—"a—gentleman. An old friend of mine was at college with an Alfred Harkness, and I have just learned it was you. The love letter you were good enough to return belonged to page 331 of my new novel, the proofs of which I have just received from the publisher. I lost it in my silver card-case, and when I looked in the 'found' column the *letter* and not the card-case was advertised." Then, smiling, she said, "I hope we may become good friends, sir, that you will come to see me, and that I may very soon show you my story in book form."

She laughed roguishly as she again emphasized the word "sir." In a moment more, before I could return the gold piece, she had entered the court and rung the bell.

X.

I WAS indeed in high spirits when I left Miss Wilmerding and wandered down the street. "She did not love," were the words that repeated themselves over and over again. They occupied my thoughts to the exclusion of all else. She had given me encouragement, too, in hoping that we should become good friends. Was it possible that I had a chance to win her? I wandered aimlessly down the street; I was simply too happy and too absorbed in my thoughts of her to care which way I went.

What wonderful things a few hours had brought about! She had returned, she was in no way implicated in the Holman Square tragedy or in any love affair, and she was plainly far from unfriendly towards me. My spirits were so high, I almost felt afraid of them.

And she was writing a love novel! Bless her heart! she promised to let me read it when it was published. The fact that she wrote had been brought out at the inquest, I recalled.

I found myself harking back to the beginning of all these wonderful developments. I had wondered why the loser of the love letter should have thought of looking in the "found" column. Who else but a romantic and sentimental chap like myself would ever have dreamed of advertising a love letter? Why did n't I think of the possible envelope having been a pocketbook or a card-case of intrinsic value instead of a paper one? Of course, the finder had pocketed the silver case and had thrown away the papers it contained. "The thief," I reflected, "pocketed the silver and threw away the gold." So I thanked God for the letter and the friendship that had begun through my returning it to its owner.

Harking back to the tragedy, I wondered to what use Brant purposed putting my electrical knowledge. He appeared to know already about those electrical calculations. And what connection had that infernal tube of phosphorus solution with the case?

"It is the only one," Brant had said. "Be mighty careful of it, my dear fellow." It must have been the only one, for there was no fire. What *did* those electrical calculations have to do with the case?

How Brant's eyes had twinkled when I recognized in the terms and equations electrical conditions of high potential and high frequency! I tried in vain to connect a possible use of such a tube of phosphorus solution with electrical currents of high potential and high frequency. I had been a star man in my scientific studies at college, and yet I was completely stumped by such a combination. I was eager to go down to the scene of the crime again, and especially to go with Brant and actually to take part in the investigation there.

Then my thoughts reverted to the gold piece Miss Wilmerding had given me. What should I do about it? I felt the blood mount to my cheeks whenever I thought of it. A dozen plans ran through my mind. First I thought I would have a locket made of it and return it to her. Then I decided that I would simply send the coin to her with a bunch of flowers. I would tell her how debased its acceptance made me feel, and yet how miserable it made me to part with it. Indeed, I felt I had a little problem of my own to deal with right here.

I made up my mind that I must do something with it to-morrow, and a big feeling of joy swept over me when I realized that it afforded an excuse to go to see her. It was a golden pass key into her presence whenever I should choose to use it. I strolled leisurely along and looked at the beautiful things displayed in the shop windows, and though I had only eight or ten dollars in my pocket besides the twenty-dollar gold piece, I felt that I was the richest man in the world. Thus I drifted until the evening papers were out.

The Chalmers case was naturally the one general topic of discussion, and the papers were reaping their harvest. Men stood right where they had bought the paper as if glued to the spot while they read the heavy type over the first column.

I rushed up to the first newsboy I saw—for he was far too busy disbursing his wares to come to me—and bought a paper. Thus ran the headlines concerning the investigation at Holman Square:

ARREST MADE IN CHALMERS CASE.

EX-CONVICT ARRESTED FOR THE MURDER.

JOSEPH GARLAND, FORMER EMPLOYE,
TAKEN INTO CUSTODY
BY THE POLICE.

> Joseph Garland, a former employé of the firm of Chalmers, Howard & Brown, and an ex-convict, was arrested this morning by the police for the murder of Mr. A. L. Chalmers. Garland, who had sworn to kill Mr. Chalmers upon his release from prison, was tracked to Biddeford, Maine, immediately after the crime, and brought back to New York. Garland stoutly denies having committed the crime, and declares that he can prove an alibi; but the police believe they have sufficient evidence against him.
>
> The man will probably be put through the "third degree" to-night at police headquarters, when interesting developments may be looked for. It is rumored that Joseph Garland was the cat's-paw of certain persons who expected to profit by Chalmers's death.
>
> The police have clearly shown that the suspect was released from prison on the first day of May, that he had come direct from Albany to New York, where he was lost sight of, and that he left for Biddeford the day following the shooting. It is believed that the parties indirectly responsible for the death of Mr. Chalmers loaded the yacht's cannon and hired the man Garland, already possessed of a grudge against Mr. Chalmers, to take up his position and pull the line attached to the cannon's primer upon the signal of the telephone, to which call Mr. Chalmers would be replying at his desk.

The article continued with a complete review of the case, the most complete and detailed description of any I had yet seen, and I put the paper into my pocket, with the idea of reading it through more carefully when I reached my room, and then sending it to my father and sister.

Things looked dark for Garland, and my suspicions of Lamar, Howard, and Dent as possible accomplices were strengthened. How easy it would have been for one of these men to instigate the crime and put Garland up to playing the part of executioner of the man he hated!

Yes, I felt sure some one must have put Garland up to the act. I remembered once hearing a prominent Boston police official say that of the many threats made by convicted men, rarely was one ever carried out. I remembered distinctly, for the statement interested me deeply at the time: "Men make threats when carried off to jail sometimes, but only in the rarest instance do they ever return to pay back or work vengeance upon their prosecutor."

These were the words as used by Captain Gosquin. I suppose a year or more of prison confinement, with the likelihood of being sent back for life, if not to the electric chair, takes such rash resolutions out of men.

"Yes," I argued, "if Garland committed the crime he was given good recent inducement apart from any personal threat he may have made a year ago."

I felt a strong suspicion of these three men whom I had seen on the stand at the coroner's inquest. Yet which one had the real motive? It was quite evident to me that Lamar was paying marked attentions to Miss Wilmerding, and that his attentions were anything but pleasing to her. Could it be that her cousin had told her things detrimental to Lamar's character? As for Howard, he had certainly acted queerly and created upon my unprejudiced mind the most unfavorable impression.

Then there were Dent and the other woman! What interest could they have had in Mr. Chalmers's death?

I felt the utter hopelessness of proving anything against them, for the relations between the principals were far too subtle for any ordinary outsider to probe. Sometimes I could reason the thing out and convince myself that Howard was the guilty man, at other times I was sure of Lamar's connection with the case, and then again I suspected Dent. With every case I built up, however, there were important details and "loose ends" unaccounted for.

I shuddered when I thought of my visit to Holman Square that fatal night. At the very hour of my visit and at the very moment I heard those rats gnawing, this man was undoubtedly crouching behind the partition with the deadly line in his hand. Had the murderer only waited for me to leave before he pulled the line, or had he tarried for the ringing of the telephone bell? What if I had stayed? Would he still have pulled the cord? Undoubtedly I should have been caught by the watchman and the police when they came upstairs, if, indeed, I also had not been shot down by the flying slugs. I was anxious to discuss the various features of the case with some one, and as I had not seen my medical friend for more than a week, or thanked him for his note offering to assist me when I was under detention, I resolved to drop in to see him at his office. He was in, and we soon found ourselves deep in a discussion of the mystery.

"You know," my friend said, "George Dent owns that building, and it is not impossible, if he was implicated in the murder, that he intended to place that tube of phosphorus solution you had such an experience with, in the yacht cannon."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Just what I say," continued my friend. "Dent owned the building. It was probably well insured and possibly he needed money."

"Then he must have forgotten to put the charge into the cannon, or else he changed his mind, for had he loaded it with such an infernal tube, it would have made short work of that building."

"Where was it found?" inquired the doctor.

"I don't know; probably in the box with the blank cartridges and primers."

"What a fiendish charge it would have made! The five slugs were bad enough, but with that beastly tube of liquid as a sixth slug, Mr. Chalmers would not only have been murdered, but the building and its entire contents would have been destroyed also. Probably the man Garland, too, would have lost his life in the flames, for the phosphorus solution would have been sprayed over a great area of the wooden interior of the office, and it would have taken fire all at once."

The more I thought of it, the more firmly convinced I became that the plot was a cunning and diabolical one, the conception of some educated criminal who had used the man Garland as a tool.

"Dent came to New York only six or seven years ago," said my companion. "He is regarded as a very clever and shrewd man, but has never been popular here."

"You know, Burt," I said, addressing my chum, "I have an engagement with Brant in the morning. He wants to use me later in connection with the case as an electrical expert."

"Probably in connection with the telephone, too, old man. Have efforts been made to learn who sent that late telephone call?"

"Yes," I said; "that point has been looked into, but without success."

"Guess you'll find Garland will go to the chair, unless he really can prove an alibi, or else show up the man who hired him. You see, he openly threatened Mr. Chalmers's life."

"I agree with you, Burt. Garland is undoubtedly headed for the chair. No, I won't take anything, old fellow," I said when my chum proposed a night-cap. "I shall need all my faculties at their best to-morrow."

My friend followed me to the door, and, after chatting for a few minutes on the step outside, I said good-night and walked briskly toward home.

X.

The facts as published in the next morning's papers rather upset my theories, and threw me all at sea again:

> GRAVE BLUNDER MADE IN CHALMERS CASE.
>
> JOSEPH GARLAND PROVES PERFECT ALIBI.
>
> It has developed that the police have acted unadvisedly in arresting Joseph Garland for the murder of Mr. Chalmers at Holman Square. It has been conclusively proved that Garland was a patient in Bellevue Hospital at the time the crime was committed. The evidence shows that Garland came to New York immediately after his release, that he arrived a week before the murder at Holman Square was committed, that he was admitted to Bellevue Hospital under the assumed name of Peter Colbert, on the second day of his stay in New York, suffering from a broken arm and rib, and that he was not discharged until the day after the crime was committed. Doctors Underwood and Branch and Superintendent Mullan of the hospital staff have positively identified him, and several nurses also have testified to the fact that he was a patient in the hospital on the fatal night. After his discharge he went to Biddeford, Maine, where he was arrested and brought back to New York.

The papers gave a portrait of Garland, and it was anything but a pleasing picture to look at. No wonder the police suspected him after his making that criminal threat! He did not look like a man I should care to meet alone after nightfall.

I put the paper in my pocket and went to get my breakfast and read my morning's mail. I had decided during the night that I would return the twenty-dollar gold piece to Miss Wilmerding, hard as it was for me to part with it, and that with it I should send a pretty bunch of roses. So after I paid my check, I walked over to a florist's on Broadway and bought a dozen red roses. I wrapped the gold piece up in a piece of paper and enclosed it in an envelope, but when I started to write her name upon it I paused. A battle between my judgment and my heart had begun. I yielded to my heart and simply quoted from her letter: "As deeply a part of me as the color is of the rose." Then with a piece of scarlet ribbon I attached the envelope to the flowers and laid them in the box, which I carefully addressed to her. I did not feel that I could entrust the box to the florist or to a messenger boy, so I called a hansom and directed the man to take me to her house.

"For Miss Wilmerding," I said to the butler, then returned to the hansom and ordered the driver to take me to the office of Mason Brant.

"As deeply a part of me as the color is of the rose." How I had learned to love those dear lines! I should never see red roses again without thinking of love—the most beautiful and wonderful love in the world! Lost to everything else in the world, I was simply revelling in the memory of that last divine look into her eyes, when I suddenly came back to earth and realized that the hansom was drawing up at the door of Mason Brant's office. I was about to pay the driver when the detective appeared upon his step.

"Just keep the fellow, old chap," Brant said, "for I am going to take you to call upon a very attractive young woman before we run up to Holman Square."

I must have shown a very sudden and deep interest, for he hastened to add:

"Not Miss Wilmerding, old man, but a very attractive and wealthy little widow."

I heard Brant give the driver orders to drive to an up-town number on Fifth Avenue, and I looked at his handsome, clear-cut features and wondered what he was going to spring upon me now.

"This is going to be a very exciting day for us, Harkness, or I lose my bet. Things are all pretty well cut and dried, old chap, and I am merely calling on Mrs. Elliott to get some things she has already told me about."

Brant did not appear to be in the least excited, and he puffed at a cigarette as we bounded merrily on the rubber tires over some rough planking where repairs were being made to the street.

"I think that before another moon we'll have our game;" and Brant's eyes sparkled as he noted my incredulous expression. "If nothing goes wrong, I shall be able to send a telephone message from Holman Square that will set up a few 'headlines' in to-morrow's papers."

"Have you come across any more leaves from that electrical note-book?" I inquired, not daring to ask a more leading question.

"Something better still, old fellow. Dale will meet us at Holman Square after our little visit here, and then I will let you see our exhibits—exhibit A, exhibit B, and exhibits C, D, and all the dear old familiar letters of the alphabet." I could see that Brant was in fine humor as we drew up before a handsome house on Fifth Avenue, and I followed him into a tasteful drawing-room.

"Tell Mrs. Elliott that Mr. Brant and Mr. Harkness would be very happy if she would see them for a moment."

I recognized the name at once. Was *she* Miss Wilmerding's chum?

"We are calling upon Mrs. Cushman Elliott," Brant said as he walked over to look at a picture that hung upon the wall. Presently there was a rustle upon the stairs, and a very attractive young woman descended and came into the room. She carried a small box neatly wrapped in paper, and cordially held out her hand to Brant.

"This is Mr. Harkness, the electrician who is going to help us," Brant said by way of introduction, and she gave me in acknowledgment a smile which I thought full of sadness.

Brant turned to me and smiled. "It was Mrs. Elliott who gave me the young lady's name in New Jersey and who advised me to look for Miss Wilmerding there. It was very fortunate that I was allowed to make Mrs. Elliott's acquaintance, for many reasons. I see you 've got the package ready, Mrs. Elliott. I wish every one might be as prompt and businesslike as you have been."

"I think you will find everything there, and just as I have described them."

"I am going to ask you to let me look them over here," said Brant. "Not that I doubt your statement as to the completeness of things, but to save time. I fear I shall have but scant opportunity to examine them at Holman Square."

Mrs. Elliott pleasantly moved some little ornaments to one side of a table, and Brant laid down the package and untied the string. It contained only a tobacco box, on the top of which were two green books.

"I 'll turn these over to you, Harkness;" and he handed me the books and opened the box. It was filled with thousands of cigar bands, all taken from a well known and expensive brand of cigar. I noticed that the box had also contained the same kind of cigar.

"How many bands did you say, Mrs. Elliott?"

"Here is the number;" and she took out a little slip of paper upon which was written 5212. Brant took out his pencil and figured rapidly.

"Let 's see, if a man averaged three cigars a day for a year, he would smoke three times 365, or 1095 cigars, and"—Brant figured further—"5212 cigars would represent nearly five years' smoking."

"I 've known him about five years, and he has collected bands for me during all that time. It 's an odd thing to happen, but the subject of collecting cigar bands came up the first evening I met the man at a dinner, and he has never ceased to let me have a lot every week or two. My little girl wanted them then, Mr. Brant, but she soon tired of them, though I never told Mr. Dent so."

I looked at the books, which were college text-books on physics. On the title page was: "An Elementary Treatise on Physics, by George W. Dent, M.A.," and written in ink: "To his friend, Mrs. Cushman Elliott." The writing seemed familiar, and it flashed across my mind immediately that Dent had also done the writing and the figuring on the loose leaf of the note-book. Yes, the "T" was identical with the letter he had put down for a factor in his formulæ. I looked at the date of the books: "1896. D. Van Namen & Company, New York, Publishers."

"Eleven years ago," I said to myself. Dent had probably written these books while teaching physics in the West, before he came to New York and took up his successful business career.

"When did you see Mr. Dent last, Mrs. Elliott?"

"The day before the murder."

"You are sure he still smokes the same brand of cigar?"

"Yes, so far as I know."

"I hope you will pardon a very personal question, Mrs. Elliott, but I know you wish to help us in every way you can."

Mrs. Elliott looked very serious. "I have already answered many questions," she said, "and I have signified my willingness to reply to any more you might see fit to ask, Mr. Brant, for I am very anxious to see Mr. Chalmers's murderer brought to justice."

"How long did you say you have known Mr. Chalmers?"

"A little over a year, Mr. Brant—but I think I have already told you this."

"Yes, you have, Mrs. Elliott, but I sometimes have a way of repeating questions to accommodate my own clumsy mental processes. I hope you will forgive me."

Mrs. Elliott had colored noticeably.

"I understand that Mr. Dent has been paying you attentions for the past four or five years."

"Yes," she said; "it is true."

"Now one more question, Mrs. Elliott. When did you tell Mr. Dent that it was useless for him to continue his attentions?"

Mrs. Elliott appeared annoyed, and I felt that Brant was pushing matters rather far, especially in the presence of a stranger. The situation had already become quite clear to me, and it was evident that Mrs. Cushman Elliott and Mr. Chalmers had been, to say the least, very close friends, and that she was submitting to Brant's question purely to assist him in running down her friend's slayer. Mrs. Elliott did not reply to Brant's question at once, but said presently:

"It was at the time when Mr. Chalmers and I became friends—about a year ago."

She had stood the ordeal well.

"Did Mr. Dent send you these books lately?"

"No," she replied; "about four years ago, when I saw a great deal more of Mr. Dent than I afterwards cared to."

"Has Mr. Dent been at all persistent in seeking to force his attentions on you during this past year?"

"Yes, and I have been somewhat annoyed at times."

"I am certainly under the deepest of obligations to you, Mrs.

Elliott," Brant said, "and I have arranged purposely to have you tell me these things before a witness in order to obviate your possible appearance in court."

"Do you suspect Mr. Dent of having any connection with Mr. Chalmers's death?" she asked.

"I fear that Mr. Dent had several motives for wishing Mr. Chalmers out of the way, but I would not care to lead you to believe that he committed any crime."

After thanking the lady and expressing his regret at having had to trouble her, Brant indicated to me that we would leave for our drive down-town. Mrs. Elliott looked very beautiful as we left her standing by the drawing-room table, and from her sad smile as she bade us good-by, I felt that she had loved Mr. Chalmers, and that she was much more affected by his murder than she wished to have known.

I was glad to get out into the street again, and to find myself driving with Brant down through the busy street.

"You must not be surprised at any developments, old chap, for they will rapidly follow."

"Is n't Mrs. Elliott charming?" I said.

"Yes—poor girl! She loved Chalmers, and if I am not greatly mistaken, he was equally attracted by her. Chalmers must have been a fine fellow, from all accounts."

"He was a most attractive man," I said. "He won my heart completely in the single brief interview I had with him. I almost feel that I have lost a friend."

"You may have observed, Harkness," said Brant, changing the subject, "that I have not let you entirely into my confidence, and that I have not told you what I wanted you for at Holman Square, what I make out of the tube of phosphorus solution, which so markedly impressed you, or why I attach any importance to the loose leaf of the note-book with the electrical calculations, to the cigar bands, and so on. It is not due to any lack of confidence in you, but to my own queer method. Everything worth knowing comes to us in due time, and once at Holman Square I am going to show you everything and let you tell me what you make out. If you and I agree—well, I will ask you to consent to act as my electrical expert on the witness stand in court. There will be experts on the other side, and I shall have to have an equally bright fellow on my side to prevent them from breaking down our case before the jury."

"Yes, but how did you happen to use me? How do you know I am competent?"

"Well, I sized you up, old chap. There are men who enlist my confidence at once, and, on the other hand, there are men who have big reputations and apparently all the necessary qualifications, but by whom my confidence is not enlisted, and who my instinct tells me are not worth a continental, for my purpose! Besides, old chap, if you will forgive me——" and Brant drew from his pocket his large note-book with a leather pouch for holding papers attached, and took out three letters, which he handed to me to read. The letter-heads were familiar to me at the first glance. The first was a flattering commendation from my friend, the professor of Electrical Engineering in the George Washington University at Washington, and the other two were from the Engineer of Tests, New York, New Haven & Hartford Railway, and the First Vice-President of the Consolidated Electrical Light & Power Company, where I was still employed. All three letters made me very proud and very happy, and I blushed as I handed them back to Brant. I only hoped I would not make a fluke of the important matters Brant had in mind for me. By the time we turned into Houston Street I felt that in Brant I had indeed a good friend. I was certainly attracted most strongly by him. He was not only a man's man, and a genius, but I felt sure also that he was a man women would go wild about. Yes, man or woman would put implicit confidence in anything he might say. I had never seen more clear-cut features or a face and frame that stood for more intellectual and physical strength.

We turned the corner at Holman Square, and the great stone warehouse loomed up to our view. There were still a number of idle people out front and a policeman standing guard at the door.

XII.

My excitement was intense as we went up the steps and passed through the door.

"We are a little late," Brant said, looking at his watch. "Our call on Mrs. Elliott took longer than I counted on. I am to meet Dale, Herbert Chalmers, and Howard and Brown here, together with their counsels, for a few minutes' conference, before I run over the ground with you. Their attorneys will also probably want to talk with you before they leave."

When we reached the now famous inquest room on the floor above, we found a number of men there.

"Gentlemen," said Brant, addressing the two attorneys, "this is Mr. Alfred Harkness, the electrical engineer we have engaged. I am going to review the technical matters in question and have him report to you at your meeting here at two o'clock."

They rose and shook hands with me, and Brant said, "Mr. Chism and Mr. Fraser, of the law firm of Chism, Fraser & Wright."

I knew the firm by reputation as one of the oldest and best in New York.

They had numerous papers spread out before them on the table, where Mr. Dale, Mr. Herbert Chalmers, and the surviving members of the firm of Chalmers, Howard & Brown were seated. I noticed that a large check-book lay opened before them, and that Mr. Chism held a blank check in his hand.

"I would like you to examine the electrical exhibits very carefully, Mr. Harkness," said Mr. Chism, "and be prepared to describe them as an expert on the witness-stand. The case is a very complete one, but we felt that the services of a specialist in presenting certain exhibits to the jury would be desirable, especially as some questions are sure to be asked."

"I will gladly do so," I replied, "if Mr. Brant will let me look them over."

Brant led me through the door into the rough partitioned office where Mr. Chalmers had been shot, and then walked over to the corner of the room where the heavy book-case was. One end of it still stood out from the partition as the coroner had left it after discovering the cannon.

Brant turned and, leaning easily against the end of the case, began: "When I had heard the statement of the watchman that only one shot had been fired, and had examined the body of Mr. Chalmers and the bullet-holes in the partition, I at once came to the conclusion that all five bullets left a single barrel simultaneously, and that the barrel must have been a smooth one, for the three bullets in the partition had "tumbled," as I showed at the inquest, and had produced very little penetration. I at first thought that the bullets had been fired by a sawed-off shotgun, or some weapon of about the same bore and length as carried by the shotgun messengers in the West. Well, to make a long story short, the weapon was evidently fired from the direction of the book-case, and I saw that such a sound as the watchman heard could have been produced by the gun's being thrown behind the case after it was used. Fortunately, the police nosed around and found the Colt's revolver, which held their attention in that direction, and kept them from interfering with me. Well, I was not long in jumping on Dale's shoulders and in looking behind the book-case after the others had left the office. We returned here again later, and as soon as we found ourselves alone I climbed up and dropped over behind the case and examined the cannon carefully. I discovered a number of other things, too, which served as such important clews that we expect to bag our game to-night."

"Yes," I said; "go on."

My heart was beating fast.

"Well, that fishing line ran into a small hole in the floor, and upon careful examination I found a loose board;" and here Brant stooped down and pulled it aside.

"I saw a small recess under the partition, where a gas or water pipe ran. Here I found the line to terminate in a cigar-box, which was tightly wedged in position by a little block of wood, and covered over with a lot of shavings, presumably to hide it from view. I quickly removed the box, put back the floor board, and cut the line off quite short within three or four feet of the cannon, so if by any chance the cannon should be found and be placed back upon the book-case, the line would not quite reach to the floor and so give the impression that it had been pulled by a man hiding behind the book-case, or else—as it is just long enough to reach the partition and pass through with about six inches to spare on the other side—that the murderer had been stationed on the other side of the partition. Having taken the box and cut off the line, I was not much afraid to have the cannon revealed, and so I betrayed its position to the coroner and the police when pressed to do so. A few minutes after examining the cigar-box and its contents, Mr. Dale and I began to weave our case, which has been a very smooth one. Here is the box, old chap;" and Brant walked over to the big desk, unlocked the drawer, and took out a cigar-box.

"The gentlemen in the other room, you, Dale, and the guilty party are the only ones, besides myself, who know about it."

Brant laid the box down upon the desk, and I at once recognized that it had contained the same brand of cigars as the box we had taken from Mrs. Elliott's. There was a tiny hole at the back, through which about three inches of red and yellow silk fishing-line protruded. When Brant opened the box the first objects that caught my eye were an ordinary telegraph instrument, or what is known as a Morse sounder, and a cell of dry battery in the pasteboard case, so well known to every one familiar with electric-bell work. The telegraph sounder was firmly screwed to the inside of one end of the box and was connected to the cell of battery through what appeared to be a little nickelled connector about one and one-half inches long. At the other end of the box was a coiled clock-spring, so attached to the inside of the box that the operation of the telegraph instrument would release its tension and allow the suddenly freed end of the spring to fly back and strike the box. My hands were trembling perceptibly, and Brant stood beside me and looked into my face and smiled.

The free end of the clock-spring had a small hole in it, through which was tied the other end of the piece of fishing line. It was at once evident to me that it was only necessary to operate the telegraph instrument from some distant point to release the clock-spring, which would then pull the line and fire the cannon.

"A beastly device!" I said excitedly. "But the criminal took a great chance of having the apparatus found, for it certainly contains numerous clews!"

"Yes, but here is where I found that tube of phosphorus solution;" and Brant put his finger upon two little clips, screwed to the side of the box, just where the released spring struck.

"It was not intended that this box of mechanism ever should be found! The released spring pulled the primer and fired the cannon, but, by the merest chance, it failed to smash the glass tube. Had it been broken, I think you will concede that, from the position of the light cigar-box in between the floor and the partition, with the covering of shavings, our investigation here at Holman Square would have been of a very different character."

I pictured the sight of twisted gas-pipes, masses of tin roofing, smoking cinders, and the members of the New York fire department wading about in the ruins in search of the body of the victim.

"Just think, Harkness, had this devilish device worked properly, the murderer would have left no trace behind that could have helped us track him."

"I do not dispute you for an instant, Mr. Brant," I said, with a sickly smile, remembering my poor suit of clothes which I had given a servant a quarter for carrying out of the house and depositing in the ash-barrel, "but the wires from the sounder—where did they lead to? What became of them?"

"Oh," said Brant, "there were but two short pieces found. One was attached to that gas pipe;" and Brant stooped down and pointed to a place in the pipe where it had been sandpapered bright for a distance of about three inches. "One of the wires terminated here," he said, "by wrapping around the pipe."

"Yes, that is one terminal to ground," I said. "That only goes to earth, and is common practice in telegraph work; the other wire is the important one, and will undoubtedly lead us direct to the criminal's lair."

"The other wire," Brant went on, "runs along under the partition to the outside wall of the building, where it passes through the bricks and connects with the old lightning-rod which terminates in a sharp point skyward, above the chimney-top. I want you to go out and take a look. You will find the old lightning-rod broken off just below the place where our wire is attached. I will join you here when you come down, as I wish to see the gentlemen in the other room for a moment before we act further."

I ran up the stairs and out on the roof. By lying flat on my stomach and looking down, I could see that a copper wire emerged through a hole in the wall and was made fast to the lightning-rod, which had been broken off just below.

The lightning-rod was an old-fashioned one, for it was supported upon glass insulators and kept free from the building. The rod, supported part way by the chimney, terminated in a sharp point about fifteen feet above my head.

"Let me see that box again," I said excitedly, after I had hurried down-stairs and met Brant coming back into the office from the inquest room, and I immediately concentrated my attention on what I had taken for a little nickel connector.

A moment later I had taken it out of the box, and, unscrewing one end, slipped out into my hand the well known sensitive coherer of a Marconi wireless telegraph.

Brant was seated upon the desk-top, carelessly swinging his leg and enjoying my excitement immensely.

"It is all very evident that our friend, Mr. Dent, has been directing his talents along devilish lines," I said; "but how can we swear to the man who sent the fatal signal, when wireless messages are going over New York every hour?"

"That is one of the important points I want your testimony in, Harkness. Can you not think of any way that the murderer could have controlled this particular instrument so other wireless messages would not operate it?"

"By Jove! of course. Within the past year a high degree of 'selectivity' has been worked out, enabling wireless messages to be sent through space, each destined for its own receiver and not interfering with the instruments of other stations. This instrument could have been 'tuned,' to use the technical term, 'way below or 'way above the operating conditions of commercial wireless telegraphs, and thereby made to respond only to the waves from its own transmitting station."

"You say 'worked out'; do you mean mathematically, theoretically? If so, kindly examine the leaf of this note-book again," said Brant, "and tell me if such calculations pertain to this 'tuning.'"

"By Jove again, they could! Yes, they do; I recognize it now as plain as day! It is one of Kelvin's formulæ for working out problems in this very line," I cried excitedly.

"Now what I want you to do, old man, is to fix the date as nearly as you can when the art of 'tuning' and of using this selective phenomenon was first employed."

"I can do that readily by looking over the literature of the subject at the technical libraries, but I am quite sure the art has been developed only within the past year or eighteen months. But how about the sending instrument, Mr. Brant? Have you found that?"

"Yes; it is attached to the house just as it was a year ago. It was installed for amusement between Mr. Dent's house and that of a friend. Mr. Dent had tuned both instruments so he could talk with his friend without being interfered with."

"Then you found the transmitter in Dent's house?"

"I found *a* transmitter there," said Brant, "but there were two, of course. The other instrument was at Lamar's. I also found these;" and Brant took from the drawer of the desk another box—a tool-box—containing little nails, screws of various types and sizes, some clock-springs, two empty glass tubes, another Marconi coherer, a firing primer, some forty-five calibre cartridge shells from which the bullets had been carefully removed, and a little hank of red and yellow fishing line.

"This," said Brant, "is Lamar's tool-box, which we borrowed from his rooms quietly the other night in order that we might look the contents over and compare these little brass screws"—Brant stirred them with his pencil as he spoke—"with the little screws used in putting this infernal machine together. They match perfectly, as you will note."

"Whom will you arrest?" I asked excitedly.

"Lamar," said Brant. "Dent knew nothing of the murder. He arranged everything for Lamar, and yet knew nothing about the use the telegraph was destined to be put to. He worked out the thing for a telegraph set nearly two years ago," he continued, "and Lamar, since he broke with Dent, concocted this;" and Brant laid his hand upon the cigar-box.

"Lamar was in a tight place financially, and had signed Mr. Chalmers's name to a check for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The check was honored just as the bank closed on the afternoon before the murder, and Lamar took Mr. Chalmers's life before morning to prevent the discovery of the forgery. He had prepared the cannon and endeavored to mend his quarrel with Mr. Dent for certain business reasons and in order to throw him in a bad light, in case it should be to his advantage to do so in connection with this crime. Mr. Dent will be here this afternoon, and I think you had better have a little chat with him. I have found him a most interesting fellow."

"But how do you know Dent did n't call up Mr. Chalmers and kill him from *his* transmitter?"

Brant smiled broadly.

"For several reasons, old chap. In the first place, Dent has no telephone. Lamar has one right on the table in his room, through which he assured himself that Mr. Chalmers was at his desk and in the cannon's range. We also found the transmitter there connected to a flag-staff on the roof. Dent's equipment was not in working order, and, besides, among numerous small deductions was the unlikelihood that a man who had smoked one brand of cigar exclusively for many years, a fact well known among his friends and possible enemies, would use a box of that brand for any criminal purpose. Our little visit upon Mrs. Elliott has pretty well demonstrated that Mr. Dent was very partial to this cigar, which Lamar probably knew, so he planned Dent's implication in case the apparatus should by any chance be found before it might be used. And, again, Lamar's record is bad. From a study of his past, Mr. Dale learned several things that go to show him capable of such an act. Mr. Dent, on the other hand, while not popular, is a man of good reputation. Perhaps Miss Wilmerding will tell you how her cousin warned her of this man's character."

XIII.

Promptly at two I returned to Holman Square and presented my views to the counsel for Mr. Chalmers and the two members of the firm. Mr. Dent came in soon afterwards, and he was very glad to go over the whole situation with me from his side.

"Yes," he said; "Lamar and I invested in the telegraph sets about two years ago, and we had a great deal of amusement out of them. At first we were much troubled by interference from other messages, but later I tuned our sets down exceedingly low, so low, in fact, as to be out of the commercial range. When Lamar and I fell out, he took his part of the set complete—that is, the sounder from my room, which was all carefully tuned to go with his transmitter, which was, of course, in his room—and I took mine. We each then had a sounder and a transmitter complete. He must have mounted his sounder and coherer in a cigar-box and attached the clock-spring. That is his own invention. How he knew about the phosphorus, I cannot tell, as I was not aware myself such a diabolical compound existed.

"He called to see me the day before the murder, greatly to my surprise, and went out of his way to patch up our quarrel. He said he had something of great importance to discuss with me and wanted me to drive down-town with him, and like a fool I made up my mind to let bygones be bygones, and I rode down to Holman Square with him on that fatal night. It was during the drive down that he suggested that I subscribe to a business deal which, after giving it some thought, I considered to be dishonorable. We were approaching the warehouse and were within a few blocks of it when Lamar saw you, and he got out and walked, as you know, to the building, having told me to stay in the cab and think his proposition over more carefully.

"The driver was instructed to follow slowly, and I sat in the cab and waited until he took you in and introduced you to Mr. Chalmers. When he came out again he spoke of Mr. Chalmers in a very contemptuous way and referred to certain other persons in such a disrespectful manner, in criticism of certain business transaction, as to reopen our old feud. I was so disgusted by the man's conduct, and especially by the way he referred to a certain lady, that I actually felt ashamed to have been associated with him again for even an hour.

"He doubtless wished to put me in a compromising position in case any of his criminal contrivances should be found. He knew of my ownership of the building at Holman Square, and that I was known to be more or less of an expert in electrical science. Moreover, he knew I had been a rival of Mr. Chalmers in a certain matter concerning a lady, and that I might be supposed to have strong motives for wishing Mr. Chalmers's death. I realized all this the morning after the murder, as I wondered if Lamar could have gone back downtown again after he had left me at my house. It was fear that I might be implicated that led me to deny having been with him.

"Mr. Brant got all these facts," continued Dent, "which was a good thing for me, for had the city detectives found that infernal device, I would probably have been ruined."

We continued to chat together, and I was thinking of all the weird conditions of the case when Dale came to me and said that Mr. Herbert Chalmers would like to see me.

"Young man," began the distinguished old gentleman, who I afterwards learned was a high official of the Central Railroad of New Jersey, "I think I know about the plans my son had in mind for you in connection with our road, and if you will come to see me in a day or two I will see that you meet our superintendent of motive power. There are two excellent positions open in connection with our plans for the electrification of the road. My son was going to give you a trial, and I have made up my mind to do the same."

I was indeed more than grateful, and expressed my appreciation as best I could. Brant was now called to the telephone, and an excited atmosphere prevailed. It did not take him long to send his message: "Serve your warrant, inspector. We are quite ready to act."

The inspector carried out his part faithfully, for the men who had been ordered to shadow Lamar closed in upon him and took him from the steps of his club within an hour's time.

That night when I returned to my boarding-house I saw lying upon the dingy hall table a note in a delicate gray envelope and addressed to me in a woman's charming hand.

I opened the envelope and took out the note. The writing simply ran, "As deeply a part of me as the color is of the rose."

SOCRATES

By Jennie Brooks

❧

> "Frowning, the owl in the oak complained him
> Sore, that the song of the robin restrained him
> Wrongly of slumber, rudely of rest."
>
> *Sidney Lanier.*

SOCRATES was in trouble—the result of not having kept to his long-established custom of sleeping in the day-time. In the late afternoon something had stirred him out of his leafy coverts in the dark wood—probably the robins—and thus rudely awakened, he had flopped heavily from tree to tree, foraging for his supper, and had finally landed in a maple adjacent to a thick woodbine, just then beginning to receive its evening tenants, the sparrows. In the golden-leaved maple he sat—a great, brown Long-Eared Owl, much at his ease, but with watchful, blinking eyes that, half blind in the light, even yet saw quite enough to locate and pounce upon his prey when he got a chance.

All owls have a way of fluffing out their feathers and making themselves appear as much as possible a part of the tree-trunk, and so long at a time will they remain motionless, it seems as if they themselves were deceived.

The small, active neighbors of Socrates were much disturbed by his sudden appearance, and with a curiosity that proved fatal to one of them, a brisk little chipping sparrow, they circled nearer and nearer to him in his immobility, until suddenly there was a swift plunge from out the maple and in a trice Socrates had captured a prize and was back to his perch, holding in his beak the injured, chittering bird. He was instantly assailed by the outraged horde, and his round, yellow eyes stared in amazement at his tormentors, as he slowly turned his head from side to side, the bird yet in his mouth. Socrates was vastly disconcerted and ruffled like an angry cat, glaring viciously at the assailants he dimly saw, but budging never an inch. Every moment we expected to see him fly away, but he evidently feared to try carrying his supper and was reluctant to leave it. For many minutes he endured all manner of insult from the sparrows, who flew in his face, tweaked his feathers, snapped at his eyes—bright and shining marks—and scolded and berated him soundly, until in sheer despair he dropped his prey to the ground beneath, and with an angry snap of his beak and a wailing "Hoo—hoo!" rose into the air and sailed away to the thick woods.

That was the very last we saw of Socrates, but not by any means the first. In the early days of his youth, before he knew better than to go dozing about in the day-time within plain sight and easy reach of two small boys, he had been captured by them along the bank of a creek, and presented to the writer.

The morning of his advent in the household was full of pleasant surprises. He was interested in his new surroundings, and submitted fairly well to being held in the hand or on a finger and occasionally stroked, though at times he did snap savagely, little as he was—a very baby of an owl, downy and soft and gray, but with an inscrutable look in his wise yellow eyes which raised the question whether he had not come into existence with the Pyramids.

In his youth he was more like a fuzzy chicken than anything else, and we were greatly surprised and delighted when as time went on he showed symptoms of having long ears. We could hardly believe we had really in our possession a Long-Eared Owl, a species much more rare about here than the Screech Owl or Barn Owl.

When he was held in the hand he was comparatively quiet, but once let him feel himself quite free, as he did when we perched him on an iron bracket, and away he would fly across the room, blindly alighting on anything or in any place, and leaving behind him a cyclonic track. A delicate china cup he shattered to atoms by alighting on its edge in his first flight. On his second tour of observation, down went a vase of Bohemian glass, and two tiny bisque figures danced gaily to the floor as his clumsy wings brushed them *en passant,* he himself gazing at the ruin as one would say, "Now *who-oo* did that? It never was *I?*"

Still, we kept him, his nonchalance captivating our hearts. For many weeks and even months he required to be tied to his perch with a stout string, a string long enough to allow of his making short flights. As he grew larger, a light chain was put about his foot, as he showed marvellous facility in tearing the string apart. He soon learned to know us, and of one person—a boy—he became especially fond.

His favorite diet was mice and grain, and it was not difficult to supply him from neighboring barns. His choice of locality was a wide window-seat, and here in long spring days and in early summer he would sit alternately dozing and gazing gravely down into the street, over into the campus or into the elms in front of the window, with a "*Won't you walk into my parlor?*" look at the smaller birds who nested there.

He grew quite tame and acquired a number of funny tricks. One of his favorite jokes was to pull the pen or pencil from the hand of any one who sat near him writing, with his hooked beak, drop it on the window-sill or the table, and then step over it back and forth, again and again, untiringly and with much dignity.

He was a great inspiration for all literary effort, was Socrates! With the wisdom of apparently uncounted ages in his square, fluffy head, he never failed to respond when appealed to. If you laid down your pen, weary, tired, not knowing what to say next, Socrates would gravely remark, "Goo—oo—ood!" and you'd quickly straighten up, run over the manuscript, and conclude it would touch the heart of your publisher after all, and that Socrates was a wise old bird.

He would willingly sit and gaze at you by the half-hour, unwinkingly, while you sounded the depths of knowledge in his ears; but it apparently required only a short five minutes for him to know one's mental limits!

When summer days came on, the plumage of grayish white gave place to the dress of maturity, a pale buff thickly mottled with brown, not less beautiful. With advancing age Socrates showed almost the intelligence of a parrot. He could do almost anything but *talk*. When the step of the boy he loved was heard on the stair, he was instantly broad awake, and evinced his delight by awkward bowing or dancing as his friend came toward him. Sometimes the boy would extinguish him beneath a golf-cap, which always drove him wild with fear, but he never resented it, invariably submitting to petting and conversation on its removal. If he was not noticed in any way, he quickly called attention by a chuckling noise in his throat, long drawn out, or by picking at the sleeve of any one near him. The Cat Owl or Long-Eared Owl has also a mewing cry, more often heard from him than the hoot of other owls.

Chimney-swifts nested in the wide old chimney of the room occupied by our bird, and sparrows filled the woodbine, but they took good care to keep out of his reach in their circling flights and wary alightings near his window. The other birds—jays, cardinals, cat-birds, and many besides—studied him at first with respectful attention, but lost interest when they found he could go no further than the window.

A restful person to have about, was Socrates—always calm, always unruffled, always gravely patronizing to the world he had known since time immemorial, and always, by his superior demeanor, moving his friends to laughter. On warm, pleasant days he was allowed the liberty of the trees in the garden, thus learning that his chain might be unfastened and sometimes taking advantage of it, as once when he hied himself away to the quince tree, where, like Jack's giant, he "smelled the blood of"—not a British subject, but of true-blue American citizens in the shape of young jay-birds. On a crotch below the nest stood the big, bushy brown owl, when noise of battle brought us to the door, and above him fluttered the two old jays, squawking in wild rage and occasionally snatching at his rumpled plumage or swooping before his big eyes. Freighted as he was with his chain, it would have been impossible for him to catch them, and, after submitting to their badgering for a time, during which the young ones joined their cries with those of their parents, excitedly thrusting their heads over the edge of the nest, Socrates concluded that discretion was really the better part, and beat a retreat to the ground, scudding over the grass with tucked-up feathers, as if to keep his skirts clean!

When Fritz, the canary, shook his rippling notes on the air, Socrates listened, entranced. Perhaps it was the æsthetic part of his nature; perhaps the carnal.

When the hottest days of August came, he drooped and grew moody, was cross if touched, and forgot or refused to perform his old tricks. Cool, dim woods were calling to him, and finally we set him free. Not realizing his privileges, he hung about the house for a day or two, coming when called, but finally sailed away into the campus. At intervals he returned to his window, even coming inside, and later he came at twilight and perched in the trees before the house, mewing for half an hour at a time. We thought him home-sick. After the encounter with the sparrows he returned no more, probably reserving his depredations for young wood-birds, captivity not having cured him of his cannibalistic appetite. Sparrows we would not argue about with him, but when it came to song birds, we felt inclined to administer discipline.

Young birds learn very early to fight in their own behalf their natural enemies—hawks, owls, and cats—and, following the example of their parents, will boldly pursue the would-be robber—not unsupported, however, by the parent bird, who will get behind them and shove them toward the assailant. Also the mother will fly at the enemy and back to her timid young ones again and again, as if she would say, "See how I do it!" Sometimes when she leaves them the nestlings turn and run, but the lesson is repeated until fighting tactics are thoroughly understood. In fact, nearly all birds except the dove, who always seems helpless in case of danger, will soon learn to make a vigorous fight for themselves, taught by their elders.

I witnessed an interesting skirmish that took place one summer day in an old orchard on a Massachusetts farm, between a Barred Owl and a chipmunk. The little striped fellow frisked down the trunk of an old cherry-tree and vanished into a hole in the heart of the tree. Lying immediately in front of the tree and just below the hole was an old moss-grown stump. From an adjacent tree the owl caught sight of him on the instant of his going in, and swooped like an arrow straight at the opening, alighting on the stump and peering stupidly in. Fortunately for the little animal, the hole was too small to admit his enemy, who, however, with the view of besieging, settled himself complacently to wait a reappearance. The chipmunk, not being able to see the owl from within, soon came stealing cautiously to the door and poked out his head. Beholding his adversary, he vanished with lightning speed. Another wait, then again out came the little brown head with the shining eyes. This time the owl made a dive, but was not so quick as the chipmunk, who was again safely hidden. After waiting a few moments, the owl flew up to the first branch of the tree above, and shortly afterward out came the chipmunk, gay and saucy. "Chee, chee, chee!" he squeaked. "Anybody here?" Apparently no one was there, so he confidently sat upright on the stump and looked about him. Finding the coast clear, he flirted up the trunk of the tree, stopping as if he had been shot when he suddenly espied the owl sitting aloft. In the twinkling of an eye he turned tail and fled downward, barely making his hiding-place when his enemy reached the door. Twice more he attempted to escape, trembling in his small doorway, looking, listening, and vanishing at the first sound of wings as the owl swooped at him again and again. Then the owl gave up pursuit and flopped away, leaving behind him a little prisoner, who dared not try to get away for fully an hour longer, and then in fear and trembling crept out, jumped to the ground, and in two or three quick springs was safe among the chinks of an old stone wall—hiding-places that defied any bird of prey that ever flew, to say nothing of a half-blinded old owl!

The little Screech Owl, of which one may see much if one lives near woods, is a sociable little bird, as are also the Saw-whet Owls, who come quite close to the house in early afternoons, almost within hand-reach of the window. They allow one to talk to them, but do not often come very close to feed while people are about.

Three young owls of this species appeared one evening directly in front of our window, sitting on a limb of the peach-tree in a funny little row, gazing complacently at the light which shone upon them, with all the appearance of having been invited to a party!

The Barn Owl is among our most beneficial owls, and shows great friendliness to our song-birds. It is not prepossessing in appearance, and has in its face the quizzical and at the same time anxious look worn by the monkey tribe, and is, indeed, from its resemblance to a monkey, called the "monkey-faced owl." One of these birds was captured this winter in the woods near here, caged, and used for window advertising in a store. Poor thing, he was very restless and looked extremely bored when he was awake, but, truth to tell, he put in most of his time sleeping, only once in a while opening on us a patronizing eye. The plumage of the Barn Owl is very striking, pale orange and white predominating and accentuated with bright reddish-brown tints.

Nesting in barn-lofts, they will in no way interfere with other bird tenants. Swallows build near them in security, and pigeons or doves nest fearlessly. A certain Barn Owl in my neighbor's barn showed much interest in the youngsters who filled the nests adjacent to her own, walking up and down the long beams in the barn loft, and gaping down into this nest or that with curious wonder in her big blue-black eyes. That she really considered her neighbors was shown fully when on a disastrous day a shrike swooped through the wide doors and pounced upon a half-grown fledgling of the swallow tribe. The little bird cried out piteously, rousing the owl, who swept up from her own nest with a wild cry, so startling the butcher bird that it dropped the nestling and darted away—too late, however, to save its life, for the claws of the shrike had torn it badly.

The young of this curious "monkey-faced" owl are extremely beautiful, and in their nests in the hollows of trees or in barns they look like small snow-balls, their downy plumage being nearly pure white. This owl shows fine perception of domestic economy, for when the first brood have put on a moderate supply of feathers, she deposits two more eggs in the nest, the warmth from the first nestlings helping to hatch the second brood, thus giving the maternal part of the household more time to forage and for relaxation. Occasionally she adds another couple of eggs, obliging the second brood in their turn to nourish the third lot of youngsters.

◆

THE GENTLE ONE

BY ELSA BARKER

NO one would ever know from your still face
How more than human-sweet you are! There lies
Maybe a dreamy something in your eyes,
A promise—like the perfume round a place
Where roses bloom—and any eye may trace
Your lips' love-moulded lines; but none surmise
The mother-tenderness that sanctifies
The man's need in your soul-diffused embrace.

O hands whose touch has all the gentleness
Of brooding dove-wings in the mellow night!
O mouth of blood-warm rose-leaves, whose caress
Quivers through me in waves of vibrant light!
Ye are as mighty as the yearning spring
That stirs the earth to lyric blossoming.

THE CHILD OF A WIDOW

By Lucy Copinger

◆

"I LUF you, Miz Teacher, I luf you!" cried Lizzie Bureschy, first and oldest of the eight Bureschys. "I knows you is old, and you ain't my mother, but I luf you." Having thus declared her affection, she seized Miss Lucy's hand and kissed it.

Ten-year-old Lizzie had come to Miss Lucy—who was already struggling with the vacant Josef and Herman Bureschy—at the middle of the school year, when a newly enacted education law had freed the child from the charge of the continuous Bureschy baby. From that time she had grown to be the best beloved of all Miss Lucy's scholars; "Miss Lucy's angel child" she had once been called derisively by one of the teachers, and, although she was only a very human and child-like little girl, the name somehow clung.

As a rule, insufficient nourishment is not a promoter of beauty, so the countenances of Class A were usually of an ill-nourished and unhealthy ugliness. In the midst of this dearth of beauty the delicate loveliness of Lizzie Bureschy blossomed with a fineness that Miss Lucy, knowing of what stock the little maid came, found a constant wonder and delight. When Anna Karenina was especially wicked, and when the light that illumined Frederick William's mind was most showily exceeded by the shine on the end of his nose, she turned with relief to the sweet-tempered and responsive Lizzie.

Having kissed Miss Lucy's hand, Lizzie laid in it what looked like a lump of soft blacking, but in which an experienced eye would recognize as a licorice "sucker."

"I haf it for you all day in my hand," explained Lizzie, "so Josef could not lick it, and it is soft."

"Thank you, Elizabeth," said Miss Lucy, with hypocritical gratitude. Then she put her arm across the narrow shoulders, and, turning Lizzie's face up to hers, she looked into the round brown eyes.

"Lizzie," she said, "what did you have for breakfast?"

"Nothun," said Lizzie frankly. "Last night my father gits drunk, and he beats my mother, and we ain't got nuthin, and my mother gif me a cent. Ain't you going to eat it?"

"Oh, yes," said Miss Lucy, taking a cautious nibble of the blacking. "I love it; it's fine. And what did you have for dinner?"

"Soup," said Lizzie cheerfully. "Ain't it nice?—my mother gits a nickel, and she gits dog meat. You git a lot, and she makes soup."

Miss Lucy looked wonderingly at the clear skin that had survived a licorice and dog meat diet.

"Lizzie," she said next, "what does your father do?"

"He gits drunk," said Lizzie.

"Oh, yes," said Miss Lucy; "but what else?"

"He 's a smeller," said Lizzie. "He smells down at the works, and my mother she 's a sweater, but she gits cut down."

Miss Lucy, remembering the gigantic steel-works of her town, understood this alleged perfuming of Mr. Bureschy's, but—"A sweater?" she repeated vaguely.

"It 's in a room down-stairs," said Lizzie. "She makes pants, but she gits cut down—and my father gits drunk," she added in apathetic refrain.

"And you take care of Herman and Josef and Marie and William and Anna and Rosa?" said Miss Lucy, trying to smile. This was the inevitable trend of these after-school talks, and here was Lizzie's cue.

"But the little Ludwig," she cried reproachfully—"the little Ludwig that I luf!"

Here followed a long account of the surpassing wonders of Ludwig Bureschy, aged one, last and best loved of all Lizzie's charges—his six beautiful teeth, his delightful fondness for bacon skins, his conversational powers.

As the child talked, Miss Lucy watched her face. So many children came under the teacher's care that she seldom tried to do more than make them happy and a little clean while in her class, passing them on without great regret or more than a casual interest as to their future. But Lizzie was so neglected, so poor, so sweet, and so pretty that the young teacher often wondered sorrowfully what would become of her.

"Lizzie," Miss Lucy interrupted, "what are you going to be when you get big?"

"A teacher," said Lizzie promptly.

At this safe discrimination Miss Lucy was delighted. How like her angel child!

"How nice!" she said. "And why?"

"Miz Teacher," Lizzie explained, "onct when I was down mit Ludwig by her beer saloon and I had a fight mit Sophie Bauerschmidt, and she took his bacon what he luf and she throwed it in the gutter, and when I am a teacher I will git the pointer and efery day I will beat her and I will beat her till she is det."

At this proof of the humanness of her angel child Miss Lucy laughed. What if her fellow-members of the Society for Ethical Improvement had heard her!

"Poor Sophie!" she said, and then, suddenly remembering the demands of the little Ludwig, Lizzie was sent home.

When the next day Lizzie did not appear Miss Lucy put down her absence to the probable indisposition of the little Ludwig. A week passed before she learned that Mr. Bureschy, returning from a convivial night at the Bauerschmidt saloon, had fallen against a curbstone. He was taken to one of the settlement hospitals, and a few days later "went to his reward, leaving a sorrowing widow and eight bereft children."

The next week Herman and Josef returned to school dirtier and stupider than ever. Their sister was not coming back, was all they could say. "She had a bureau on a piece of paper, and she did n't have to come."

The mystified Miss Lucy reported the case, and a few days later the Truant Officer came to her.

"I 'm afraid your angel child has flew the coop for good," he informed her. "She 's working in a coat factory from seven till six, so you will please consider her education finished."

"What?" cried Miss Lucy.

"You can't do anything," the Truant Officer shrugged. "She 's got a permit from the Industrial Bureau. Thanks to your special efforts, she can read and write. She 's the child of a widow, and she 's twelve years old, so it 's all right."

"Twelve!" protested Miss Lucy indignantly. "Why, she 's only ten. Her mother said so when she brought her, and I know it 's so."

"Oh, yes," said the Truant Officer philosophically; "but you can't prove it. Besides, there are seven others, and they have to live."

"How calmly you take it!" snapped Miss Lucy angrily. "You know it 'll kill that baby to work in a factory. What are orphan asylums for, anyhow?"

The Truant Officer smiled reminiscently. "Why don't you go to see Mrs. Bureschy and suggest that?" was his bland rejoinder.

"I will," cried the Champion, "and you see if I don't get my angel child out of that place!"

Inspired with this idea, the next day Miss Lucy hunted up the officers of the Charity Organization and wrested from them a promise of help to the extent of half of Lizzie's wages. From them she also got the name of the very nicest of all the orphan asylums. Then followed a week of hard work, for this asylum, splendid and liberal in its equipment and education, was a very exclusive one. You had to be something more than a common little orphan—indeed, you had to be an orphan with ancestors—to be admitted to it, and its doors opened grudgingly to the daughter of a "smeller" and a "sweater."

In the course of her campaign Miss Lucy visited the Home, and was delighted with the charmingly and overpoweringly maternal matron.

She also caught a glimpse into the dining hall, where sat the thirty little orphans with blue dresses all alike, and close-cropped heads, happily eating a plentiful supper of mush. Although rather startling in its convict-like effect, a practical experience of conditions existing among the coiffures of Class A allowed Miss Lucy to commend this shearing of the parentless lambs, and she returned with new enthusiasm to her beseeching of supercilious patronesses and sleek directors.

At last she succeeded, and one evening about eight o'clock she alighted from the car carrying with her the hard-won paper. She had been so busy all week that she had not had time to consult Mrs. Bureschy about her plan, but the matron had so impressed upon her the high privilege it was to be a happy little orphan in that especial Home that she pictured herself the centre of the grateful Mrs. Bureschy and the seven remaining Bureschys, all kneeling and tearfully beseeching for like favors. The thought of her pretty and much loved Lizzie freed from the dreadful factory, the dirty tenement, and the ignorant Mrs. Bureschy, hurried her along and it was with the delightful feeling of the Lady Bountiful that she ran up the dark stairs leading to the Bureschy home.

The Bureschys occupied a flat consisting of one room, a large cupboard, and a bath-tub—a relic of the old house's better days. The room was the general living-room and the sleeping place of Mrs. Bureschy and five of the children; the cupboard was the bed-room of Lizzie, Josef, and the little Ludwig; the bath-tub was the coal-bin, the wood pile, the chiffonier, and the safe deposit vault, holding, besides the coal and wood supply, both the death certificate of Mr. Bureschy and the solitary tooth-brush of all the Bureschys.

In response to Miss Lucy's knock the door was opened by Josef, who, in an ecstasy of shyness at this thrusting of pedagogical greatness upon him, immediately retired beneath the table, where Herman, Anna, William, Rosa, and Marie at once joined him. Mrs. Bureschy was sitting at a table upon which a lamp smoked out an oily odor into the air, already foul and smelling of a sausage supper. Before Mrs. Bureschy there was a pile of trousers, upon one pair of which she was sewing buttons, while at her feet, her tired head within easy reach of her mother's prodding knee, sat Lizzie, also sewing buttons. The little Ludwig, a dirty baby, was lying on the floor beside his sister, comfortably sucking a large piece of bacon skin.

Upon Miss Lucy's entrance, Mrs. Bureschy, looking as though she would like to join the recreant Josef, rose and greeted her with worried politeness. Lizzie, her heavy eyes brightening for a moment, smiled a vague welcome across her work. When you have a family to provide for, you have not much thought for the foolish gambols of the baby class, and in the month of her factory life school and Miss Lucy had come to be a pleasant but vague dream, a part of her abruptly ended child life, and all but forgotten in the reality of her present cares.

"Good evening, Mrs. Bureschy," said Miss Lucy cheerfully, her satisfaction too complete to be chilled by this reception. "I have come to see Lizzie. She has not been at school for nearly a month, you know, and I have missed her very much."

"Yiz, miz," agreed Mrs. Bureschy politely. This mild agreement was a habit of hers, an obscure strain of Jewish blood giving her a conciliating air of deference toward life in general. Perhaps long ago, before she had left her Hungarian village home for the land of gold, Mrs. Bureschy might have been pretty, but work and Mr. Bureschy had destroyed any vestige of beauty, leaving her ugly, lean, and scrawny-necked, with a dirtiness that seemed to be rubbed in.

"Where has she been?" continued Miss Lucy diplomatically. "She was getting on so well that I don't like her to stay home."

"It iss all right, miz," said Mrs. Bureschy eagerly. "I got the ticket. Here," she said, giving Lizzie's nodding head a prod, "git ub and git the ticket."

Lizzie, thus aroused, got up and, going over to the bath-tub, drew out from a corner the child-labor permit. In it "Elizabeth Bureschy, aged twelve, being the child of a widow," was given permission to be employed.

After she had read the permit Miss Lucy pulled Lizzie to her, and, pushing back her hair, looked into her face. She saw that her month as a wage-earner had left its marks upon the face of her angel child—marks none the less sure because still light. The pink skin that had withstood a succession of licorice breakfasts had succumbed to the close air and confinement of the factory, and the round eyes were swollen and inflamed.

"It 's the lint," Mrs. Bureschy explained. "She makes west pads, and it iss the lint; but she 'll git used to it."

"She won't at all!" cried Miss Lucy, with a burst of sudden anger. "And you know she's not twelve; you told me she was ten."

Mrs. Bureschy extended her hands deprecatingly.

"Miz, yiz, miz," she agreed, "but she iss now twelve, miz. I told you what iss not so, but what can I do when efery year another Bureschy come?"

"Oh, well, Mr. Bureschy's dead now," said Miss Lucy, with a thoughtless consolation that she at once blushed for. However, Mrs. Bureschy had evidently wasted little time in conjugal mourning.

"Yiz, miz," she said quickly; "and it iss all there on the ticket about the child of a widow. The foreman says it iss all right."

Miss Lucy had often wondered heartlessly as to what in the general scheme of things was the good of Mr. Bureschy's drunken existence, and in the effect of his death, upon Lizzie, she found her rebellious questioning bitterly answered. "If his special bacchanalian providence had only kept him away from that curbstone for a couple of years!" she exclaimed to herself.

Mrs. Bureschy, evidently considering this verdict of the foreman as final, grew more communicative.

"And she iss that smart!" she continued, with a touch of maternal pride. "She iss making two dollars a week alreaty, and maybe soon she will git a machine and she will git more."

Miss Lucy turned Lizzie's face up to hers.

"Lizzie," she said coaxingly, "would n't you like to come back?"

Instead of joyfully accepting this offer, Lizzie looked disappointingly unresponsive; but she inherited her mother's desire to conciliate, and she hedged skilfully.

"Miz teacher," she reminded Miss Lucy, with a mixture of pride and appeal, "but maybe soon I gits a machine."

At this desertion of her angel child Miss Lucy let Lizzie go.

"But she 's such a little child," she appealed almost tearfully to her mother, "and it 's a dreadful thing to take her childhood away from her like that. Have n't you any feeling at all? You know she can't stand it!"

Mrs. Bureschy looked sullen. "Miz," she said, "I works in the basement, and I makes buttons, and sometimes when I start I makes fif dollars, but they cuts me down, efery month they cuts me down, and I can't do nothun else."

"But why don't you put them away in an asylum?" said Miss Lucy, with a sweeping gesture toward all the little Bureschys. She reflected that this was a dramatic moment to make her little speech and receive the thanks of a grateful widow. So intent was she upon her plan that she did not notice a sudden and warning gleam in the eye of the supposedly grateful widow.

"I know a beautiful place where I can get Lizzie and have her educated finely," Miss Lucy went on, "and you won't have to lose a cent." She then went into a glowing description of the enticements of the Home, from the milkiness of its mushes to the motherliness of its matron. She was so carried away by her own eloquence that she did not notice Mrs. Bureschy get up suddenly and grab the little Ludwig from the floor, who, as she talked, cheerfully and solemnly polished the end of his mother's nose with the bacon skin. If Miss Lucy had but known it, it was also a piece of bacon that, thrown by outraged motherhood at the head of the Truant Officer, had engendered his philosophy. But she did not know it, so she rambled delightedly on. It was a dreadful jolt to her when finally she stopped for breath and Mrs. Bureschy spoke.

"Git out," said the ungrateful woman.

At this Miss Lucy gasped.

"Wh-what?" she said weakly, all her eloquence knocked out of her by this succinct command.

"Git out!" repeated Mrs. Bureschy violently. "Nobody ain't going to git her away from me. Git out!"

For a moment Miss Lucy was dazed, then she thought she understood. What dreadfully mercenary creatures these women of the submerged tenth were!

"But I told you you'll get just as much as she makes," she explained kindly, "and you'll have one less to look out for."

"You can't take her away from me," repeated Mrs. Bureschy doggedly. The little Ludwig, having sufficiently shined his mother's nose, was now massaging her right eye, while the left glared out at Miss Lucy in an alarming manner. "I works all day, and I ain't bad, and you ain't going to git one of them away from me." Then a hard tear trickled queerly and detachedly down her greasy face, and her anger rose once more. "Git out!" she concluded.

Miss Lucy was beginning to realize that here was something primitively strong and beyond the reach of her reasonable philanthropy. The divine passion of motherhood, as represented by spiritual, clean madonnas, bending starry-eyed over equally clean babies, had always been to her a thing of worship, and it seemed almost irreverent to humanize it in this dirty Mrs. Bureschy and the greasy Ludwig. But a sense was coming to her that she had lightly and cruelly touched upon something sacred to the widowed mother. Also the gleam in Mrs. Bureschy's solitary and baleful eye made her nervous.

"I guess I had better 'git out,'" she said gracefully. "It seems most proper—and decidedly safest. I'm sorry you feel so about it," she concluded weakly. Then she stooped over Lizzie, who, the prods forgotten, had at once fallen asleep on the floor. "Good night, my poor little angel child," she said regretfully. Then, the implacable eye of Mrs. Bureschy still fixed upon her, she went out.

She went down one flight, and then in the darkness and dirt of the bottom step she sat down. In the room below she could hear thick-voiced swearing, and a woman's sobs mingling with the weak, hungry cry of a very young baby. There was something so forlorn and so weak in the baby's voice that it brought the tears to Miss Lucy's eyes. A feeling of something overwhelming and fatally inevitable swept over her, knocking down all her comfortable little altruisms, and there outside the Bureschy home she sat and dismally wept, not only for Mrs. Bureschy and Lizzie, but for the whole race of sweaters and the children of sweaters.

THE GREAT GOD NEWS

By Will Levington Comfort

❧

THE evening train of the Chinese-Eastern brought an American lady to the Rest House. The peculiarity was that she did not resume her journey the next morning, nor the next. Why any one should stay in Tienshankwan on purpose was beyond the minds of the little coterie of foreigners held there by various fortunes.

Diabling, of the American press, was the first of this little coterie to achieve the miracle of self-introduction to the strange lady. It was on her third morning in Tienshankwan, and she permitted him to walk with her out toward the Wall.

"Do you mean to stay long in Tienshankwan, Miss Quest?" he asked.

"Until it palls," she replied. "So far, I have been no more nor less than enchanted here."

"What is it you like about Tienshankwan?"

"Why, all China is here, all of the East," she replied readily, as if she had thought out the whole matter. "And it is in little bits, so that you can see it all. For instance, there is the little walled city, growing out of the Great Wall itself. You can stand up there and look at a bit of living China, all its drones and workers and sections and galleries, as if it were a glass bee-hive. Then the foreign colony is so simple but complete, each man a type, the British and French army officers, the American and other war-correspondents, the poor remittance wreck, the missionary, the continental tourist waiting for funds, the Japanese railway guards—oh, I dislike *them!*"

Diabling was startled a little. There was a speck of vehemence in the last. Of all things, the casual tourist is a worshipper of Japan and the Japanese.

He looked closely at the woman. A face of pure feminine line; a voice not only womanly, but cultured and womanly; the hand of an artist, restless and slender and pale; dark hair, impalpably fine, and blowing always; fine active nostrils; lips not so full as he should have liked, but rarely-cut; a brow that warned him not to deal with her as *mere* girls are treated; teeth of a size and setting that showed grand health; and wide-apart eyes, gray-brown eyes, large but electrically quick to show the whole scale of expression. It was a face that you look twice at, after something has compelled you to look closely once.

"And then the Sikh infantry brings India back, and the Chinese we have always with us," she added. "Look at the fine virgin sea-beaches, too, brand new every morning from the tides and wind. Look at the Great Wall! It takes the breath out of me, Mr. Diabling. Twenty-story buildings, wireless messages, and airships are cheap beside it! When I pick up one of the stones fallen at its base—touch the hem of its garment, as it were—I feel that I can look back centuries into the youth of the world, when the Wall was building—see the men swarming like ants over the raw, half-done thing—before Christ! I feel like an upstart, too, but I love old China!"

Diabling was fascinated by the woman's mind.

"Miss Quest," he said haltingly, "you humiliate me. I should have seen all these things about Tienshankwan for myself. The trouble is, I think, that matters are going so badly for the correspondents in this Russo-Japanese war. Here I am, for instance, held here at the edge of the war-zone, because of the uncensored cable, and yet I can't get a whisper of the war to send. Sometimes I have been ready to curse God and die because I could n't get up to the front."

"But there are men up there—correspondents, I mean," she said innocently.

"Yes, and what news are they getting out?" he asked with spirit. "The colossal silence of the war-correspondents is adding to the gaiety of nations. Why, those men up there in the field are just this—each a man-width in a fifty-mile battle-line! They are surrounded by smoke and human menaces to no avail. They cannot extract a word of the main strategy from the Japanese generals. Japanese officers are assigned to overhear what they say to each other. There is but one cable from the field to Tokio, and it is constantly, day and night, burning with official messages in cipher to the war-office. Even letters which the correspondents send to their wives are opened and read by these little men whom you dislike—bless you for that! Tell me, what can a man do better than staying here in Tienshankwan—or Chifu—or back in Japan, translating the native newspapers?"

She was smiling, possibly at the emotion of the man before her.

"If I were a man," she said quietly, "I should slip up to the Liao River and hire a Chinese junk to take me up towards Liaoyang. The next battle is to be fought there—everybody says. I would move nights, hide with the Chinese, until the battle—then, in the excitement, go forth and watch it, disguised in the smoke."

She laughed a little at Diabling's set face and added: "Then I should come back here to the free cable at Tienshankwan with my story. . . . But I should be lucky—if I were a man!"

"You have a mighty fine grasp on this war-game, Miss Quest," he said at length, with some embarrassment. "Moreover, you call forth a remark that would need no explanation—if you were a man! You please me. I like you!"

"Good!" she said merrily, and she straightened back her frail fine shoulders to breathe more deeply the good sea air.

Now, Diabling had told the woman that there were times when he had expired to get to the front and see action. This very thing was doubted by the correspondents who knew him in Tokio. His reasonableness as a gentleman was not doubted, nor his greatness as a newspaper man; his wonderful grasp on international affairs, nor his ability to command the highest price. The war-correspondents of the world granted unto Diabling glory in the highest as an editorial dictator; but, frankly, they were convinced that he lacked the punch and jaw and general animal, greatly to relish mingling his person with shrapnel at first hand. "He is not reinforced for brute scenes," they said.

These views were augmented one night in the billiard-room of the Imperial Hotel in Tokio, when Diabling expressed himself as follows:

"A correspondent in this day and age cannot cover a war for a newspaper by dangling his body in some dirty area of fire between two obscure lines. A man might as well tie his fortunes to some poor pawn in a chess-game. And say, what is the Japanese war-office across the square giving out to us these days? Not a whiff of value, and these are mere preparation days! Do you think the various field-headquarters—if you ever get into the field—will whisper to-day's defeat or to-morrow's strategy? Why, if they did, your cables would carry it around the world to the enemy *a mile away*—in six hours!"

Had an unnamed cub-reporter offered these remarks, he would have been deported, steerage, to the last and loneliest isle; but from Diabling, a man of age and fame, the words were tolerated by the masters of many services who had consorted with generals and discussed the dawn's forlorn hope in shell-swept tents.

Diabling was a medium-sized man, past thirty, unscarred, unmarried, credited with acumen, flying and submarine. His Tokio days in April have been outlined; August in Tienshankwan touched upon. One woman, not a large woman, had caused him to vent a wish that he might get to the front of a fifty-mile battle-line. Either he had lied to her, which would make him a very weak and wicked individual; or else She and Tienshankwan had altered his convictions, against which the Hosts of the Lord had flung themselves in vain.

On the fourth morning of her stay in Tienshankwan, Diabling sought Miss Quest yet again. He looked at her profile, as they walked out together in the morning light, and he found that he had not dreamed the previous afternoon and night away. She was rare and fair and mysteriously wise to look upon.

"I felt that I must walk with you again this morning, Miss Quest," he said, as they threaded the burial mounds which arose like petty corruptions of earth along the city wall.

"I was hoping you would," she replied.

"But before I talk any more," he observed half-humorously, "would you mind telling me if you are a Russian nihilist, a Japanese secret-agent, or just a young woman of prodigious information, touring the world? The more I think of what you said yesterday, the stranger it seems that you should be able to tell me what to do——"

She halted and stepped aside to laugh at him blithely. "'I am what I am,' as the Hindoos say," she observed.

"Wonderful to me, at any rate," he finished.

That night he sat in his room. Nothing appealed to him as being more remotely childish than the usual recreations of billiards, a stimulant or two, and a magazine. He forgot to smoke, forgot to light the Rest House lamp. He thought about the woman, stayed awake to recall her phases. Finally he began to plot a sudden way to her heart. The fruit thereof fell ripe at day-break:

"I shall go up into the war-muck."

Thereupon he cabled the decision to his paper, observing to himself, as he left the cable-office, that the editors across the world were too busy electing a President to take notice.

"By the way, Miss Quest," he said that afternoon, when they were well out of hearing of the Rest House porch, "I 've decided to take a 'look-see' at Liaoyang."

She glanced at him in a quick startled way, saying, "But it may be a lot harder to get to the front—than we talked about!"

He looked at her studyingly. The warning tone of her words suggested an intimate knowledge of the topography of the war-country and of military affairs in general.

"But would n't it be splendid," she hastened to add, "if you could slip in and get the story of Liaoyang, and bring it back here safely to the free cable?"

"It would," said Diabling gravely. "The Great God News is a wonderful god."

"But think of the danger——"

"Physical heroism is cheap, Miss Quest—the cheapest utility of the nations. This is mighty pitiful to me," he went on, suppressing the violence from his words. "I have always said and written that a war-correspondent cannot do a battle-classic for his cable-editor, simply because he exposes his body to fire. The maker of the war classic must catch a conception of the whole land and sea array, and have an inner force of his own to make his lines and sentences shine."

"But suppose he has all that, and then goes to the heart of the thing!"—her voice became intense. "Suppose he sees the very points of a collision—poor brave brutes coming together to die!"

"I am going up to Liaoyang—for that—yes, that is just it!" Diabling returned, in a strange, slow way. "And yet I should like to know—that you will be here when I come back."

Faint rarities of color suffused her skin. She braved the surprise, but punished him a little in the one word:

"Why?"

"Because I love to walk with you. I don't want to appear impulsive or ridiculous, but these three days have made me think a great deal. They have sort of restored my soul. . . . I want you to know, Miss Quest, that mine has always been a brain-fight—for thirty-three years a brain-fight—and I think a clean one. A woman has never complicated nor compelled an instant of it—before."

She stepped aside and faced him. "If I were a man," said she mirthfully, "I should return your next favor of a day or so ago, by saying now—I like you, Mr. Diabling!"

"And will you wait until I come?" he said.

"I cannot promise that," she answered. "There are outer conditions, but if I follow my own wish,—I shall be here when you come back."

That night he should have slept hard and long in preparation for the great tasks ahead, but the lover in the man, so newly roused, rioted over his consciousness with dancing and loud cymbals. Instead of catching a doze, here and there, the next day, in the heat and dust of a railroad journey over the interminable Manchurian levels, this Diabling who made a business of telling nations how to conduct themselves brooded upon the marvellous drama of a woman's face.

In the evening he reached Shenkau, on the southern banks of the Liao River. Civil passports would take him no further. Across the river was Wang-cheng, formerly a Russian headquarters, now a Japanese base—a buckle of the inner war-belt. American and other correspondents were there, old Tokio friends, but Diabling had no intention of renewing acquaintances. It was his purpose to touch the opposite shore forty miles higher up the river, at Liaoyang, where the vast herds of cannon-meat were mobilizing.

He spent the night at a dirty Chinese inn at Shenkau, and the next morning he stepped innocently into a Chinese junk, showed a handful of *taels,* and pointed up the river. The Chinese thought he wanted to cross, and were quite willing to deliver him into the hands of the Japanese sentries on the opposite shore—for money. The stream was a mile wide at this point and the current was almost a rapids, but a stiff hot breeze was blowing against it. In the centre, Diabling again pointed up-stream. The Chinese demurred. There were only two of them. Diabling showed more money. The course of the junk was not changed. Thereupon, the American uncovered a six-shooter, man's size and brightly new, which he had not yet fired. The Chinese considered spiritedly, and the craft was turned up with the wind.

Correspondents at Wang-cheng, some of them consumed with a passion of recklessness, had contemplated this step, but only one had dared. This was Butzel, who had started up the river three days before. Butzel knew the river, the river-pirates, and the red-beard bandits, made daring by the war; moreover, he planned his coup in all coolness and craft. . . . Wang-cheng had not heard the news; certainly Diabling had not, but back in America and London the death of the brave war-scribe was being deplored in the press. Diabling, who knew little of the bandit-scourge of Manchuria and nothing of war at first hand, was on the same trail. But the present God of Diabling was a potent and Laughing God.

Two precautions saved his life. He prevented the Chinese from approaching even within hailing distance of any other craft on the river, and he remained awake throughout the day and night. In the hot red dawn, he beheld the Japanese bivouac, a crowded valley stretching away miles to the right in the fast-lifting gloom. The sight clutched his very soul—leagues of uprising men, the faint smell of wood-smoke and trampled turf, the gray walls of Liaoyang, over the reddened hills. Crazily he commanded the Chinese to the bank, and they put him ashore, under protest, in the very lines of the Japanese.

Sentries covered him before he had touched the land. The junk, too, was held. Diabling was bundled forward under a guard of two men. They passed into the main camp, and through lines of infantry, the American swallowing Failure as he walked. He would be taken far to the rear, a prisoner, that was plain; plain, too, that he would miss the battle and go back to Tienshankwan without a look in his eyes to conquer the woman.

The soldiers were eating rice and drinking tea from little bowls; some were bathing, others cleansing their teeth with great zeal, using pointed sticks and lotions. They meant to be gathered unto their fathers that day with clean mouths. And, suddenly, as they made their way, certain orders went ripping down the unformed lines and action was called for. One of Diabling's guards was swept away in the torrent of men that poured over them; but the other held grimly to his arm. The soldiers ran forward, just as they were, with eating-sticks and bowls and paper napkins. Diabling saw one stuffing the contents of a dish of rice and curry into his mouth as he ran, a ten-pound rifle clapped between his elbow and ribs.

The American loved the human atoms hurtling past, loved the guard who gripped his arm. The majesty of it all was upon him—the greatness of the little brown soldiers, the greatness of the gamble on that gorgeous morning for the old gray walls of Liaoyang. "War is grand and tremendous and final," he apostrophised, "but it is a rotten imposition upon you poor little obscure men! You will fight until you die, bleed your lives away in the bursting heat—all for an abstraction! Man for man, you are greater than the principality and power you serve! . . . Think of it," he finished, chuckling. "I 'm doing editorials for nothing!"

There was a volley from the enemy, and then continuous fire. The marvel of it entered into the American. Now and then a Japanese in front of him fell. Smoke was crowding out the distances. The avalanche of men had passed. Diabling's guard held him fixed where they were. The American perceived that they had reached the field headquarters of some general who was too busy to bother with his case just now. Aides and orderlies were spurring out from a common centre; others riding in took their places. Always the little chief, whoever he was, stood in a thick protecting cordon of men; and eternal above the fire was the screaming of trumpets.

The long *pi-n-n-n-g* of the high bullets was a constant singing in the air; and the instant *bz-r-p* of the close ones. Some one had told him in Tokio that you never hear the ball that hits you. Diabling was distantly pleased with himself to find that he, personally, was unafraid.

He was weary unto fever, and so hungry that he had picked up a dried fish from the ground and munched it, under the grin of his guard. Indeed, his moderate life had been so shocked by late denials of food and sleep, that his brain seemed to hold itself aloof from the carcass of him, the better to grasp and synthesize the immense actions of the present.

And God! how he was seeing! Diabling sensed vaguely that the thing was going on for miles and miles. The smoke blurred all but a finger-bone of the valley; yet from the part he could reconstruct the whole horrid skeleton of twentieth-century crime. The land descended slightly from the place where he stood at the headquarters of the left wing; then rose evenly to the Russian outworks two hundred yards away. There were no barb-wire entanglements, no pitfalls, no underbrush nor trees. The luck of the American had made it so.

The black line of Japanese rolled up against the works. Diabling could think only of his own baby soldiers, heads bent forward, legs working, and guns of *papier mache* in bayonet charge. The black line was thinned. The Russian embankments wore a white ruff of smoke, the lace of which was swept by stray winds down over the fallen.

The grip of his guard relaxed. Diabling thought he had been hit, as the blood rushed down his arm where the tightened fingers had been. The realization that he was free came slowly, and with it a pang at the cost. The wriggling legs of the fallen guard were beating against his own. Diabling looked down at the face upon the ground.

It was brown, Oriental. In the corner of the mouth was a flake of rice, and the coarse-grained dust of Manchuria was over all. The eyes were turned back and the ears were bad, criminal ears, thick, small, close to the skull; but the mouth was beautiful! It was carved as if some god had done it on a fine morning when joy was abroad on this little earth, and the perfection of the human mouth was the theme of the day.

Diabling bent down. He had not water nor whiskey to give, but he said: "Hello!"

Deep understanding came to him from the dying face. The American saw what it meant to the Japanese boy to go out for his Emperor, saw the faith and glory of it all. It was the face of a man who comes home after years of travail to the marvel of a loved woman's arms.

"*Sayonara,*" the fine lips uttered.

"*Sayonara,*" Diabling repeated. . . . The word brought him back to a night in Tokio—a banquet at the Oakleaf Club, tendered to the correspondents by certain distinguished Japanese. In response to a toast—it was the eve of departure for many—old Strong of the *Sentinel* had said that *Sayonara,* as the Japanese uttered it, meaning "Good-by," was the sweetest and saddest word of human speech.

The body jerked itself out, but the smile remained. The whole story of the Japanese conquest boomed in Diabling's brain from that one perishable portrait of joy.

The sun sent streamers into the white smoke drapery upon the Russian bank. The Island men were thrashing against it. Guns spurted continuously from the ledge, and the Japanese met the fire with their breasts. One man out of a company lived to gain the top of the trench. He was skewered on Russian bayonets and shaken down among his writhing fellow-soldiers, as the wing of a chicken is served upon a waiting plate.

But the Island hope was higher than these things. It was a glad morning to the Japanese, a bright task. Another company, full quota, was shot forward to tread upon their dead, and beat itself against the intrenchments. A third torrent was rolled upward before the second had suffered a complete blood-letting. . . . Diabling saw one five-foot demon wielding his rifle-butt upon the rim of the trench in the midst of gray Russian giants. For an instant he was a human holocaust—that Jap—then he was sucked down into the trench and stilled.

Diabling wondered if they completely wiped out the little man's smile at the last.

The American himself was hit twice; his left legging torn and bloody; his left arm shattered. The sleeve was filled with stickiness and heat. His stomach rebelled and his brain was prone to grope away from the heart of things; still he missed little of the great scene which unfolded in flashes of glory and horror; and at steady intervals, as a chorus breaks a splendid lyric, the mind of the man picked up the memory of the woman in Tienshankwan, fondled it, and treasured it away once more. He opened his legging, twisted it a bit, stuffed his handkerchief against the wound and fastened the buckle again. With his teeth and right hand, he drew his necktie desperately tight above the wound in his left arm.

After that he lay upon the ground beside the dead guard. Voices reached him from the right—voices of command. The human shield of aides parted for an instant, and he saw the little man of the eagles—the general commanding the left wing!

It was Noku, whom he had met on the night of the Oakleaf banquet, on the night of *Sayonara*—Noku, who was very close to white in color, who looked like an assistant rector of an Episcopal church, with a face mild unto failure and a manner sweetly polite. Here was Noku coiling up his companies to meet death against a wall that Napoleon would have called impregnable.

Diabling rubbed the turf into his face with his good hand—it was a rattled, ostrich notion to cover his color—and watched Noku, unparallelled profligate of men! . . . The general's voice was quiet as a mystic's prayer. He seemed absolutely joyless in the fact that his aides spared *him* from the rifle-fire; and yet he seemed to hold also the thought that his Emperor needed *him* alive! It was as if he were sorrowful, but patient withal, inasmuch that his rank denied him the boon of his men—death for Japan!

Meanwhile Noku slew his hundreds and his thousands—this little placid deacon person. The thought came to Diabling on his stomach in the smoke that the women of America would tear down the Capitol at Washington with their hands if the stones contained a monster who had spent the blood of their sons and lovers as Noku was doing now.

A new sound in the air! It was like an instant horrid crash of drums in the midst of a violin solo. The Russian artillery was placed at last and roared its discord over the rifle-fire. Russian glasses had found the heart of the left wing—Noku and his aides—and the valley rained shrapnel splinters.

The wildest dream of hell was on. Diabling, crawling back through the carnage, saw Noku and his staff smashed as a cue-ball smashes a fifteen block in pool. . . . Back through the sunlit, smoke-smeared pandemonium he made his way, his mind alive with horrible sounds and images, songs, smiles, the groans of unconscious flesh whose souls were breaking away, the screaming of cold trumpets and the hot response of men! And he saw the blood-wet soil (this wounded American, obsessed for the day by some cool devil) and the quivering parts of men, which strewed the ground. His brain was filled with glory and strategy, and one crowning dream of a woman and a cable!

Shivering and snorting in the smoke, stood a saddled horse. The coolie who had held the mount was dead and trampled. Diabling gained the saddle. He had learned to ride in a riding-school—short stirrup, bob-bob. A brown hand grasped the bridle-rein as he turned toward the river. Diabling leaned down toward the face in the smoke and crashed his right fist into it.

His smoke and dirt-stained face, and the Japanese letters on his saddle-housing, saved him at a gallop. He reached the river, and found that the Japanese outposts had been pulled in by the battle; also that the Chinese junks had winded far out of the periphery of the same; so he turned south toward Wang-cheng, and permitted his beast to spend all the innate badness and toughness that he pleased, in a race with his shadow along the river road.

Three hours of furious riding before he found a junk moored in the wilderness of the river. Yellow babies were playing like little cinnamon cubs on the shore. Two women were cooking rice and fish; two men were asleep on the sheets. Diabling slid off his mount and boarded his barge with a lordly limp. The babes were caught up and hidden in the hold; the men began to converse in many keys; the junk was cast off and crawled down with the stream.

Considering the ride, Shenkau could not have been more than fifteen or eighteen miles away. It was only an hour past noon. With a three-mile current, Diabling planned to catch the evening train for Tienshankwan at eight in Shenkau. Already, the day was so interminable, the battle seemed as yesterday. In the centre of the current, the American ate rice with fish-dressing, bowl after bowl, at a Chinese dollar each, his own price. Drowsiness came afterward in whirlwinds and avalanches, but he dared not lose his grip, and sat in the stern with one eye cocked open like a stuffed bird's, his brain a blank to all save one sentence, "To sleep is to die, and be added unto the mysteries of a dirty river." Sometimes he sang it. The Chinese thought him mad, but he kept them warm with large silver *taels* of the realm, and kept them good with his pretty new gun.

Shenkau at seven in the August dusk! Dazed with pain and wounded like one of the French Old Guards, Diabling ate again at the foul Chinese place and boarded the train at eight with a basket of champagne, his only luggage. To the Chinese train-guard, he gave many pieces of silver, demanding to be called at eleven. Then straightway he sank into a brand of sleep, not to be conceived by one who has not spent every ounce of tissue, brain, and blood, that a man can spend and live.

It was twenty minutes past eleven before the Chinese guard succeeded in pulling Diabling back to the horrid agony of living. He seemed yet dead in parts, his brain untenable, his hands fumbling and unsensitive. For the first time in his life, the American invested himself with wine to recapture his mind. In a half hour, he was a white man again, one whose pain could be borne and whose brain was unfolding the pictures of yesterday. The wine brimmed in his veins and his pencil began to cover vast areas of white paper.

The train neared the Great Wall in the dawn. Utterly gone now was the correspondent's capacity to express or thrill at a thought. Reel after reel of films which his brain caught in the battle had been redone in pencil. The thick bundle of white sheets clutched in his hand held them all. . . . The train passed through the break in the Wall and the dawn came in fresh from the Sea. . . . Here was the woman and the free cable. The victory already won seemed cheap to him; the winning of the woman was a braver, finer thing.

He was quite conscious, yet his mind was tinged with dreams. . . . He wanted the woman's arms now; wanted her to whisper and love and pet him back to life. This seemed a primal instinct of the wounded man. Thirty-three years of brain-culture and arrogant bachelorhood had not killed it. . . . Yet he remembered that the woman was not won; that he had not known her a week; that he did not know her first name.

Huts and burial-mounds of Tienshankwan (among which they had walked together) loomed dull in the dawn-gloom, as the train slowed up. Diabling drank the last of the wine, and the vagaries crept farther back in his brain. The Chinese guard half-carried him out of the coach, and in the gray-white light before the station, he saw the woman running toward him.

"Hullo!" he said.

She peered into his face and unbuttoned his coat with lightning fingers, dreading to find a wound in the breast. The Chinese pointed to the American's arm and the bulged legging; also to the bundle of copy in Diabling's hand, making her understand that he had been exhausted from the loss of blood and sleep, when he took the train at Shenkau, and that he had written all night. She pressed Diabling's good arm with a quick catch of breath, and helped the Chinese to bear him to the Rest House.

"Oh, Lady, Lady, I've had a good time!" he muttered. "You and the battle were big to me!"

In his room at the Rest House, Diabling was propped up on his right elbow, staring at her hungrily. A Chinese physician came; also the surgeon from the British garrison. They were forced to wait in the hall.

"Possibly I should n't have died if I had failed to find you here," he said gravely, "but I should have wanted to. It has got to be a big thing to me—you!"

"But we can talk again, Mr. Diabling," she said with nervous haste. "I want the doctors to come in now and take care of you."

"Sit still and listen," he commanded. "I figured it all out going up to Shenkau. I was an idiot not to see it before. You're a newspaper woman—are n't you?"

"Yes—of London."

Diabling sighed. His lips twitched pitifully. "I want you to take this story," he said, putting the copy into her hands. "It's a big story and a sweet one—but out of my line. You made me do it. For you I did it. Because of you, I did it well. It's yours. You've got the world beat at least a week. File it to your own paper this morning—in the third person. They'll have the main strategy and topography in your London office by this time from Tokio. I've allowed for that. This covers Noku and the left wing and some of his assaults. It tells how I saw Noku killed—how he went up in shrapnel and could n't be gathered together. . . . Forgive me for being so dirty to look at, and God love you!"

She held the copy eagerly, bent over him, and smiled; then stepped quickly to the door. "It was very dear of you to think of it," she said, "and I'll file the story. The doctors must come in now. When they are through you must sleep—and sleep!"

Indistinctly, he recalls being tortured for an hour with cleansings and dressings and broths, after which he sank into the bottom of the sea of sleep. Another morning was brightly abroad when he fully awoke. A vague remnant of the triumph was in his brain. His voice sounded weak and unfamiliar when he called for the woman. The missionary, a patient and well-beloved man, was watching at his bedside.

"She was here to inquire about you a little ago," the missionary said. "She was just walking out to the Wall. I'll have one of the Chinese boys go out and hail her. . . . There are cablegrams for you, Mr. Diabling."

The first he opened mystified him completely. It was from a London daily, congratulating him upon his Liaoyang coup, and asking him to send an additional story at the rate of twenty pounds the hundred words. A similar offer from Paris, Chicago, and a New

York rival hurled him farther into the dark. The last cablegram cleared all. It was from his own paper, and read:

> **Thank you for brilliant achievement and splendid story. Heaven heal your wounds quickly.**

Diabling sank back among the pillows. First his eyes smarted, and then grew wet—a thing that had not happened for many years.

"It is very wonderful," the missionary said quietly. "I did not think that a mere worldly achievement could be so appealing."

"Nor I," said Diabling.

Miss Quest entered. The gentle missionary withdrew and shut the door. The woman was fresh as the morning and as fair.

"Ah, Lady, you did n't do as I said," he began brokenly.

She scanned the cables, her gray eyes joyously bright; and she pressed his good hand warmly.

"Until I studied these, I thought you had filed the story to your paper instead of mine. . . . Why would n't you take a gift from me?" he faltered.

"Do you think I would do such a thing—just because I am a woman—take your blood-bought work for my own? Why, if a man did a thing like that, he would be the vilest thief of our craft."

Every turn of her eyes and utterance of her lips had come to be a marvel to the poor man. "But don't you see that it is different with you?" he pleaded. "Why, it would be the rarest hour to me—infinitely finer than all these cables to the heart of a newspaper man—to give you—you—the fruits of that forenoon before Liaoyang! . . . And then it was you who made me go—don't you see?"

"Why did I make you go?" she asked quickly. "All that I said, you knew far better than I."

"Ah, but you struck deep, Lady. I went out there for you. I had to find out if I was red-blooded enough to face guns and grin. I could n't go on walking with you mornings until I was sure of that. . . . How could I look into gray eyes like yours—with honor—until I found out that I was *not* a physical coward?"

She was freshening his pillows just then and did not answer.

Three weeks later they sat down together upon a large block of stone which had fallen from the upper masonry of the Wall.

"But what makes you so restless about me?" she whispered.

He leaned back and puffed his cigar luxuriously. "This Wall has been standing pretty long already. How do I know it is n't to fall on you this minute? Certainly I 'm restless."

Long silence. . . . "They say that the two armies are mobilizing along the Shahke River," she remarked, "and that another battle will soon be fought in front of Mukden. Would n't it be grand——"

"My arm pains dreadfully," he interrupted. "Would you mind if I rested it upon your lap—so? . . . Thank you, that 's much better. What did you say about armies?"

"I say, would n't it be grand to witness the next battle at Mukden?"

"Yes," he observed. "I 've just about figured out when to start. You see, I want the exact moment—as at Liaoyang."

She bent her head forward swiftly close to his. "John Diabling," she said, low but vehemently, "I would n't let you go to Mukden, as you went to Liaoyang—no, not if they carved your name on abbey-stones!"

"Oh, well, battles are all alike," he said carelessly. "Same as circuses. See one—see 'em all. . . . Oh, say, don't joggle my arm, but look like that again! It makes me feel as if I had just bought the earth and given it to the poor."

So they played away the endless afternoons of Tienshankwan.

◆

A LULLABY

BY AMY CHURCHILL

THE sunbeams are kissing each other good-night;
Hush thee, my little one, hush.
The flowers are closing their peepers up tight;
    Hush thee, my little one, hush.
Now draw close the shutters across thy blue eyes;
The loved queen of Nodland awaits her sweet prize,
And fairies stand ready to carry thee o'er
The meadows that stretch to the far, silent shore.
    Hush thee, my little one, hush.

The golden head nestles on mother's warm breast;
    Baby is almost asleep.
A wee little bird flutters home to its nest;
    Baby is almost asleep.
How gently, how fast, fall the deep twilight shades
O'er sea and o'er land, o'er hills and o'er glades!
How softly the moon sheds its silvery beams
On Slumberland's walls and its cities of dreams!
    Baby is fast, fast asleep.

THE DISAFFECTION OF ADELAIDE

By Laura Simmons

"WHAT deucedly good luck!" I had slipped into the only vacant seat in the fast-moving express and found myself at Rosalie's side. "Please take me along!" I pleaded. "I'll go anywhere you say. Don't shake me off. I'm going, any way—since you press me so hard," I added satirically, for my beloved's expression was none too cordial.

"What's the matter?" I demanded. "Still grumbling about Adelaide? I'll wager you are going out there to call this morning. Me, too; so glad I happened along!"

"I suppose"—Rosalie punctuated her remarks by wrathful, futile little tugs at her small, mouse-gray gloves as she jerked out the words—"I suppose I am expected to call sooner or later. She's been married over a year now, so I may as well have it over with. But I don't pretend to have forgiven her. Of course we shall hear that she's been rapturously happy, buried in that impossible little village, with her æsthetic housekeeping and absurd ideals as the wife of a struggling professor. That brilliant, wonderful woman! I confess I've never quite recovered from the shock!"

"Don't take it so hard, dear" (having proposed to Rosalie regularly once a week since New Year's, I feel privileged about the "dear"). "Why should n't a woman marry if she likes? And Adelaide was certainly a beauty, in spite of her Ph.D. I remember that she wore something pink at the Scientist's Reception last year—something all soft and messy and chiffony—you'd never have dreamed that she was an Egyptologist. Besides, one could n't expect a woman as charming as she to remain single forever." I sighed plaintively, and stole a glance sidewise to see whether my shot had taken effect.

Never was more dismal failure. Rosalie's expression was most discouraging, and her lovely nose was tilted to an alarming angle.

"Never mind Adelaide," I hastened to add, tenderly. "Just permit a poor inferior being to tell you how cruelly, heartlessly lovely you are looking to-day in that yellow—no, drab—er—yes, drab affair——"

"This drab affair," interposed my lady, in chilling tones, "is an oyster gray crepon, combined with val."

"Val?" I repeated wistfully. "And what's val? Really, Rosalie, I think you might explain some of these mysterious terms. When a fellow has been up half the night grinding away over Blackstone, and is crammed full of Torts and Mortgages and things like that, a little more knowledge can't possibly injure him. And I have a morbid yearning to learn about val."

"Such a future before her! Such glorious promise! Oh, it is positively tragic!" Rosalie's exasperation seemed to attain a climax as we alighted at the pretty rural station and looked about us, before wending our way up the solitary village street. "An authority on everything Egyptian, too! Could tell you all about the Ptolemys, and hieroglyphics, and—and cuneiforms—and things nobody else ever knows anything about——"

"Or cares, either. Say, Rosie, there's that little gold-dust curl again, just over your left ear——"

"And we were to have a lecture-course from her this very fall! And now to think how she has slumped, become lost in the crowd, and doing just nothing after all!"

"Sh-h! It's the next house!" We found ourselves approaching a quaint but most attractive little cottage, which, as we simultaneously observed, looked exactly like Adelaide.

"She always did have a knack with flowers," admitted Rosalie tentatively, as we paused to inspect the wonders of the midsummer garden—the flame of poppies along the walk, and the ethereal pinks and impassioned purples of the morning-glories, as they mounted ambitiously above the trellis-work of the broad piazza.

"What a kaleidoscopic retreat!" I cried admiringly. "Haven't I always told you, Rosie girl, that there are infinite possibilities in any spot—even in a suburban village, where every prospect pleases, and only man is artificial? Now, don't you fancy that you and I can find just another such a cozy bungalow hereabouts——"

"Jimmy!"

I had known beforehand that she would say exactly that, in exactly that way. I turned up my coat-collar and shivered resignedly.

You could see that poor Rosalie's outraged spirit still struggled for expression, even up to the very gates of the house. Her tragedy-queen gesture had all the effect of a personal grievance against everything in sight—the pretty porch, the smiling posies all about us, the whole charming and tasteful *ensemble,* bespeaking culture and every refinement of modern living.

"Can it be wondered that I become enraged at the whole matrimonial proposition, when I see so grand a woman deliberately renouncing such a career? And for what? Just answer me that!" and my adored one's blue willow-feathers shook so truculently as to loosen the two tiny gold-dust curls just over her left ear. They always escape like that when she is excited, and I always yearn to put them back. And then immediately I want to see them loose again.

"Great Scott, Rosalie! don't glare at me in that awful manner! It is n't my fault. And no doubt she 's perfectly satisfied. Ha! sofa pillows!" as my exultant glance took in the long, low windows of the veranda, thickly stuffed with cushions of a delightfully lurid and melodramatic variety. "If sofa pillows be one of the baneful results of matrimony——" I chuckled; but my sinful mirth was promptly subdued into a respectful silence.

"Spare me the masculine view of a woman's career! Her higher education, college degrees, foreign travel, brilliant lectures, and magazine essays—what are these to be compared with her domestic virtues, and the allurements of a suburban cottage, with morning-glories rioting about the piazza——"

"And sofa pillows, Rosie! Whole prisms of 'em!" I entreated.

"Oh, but it makes me fairly desperate! To think of the wicked sacrifice—the injustice of it all!"

There was such a convincing ring of actual anguish in Rosalie's voice that I hastened to repress the facetious rejoinder I was sorely tempted to make.

The sight of the hall door standing ajar suddenly inspired me with a glittering idea.

"I say, Rosie," I whispered, "let 's step inside and surprise her. You can do your scolding afterward. Just see how easy!" and quite noiselessly we tiptoed into a large, cozy apartment, which, while not exactly a hall, was not yet a drawing-room; but rather the two combined in a charmingly hospitable and unconventional fashion.

From upstairs a gentle murmur of voices floated down to us. We looked at one another guiltily, and waited, apprehensive as criminals, for something to happen.

It happened. From somewhere right beside us in the room there suddenly arose the softest, queerest little sound,—a cooing, appealing, helpless cry, like nothing else in all this big, callous, sinful world. Rosalie and I stood petrified—our startled gaze directed to a deep white crib over in the corner, from whose multitudinous wrappings the peculiar disturbance seemed to emanate. As we looked, a vigorous wee pink fist waved joyously in the air—this phenomenon being followed by tiny pink toes wriggling strenuously at the surrounding atmosphere. Then more coos, and gurgles, and grunts of deep contentment.

I remember nothing so distinctly as my dear girl's face; how the color stricken out of it in that first instant of bewilderment came rushing back in a glorious crimson flood, as with a faint sob she tottered over and sank upon her knees—my haughty Rosalie!—beside that blessed kid.

"Rosie—belovedest!"

But, great Jupiter! how can a fellow say things to a girl who shows only the edge of a hot red cheek, wet with tears, while her arms are hugged tight about an absurd bundle of lace and silk fixings and ribbon bows? Ah me! I had thought I had loved her before, but now! Something tugged wildly at my stupid masculine heart, and I could only look on in silent, helpless adoration.

"Oh, Jimmy," she quavered ecstatically, "is n't he just too lovely? Look—real hair! Oh-h! And the cutest little finger nails! See, Jimmy! You *must* see! Are n't they simply too perfectly dear for *words!*"

Being a wise as well as a patient man, I let her grab my coat-sleeve in her excitement and weep softly upon my nigh shoulder.

The little gold-dust curls were so near, and my desire to sympathize was so intense, that I kissed them in a fatherly sort of way several times in succession before I made reply.

"Rosalie," I declared solemnly, "you are right; you are always right. They are, as you say—simply too perfectly dear for words!"

◆

THE END OF THE ROAD

BY EDWIN CARLILE LITSEY

WHAT will I find at the end of the road?
Faith, I cannot tell!
But I know my shoulders will miss the load
They have borne, or ill, or well.

What will I find at the end of the road?
Better I should not know;
But my back will miss the whip and goad
On the new way which I go.

Will I find sweet rest? Ah, yes! I know
The Master will grant me this;
And I pray, dear heart, your face will show
Me the path to the plains of bliss!

ZELPHINE IN WARWICKSHIRE

By Anne Hollingsworth Wharton

❧

WARWICK, July 22nd.

DEAR MARGARET:

We have changed all of our plans, which you and I once decided was the most congenial occupation of a traveller, and we are indulging in what the English call "bad geography." Instead of going directly from Keighley to York, we suddenly decided to turn our faces southward while the weather is so cool, returning to the North country in August.

Here we are established in a fairly comfortable place near the castle of the old King-maker, after spending a night in a quite impossible inn that was recommended to us as perfectly delightful. At the first place that we essayed, also highly recommended and a temperance hotel at that, the manager was so under the influence of one or more of his tabooed beverages that it was all that he could do to keep his balance while he talked to us. As this is our second experience of the sort, we have added an emphatic note to our list of don'ts: Don't ever try a temperance hotel under any consideration whatever.

As we were wandering about the streets this morning, feeling homeless and houseless in this strange town, having sent our luggage to the railway station and not yet having secured an abiding place, we suddenly found ourselves at the entrance of the Church of St. Mary. After surveying its several objects of interest, we turned our steps towards the magnificent Beauchamp Chapel, which you and I enjoyed so much one rainy morning eight years ago. You will remember the tomb of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, the founder.

The tomb of Robert Dudley and his second wife is quite near, very ornate, as you may remember, but much less beautiful than that of Richard Beauchamp, with a massive superstructure and under it a semicircular recess which contains a long Latin inscription. Here lies the once powerful Leicester, with all his honors, titles, and armorial bearings emblazoned upon his tomb, surrounded by small figures representing the virtues, and, quite as appropriate, the motto, "*Droit et loyal.*"

I remember how indignant you were at the thought of the noble Lady Lettice lying here in this gorgeous tomb beside her Lord, while the disowned and rejected Amy Robsart, quite as truly Lady Dudley, lies unhonored beneath the chancel of St. Mary's Church in Oxford. It is some satisfaction to know that the rich and tasteless monument was erected by the excellent and pious Lady Lettice herself, who survived her husband by many years, and also that one has to come to Warwick to be reminded that such a person existed, while, thanks to Sir Walter Scott, the beauty and the sorrows of the Ladye Amye Dudley are known wherever the English language is spoken.

We were reading the Latin inscription on the recess back of the tomb and trying to identify the several virtues that adorned the canopy, when a familiar voice behind us exclaimed: "All of the virtues indeed! If the Earl of Leicester possessed the virtues, I should like to know where the vices are to be found!" We turned, to find Miss Cassandra West, the delightful Philadelphia Quakeress whom we met in Canterbury, standing behind us with her niece, Miss Mott. Nothing could have been more opportune, for, aside from our genuine liking for Miss West, she proved to be the proverbial "lady from Philadelphia" and equal to any emergency. She not only provided us with accommodations in the hotel in which she was stopping, but she made up our minds for us as well, a really valuable service to a traveller and a great saving of time. We had not been able to decide whether we should devote this brilliantly beautiful day to Kenilworth or to Stratford. So few perfectly clear days have fallen to our lot of late that Walter declares that when we have one it goes to our heads like champagne and confuses us, and here was dear Miss West coming to our rescue with a carriage and a well arranged plan for a morning at Kenilworth.

Like fair Melrose, Kenilworth, to be seen aright, should be visited by the pale moonlight; but even in the garish light of day the castle lends itself to the history and romance that are inseparably associated with its ruinous chambers and massive ivy-grown walls.

Having entered through Leicester's Gate-house and passed on by the Norman keep, we crossed the ancient kitchen in which feasts were prepared for Queen Elizabeth and her retinue, and on to the great banqueting hall in which they were served. This noble hall with its two beautiful, almost perfect oriel windows, was built by John of Gaunt, "the time-honored Lancaster." Quite near is the Strong Tower or Mervyn's Tower, whose small octagonal room on the second floor is still to be reached by a narrow winding stone stairway It was in this room that Sir Walter Scott placed Lady Dudley when she made her ill-starred journey to Kenilworth under the protection of Wayland. The room with its stone floors and thick walls looks indeed like a prison, although from the window there is a charming view of an orchard and garden which now occupies the site of what was the Pleasance in Leicester's time. It was in this Pleasance, then "decorated with statues, arches, trophies, fountains, and other architectural monuments," that Tressilian wandered, paying little heed to the beauties of nature and art which surrounded him, his mind being absorbed by thoughts of his lost love, Amy, whom he knew to be in danger, but in how great danger, or how near to him at that moment, he was quite ignorant.

As I stood in the little tower chamber looking out upon the Pleasance with its orchard and garden, and upon the reaches of green meadow beyond, my mind, like Tressilian's, quite filled with thoughts of Amy Robsart, a voice that seemed to come from the floor below, an infinitely pathetic voice, broke forth in these words:

Now nought was heard beneath the skies,
  The sounds of busy life were still,
Save an unhappy lady's sighs,
  That issued from that lonely pile.

"Leicester," she cried, "is this thy love
  That thou so oft hast sworn to me,
To leave me in this lonely grove,
  Immured in shameful privity?"

* * * * * * *

Thus sore and sad that lady grieved,
  In Cumnor Hall, so lone and drear;
And many a heartfelt sigh she heaved,
  And let fall many a bitter tear.

The death-bell thrice was heard to ring,
  An aerial voice was heard to call,
And thrice the raven flapp'd its wing
  Around the towers of Cumnor Hall.

The lines so perfectly fitted the scene, and I was so completely under the spell of Kenilworth and the Northern Wizard who described it, that I never stopped to think whether the voice was of the past or of the present; there may have been tears in my eyes, I do not know, I only know that I was aroused from my sad reverie by Walter's voice at my side, saying very gently, "Don't take it quite so hard, Zelphine; you know that Amy never really came to Kenilworth, and the great pageant took place long after her death."

"I don't care," I said; "Sir Walter Scott pictured her here and I shall always think of her in this little room, no matter what dates and facts say about it. And those verses—did you ever hear anything so weird and haunting?"

"The ghost of the Ladye Amye," said Walter. "She does not appear by daylight, she only recites."

"Now, really, Walter do you think that some one is kept here to repeat those verses when parties of visitors arrive?"

"Aunt Cassie has a wonderful memory," said Miss Mott, her head just then appearing above the stairway, as if in answer to my question, "and she always seems to have her poetry on tap."

Something more than a good memory, a gift of sympathy and a power that we should call dramatic if she were not a good Quakeress, enabled Miss West to enter so completely into the spirit of the place and its associations and so to carry us with her (Walter, too, despite his jesting) that the years were swept aside like a veil and we shared for the moment Amy Robsart's sorrows, her hopes, and her fears.

We selfishly rejoiced that no other tourists or trippers were at Kenilworth to-day to disturb our reveries, and, a rather quiet party, we drove away from this monument of the Earl of Leicester's pride, his ambition, and his heartless cruelty.

Miss West suggested a drive to Cumnor Hall while our minds were filled with thoughts of Amy Robsart, but the driver's common sense acted as a check to our enthusiasm. He advised us to visit Cumnor from Oxford, a drive of about four miles from that town; but, with an amiable desire to humor our fancies, he suggested an afternoon excursion to the Leycester Hospital at the west end of High Street, where some relics of Ladye Amye Dudley are still to be seen.

"By all means!" exclaimed Miss West. "Let us go to the Hospital and see something good that Leicester has left behind him."

We did not, however, visit the Leycester Hospital this afternoon, as our coachman made still another suggestion. A fête was being given in the grounds of Warwick Castle this very day, an excellent opportunity, he said, to see the park and gardens at their best.

If it was our pleasure, our Jehu would drive us to the old stone bridge over the Avon, from which there is a fine view of the castle, and afterwards take us to a little garden café for our luncheon.

Of course it was our pleasure to fall in with a plan so well arranged. The view of Warwick Castle from the Avon bridge is superb, and a day away from lodging-houses and inns is in itself a delight. The simple luncheon served to us in the little garden café under the shadow of the castle walls was more than satisfying. As we lingered over the inevitable plum tart, Walter proposed the health of the coachman, which we drank in ginger beer of the landlady's own make. She looked so pretty, smiling and blushing, as she stood before us opening the bottles, that Miss West, with her clever way of getting at the root of things, discovered, by means of several adroit questions, that the coachman was her husband, whom we were toasting in his own beer.

Could a Yankee from the land of the wooden nutmeg do better? The additional drive to the bridge over the Avon, the dinner at the inn, and perhaps a share of the fee of a shilling for each one as we entered the grounds, were all admirably planned.

"Well, I 'm satisfied to have him make something off us," said Miss Cassandra, as we passed through the embattled gateway and into a winding road cut out of the solid rock. "He has added so much to our pleasure. Nothing could be more delightful than this, and after all, when you reflect upon it, where did the Yankees come from, if not from England?"

Miss Cassandra's conundrum would probably have led to an animated discussion, under ordinary circumstances, but the vista of enchanting loveliness revealed to us as the great gates swung open entirely absorbed our attention. I wish I could give you some idea of the beauty of that sylvan scene, a combination of the richest exuberance of nature and the most skilful cultivation. You know that I love the wild beauty of our own forests and the rich verdure of our pasture-lands, but really—now don't laugh at me—I felt that I had never seen trees or grass before. Our feet sank into the greensward so far that I was afraid they would never come out again, and the cedars of Lebanon and the giant oaks and beeches reached out their sheltering arms to make refreshing coverts from the afternoon sun. At the other end of this vast park were the marquees in which vegetables, flowers, and fruit were exhibited. The space around them was thronged with judges, competitors, and a large company of spectators, including many tourists like ourselves.

The Countess of Warwick was not present to-day, to our regret, but we had the pleasure of seeing her sister, Lady Gordon Lenox, give the prizes for the fruit, flowers, and vegetables. She was charming in a mauve gown and large black hat, and with her aged mother and a young daughter of the Countess of Warwick, the Vicountess Hammersley, in white muslin and blue ribbons, the trio presented a most attractive picture of three generations of aristocrats. However it may please certain democratic Americans to

> Smile at the claims of long descent,

there is a certain indefinable quality that belongs to these high-born Englishwomen, something in their exquisite dignity and repose, that stamps them with the "caste of Vere de Vere."

I must tell you of an amusing experience we had this evening, with some English dowagers—large, florid dames, with such structures of tulle and flowers upon their heads as are only to be found in the British Isles. As these ladies showed an amiable desire to converse with us, we asked them some questions about the Oxford Pageant, which they had recently witnessed. They gave us the desired information, but in a tone of evident condescension and with so marked a note of contempt for a nation that could not boast its thousands of years of history, that Lydia Mott's freeborn American spirit was thoroughly aroused and she suddenly sailed in and had what Walter calls "her innings."

After expatiating upon the picturesqueness of our American Indian life, she described at length our own pageant in commemoration of the two hundredth anniversary of the settlement of Pennsylvania. Although she must have been a child at the time, she remembered all the details far better than I did.

"And where did those settlers that you speak of come from?" asked the first dowager.

"From England," replied Lydia, somewhat surprised at the question, and then rallying to the charge. "They were Quakers who were so badly treated in England that they had to come to America for protection."

"Fancy!" exclaimed the second dowager. "I think I have heard of the Quakers. They wore strange clothes and spoke quite ungrammatically, I believe."

"I don't know about that," replied Lydia, nothing daunted; "that 's, after all, quite a matter of opinion."

Miss Cassandra looked unutterable things, but kept her lips firmly closed.

Lydia then proceeded to outline certain pageants that could be given in America. The landing of John Smith and his company at Jamestown; the arrival of the Plymouth Settlers; William Penn's Treaty with the Indians, and the surrender of Yorktown. The latter scene was described with so much spirit that the dowagers might have taken it for granted that Lydia was present at the ceremony. But alas for the narrator and her eloquence! The first dowager, instead of expressing intelligent interest, or looking the least bit crestfallen over the superlative importance of American antiquities, said, with an inquiring look in her eyes and a rising inflection in her voice, "Yorktown? We never say Yorktown; it is just York; it is a very ancient city, once occupied by the Romans. They say that one of the Roman Emperors built the walls. Perhaps he is the one who surrendered."

Can you imagine such density? Lydia was speechless at last, but an intelligent-looking young Englishman who had been listening to the conversation explained that the surrender had taken place in America, and was of comparatively recent occurrence. Then, his British pride being touched by Lydia's patriotic harangue, he very adroitly took up the cudgels for his own country by saying that the officer to whom Lord Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown was really an Englishman, his family having been in America only for two or three generations. Clever, was it not? Turning again to Lydia, he said very civilly, "I have never been in the States, but I have been in Canada and at Quebec, and at the citadel on the summit of that almost impregnable fortress which our General Wolfe captured from the French, I saw a cannon which was taken by us from the Americans at Bunker Hill."

"Yes," said Miss Cassandra suddenly; "the British may have taken the cannon, but we kept the hill!"

A hearty laugh followed this rejoinder, and the Englishman, with a good humor and courtesy that won our admiration, bowed to Miss Cassandra, saying, "I have heard much of American valor, but of American wit I have now had a practical illustration." Was it not delightful to have our Quaker lady come off with such flying colors? And so, in gay good humor with our respective nations, we said good-night to each other, as I say it to you, Margaret, only wishing that you had been present at the war of wits.

Ever your devoted

ZELPHINE.

◆

MY KNIGHT

BY MABEL URMY SEARES

NOT in a coat of shining mail goes he
To fight in tourney or in war for me,
But well I know that in the busy mart
He wears my 'broidered colors near his heart,
And none dare speak my name, save soberly.

◆

LAUGHING CYNICISMS

TIT-FOR-TAT is a game that is older than golf.

Many a "Saint" has a homely face to thank for her halo.

Fools never listen to the wise; but the wise occasionally give ear to Fools.

Much is forgiven Beauty at the Court of Injustice.

To be bad-for-something is stronger than to be good-for-nothing.

Candor is the cold-water spigot of Truth.

A dull hearing and a bad memory have proved immensely profitable afflictions.

Minna Thomas Antrim.

DEPORTED

A TALE OF SAN FRANCISCO'S CHINATOWN BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE

By H. C. Stickney

◆

AS the steamer City of Peking passed inward through the Golden Gate, Hoo Song sat crouched upon the bundle of matting that contained all his worldly possessions. His heart beat violently. The long hoped for yet dreaded hour was at hand when with the aid of the certificate he carried he was to seek entrance into the land of promise. The certificate had originally been issued to Loo Fat, a Chinese merchant, who had left the United States on a visit to his native land a year before. Loo Fat had owned a twenty-fifth interest in a fruit stand in Chinatown—the amount of capital invested being one dollar—but it was enough to class him as a merchant. The tragedy that prevented him from returning to America does not belong to this story, but his certificate fell into the hands of a Canton broker, and was purchased by Hoo Song's family. They were obliged to sell two of Hoo's sisters into slavery in order to raise the money, but as the young fellow was expected to make in America the fortune of the entire family, this was regarded as a good investment.

Hoo Song answered fairly well to the description given in the certificate. There had been a scar an inch long on Loo Fat's temple, but the stroke of a knife sufficed to make a fairly close imitation on Hoo Song. A brown spot on Loo Fat's breast was reproduced on his substitute in exactly the right position by the skilful use of a chemical preparation. So far as height, weight, and general appearance went, the difference between Hoo Song and the description in the certificate was slight.

Hoo was accompanied by a friend, Lo Ching, who was returning to America after a visit to China. Indeed, it was through the influence of Lo Ching that Hoo's family had been induced to send the young fellow to this far western land. Lo Ching had related glowing stories of that marvellous country of the Foreign Devils, and had told how a smart young man could earn enough in a few years to support not only himself but all his relatives in luxury. It was Lo Ching who had found the certificate, and who had undertaken, for a modest consideration, to coach Hoo Song so that he would be able to answer any questions that might be put to him on landing.

And now the long voyage was at an end. The constant roll of the great ship had ceased, the throbbing of the engines, which for days and nights had crashed and thundered close to Hoo's head, was still. The first cabin passengers had gone ashore unquestioned, but officials in blue coats and brass buttons took possession of the hundred-odd Chinese passengers. Hoo Song sat silent and bewildered till Lo Ching came hastily and commanded him to talk. Already a sharp-eyed officer had noticed the young Chinaman's air of unfamiliarity, and suspected that he had never been in the country before. Prompted by Lo Ching, Hoo Song began to scream and gesticulate with the rest.

Then came the critical ordeal. One by one the almond-eyed Asiatics were called up before the officials to undergo examination and comparison of certificates. If all was satisfactory, the Chinaman was passed ashore; if he could not answer the questions or if his appearance did not tally with the description in his certificate, he was remanded for further examination—which usually resulted in his being sent back.

When Hoo's turn arrived he nearly came to grief because for a moment he forgot to answer to the name of Loo Fat. A surreptitious kick from Lo Ching, who stood behind him, recalled the young fellow just in time. The officer who had already been eying Hoo Song suspiciously was conducting the physical examinations, and a grim smile appeared on his face when he saw the brown stain on Hoo's breast. He was accustomed to such tricks. "Stand back," he said curtly.

Hoo's chances for an immediate return trip to China seemed extremely good; but just at that moment an enormously fat Chinaman who was lounging near spoke a few words in a low tone to the official in charge—and Hoo Song was soon recalled, and, after a few more questions, permitted to go ashore.

Now, the fat Chinaman who had interested himself on the young fellow's behalf on the steamer—and whose name, by the way, was Em Moon—was a power in Chinatown. He owned a controlling interest in a large store, and was also the proprietor of a prosperous gambling-hell. Being on intimate terms with some of San Francisco's politicians, he had learned some valuable lessons from them, one of which was the art of using other men for the purpose of advancing his own interests. When he had first seen Hoo Song, he had decided that there was valuable raw material, so after the young fellow had gone ashore, he sent for him and turned him over to one of his henchmen, with instructions to give him a job in the gambling rooms. Hoo was also immediately enrolled in the Yung Ho society, of which Em Moon was a leader.

Among those who frequented Em Moon's gambling rooms was a young Japanese named Kitisani, a dealer in Oriental goods with a shop on Kearney Street. Now, the Japanese and the Chinese have little to do with each other at any time, but at the period of which I write the feeling of hatred and contempt was intensified owing to the war which had just broken out between the two nations. Had Kitisani's friends and relatives known that he frequented Chinatown, that young man would have been placed in a very awkward position. He had come at first in a spirit of bravado, and now persisted because he had become fascinated with the games. The Chinamen tolerated him partly because they were quite ready to win his money, and partly because they feared his fiery disposition, and his well known readiness with knife and pistol.

For some reason, Hoo Song conceived a strong admiration for this reckless young Japanese, though he was shrewd enough not to exhibit it too freely before his own countrymen. Kitisani was impressed by Hoo's bright, intelligent face, which was in strong contrast with the repulsive looking beings that frequented Em Moon's gambling rooms. One day, in a friendly spirit, he advised the young Chinaman to learn the English language as the surest road to success in this country. Hoo replied that he was fully alive to the importance of this, but declared that he had been unable to find a teacher. Kitisani, who could speak both English and Chinese fairly well, said that if Hoo would come to his store every day, he himself would give him lessons.

Kitisani, who in common with his race had a profound contempt for all Chinamen, regarded the teaching of Hoo Song very much as an American would the teaching of a clever dog new tricks. But Hoo Song gladly availed himself of the offer, and it was during one of his visits to the store that he first saw Mai, Kitisani's sister.

She was a short, plump little Japanese maiden. Kitisani was an ardent admirer of everything American, and he encouraged his sister to imitate as nearly as possible the dress and customs of the young ladies of San Francisco. So Mai walked about the streets of the city as freely as an American girl, visited her brother's store whenever it pleased her to do so, and comported herself generally with the greatest freedom. She took not the slightest notice of Hoo, except to scold her brother for having anything to do with a Chinaman. Men of that race were to her as the dirt under her feet.

To Hoo Song, Mai was the most beautiful object in the world, even in her unbecoming American costume. He watched her as she went about her brother's store, with more reverence than he had ever felt for his grandfather, and more veneration than he possessed for all his ancestors put together. What little of the English he had mastered faded from his mind when she was near. He could see nothing, think of nothing, but this little, laughing, black-eyed girl.

Probably Mai would never have wasted another thought on the Chinaman her brother was teaching, had he not been able to render that brother an important service. It was after one of the great Japanese victories that Kitisani had engaged in an argument with some Chinamen in Em Moon's gambling rooms, and had presently taunted them with the cowardice of their countrymen. Patriotism is not generally a strong feeling in the San Francisco Chinaman, but there is a limit to all things, and the ridicule of the young Japanese aroused the anger of a man named Gee Long, a highbinder and the servant of "Little Jim," one of San Francisco's Chinese millionnaires.

Gee Long drew a hatchet—a favorite weapon of the Chinaman—and sprang at Kitisani. The latter leaped behind a table and drew a revolver, but before he could use it it was struck from his grasp. Hoo Song was the guardian of the door, and a dozen men yelled at him to keep it closed, but, notwithstanding this, and though he knew perfectly well that if he disobeyed he would incur the enmity of every Chinaman in the room, he flung the door open as Kitisani dashed toward it, and closed it after him, in the very faces of his angry countrymen. As a result, Kitisani escaped, but Hoo Song was beaten into insensibility, and would have been killed but for the intervention of Em Moon himself.

It was several weeks before Hoo Song had recovered sufficiently to present himself at Kitisani's. Mai was there, and had evidently heard the whole story from her brother, for she looked at the scarcely healed wounds on Hoo's face and her black eyes filled with tears of pity. When she asked her brother if she could do anything for Hoo Song to show her gratitude, Kitisani, who had gotten a bit tired of his rôle of instructor, suggested that she continue the lessons that he had begun. Mai had acquired English with great rapidity, as do most of her countrymen, and she took up the task with ardor. Kitisani had no more hesitation in allowing his sister to teach the Chinaman than if he had been a pet monkey. Were not many American girls engaged in teaching these cattle? He would not have believed it possible that his sister should learn to care for a Chinaman. Indeed, Mai herself would have scorned the idea.

In the beginning the young Japanese girl could hardly control the repugnance she felt in the presence of one of the despised and detested race; but Hoo Song was so invariably polite and deferential that this feeling soon wore off. It was not long before the merry little Japanese maiden came to see that her big pupil adored her, and at first this amused her, as one might be diverted by the affection of a pet dog.

So matters went along until one day, during a lesson, Hoo Song accidentally touched Mai's hand at a moment when he happened to be looking straight into her bright black eyes. What caused the sudden tumult in the brown girl's breast? What made the black eyes grow dim and misty? Why did her heart beat rapidly and her cheeks darkly redden? Was it shame and indignation at being brought so closely in contact with a Chinaman? At first she tried to persuade herself that this was the case, but in her heart she knew that she was learning to love this enemy of her race. It was not the first time that love has overcome race hatred, nor will it be the last. Hoo Song said nothing, but his black eyes said a great deal.

Kitisani saw nothing of what was going on. That young gentleman no longer visited Chinatown in search of excitement and adventure, being now engaged in hot pursuit of an Irish-American lady, who managed to absorb not only a large share of his attention, but a considerable portion of the profits of the store as well. Some of the Japanese workmen in the shop were not so blind as Kitisani, however. Oyama, a bamboo-worker, who had long gazed on Mai with ardent eyes, noted the glances that passed between the girl and the Chinaman, and so fierce was his anger thereat that on the slightest of provocation he broke a bamboo rod an inch thick over the head of Kai, one of his subordinates. Oyama dared not voice his suspicions to his employer, for he feared Kitisani's wrath and the consequent loss of his position; but he watched the girl and the young Chinaman closely.

How did Hoo Song learn that on certain days of the week Mai walked in the Golden Gate park unattended, after the fashion of American ladies? Perhaps Mai did not inform him in so many words, but the lessons in English required many illustrations. The description of a young lady walking in a park is a very pretty exercise in any language, and what better test of conversational ability is there than the accurate description of scenery? Hoo Song did not understand all the strange English words of this lesson, but his heart grasped its meaning very readily.

Then during the long, glorious mornings they wandered in the remotest parts of San Francisco's splendid park. They could speak but little of their common language, English, but there was scant need for words. They forgot the strife waging across the broad Pacific; they did not even stop to consider very seriously the outcome of their love. It is true that Mai sometimes trembled when she thought of what her fierce brother might do should he learn of her infatuation for the Chinaman; but she put away the thought in the happy, childish fashion of the women of her race, and laughed and chattered, and was supremely happy, in Hoo Song's presence. Hoo had a vague idea that some day they would go to some distant part of this great country, and marry after the American fashion. He did not know exactly how this was to be accomplished, for he had little money, and he knew that the strong arm of the Yung Ho society reached wherever a Chinaman was to be found. But he hoped for a bright future, and meanwhile enjoyed to the utmost every hour spent in the little Japanese girl's company.

Oyama's suspicions grew stronger every day. Why should his employer's sister take the trouble to teach this beast of a Chinaman the English language? It was unendurable that she should speak to, or even notice, one of the base creatures. When he hinted as much to Kitisani, however, he was told sternly to mind his own business. Why, reasoned Kitisani, should not Mai amuse herself teaching the Chinese devil, if she wanted to? Did not young American ladies do so? What these girls did in their Sunday schools, surely Mai might do without loss of dignity in the room back of her own brother's shop! That she should manifest any further interest in this pig, who was a good enough fellow in his own inferior, base-born way, was impossible.

But Oyama was not satisfied. That any one could come daily in contact with Mai and not love her was beyond belief. He had heard that these same absurd American girls, about whom Kitisani made such a fuss, had begun by teaching the beasts and had ended, in some instances, by marrying them. Oyama was not American-mad, like his master. So in spite of Kitisani's disdainful wrath, he resolved to watch closer than ever. He feigned illness, and quit work at the shop, so that he might devote his whole time to the purpose.

At first he tried to spy out Hoo Song's movements, but soon found that this was a dangerous proceeding, for at this time a Japanese found in Chinatown was in considerable peril. So he set himself to watch Mai. But although the simple little Japanese maiden was childish and laughter-loving, she possessed a considerable share of catlike cunning, and her eyes were quite open as to Oyama's jealousy and suspicions. In consequence, she approached the rendezvous with Hoo Song in such devious ways that for a time Oyama was baffled. It was an excess of caution that betrayed her. She consumed so much time one day in endeavoring to mislead any one who might be following her that she was a half-hour behindtime. Hoo Song, to whom every moment of her society lost was a moment of agony, sallied out to find her. He was seen by Oyama, and, being only a man, was easily tracked to the place of meeting. Oyama would have liked to kill Hoo Song on the spot, but he was by no means a powerful man, while the Chinaman was big and brawny and had the reputation of being a fighter. Indeed, Em Moon intended that in the course of time he should be employed as an adjuster of difficulties for the Yung Ho company. So Oyama crept away without disturbing the lovers.

When the bamboo-worker informed his master that Mai was in the habit of meeting the Chinaman in the park, Kitisani at first threatened to kill his countryman for daring to give utterance to such a hideous lie.

"Kill me," said Oyama, "if it is not true."

"If you have lied, I will kill you," replied Kitisani.

"I am willing to die if I am not speaking the truth," returned Oyama.

Persuaded at last, Kitisani consented to watch his sister, and one day sprang into the presence of the lovers, furious. The first impulse of the hot-blooded Japanese was to kill them both. Oyama, who was lurking behind, had urged that this was the only way to remove the stain from his family honor. Hoo Song offered no defence, save to say that he loved Mai. He was undoubtedly stronger than the Japanese but he would not fight with Mai's brother.

"Remember," cried Mai, "he saved your life!"

Kitisani paused. After all, he was under some obligation to the Chinese pig.

Cursing Hoo Song with all the bitter and contemptuous English words of which he was master—there were no invectives strong enough in the Japanese language—he led the weeping girl away. She was taken home and locked up in a room where she could repent at leisure of her disgraceful folly. This was the outcome of trying to follow American customs, of allowing women liberty. For a time Kitisani heartily detested American civilization.

Hoo Song went sadly back to Chinatown, and buried himself in its deepest recesses. Here was an end of everything for him. He lost faith in his Joss and in all supernatural aid. He refused to burn Joss sticks, or to use any means whatever of scaring off any particular devil. Perhaps the glimpses he had obtained of American ways and literature had begun to undermine his faith in the old religion.

But hope, which rarely deserts the young, kept him from utter despair. Was he not in the same country with her? Was not this a country of wonderful possibilities, of wonderful freedom? As long as they were both in America, all things were possible. He would fight desperately for her. The first thing, however, was to get money. With money all things could be accomplished, and there was money to be had in Chinatown if one knew how to get it. He felt sure that Mai would remain faithful to him for a thousand years if necessary.

But Hoo had made some bitter and powerful enemies in Chinatown. Gee Long remembered his interference on behalf of the hated Japanese, and so did many others. It was told about Chinatown that Hoo was consorting with the Japanese devils, and he was looked upon with suspicion everywhere. Gee Long, who was in the employ of the Sam Yup society, a powerful rival to the Yung Ho, began to inquire into the young man's antecedents. By skilful tactics he ascertained from Lo Ching that Hoo had gained entrance into America by means of a fraudulent certificate. Ordinarily the outwitting of the American devils was something to boast of, and Lo Ching, who had been away from the city, did not know of the disfavor into which his friend had fallen. But Gee Long saw in the circumstance a way in which he could make trouble for Hoo Song, so he went to the United States authorities and informed them that the young Chinaman had gotten into the country under false pretenses.

Now, just at this time the officials needed an example, for there had been a good deal of newspaper gossip about the laxity in the management of Chinese affairs in San Francisco; so Gee Long's information was promptly acted upon. Hoo Song was arrested and lodged in jail.

Em Moon had remained friendly to the young fellow, but at that time he was anxious to avoid any complications with the United States authorities; for he had been carrying things with a rather high hand and his influence was nearly exhausted. As a result, the habeas corpus papers, through which so many Chinamen have slipped into this country and remained here, were not applied for. When the case came up before the courts the officers had no difficulty in proving the fraudulent character of the certificate Hoo Song had presented, and an order was made out for his deportation.

The young Chinaman was returned to jail to await the sailing of the ship that had brought him to this country. He was completely crushed by his misfortunes. The contempt of his family for his failure, the life of hard labor to which he would be doomed, the loss of all this land of freedom offered, were all bitter to him; but these faded into insignificance beside the fact that he would be parted from Mai forever. While he remained in America there was a hope that he might somehow gain her; banished to China, all hope was lost. He grew thin, and wretched. No one came to see him. He was abandoned by his countrymen.

The day of sailing came, and Hoo Song was taken to the ship, closely guarded. Down in the familiar, filthy steerage, he sat, huddled together, his head bowed on his breast, a heap of abject misery. The ship swung out into the bay, the prow pointing toward the Golden Gate.

The vessel being now clear of the dock, the vigilance of the guard was relaxed, and Hoo Song crept on deck for a last look at the city where dwelt the idol of his heart. The hills of San Francisco, covered by a cloud of smoke, were astern; the grim fort Alcatraz was past. The ship was plowing steadily along, headed straight for the Pacific Ocean. Hoo Song gazed for a moment at the receding city, them climbed on the rail, and without any hesitation leaped into the water. The engines were stopped, but when it was ascertained that the man overboard was only a Chinaman, and that no trace of him was to be seen, the gong sounded to go ahead at full speed.

MEMORIES

By Fannie Heaslip Lea

◆

IT happened that the Cynic came suddenly upon Jaconetta one evening when her lap and a portion of the hearth-rug upon which she sat, Turk-fashion, were white with letters—old letters, some half-opened and some—but these lay in the grate—half-charred.

"Hello!" he said cheerfully, pausing in the doorway to reconnoiter. "Having a holocaust?"

Jaconetta looked up with a little startled scowl that did not smooth itself out at once.

"How did you get in?" she inquired, anything but politely. "I told Mary I was not at home."

"So Mary told me," admitted the Cynic, unmoved. "I said that I 'd come in and have a smoke with your father."

"Father!" Jaconetta scrambled half-way to her feet with a protective clutch on the letters, but she sank back before the Cynic's soothing gesture.

"That 's all right," he said gently. "Go on with the wake. When I got to the door I said, 'Ah, Mary, I see Miss Jaconetta is in, after all. You need n't bother——' So here I am." He waived conclusions with a genial smile, and, selecting a large leather chair on the opposite side of the fireplace, sank into it with a sigh of content, and reached for his cigarette case.

Jaconetta returned to the contemplation of the letters in an abstraction that apparently left no room for conversation.

"Sick?" asked the Cynic pleasantly, from behind a drift of blue smoke.

"H'm?" said Jaconetta, not looking up.

"I 've noticed," he went on impersonally, "that when a woman becomes reminiscent she is either sick or contemplating a new victim."

"Sometimes," said Jaconetta impishly, "there is another reason. Girls read over their old letters, and burn them, you know, when they are—going to be married."

"Yes," assented the Cynic; "yes." His cigarette burned to an incredibly long ash between heedless fingers. It is a cherished delusion of his that if Jaconetta will not marry him, at least she will marry no one else.

"Yes?" he repeated with a new inflection.

Jaconetta rested her cheek on the little brown fingers of her left hand and looked at the fire with pensive tenderness. The hand was ringless.

"However," she announced at length, "I am neither sick, 'contemplating a new victim,' nor going to be married. I am blue—unhappy—desolate." She leaned her chin on both hands and stared hard before her. "So I got out my box of letters and began to read them. It cheers me up," she added hopefully, "to see how many people have loved me. It seems to argue that I must be a very decent sort after all, eh?"

The Cynic shrugged his big shoulders with a smile that was both inscrutable and adaptable. It might have meant anything, from ardent devotion to a disinterested consideration of circumstances. "Pretty decent," he added, by way of parenthesis.

Presently Jaconetta looked up from the earnest perusal of a voluminous epistle, closely written in a small, masculine hand.

"Every man is a poet in his first love-letters," she said sententiously. "Listen to this——"

"See here——" began the Cynic.

"I'm not going to tell you who it is——"

"I don't want——"

"Don't be absurd," said Jaconetta coldly. "Do you think I'd do it if it weren't right?"

She read slowly and with a total lack of emphasis:

> "There is nothing I would not dare for you; nothing I could not be, that you wanted me; nothing I would not give up, nothing I would not leave, nothing I would not change, at your wish, except——"

"That's enough!" cried the Cynic suddenly. "What sort of a soul have you got, anyhow? Don't read me that stuff. Is it nothing but black and white to you?" He broke off in real indignation.

Jaconetta selected another sheet from the loose heap in her lap.

"I hope I know when to forget," she said serenely. "Calm yourself! He's been married for two years, and he adores the very buckles on his wife's slippers. What? No, he wasn't flirting with me when he wrote that; he meant it—at the time. Now listen to this"—she read on hastily, before the Cynic could stop her:

> "You are the only girl in the world, so far as I am concerned. The rest of them will do for the general run of wives and mothers and sweethearts and humanity; but you are different. You are the reason for everything I shall ever want——

"Ugh!" said Jaconetta unexpectedly. "That was a heavy responsibility, was n't it?"

"You are impossible," said the Cynic slowly.

"Eh?" said Jaconetta, honestly startled. "Oh! Because I'm reading you this? That's all right. They're all old stories now—dead pasts—mummied loves—and all the rest of it. This last one"—she folded the sheet and patted it back into its envelope—"I had a letter from him a month or so ago. He's going to marry a girl in Texas, and he writes of her with exactly the same enthusiasm. What's a little enthusiasm, after all, that one should grudge it to life? One has only a handful of years, at best, and if one does n't savor all there is in the phases that come with those years, why——" She broke off, looking curiously at a sprig of something, withered and dry, that had fallen from the envelope she held, into her open hand. "Why——" she said again, aimlessly, the thread of her speech lost in a new tangle of thought. "Why——"

The Cynic laughed noiselessly, then he leaned forward with a charmingly confidential air.

"What is it?" he demanded. "Another dead past? What's the little vegetable for?"

Jaconetta lifted quick eyes and laughed. Then she went back to staring at the thing in her hand.

"Are you thinking whether you shall keep it or burn it?" he teased.

"No. Oh, no; I am wondering, on the contrary," said Jaconetta calmly, "why I ever kept it, and who gave it to me."

She regarded it with a reflective air, and lifted it suddenly to the central feature of her small, dark face.

"Heliotrope," she announced, between sniffs. "Heavens! it's dry!" She groped in the lacy recesses of her sleeve with her free hand, and a pained expression contorted her face.

"I think I'm going to sneeze," she faltered. The Cynic produced a large square of spotless white linen, and dropped it in her lap. Jaconetta buried her face in its folds, and agonized a moment in silence, to no avail.

Presently she gave him back the handkerchief. "It must have been merely emotion," she explained thoughtfully, "but I was sure it was a sneeze." She held the withered bit of heliotrope at a safe distance and regarded it resentfully.

Jaconetta has a face that slanderously reveals her lightest thought. Above the heliotrope it wavered from resentment to uncertainty, from uncertainty to resolution, and from resolution to a very definite amusement. Finally she laughed—chuckled rather—in an adorable fashion of her own. The Cynic watched her meantime, through half closed eyes, and his cigarette went out, forgotten.

"What vampires you women are!" he cried suddenly.

"Eh?" Jaconetta was plainly astonished.

"Yes," insisted the Cynic; "vampires, parasites—every one of you!" He leaned forward, elbows on his knees, and brought the clenched fist of his left hand down into the palm of his right. "There you sit, laughing over the dry husk of a man's love—giggling in the face of a corpse—preening your vanity above a strangled illusion! What 's truth to you? or faith? or passion? or love? The trinket of a day, something to wear in your hair like a flower, and throw away when you tire of it. Something to foster your vanity and prop up your self-esteem. Why, your memory 's a rag-bag of loves and lovers. You pull out a scrap, but you can't even remember whose cloth it was cut from. A man lives in your remembrance, not for what he was or was not, but because he loved you. It is his claim to distinction. Have you nothing more real than that in your life? Does n't that bit of a dead flower, there, hurt you for even a second? Has n't it a voice for some dead moment? Why, you should be sorry—or glad—for the memory it awakens—anything—only feel! For Heaven's sake, feel! You might have sawdust in your veins! What?" He broke off in an irritation not lessened by Jaconetta's mocking eyes.

"Go on!" she said, with a gamin grimace. "You 're doing fine!"

"That 's all very well," he retorted. "I 'm glad I amuse you; but, on my word, I think the man who loves and rides away is the only sane one in the human species. You 're not worth a man's faith and trust and manhood. You 're vampires—vampires, all of you! You batten on our illusions, our youthful beliefs, our credulity, and then—you smile over the words we wrote in the clutch of our agony—laugh at the crude expression on the only love that is ever real in any man—his first—and sniff delicately at the dust of the flowers you wore for us. 'Whose was it? Why did I keep it? What did it stand for?'"

Jaconetta's eyes softened to an appeal.

"If I could remember who gave it to me," she offered hopefully, "I 'm sure I should know why I kept it, and what it was for. But you see——"

"I quite see," he interrupted ruthlessly. "There have been so many——"

"One gets them confused," said Jaconetta eagerly, "and then, there 's no clue. It 's just a bit of dead heliotrope in a plain envelope. Heliotrope's a silly, sentimental sort of flower, so it must have had some significance; and one does n't get it in hothouse bouquets, so it must have been an intimate gift. But then again so many men are sentimental——"

"And intimate?" suggested the Cynic, with caustic brevity.

"If you like," she conceded. "At least, you *are* easy to know." She drew her dark brows into a puzzled frown and sighed deeply. "I wish I could remember—he may have been interesting."

"He must have been," scoffed the Cynic, "since you forgot him."

"Aha!" cried Jaconetta suddenly. "Then you think forgetfulness is not easy?" She clasped both hands about her knees, and the letters slipped and slid unheeded from her lap to the floor, as she lifted questioning eyes for the Cynic's answer.

It did not come at once. The Cynic's shrug was a tacit admission of disbelief and uncertainty.

"God knows!" he said somberly, at last. "Do you forget the white stones that mark your life? Do you remember the every-day pebbles? What do you mean by forgetfulness? Oblivion? Or temporary relief? A woman forgets sooner than a man, I think."

"So?" murmured Jaconetta courteously; then her mockery shrivelled in a flame of protest. "It 's good that we do!" she cried bitterly. "If women were not adjustable and adaptable—if they were not weak and uncertain, and sometimes, thank Heaven, forgetful—there would be nothing left of them for punishment in the next world—each of them would have her own little self-lighting, self-heating Inferno right here on earth." She thrust the dark hair out of her eyes with an impatient gesture, and drew a long breath. "I think," she finished with whimsical deliberation, banking the fires of her feeling, "the Powers That Be sent women into the world weakened, mentally and spiritually, to their uses, and it is through that weakness that they endure."

Her words died in a shadowy silence. The Cynic lit another cigarette and flung it into the fire half smoked.

"I 'm going," he said suddenly, and got to his feet with a restless suggestion of haste. "You might, at least, leave me my belief in *one* woman's squareness and reality."

"Meaning me?" asked Jaconetta, with a slow smile.

"Meaning you," he retorted grimly. "It hurts my understanding of you to have you show the shallow flippancies of the common or garden flirt. That wretched little vegetable, now—throw it away if you like, but don't laugh at it. It must have been a part of your life—and life 's nothing to laugh at."

"Indeed, no!" Jaconetta assented indifferently. "In my experience, life 's a story with the joke on you."

She waited until he had taken her hand, perfunctorily, released it, and crossed the room to the door, then she spoke in her softest voice.

"I'm glad to know your views on the subject," she murmured sweetly, "because, as a matter of fact, I remembered all along. You gave it to me yourself, the day we drove into Camden for the Flower Show."

◆

HANNAH, MAH HONEY

(*Banjo Song*)

BY MARGARET BELLE HOUSTON

OH, de big moon shine an' de li'l stars shake,
An' de bull-frog whine on de aidge ob de lake.
De ol' owl listen
Wha de white dew glisten
An' de win' lay low in de brake.

Oh, Hannah, mah honey, is yo' comin'?
I 's awaitin' in de honeysuckle glade!
Don' yo' heah de li'l banjo strummin'?
Oh, Hannah, mah honey, is yo' 'fraid?

De fire-flies twinkle in de skirts ob de night,
Lak de stars done sprinkle dey li'l draps o' light.
Dey darkle an' dey burn,
Dey tremmle an' dey turn,
An' dey weave a li'l road so bright!

Oh, Hannah, mah honey, is yo' comin'?
Is yo' comin' down de fire-fly road?
Don' yo' heah de li'l banjo strummin'?
I 's a-lonely, ef yo' only knowed!

Oh, de li'l stars chuckle an' de big moon fade,
An' de shaky honeysuckle he tremmle lak he 'fraid;
An' I wunner why he shake,
Caze de win' am in de brake—
Is dey somebody slippin' froo de glade?

Oh, Hannah, mah honey, is yo' comin'?
Oh, Hannah, mah honey, am it you?
Does yo' heah de li'l banjo strummin'?
I 's awaitin' in de shadder an' de dew!

WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

◆

THE TYRANNY OF PARENTS

FIRST they bring us into the world without our volition—then they educate us after their own ideas, or according to their means. They enjoy our childhood, precipitate us into lifelong mistakes, and bewail our ingratitude if, when the period of adolescence is reached, we do not choose them for our friends.

It is not only in France that a child must marry to be free. The boy that leaves home to escape his father's dominion, the girl whose letters "must contain something very wrong if she does n't want her own mother to read them," are common to the civilized world.

The child by right may expect his parents "to protect his youth"—his body, that he may not be handicapped in the coming struggle; his mind, that he may have power to find and fill his own niche; but it is the child's niche, not the parent's, that he should be permitted, nay, encouraged, to seek. He may by right expect such advice as a veteran soldier might offer to a drummer-boy; as though the parent said, "I have travelled a little further along the way. Trust me now, and perhaps, after a while, you will teach me."

But the parent has no more excuse for forcing the growing child to be a pocket edition of himself than he would have to rob of his most cherished possessions the guest who sojourns beneath his roof for a time. Indeed, he has less right, for the guest is not helpless—his individuality cannot be invaded, shaped for ends to which it is not native, deprived of the chance of self-expression; for which cause we were created separate entities—no two of us alike. Each child should be regarded as a fresh beginning, and given a fresh start free of old blunders.

The parent who is his child's friend is in a class by himself—a class which holds too few, since the very atmosphere of friendship is freedom. But when the period of ignorance and blind submission is past and the child awakes, reasons, questions, and *judges,* the parent will reap whatever he has sown. "To him that *hath* shall be given."

Jane Belfield

THE MOULDING OF MEN

SO firmly fixed, so frequently flattered, has been our belief in the perfection of our public school system, that it comes as a shock to realize that this system, or rather its present condition, may be a source of devitalizing weakness.

Recently the president of a great university spoke of the evil that has been done the minds and ideals of the young men of our nation by the almost universal monopolization by women of the function of educating our masculine youth. Our young men during the most impressionable period of their lives are taught almost exclusively by women. The man teacher is slowly becoming extinct.

Up to the age of fourteen years the boy may be trained perhaps equally well by a man or woman. Beyond that age the boy usually becomes negative to the influence of the average schoolmistress, and the teacher's efforts are usually annulled. At this period the young and plastic nature of the man-to-be requires, both in precept and example, the guidance of some strongly formative, virile mind, instruction, discipline, and advice by men of worth and culture from the schools of Life and Learning.

Well known is the usual boy's contempt for all that is girlish and effeminate. The records of boards of education bristle with instances of the futile influence of one poor overworked, nerve-racked woman over a class of boisterous irrepressibles bent perversely upon the one idea of frustrating and antagonizing her. Apart from her routine duties and scheduled studies, the teacher, often a mere girl but little older than some of her pupils, has neither opportunity, desire, nor strength left to inculcate in her unruly charges those ideas of ethics, honor, and manliness that are more valuable to the youth of a nation than all the studies of all the schools. The formation of character is the first virtue of education.

Between the woman teacher and her older boy pupils lies an insuperable bar, not because of sex, but because of sex miscomprehension, eternally inherent in both, a lack of that closer knowledge, intimacy, and sympathy that the master must depend upon for his success. Without hesitation and without prejudice it may be averred that women are capable neither mentally nor physically of the arduous feat of ruling, teaching, and training several dozen young men.

The results of the effeminization of our schools are at last evident enough—lax discipline, lack of reverence for rules and consequently for law, inefficiency among the scholars, and helplessness among the teachers. But far worse is the utter absence of all that goes to instil ideas of honor and the higher conduct of life into the fallow ground of the young man's mind.

Lamentable fruits of this system of loose restraint and the absence of strong hands at the helm of popular education are such men as Harry Thaw and Stanford White. Neither of these men, when young, had reverence for law, human or moral, implanted in his mind. The architect, despite his subsequent artistic training, had received no ethical training in his impressionable years, nor had his slayer, one of a type whose perverse, yet weakened, wills know no restraint.

It is not the making of the physical "mollycoddle" we need fear, but of the mental and moral one. It is weaklings of this sort, unreinforced with the proper stamina of soul, that have brought about the hideous reign of graft and crime that seems to devastate our land.

The public educational moulding of men must rest in the hands of men—after the deep and abiding influence of good mothers. The proper men must be encouraged to serve as teachers, men who will be proud of this high and holy task. Not only will the human tree be inclined as the twig is bent, but tree and fruit will be feeble or hardy, sound or cankered, according to the soil in which it is planted and the air in which it grows.

HERMAN SCHEFFAUER

THE LITERARY SPIRIT IN THE MODERN MAGAZINE

AT a recent representative gathering of those who make the periodicals of this country, a number of speeches were delivered by men of attainment in various fields of intellect. Their speeches, more or less in harmony with the general aims of their auditors, were strangely unanimous in one respect—an utter avoidance of any expression of desire for the literary spirit in periodical publications. Without any deliberate consensus of opinions among them, it was evident that to their minds the purpose of the periodical magazine had ceased to be literary; that its aim should be essentially that of a purveyor of news. Of course it was understood that it should be a purveyor of news in the higher sense, with the guiding star of trained intellects to lead the minds of the readers while yet supplying them with the style of reading desired, but that the magazine should be always the objective, the timely, the nice fountain of current information and tendency. Not the statesman who spoke, not the eminent scholar and man of affairs, not the magazine editor, not the politician, not the journalist—not one of them so much as hinted in his address of the æsthetic or literary purpose of the modern magazine, or seemed to have in mind those few periodicals which still live whose policy is not news but literature.

Was there a rare opportunity lost by one or all of these men to say something on this score, or is it that in the fine endeavor of the magazine editor to influence his public while giving it what it wants he has attained his end and that public's desire by thus side-tracking the purely literary output of his magazine?

Assuredly this is not a literary age, and the best proof of the assertion lies in the enormous amount of printed material annually consumed by the public. In the apparent contradictoriness of the proof lies its truth. The publisher of books demands in his contributions "popular quality" rather than literary merit. Literary merit without "popular quality" he does not want on any terms. The magazine editor, likewise, demands "popular interest." Now, popularity does not by any means imply literary quality. Literary appreciation is an attainment as rare in its subtler manifestations as the genuine appreciation of any other fine art, and the general public has just as little of it. Presumably it does not want it.

Yet, without doubt, if the magazine of current events has literary ideals, there is to be found a discriminating manner of presenting them to the reader who is supposed to be alert only for "general interest," and it is just here that the contributor to the magazine may be supposed to have some palpable weight. Policies of magazines become case-hardened and atrophied. General interest does not always respond to the demand upon it, and even general interest may be killed by general style. Fortunate it is for the magazine and for the general reader, however little credit the fact may receive, that in all but the most outworn writer there glows more or less brightly the literary fervor, and he is the wise editor who fans this spark into careful flame, even if to do so sacrifices some portion of that timely interest of which his magazine seems destined, for the time being, to become more and more the mouthpiece. ROBERT ADGER BOWEN

◆

MANY dream of Happiness whilst the starry-eyed visitor knocks unheard at their doors.

GOOD resolutions are useful. They teach us how difficult it is to remould ourselves.

VOL. LXXXII NUMBER 490

LIPPINCOTT'S
MONTHLY MAGAZINE

OCTOBER, 1908

A JEWEL OF THE SEAS

BY JESSIE KAUFMAN

I.

"IS she pretty—this wonderful Mrs. Chandler?" asked Mrs. Kapua, her dark face aglow with interest.

"I dropped my anchor by her at the hotel hop," said Teddy Skelton, a cadet on the *Terror*. "She 's all my fancy painted her."

"You must have a vivid imagination, eh?" murmured Mrs. Kapua. "They say she lays it on heavy."

"A complexion is so unusual in Hawaii, it makes us suspicious," I interposed in mild defense of Mrs. Chandler.

"We are apt to think it 's too good to be true," assented Frank.

"Have some sherbet," I said, and there was a momentary diversion while Tumi passed the sherbet.

I really did not think it fair to settle Mrs. Chandler's complexion right here, so I changed the conversation by saying:

"It is very discouraging to be told that it is pure madness to try a lawn party in Honolulu and run the risk of rain. Mrs. Thornton says I deserve a shower, at least, for my temerity."

"'Never mind the weather, love,'" Teddy Skelton said, with more sincerity than originality.

"How personal you are!" I murmured, and I met Frank's eye instead of Teddy's; I suppose because I tried hard not to. "The Chandlers and the yacht are going to stay here for quite a while, I hear," I began hastily.

"Well, Mrs. Chandler must be pretty, but somehow a pink and white skin does not suit our climate," Mrs. Kapua declared with conviction.

Copyright, 1908, by J. B. Lippincott Company. All rights reserved.

Mrs. Kapua has been told that she is just dark enough to be warm looking.

"It is nearly six. I must go," she added. "Your day at home is always so pleasant. Are you coming my way, Teddy?"

Teddy was. The navy generally went Mrs. Kapua's way. She stepped into her carriage with a grace all her own and a generous glimpse of lace fluff and open-work stockings.

"*Aloha!*" she called back as they drove off.

"*Aloha!*" echoed Teddy Skelton. He had almost caught the inflection. It was time to learn who was responsible.

"Be forgetful to entertain the stranger,—and this should be the motto of Hawaii," said Frank. "The key-note of life in the Islands is hospitality, born in the past, when mails and visitors were rare. But to-day our indiscriminate hospitality is only a bad habit."

I heaved a sigh. "Half the charm of the Islands is gone," I protested. "We have only the climate and our hospitality left."

"Well, when is your garden party for the Chandlers?" asked Frank.

"It 's true," I resumed irrelevantly, "her eyebrows seem blackened, but of course they may have been white, and so—you see——"

"Of course, of course," Frank agreed. "Woman, lovely woman, may have a prejudice against the artificial, but white eyebrows will conquer the most bigoted."

"Mrs. Thornton is going to give them a breakfast, Mrs. Elkins a dinner, the Kapuas a *poi* supper——"

"The same old routine; you need n't go on. And as for the menus—Mrs. Thornton will have cold fish with mayonnaise sauce, Mrs. Elkins will have canned oyster soup with the oysters calculated, five to guests, three to the family——"

"And they say that a woman's mind runs to small details!" I exclaimed.

Frank laughed. "It does the bear good to growl," he said. "This growl is all sugar, any way——"

"It sounds sweet," I interposed.

"With one plantation after another shutting down its dividends, I must say the outlook is bad. Lawyers don't make money in times of financial depression; at least, young lawyers don't. The fellow who will be retained by Mr. Thornton, in the case of Aloha Plantation against Leielima for the right of water for irrigation from Cacao Creek, will have enough to float him for a year, besides a small fortune for a fee at the end. But the fellow who is lucky enough to get that case will be a man who has made his mark and his pile. Well, the rest of us are in the same boat, but we can't all sail along until sugar goes up and a safe harbor is in sight. Some of us will be swamped."

Frank and I have been friends always. This means much in Hawaii, where we grow up together and have no chance later to drift apart. I stretched out my hand and drew it back. Frank was gazing gloomily at the floor and did not see the gesture. A man claps his chum on the back and says heartily, "Cheer up, old fellow!" Why can't a girl indulge in the more feminine method of slipping her hand sympathetically into a man's, and saying twice as much to the same effect? Why on earth did I hesitate? It was impossible now to be natural or spontaneous. Frank says, when a woman hates secretly she's stiff, but when she loves secretly she's stiffer. Mrs. Thornton's remark this morning when I was going out her gate was running through my mind:

"Remember, young lady, Hawaii does not believe in platonic friendship."

But Mrs. Thornton, in the face of evidence, would have to believe in platonic friendship. If Frank—but of course if it had been impossible in the past, if financial reasons had been the cause, it was doubly impossible now; or he would think so.

"I'm sorry," I murmured tritely.

"Thank you." Frank spoke with a degree of intensity warmer than my simple words seemed to call for.

"To go back to your lawn party," he resumed abruptly, "I don't want you to misunderstand me; hospitality is without doubt one of the charms of the Islands, and of course the Chandlers are all right—my remarks were not apropos of them—but this round of entertainments for strangers does become monotonous when one is n't in the mood."

"Oh, yes, I know," I said somewhat impatiently. I had lost interest in the lawn party.

"Wh-o-o-o! Wh-o-o-o!" called a voice from the garden walk.

"Wh-o-o-o! Wh-o-o-o!" I answered back.

"Anybody at home?" asked Mrs. Thornton.

"Very much at home, thanks," Frank replied, going forward to greet her.

"Oh, Frank, I'm glad to find you here; it saves me a struggle with the telephone. I want you to come to breakfast next Sunday at one, to meet the Chandlers. That's good; I'm so glad you can come. I went on the yacht yesterday to call, and, really, everything is perfect. They call her a 'Jewel of the Sea.' I told them that Honolulu was our 'Jewel of the Seas' and we had the name first. Mr. Chandler was very polite and said the *Gelda* considered it an honor to be second. She flies the flag of the Atlantic Yacht Club, of which Mr. Chandler is commodore. They have a doctor, and a swell looking captain, and a steam laundry, and a guest-book bound in gold, and curios from every part of the world, and champagne just flows. What day is your lawn party? Thursday? I 'm going to wear my new picture hat. I wonder if she is made up; very artistic if she is; you really could n't be sure." Mrs. Thornton paused for breath, and Frank took up his hat. "Wait a moment and I 'll walk along with you, Frank. I just stopped in to ask about the lawn party. I 'll get my cook to make some cake and send it over."

"Oh, thank you," I said. "It will be such a help."

II.

THE afternoon did not seem to take a start until the Chandlers arrived, although the lawn looked festive with groups of guests scattered about, the women in gowns of gauzy summer texture, the men, for the most part, in white duck, and every one decorated with *leis*. It is remarkable what an addition are the floral wreaths of Hawaii to the festive aspect of our entertainments.

Mrs. Thornton had sent Suki, her Japanese maid, over to help. She made a quaint little picture in her *kimono* and gay *obi* as she stood at the end of the lawn with a basket of bright carnations and green *maili leis,* which she tied around the neck of each new arrival.

There was a perceptible drop in the hum of conversation as Commodore and Mrs. Chandler alighted from their carriage and walked slowly across the lawn. The woman new-comer had subtle touches of toilet novel and strange to the resident of Hawaii, even to-day when it is no longer a foreign port, and, with the abolishment of duty, imported clothes have become more usual.

"Oh, these beautiful *leis!*" cried Mrs. Chandler, while the Commodore bent over my hand, murmuring graceful sentences. "I shall never be without one while I 'm in the Islands!"

It was becoming; the pink carnations were almost the color of her cheeks, and the deeper tint of her lips, the gray of her eyes, and the transparent pale blue and cream of a gown that was simple, but French simple, as every woman would recognize at a glance, all toned in with an effect which her big white picture hat completed to a perfect whole. Mrs. Chandler was pretty, but, above all, she aroused attention through an intangible air that promised something in reserve.

"I wonder if she has lived all she looks, or if she lives to look as if she had," Frank whispered in my ear, as Mrs. Thornton claimed the attention of the Commodore and his wife.

"If she is made up, it is wonderfully done!" I returned in a tone as careful. "I don't believe she can be, after all."

"Mrs. Chandler wants you to come on the *Gelda* to-morrow to afternoon tea," said the Commodore, turning to Frank and me.

We were duly delighted; the Commodore was felicitated by our acceptance; we were looking forward to seeing the *Gelda,* but still more to the pleasure of again beholding her owners; only half the pleasure her owners would feel to extend the *Gelda's* hospitality, which could be but a feeble attempt in comparison with the hospitality in general of Hawaii, and the present function in particular.

It was now our turn, but in my mind ran nothing but the frenzied thought, "It 's up to us; it 's up to us!" This seemed to freeze all other thoughts—though a thaw is more usual in the tropics. Of course what Frank was thinking, I could not tell, but as he says: "A woman's idea of conversation is to talk; a man often thinks a pause is speaking."

I looked up at Commodore Chandler, and he looked down at me. He was very tall; a man of fine physique, good-looking, with clear cut features, dark hair slightly tinged with gray, and handsome eyes that met yours boldly, squarely, even to a suggestion of defiance. And my eyes fell beneath his direct glance, while I reflected that he must have acquired it through steering the *Gelda* to port after port around the world.

"I see you allow smoking," said the Commodore. He took from his pocket a curious silver case, and, after offering Frank a cigarette, lit one himself.

"What a beauty!" I exclaimed.

"It is very rare," assented the Commodore. "It was given to me by a Russian prince, a diplomat in Japan. When you come on board to-morrow I 'll show you some of our curios. In Samoa I found a few that I treasure very highly."

"Samoa was your last port?"

"Yes; the *Gelda* has seen about every country on the map now, but I am disappointed in my trip, for I was disappointed at the start and I have n't got over it. My plan before I left New York was to organize an expedition to explore unknown rivers, unvisited countries and tribes. I had arranged to carry with me a company of writers, scientists, and photographers, who were to furnish descriptive articles to a syndicate of publishers. Everything was arranged when Mrs. Chandler's health demanded a prolonged sea trip, and I gave the whole thing up. I must say I feel repaid." And the Commodore gazed appreciatively at his pretty wife.

"Is Mrs. Chandler quite well again?" I politely questioned.

"Are you talking about me?" Mrs. Chandler asked. "My health? Oh, I never was sick a day in my life."

"Dear little optimist!" murmured the Commodore, as he gazed upon his wife.

"Let me introduce you to some of the people you will be constantly meeting in Honolulu," I proposed, and I led the way to a group of girls and men a little distance off.

I felt that the duties of a hostess were trying as I saw Mrs. Thornton and Frank laying their heads together. The Chandlers would be thoroughly discussed before I could return. But I smiled bravely and held to my post.

"It's nice to be so attractive!" I said to Frank later, when I had a breathing spell.

"It is indeed!" assented Frank, with undisguised sincerity.

"I mean Mrs. Chandler," I explained, half laughing.

"Of course," said Frank calmly.

"Well, I call that small!"

"I call it agreeing."

"I don't think she's anything at all but a snob!" I resumed petulantly. "She's mentioned half of New York's four hundred; and when one of the girls asked her if she had met a Lieutenant Sayers in Tampa she replied, 'Oh, we only met generals!'"

Frank laughed as heartily as though every plantation in the Islands had declared a dividend.

"I'll come around to-night," he said hurriedly, as Commodore Chandler started in our direction with the evident intention of joining us, "and hear the rest," he added.

And I recalled a remark Frank had once made:

"When a man is fertile in reasons for calling on a girl he's interested, but when he ceases to explain he's in love."

I really did n't need the explanation either.

III.

THE men all said the *Gelda* was a "neat little craft"; and the women said they would be willing to risk sea-sickness when they saw her darling little cabins, with cute dressing-rooms and bath-rooms attached.

We were met at the wharf by the *Gelda's* barge, flying the Atlantic Yacht Club flag, and manned by sailors in immaculate white and blue suits, with *Gelda* cap ribbons. On deck stood the captain, a picturesque figure in white duck uniform.

The Commodore greeted us with hearty cordiality.

"The ship's yours!" he declared gallantly to me as we walked along the deck to where Mrs. Chandler, in yachting costume of white and pale blue, was waiting to receive us. After we were shown all over the yacht, which was a miniature floating palace, we came out on deck again to "tea." This beverage proved to be champagne, and Mrs. Thornton did not exaggerate when she said it "flowed."

While we were drinking it, and eating delicious sandwiches of real Russian caviare, sent by the Czar when the *Gelda* was in Russia, Mrs. Chandler showed us her photographs of princes she had known in the different countries where the *Gelda* had stopped. I was particularly interested, as I was making a collection of photographs myself—though I did not confine myself to royalty. Last but of course not least was our own Prince Maluna. They were a good-looking set of fellows. I quite lost my heart to one of them, a broad-shouldered, athletic blond, with an air that was dashing—Frank said "rakish"—and a hint of melancholy in his eyes.

"He looks so familiar," I said to Frank.

I turned the picture over to see if the photographer's address would give a clue to the prince's nationality. Across the back was scrawled, "*Tout à toi, chérie.*" As I looked up, I caught Mrs. Chandler's eye, and I flushed in a loneliness unshared by my hostess, though I did not quite see why the flush was n't all hers. But as Frank says: "The tree may be known by its fruit, but a woman can't be read by her complexion."

A few moments later Mrs. Chandler gathered up her photographs. She hurriedly glanced through them.

"I don't see how this picture got among the lot," she said to me, as she picked it out. "This man is Prince Otto; he was engaged to Princess Stephanie, a dear girl and one of my best friends. She died of Roman fever and left her lover's picture to me."

I expressed sympathy for the princess. "What became of Prince Otto?" I asked interestedly.

"He came to America incognito, in search of diversion. He did a lot of crazy and eccentric things, and was finally killed in a balloon ascension in Central Park, New York. You 've seen his picture before, no doubt."

"I did think his face familiar."

"Oh, yes, poor fellow, his history is so sad. I 'll tell you more about him some day."

"You must have met some very interesting people in your travels, Mrs. Chandler," said Mr. Mitchell, leaving the group of men surrounding the Commodore and joining us.

Being a United States official and quite awake to the social importance of his post, Mr. Mitchell is likely to be met everywhere.

"Yes, we have been fortunate," replied Mrs. Chandler. "I think the *Gelda* has entertained most of the crowned heads of Europe, besides prominent people in all parts of the world. Of course the *Gelda* is a drawing-card; she 's considered one of the finest yachts of the Eastern fleet, you know."

"She 's a beauty!" Mr. Mitchell's tones were enthusiastic. "No doubt we have many mutual friends in Washington," he added. "Mrs. Mitchell and myself have just returned from there. You know the

Russian ambassador—and the minister from France? Yes? Charming fellows. Mrs. Mitchell and I gave ourselves up entirely to society. Last time we went on, Mrs. Mitchell was in mourning, and we saw little of the social life, of course. I said to the President one day, 'Honolulu is gay, but we could n't stand this pace in the tropics.' And the President said, 'Tell me, Mitchell, my boy, why it is that in that seemingly peaceful little spot you have this continual political strife.' And I said to him, 'Mr. President, since you ask my views'—and then I gave him frankly a little synopsis of the situation. When I got through the President said, 'Mitchell, this is the first clear explanation I have had of Hawaiian affairs.' I replied, 'Thank you, Mr. President;' and I felt that he wanted to thank me. The truth was that the other fellows stood in awe of him, and, remembering always that he was the President of the United States, they simply could not talk freely. It was n't that I understood politics here any better than they."

"One must be thrown with those high in authority before one can realize how they unbend," rejoined Mrs. Chandler. "I must tell you a little incident that happened when we were in London. One day we went to the races. As we arrived, a gentleman who drove up about the same time alighted from his carriage on the outskirts of the crowd, and as he saw us he inclined his head. The Commodore bowed and so did I. Although we could not recall having met him, his face was not entirely strange, and he seemed to know us.

"'We 're all betting on Juanita to-day,' said the Commodore, who is an ideal traveller, any way, being hail-fellow-well-met with every one. The gentleman bowed politely, but said nothing. The Commodore then offered to bet with him, adding with a laugh, 'My wife will make a record of the bet.'

"I wore a chateleine hanging at my side, to which was attached a tiny note-book. The whole thing was of rare and curious design and was given to me by the Empress of China. The gentleman remarked upon its beauty as I opened the little book, and I told him something of its history.

"'What name shall I put?' I asked.

"'Oh, write me down as the Prince of Wales!' cried the Commodore.

"'Well, call me just "Tummy,"' said the gentleman. 'Tummy,' of course, was the pet name of the Prince of Wales.

"We all laughed and the bet was recorded. 'Tummy' lost. In a few days the Commodore received his picture in all the glory of court dress and medals. Across it was written: 'Tummy, a debtor; Prince of Wales, a friend.'"

"It was the Prince of Wales!" breathed Mr. Mitchell, infinite awe in his tones.

We had found a height which could strike awe to the soul of Mr. Mitchell!

As for myself, I felt that it was time for me to travel and get a crowned head or something on my visiting-list. I nestled up to Mrs. Thornton a few moments later and asked her who was the most noted person she had ever met; and she said Rudyard Kipling—but they 'd never been introduced. This was soothing, for I remembered that I 'd met General Miles in the same manner.

When we were going home I told Frank all about it, he happening to be nearest me.

"It would make any woman long for wealth to go on the *Gelda*," he said gloomily, and not at all apropos of my story, "and most men discouraged to think how little they could give the woman they loved!"

But I looked at Frank and knew that I could be content in little Honolulu, the Prince of Wales forgetting and by the Prince forgot.

IV.

If I ever become a social leader, Honolulu shall have a "season," and a luncheon in July will be as rare as our roses since we have acquired the rose-bug. I never could understand why a luncheon was any the less lunch when called a breakfast. Mrs. Thornton gives them on Sunday, when the men can come, and she says, "Won't you drop in to breakfast Sunday at one?"

Of course in doing the informal she does n't have to use her best china, and her steward can go the happy-go-lucky way of the Honolulu steward since annexation and the Chinese Exclusion Act have made us his slave. Mrs. Thornton calls him "my butler," with a serene indifference to the fact that he is just what the rest of us struggle with and have always called a steward, as they do on the ships that have brought us him and the mosquitoes and other mixed blessings. In fact, Mrs. Thornton hypnotizes one's realization of the incongruous while confidently talking of "my butler," who is the while making mistakes that would shatter the nerves of an ordinary hostess.

As I sat at the table I felt that a complexion alone could evolve the breakfast. The white of Mrs. Thornton's skin has defied the tropical sunshine of this "land of perpetual summer," and she has kept her color. The tourist who passes through and writes a book on the Islands generally speaks of the sun-kissed cheeks of Hawaii, flushed with a rich warmth. But he is blind for the sake of his pen picture. As a matter of fact, the kisses of the sun, the caresses of the salt breeze, too often result in a skin that suggests leather. For my part, I gazed upon Mrs. Thornton and tried to look happy though freckled.

Mrs. Thornton always brings in a *malahini**; the rest of us do it only occasionally. Being a traveller herself, she knows what it is to be lonely. Frank says she casts her bread upon the waters with a happy faith, and sends her card by way of a searchlight when she arrives in San Francisco, New York, and way ports. Not content with the Chandlers alone, there was another *malahini,* Mrs. Spotfield, a naval officer's wife, who sat at Mr. Thornton's left hand. And she had not sat long before she gave a merry little laugh in the midst of a pause, and spoke. It was quite clear that she had often been told she was bright. What she lacked in thought she made up in animation, and her eyes were like stars.

"Yes, we've taken a cottage back of the hotel," she said, "and we have started housekeeping. As it is all temporary, we are just playing at it—picnicking, in fact. We have a wooden box for an ice-chest, and a long nail for an ice-pick. And the parlor looks so pretty with *tapas* hung all around and navy ribbons in between. It's a little uncomfortable just now because there is a big spider crawling on the wall. He's as big as a dinner-plate, counting his legs, and he scares the life out of me, but I've heard that spiders are considered lucky in Hawaii, so I won't have it killed. When the spider is on one side of the room we take the other. Sometimes it's a trifle inconvenient."

Everybody looked amused, and Mrs. Thornton laughed aloud. Being the hostess, she could do no less, and her laugh has a ripple. This encouraged Mrs. Spotfield to go on. She became quite reckless.

"And it does seem so odd to have one's bedroom open on the front veranda. My door is next to the parlor, and there is no bell. Has any house in Honolulu a bell? And one's steward, of course, is off gambling; so when I'm not to be found in the parlor, man, woman, or child turns to the next door and walks in. And—in the tropics—so I either run out the back door or into a kimono—if they are slow enough." Mrs. Spotfield came to a pause with a plaintive note alluringly suggestive of lace and baby ribbons and transparent effects.

Everybody looked still more amused; Mrs. Thornton's laugh rippled one scale higher; and Mrs. Spotfield, with blissful ignorance of Honolulu high life, plunged in where the *kamaaina* (one who belongs to the Islands) fears to tread.

"But what's the difference?" she said blithely. "The white people are all in the same boat; we have become oblivious of the sensibilities of the Chinese and Japanese, and the Hawaiians did n't know fashions—or even a *holoku*—before the missionary came. It's too bad the missionary ever did come. It's the same old story of mistaken zeal or unworthy greed. In China it's tragedy, bloodshed, riot; in

---

* Stranger.

Hawaii it 's a dying race, dried up taro patches, and the half white. Do you like the half whites, Mr. Thornton?"

Mr. Thornton's reply was hasty and mostly suggestive of hot potato half swallowed. Mrs. Spotfield flushed and looked pained. It was clear that somebody had kicked her under the table. For an instant she did not speak, and it became a matter of conjecture whether all her emotions had not concentrated in her shins.

"Oh, you do like them, Mr. Thornton?" she proceeded smoothly. "So do I—they are so fascinating. I 'm mixed myself, you know; I think it makes us more vivacious."

And nobody doubted that she was mixed, for, glancing from one to the other of us, she found us fairly fair—if tanned—and that she was puzzled one could not question. Opposite her sat Mrs. Elkins, one of whose brothers had married Kealoha Moody. Mrs. Elkins had never pretended to like it, particularly since Kealoha had awakened from the glamour of a foreign marriage and had returned to *poi,* a growing corpulency, and *holokus.* Next to her was Jimmy Jones. His wife being in San Francisco, he is unencumbered and in demand among hostesses. Jimmy came to the Islands a young fellow without prospects or a cent, and married a Hawaiian heiress with land—lots of land. In fact, most of the valuable property about Honolulu is owned by the Jimmy Joneses.

Mr. Elkins sat at Mrs. Thornton's left. He comes of good old missionary stock, and the Royalist faction never lose a chance to hint that his beautiful Colonial house is quite unlike the rude hut of his grandfather, entirely ignoring the fact that time and sugar have sweetened life's jackpot for Royalist and missionary alike.

In the ensuing three minutes everybody thought what to say and did n't say it.

"I met such a queer person in San Francisco," said Mrs. Chandler. "She was the daughter of a Chinese cook, and she said she came from Honolulu. She was dining with some navy people, and so were we. Really, I could not understand it, and I don't to this day. He may have been a good cook, but——"

Everybody gasped.

"The daughter of a Chinese cook!" exclaimed Mrs. Thornton. "Why, who could she be? What was her name?"

"I think it was Singsong or—Philip, what was the name of that girl?"

"Singlee, do you mean?" asked Mrs. Thornton. "You must mean Adrienne Singlee; she was in San Francisco about a year ago. But she is the daughter of a rich Chinese merchant, and not a cook. Her mother is a Hawaiian of royal blood. The Singlees are one of our most—most picturesque families; you must meet the Singlees."

"Really!" drawled Mrs. Chandler.

Mrs. Thornton took some cards from the tray handed her by one of the servants. "Mr. and Mrs. Starley Wyncoop, New York," she read. "Do you know them, Commodore? No? New York is so big, of course! They must have arrived on the *Maru* this morning. They gave me the most delightful dinner when I was in New York, last winter."

She glanced around her polished *koa* table. It could have held two more without the least crowding. Her expression almost said, "Move up, and I'll start the menu again!"

Nobody could blame her; it was hard to be at dessert of one entertainment and be brought face to face with bouillon for the next. It is never a new sensation in Honolulu, but it is none the less painful. Mrs. Thornton must have felt our silent sympathy.

"George," she said to her husband as she rose from her seat, "have coffee in the *lanai.* I'll ask the Wyncoops to join us."

And as she disappeared we all knew that she would be equal to the situation and surely give another breakfast.

In a few moments we sauntered by twos into the *lanai,* where we were introduced to the Starley Wyncoops. Mrs. Starley was reminiscent of Fifth Avenue even to those of us who had never seen New York. She had black eyes, a skin of creamy pallor, and hair that lay in dusky waves on a very white brow; she was good-looking in a rather severe style, which was contradicted by a wicked curve at one corner of her mouth when she smiled. Her figure testified to a faultless corset, and the perfect lines of her tailor made jacket were a revelation. She carried a parasol with a striking handle—a beautiful dog's head, with large jewelled eyes. Mr. Wyncoop was a blond boy with blue eyes that just seemed to be hunting for experience; when he looked at his wife a world of awakened intelligence seemed to dawn in them. In fact, she looked about ten years older than he, and as Frank said to me when he got a chance: "She must have been kept busy 'putting him on.'"

Mrs. Thornton went off to see if her butler was "planting the coffee," which seemed unaccountably delayed, and I tried to make conversation, which was n't easy in the face of a midday glare and the discouragement of New York style.

"It is too bad you can't wait over and take the next through steamer," I began.

This being the usual remark of Honolulu to a through passenger, it came without stress of thought.

"We regret it so much," returned Mrs. Wyncoop. "Next time we come we are certainly going to arrange it so that we can stop over in this charming place."

This was the usual reply.

A short pause ensued, broken by the approach of Mrs. Chandler with Jimmy Jones. Mrs. Wyncoop was gazing around Mrs. Thornton's spacious, picturesque *lanai,* with its gnarled old tree in one corner, the trunk coming up through the floor and disappearing through the ceiling, where the *lanai* had been built around it; with its hammocks and palms, wicker lounging chairs and odd Chinese lanterns. She turned slowly as I started to introduce Mrs. Chandler.

"Fidette!" she murmured with a surprised stare.

"Mrs.—Starley—Wyncoop!" exclaimed Mrs. Chandler, lingering on each name as though each in itself was a new sensation.

"And Mr. Jones—let me introduce Mr. Jones," I said, after waiting in vain for the two women to come back to earth—and to us.

This passed unnoticed, and Jimmy, in his usual happy vein, suggested that I melt away with him. But I was too much interested to dissolve entirely, and stood near by with Jimmy, who at once started to pour reminiscences of early and gay days in my ear—one ear, for the other naturally stayed with Mrs. Chandler and Mrs. Starley Wyncoop.

"Where did you bag the kid?" demanded Mrs. Chandler in a modulated but none the less distinct key.

I thought this was rather hard on Mrs. Wyncoop, but she only laughed as if she had done something to be proud of.

"I was on my way to Europe with the 'Fairy,' she said. "He was going over to meet his yacht in the Mediterranean. Eight days on deck and nearly every one else sea-sick. My chaperon failed to meet me on the other side—he married me in London, and——"

"What do you mean by murmuring 'Yes' in that dangerous way!" Jimmy Jones whispered softly.

I started; Jimmy was renowned for his flirtatious proclivities. What on earth had he been saying? There was nothing left for me but to bluff.

"You 've never understood me," I murmured.

"Give me a chance!" cried Jimmy. "You can make a student of me."

This was a gallant declaration, for there was little of the student about Jimmy.

"Tell me that story about Lunalilo and the naval officer; I love it and no one can tell it like you," I interposed. I knew it by heart, and Jimmy, once launched, would be good for a full two minutes any way.

"And you, Fidette? Learning the hula hula?"

"No, I too have not been idle," laughed Mrs. Chandler. "Here comes the Commodore; I'll introduce you. I met him after Otto—— Oh, thanks, Mrs. Thornton. Yes, I will have coffee, please. Yes, Mrs. Wyncoop and I are old friends, but we have n't seen each other for years. We have both been married since. We have been talking New York four hundred here until you'd think we were writing for a society column."

"I tell you Lunalilo was the wise old chap, even if he did sometimes look on the wine when it was red," wound up Jimmy. And I knew it was safe this time to murmur, "Yes."

"Who was Mrs. Starley Wyncoop before she was married?" I asked Mrs. Thornton, following her across the *lanai* when she went to get her fan.

"Well, my dear, I really don't know exactly," replied Mrs. Thornton. "There's always such a lot of gossip, you know, that one cannot tell what to believe. They say in New York that she was a model for a corset house, and she was sent to Europe by the firm every winter. On one of these trips she met him, and he fell madly in love with her. He is one of *the* Wyncoops, you know, and has even more millions than the other millionaires. They know every one and go everywhere, any way."

"And Mrs. Chandler? Who was she, I wonder?"

"Oh, she was a Miss Chalmers; her mother was the daughter of the American minister to Berlin, and her father was naval attaché at the Court of Vienna. Very distinguished family, really. She met Commodore Chandler abroad."

"How do you know all that?" I asked in some surprise.

"Why, she told me herself," said Mrs. Thornton.

"Come for a walk, do," said Frank, as Mrs. Thornton disappeared into her room. "Just to get an appetite for dinner," he explained to my entire satisfaction.

VI.

"TALKING of the navy," said Frank, thoughtfully puffing his cigar, "if a sailor has a sweetheart in every port, it must be on the principle that to every one that hath shall be given."

"What would Honolulu be without the navy?" I murmured, and my tones were dulcet, indicating recollections to fit.

"Ask the Singlees!" muttered Frank, rising and taking his hat.

The Singlees have just announced the engagement of their fifth daughter to a fifth officer in the United States Navy. And the Singlee is abroad in the land, no two brothers-in-law being stationed in the same port. Besides, there are three daughters left, and they are going to Manila, so the fate of three more officers is sure. The Singlee girls are supposed to be rich, in spite of their numbers. They keep open house, and what is generally known as the sideboard in most homes is, to quote their steward, " All same one bar." Besides being hospitable, the Singlees have an indisputable fascination all their own, which makes them the envy of the other girls and the despair of the other mammas, who in the face of five Singlee alliances never lose a chance to allude to the dash of Chinese blood, mixed with Hawaiian, Portuguese, Spanish, and English, that runs in the Singlee veins. But though ready to supply the Singlee genealogy, they give it with a lack of spontaneity born of the conviction that mixed blood will tell. France is among the few countries that cannot claim the Singlees; so the Singlees, just to show it is n't their fault and that they permit no national intolerance, have showered French names upon their girls with reckless disregard of a surname that suggests Chinese. Héloise, Lucille, Clémentine, Lizette, and Félicie are successfully shipped, in the true sense of the word. Adrienne, Céleste, and Léonie are still unattached, though attached beyond a doubt to the navy.

" Would you consult the Singlees' five brothers-in-law ? " I inquired amiably.

" I would," returned Frank. " They may be prejudiced, but they 're always the navy ! " And he vanished.

It is evident that, like all the " town boys," Frank is jealous of the " brass button." It must be trying to see them constantly arriving. They come, they choose, a " crush " is inevitable.

The *Terror* anchored in " Naval Row " six weeks ago. They had come; the next thing was to choose. This they did according to their rank or their taste—the higher their rank, the more diplomatic their taste. Each ship that has been with us has a list made out; and to each coming ship the list and a " tip " are given. So the officers start their career on shore with their eyes wide open, though, with the spirit of chivalry that is part of their efficacy, any officer who has chosen a different set from the one in which you shine will tell you he got started wrong. The appeal to set him straight is aimed direct at any true woman's heart. A very comprehensive list was bidden to the ball on the *Terror*. Every man invited his friends; he had come, he had chosen.

" Oh, just look at the moon ! " I heard Teddy Skelton say to Céleste Singlee in a tête-à-tête corner.

Céleste is only sixteen, though confessing to eighteen in order to be considered " out," but she had met a cadet or two in her day, having started young, and she looked Cadet Teddy Skelton in the eye, knowing full well that if she turned her attention on the moon any cadet would feel emboldened to concentrate his attention upon the cheek turned to him. Céleste Singlee is coy; her five sisters had all been coy, and Céleste was practising for Manila. So she dropped her eyes—her lashes are quite long—and when she raised them the calm light of reason shone in their depths, for she knew that naval rules forbade a cadet to marry. Teddy Skelton is good for buttons, though; Céleste wears a bracelet of them. However, with a supply has come a demand, and she wants a girdle. But that is the trouble with Teddy Skelton; like all cadets, he gives his buttons lavishly, but impartially, as it were. That is, not singly alone to one, but one each to many. In fact, he confesses frankly that sometimes he has to stop and say unto himself, "Button, button, who 's got the button?"

Adrienne Singlee, being twenty-two, though confessing to nineteen—the Singlees having a prejudice against leaving their teens—had an ensign in tow, Ashton Seely. Ashton is intense, and he gives his buttons with a discrimination that might be called rare. He knows all the latest fancy steps, and he dances every dance, but it does n't take many girls to go around with Ashton. Three girls may suffice for twelve dances; the arithmetical calculation involved is more complicated, however, than just three times four, and not quite so impartial. And Adrienne was plainly satisfied.

Ashton is attractive beyond a doubt. He has travelled and, being musical, he has learned the guitar from a dark-eyed señorita, and the *san-san* from a little *mousme* in Japan, and Adrienne has taught him the *ukulele* so that he plays it as well as she does herself, and that is saying not a little. Adrienne was frankly pleased with his devotion, and at supper, when our partners went off for salad, she turned to me and said:

"Ashton is so accomplished, is n't he?"

And I said, "Yes." It is n't much to repeat, but there is so much in the tone, and I said, "Yes," warmly.

"He can speak every language," she went on proudly, "French, German, Hawaiian, Spanish, Swedish, Japanese——"

"How do you know?" I murmured, trying in vain to recall any abnormal bump on Ashton's head that would indicate linguistic talent.

"I 've heard him, of course," said Adrienne. Then she blushed reminiscently, and, knowing the ensign type myself, it was quite evident that she had been treated to samples of the all-important verb and its conjugations. *"Je t'aime," "Ich liebe dich," "Aloha nui"*—I could just hear Ashton's inflection. No wonder Adrienne's assertion was sweeping. She had apparently inquired no further, but took the rest on faith. And that should be the way of a maid with a man—particularly a navy man.

Our partners came back just then, and Guy Selby cast a look of absolute agony straight into my eyes, for Guy is a devotee of the tête-à-tête. He cannot, or will not, talk in a crowd—anything over two being a crowd.

"I must have a sympathetic companion to draw me out," he had told me earlier in the evening, when we were sitting out a square dance (Guy never wastes any energy on a square dance). And he left no doubt in my mind that I filled his requirements. I could not resist the appeal in his eyes, so I moved off with him and the salad, and we went to a sheltered spot on the poop-deck, where we could see everything, but where it would be impossible for my next partner to find me. Guy makes a specialty of corners that might be termed snug.

I realize, though, that Guy is elusive (lieutenants generally are); he appears intense, but in reality he is over it. He talks beautifully of his sincerity, and knows a lot about sympathy and affinity. He hints darkly of the time that comes in every man's life when he longs to settle down. Frank says, "The nearer his orders, the darker his hints." It is true the *Terror* won't be here much longer. Guy is subtle—lieutenants often are. His dancing card is an illegible enigma founded on the principle of never putting anything down in black and white; the girl with whom he has tête-à-têted would never recognize herself thereon. But Guy is not absolutely invulnerable—lieutenants seldom are—and he is sure to tête-à-tête once too often.

"Just look at old Jerry!" he whispered with a chuckle.

And I gazed upon Lieutenant-Commander Jeremiah L. Hamilton, who was passing our flag-draped, sequestered nook, while, oblivious of it and of us, he was unmistakably, if surreptitiously, squeezing the hand of his partner as it lay upon his coat-sleeve. His partner, in white swiss with blue ribbons and a "just out" expression of shining enjoyment, seemed to take it philosophically. Lieutenant-Commander Jeremiah L. Hamilton is handsome, with his steel-blue eyes and his dark hair tinged with gray at the temples.

"He calls it 'fatherly interest,'" murmured Guy. "After all, age has its compensations."

"Oh, but she is so young!" I said.

"She is always young," Guy replied, and once more he chuckled. "Jerry used to dance for love of the dance, but now he dances for love of the girl."

Captain Bryce was escorting Mrs. Mitchell across the deck. He never forgets to be conservative, and he remembers to forget the girls when etiquette demands abnegation. It is not all joy to be a captain; Mrs. Mitchell is somewhat pompous and equally heavy in weight and ideas. But she has a position.

"It 's a perfect shame such a nice boy should be so devoted to that Mabel Solley," I said as she passed with Lieutenant Bailey.

"That 'nice boy' is thirty-six and married—when he is home," said Guy. "When he is on a cruise, though, he says he is not a bigoted married man."

"And he looks so blond and so—so——"

"Exactly so—innocent, you mean. Well, Dicksy is all right; he's just looking for types. He says he is not narrow, and he will never have to kick himself for a snob. He has read in a book of poems, on the isles of the Pacific, about a dusk maiden in a pool, and he says he is not going to travel with his eyes shut."

All I replied was, "Oh!"

"Come along, you two," said Mrs. Fletcher, putting one of the carefully draped flags about our nook ruthlessly to one side. "We are going to have a Virginia Reel, and we want you in our set."

Guy smiled with his mouth and looked daggers with his eyes. It was quite a feat; still, you could hardly call his smile spontaneous. Mrs. Fletcher smiled gaily back at him, oblivious of his eyes, being satisfied that her rank and her charms formed a combination that made obedience at once a duty and a pleasure.

Mrs. Fletcher is the wife of Captain Chauncey Riversley Fletcher, and she has come to Honolulu to await the arrival of the flag ship of the Pacific Station. She loves to dance, though somewhat plump for sustained exertion. But partners being forthcoming, dancing is an easy proposition, at least in one way. Naval men know their duty—dances—and the majority do not flinch. Besides, Mrs. Fletcher is generally chaperoning a belle or two.

Mrs. Spotfield came up with one of the cadets as we reached the lower deck. She had on a white dress with a big bunch of pink flowers on one shoulder, and pink slippers and stockings. It was very effective and becoming, and one could see a busy time before the white frock, with a change of flowers and slippers.

"Have you had supper, Mrs. Fletcher?" asked the cadet. "Do let me get you some ice-cream."

"Oh, you bad boy!" cried Mrs. Spotfield playfully. "Ice-cream is fattening and you know it. Don't be tempted, Mrs. Fletcher." She slipped her arm through Mrs. Fletcher's and seemed unconscious that she looked particularly slender and lithe beside her.

Mrs. Fletcher did not look happy, nor pleasant. It is not soothing to be reminded of fat when you are about to indulge in a Virginia Reel. "These little things are great to little men." When Mrs. Fletcher is an admiral's wife Mrs. Spotfield's husband may wonder what has gone wrong with his "pull."

Mrs. Thornton, looking handsome in white, with no ornament but her diamond sunburst scintillating against her dark hair, danced with Commodore Chandler, and Mrs. Chandler was next to me, with Frank for her vis-à-vis. She was unusually pretty and dashing in a yellow crêpe that clung, even to the extent of arousing conjecture as to the texture of her lingerie. It was very becoming, and the color seemed to bring out the reddish tints in her hair. She did not wear a jewel nor an ornament of any sort. But Mrs. Chandler, you could see, knew how and when to refrain. The faintest, most subtle perfume clung to her, as though caught in the meshes of lace she wore, and escaped, softly sweet, with a hint of elusive delight, when she moved.

Mrs. Kapua was dancing with Albert Fenwick, but her heart was n't in it; she was through with Albert, and even she could n't revive a flirtation. Her smiles and glances were all directed at the Commodore. Mrs. Kapua's smile was very pretty, with its flash of exquisite white teeth and sparkle of dark eyes. She was dressed in white gauze, with a gorgeous ruby pendant set with diamonds gleaming against her dark, clear skin, and in her hair was twined a *lei* of rich red carnations.

"Lieutenant Selby evidently believes in monopoly," said Frank; and his tones were far from honeyed.

I cast down my eyes in imitation of the Singlees' best, and I know I looked modest, though pleased. Jealousy may be a green-eyed monster, but it is so soothing at times. The captain came along just then with a bevy of officers from the Italian man-of-war, in port for ten days. Adrienne Singlee, the Thorntons, and the Chandlers, who were near by, were introduced, after Frank and I had gone through the ordeal of trying to catch and remember one name, at least. We all suffered in proportion to a lack of education in French, which all the Italian officers spoke, English being quite beyond them.

Of course Adrienne could speak a few words of Italian. Frank said she had evidently made up her mind that lack of language should not be her undoing; there were just as good fish in one country as ever came out of another.

A dapper little lieutenant asked in French from what opera the air was taken that the singing boys were giving with such expression. It was a *hula;* one suggestive of infinite possibilities of *abandon.* No doubt the dapper lieutenant thought that everything musical must have its origin in Italian opera, but I wonder if he had ever seen a stage setting that would do justice to a *hula.*

I was making up my mind how to explain in French, when Adrienne murmured something in Italian—or it might have been Greek, for all I knew. All the officers looked puzzled, but they were so polite that they quickly murmured something that sounded credulous, and might have been, "Exactly so!" And Adrienne seemed to feel confident that she had at least been tactful, if not exact.

As Frank said, who could explain a Hawaiian dance to an Italian? It was asking too much of linguistic talent—not to speak of the innocence of youth. But Adrienne looked so pleased with herself that I came very near laughing. Frank did, and then tried to pretend he was laughing just from pure happiness; so like him.

"Ah, it's fascinating, it's alive, it's an incentive, this national dance of yours!" cried Mrs. Chandler.

It was the only time I had ever seen her show any real enthusiasm. She moved away from her husband, and with a sinuous twist of her lithe body, a slight undulation of her hips, her arms and hands waving in characteristic gestures, curiously clever in imitation, she gave a perfect suggestion of a trained *hula* dancer—in an early stage, of course.

We all gazed at her appreciatively.

"Where did you learn?" exclaimed Mrs. Thornton.

"Oh, I know the dance of every country," Mrs. Chandler replied, laughing over her shoulder as she retreated with the swaying movement of the dance still further pronounced.

I happened to glance at the Commodore; he certainly looked annoyed, and as the hem of his wife's skirt trailed near him he moved a step forward and put his foot down on it firmly. About two yards of gathers promptly responded to this appeal and lay upon the ground.

As Adrienne said afterwards, "Those polite Italians fell upon one knee and offered pins."

Frank asked, "Whose knee?" And I was weak enough to laugh, but Adrienne seemed to lose herself in solving this proposition.

Mrs. Chandler looked more amused than angry. She murmured something I did n't catch to her husband, and he scowled. When he caught my eye he explained that he always frowned when he faced an electric light. But there is a distinction, if not a difference, between a scowl and a frown. Frank says a frown is amenable to massage, but a scowl is apt to need a heavy fist.

"You jealous boy!" laughed Mrs. Chandler, a touch of irony in her tone.

The Commodore responded, but under his breath, so it would n't be fair to quote him, even if it did sound like: "Jealous—Hell!"

"I'm very proud of Mrs. Chandler's dancing," he said quickly, addressing us all; "but she has scarcely danced since she was a little child, though it's one of her natural gifts."

"Oh, sometimes I have allowed myself to be persuaded," said Mrs. Chandler.

By this time all the pins were gone, or, rather, pinned.

"What an exquisite diamond ornament that is in your hair!" said the Commodore to Mrs. Thornton, "if you will excuse a personal remark."

"I think it is pretty," Mrs. Thornton rejoined modestly, but she beamed on the Commodore. "Mr. Thornton took great pains in selecting these stones, and I really think he is more proud of my pin than I."

"Incomparable!" declared the Commodore. "The Shah of Persia gave Mrs. Chandler a diamond that we are taking to Tiffany's to have set. It is a large stone, but that middle one of yours is of even more remarkable purity and brilliancy. It makes your eyes seem all the brighter."

This was a happy touch—for Mrs. Thornton; the rest of us began to feel a trifle *de trop,* but Colonel and Mrs. Hervey came along opportunely, and I moved away a few steps to shake hands with them. I soon forgot all else but their alleged determination to make the army as popular in Honolulu as the navy has always been.

After a dozen or so pleasant and politic remarks, Mrs. Hervey varied the monotony by criticising the lack of etiquette existing in Honolulu.

"You seem to think it sufficient here for the women to call and take their husbands' cards," she said somewhat consequentially. "The men seldom think it necessary to accompany their wives."

I felt quite guilty until I remembered that, as a spinster, I was n't responsible.

"Frank says that marriage is not a failure, because man makes the money and woman makes the calls," I said, trying to brighten up the situation.

Mrs. Harvey smiled faintly, knowing it was expected of her, but she was standing on her dignity and she could scarcely be hilarious.

"Let me introduce Mrs. Lumsing," I said, as she approached with her husband.

The Herveys and Lumsings exchanged bows, while Mrs. Hervey's eyebrows asked, "Who are the Lumsings?" in a curve possible only to the eyebrow of society. Mrs. Lumsing was pretty, but dubious as to her hair, which was brightly yellow, and enigmatical as to her gown, which was built on a "naught venture, naught have," model that spoke the French artist in its daring and betrayed the "little dressmaker" in its finish. Mr. Lumsing looked *blasé,* elegant, travelled. Frank says he is English by assumption, Chinese by deduction, and Hawaiian by conjunction. In fact, Mr. Lumsing's father is Cheong Lum Sing; he wears a queue and has risen, through shrewdness and sugar, to the dignity of a rich merchant. His mother is a typical Hawaiian, with a predilection for the fattening *poi,* to which her figure testifies. And they sent young Fong Lum Sing to England for an education. He returned to us Cyril Lumsing, with an English wife, and an English accent besides; a simple matter of attachment all through.

"Aw, by Jove! the effect of all these brightly colored flags is fetching, don't cher know," drawled Mr. Lumsing, twirling his monocle. "How smart Mrs. Thornton's gown is to-night! She 's a ripping good sort all around."

"Yes," assented Mrs. Lumsing; her voice held a soft note, but, alas, it was cockney. "Does n't Mrs. Thornton remind you of Lady Georgiana, my cousin, Cyril?"

"Aw, yes, by Jove!"

But everybody forgot Lady Georgiana, for Cheong Lum Sing in gorgeous purple blouse, with head newly shaven to his queue, and his wife, colossal in bulk and only a few shades fairer than her black silk *holoku,* joined the family group.

"We have been looking for you, papa," said Mrs. Lumsing.

And Colonel and Mrs. Hervey looked bewildered and helpless withal, which is not unusual in the face of a Chinese puzzle. The strains of "Sobre las Olas" pulsated about us with its lingering notes of sweetness.

I turned and started towards where Frank was waiting for me on the other side of the desk.

"You can't be too careful!" I heard the Commodore's voice mutter as I paused for a moment to watch the waltzers circling around the big deck, gay with bunting, electric lights, palms, and flowers, a group of interested sailors in white making an effective background. I was in a quiet spot by an innocent looking flag. Evidently the Commodore was on the other side; any flag on the *Terror* was apt to mean a tête-à-tête corner behind it.

"It 's sure to come sooner or later—it always comes, as we know by precious experience, but I don't care to hurry it by fool invitation," growled the Commodore. "A false move——"

"Means a trip," interrupted Mrs. Chandler's voice impatiently. "Don't be so cross about it; I 'll be careful, but you——"

"I have to," rejoined the Commodore hastily. "Where would you be if I did n't look out for you?"

Frank says that to point the distinction between overhearing and listening, wait until you hear your own name mentioned, and prove the proverb. Still, I moved on.

"Phew! but it 's hot!" said Frank as I reached him. "It 's by the sweat of our brows, verily, that we know society in the tropics."

"The Commodore is really devoted to his wife," I said irrelevantly. "I think she must be delicate; he 's so solicitous of her health."

"He does n't seem happy to-night," rejoined Frank, an element of unadulterated joy in his tones. "I 'll bet a hat he lost at poker last night."

"You 're sympathetic!" I observed.

"I have n't taken a fancy to him," admitted Frank.

"That 's plain."

"Well, when I don't fancy a person, I won't make a secret of it."

"And when you do fancy?"

"It 's wiser to make a secret of that sometimes."

"That's an open question!"

"Open questions are doubtful; often they should be shut."

"If you're trying to say 'shut up,' take a straight route," I suggested cheerily.

"If I dared take a straight route——"

"Give me this waltz," demanded Guy in his own inimitable way,—the requests of other men always paled beside his flattering force.

I had not seen him coming, and this was so sudden I almost fell into his arms. As the music stopped, we did.

"A perfect waltz; you danced as if your soul were in it!" whispered Guy tenderly, and, not to be contradictory, I bestowed a soulful glance upon him.

I was thinking that Frank would have dared to say, "Shut up"—with polite modulation, of course.

All roads may lead to Rome, but where would that straight route have led that Frank hesitated to take?

I wonder.

VII.

Mrs. Thornton said I was an angel of mercy, but somehow it did n't seem to strike a chord. I realized that I had been too conscientious for comfort, and I think that was why I did not beam at the compliment. But what could I do? It is our boast in Hawaii that we live as one big family, always ready to share our joys and sorrows, and when Mrs. Thornton telephoned me that she had a dinner on hand for the author Hugo Basilton, that her cook had walked off without warning, and that there were fourteen people bidden to eat at half past seven that evening, and she could n't, or would n't, put them off, and oh, she was in such *pilikia* (trouble) and if she had it to do over again she would make it a breakfast, any way, and would I come and help her, I naturally replied that I would.

When I arrived at Mrs. Thornton's house, I heard her anguished explanation of a situation that might at least be termed trying.

"Mura, my cook, asked me almost every time I entered the kitchen who my guests were to be. At first I paid no attention, but then I began to wonder why he wanted to know. When I questioned him, he said something about number one dinner, number two dinner, and number three dinner, and I found, to my horror, that he had grades. Now, just imagine! His number one dinner was in honor of any government representatives, number two for any one in the merchant class, and number three—for the missionaries! Do you blame me for losing my temper? With the Stowes and the Elkins invited, I knew we were in for a number three dinner. I gave Mura a piece of my mind, and he politely took his leave."

Poor Mrs. Thornton was almost ready to cry. She brightened up, however, when I suggested calling in Mrs. Probyn, a lady in reduced circumstances, who had turned a taste for culinary art into a means of livelihood.

"Mrs. Probyn can bring a salad and curry," I said cheerfully; "that disposes of two courses, and then you can buy ice-cream, and have canned soup, and——"

But Mrs. Thornton had already ordered her carriage.

"We will bring her back with us," she said. "Everything is comparatively plain sailing now. I never would have thought of Mrs. Probyn; she is so new, and Honolulu never had a caterer before; it is hard to get used to such bliss. I would have given the dinner up when Mura basely deserted, but one does not get a chance to entertain a Hugo Basilton every day, you know. Have you read his last book? It has made a tremendous hit. But really at times I think I 'll never entertain again; it is such a struggle. And does Mrs. Probyn make good curry? Curry is such a stylish dish for strangers. It is a revelation too. When they go home they are never satisfied again with a dash of curry powder shaken in raw. Oh, is that you, Kami? What you want? Cream? All right, I bring by'n'by."

We got into the carriage and drove off. Mrs. Thornton's eyes were shining and she was all animation.

Mrs. Probyn was standing at her gate as we stopped, and Mrs. Thornton entered into a voluble explanation, which a cheerful confidence made possible.

"I have only my yard boy in the kitchen; he says he can cook; he 's so ambitious, but ambition does n't insure success, does it, Mrs. Probyn?"

In Mrs. Probyn's face was the light of an implacable resolve.

"I am going on a picnic this morning, to be gone all day, Mrs. Thornton," she said, and her voice held a pleased note of anticipation. "I am sorry I can't help you. Oh, please don't mention money! I know you would be willing to pay me double, but I gave up a picnic last week to oblige Mrs. Fenwick, who wanted me to make sandwiches for a tea, and I have regretted it ever since. So I am sure you will understand that it is quite impossible. Some other time I will be glad to help you out, if I am not invited anywhere. But let me suggest a good cook who might be willing to go to you. His name is Kiomoto, and you will find him at the Japanese church. I can recommend him, I assure you. Good morning." And Mrs. Probyn cordially bowed and disappeared.

We turned and drove down the street.

"And she is doing this to pay off the mortgage on her house, and to hold on to three hundred shares of assessable sugar stock!" Mrs.

Thornton muttered further and pointed remarks; they did n't point skyward; Mrs. Probyn never could have reached heaven on them.

"Well, we will secure the Jap, any way," I said soothingly, and a moment later Kiomoto was bowing and scraping before us, with indrawn breaths hissing, *à la* Japanese, in proportion to an excess of civility.

"No can come; very sorry, no can," he said between his bows and breaths. "To-night six Christian gentlemen come dinner. Very sorry."

Expostulations and bribes followed from Mrs. Thornton.

"No can," reiterated Kiomoto. "You please excuse; very sorry. To-night come six Christian gentlemen."

"I 'm something of a Christian myself," asserted Mrs. Thornton, with heroic hope.

I recalled her late pointed remarks about Mrs. Probyn, and reflected that the six Christian gentlemen did not need a good cook as did Mrs. Thornton.

But Kiomoto's firmness was equalled only by his suavity of manner. We left him bowing, scraping, hissing, and satisfied.

The situation was hopeless; there was nothing left but to go home and cook. In the cheerfulness of ignorance, and the comfort of a cooling breeze created by rapid driving, I offered to do the cooking. And Mrs. Thornton seemed grateful, if not confident.

"We will stop for some bonbons and have them at least," she said.

As we reached the candy store we met Commodore Chandler, immaculate in white duck. He was very handsome in a bold, devil-may-care style. He raised his hat and greeted us cordially, and I thought, as he stood there, that his photograph taken just then would certainly do for a dashing buccaneer.

"We are looking forward to this evening with so much pleasure, Mrs. Thornton," he said politely.

And Mrs. Thornton refrained from telling him that she did not dare look forward.

While we were waiting for the candy to be put up I went behind the counter to look at some fancy boxes that attracted me with their gay coloring. One of them had an envelope fastened to it addressed: "*Mrs. Kapua.*"

I could n't help wondering if the Commodore was responsible for the generous five pounds, or more, that it must have contained.

"We will just get the cream and hurry home," said Mrs. Thornton as we got in the carriage again.

"All out of cream, Mrs. Thornton," said the clerk cheerily. "You won't find any in town to-day. I 've just sent around to try."

We drove home in silence, and got into *holokus*. I remembered that Mrs. Thornton had often declared—to the exasperation of those of us less conscientious—that she never wore a *holoku* outside of her bedroom.

"A *holoku* is only a Mother Hubbard to the stranger," she said. "We understand the distinction, but they see no difference."

And the rest of us had admired her abnegation, while continuing to be comfortable. Mrs. Thornton evidently intended now to make the occasion fit the crime.

"I'm going to have cucumber salad with the fish," she announced.

"I'll dress it," I rejoined, and I went for the oil.

The yard-boy cook explained that the oil was *pau*.

"*Pau!*" cried Mrs. Thornton. "Why, this morning one new bottle come!"

"All *pau;* lady next door come get."

"It's Mrs. Fenwick; she always forgets half her market list; she says I am such a desirable neighbor," said Mrs. Thornton, and her resignation was almost pathetic.

"I'll dress it without oil," I proposed, with considerable temerity.

"Bring cucumbers," Mrs. Thornton ordered in a subdued tone.

And the yard-boy cook brought them.

"What on earth——" began Mrs. Thornton; her eyes were like saucers. She fell on a chair in an attitude that suggested the third act in a comedy-drama.

In fact, the yard-boy cook, with a contempt for seeds as an article of diet, had scooped out the inside of the cucumbers, and, upon further frenzied inquiry, we learned that he had thrown away the salad-to-be, and preserved the rinds alone.

It was discouraging, beyond a doubt. We went into the *lanai* to cool off and write down the menu, even if it might not materialize. The wisdom of never putting anything down in black and white is questionable. We found it distinctly soothing; everything looked so well.

"Thank goodness Mura did the sweetbreads yesterday," murmured Mrs. Thornton. "They may curdle when they are warmed up, but at least they are done."

"Put in a lot of truffles, and they won't notice trifles," I said, with a laudable effort after the facetious.

Mrs. Thornton cheered up at the idea of truffles, and rushed in to open a can.

I did not have the heart to tell her that Frank says there is everything in a name when it comes to truffles; it would never do to call them leather.

"They're in!" she said coming back. "It's wonderful what a touch of black will do; the effect is as *chic* in cooking as it is in one's gowns!"

"Number one: Soup *à la* American," I read. "Number two: Fish *à la* mayonnaise. Number three: Sweetbreads *à la*——"

"So far, so good," said Mrs. Thornton, looking over my shoulder; "but that 's all the far, and I am not so sure of the good. Number four: Frozen fruit punch—you and I can do that. But the fillet and curry and salad, eh?"

We sat in gloomy silence. In fact, so lost in thought was I that it startled me when Mrs. Thornton jumped to her feet with a gasp, and rushed across the lawn after a Japanese carrying an apparently innocent bucket. Mrs. Thornton literally fell on his neck by a magnolia tree near the fence, and wrested the bucket from him.

"It was just Mrs. Almys borrowing my ice-cream freezer," she explained pantingly, as she mounted the steps of the *lanai*.

"What friendly neighbors you have!" I remarked.

"One has to be friendly when there are no corner groceries," said Mrs. Thornton, with more philosophy than content. "Talking of friends, I have an idea!" she added. "I 'll telephone and ask Mrs. Fenwick to make my salad; it 's the least she can do to be neighborly; besides, she has the oil, and she can just lend me something to put under a mayonnaise. Mrs. Almys, my left-hand neighbor, has a good cook, and I 'll ask her to roast my fillet. And Mrs. Dean, who lives across the way, is noted for her curry."

She heaved a sigh of relief and went to the telephone.

In fifteen minutes it was all arranged, and we went into the pantry to make the fruit punch. Mrs. Thornton emptied in liqueurs and liquors recklessly, lavishly, and, as she explained, economically, because it happened that Kami was inclined to drink, and a bottle once uncorked was sure to go any way. Then we went into the dining-room to arrange some gorgeous crimson ponsiana for the table.

We decorated the table, salted some almonds, got out the best china, and tried to cool off in between.

It began to look as if Mrs. Thornton's troubles were gradually fading away when a message to the effect that Miss Stowe was ill, obliged to be absent, etc., etc., started a share of trouble in my direction. Thirteen at table was not to be considered, of course.

And I went home to put on a dinner-gown and a pleasant smile.

I was so tired that the smile was fixed, and I suppose Mrs. Thornton thought I was unsympathetic when she took me into her room and told me that, through a harrowing mistake, she had slaved and suffered in vain over her dinner, for the celebrated Hugo Basilton was in California, and the Basilton in Honolulu was an obscure nephew from Timbuctoo or some other place that Mrs. Thornton never touched in her travels.

"I had heard from San Francisco that Hugo Basilton was there," groaned Mrs. Thornton, "and when I saw 'Basilton' on the passenger-list I just wrote a note to his cousin, Mrs. Dalton, and asked if she and Mr. Dalton and Mr. Basilton would dine with me. They accepted promptly, and I never knew the truth until a few moments ago, when I saw this beardless baby blushing through his introduction. I never liked Mrs. Dalton, any way, and she is more—more so—than ever to-night; she has on a light pink waist with a black skirt. And just think how we worked all day for this! I don't see how you can smile."

I did n't explain, but I felt that I had missed my vocation; I should have been a ballet dancer; my legs might have been weak but my smile would have compensated.

The dinner went off beautifully, excepting perhaps in spots. The most successful dishes, I must say, were the fillet, curry, and salad. Neighbors are a blessing, after all, though perhaps a mixed one.

"Hugo Basilton is going to Japan on the next through steamer, and he 's going to stop over for three weeks," Mrs. Thornton whispered to me ecstatically after dinner. "I 'll just have a breakfast for him. A week from Sunday, at one; will you come?"

And I still smiled as I answered, "Yes."

"I 'm getting tired of this," said Frank on the way home.

He had dropped in after dinner with two or three other men.

"Society is strenuous!" I observed.

"I don't mean that; but the outlook is so gloomy; there 's no possibility of sugar going up this year. It 's all very well for the Thorntons and the Fenwicks and the Kapuas and the rest to groan and talk of their incomes being cut in half; what is the difference when they can live in affluence on the other half? Mrs. Thornton could splurge for a couple of years on the worth of her diamond sunburst alone. Albert Fenwick has lost two or three little fortunes at poker lately, and he will never even miss the money."

"Oh, when we are rich here in Hawaii, we *are;* there 's no doubt of that," I said. "Who won the fortunes?"

"Commodore Chandler, of course."

"Of course, as he don't need money."

"By the way," said Frank abruptly, "why don't you get the Chandlers to give you their photographs to add to your collection?"

"I will," I assented, as the dashing Commodore and his pretty wife rose before me.

"Who knows when Joe Elkins will be around to call again!" he added.

I laughed, for I had confided to Frank that whenever Joe Elkins, who had no small talk in his repertoire, came to call, the photographs made conversation, while otherwise there would have been but a communion of souls.

"I must get them!" I said with conviction.

There was a pause, and then a deep sigh from Frank.

"You must n't be blue, Frank," I ventured softly. "Everything is sure to brighten up soon. Oh, how I wish Mr. Thornton would retain you in his suit against Leielima!"

"No chance of that," muttered Frank. "I 'm getting desperate!"

We walked along in silence. About us, all was peaceful and quiet; the air was like velvet; the breeze was a caress; even the moon shone softly through hazy little clouds; it did not seem reasonable for one's feelings to be disturbed in the midst of nature's harmony. I felt powerless to comfort; I seemed benumbed.

We reached the gate and walked slowly up the driveway. I had a distinct consciousness that girls were hampered. I almost longed to be a widow—until I recalled whose widow. When we reached the *lanai* I turned and looked at Frank. Perhaps if I 'd been a widow, I could not have done more. He grasped my hand and held it tight; in fact, it was a squeeze.

Abruptly he left me. And as I mounted the steps I reflected that a widow might have met his glance at the gate,—not in the safe harbor of home.

VIII.

Mrs. Thornton's breakfast set the ball rolling for the real Hugo Basilton. It was something of a shock to learn that he had been married a year. In fact, Adrienne Singlee had shown an interest in his coming that almost savored of disloyalty to the navy. For Hugo Basilton writes love scenes to distraction,—and a conclusion in stars, none other being permissible. Of course the printer makes the stars, but the "Young Person" suggests them.

Mrs. Thornton declares that men of genius should never marry; she says this may not be original, but a single man is so easy to entertain.

Of course Hugo Basilton had to see a native feast, and Mrs. Thornton persuaded Mrs. Kapua to have one in his honor under her famous old *hau* trees on the beach, where chiefs and chiefesses had revelled in the past.

Mrs. Kapua was more than willing; the author was good-looking and had an attraction possible only to a man of the world. His mannerisms most of the women found fascinating. His smile was sudden and was always preceded by an expression of deep gravity; it brightened up his face into an unexpected radiance that was really taking. Also he had a lock of coal-black hair which fell over his forehead continually, necessitating a toss of his head to throw it back into position. This became exasperating or captivating according to one's credulity or the state of one's nerves.

The *luau* was a regular old-timer, except that there were no *hula* dancers. Mrs. Kapua, being undeniably clever, knew how to gauge her guests; Hugo Basilton was only one of them; the rest were going to stay—and remember. We all sat on the ground with our legs crossed, in a manner trying in the extreme to any one past the suppleness of youth. The women looked pained and spoke of the ecstasy of throwing aside conventionality; the men squirmed and referred to history and the comfortable couches about the festive boards of the Romans. The table-cloth of ferns and the red carnation *leis* at each place, calabashes of *poi,* tropical fruits and gorgeous masses of flowering vines, the heavy scent of *maili,* the plaintive singing of native boys in the background, the murmur of the surf beyond, the soft light of colored lanterns, were all calculated to arouse the great author to a frenzied reach for adjectives and a new book.

Both he and his wife praised the viands, while eating sparingly thereof; this was usual, of course—native dishes look suspicious. The rest of us ate in native fashion with our fingers and considerable relish, not a whit constrained by the politely suppressed but unmistakable wonder of the strangers.

Mrs. Kapua looked dashing and satisfied in a gown of a brilliant shade of red, with her ruby pendant hanging about her neck, a carnation *lei* wreathed saucily in her black hair, just above her brow. She boasts of being "pure Hawaiian," and it goes without saying that she is a princess, for, as Frank says, "Now that Hawaiian royalty is n't, every Hawaiian is." Over her head a handsome Hawaiian girl waved a *kahili* with the rhythmic motion of a trained retainer.

The charms of the other women paled in comparison; even Mrs. Thornton, her good looks enhanced by her exquisite diamond sunburst, and Mrs. Chandler, in pale pink with crush roses, the color of her cheeks, were almost insignificant in comparison with our dashing hostess. It was quite interesting to watch Adrienne Singlee, for it was a study to see how she could keep one eye on Hugo Basilton and the other on Mrs. Kapua, without becoming cross-eyed in the effort.

Mrs. Kapua is regarded as a *kahuna* by the superstitious of the community, and this means that she has supernatural powers in more than one direction. It is queer what a long residence in the Islands will do for us all; I acknowledge that I would not struggle against Mrs. Kapua when she puts on her red gown. *Kahunas* are bad enough at any time, but in red they are in working clothes, so to speak. I, of course, don't believe that Mrs. Kapua can "pray to death," but in the face of evidence I can but think she can "pray to love."

We had all watched the case of Lieutenant Sanford, who was only one among many. Lieutenant Sanford was engaged to a girl at home, and never was a man more oblivious to the charms of all others. Mrs.

Kapua saw him and his six feet two of blond good looks. She put on her red gown and sallied forth to conquer. It was on board the *Dragon*. Mrs. Kapua was dancing a waltz, with a *hula* suggestion skilfully modulated to a perfection of grace. She passed Lieutenant Sanford five times. The first time he was apparently unseeing. The second, he saw her. The third, he regarded her impassively. The fourth, he stared. The fifth, he gazed. Then he asked for an introduction, and from that moment Lieutenant Sanford was Mrs. Kapua's slave.

It scarcely seems fair that Mrs. Kapua should inherit the *kahuna* power while the rest of us are endowed with only human powers of attraction. But Mrs. Basilton was serenely unconscious of any material danger. Her open blue eyes met a half-veiled glance of Mrs. Kapua's with an equanimity which betrayed the fact that she herself preferred blondes. Mrs. Basilton was pretty, very pretty. Her eyes were like violets until, in a shadowed light, they suggested purple pansies. Her skin was dazzlingly fair; her hair waved softly in reddish gold masses. She wore a white lace gown cut off the shoulders in a way that might have been daring had not her shoulders testified to the reason.

"I had no idea that Honolulu was so gay," said Mrs. Basilton. "Really, New York is dead socially in comparison with this." Her intonation was due west; her twang each point of the compass would be sure to disclaim, twangs not being popular. "Mr. Basilton and I have travelled everywhere, but I never got into a place where one needs so many gowns," she declared.

Everybody beamed; the social life of Honolulu we feel to be its little all. And nobody interrupted Mrs. Basilton with the information that Honolulu, in the hope of being written up, had striven for the entertainment of the famous author with every expectation that his next love scene would be entirely tropical and forced to end in stars.

"In fact," added Mrs. Basilton, "I have n't a thing to wear!"

There was a chorus of protest from the women; the men gazed at the fair prattler's snowy shoulders and did n't say what they looked.

Mr. Basilton tossed the lock of hair from his broad forehead. "The wife of Basilton needs no clothes," he said with infinite gravity.

We waited for him to add, "Metaphorically speaking," which might have relieved the tension, but neither the great author nor his wife seemed to think this necessary, so from any one else it would surely have been superfluous. Mr. Basilton tossed the lock once more from his brow and laughed.

"Mrs. Basilton and I went to a dinner before we left New York," he resumed, "and at Mrs. Basilton's seat she found this little squib:

"The wives of great men all remind us
They can do a thing or two,
And, departing, leave behind them
Footprints just a few—and new."

Inordinate laughter greeted the squib.

"Is it true, Mr. Basilton, that an author must feel emotions to write them?" asked Mrs. Kapua, leaning forward and lightly touching his arm.

Each liquid tone of her voice was a caress; her touch—we all know the Hawaiian touch—supple, soft, lingering. Mr. Basilton looked into the depths of her dark eyes, one moment inscrutable, the next guileless, as though for him she allowed the veil to drop that hid her soul. We all know the Kapua road to conquest, though we cannot grasp the side paths of *kahunaism.*

"In a measure," replied the Great and Only Basilton. "I, for instance, am wofully the slave of my moods. You all remember the ball in the eighth chapter of my last novel? Would you believe that I had to put on my dress-suit before I could catch the pulsation, the intensity, that throbs in heart-beats to glowing undertones of music?"

Nobody answered until Adrienne Singlee murmured, "I must read it again." Her tone admitted that she felt she had more to grasp.

"I am too restricted; I never could write," sighed Mrs. Kapua. "But you—you feel that love is limitless."

This implied that she did n't, but as Frank says: "Only she who goes the limit talks of love's limitations."

"Shall we go down on the beach?" continued our hostess, rising. "Mr. Basilton, I want you to see the glory of our moonlight at Waikiki."

"Ah, Hawaii, Paradox of the Pacific!" exclaimed Hugo Basilton. "Moonlight and leprosy, waving palms and bubonic plague; still art thou justly called Paradise!"

And, looking down into Mrs. Kapua's upturned eyes, he sauntered off with her.

The rest of us, as one, stole a glance at Mrs. Basilton. And in her absolute tranquillity it was plain to see that she still thought the blonde mightier than the brunette.

Such is the informality of all entertainments at Waikiki, and a native feast above any other, that a hostess is free. Frank remarked that as Mrs. Kapua was free and Hugo Basilton was easy, the result was a rare exemplification of congeniality.

So it was some time before they returned. When they did they found us in the *lanai,* enjoying some comfortable chairs. Hugo Basilton sought his wife's side and murmured something about "types" and "local color." And Mrs. Basilton "fluffed" her hair into a further study in disorder and ravishing Titian tints.

"It's too bad she's so dark," she rejoined in a low voice. "Could n't you put some gold lights in her hair when you write her up, Hugo?"

The Great and Only Basilton looked inscrutable.

"I'll do my best to make her possible," he said.

And the rest of us realized that he had faith in a liberal public, hope in his editor, and a large charity that reached even unto the stars.

Mrs. Chandler and the Commodore strolled out through the blind doors opening into the *lanai.*

"We have been enjoying Mrs. Kapua's collection of calabashes," said the Commodore.

"Ah, I have wanted a chance to speak to Mrs. Chandler!" Hugo Basilton stepped towards her and bowed low as he spoke, and Mrs. Chandler showed her pretty teeth in a gratified smile. "Your face is very familiar," he added. "I cannot rest until I recall where we have met."

Mrs. Chandler's face fell; the compliment, of course, was no longer distinct.

"Mrs. Chandler has been in every country," interposed the Commodore. "Perhaps in Egypt——"

"No, I have never been in Egypt. Mrs. Chandler, I throw myself on your mercy; surely you must remember where or how you have met me!"

He did not add, "Me, Basilton!" nor a list of his books.

Mrs. Chandler shook her head and murmured that she had never had the pleasure.

But the author still looked puzzled.

"I want to see Mrs. Kapua's calabashes," said Mrs. Thornton, rising. "Frank, will you come with me?"

"Allow me," said the Commodore, gallantly presenting his arm.

Mrs. Thornton slipped her other arm through Frank's.

"Don't you girls wish you were a belle?" she laughed, turning as she stepped through the bead portières, held aside by the Commodore.

Her sunburst, I noticed, shone no brighter than her eyes. I never knew a woman with such sparkling eyes as Mrs. Thornton; no wonder diamonds were so becoming to her.

It was rather stupid on the *lanai* after they left. Mrs. Chandler talked of New York's four hundred and knew the nicknames of all the millionaires. Mrs. Basilton's reminiscences were mostly of the literary set. Her husband spoke little; he gazed, almost stared, in fact, at Mrs. Chandler, and she met his eye carelessly as she flung a procession of names familiar to Fifth Avenue and Newport at his head; Hugo Basilton could never persuade her that the pen was mightier than that they could afford.

I sighed with relief as I heard Mrs. Thornton's voice approaching. I had made up my mind to go home, and I glued my eye to the bead portière, prepared to wink it discreetly but significantly at Frank. He stepped through first and held the beaded strings aside. Just then the electric lights went out—a pleasant little trick electricity has with us, thanks to monopoly and a weak circuit.

Everybody said, "Oh!" But I said it to myself, and it was n't "oh." It was exasperating! Frank could not see my wink. Almost instantly the lights went up, and everybody said, "Ah!"

Mrs. Thornton came towards me, laughing. "A great problem is solved!" she cried. "I'm going to choose a tall calabash for my Christmas present from George."

"Why, where is your diamond sunburst?" I exclaimed.

Mrs. Thornton put her hand to her head and looked bewildered.

Everybody was talking and laughing. I had once heard a Honolulu hostess say that she had ceased to care when the lights went out; it made things so informal. Mr. Kapua, who laid no claim to startling originality, called out, "'Where was Moses when the light went out?'" And his hearty laugh rang just as true as though it were the first time he'd been guilty of the same outrage.

"Don't make a fuss!" whispered Mrs. Thornton to Frank. "Tell George; you and he can help me look for it; I must have dropped it inside."

I went in with them, and we all searched for the pin. But in vain. It was nowhere to be found.

Mrs. Kapua was distressed when told, but confident that the jewels would be recovered. She begged Mrs. Thornton not to worry.

"I can rely absolutely on my maid and on my steward; they alone shall look for your sunburst; I'm sure it has rolled in some corner under the furniture."

There was nothing further to be done, and Mrs. Thornton of course would not make her hostess uncomfortable, so she assumed a confidence she could scarcely feel.

Soon after we left.

"They will surely find it in the morning," I said to Frank.

But Frank seemed tired and depressed, and did not answer.

We drove home almost in silence.

Frank said simply, "Good night," when "Pleasant dreams!" might have been conducive to the same.

IX.

Adrienne Singlee said it was a perfect shame that no one had given the Chandlers a moonlight bathing party, and every one agreed with her, for Honolulu loves the moonlight and loves the sea. Nowhere does the moon shine with such radiance as in Hawaii, and only Waikiki, with its white sands and widely stretching seas, can be lit into such soft, cool, pale beauty.

The Singlee girls made a specialty of their bathing-suits. They all had trim, slim figures, rather on the boyish order, and bathing suits were very becoming to them. They swam well and dived gracefully, and they almost lived in the water.

Frank and I were starting rather late, for we had been discussing Mrs. Thornton's lost sunburst.

"It will not be found," declared Frank.

"Frank!" I exclaimed. "Why not? That's too absurd. Surely Mrs. Thornton must have lost it in the house, for I distinctly saw it when she went in with you and Commodore Chandler to see the calabashes."

"Yes," said Frank slowly; "she had it on then."

"Well—well?" My tone was impatient, but Frank did not answer me. "Frank," I said with some warmth, "you either mean something or you don't!" This was certainly a plain statement and did not seem to call for a reply. At least, there was none. "I shall begin to think *you* took the diamonds if you are so mysterious," I said laughingly.

A dead pause ensued, and I began to feel uncomfortable. At last indignation took possession of me. "I just hate you when you act like this!" I exclaimed. "You evidently have something on your mind, and you either hint at it or keep silent. You don't trust me; we have been friends for years, but you—you treat me like a stranger; not like a friend!"

"We are not friends," said Frank significantly.

"Not friends!" I cried, but my voice did not sound sincere.

"No," said Frank somewhat gloomily; "I am more than a friend to you—you know it, dear. Yet I cannot be more—I cannot say more——"

"Why not?" I began impetuously; it slipped out in spite of me.

"A man has no right to tell a girl he loves her unless he can ask her to marry him," said Frank.

"Any man can ask a girl to marry him," I said tentatively.

"Not always."

"Well, if he isn't secretly married, if he doesn't inherit insanity, or something like that——"

"It doesn't have to go as far as insanity," said Frank. "Lack of money would be sufficient tragedy; it would be a selfish brute who would ask a girl to share his poverty."

"Oh, it's the same old story!" I cried impetuously. "A man is the most selfish while persuading himself of his generosity. He never stops to think of a girl's limitations; he never stops to put himself in her place; it never enters his head to think how she must feel—to think how it must seem to sit around and wait. If she cares for him, she wonders and doubts until the wonder becomes a worry, and the doubt an agony, and she must hide both, while he—with the power to act, with the right to speak which has been the privilege of men since the world began—he keeps it all to himself and comforts himself with thoughts—false thoughts—of his generosity and unselfishness. Why can't he tell the girl and let her at least be *in* it, instead of on the outside, like any mere acquaintance? Why can't he tell her and let her have a say in a question that concerns her as much as it does him? Why can't he let her into a decision which means her life as well as his? If she is willing to take the risk, if she is willing to wait—at least, give her the——"

I started violently. Frank had my hand in his and dropped it guiltily.

"It is only the telephone," I said with a gulp.

I went to answer it, and Mrs. Chandler's voice asked if the Commodore was with me, and if she might speak to him.

"Not there!" she exclaimed, when I told her I had not seen him. "Why, he started for your house a couple of hours ago, at least. He left his bathing suit there yesterday when he went to call; it was done up in a small bundle, and he left it on a chair in the *lanai*, he said. He was to have met me, and I cannot imagine where he can be. I'm not going to wait for him any longer. Will you tell him I'll go straight to the Singlees', and meet him there?"

"All right, I'll tell him," I said. "And if he does not come, I'll hunt up the bundle and take it to the Singlees' for him. I'm just about to start; yes, I'll leave a message for him; good-by."

As I hung up the receiver, I felt I could never go back to the *lanai* and Frank. My cheeks were blazing; I felt almost as if I had proposed. As I hesitated, I heard the Commodore's voice outside; it was a great relief, and I went out after a moment to give him his wife's message.

"I was detained at the club," he said. "I tried to telephone, but the line was out of order."

"Will you drive to the Singlees' with us?" I asked.

The Commodore thanked me and said he would be delighted.

"You dismissed your hack?" This was half a statement and half a question from Frank.

"Hack?" rejoined the Commodore. "Oh, hack—yes, beg pardon, my thoughts wandered for a moment. Yes, the poor old horse was no good, and I got out at the corner, not daring to put him up the hill. Jove! what a view of the surrounding country this house commands, though!"

I could not find the Commodore's bundle anywhere about the *lanai,* so I called Tumi and asked her about it.

"No see," said Tumi. "Plenty sweep before, plenty clean *lanai.* No see."

"I must have made a mistake and left it somewhere else," said the Commodore.

I offered to lend him a spare bathing-suit of my father's, and he seemed most appreciative of the offer. Tumi did it up in her usual deft, quick way, and the Commodore seemed surprised when she handed it to him after a moment or so.

"Is n't it too early to start?" he suggested.

"Oh, no, we are late!" I replied, and I started down the steps to the carriage.

"What is the exquisite scent that always lingers about this *lanai?*" asked the Commodore, pausing.

I explained that it came from the stephanotis vine climbing over the trellis.

"May I have a flower for my buttonhole?" asked the Commodore.

Of course I could n't say no, but I felt like it; the horses were getting restive, and we were late any way. I hastily retraced my steps and picked a bunch of the waxy flowers.

"They are a little heavy for a boutonnière," I said, as I handed them to him.

"Don't you think their perfume would be quite perfect if you pinned them on for me?" suggested the Commodore.

I laughed and assured him, as I started to fasten them in, that he had put this very prettily.

"Here is a pin," said the Commodore, and no sooner had he uttered the words than he dropped it. "How stupid of me!" he exclaimed.

We both started to hunt for it, but of course it was gone, or the light was too uncertain.

"Could you send for another?" asked the Commodore.

But Tumi was right at hand with one. After all, it had not delayed us more than a moment. I jumped in the carriage and the Commodore slowly followed me, after a polite argument with Frank as to which of my escorts should have the seat beside me. Certainly the Commodore was in no hurry. The horses were nervous from waiting and went like the wind. The Commodore kept saying "Whoa!" as though he owned them. He finally explained that he feared I was nervous. I thought to myself that *he* certainly was. Ahead of us was a hack with a white horse that loomed up in the moonlight very white, and equally slow. In fact it was a tired-out hack horse, and no mistake.

The Commodore uttered an exclamation. "Stop!" he cried. "One of the bathing-suits has dropped out."

"Oh, pshaw! how stupid of Tumi!" I cried. "I told her to put the rug over it."

"Allow me," said the Commodore, starting to get out.

But Frank had jumped from the front seat and was back with the bundle in a jiffy.

"Drive fast," I heard him whisper to Nagaski.

We were soon passing the carriage with the white horse, and I leaned forward to see who was inside, feeling sure that it must be some one from our neighborhood, bound for the Singlees'. Coming up from the back, where the carriage lights did not dazzle one, it was easy to distinguish Mrs. Kapua, though she was leaning far back in one corner and almost seemed trying to avoid being seen.

"*Aloha!*" I called out gaily. "Going to the Singlees'; we 'll meet you there." And we dashed on.

"Who was it?" asked the Commodore most interestedly.

"Mrs. Kapua," I answered. "I wonder what she is up in this direction for—and in a hack, too!"

"Are you sure it was Mrs. Kapua?" asked the Commodore, incredulity in his tone. "It did not look like her to me. Yes? Well, I heard her say one of her horses was lame; that accounts for the hack. Charming woman, really. But I prefer the marshmallow myself; no chocolate drops for me!"

For a moment I was puzzled, but the Commodore's bold glance and lowered tone brought the realization to me that I was the marshmallow. So soft, so yielding, so sweet—I really did n't know whether to feel complimented or not. The Commodore pressed his foot against mine.

"Let me be your partner in bathing," he whispered.

"Oh," I protested, "we don't have partners. We—we just go in."

"But may I stay by you," he persisted. "Surely you don't know how to swim? Let me teach you!"

"Fancy an Island girl not knowing how to swim!" I laughed, but the Commodore did not like to be teased, I could see. He could be a bad enemy, I was sure; whether he would be a good friend or not I could n't tell, but at least he might be neutral. "But even if I can swim, you could teach me many things perhaps—if you would," I amended.

"May I?" murmured the Commodore as we dashed up to the Singlee steps.

Evidently the Commodore, too, was not "a bigoted married man."

Everybody was in the *lanai* down by the sea when we got there: Mrs. Chandler, the Thorntons, Mitchells, Elkins, Spotfields, Miss Stowe, Albert Fenwick, Guy Selby, Teddy Skelton and a couple of his cadet friends, Jimmy Jones,—in fact, as *he* expressed it, "The prizes of the bunch." All the women wore shirt-waist gowns, befitting the informality of the entertainment, and the men were in duck.

"Any news of your diamonds?" I asked Mrs. Thornton.

"Not yet," she said dolefully. "My consolation is that they were lost indoors."

When Mrs. Kapua arrived she explained the delay that forced her to keep the party waiting. Her voice was so musical that one did n't care if the reason was off key. She greeted me in her graceful, pretty way.

"I wanted to stop you and get in behind your fast span," she said. "Ah, Commodore, so glad to meet you again! I still remember our waltz together on the *Terror*. All sailors dance so well!"

"Thanks for a very general compliment," responded the Commodore gaily.

Those of us who were going in started for the bath-houses.

"No wonder the Commodore left his hack at the corner!" whispered Frank to me, before he went off with the other fellows.

"Come up to my room and undress," Adrienne proposed. "Then we will go down in our kimonos, and come back to dress comfortably, after we 've had a shower in the little bath-house. There will be nobody in there, and we can have it to ourselves."

Adrienne was ready first, and I followed her a few moments after, with my big towel over my arm. I went slowly over the soft grass, in my stocking feet, for there was always danger of a thorn from the algeroba trees.

The broad expanse of lawn that led to the sea was lit up by the clear rays of the moon, that fell in patches of light between the shadows from the branching trees. Beyond stretched the sea, a dancing, rippling, silvery expanse of water, breaking into snowy froth where the surf thundered beyond the coral reef. I stopped to wonder why the ocean "stayed where she was put"; why no tidal waves rose in their might by our peaceful shore. And I recalled Adrienne Singlee's explanation that the reef might not stop a wave, but at least "it would weaken it down below."

I turned to the left, where the small bath-house stood. It was dark and evidently unoccupied. I went carefully, almost on tiptoe, for I knew of old the thorns that lingered around it where the yard boys neglected to sweep; this was economy of labor, for the other two bath-houses, which were larger, were more often used.

As I reached the door a tall figure stepped out of the shadow, and the Commodore's voice murmured tenderly:

"Are you ready, *Kuu Aloha?*" *

I pressed the electric light button, for which I had been feeling, and he started violently as my eye met his.

A soft footfall behind made me turn; it was Mrs. Kapua just coming out in her fetching red-bathing suit, with red stockings to match and a red handkerchief tied in a saucy bow over her dark hair.

The Commodore's smile faded.

"I had just turned out the light," said Mrs. Kapua, in her musical voice. "Come, we will all go down to the pier together, eh?"

There was one thing certain, and that was that Mrs. Chandler was not worrying over the Commodore. She was busy with Albert Fenwick, who seemed absolutely fascinated by her. She hesitated on the last step that led from the pier down into the sea, in a bathing-suit of heavy black silk, with pale blue bands; it was very *chic* and becoming. Around her head was tied a pale blue silk handkerchief in a stunning bow, just allowing a few curls to escape on her forehead and around her neck; a blue sash, tied on one side in a jaunty sailor knot, completed a costume that made a picture of her.

The water was like a caress; one could n't feel a chill even when first going in. I called to her to join us, but she still hovered on the brink and shivered prettily.

"Mr. Fenwick is going to help me put on my water-wings, and then I 'll come," she said.

But it took a long time to fasten the water-wings, for she stayed on the step all the time and looked just like a cute little chorus girl on the stage.

Adrienne, Céleste, and Léonie Singlee, on the end of the pier, locked arms and walked backward until they stepped off into the sea. This required some nerve and curly hair; the Singlees were blessed alike in each. They dived from the spring-board, turned back somersaults, and were as much at home in the water as fish.

Mrs. Kapua and the Commodore swam out to the raft, where they stood silhouetted against the sky, most discreetly far apart.

There were really only a few of us who went in, as is usually the case at bathing parties. Mrs. Spotfield, Mrs. Kapua, Mrs. Chandler, the Singlee girls, and I were the only women; the rest watched us from the pier and declared it was all very fine while you were in, but too much bother to get dressed again. There was just a sprinkling of men left on the shore.

The romping and diving, the shouts and peals of laughter, rose above the murmur of the surf and the splash of the waves on the beach, until one laughed from very sympathy. The water was so velvety and warm that we stayed in longer than usual, but at last we reluctantly came out, and one dripping figure after another sought the bath-houses.

---

* My loved one.

We found cocktails and caviare awaiting us in the *lanai,* and a delicious supper followed. Every one was hungry after the swim, and while we were enjoying salads and sandwiches Frank recalled to my mind a similar function the Mitchells had given last moon, on a damp, south wind night, when the water was cold and the refreshments were iced lemonade and watermelons. Even Christian Science could n't withstand such "a claim."

It was so late that we left soon after supper. I asked Miss Stowe to drive home with us, as she lived so near, and while she and Frank talked I lay back in my corner sleepily, with hazy thoughts of the Commodore and his mislaid bathing suit, and Mrs. Kapua and her ways.

X.

I FELT sorry for Mrs. Thornton; she seemed so distressed about her lost pin.

"It is not only the value of the stones," she said to me, with her pretty eyes full of tears, "but George gave it to me when baby came; and then—then—— And after—I could n't wear it at first, but now it seems like a memory of her pure, bright little life. We both of us love it. I 'd rather have lost anything else, every jewel I possess!"

"It will be found," I said, trying to console her. "You are so concerned about it that you don't look at it from a reasonable point of view. How can it be gone forever when it is somewhere in that house?"

"The servants?" suggested Mrs. Thornton.

"Nonsense!" I interrupted firmly. "What would those Japs know about the value of the jewels? And how could they dispose of them here in Honolulu? If they tried to sell them they would at once be found out."

"That 's true," murmured Mrs. Thornton, more brightly. "I won't give up hope yet. Mrs. Kapua will be at the Mitchells' this afternoon; maybe she will have good news for me then; she may be waiting to tell me herself instead of telephoning."

The Mitchells were going to open their new driveway in the afternoon, and we were all to be there at about five. The garden was pretty as we drove up, for the Mitchells made a specialty of flowering trees and vines; it seemed as if they had all bloomed for the occasion, or as if the occasion was because of the bloom. The golden shower hung in gorgeous yellow branches, the ponsiana trees, like huge umbrellas, shaded us with tropical crimson clusters, so thick that one could scarce see any green, and further along riotous vines of magenta bougainvilia climbed over an arbor that led to the house. Brilliant crotons edged the driveway, and branching banana and palm trees were scattered about the wide stretches of lawn.

From one side of the open gate to the other was tied a thick, heavy rope of pink carnations, and every one came in by the foot-path near by. A *koa* table under the shade of the ponsianas down by the gate held a large punch-bowl and glasses; near it was a big tub of ice filled with bottles of champagne. A group of pretty little Japanese maids in their kimonos, with specially striking *obis* for the festive occasion, stood back of the punch bowl and lent a picturesque touch of Japan.

At about half past five a shrill shriek from a siren was heard, followed by whistles and tooting of horns, and along sped a big motor. followed by a couple of others close behind. Through the pink *lei* dashed the heavy car that led, scattering the flowers to right and left, and from its interior the Mitchell children, with shouts of glee, flung a profusion of pink carnations which fell amongst us, a shower of spicy sweetness. In the next car were the three Singlee girls and three cadets from the *Terror*. They were all in white, with pink *leis* about their necks and hats. Following them closely were Commodore and Mrs. Chandler and Albert Fenwick; she wore a big picture hat and a gown of clinging, shimmering pink, and as she descended from the car—after the motors went the length of the winding drive and back again—she looked like a beautiful pink rose.

Amidst the tooting of horns, the shrieks of the siren, and the popping of champagne corks, the occupants of the cars alighted and were greeted by Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell. In a few moments trays filled with glasses of champagne were handed around by the Japanese maids.

"Here 's to the new road!" said the Commodore, stepping forward and raising his glass. "May it lead to happiness!"

"*Prosit!*" cried Jimmy Jones. "Me for the new road, for it never could be the straight and narrow path."

This certainly was a tribute to the broad, winding driveway of which the Mitchells were so proud.

As the Commodore turned toward the table to put down his glass, Mrs. Mitchell stepped forward with Dr. Russell, who had just come in that morning on his way to San Francisco. Dr. Russell was one of our boys, who had accepted a position as ship's doctor, on account of his health, and had been travelling back and forth on one of the *Marus* for the past year.

"Let me introduce Dr. Russell," she began. "Dr. Russell, Mr.——"

"Oh, I 've met Mr. St. Claire before," said Dr. Russell.

"Beg pardon," said the Commodore coldly. "I really have n't the pleasure."

He took off his hat and wiped his forehead leisurely.

Dr. Russell looked up with a puzzled glance. "Perhaps I 've made a mistake," he said slowly. "I mistook you for a chap I met at the United Club in Yokohama."

"So sorry,—I don't recall you," said the Commodore, and he turned abruptly away.

As he did so the *lei* he wore around his neck swung and caught in the button of Dr. Russell's coat. With a smothered oath, the Commodore jerked backward; his lips were drawn tight, showing his teeth in an ugly snarl. His expression was not pleasant; he did not look as though bound by so light a tie as a floral wreath. It held for a moment and then parted, and the loosened petals of the flowers fell in a shower at his feet.

My! what a temper he had! I glanced at Mrs. Chandler; she was biting her lip and looked annoyed—or nervous. Neither of the men spoke, but after an awkward moment the Commodore, with a slight bow, moved away.

"Mrs. Kapua is not here," said Mrs. Thornton, joining us. "I wonder why?"

"She telephoned me she had a bad headache and could not come," replied Mrs. Mitchell.

"Will you go there with me in the morning?" Mrs. Thornton asked me. "I have an idea I may have dropped my pin in one of those tall calabashes. We were talking and laughing, and might not have noticed, particularly if there was anything in the bottom that might have deadened the sound. It 's too late to drive there this afternoon, but if you 'll go there with me in the morning——"

"Of course I will!" I declared heartily.

Mrs. Mitchell bustled off to order more champagne, and Mrs. Thornton's attention was claimed by Hugo Basilton, who had sauntered in a little late with an absorbed air and a toss of the coal-black lock from his brow.

Mrs. Chandler was talking to Albert Fenwick, as usual. I idly wondered if the fascination of the wife induced him to play poker with the husband, or if the fascination of the game led him to her as a sort of "half-way station" proposition. The three Singlee girls and the three cadets had separated into tête-à-têtes and individual effort, to the undoing of each cadet. The telephone was ringing insistently from the house, in the distance; no one seemed to notice it, however, and after a moment I went up to Mrs. Mitchell and asked her if I should answer it for her.

"Oh, thank you, dear," she said, "if you don't mind. And if it is for me, just send one of the Japs down to tell me."

I hurried off, as the telephone bell broke into a steady ring.

"Hello! Hello!" I cried somewhat breathlessly, as I took the receiver from the hook.

"Mrs. Mitchell's house?" asked a musical voice, unmistakably Mrs. Kapua's. "Please ask Commodore Chandler to come to the telephone. Tell him the Moana Hotel wants him."

"Hold the line," I replied in a business-like tone, and I went to hunt up one of the Japs.

"You know Commodore Chandler?" I asked. "Yes, tall gentleman. You go tell him come telephone, *wiki wiki*." *

The Jap flew, and as the Commodore came in the front door I went out the back.

"It was for the Commodore," I explained to Mrs. Mitchell as I joined the party on the lawn again.

In a few moments he returned to us. "I'm so sorry, Mrs. Mitchell," he said, "I shall have to go. Captain Jeffreys has telephoned me from the *Gelda*, and I shall have to get on board at once. I'm not going to hurry Mrs. Chandler off, though; Fenwick can bring her down later."

He took his leave, and after a few words with Mrs. Chandler jumped into one of the automobiles and flew off as though the *Gelda* were about to sink into the sea and needed him to save her.

XI.

In the morning, directly after breakfast, Mrs. Thornton and I started for Mrs. Kapua's house. Mrs. Kapua in a red *holoku* ran down to the carriage as we drove up. She looked pale and a trifle drawn in the bright morning sunlight.

"We have not found it!" she exclaimed excitedly. "At your suggestion, I searched the calabashes myself, but they are empty. The entire house has been turned upside down; the rugs have been shaken; most of the parlor furniture has been out on the lawn; every corner has been swept out. I intend to follow this matter up; I shall find out who stole your sunburst. It was done in my house, and I shall make it my duty to find the thief!"

"But who—how—?" stammered Mrs. Thornton and I in chorus.

"The sunburst was in your hair when you went inside to look at the calabashes. You were alone with Commodore Chandler and Frank Alden. When you came out—it was no longer there!"

The silence that ensued was heavy with an intensity that seemed almost to shriek. I felt the blood rush to my head and then recede; my very lips felt cold and stiff; my heart beat almost to suffocation.

"I would stake my life on Frank's honesty!" cried Mrs. Thornton at last. Her voice trembled.

---

* Quick.

"Commodore Chandler's position and wealth raise him above the need of a defender," Mrs. Kapua rejoined slowly.

My eyes met hers; her glance was cold, implacable. Commodore Chandler was her latest—and Frank had resisted Mrs. Kapua's fascinations in the past. Perhaps he was the only "town boy" whom first, last, and always, she had never been able to bring beneath her sway. Was this revenge? For Mrs. Kapua could hate.

"I accuse no one," she resumed. "I consider it my duty to sift the matter, and I shall do it. I cannot discover the thief in a moment, but it will not take me long."

The rest of the conversation was a blank to me. When we drove off I had not opened my lips.

"She intends to find the culprit through her *kahuna* powers," I said to Mrs. Thornton, when I could speak. "In other words, whether she is a *kahuna* or not, she has the reputation, and she can influence many of the natives. It is n't the natives alone, either, who believe that Mrs. Kapua is a *kahuna*. Even Mrs. Fenwick, being superstitious, went to her when she lost her ring. If she decides to ruin Frank, she can! She dare not accuse him openly, but she can injure him with her innuendoes, backed by her reputed power."

"But why should she try to injure Frank? Do you suppose she is actually smitten with Commodore Chandler and is afraid that he might be suspected——"

"No, not that, of course," I interrupted somewhat impatiently. "I mean, no one could suspect so wealthy a man. But for some reason or other, she is trying to implicate Frank."

Mrs. Thornton laughed at me and tried to reassure me; but she was plainly troubled.

"I must say that this has happened at an unfortunate time," she admitted at last. "Frank has talked hard times so gloomily of late. Of course we—all his friends—understand. Now I am going to ask you a plain question: are you and Frank engaged?"

"No!" I answered emphatically.

"I was going to suggest that now would be a splendid time for you to announce it. Your father's position in the Islands, his well known integrity, would make the announcement of his daughter's engagement equivalent to a guarantee of his belief in her lover. Such a proof of trust given to the public now would be enough to avert the possibility of suspicion; and suspicion is an ugly thing when once aroused. Of course I know the state of affairs between you two, or I would not say all this. I know that for five years, at least, Frank——"

"But what 's the difference what you may surmise?" I cried. "It is politeness to wait until you 're asked. Please don't humiliate me further; no girl has a right to believe a man loves her unless he tells her so."

"Oh, where is intuition?" cried Mrs. Thornton. "But oh, where is my diamond sunburst?" she added. "If we could only find that! It is too absurd to believe that Frank could be suspected; I will not harbor such a ridiculous thought."

"It is just as ridiculous to suspect Commodore Chandler."

"More so," assented Mrs. Thornton amiably.

We discussed the subject threadbare, and I went home to lunch, after which came a good cry in the solitude of my own room. Lying prone upon my bed, I gave way completely. Then I dried my eyes and tried to think the situation over calmly.

We had drifted along, Frank and I, through the lazy, thoughtless, happy hours, content in the present, and with little thought for the future. It was a way we all acquired in *Hawaii Nei*. As Frank says: "We blame it on the climate, but when we blame the natives we forget the excuse."

But now, brought face to face with danger, I knew that the ideal had vanished and we must meet the real.

When Frank came in after dinner I began abruptly:

"What would you do if you loved a girl, and that girl was in danger?"

"I should try to save her."

"But if the danger only threatened?"

"I should try to protect her."

"Well, if you were a girl and the man you loved were threatened with disgrace, then what would you do?"

"I 'd use my tongue."

"But if your tongue were not long enough to reach?"

"It would be long enough if I loved."

"Then if it were tied; if the man had not cared enough for you to tell you so, and you had no right to go around defending him—then what?"

"Then I 'd give up!"

"Ah, there 's the injustice of it!" I cried. "A girl can't half live; she has to stifle every impulse, and half breathe, half act, half think, half talk——" I choked.

"'T is true," said Frank calmly.

I sprang to my feet.

"But," added Frank, "if a man cared for a girl, she ought to know it, and she might dare to act." I sank back in the hammock. "But you can't change the world; a girl is restricted and always will be. A man who cared for a girl would fly from her if he was in danger, but he'd fly to her if danger threatened her. The girl who cares can look coy; it's safe, and it's about all there is for her to do."

"It's cruel!" I gasped. And Frank did not reply.

In the dark of the *lanai* I clenched my fists, and I did n't look coy. I had my cue and I came on with a rush.

"Frank," I began solemnly, "if I were accused of stealing Mrs. Thornton's diamonds——"

"You," cried Frank. "*You!*"

Words seemed to fail him.

"I don't say it has come to that, not actually to that," I murmured with infinite guile; "but if I were suspected—if I should tell you——"

Frank began to pace up and down the *lanai;* this was encouraging.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "Preposterous!"

"Listen to what might be," I interposed plaintively. Monotonously, drearily, I recalled one little incident of Mrs. Kapua's *luau* after another which could be construed into evidence against myself, joining them into quite a logical whole. Frank might be a lawyer, but even a lawyer's heart may get away with his head. At any rate, Frank came over to the hammock and took my hand in his.

"Give me the right to defend you!" he cried. "You know I am poor, you know I have been waiting until I could at least plan a wedding-trip before I asked you to marry me—before I told you of my love. But now——"

"You don't really love me!" I broke in impetuously. "True love does not wait to calculate, to doubt, to question. Love does not need a wedding-trip. Just to be with the one you care for—that alone is enough. On a desert island one could know infinite content. But you—you talk of wedding-trips, the future, and call your doubts my happiness. I—I'm sure you plan ahead and wonder if you can afford a hack for my wedding calls. Love! You don't know what love is! Love lets the future take care of itself; it oversteps, it *strides* over, the bounds of prudence. Love cannot be argued down, repressed——"

But I was sobbing it all out in Frank's arms.

"Little one," he murmured, "Little one!"

As our lips met I knew the weary months of waiting, the tender unselfishness, the disappointments, the hope,—the love that was strong enough to endure.

And Frank,—I wondered if he knew my soul was in that kiss.

In a few moments Frank said we would announce it at once.

And I said:

"*We will!*"

XII.

Mrs. Kapua telephoned her congratulations when the news reached her next day.

"He's the finest fellow in the world, eh?" she declared in her musical voice.

And I agreed sweetly. For in Honolulu, where we meet daily, it is n't comfortable to harbor enmity. As Frank says: "We love luxury, but in the luxury of hating we cannot indulge; for though we are not too broad, Hawaii is too narrow.'"

Of course Mrs. Thornton gave us a breakfast. She had expected woodcock by the *Hongkong Maru,* due from Japan the day before, and had counted on this delicacy for a course. In fact, as Frank said, "Honor to whom honor is due," but he could n't help being mixed as to whether the woodcock or our engagement was the incentive for the breakfast. Mrs. Thornton had to substitute brains, which she admitted was harrowing for all concerned.

Besides Frank and me, a few of his best friends and some of the girls I liked, there were the Chandlers, because they were strangers, and Mrs. Kapua—just to show her we hadn't understood.

She was a few moments late and looked handsomer than ever when she came in, dressed all in white, with no touch of color except her ruby pendant.

"Your sunburst was found this morning, Mrs. Thornton!" she cried excitedly as she entered the *lanai.* "I wanted to have the pleasure of telling you myself and seeing your surprise, or I would have telephoned at once."

She handed the glittering stones to Mrs. Thornton. Henceforth their sparkle could only be glitter to me; but Mrs. Thornton was just as pleased to recover her treasure, in spite of my vanished regard. She gaily stuck it in her hair, smiling happily in answer to everybody's exclamations of delight.

"Let me see your pin!" said Frank in tense tones that suggested, "Your money or your life!"

I looked at him in some surprise, and Mrs. Thornton raised her eyebrows inquiringly.

"Why, of course," she said, drawing it out of her hair, after just a shadow of hesitation.

Frank took it in his hand and examined the ornament as though he had never seen it before. Then he turned it over and looked at the back.

He returned it to Mrs. Thornton without a word; he seemed almost dazed. I saw the Commodore exchange a lightning glance with his wife. Had they, too, seen Mrs. Kapua the day after the *luau* and been affected by her innuendoes?

"Handsome, is it not?" drawled Mrs. Chandler. "I suppose you know the stones by heart, Mr. Alden?"

"Oh, yes," said Frank, with an absent-minded air unusual to him. "Though I have little knowledge of precious stones, I think I would know these."

"They are unmistakable," declared the Commodore, "both in purity of color and workmanship."

"It was caught 'way up in the beads of the portière," explained Mrs. Kapua. "Of course we only searched on the ground, but still I don't see how we missed finding it all this time. The only way I can explain it is that, being moonlight, we have not had the *lanai* lighted; during the day the sun is kept out by the thick vines, so the pin has really been in a dark corner all the while."

"'All 's well that ends well,'" Mr. Thornton said cheerily, rising as Kami announced breakfast.

And his words found an echo in my heart.

"Who went to see the Basiltons off?" asked Commodore Chandler at the table.

"Why, we all did," cried a chorus in reply.

"Hugo Basilton is going to write up the poetry, the sentiment, of our floral farewells," said Mrs. Thornton. "He says the native boys can play their plaintive airs quite touchingly, but the tears will come to our eyes when we read his description of how the band plays '*Aloha Oe*' as the ship is slowly moving off."

"Who was Mrs. Hugo Basilton?" asked Mrs. Chandler, with a drawl calculated to relegate Mrs. Basilton to the rank of a chorus girl.

"She was a Miss Berry, daughter of a merchant from somewhere in Massachusetts," Albert Fenwick answered. "The Berrys are quite well known, I believe."

"Oh, but she seems so *nouveau!*" protested Mrs. Chandler. "No? Well, then, she must have been very poor, at least, some time in her life."

Nobody seemed ready to stand forth and rescue Mrs. Hugo Basilton from the aspersion. The Commodore and Mrs. Kapua, seated side by side, were plunged in a flirtation which promised shortly to become violent. I felt hypnotized by the baleful glitter of the recovered gewgaw. As for Frank, he seemed drugged into oblivion of his surroundings. Neither of us could have been suspected of having lately been transported to realms of bliss; though of course our inertia might have been ascribed to our having reached a haven of rest, possible only to perfect happiness.

I roused myself with an effort. "Don't you sing, Mrs. Chandler?" I asked. "I 'm sure you do; promise that you will sing for us."

This was a brilliant thought; there would be nothing to do after breakfast—there never was.

"I do sing just a little; only enough to amuse the Commodore and myself while we are at sea; I could n't think of inflicting my songs on this audience."

"Oh, promise that you will give us a chance to judge!" I begged with some feeling.

The others joined in my entreaty, and after we finished our black coffee, which was served in the *lanai,* Mrs. Chandler good-naturedly went to the piano, while Mrs. Kapua and the Commodore sought a secluded nook outside.

She sang a song in which a patriotic story was unfolded in many verses. She enunciated clearly, and her power of dramatic expression compensated for any lack of voice. The tune was of the order known as "popular." The chorus was stirring, and she gave it with vim.

"Would n't it be effective in short skirts, black stockings, and waving an American flag!" whispered Frank in my ear.

"Your imagination is n't respectable!" I rejoined severely.

But Frank did not catch the deserved reproof, for Kami was telling him, in his peculiar Hawaiian-Japanese-English lingo, that he was wanted outside.

Mrs. Chandler sang a coon song with telling effect, and followed it with a pathetic ballad picturing an ungrateful daughter, lured by the glamour of stage life and champagne suppers from her country home and her poor old father's side, finally to return to the farm, disillusion—and presumably hard cider.

Mrs. Chandler's repertoire was varied, her audience delighted, their applause enthusiastic. Of course I saw only the black stockings, according to Frank's suggestion. I began to wonder where he was and what the messenger had wanted.

"I never sang for a more appreciative audience!" laughed Mrs. Chandler, rising from the piano stool as the Commodore appeared at her side. "But we must be going; indeed, we must; it takes longer than you 'd think to reach the *Gelda.* She 's lying quite a bit off, you know."

"Just sing one coon song before you go!" begged Albert Fenwick.

Frank returned as Mrs. Chandler finished the first verse. "Will you come outside?" he said to me in a low tone. "I have something to tell you."

"Oh, Frank!" I protested. "We can't leave in the middle of her song. Wait till she finishes."

Frank muttered something that I could n't quite catch, and I looked at him in surprise. His face was stern, his mouth drawn into a straight line that read, "Do or die!" or something dreadful.

"What is the matter?" I cried. "What did the messenger want?"

"It was my mail from the *Hongkong Maru*," answered Frank. "I left orders to have it sent to me; my boy took it to my house, and as I'd left he tried yours; they sent him here."

"No bad news, I hope?" I asked anxiously, though wondering what bad news could come from Japan.

Frank shook his head.

Mrs. Chandler's song had come to an end and, leaving the group around the piano, she walked towards us with the Commodore.

"Can you come to us on the *Gelda* Thursday for a little dance?" she asked cordially. "We want to have a few of your friends to celebrate your engagement."

"How kind of you!" I cried.

"I am sorry," said Frank slowly and distinctly, "but we decline to accept your hospitality."

There was a dead pause. The Commodore's bold glance flashed a challenge. His wife turned white to her lips, except where her cheeks stayed brightly pink.

"You will explain!" muttered the Commodore furiously.

"I will," Frank answered firmly.

"Later," the Commodore added, and, giving his arm to Mrs. Chandler, they turned without another word and left us.

"Frank!" I gasped.

"Hush," he whispered. "No one has heard. Wait for me here."

He rushed off, and I saw him make a signal to Mr. Thornton, who hurriedly joined him.

I hesitated a moment, and then followed Mrs. Chandler into Mrs. Thornton's room, where I knew she must have gone to get her hat. I did n't know what I intended to do, but somehow I could n't let her go like that.

She was standing in front of the mirror, and as I went in I could see her reflection and knew that although she gazed into the glass she did not see herself, but looked through it, and beyond.

She turned with a start as I appeared behind her. I don't know what she saw in my eyes as she looked into them, but her face softened,

"Look here, *chère amie*," she said, "the game is up, and I know it. But what to you would be a tragedy, to me is only an episode. If the ship sinks, I'll float; if the Commodore goes down with her—well"—she shrugged her shoulders—"well, there are just as good fish in the sea. Don't waste any feeling on me; I'm not in your class, that's all!"

She took off the *lei* of pink carnations she wore and threw it over my head.

"Good-by," she said, turning from the doorway, pretty, pink, and smiling.

After everybody had gone I told Mrs. Thornton all that had happened. Men were brutes, we decided; Frank should have explained, and George was no better.

It was a whole hour and a half before they returned.

"Here is your diamond sunburst!" cried Mr. Thornton, as he and Frank ran up the steps and came in abruptly upon us.

Mrs. Thornton put her hand to her head; I never saw a woman look more puzzled. I had calmed down.

"Begin at the beginning!" I demanded, and I looked Frank in the eye. No doubt he saw I had been tried.

"Well, here are the documents in the case," he said hastily, taking a bundle of letters from his vest pocket. "But to obey commands and begin at the beginning, I distrusted the Chandlers from the start, although it seemed madness to suspect a man of the Commodore's apparent wealth, his reputed position. I first felt justified in my prejudice against him when he won so daringly often at poker. When Albert Fenwick lost his third staggering sum of money, I decided to investigate. I wrote for information to my old friend John Boynton in Japan, knowing that the *Gelda* had lately been in Yokohoma, and I enclosed a photograph of the Commodore."

"A photograph!" I cried. "I did n't know you had one. I asked Mrs. Chandler for one, and she promised to give it to me, but she never did."

"I know," Frank said. "But for purposes of my own, I quietly took a snap-shot at them one morning. Of course I could n't put such vague suspicions as mine into words," he added. "This is what Boynton writes me:

> "The photograph you sent me is unmistakably that of Harry St. Claire, although in the picture his hair seems dark and he wears a mustache. When we knew him here his hair was light and he was smooth-shaven. Harry St. Claire is the king of modern swindlers, and he found our little community dead easy. Soon after his arrival he was put up at the Club by two Englishmen, well known fellows among us. Because of his genial manner and lavish ways, he soon became a welcome visitor. He gave entertainments on board his yacht on a generous scale; still, a poker atmosphere pervaded everything in his vicinity. His departure was sudden and well-timed; that 's one thing about St. Claire, we have since heard—he always knows when it 's about time to go.
>
> "Harry St. Claire has wrung thousands from people, under the very noses of the police, though he has a record that covers England, South America, China, Samoa, Australia, and a few other countries—perhaps by this time Hawaii—and his aggregate debts would foot

> up a quarter of a million at least. For three years, St. Claire, who poses as the Commodore of the Atlantic Yacht Club, has been sailing the magnificent yacht, entertaining royalty and millionaires at every port. Wherever he has stopped, St. Claire has borrowed money; in some places he has borrowed jewelry, without saying "By your leave." Generally he returned it promptly and always with paste, his collection from the Palais Royale being of considerable value and comprising stars, crescents, sunbursts, birds, insects—all the latest designs known to the jeweller's art.
>
> "With his good address, social adaptability, plenty of assurance, and 'ways that are dark,' Harry St. Claire has not found it difficult to live for a few weeks, or even months, in each port. Poker has sailed the *Gelda*, in addition to bogus land schemes, bottomry bonds on his yacht, drafts cashed for his benefit but never honored, etc.
>
> "His wife was a vaudeville artist of some renown as a dancer. She was billed:
>
> FIDETTE
>
> *Song and Dance Artiste*
>
> Her picture is still a favorite seller, and she has the proud distinction of having a perfume named for her. She has some talent, but her chief claim to notoriety was through her association with an aeronaut who was dashed to death at Central Park, New York, some years ago."

"That—that—was Prince Otto!" I stammered.

"He got mixed in the shuffle," said Frank. "She may have thought him a prince of good fellows, but he was really among the others by accident."

"And the sunburst Mrs. Kapua found?" asked Mrs. Thornton in dazed tones.

"Paste," Frank assured her. "A good enough imitation to deceive any one but an expert. The Commodore has been getting up quite a flirtation with Mrs. Kapua, as we all know. During one of his visits to her it was easy enough to fasten the bogus pin to the portière. In the first place, when the lights went out at the *luau*, the Commodore was standing by the switch. One button served for *lanai* and living room; the Commodore lives on chance—he took the chance. From my position, I could see the reflection of a light burning in the mosquito room in the back. Afterwards I discovered there was no lamp in the room, and I knew that the Commodore must have been responsible for the extinguished lights. Even then I could hardly bring myself to suspect him of actual theft, and thought he must have pressed the button either by mistake or through a spirit of fun. When day after day passed and the pin was not recovered, I became more and more convinced that he was a common thief, and I could scarcely believe my senses at last when Mrs. Kapua appeared with the diamonds. Of course the Chandlers read my thoughts; when you 're guilty you 're good at guessing."

Mrs. Thornton's cheeks were flushing and paling; her eyes were brighter than either the imitation or the real sunburst.

"But what did you do, George?" she cried excitedly. "Where have you been? How did you get it? What did he say?"

"We followed them down to the yacht, stopping on the way for the marshal, who accompanied us on board with two of his men. We faced the commodore with the mail from Japan, and supplemented a demand for the original stones with a few persuasive arguments. But nothing seemed to make the slightest impression on him; not for a moment did he drop his defiant aspect. After in vain threatening him with exposure, arrest, disgrace, we at last hit upon an idea that seemed to appeal to him. We offered to keep the whole affair quiet until he got away if he would return the genuine sunburst, and I proposed to sign a paper to the effect that I would let the matter drop and not prosecute him now or in the future. This, coupled with the alternative of immediate arrest and a search of the *Gelda* from bow to stern, seemed to touch the right spot, and in a few moments more the whole matter was settled to our mutual satisfaction. There 's only one thing I don't understand, Frank, and that is why he gave us that triumphant look when we were leaving. You remember he said, 'Are you sure you are satisfied?'"

"Count the spoons!" suggested Frank.

"Perhaps he has Mrs. Fenwick's ring," I added.

"How can we ever thank you, Frank?" cried Mrs. Thornton. She looked at her gorgeous sunburst and then at Frank. In her pretty, impetuous way, she flung both arms around him and kissed him twice.

"I 'm twice rewarded," Frank said, smiling broadly. I thought this quite gallant. "Mr. Thornton has just retained me in the case of Aloha against Leielima," he further explained.

Kami came in with Mrs. Thornton's mail, and while she read it Frank and I slipped off and were happy.

"We must go back," I said at last. "They will think we are lost or have gone home; besides, you 're getting spoiled. I 'm not going to make a hero of you any more."

"A hero!" groaned Frank. "Not much! On the stage a man may look every inch a hero when he discovers the villain; but in real life he feels mighty small; I could hardly meet the Commodore's eagle eye!"

"Never mind," I whispered comfortingly. "The man she loves is always a hero to a woman."

Mrs. Thornton was just finishing her mail when we entered the *lanai*. "Some friends of Mr. Boyer, who entertained us so hospitably when we were in Japan, are coming to Honolulu by the next through steamer," she said. "I'll just give them a breakfast; will you both come?"

"So sorry we can't"—Frank's tones betrayed unadulterated glee. "In fact," he added, "we will be on our wedding tour about then."

"Oh, I'm glad!" said Mrs. Thornton genuinely,—which was not equivocal in the circumstances.

"You'll be invited to tour on the *Gelda* no doubt," Mr. Thornton said. "The marshal can escort you on board with official display; he is going out in the morning just to quench his thirst for knowledge as to the sort of poker game in which the Commodore indulges."

XIII.

BUT the marshal was a little tardy; even a marshal does not hurry in the tropics. And in the morning the luxurious *Gelda* no longer rode at anchor in the harbor of Honolulu.

Mrs. Kapua's ruby pendant went along; at least, it was gone, and it seemed reasonable to suspect the Commodore—or Mrs. Kapua; her ruby pendant has dangled from many a watch-chain in the past.

When Frank told me of her loss I chuckled; the most obtuse could not have misconstrued my lack of sympathy. Frank was plainly surprised; it is no doubt painful to see one's ideal smile with joy when a sigh of sorrow is in order.

"It just serves her right!" I cried. "She isn't punished half enough for daring to suspect you of stealing!"

"Suspect me!" exclaimed Frank. "Do you mean to tell me that Mrs. Kapua thought me the thief?"

"She certainly implied that you had taken Mrs. Thornton's sunburst."

A pause ensued and lengthened into minutes while I waited for Frank to say: "Absurd! Impossible! Preposterous!" or some one at least of those words.

At last he said, "Ah-h-h!" and that was all; it was half a sigh and half a groan, and he looked gloomy in the extreme.

"Of course we believe—she believes—I have believed—in your innocence," I ventured.

Frank rose and paced the *lanai*.

"What is the difference?" I murmured consolingly. "It is all over now."

Still Frank did not reply. "You thought me in trouble," he muttered at last. "You accepted me through pity!"

I gasped. Love is indeed blind. Filled with wonder that he could be so dense, I did not speak for a moment. And while sunk in a revery memory awoke; I was plunged into an abyss of doubt.

"I told you that I was in trouble," I said slowly, "and you proposed to me—then!" My voice was full of tears.

"But, after all, pity is akin to love," Frank began more cheerfully, breaking in on a long silence.

"Take all my pity then," I said generously.

"I need it—I 've given you all my love!"

"I 'll take back my pity and make it a fair exchange!" I declared.

And Frank said that if I was not lavish, at least I was a lightning calculator.

◆

OCTOBER

BY ROSCOE GILMORE STOTT

MONTH of a thousand singing winds—
Petulant winds that will not rest—
Yours are the days I love the best.
When they are come, my spirit finds
Freedom to lose itself in space,
Yearning the winds to keep apace.

Month of a thousand falling leaves—
Tinted by Nature's master skill—
Long have I gazed across the hill,
Craving the joys my heart receives
When you have come to be with me,
Season of woodland gayety.

Month of a thousand mystic dreams,—
Tinged by the leaves of red and gold—
What is the magic spell you hold?
Is the charm less than what it seems?
Ah, 't is a secret passing strange—
We are so fickle-fond of change!

ABOUT GOOD HEALTH

By Elbert Hubbard

❧

THERE are three serious objections to my health prescriptions: first, I make no charge for them; second, they are written in plain English, without myth, miracle, or mystery, and can be understood even by the mediocre mind; third, you have to fill the prescription yourself, and this costs effort.

Sickness is a selfish thing. If you are well, you are expected to work, and give your time and talent to helping other people. If you are sick, you are supposed to be immune from many unpleasant tasks and duties.

Mark Twain says he was never wholly happy excepting on two occasions. One was when he was given that Oxford degree and wore a marvellous red cloak and mortar-board hat; and the other was when he had the measles and expected to die.

The joy of holding the centre of the stage and having the whole family in tears just on his account was worth all the pangs.

Mark is a humorist, and a humorist is a man who has the sense of values, and to have the sense of values is wisdom. Mark is a great philosopher as well as a humorist. Not only has he testified that pangs and pains are the attributes of life, not death, and that there is no pain in death, but he also gives testimony that sickness is an acute form of selfishness. The sick man disarranges the entire scheme of housekeeping wherever he is, unless he be in a hospital. To have his meals served to him in bed he regards as natural and right. For once he holds the centre of the stage—all dance attendance. Doctors come, nurses run for this or that, neighbors call and inquire. He is it.

The paranoiac is a person who craves attention, and, rather than go unnoticed, commits crime. Just observe how most sick people obtrude their maladies upon their friends, and then tell me whether sickness is not usually a form of paranoia!

Dr. Johnson said the sick man is a rascal. Not only is the remark true, but Dr. Johnson might have gone further and stated that a long period of rascality is required to produce most cases of sickness.

Fear, hate, prejudice, revenge, jealousy, wrath, are all disturbers of the circulation, and producers of toxins. This toxin poisons the entire system, and, continued, may produce rheumatism, dyspepsia, cancer, neuritis, sciatica, Bright's Disease, or various other pleasant things for which we look to the doctor for relief.

Most people go through life on a short allowance of ozone, and a surfeit of food. We eat too much, and breathe too little.

Life is combustion—the digestive tract is a boiler. And as oxygen is necessary to fire, so it is to life. The value of exercise in the open air lies in the fact that it is getting a goodly draft of oxygen through your system, and this forced draft is both eliminating refuse and burning up the slag.

These things are all so trite and true that it seems silly to write them out for cultured people, and yet cultured and educated people are sick quite as much as are the other kind. In fact, more so, since necessity is often removed, and the person has the privilege of going to bed in the morning, getting up when he pleases, eating a multiplicity of dishes that set up an internecine war, giving the saw-buck absent treatment, and forcing or bribing other folks to wait on him.

It is a curious comment on our civilization to find our great sanitariums and health resorts full of college graduates. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, Vassar, Smith, and Wellesley are all represented constantly at Battle Creek, Mount Clemens, Dansville, Hot Springs, Richfield, and Alma.

Imagine an LL.D. being given vicarious exercise by a healthy colored man who cannot read nor write; a Ph.D. looked after by a saucy slip of a nurse, in becoming cap and apron, fresh from the farm and paper-box factory; an M.D. being vigorously Muldooned by a man who knows nothing of medicine, but something of health!

A great surgeon tells me that he has never yet seen a case of appendicitis where the patient had not been addicted to the Beecham Habit. That is to say, this disease is the result of medicine, just as are many others.

So here is the prescription: Get the Health Habit—

By throwing physic to the dogs—because it will not hurt the dogs, since they know better than to swallow it.

Drink pure water.

Eat what you like, but do not overeat.

Have a regular daily occupation.

Breathe deeply and much in the open air.

Have a veranda bedroom open, if possible, on two sides, or at least sleep in a room with windows run up wide, even if the water pitcher freezes.

Think well of everybody, especially doctors, for good doctors everywhere are practising a Science of Prevention and are doing the best they can, considering the ignorance, superstition, and inertia which they have to combat in their own minds and those of the patients.

THE SCHOOL-MOTHER

By Owen Oliver

◆

IT was funny what a lot the fellows at our school thought of the old Head's wife, because she did n't think anything of herself. She knew that she did n't understand the things that went on in the school, and had the sense not to interfere; but she liked us to tell her about them, and what she thought was generally sensible. You could tell her what you would n't tell the masters, because she always saw your side of it, as well as theirs, and never gave you away afterwards. Sometimes she could get the Head to see things in the proper light when we could n't, and we all knew it was she who got him to give up the silly idea of altering the tea hour, though she only laughed when we asked her.

Some of the fellows thought that she was a lot cleverer than she knew, except over games. I believe she only pretended to be interested in them because she thought she ought to. You simply could n't make her understand what off-side was, and she always fancied that every duffer played beautifully. She used to have a try at tennis herself, and give us tennis parties. She was ripping at making tennis-cake; but she could n't play a bit. It was an awful job to let her win, but none of the fellows would beat her on any account.

When she had us to tea—she always invited every one every term —she used to get us to manage the games for her; and she always asked us older chaps to advise her what would be best for the school garden parties. But they would n't have been any good without her, though she tried to give us all the credit.

The best thing about her was that she never bossed us, or ordered us about; and as for sneaking—well, if you knew her, you 'd know that she would n't. If she met us out of bounds she pretended not to see us; and if the Head was with her she 'd talk to him and keep him looking the other way; but it made her flustered and uncomfortable, so we were rather down on chaps who broke bounds.

If she met you in the town she did n't just give you a stuck-up nod, but bowed and smiled all over her face—she had a jolly nice way of smiling—but you had n't got to go and speak to her unless you wanted to. She was very particular about that and hardly ever stopped us, except the new boys and the fellows who were down on their luck.

She came to see you every day when you were in the infirmary, and read to you and wrote letters to your people at home, and talked to you about them. She did n't make out that there was nothing the matter with you, but she made you feel you 'd soon be well again, and bucked you up tremendously.

Another decent thing about her was that she did n't shove her baby down your throat, or expect you to kiss it—ugh!—like some women do. "I know boys are n't interested in babies," she always said, "but baby is so interested in boys, the naughty little girl!" So we used to look at it, and say it was a good-looking kid and we liked it, just to please her. It 's name was Winnie, and it used to laugh at you and say, "Boy, boy!" and grab at your fingers. It was awful fun when she was learning to walk, and one day when she was out in the mail-cart with the nurse she screamed after me and I had to walk beside it to keep her quiet.

That was just before the old Head left. It was a bigger school and he got a lot more money, and we gave him a gold watch; but he was cut up about going all the same; and she kept wiping her eyes when she said good-by to us. We gave her a watch, too, from the school; every chap brought her a bunch of flowers besides, and went up and shook hands and gave them to her. Then we gave her "three cheers"—only, it was about a hundred. Hollingbrook's mother went to see her at the new school, because they were friends, and wrote and told him that she kept the flowers all in a big drawer, though they were faded; but what she thought most of was the doll's house that we bought for the baby. It was a funny little youngster, and you could n't help liking it a bit; but we should n't have done it if it had been any one else's kid.

The new Head was a quiet chap and wore spectacles, and wrote books, and was supposed to be clever. He was frightfully absent-minded, but he had been in the school himself and was reasonable, so we did n't object to him; but we objected to *her* like anything—his wife, I mean. We called her "the Terror."

She was tall and thin and dark and not old. You could n't say she was n't good-looking, and she was friendly enough to talk to; but she was so frightfully bossy that nobody could stand her. She was a B.A. and had taken honors, or something, in mathematics, and she 'd won no end of golf and tennis tournaments. She rode a bicycle and a horse as well as a man, and drove their motor herself; and she did make it go, I can tell you! Her brother was R. P. Crichton, the international at football and cricket, and the one hundred-yards champion. So she thought she knew all about games and sports, and tried to teach us!

She began on me the very first time she saw me play footer. I was captain of the under-sixteen team, so I did n't want a girl to teach me.

"You have the making of a fine half, Johnson," she said, just as if she was a master, "and I quite admire the way you stick to it; but you should pass lower and further in front of your man, so that he can take the ball on the run." (As if I did n't know that! The trouble is to do it!)

She told Tomlin that he was too fond of playing the man instead of the ball (I 'm always growling at him about it, but he 's such an obstinate beggar that you can't alter him), and Williams that he went to sleep (he does!), and Carter (he 's the best runner in the school) that he ought to take two steps less in the hundred. She told everybody about something. So it was n't long before we all hated her.

There were lots of other things that we did n't like in her. She met Richards and Venning out of bounds and walked straight up to them.

"I give you boys fair warning," she said, "if I meet any of you out of bounds after this I must report you. Bounds exist for a reason."

I dare say they do (though I never could see it); but what could *she* know about it?

She upset the whole infirmary, and had the walls done with colored stuff instead of paper, and the hangings taken off the beds, and a lot of things put in that she said were sanitary. She persuaded the new Head to have shelves put in the top of the dormitory cupboards, because she said "the boys would like them." We did rather; but when we found out that it was her doing we would n't use them.

When the garden parties came on she bossed everything and did n't ask us to show her; and if the servants did things the old way she had them altered. She had a conjurer and a professional chap with long hair to play the piano, and sang herself. It 's no use saying she could n't sing, because she could; but we thought it was beastly show-off. We had to clap a bit on account of the Head—he 's really quite decent—but we should n't have done it enough for an encore, if we had n't wanted her to sing another.

She managed the cricket teas herself, instead of leaving them to the housekeeper. The teas were better; but we did n't think it was her business to interfere. She pretended to be frightfully keen on the cricket, and actually had the cheek to come and look on at practice every night! She 'd stand behind the nets and get quite excited with you.

"Oh, Johnson," she 'd say, "*do* keep a straight bat." Or, "Carter, Carter, *do* pitch up further!" And if you made a good catch she 'd clap her hands and look as pleased as if she 'd done it herself; and she actually tried to show me how to get a finger-break! She did understand cricket better than most women; but, of course, she 'd picked it up from her brother.

She tried to teach the first team even! But Holloway scored off her. He 's a ripping bowler, and he 'd be the best bat in the school if he was n't such a mad slogger. He went in against Mapleton when we were six wickets down and wanted forty; and she was so excited over it that she caught hold of his sleeve as he passed her.

"Play steadily, Holloway," she whispered, all in a fluster. "Be sure you play steadily."

Old Holloway just grinned down his long nose—you don't catch *him* getting flustered—and went in and stood with his bat over his shoulders and smashed at everything, and made 46 off 11 balls. The twelfth had him; but, of course, we 'd won. When he came out she looked at him and he looked at her and grinned. She bit her lip, but she did n't say anything. Neither did he. But when he was taking off his pads he chuckled.

"You had her that time, old man!" said Simpson. He 's the captain, and he hated her interfering.

"Yes," said Holloway. "Only—she was quite right, you know. She 's a good sport."

Holloway seemed to like her somehow, and used to go and play her at tennis, and they won the doubles in the town club; but the rest of us would n't play with her if we could get out of it. We did n't mind being beaten—she was a ripping player, though she was only a woman—but we could n't stand being told things all the time. She called it teaching us. As if we wanted to be taught by her!

I was maddest of any one with her. The fellows always said that I was her favorite, and that made me wild to begin with; and when she caught me out of bounds she did n't report me, only gave me a lecture, and that made them say it more than ever. I said she 'd never reported any one because she knew the Head would n't listen to her because she was n't a master, and it was n't favoring; but they would n't listen to me, so I got wilder; and the match against the second team of Mapleton made me as furious as I could be.

It was over a beastly knock that I got in the ankle. It fairly bowled me over, and I could n't stand, and they carried me into the pavilion. She came rushing up with bandages and stuff in a bottle—she was great on first aid and all that sort of thing—and first-aided me, or whatever she called it. The old Head's wife used to do it, but she did n't call it anything. *She* always made a fuss about you, and did n't want you to play any more (but of course you did); but the new one made out it was nothing—as if I should come in for a little tap!

"There!" she said, when she 'd finished messing me about (she did the bandaging all right, I 'll say that for her). "Now you can go in again. It hurts a bit, I know; but you must think of your side, not yourself."

I simply stared at her.

"Of course!" I said. "Thank you;" and I hobbled back to the field. She came up to me afterwards and said she had n't meant to hurt my feelings, and never doubted my pluck for a moment; but I did n't give her credit for that because Tomlin heard the Head whisper to her that she 'd "hardly done the youngster justice." So when she sent me some liniment in the evening, I poured it down the sink; and after that I never spoke to her if I could help it, and went another way whenever I saw her coming. So I had n't much to do with her for a month; till the day after I heard about mother. It was Wednesday when I heard, and the operation was to be on Saturday. I had n't even heard that she was ill before, so it rather knocked me over. I 'm fond of mother, and I knew what a beastly thing it was, because I 'd been done for appendicitis myself. I expect it runs in families.

I was n't going to tell any one except Tomlin—we 're chums, and all our people were in India together till father sent the mater home in the spring. But I made such an ass of myself in form on Thursday that old Brown noticed. He let me down easily, because he knows that I always do my work, and after school he asked me what was the matter. He was decent about it and told the other masters not to mind if my work was a bit off. I suppose he told the Terror too, for she came and spoke to me in the evening. I had n't gone to practise, because I felt slack, and I was sitting on the seat by the big tree reading.

"I 'm very sorry, Johnson," she said. "Really and truly sorry. It is a great blow to you, I 'm sure; but you won't meet trouble half way, because you 're a good sportsman. It does no good to brood over things. I should go to practise, if I were you."

I got up and went to practise; but I played a rotten game. The fellows chaffed me about it at first, but she whispered to Tomlin and told him to tell them what was the matter. So, of course, they stopped chaffing. Tomlin thought it was rather decent of her, but I thought it was beastly cheek. Anyhow I did n't care, because I was too jolly miserable.

On Friday it did n't seem as if I could do anything right, and Brown said I 'd better take a holiday in the afternoon. I was in my study putting my box straight (I keep mother's letters in it) when there was a knock at the door; and who should walk in but the Terror! She had the decency not to stare at me, but, of course, she noticed that I 'd been blubbing. A fellow can't help feeling those things somehow; and I 'd always meant to do a lot for mother when I grew up.

"Oh, Johnson," she said, "I 'm going out in the motor. I thought perhaps you would like to come with me."

I did n't want to go in her wretched motor; but I thought anything would be better than doing nothing. So I went. My word! She did make it go! And she explained all about it, and let me drive when we were on a wide road. I made up my mind that I would have one some day and take the mater out—if she got well.

She was very civil that afternoon, and said that I had plenty of nerve, and should soon learn to drive well. She asked me to tea afterwards. I said I thought I 'd go and fag at my mathematics, because I was in for the scholarship at the end of the term, and it would please mother if I got it; but she said I could do the work just as well in her study and it would be quieter. So I sat there with her and the Head. When she saw that I was stuck she came over and sat beside me and helped (the Head is a classical man, and he said he did n't expect his mathematics were as good as mine). She was n't bossy over trigonometry, though she knew a terrific lot of it. When I did n't understand she did n't get mad, only frowned and poked her mouth with the end of her pen, and said, "I 'm afraid I did n't put it quite plainly. Let 's try again, shall we?" When we had finished she showed me her stamp collection and we changed some duplicates; and then she said I 'd better have some dinner with them, and afterwards the Head taught me chess. She helped me, but he won.

When I was going she squeezed my hand awfully hard, and whispered, "Surgeons are very clever nowadays. Be brave and don't worry." I thought it was decent of her to recollect about it.

Saturday morning was frightful. I could n't stick class, and Brown let me go out. I hung about the gate looking for a telegraph boy. He went to the Head's house, so I did n't see him after all. It was half past eleven (the thing was at ten) and I was counting a thousand to make the time go, when the Terror came round the corner. She was actually running; and I saw that she had a telegram in her hand.

I ran to her, but she caught hold of my arm, and pulled me behind the shrubbery, and made me sit on a seat before she would tell me. I went rather faint, so I don't recollect just what she said, only that she held both my hands, and told me that they gave mother an hour to live, and she wanted to see me; and Walker—he was their man—was to have the motor ready in five minutes; and we must go round the back way, because Mr. Harnden (that 's the Head) would want to go instead of her, if he knew about it, and he would n't drive so fast as she would. At least, that 's what she *said;* but I believe it was because she thought we 'd get smashed up, and she 'd rather be killed than him.

"It 's twenty-seven miles," she said, "and a frightful road; but we 'll do it in time, please God!"

"Thank you," I said, and got up. I was dizzy and had to lean on her arm.

"I ought to tell you plainly that we run a great risk," she warned me, as we got in. "But you are willing to take it, of course, to try to see her?"

"Of course," I said; and off we started. Then it suddenly occurred to me that it was a risk for her as well.

"How about *you?*" I asked. "It is n't *your* mother."

"Oh!" she said. "We have to take risks for our friends too, you know; and I hope you and I are—friendly."

"I 'll fight any fellow in the school if he says anything against you," I told her. I would too!

It 's hilly round the school, and the roads are pretty bad. I was nearly jolted off the seat once or twice, and she said I had better hold on to her arm, because she was used to it. When we turned the corners we had to get over to one side, and sometimes we seemed to stand on one wheel. Once we skidded nearly into a ditch; and when we were going down Breakneck Hill we fairly bounded, and I shut my eyes. In a lane we nearly ran into a cow, and a beastly lot of sheep blocked us for a bit. We only just missed a cart going through a village, and a policeman shouted after us. There was such a cloud of dust that you could n't see anything behind, so she expected he would n't see the number. She hoped he would n't because Mr. Harnden would be frightfully cross if she was summoned.

"Why!" I said. "You are n't afraid of him, are you?"

"No-o," she said; "I 'm not afraid of him, but—that 's just why I don't like to displease him. If I had an accident, and you did n't—— Tell him I—sent him my love. Be sure you remember."

"Yes," I told her. "I expect he 'd be awfully cut up if you were hurt. I——" I was going to say that I supposed it would be my fault, but she saw a wagon in front of us.

"The hooter!" she interrupted. "The hooter!"

I squeezed it like mad, but the beastly wagon would keep in the middle of the lane, and we only pulled up just in time. The man would n't give us a chance to pass for ever so long; but she jumped down and ran in front and explained to him, while I drove slowly. Then he pulled right into the hedge like a shot, and we flew by; but we 'd lost nearly three minutes.

"Can't we go faster?" I asked; but she shook her head.

"I 'm doing my best," she said.

"I know *that,*" I told her.

Then something got in her eye, and made the tears run like anything; but she kept on steering somehow while I wiped it out. I gave her a regular dig in the eye when we jolted, but she did n't make any fuss about it, and said it was n't my fault.

She gave me her purse to get the money out for the toll, so that we need n't stop, only slow down, at the ferry bridge. I began to say that mother would pay it back. Then I remembered and began blubbing. She blubbed a bit, too. I had to wipe her eyes, because she could n't see to steer, and she dared not take her hands off just then.

We had a nasty side slip at a place called Marberry. I thought we *were* done for that time; and we chipped a great splinter off the side of the car against a wall. We ran over a heap of stones just afterwards, and they flew all over us. One cut my forehead a bit, but I saved her face with my hands. I was glad I 'd done something for her.

Then we came to Stepelton Hill. There 's a great danger notice at the top, and several people have been killed there; at least half way down, or at the bottom. My hair nearly stood on end when we rushed down it. She did n't say a word, only sat looking straight ahead; but her arm was frightfully tight on mine; and when we got to the bottom she drew a long breath.

"I thought we should n't turn the last corner," she said, "but—here we are at Stepelton." That is where mother's house is.

"Do you think we shall be in time?" I asked.

"Pray to God," she said, "my dear boy." She pressed my arm.

"I—I have a little," I owned.

"So have I," she told me. I thought it was decent of her, because it was n't her mother.

I showed her where to turn off the High Street into Fox Lane, and then into Victoria Road. It 's number three. She glanced up at the house as we stopped, and grabbed at my shoulder.

"The blinds are still up!" she cried. "You 'll see her! Be brave when you do. Be as brave as you can. My *dear* boy, God help you!"

"Yes," I said. "Thank you."

I jumped out of the car and ran to the door, and she came just behind me. Old Mary opened it and flew at me and hugged me, and kept laughing and crying.

"She 's taken a turn for the better, Master Fred!" she declared. "A turn for the better. She 's sleeping and you must n't go up till she wakes, the doctor says."

I felt funny all of a sudden, and the place seemed swimming, and she—Mrs. Harnden—caught hold of me and dumped me in a chair.

"Don't give way," she said. "Be—a—man!"

And all of a sudden *she* fell on the floor. It was such a bad faint that Mary had to run to fetch the doctor. I picked her up and carried her to the sofa before he came. She was n't a bit heavy, so I knew she was n't really strong, and it made me think how frightfully plucky it was of her. I was in an awful stew till she opened her eyes.

"I'm ashamed of myself," she told the doctor when she came to. "I've never fainted before."

"No," said the doctor. "No! You're a very brave woman; but you don't go risking your life a dozen times every day, I suppose! I don't wonder that it was too much for you."

"Oh!" she said. "It wasn't *that*. You see, I was risking the *boy's*. I'm fond of my boys, doctor; and especially this one!"

If I'd heard her speak of me like that a few days before, I should have been mad; but now I wasn't; and when she looked at me and tried to laugh—she was like chalk—I thought of all the things I had said about her and nearly choked over it. I believe I should have made an ass of myself only I thought of something to do.

"I'll run and telegraph that you're all right," I said and bolted. It was a long telegram (two and eightpence) and I said how plucky the doctor thought it was, and put in at the end that she sent her love. I think that fetched her, because I've always been her favorite ever since and everybody knows it.

I told the fellows about it when mother was out of danger and I went back to school; and we voted that Mrs. Harnden (we don't call her the Terror now) was all right, and she could be as bossy as she liked and we didn't mind it; and we subscribed and bought a gilt clock like a motor-car and gave it to her; and she took her own clock off her study mantelpiece and put ours there instead.

"Why, that's just what the old Head's wife would have done," I told her. (She showed me the mantelpiece first.) Then she asked me about her; and I told her. "We never thought we should like any one else after her," I said, "but now we do; and *I* like you better."

"*Do* you?" she said. (I could see she was pleased.) "Well, I'll have to let *you*. But the others mustn't."

And when we broke up for the summer holidays she asked the old Head's wife down, and had their photos taken together, and gave one to every fellow in the school. She said they were our two "School-mothers"; but Mrs. Mayers (that's the old Head's wife) said that we could only have one at the time; and Mrs. Harnden was our "School-mother" now; and she wouldn't have given us up to any one else, but she would to her.

"I can't be your School-mother now," she said. "I'm off-side."

We laughed for five minutes. Then the old Head explained that she meant "over," and we laughed for another five; and then the new Head said she wasn't because she was "back," and we laughed till we cried; but they all agreed that Mrs. Harnden was our "School-mother"; and we've called her that ever since; and if any fellow said anything against her, he'd get his head punched jolly soon.

THE PIN-HEAD

By Caroline Lockhart

ONE of the reasons why life was not at fever heat in the Swift Current canyon was because no two families that still remained in the busted copper camp were on speaking terms with each other.

When "Dad" Walker had occasion to refer to Mr. William De Wolfe, who lived in the house opposite, he usually identified him by saying, "The skunk who dens in the shack acrost the street"; and when Mr. William De Wolfe felt called upon to speak of Mr. Edgar Harrison he generally prefaced his observations by the statement that he was referring to "the wood-pussy who lived down there by the bridge"; while Mr. Edgar Harrison, from his rocking-chair by the window, frequently called his daughter's attention to the fact that "the pole-kitties up the street were sticking close to home."

It is difficult for persons whose lives are broad and interests many to enter understandingly into the atmosphere of a small and isolated colony with its petty but intense feuds, its threadbare topics of conversation, and its paucity of ideas. On the other hand, the world off there to the East somewhere, beyond Blackfoot and Havre, off there where the Great Northern starts, where miners are entombed by the hundred, where there are riots and cowardly murders, burglaries, social and political wars, that world where these things happen, is, to the small and isolated communities, like a myth. Swift Current read the happenings of the world in occasional newspapers, and promptly forgot them. Some recent evidence of the innate cussedness of Dad Walker, or Harrison's latest comment upon the actions and personality of Bill De Wolfe, was of vastly more interest than the assassination of monarchs.

The snow lay drifted deep in the one and only street of Swift Current. The north wind swept down the canyon, and the occupants of the three tenanted log shacks looked through their windows and the swirling snow, and dissected their neighbors with caustic tongues.

The conversation which was going on in the ten-by-twelve log shack where Dad Walker "batched" with his partner, a long, lean, swarthy person known as "Bacon-Rind" Dick, was a fair sample of that which was carried on at intervals during the day in the other two houses in the camp. De Wolfe, the squaw-man, rehearsed his grievances to his wife and his wife's father, Running Rabbit, who was paying his son-in-law a visit of indefinite length. And Harrison, helpless and hopelessly crippled for life, as he insisted, sat in his chair rehashing his grievances to his daughter as she went about her household duties.

Having loaded the stove with cottonwood chunks, Dad and Bacon-Rind fried the soles of their cow-skin moccasins on the stove hearth while they roasted their neighbors. They had a system about it, beginning always with Harrison down by the bridge and ending with De Wolfe across the street. They showed no partiality, whatever, but did them up daily in a neat and orderly manner.

"Every day about four o'clock I gits the blues so bad I don't hardly know what to do," began Dad restlessly. "If it ud chinook so I could git out and see somethin', it would n't be so bad; but this here scenery goin' straight up for a mile on three sides, and fifty mile of Injun Reservation a stretchin' out in front of you, gits monotonous. It 's snowed four days now, stiddy, and De Wolfe looks like a badger crawlin' out of its hole when he comes out of that tunnel he 's run through the snowbank at his side-door."

"We oughta bury the hatchet in this here town and all git together," declared Bacon-Rind, who was naturally of a sociable and forgiving nature.

"No, we ought n't," declared Dad fiercely, wedging the stem of his pipe in the space where his front tooth was missing. "We ought n't," he reiterated. "When I gotta gretch I gotta gretch, and so long as Harrison and me both live I 'll never forgit what he said about my pig. You did n't know that pig, Bacon-Rind, but you have my word for it that he was a pig among pigs. He was a looker, that pig, and he was that spiled with attention that he did n't know he was a pig—he thought he was a Walker.

"There were about five families in town then, and everybody was good to him, carryin' him scraps and comin' over to talk to him. He was a hot favor-ite with everybody. It was De Wolfe who told me what Harrison said about my pig. De Wolfe said he felt he ought to, and so he ought. He had met Harrison a-carryin' of a pail of sour milk, and he says, 'Where you goin'?'

"'I 'm a-goin',' says Harrison—'I 'm a-goin' to feed the pig what 's on the town.'

"So I puts up a sign what says:

"This is a private pig. Neighbors keep their grub to home.

Harrison, you bet, surges over with no more sour milk, for he knowed well enough what I meant. I never spoke to Harrison sence."

"Don't blame you at all," said Bacon-Rind sympathetically, "not a-tall. I regards him as an out-an'-out 'knocker' ever sence he told that she-tourist that I wore a buckskin skirt seven years—seven years, mind you, when I never wore no shirt, of no kind, longer than two. I was a-doin' good, too. I was makin' a stand-in till he sprung that, then she passed me up like a white chip. I 'm civil to Harrison, I aims to be civil, but I never steps over his door-sill."

"What I 'd like to know," said Dad, beginning on De Wolfe, "is what a man can think of hisself who dee-liberately marries a blanket squaw. De Wolfe and me ain't been what you 'd call sociable sence I beat him up for stealing a widder's rockin'-chair when he was movin' her out to the railroad."

"He jumped my quartz claim till I kicked him back of the ear, and I see him myself dope an ile well for a tenderfoot from St. Paul. It——"

"The cryin' need of the hour in this here country," interrupted Dad vigorously, as he stirred the ashes with his toe, "is a travellin' gallus, a gallus that ud hang one or two in every family between here and Kalispell."

"I 'll tell you about me," declared Bacon-Rind. "If Capital takes holt in the spring I 'm goin' to sell and git out. I 'm goin' to buy me a saloon in Great Falls, fer there ain't nobody in this here camp I 'd look at, much less speak to, and I aims to move some in society before I dies."

"Same here," said Dad sourly.

Mr. William De Wolfe, rubbing bear grease into his saddle to soften the stirrup leathers, occasionally lifted his head and looked wistfully through the window at a small log building in the rear of the shack across the street, where Dad Walker was known to keep his winter stores—bacon and flour and delectable air-tights in plenty. Running Rabbit, following his earnest gaze, comprehended perfectly.

"No good time," said De Wolfe's father-in-law.

William De Wolfe realized that fact quite as clearly as did Running Rabbit, yet he could not control his yearnings and wistful glances. It was excellent tracking snow, and any midnight raid upon Dad's storehouse could not but entail disaster, and he would better curb his proclivities for appropriating other people's provisions, however much he might crave a change of diet. Mr. De Wolfe always forgot that there was a winter coming until it had arrived, then he spent the long days reviling his neighbors for having plenty and refusing to share with him. He had turnips, and he had beans, and if any cattle strayed off the Reservation he had fresh beef, but he hankered for tomatoes and potatoes, corn and bread made from white flour. In his heart he regretted keenly that he and his neighbors were not on speaking terms, for speaking terms were borrowing terms. Independent as he might be in summer, he was servile enough in winter, but his servility did him no good, since Dad and Bacon-Rind persistently refused to recognize him. There had been a dispute over a wounded mountain sheep which all had claimed. If the first snow had fallen, Mr. De Wolfe would not have been so aggressive, but the weather was mild, and, as usual, the little matter of the coming winter had quite slipped his mind.

"Reg'lar hogs, them two," said De Wolfe glumly, for just at that moment Bacon-Rind had opened the door to heave a tin can into the street. "Jest set over there all day long and eat canned pears and canned peaches and canned plums." Unconsciously Mr. De Wolfe licked his lips. "I despises them," he added tersely.

Mr. Edgar Harrison at the window of his log house of two rooms moved painfully in his rocking-chair and groaned—not one groan, but many. All the agony of which the human body is capable seemed to be concentrated in each of Harrison's groans. Groaning had become a sort of diversion with him, as some people recite poetry or sing. Harrison believed firmly that his back was broken. He said there were times when he could distinctly hear the ends grit together, where the break was. He had inadvertently stepped into a ten-foot hole which represented one hundred dollars' worth of assessment work done by Bacon-Rind upon a tenderfoot's copper claim, and Harrison saw in the location of this hole a malevolence of intent upon Bacon-Rind's part which was little short of fiendish. He forbade his daughter to mention Bacon-Rind's name in his presence, though he himself talked of him constantly.

If Harrison had had a brain to educate, he would have been a man of some learning; as it was, he had only a vocabulary.

"No human mind can fathom my anguish when I realize that I shall never walk again," moaned Harrison, "that I shall never be as other men are, never again to gird on the armor of manhood and go forth to give battle in life's strife."

Rose Harrison, washing lamp-chimneys at the pine table in the corner, looked at her father quizzically.

Since most of his battles in "life's strife" had been of a verbal nature, and had taken place from a nail keg in some "General Merchandise Store" while she had supported them both by teaching little half-breeds their multiplication table, she could not see that his invalidism need make any material difference in his mode of life. Observing, also, that he lost no sleep and that there was no perceptible diminution of his excellent appetite, she did not permit his sufferings to prey upon her mind.

"Cruel, cruel fate," went on Harrison, "that leaves me like a derelict in the Sargasso Sea, drifting with every tide, blown hither and thither with every changeful wind, and all because a pin-head dug an assessment hole where he had no business to. Girl"—in a quavering voice—"even to feed myself is torture, and I shall never lift a pound again. I shall soon be an old man—my only solace memories and my pipe, and all because a pin-head——"

"Father," said Rose Harrison sharply, "be careful where you throw your matches."

The walls of the log-house were covered, for the sake of warmth and appearance, with the cheap, dark gray outing flannel blankets so plentiful in the far West, and Harrison had thrown a lighted match dangerously close to the wall, where the blankets met the floor. It is possible, also, that weariness at hearing Bacon-Rind so constantly referred to as a "pin-head" had something to do with the irritation in the girl's voice, for prior to the time when her father had stepped into the assessment hole Bacon-Rind had spent many of his leisure hours on the sill of Harrison's kitchen door.

It was late the next afternoon that Dad observed, after their neighbors had been temporarily exhausted as a topic of conversation, "I 'll have to fetch in another piece of swine-buzzom for supper, looks like."

"I 'll get it"—Bacon-Rind rose at once.

"I want a breath of air, anyhow." Dad pulled his german socks over his moccasins and went out.

Half way between the cabin and the store-house he stopped and looked suspiciously at tracks in the snow which led toward Harrison's house. The wind had half filled them, but there they were, undoubtedly. Since there was no communication between the two families, what could it mean? He opened the store-house door and promptly swore. They had been robbed! Tins of plums were missing! Dad knew to a can how many should be there. Eight were gone!

His pale blue eyes were gleaming when he returned to the cabin.

"Our air-tights have been stole!" he blurted out.

"Who do you think could have done it?" Bacon-Rind was surprisingly calm.

"The tracks p'int to Harrison, and I know he did n't pack in anything but dried fruit fer winter."

"But how could Harrison, with a broke back, walk up here and steal an armful of air-tights?"

Dad looked perplexed.

"That 's right," he agreed.

"More like, it 's De Wolfe or his father-in-law," went on Bacon-Rind, "and they walked around by Harrison's to throw suspicion there in case the wind did n't blow the tracks out overnight."

"That ud be Injun."

"Then they 've made a big circle and come up through the woods at the back of their house." Bacon-Rind made the statement as positively as though he had seen them in the act.

"I 'll take my s'arch warrant and go over after I swaller a bite," declared Dad, in growing wrath. "I 'll ketch 'em at supper with a plum in their mouth."

"Oh, I would n't say it were worth doin' anything like that," said Bacon-Rind quickly. "It would mean a ruckus."

"Ruckus or no ruckus," declared Dad, "air-tights is air-tights, and when I drives a onery pack-horse loaded with grub fer sixty mile, I don't aim to have it stole and et without mentionin' that I ain't pleased."

"But it would n't sound well if it got out that you killed a man fer an air-tight," pleaded Bacon-Rind. "It would n't hardly be called provocation."

"No jury would hang me if they knowed the truth," said Dad firmly. "But De Wolfe ain't no more fight in him in winter than a range horse, and I aims to git them plums back peaceable. I aims to be pleasant and polite until I sees where he stands."

"That 's the play to make," agreed Bacon-Rind, in evident relief. "Don't git on the prod."

Dad ate his supper hastily, like a man who has an important engagement which he fears missing; and when he had eaten he took his old 45–90 from behind the door and threw in a couple of shells. Then he put on his coon-skin cap, drew his german socks over his moccasins, and, with his "s'arch warrant" under his arm, started across the street.

He knocked and opened the door. In his expectation of finding each with a plum in his mouth he was disappointed, for the family already had eaten and the dishes were stacked on the table. It was evident that an I. D. beef had strayed recently from the Reservation, as there was a strong odor of fried liver in the air.

"You thievin', saddle-colored, in'ard-eatin' mutt!" began Dad. "Whar 's my plums?"

De Wolfe's jaw dropped.

"Plums?" he repeated blankly.

"Yes, I said 'plums'—plums you stole out of my store-house last night!"

De Wolfe straightened haughtily. The sensation of being accused of something he had not done was a novel one. The righteous indignation which arose within him was decidedly a pleasant feeling. This feeling, together with the liver he had eaten, combined to give him an amount of spirit which, in him, was unheard-of in February, with at least two months more of winter to live through.

De Wolfe was as lithe and quick as a cougar, and the spring which he made for his rifle resembled nothing so much as that animal in action. Dad's "s'arch warrant" and De Wolfe's 30–30 covered each other simultaneously. But the real danger which menaced Dad was as desperate-looking a pair of shears as is often seen outside a tailoring establishment. They were sharp of point, long, slender, glitteringly new, and the grip which De Wolfe's squaw had upon them as she crept stealthily behind Dad unmistakably meant business.

Dad knew from a slight wavering of De Wolfe's eyes that something was transpiring behind him, yet he dared not turn his head. The squaw read encouragement in her husband's face. She raised her arm to drive the long steel with all her strength between Dad's shoulder-blades. The squaw-man's growing smirk was too much for Dad's curiosity. He side-stepped and wheeled to learn its cause, and, as the weapon cut the air, the woman all but fell with the force of her own blow.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!" There was no mistaking the cry. It was Rose Harrison's shrill voice shrieking for help.

Instantly, with a concert of action and a unanimity of purpose in ludicrous contrast to the tense situation of the preceding moment, each actor dropped his weapon and, grabbing a bucket or any utensil which would hold water, ran at top speed to the log house down by the pole bridge, where a glare of light from the open door crimsoned the snow.

Harrison had done it at last! His daughter's frequent prophecy had come true! A careless match had set ablaze the outing-flannel blankets on the walls, and the flames were spreading over their fuzzy surface with the rapidity of a Kansas prairie fire in a ravine of dried sunflower-stalks.

But the most amazing sight—the spectacle which made Dad Walker drop the quart measure with which, in his excitement, he had expected to assist in extinguishing the flames—was that of Harrison, whose back was broken, who would never walk again or lift a pound, dashing out of the house with his arms laden with air-tights—plums!—eight cans of them!

A resolve formed itself in Dad's bewildered brain. He muttered it aloud, the better to convince himself that he was not dreaming.

"If he don't git burnt up, I'll lick him," he swore softly. "I'll break his back in nine places and leave Rose a orphlin."

Bacon-Rind, Harrison, Dad, De Wolfe, even Running Rabbit, worked to save the home-made furniture with a frantic energy which could not have been surpassed had the furniture been worth its weight in gold. Dad lost his left eyebrow and half his ginger-colored whiskers in a desperate attempt to save Harrison's rocking-chair, which must have cost as much as $2.35 when it was new, while Running Rabbit came out with his blanket ablaze carrying a pair of corsets and a bottle of lemon extract—which were only two of many gallant rescues on this memorable night.

And then, when the house was a hopeless, roaring furnace of flames, with the roof in and the side walls caving, Dad, not too gently, took Harrison by the arm and dragged him to the spot where the canned goods were piled, and, pointing to the plums which rose from the snow like a sheep-herder's monument, said sternly:

"Harrison, you are a petty larceny thief. You stole my air-tights, and I'm goin' to lick you."

"Back up, pardner." Bacon-Rind's face wore a sheepish grin as he stepped forward. "When it comes to a show-down I allus acknowledges the corn. The fact is, I could n't see no father-in-law of mine a-cravin' of a change of diet, so I packs them eight air-tights over to Rose last night, never thinkin' you'd miss 'em, or carry on so about 'em if you did. If you wants to give Rose and me them plums for a weddin'-present, we're much obliged; but if you wants to lick me, fly at it."

"Bacon-Rind——"

"Richard Watkins, if it's all the same to you," interrupted the prospective bridegroom, with hauteur.

"Well, then, Richard Watkins," said Dad dryly, "I can't give you jools or a furnished house, but you got my blessin' and them eight air-tights, for any pin-head that's smart enough to get away with a girl and my grub right under my nose—why, I feel that it's comin' to him. I thought I was tol'able wide awake—me—but——" Dad's eyes followed Richard Watkins's blank gaze.

The monument of air-tights had vanished; so also had Running Rabbit!

◆

DEFIANCE

BY ROBERT HAMILTON KELLEY

THE craven heart may quake, Death,—
Ye both but cowards are;
My spirit shall not shake, Death,
Stand near or far.

I welcome you as foe, Death,
And never yet as friend.
A fight before I go, Death,
Before the end.

THE SERVICE OF FEAR

By George L. Knapp

❧

AMONG all the kings and princes and czars of the earth, the most exalted and unquestioned rank is held by his majesty the baby. No other potentate has a court so zealous to serve his slightest whim; none is guarded with such watchful care; from none is danger of every violent sort so far removed. Not only is peril banished from the baby's throne-room, but the bare idea of fear is not allowed to reach him. Yet there are times when to no grown wearer of the purple is fear a more living presence. Make a sudden loud noise near this baby; offer to hand him to a stranger of unusual appearance; or, best of all, let a perfectly good-humored but unaccustomed dog approach on the run—and you will see how vain has been the effort to keep the knowledge of fear from this little pink and white king. His every feature expresses the extreme of terror. He shrinks back, screams, strikes at the intruder with futile, chubby hands; and if his mother be near, clings to her skirts with a grip you would never dream he possessed.

Why this effect without an apparent cause? Not only is the occasion of the fright harmless in itself, but the baby has had no possible chance to learn what harm is. Then why should he dread it? Why this fear in a creature which has never known reason for fear? Whence comes this terror which seems to have no root in experience?

And the answer is that it has a root in the deepest and most vital of experience: the experience of the race. It comes down from the primitive world, from the deeps of that distant time in which humanity was slowly born. The baby, the child, is not a little man or woman of our own day, complete in all but size. He is the creature of another age and time; a throwback, a shorthand note-book of the history of the race—and in the history of the race there has been enough and to spare of harmful things. When the baby starts from every unaccustomed show of power, he is simply acting on the race memories of a time when what was strange was hostile, and when the strategy of life lay largely in keeping open a good line of retreat.

Now, if you will put in a little time in the quiet study of a young child, you can not only satisfy yourself how large is this element of hereditary fear in his make-up, but you can make some pretty shrewd guesses at the things of which that baby's ancestors stood most in awe. Falling, for instance; see how the little chap clutches his mother when she starts to put him in his cradle. Even when asleep, this fear of falling is active; illness accentuates it; and while I cannot tell you how early in life it appears, you can form your own judgment from the fact that a child half an hour old can hold his weight by his hands. Then there is the dark. Much of the fear of the dark is due to the detestable habit of telling bogie stories to children; but there is a good bit which cannot be so accounted for. Strangers, and especially strange animals, bring out this primitive fear; and of all animals, snakes inspire the most vivid, the most sharply defined, the most persistent dread. Then there are any number of personal peculiarities. One child cannot abide the presence of a cat, another cries at the sound of thunder; and the infant son of a friend of mine will not endure contact with fur. The softer and furrier it is, the more sharply Philip objects to having it near him.

◆

Nor is it only in babyhood that these primitive fears are shown. They are most noticeable then, by far; but all through life the race memories of vanished terrors are dim ghosts that haunt our brain-cells, and wait but opportunity to peep forth. The horror of serpents persists in most people; the fear of falling in practically all. And here is a noteworthy thing about this fear of falling. Did you ever notice how the sickening feeling that comes on looking down from a height is lessened at once if you can but get a good hand-grip on something? It may be something that would give way in a moment if you put your weight on it; but the touch of it relieves you, none the less. For the cells that are crying to you of danger take their memory from a time when arms, not legs, were the chief reliance for support; and they are satisfied as soon as the arms come into play.

Another telltale circumstance is our fear of vicious animals. The average man would sooner face a two-hundred-pound human antagonist than a fifty-pound dog which he could choke to death in three minutes. I have seen a charging ram scatter half a dozen men, any one of whom could have mastered the brute in a moment, and not one of whom was, in ordinary matters, a coward. There are instances on record of men who with their bare hands have held and baffled an ugly bull; but it was only the pressure of grim necessity that taught them their powers. Put a man against an animal, and the man looks around for weapons or support, whether he needs them or not. There was a time when he did.

For man, to-day the most lordly of animals, was once well nigh the most humble of them all. He has come up out of a state in which fear was the normal condition of existence; fear of violence, of the dark that gave opportunity for violence; fear of falling, of animals, of being alone. And into the plastic gray cells of our brains are stamped these ancient terrors; a living record of the upward climb of man. The baby shows this record most clearly. In him the prints of heredity are not yet overlaid by the tracks of use and custom; and therefore in him we may most easily read our past history. He is our ancestor as truly as he is our reincarnation; and his every shrinking gesture and frightened cry are chronicles of the Younger World, tales of the Age of Fear. They tell of the days when man was not the master of the earth, nor even a highly considered citizen of the same; but a runaway subject of the meat-eating monarchs whose sceptre was tooth and claw; a humble plebeian in the presence of the horned and hoofed aristocrats of woods and fields. They speak of the nights when our hairy sires crouched in the forks of trees and whimpered softly at the dark; whimpered because the dark held so many enemies; whimpered softly lest those enemies should hear.

Now, if there is anything which modern science has rendered certain, it is that every persistent trait in every living creature is or has been of service to the race to which that creature belongs. What, then, was the service of this fear in which primitive man was steeped and saturated; a fear so tense and all pervading that it has spanned unnumbered ages to plague our dreams to-day? We of the modern world count fear a disgraceful emotion; a thing to be concealed and fought down. We know that to yield to fear is not only cowardly, but in the vast majority of cases is highly unprofitable as well. Courage pays the race to-day; and has paid for thousands of years. Then how is it that fear once paid, as it must have done if there is any truth in biological science? What has brought the race half circle, so that the most primal of instincts has become the most despised of them all, and is commonly reckoned useful only for the moral gymnastics which its uprooting affords?

◆

So long as we use the phrasing of the old-time theologian, and speak of things as having an absolute, rather than a relative, value, the question is unanswerable. So soon as we take the viewpoint of the evolutionist, and study things as they are, not as we think they ought to be, the answer is easy. For fear is simply the defensive expression of the will to live; it is the reaction of the love of life in the presence of a threat. In the strong and aggressive, this reaction takes the form of anger. But primitive man was not strong, and therefore could not possibly be aggressive. He was unquestionably far below the modern man in size; his hide was tender, his teeth were small, his balance poorly assured. He could not attack, he had to content himself with defending; and fear is the defensive impulse—no more. If primitive man feared greatly, it was because he held to life tenaciously; and in the firmness of that grip lay hidden the germ of his future mastery.

There is another thing, a corollary of the statement just made, yet so important as to deserve separate mention. Not only was man's fear the measure of his hold on life, but it was as well the cohesive force which bound him to his fellows. The animal which is sufficient unto itself lives unto itself—witness the cats. If our ancestors had been able to paddle each his own canoe, we should never have gotten past the canoe stage—if indeed so far. If man is to-day the most gregarious of animals, it is because his fears have driven him to his own kind for aid and comfort. It was human weakness and human fear that bred the group life, and gave us thereby language and sympathy and comradeship, and all the million blessings which take their rise in the contact of man with man. The start of this group life may well be due to the prolonged infancy of the human species, as pointed out by John Fiske. But even more, I think, is it owing to the vivid fear, the capacity for feeling and anticipating pain and danger, in which man stands unrivalled among the creatures of the earth.

❧

In any fair court, then, the primitive cowardice of mankind can easily justify its existence. Whether nice or not, it has at one time been necessary; and after that there is no more to be said. Without this fear, the higher characteristics of humanity would have been as impossible as pity to a panther, or love of beauty to a bear. There are oriental peoples who have acquired a stoic indifference to danger and discomfort which is the admiration of all beholders. But with the fear which they have banished have gone also the love of life, and the working power which that love brings in its train. You can make a man brave, in one sense of the word, by teaching him that life does n't really matter. Only, if you should afterwards call upon him for an effort, he is likely to quote you your own precepts, and assure you that dying is easier than doing.

But if fear is primal in man, whence came his courage? He has it now, that is certain; has it in larger measure than any other living thing—save the animals which he has trained to be his sole superiors in this regard. When a policeman showed the white feather the other day, the fact was an item of amazing news for two continents; and was commented on by a hundred editors, who could not see the tribute paid by their astonishment to the average pluck of mankind. Here, then, is a primitive tendency which has been not merely arrested, but reversed. How has such a change come about?

If we want to trace the beginning of that conquest of fear on which man was forced to enter, let us look for the spot where that conquest is most complete. We shall find it, not in camps nor armies, nor in any masculine thing; but in the sex which we usually associate with timidity, rather than with pluck. The most devoted, unfailing, unreckoning courage on earth to-day is the courage of the mother in defense of her child. It may defy reason; but at least it is proof against either force or surprise; and this has been true since a time so remote that it must be measured by geological periods. The human baby dates back to the raw beginnings of the race; but even he is not old enough to remember the birth of mother love and devotion. For the baby, look you, when thoroughly frightened, does not try to escape on his own hook. Not at all. He knows a trick worth hundreds of that. He screams and clings: screams for the help that in all the ages has never failed him; clings that he may be carried away from danger.

◆

This, then, was the starting point of human valor; this is where terror was first beaten back—and the victory was doubtless won before ever man was man. The next gain was made by the mob. The second most common form of bravery is the mass courage of the soldier, the readiness to encounter dangers in company. This is possessed, at least in the germ, by practically every healthy man. Much less frequent is the courage that can go ahead without either witnesses or assurances of support. Rarer yet is the pluck that snaps into action automatically, and that surprise cannot disconcert; the "two o'clock in the morning courage," which Napoleon prized so highly. As a measure of its comparative frequency, just recall the fact that the Austrian army at Arcola, which had fought like banded panthers for two days, dissolved into a swirling mob at the unlooked-for charge of fifty horsemen on their flank. Rarest of all is moral courage, which can face danger and scorn at once. The man who owns this quality in any high degree has won to the very forefront of the army of progress.

In this distribution of the varying breeds of bravery, I think we find the clue to its origin. Human courage is not an individual, but a communal thing. Ours is not the simple, unconscious valor of the bulldog; nor the ferocious daring of the leopard; nor yet the half stupid disregard of danger and pain which the ox tribe displays in such measure. Our courage is derived, secondary, complex; the child of fellow feeling, and the grandchild of fear. Fear compacted primitive man into groups; and group life bred the sympathy and intelligence which are slowly mastering the primal terror. First the mother courage, since families came before hordes, and the primitive family is the mother and her offspring. Then the mob courage of massed numbers; then other and finer forms; and finally the moral valor which enables the individual to cut loose from dependence on the opinions of his fellows, and face the world alone.

Is this a degrading view? Does it lessen the worth of valor to learn how closely it is allied to fear? There be those will answer "yes." But to my mind the lowly source from which our courage sprang does but magnify the heights to which it has since attained. Fine deeds do not need fine pedigrees. The fiery valor of Lodi and Fredericksburg, the cool, calculating devotion of Thermopylæ and the Alamo, the cheerful self-sacrifice of Bruno and Borromeo and Florence Nightingale, need no stilted genealogy to make them great. Every hero the world has seen was once a timid baby. If this does not belittle heroism—and I fancy we shall agree that it does not—then surely the study which explains the baby's fears and the hero's valor can be no cheapening thing.

And I think that the primary character of human fear, and the secondary nature of human courage, make plain much that otherwise must remain a puzzle. Is not the all but universal fear of the unknown a mere survival of the days when the only safe rule of life was to count every unknown an enemy? Is not the leadership we so readily grant to the men who are unconsciously brave, to the Walkers, and the Murats, and the Nelsons, a dumb recognition of the scarcity of this unreckoning pluck? And the adoration of courage, shared in some degree by every active race the world has known, and forming the basis of sense beneath the idiotic temple of knight errantry—is it not due, in part, at least, to the instinctive prod of race cowardice, the urgent need of mastering inherited fear?

That mastery is yet far from complete; yet it was never so near as to-day. We make a serious mistake when we turn to the misty past in search of instances of heroism. There is more solid pluck in an American fire department than there was in both the armies that talked and threatened and sometimes fought on the plains of Troy. There was never a time when courage was so abundant as it is now; or when there was less need of the props of militarism to bolster up the sagging valor of a people. For if bravery be the offspring of intelligence and fellow feeling, as our analysis would seem to prove, then with the growth of the race in solidarity and wisdom courage must likewise continue to grow. "The courage of a day that knew not death" is a beautiful metaphor, but an idle one. We are coming to the courage of a day that knows the worth of life; and knows that in the affairs of life courage is but the economy of the straight line, the shortest possible distance between desire and accomplishment.

THE ANGEL OF HAPPY HOLLOW

By Luellen Cass Teters

◆

THE train panted in at the pinky-yellow station, its huge wheels striking the rails discordantly as its tremendous hulk came to an abrupt stop. The impetus of it shook the mushroom structure as if it were seized with an invisible palsy, rattling the thick iron-stone china dishes in the eating-room and scattering an imposing pyramid of crusty doughnuts on an array of discouraged-looking green apples that were protected from familiar fingers by a porcupine glass of toothpicks.

A woman's face peered suddenly out of the window, her eyes wearily scanning the few passengers that alighted and walked up and down the platform in brief exercise. "He ain't there," she soliloquized audibly, the lines of frustration deepening around the corners of her mouth, intensifying its tragic droop. She doubled ungracefully over the downfall of fruit and doughnuts with a stoicism born of frequency, and, totally undisturbed by their accumulation of dust from the floor, restored them in place. In fact, these architectural triumphs of the culinary art acted purely in an ornamental capacity, on which commercial ambitions were based for the tempting of such frail humanity as should cast an occasional scrutiny out of the Pullmans attached to the coast division, and whom an aggressive appetite might urge within.

"There 's nothin' what furnishes up an eatin'-parlor more stylish-like," Mississippi Cox had confided to the telegraph operator's shapeless pink wife, whose maternal bosom was never without its child. "An' Lord knows they 're dirt cheap at ten cents apiece, or two for a quarter." These elastic highways of robbery passed unquestioned, if noticed, by her intermittent patronage; for Sippi's piracies had from the first been accepted as one of the expected business monopolies against which honesty and protest are defenseless. Although mentally writhing under such flagrant impositions, her patrons were compelled to amiability the while she openly read their unsealed mail before delivering it; took whimsical flights in prices, so that the more one bought, the more he paid in proportion; or surreptitiously purloined the choicest tidbit from the purchase as the trustful customer's back was turned.

The little, rough-boarded room officiated in turn as post-office, eating-station, grocery, and general merchandise. One corner was partitioned off as the appanage of the mistress, and no curious eye dared peep within.

There was an impenetrable air of mystery about the woman that defied solution. The impersonal sweetness of her face redeemed the hostility of her unfathomable dark eyes, in which fires seemed to be continually slumbering. Yet her pronounced intolerance of people relaxed when demand was made on her sympathy, and in tenderest commiseration she would trudge miles in snow or shine, to battle with dread disease; or to receive the new-born with the same pitying mien with which she closed the eyes of some dear departed dead for the last long dreamless sleep. Gratitude heaped a crown on her unhaloed head, yet the Angel was refreshingly human, and full of womanly anomalies and contradictions. All friendly interest in her life was discouraged with sensitive savageness.

But there was one shrewd individual who, totally unruffled by her frigidity, made her an unconscious recipient of his daily visits, cloaked under such transparent subterfuges as tobacco—which was vile—canned sardines—which toyed with ptomaine effects—or inquiries after mail which he never expected. The ruses availed, for Sippi, unaware of the ungovernable flame that was being fanned in the bronzed sheriff's heart, made him the object of keen financiering, and because of his polite requests canned goods took an unparalleled and undeserved flight in prices.

Calkins formed the reprehensible habit of relapsing into a chair in the store, pretending to read a two-weeks' old paper, for which he had consented to be robbed of twenty-five cents. The briskness of this woman's manner neutralized certain indolent delinquencies in his, just as strong irritants bring to the surface suspected impurities of the flesh. He had always regarded women in the abstract with fear and cowardice, because of their perishable furbelows and whims, and as toys, which were breakable by clumsy fingers. Here was an abnormal type in this railway station, whom masculine attire would suit more than petticoats; who knew how to grapple with the thistles of a hard world, as the pathetic patience of her countenance proclaimed; and yet who was enough of the feminine eternal to sob over a wounded snow-bird one frosty day as it fluttered in through the open door. Her very antagonism held him enthralled, seeking nothing beyond the ecstasy of the present.

The sharp faculties of the telegraph operator's wife divined the secret even before Calkins himself was aware of the cause for his detached interest in mundane affairs. She burst in breathless on Mississippi one day, triumphant over the information she had to impart.

"There 's goin' to be a dance to-night over at the big hotel the railroad people are opening, Sippi," she announced importantly. "Jim Calkins he wants me to extend you his compliments for it. He 's a modest man where women-folks is concerned; that man won't even wash his face before a lady. He 'd make somebody a grand husband —his uniform has twenty-eight brass buttons on it." Her judicial eye traversed her listener's face, hoping to discover any lurking sentiment. "You an' him would pair off something elegant, Sippi," she added significantly.

Mississippi regarded her tentatively; then her heavy shoes creaked over to a table that barricaded one corner of the room. She took a revolver out of the drawer, and flourished it intimidatingly.

"I won't have men-folks flirtin' with me," she snapped out vindictively. "You tell him that, takin' his old compliments back."

"Oh, Sippi, I jest don't see how you can be so stuck-up! It does n't seem like you one bit—the way you acted over my Lottie when she was so sick. An', Sippi, I—I saw through your window the other night—an' I seen you cryin' over a little shoe. Was—was it a baby's?"

The Angel went deathly white, staggering weakly at the unexpectedness of the inquiry.

"You lie!" she cried fiercely. "It—was—it was only a pincushion——" Her voice trailed off into a whisper. Mrs. Buxton arose and went to her, stroking her thin arms with maternal solicitude, despite their similarity of years.

"Now, tell me all about it, dearie," her soft intonations persuaded. The other woman evaded her embrace, then resistance was overcome by persistence. Her dark head sank dejectedly on the plump bosom that seemed especially fashioned in its breadth for sorrowing faces.

"He—he said he 'd come back, Mis' Buxton," she said huskily. "I—I guess he will. But, Lord! the years jest seem as if they 'd never end; they jest stretch on into centuries, me awaitin' for him. Then I count the green trees again—an' the flowers bloomin'—an' they pass off into the snow again. Oh, Mis' Buxton, sometimes I jest wish the Lord would kill me, it 's hurtin' me so——"

"There, there, lovey—you jest cry the ache out," she was soothed. But a step sounded harshly on the gravel, and a man's form silhouetted itself against the golden glare of sunlight outside before it faded into the shadows within the store.

"Mornin', Mis' Cox." He tugged politely at his weather-beaten felt hat as the two women started in surprise at his appearance. Mrs. Buxton advanced encouragingly toward him.

"I was jest deliverin' your invite, Jim," she explained. "I guess you can 'tend to the rest of it. There 's Lottie frettin' over her stumick teeth—I jest don't ever know what my man would do if I should die —all them babies to feed." Her cadences floated sibilantly after her until they became a sepulchral echo. Calkins sank heavily into his usual chair.

"Spry day, now, ain't it?" He relapsed into his every-day vernacular from habit. There was no answer. "There 's goin' to be a real fiddle an' drum at the dance to-night," he essayed again, with pathetic endurance. "Air—air ye fond of dancin'?" He hung awkwardly on the reception of his speech.

"Legs ain't for that purpose," she retorted cholericly. There was a menace of finality in the way she said it that prohibited any discussion.

"You have n't ever been to a dance, I guess," he commented quietly, unaffected by her spirited rejoinder. "That music, if the fiddler knows his business, cuts up little capers right in your heels, an' just makes them itch for to be kicked out. An' 'way down deep within your heart somethin' starts up bubblin' like a spring I seen once in Death Valley, that just seemed to be laughin' as hard as it could, to be friends with us delirious men, who were makin' up our minds we were passin' over the Big Range for sure—we was that played out by sand-storms and the mirages. Lord! it was awful." He paused, contemplating painful memories, a shadow clouding his genial face. "An' that little bubblin' just trickles all over your soul, waterin' barren places where flowers never could be coaxed to grow; an', all of a sudden, seems like a great white glory flooded you from top to bottom, makin' you forget things—makin' you want things—an' it 's so sweet that it just hurts you—an' you just keep on not knowin' where you are or what you do." He looked at her mutely as he finished.

She was aroused from her apathy; her lips had parted, her eyes levelled with his; a strange, rapt expression chiselled her face.

"Say it again, Jim," she breathed, still under the spell. "Some way I jest feel it every bit——"

His hour had come; he did not care that to her he was completely divested of all personality; that he was but the medium for the transmission of words she delighted in. She was listening to him at last. An odd jubilance struggled within him, seeking audience. But it could not pierce the dross of speech. He dwelt liberally on trivialities, coloring them from the pigment of his own imagination, cleverly playing on her susceptible emotions. She mechanically resumed the dusting of her doughnuts; the vibrations of the building foretold the approach of a train, and the frailty of the flesh must be coped with anew.

"It sounds persuadin'," she said unequivocally.

"You'll go?" He tried to subdue the eagerness of his voice.

She seemed lost in abstraction; her wonderful eyes were brooding on the violet path of the pine-trees in the remote canyons, where the tawny, topaz splendor of trembling aspen made golden monuments. There was the whispered harmony of insect life in the air, a thrill, a call. Something stirred and pulsated within her, clamoring for recognition under the weight of years. Her eyes ached with unshed tears.

"An' that music—does it really make you forget—an' air you any better for havin' heard it?"

"Just as much as goin' to a church," he affirmed emphatically. He knew she had decided to go; there was consent in her manner. "I 'll drift around for you, then." He arose, stretching in content. Mentally, he felt as if he had done a good day's work, seeing fulfilment of effort before him.

There were preparations of importance when night came, superintended by the telegraph operator's wife, and when Mississippi released herself from decorative fingers she was amazed at the transformation.

The two walked the intervening three miles in unbroken silence, until against the pall of night the glitter of many windows assumed an unearthly radiance. Sippi stopped short, awakening to animation under the luminosity.

"Jest like a Christmas tree I seen once." She moved on reluctantly.

"I guess you 'll like it," answered Calkins, keeping step with her long, masculine stride.

The elegance of the place oppressed her, just as the raiment of the guests riveted her gaze. Once her roughened hand stole stealthily out and reverentially touched the satin folds near her, as if she doubted its tangibility. Awe depicted itself on her face as she felt its substantial quality. The scintillating jewels, the rustle of silk, the whiff of fragrance, all swept over her, unresisting to their seduction.

"Dance?" Calkins held out his hand. She noticed how big and red it was and shuddered. But he misunderstood her denial, and dashed her off her feet, with his mighty arm so tight around her that she could barely breathe. Then the trickle of the music, insistent, magic, pushed its way through all the nebulous obstacles in its way, leaving its white heat, quivering, agitating, vibrating, in its silver flow. Ah, she could dance! Exaltation pounded in her veins, beating through the gray habiliments of her thoughts, scourging despair. Unfettered, her spirit arose, joyousness directing her. It was the leaden weight of years she was dancing off. Her sensations made her dizzy in a supernatural exuberance of feeling that choked her. Then out of the chaos of her perturbation a man's voice, a trick of speech, sounded behind her as he bent tenderly over the yellow head of the girl resting in his arms. It sent a tumultuous wave of agitation through her, destroying the spell. Her feet clumsily halted; her breath came in gasps; she put one hand over her heart, praying for calmness.

"I 'll get you a seat." Calkins considerately caught her as she half stumbled. She nodded her acquiescence; incoherent thoughts whirled through her head. She peered out at the couple as they danced by, dwelling minutely on the pale blue ruffles of the girl, noting in detail the man's attitude as his arm encompassed her. It was Gregory—after all these years! A sob arose in her throat. A boyish young fellow whisked the girl off as the music ceased. She watched the man's disappearance at the end of the room, where festoons of Chinese lanterns cast a riotous red and green glow.

"I feel sick," she met her companion's solicitous remarks in haste. "If I 'd get to the piazzy, I 'd feel better. No, don't you come." She darted away before he could reply.

She stepped out upon the dimly lit balcony. A man's figure, erect and commanding, showed at the end, the red spark of his cigar arresting her vision. She moved softly behind him, one hand falling against his in purposeless motion, as if drawn against its will.

"Bob," she breathed.

He turned around, indifferently, and she could have struck him for his insolent ease. He did not recognize her—she was confident of that, and the truth stabbed her. Her fidelity, her unswerving remembrance of his most trivial mannerism, all those long, dreary years, mocked her. She fought their bitterness down.

"Bob!" Her voice gained strength. He faced her, with nonchalance; but the hand that held his cigar trembled.

"You have made a mistake, my good woman." He airily blew a fluff of ashes off his sleeve, as he endeavored to pass her; but her hand fell detainingly on his, barring his progress.

"Bob, don't you know me?" The anguish of her tone was pitiful. "It 's me—Liz. Oh, Bob, I 've prayed my throat hoarse, askin' to see you again! I don't hold nothin' against you, dear—jest bein' content to love you. I don't care what you 've done. Oh, Lord! how I have loved you—all this time——" She broke down, convulsively, her head sinking on her bosom in unrestrained grief.

"An' now to see you again," she resumed apathetically; "it 's like havin' a corpse come back to life, after you had cried over it, an' buried it, an' put an epitaph up over it, so 's the world would know how good it had been. Bob"—her voice struggled over a whisper—"some way, I—I almost wish I—I had n't seen you again—if—if you treat me like this."

Her arms stretched hungrily toward him. Some one was coming out of the ball-room, behind them. Gregory turned hastily aside.

"Don't make a scene here," he muttered under his breath. "I—I 'll see you again——"

"I 'm livin' over at the railroad station, across the river," she said simply. Her hand groped for his, but he evaded it. "I 'll wait for you, Bob."

The darkness engulfed him. She crouched for the moment against the shingled railing, aghast at the ruins around her, adrift and hopeless. The apochryphal hopes of those past ten years had robbed her of the best of her life; the poverty of her existence had always been sanctified by those fragile, sweet delusions with which she had made compromise with judgment. There was nothing left now. The lapping of the river interposed; there was—that—— She shrank from its hideousness, afraid of herself.

"Mis' Cox!"—Calkins's hearty, honest intonations rang out as he scanned the piazza for her. Perhaps, after all, she had judged Gregory too hastily; he would explain when opportunity came. The thought, though created from her own inclination, dimly comforted her.

"I 'm here," she replied, rising wearily, a huddled, dark figure in the gloom.

"It 's feedin' time in there, an' I just want you to see how grand they can fix up vittles. I thought you 'd enjoy a bite yourself." His arm piloted her within; the glare of the lights, the odor of crushed flowers under the dancers' careless feet, the ecstatic harmonies of the orchestra, her dulled, starved senses absorbed greedily; but there was the intermittent whine of the wind, rising from a purple cloud-bank in the west, to remind her of the darkness outside and her own torments and doubts.

The days came and went, and each morning she tantalized herself with the belief of Gregory's arrival, only to acknowledge defeat at night. The advent of the train at first infused an inexplicable nervousness, and it was only the expectation of his familiar figure that kept her attentive to its going and coming. There was no solace after, till the next day should come, with its repetition; and she would retreat to her barren room, and commune audibly with herself, as she had done for the last ten years, since their paths had separated. Solitude had forced her into sustaining imaginary conversations, and often she dealt in hypothetical cases for the sake of enjoyable argument; it had sufficed, in its way, to bridge over terrible gaps of loneliness, and hours of torture when she was haunted by bitter recollections. She spread a table for two, delighting in dwelling on such evidences of companionship. To-night she relapsed into the pretense with more cheerfulness than usual, for superstitious signs had pointed to prosperity, and had not the broomstick fallen noisily into the door? Its omen was indisputable about the coming guest. Two chairs were drawn confidentially up to the table, and cups and saucers placed precisely around.

"Set down, Bob, do," she urged her invisible guest, with elaborate courtesy, "an' make yourself at home. Ain't you a bit late to-night?" How often, during these unenlivened, terrible years, had she enacted this domestic comedy! Ever since—her breath came irregularly, with effort. Yes, the telegraph operator's wife was right. She sobbed weakly to herself, hungry for the touch of clinging baby-fingers again. It was such a night as this when he went away. Eternity could not have seemed longer. She pulled herself together with determination, unable to confront the ghosts of the past.

"Shall I pour your tea, Bob?" she essayed, biting her lips to keep the tears back. "An' two lumps? You should n't eat so much sweet stuff; it 'll make you fat." Such homilies made it appear strangely natural to her simple mind; it brought her into a thousand and one intimate relations with him, tender and forbidden in practical light, and over and over they were rehearsed, becoming a shrine, a precious part of her dreary routine.

She bustled around, assuaging her grief with work; something flicked sharply at the door, which opened on a carpet of white-faced wind-flowers and the creeping green arms of the kinnikinnic. It was only the breeze, tossing its flotsam from the hills. She resumed her dialogue, desultorily, pecking at an occasional bite of food, as does a sparrow.

The knob turned softly, but the lock resisted; there was some one at the door. Fright made her cowardly; then she repelled her fears, and boldly opened the door, in a man's face. The glow of the lamp behind her cast an oblique ray, emphasizing a dark, sinister line across the cheek. She remembered that mark—the fight in Welling's saloon; the pools of blood on the floor. She had seized him from them, and dragged him away—away from death—from disgrace—from the prison walls.

"Bob!" Her joy was mingled with surprise at his unkempt appearance. "At last——"

He stepped within the room, with a suspicious glance at his surroundings. "You are not alone," he said gruffly, his eye measuring the table arranged for two. "You are not alone," he repeated. There was no word of greeting; the beggary of it cut her to the quick. There was no word about her—his—their child.

"I—I was expectin' you," she replied quietly, and the years stalked by in affirmation, leaving her in a tremble.

He grasped her wrists in a vise of iron.

"You know, then—you have heard? You 're trapping——" He stopped guardedly.

"Know what?" she said calmly. "I don't know anything. Set down—your tea 's getting cold. Two lumps of sugar?"

Her manner relieved his uncertainty; he took the proffered chair, eating ravenously, as if hunger had been his companion for some time; then he abruptly shoved his chair aside.

"Ain't you goin' to give your old lover a kiss, Liz?" he asked softly. The blood flamed in her gaunt cheeks; she pursed up her mouth obediently, but the caress was unsatisfying and empty. In all of her dreams, its intangible sentiment was stronger.

"Now, girl"—he stole one arm around her—"I 'm in a fix. I want some money. Look here"—his hand crept to her throat; she watched him in fascination. "You ain't going to scream, now, are you? Where are those government bills that came in this morning? You see, I know. I 've been waitin' for them."

"There ain't none," she said defiantly, folding her arms coolly, in a bravado she did not feel. His clutch at her neck tightened; still, the smile on her lips not once wavered. He released her, with a shrug.

"You 're defending them pretty well, ain't you?" He caught her, with more gentleness, around the waist. "Liz, will you come with me again? I 'll take you out into the beautiful world, an' we 'll go on the ocean—an' 'way off. No work, Liz; no more stealin' for livin' expenses. I 've reformed now, girl. But, honey, I have n't got enough money for two just now—unless you help me out—just a few dollars——"

It was the realization of her dream at last—heaven after purgatory. Happiness shivered through her, her heart stopped beating; he wanted her.

"I must comb my hair first"—it was the woman speaking within her.

"There 's no time to lose." He paced the floor restlessly, biting his nails in his old familiar manner. "We must walk over to the next station, so no one will see us here. Give me your money, quick—an' I 'll wait outside."

She dived under her bed, under the mattress, and jerked out a thick woollen stocking. The savings of labor, of sacrifice, of frugality, were represented there for him, should he return; for a decent, final exit for her—one way or another, it mattered not which—if he did not come; for even death had lost its terror in its hopes of forgetfulness. It was lawfully his, any way. She poured it into his hands with a little laugh of pride, thankful that she had so much to give.

"An' I 'll put on my hat with the red roses you used to like so well, Bob." She was suddenly rejuvenated again. He made no reply, counting the money and shoving it into his pockets, as she coiled her long, dark hair into a stiff, angular knob at the back. What would the officials say? She had taken minute pains to please them, and their praise had more than rewarded her. But the wine of liberty and love revolutionized her. There was only one Gregory; and they were going away together.

He looked up abruptly, his eyes furtively on her.

"Liz," he said finally, "I fooled you, girl. I 've got a wife—an' two children—already. You saw her at the hotel that night. It ain't any use pretendin' any longer. I 'm telling the truth now. You get me that government money in that drawer in there, an' I 'll give up my wife for you, an' we 'll go 'way off, just as I said——"

She turned on him, in a white heat of passion. It was not his proposition that enraged her; not his insolence of manner and speech. But his acknowledgment of another woman in his life, some one for whom he had cared enough to legalize his relations with. And for her—— Something seemed to snap in her brain; odd buzzing noises sounded in her ears; she made a motion toward the table in one corner of the room beyond; the end was near.

A quick decisive step sounded in the store; a hand pushed roughly at her door. She motioned Gregory under her bed.

"You lie there," she said warningly.

"Hello, Mis' Cox." It was the sheriff who stood before her.

"Come in," she urged, with chary hospitality, but her hands shook as she cleared up the dishes, while he paused and scrutinized her meagre possessions, the scrupulously clean but shabby belongings.

"Set down," she was impelled to reluctant courtesy.

"I thought I heard voices in here." He sank gingerly on one of the wooden chairs, the legs of which were strengthened with wire. "There ain't any one?"

"No;" she nodded her head in denial. If he moved his foot even an inch, it would come in contact with Gregory's arm as he crouched timorously from view. "I was jest recitin'. I 'm powerfully fond of elocutin' to myself. It 's good for the lungs. Be it a nice night, Mr. Calkins?"

"Us government officials have n't time to think of the weather when there 's work to do. There 's nasty work afore me to-night—takin' a man, livin' or dead, if I can find him; an' five thousand dollars' reward, for he 's done other things, an' escaped. Five thousand dollars! Do you know what that means to me, Mis' Cox? Would you mind if I told you?" He stumbled ponderously to his feet, his large, red hand reaching out towards hers; but she was unconcernedly washing dishes, and kept on religiously, undisturbed by any errant sentiment.

"It means——" He broke off huskily. "Lord! what does n't it mean? I know I 've been dreamin' of it all this time, when I should have saved enough money to throw up this bloodhound work an' go back East an' have a nice little home, with some flowers, an' cows. I 'm a domesticated man, Mis' Cox, an' all these years it goes through my soul like a red-hot coal, singeing my conscience, livin' this way; wakin' up nights thinkin' of the awful things I 've seen, capturing human beings like dogs—men like myself—women like you. Men crazed by drink, killin', murderin'; women who forgot everything for love. Well, I guess their hunted eyes will haunt me to my Judgment day, askin' for help—when I had to run them down to Canyon City, knowing there was a little black door in the penitentiary there out of which they wa' n't goin' to come back. That 's what law is, Mis' Cox. An', Mis' Cox, mebbe I did n't tickle myself thinkin' I would n't have to go 'way back East alone! D' ye know what I did? I jest closed my eyes an' imagined I seen you there, tyin' up the red climbin' roses, an' cookin' pies for me—everything growed in our own garden. An' trees around; an' hangin' out a wash so white it just made your eyes smart. That 's what I want. I 'd get you a black silk dress in Denver, an' a gold watch, an' some white handkerchiefs—the kind tony folks use. I 'm not set on style myself, but it 's different with a lady. Would—would you go—with me?" His fingers longed for the familiarity of touching the folds of her dress, but such actions were chilled under the frozen expression of her face; yet she was not insensible to the generosity of his appeal, as contrasted with the brutal demands of that other man. On the other hand, she was torn by apprehensions of horror, as she followed his recitals, and clung for support to the wall, harassed by premonitions.

"A fellow like this rascal, robbin' the post-office yesterday not three miles away, would make a big fight for his life," Calkins continued reflectively. "He 'd shoot to kill, if he had the chance—but I 'm not goin' to let that happen. If I get this Gregory, an' things come out right, I just want you to understand that half of it is your'n, throwin' myself in with my name, to be your husband, in the bargain. There, I 've said it; I feel better." He mopped his flushed forehead with a red-striped bandanna, then walked deliberately around the four narrow walls, poking at remote corners with his big boots, or stopping to pick up some cheap trinket and intently gaze at it. The gleam of a pistol scintillated from his hip pocket. The woman bent lower over her task, her face devoid of color, her lips dry and cold; a sickening chill numbed her being; all of her habitual courage had deserted her, leaving her in a state of suspended animation.

Calkins strode twice across the floor and back again, his brows ominous. Then he paused shortly before her bed, with its old-fashioned log-cabin quilt, a remnant of a halcyon splendor.

"Ain't ye heard what I said, Mis' Cox?" he asked.

She half fell in her excitement across the chair he had vacated, speech forsaking her. He turned around, and all at once leaned toward her, patting her head in unspoken sympathy. Then he coolly cocked his revolver, bent toward the floor, and kicked significantly at the figure under the bed.

"I guess you 'd better come out, Gregory," he suggested menacingly.

Mississippi cowered lower, her face writhing under her disfigured hands, shaken by dry, tearless sobs. The man crawled awkwardly from his hiding-place, his appearance one of guilt and cowardice. The sheriff snapped handcuffs on his wrists and shoved him unceremoniously onto the foot of the bed. Then he deliberately took the other chair by the table, placed his revolver before him, and drew in a long breath.

"Now, Mis' Cox, if you don't mind, I 'll take a cup of tea an' eat a bite," he announced authoritatively. "I 've been trackin' this scoundrel all day, an' have n't had time to eat anything. He 's quite valuable to the law just now, for some old offenses; an', knowin' he 'd been in these parts lately, I wa' n't goin' to risk not catchin' him just for satisfyin' my stumick."

She jumped hastily to her feet, her mind in chaos. Her hands drew down jars of choice fruit—such as the public paid for, but never got—from odd shelves; the only can of condensed milk the store contained was set before him. The sheriff's eyes bulged with excusable pleasure, and he began his attack with lusty vigor. Mississippi stood erect and thin beside him, her fingers nervously interlocking.

"Jim Calkins," she quavered, "you won't never prosper on blood money. That ain't the will of the Lord, permittin' it. You would n't trap a rabbit this way, not givin' it a chance. What has this man done to you? He ain't never harmed you——"

He gulped down a mouthful of the warm beverage. "An' what has he done for you? What is he to you?" he asked, between mouthfuls of food.

"What—has he done—for me?" Mississippi repeated vaguely. The question staggered her. In a silent panorama, the voiceless misery of those ten eternal years flitted before her; years of enslavement to a vaporous belief, the apotheosis of an inferior image whose virtues were but the figment of her own brain. The anguish of it all partook of brutality. Her burdens had been more than physical; but she had had to pass through her Gethsemane alone—deserted, betrayed; yet her love had never wavered in its intensity, her faith had never shaken. But this was no time for idle recrimination. The caravan of sorrow faded into nothingness beside the imminent greater danger. She watched the sheriff eat in weird enchantment, seeing with the disappearance of each bite the nearer approach of Gregory's incarceration. There were other tidbits with which she could tempt this executor of stern justice, and temporize. Appetite was visibly his strongest enemy; a bottle of wine was added to the other array of material temptations.

"What has he done for me?" She recalled herself slowly to her environment. "It 's this, Mr. Calkins." Gregory glared sullenly at her, with intimidation in his gesture, but her calm, shining eyes quieted him. "That man, years ago, kept life in body and soul by workin' his fingers to the bone, workin', slavin', forgettin' he was a human being—glad to get enough for jest bread. An' it was for me. I guess you don't know what starvation is, Mr. Calkins." She gave a short, mirthless laugh. "It 's—it 's hell. An' he was sick, too—all wore out with fever, jest like a bony skeleton with his big, hollow eyes and white lips. An' he used to tramp miles an' miles every day, beggin' crusts for me, after he lost his job. It ain't the churches what keeps a man fed, Mr. Calkins—I an' you know that; it 's the saloons. I ain't forgot who give me my first kick, any more 'n I forgot who give me a kind word—this man. He 's not bad; his heart is jest as white as your'n or mine. But luck 's against him. He 's tried to get honest work to do, but the foreman discharged him 'cause he did n't know how to do it right, seein' he had n't been learnt, but took anything he could get. I guess if your poor old, dear mother, whom you loved—who sat patiently waitin' every night for your earnin's to be brought home, to keep livin'—tryin' to get jest enough to pay off the mortgage, so 's your bloodhound law would n't send her off to the county work-house—an old, pretty, blue-eyed lady over seventy, who never harmed a livin' soul—oh, Mr. Calkins, I guess you 'd take anything you could steal—to protect her dear old body—seein' you loved her." She sobbed hysterically, helplessly, in weak abandon. A dull red flush stained Gregory's dark cheeks, as he stirred uncomfortably on the bed.

The sheriff desisted from his eating; a drop of moisture clouded one eye. He blew his nose vigorously; something choked in his throat. The revered picture of his own beloved mother arose before him, conjured to reality by the woman's graphic portrayal. His entire being vibrated with sympathy. He had idolized his parent; her very memory was part of his religion; unconsciously she had been his Bible, guiding his slightest act in life; and his dreams of paradise were seen through her tender, maternal eyes. Death had not separated them; like a beautiful immortelle, she would always live, to him. He tried to shake off the torture the very thought caused him. On the other hand, there were the rights of his government to consider, the rigid enforcement of duty, and, beyond, the tantalizing allurement of the fields of Elysium and ambitions realized. It was so little he asked for; was he to forfeit all, for this? The bleakness of the gray prairie filled him with unvoiced despair; he had perfunctorily ground out life there, not knowing half the time whether the sun shone or not, grappling with unseen foes worse than flesh and blood tangibilities. Loneliness—solitude—what awful chasms of terror had the nights not held for him? And now, after, from the ashes of resignation, a tiny spark had been fanned into a hope of liberty, was frustration to ruin all? He stubbornly rebelled.

"I 'm—I 'm sorry, Mis' Cox"—he cleared his throat in order to command his voice—"but it 's the law; it 's not me."

She traversed his big, stalwart form despondently. It had been for nothing, her puny efforts! One of her angular hands swept over to his, holding it firm against the table.

"You don't want blood money, Jim Calkins," she reminded him again. "You don't want to wake up nights thinkin' how you sold this man's life for jest dollars an' cents. It 's jest your ambition he 'd be payin' for—givin' his body to hoist you up, that 's what it is. He ain't done nothin' to you. If he got started wrong, was it his fault? Luck 's against him, that 's the trouble. An' if he 's taken any money what does n't belong to him, was it for himself? You know it was n't. I 'd do the same thing in his place—an' you would, too. I hope the Lord would kill me dead if I did n't, seein' it was my dear old mother that brought me into this world. I 'd ought to be shot if I would n't steal to keep her from goin' to the work-house!"

"It—it ain't the money I want," the sheriff interposed doggedly.

Gregory shifted from the rigidity of his posture; an icy perspiration stood out in beads on his forehead.

Mississippi fell recumbent on her knees, raising her tear-swollen face to Calkins.

"Let him go," she begged, her eyes strangely gleaming. "You ain't found him yet. There 's a road over the river here he can take an' reach the Eastern Express at the siding, before the news does."

The sheriff repulsed her roughly, but her hands crept out to his again, and he closed his eyes in order not to see the intolerable suffering depicted in her countenance. But he could not so shut out the loud, spasmodic breathing, like the difficult panting of some maimed animal, whose respiration fails it.

He had not yet heard what this man was to her—she had evaded that issue; and a nameless jealousy precluded his pressing the question further. He preferred not to know, for, loving her, the suggestion of any former intimacy was unbearable. Her lips moved entreatingly in his ears; the mirages of Elysium, in their unattainability, danced mockingly before his tired, distorted vision—chimeras on which he had pinned faith. Ah, it was hard——

"Oh, God, woman!" he cried in anguish, trying not see the yearning of her soul written in her solemn eyes.

He looked carefully and long at his revolver; it was loaded—a good friend in times of emergency.

"Stand up!" he ordered the hulking figure on the bed. "Come here, you low, contemptible cur."

Gregory obeyed without raising his eyes.

"Is what this woman says true?"

Gregory's lips moved, but no sound issued forth. Mississippi cast him an imploring, frightened glance.

"Speak!" thundered the sheriff.

"Yes"—he choked over the lie. The woman stoically picked up her towel, where it had fluttered from her nerveless grasp, and mechanically resumed her task of washing dishes. Calkins placed his two hands on the younger man's shoulders.

"Don't take other people's money the next time, that's all," he said warningly. "It won't go so easy again. Now empty your pockets—every cent." He loosened the handcuffs first, then received from various hiding-places the thick wads of bills secreted about Gregory's clothes. Mississippi watched the operation breathlessly; it was more than she had given him.

"Now, take this"—the sheriff shoved some bills from his own pocket at him. "You'll be wantin' food an' shelter. It's a hard road, but it's your only chance for life. An' here's my revolver. It's your best bed-fellow. Now, git! An' you'll have to travel purty fast, for if they catch you now, they'll string you up for sure. I ain't lettin' you go on your own account. It's only for your poor old, lovin' mother's sake. I had a mother myself once."

Gregory essayed to speak, but utterance failed him. He cast a look of appeal at the woman.

"Liz!" It was the cry of an awakening soul, freed from the firebrands of sin, comprehending the magnitude of her nature at last.

She turned her inscrutable eyes on him, and he shivered under their burning radiance, their unearthly lustre. It was more than the material limitation of distance that separated them.

"You—go!" she said threateningly, hanging up the tea-towel to dry.

He looked at her silently; that inspection was to last him forever, he knew. Then he opened the door at the side, where the passionless white wind-flowers raised their unblemished petals to the wanton caresses of the breeze—unseeing, in the formless, characterless shadows cast by the station; unheeding of the white shroudal of the snow-hooded peaks.

And he stepped outside, into the impenetrable obscurity of the night.

A MEMORY OF PICKETT'S BRIGADE

By La Salle Corbell Pickett

❧

IT was years after the war, and some veterans of both sides were exchanging reminiscences at a banquet given by the Board of Trade of New York. It was presided over by the First President, Colonel J. J. Phillips, Colonel of the Ninth Virginia Regiment, Pickett's Division.

"There is nothing else so terrifying as a night attack," said Colonel Phillips. "The imagination works with intense activity in the darkness, and even in peaceful times adds infinitely to the fear of perils, real or fancied. How much more are the horrors of warfare increased when the opposing forces are hidden from sight, when the first announcement of hostile intention is the thunder of guns, the crack of rifles, the flash through darkness—for it is the darkest possible night that is always selected.

"One of these night attacks in particular—on the Bermuda Hundred lines in 1864—I shall never forget; not because of its startling horrors, but because of a peculiar and sacred circumstance, almost resulting in the compulsory disobedience of orders, the obeying, as it were, of a higher than earthly command.

"The point of attack had been carefully selected, the awaited dark night had arrived, and my command was to fire when General Pickett should signal the order. There was that dread, indescribable stillness—that weird, ominous silence that always settles over everything just before a fight. It was so thick you could cut it with a knife; so heavy it weighed you down as if worlds were piled upon you; so all-pervasive that it filled creation for you. You felt that nowhere in the universe was there any voice or motion.

"Suddenly that awesome silence was broken by the sound of a deep, full voice rolling over the black void like the billows of a great sea, directly in line with our guns. It was singing the old hymn, 'Jesus, Lover of My Soul.' I have heard that grand old music many times in circumstances which intensified its impressiveness, but never had it seemed so solemn as when it broke the stillness in which we waited for the order to fire. Just as it was given there rang through the night the words:

> "Cover my defenseless head
> With the shadow of thy wing.

"'Ready—aim—fire to the left, boys,' I said.

"The guns were shifted, the volley that blazed out swerved aside, and that defenseless head was covered with the shadow of His wing."

A Federal veteran who had been listening looked up suddenly and, clasping the Colonel's hand, said:

"I remember that night, Colonel, and that midnight attack which carried off so many of my comrades. I was the singer."

There was a second of silence; then "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," rang across that banquet board as on that black night in 1864 it had rung across the lines at Bermuda Hundred.

◆

THE VIOL AND HARP AND THE REEDY BASSOON

BY JOHN RUSSELL HAYES

OH, WONDROUSLY wistful and tender the somnolent measures
Played by the viol and harp and the reedy bassoon!
I think I could sit in the shadows and listen forever
Wrapt in the spell of the strange and enchanting soft tune.

With you, O my dreams, I could linger and listen forever,
Delighted and soothed by the somnolent flow of the tune
That weaves and upbuilds me a tangle of magical music
Poured from the viol and harp and the reedy bassoon.

Visions and memories waken that long have been sleeping,
Stirred by the viol and harp and the reedy bassoon;
Phantoms of flowers and of songs of the far-away summers
Rise at the sound of the haunting and eloquent tune.

The sweep and the sway of the plaintive and somnolent measures
Charm and enchant me and flood all my thought with the tune
As I dreamily sit in the shadow and listen delighted
To the song of the viol and harp and the reedy bassoon.

CUPID—AND A CALL

By Edith Morgan Willett

◆

THE Rector of All Souls paused in the hall to remove his clerical hat and smooth the ruffled auburn hair beneath it; then he pushed back the portière and briskly entered Mrs. Minturn's luxurious drawing-room.

Half past ten o'clock.

He glanced dubiously at the gilt time-piece opposite. A trifle early for a morning visit, but he could n't help that. There was no time to lose. This matter must be settled without delay, and his letter written to the Bishop and off by the 3.30 train.

Dropping with satisfaction into a deep, cool Morris chair, Mr. Marble congratulated himself resolutely on the step he was about to take.

It had been a serious problem and hard to decide, especially (as he acknowledged) for a man of his whimsical, over-fastidious tastes. Even now he realized keenly that there *were* other women in the world—girls even, good-looking ones too! (a reminiscent blush overspread his carefully shorn face)—but for charm, position, and—well, *general attractiveness* (here his eye strayed appreciatively out of the window towards conservatories and well-kept lawns where many gardeners pottered about) there was no one in Wheatley better fitted than Lydia Minturn to adorn——

At this point with some embarrassment he rose to greet her.

"I was especially anxious to see you this morning," Mr. Marble told his hostess boldly after a tactful prologue of banalities. "There is something exceedingly important I desire to communicate to you."

"To me!" echoed Mrs. Minturn.

She looked at him with innocent, illusive blue eyes and fingered her rings pensively.

"What can it be, I wonder! Has that wretched vestry been bothering you again, or is it the poor throat? Do you know you're looking very badly?" She leaned towards him with pretty earnestness. "What you want, my dear friend, is rest—a complete rest and change!"

Want it! Of course he did, but the Rector of All Souls, being a subtle student of the other sex, "walked delicately"—like Agog!

"Not much rest for me!" he ejaculated with a tired smile. "The

Bishop is seriously urging me to accept a call to Shooting Rock, Arkansas."

And at her cry of dismay——

"Yes, it 's a good way off," he said grimly—"a lonely spot seventy miles from a railroad track. A mission of a thousand miners that have never felt a civilizing or refining touch; pretty desperate characters, some of them, I understand, but of course it 's a splendid field."

He paused as Mrs. Minturn laid a white, restraining hand on his arm.

"Don't say another word," she begged. "It 's too awful! How can you even *talk* of going to that dreadful place You *might* think of us!" There was a touching catch in her voice. "What would I—we—do without you at Wheatley? Oh, Mr. Marble, say that you won't go!"

"There is only one consideration that would induce me to remain!" said the Rev. Ronald with decision.

His moment had come, and he seized it with characteristic promptness; also her unresisting hand. How soft it was, and how her rings sparkled!

"Lydia," he cried, putting the time-honored question with striking originality, "will you be mine? Will you make me the happiest of men?"

Twelve o'clock struck, and Mr. Marble rose, somewhat flushed and dishevelled from a kneeling posture.

"Then it 's irrevocable, and you won't have me!" he queried blankly.

The fact, even now, seemed preposterous, incredible.

Mrs. Minturn nodded and dabbed her eyes with a few square inches of real lace.

"It 's not that *I* would n't have you!" she explained lucidly. "It 's Jack! Don't you see—*can't* you understand that my poor husband would n't have liked it if he 'd been alive, and is n't it just the same now—that he 's dead and gone—even more so?"

Mr. Marble sighed impatiently. This was the sort of wearing female logic to which he had been treated for the last hour and a half, in spite of all his arguments. Yes, he had done his best, pleaded with her as lover, friend, and pastor; quoted copiously from Sacred Writ, secular poetry, and modern novels, but all to no purpose.

He asked himself wistfully if all women would have been so unreasonable—Janet Noble, for instance.

A sudden inspiration dawned on Mr. Marble. A light shone in his blue eyes.

"Then I understand that you 've definitely refused me," he said, facing his hostess reproachfully.

Mrs. Minturn raised her eyebrows. "How dreadfully downright you men are!" she remonstrated.

"At all events, you said you could n't marry me!" he reminded her with bitterness, as he made determinedly for the door.

Mrs. Minturn put out her hand. "We can be friends, at least, can't we?" she pleaded. "And you won't go away?"

The Rev. Ronald Marble turned the knob. "If I do," he said sternly, "it is because *you* have made it impossible for me to remain! Good morning!"

And the portière swung to behind him.

The Rector of All Souls followed Janet Noble into her cosey sitting-room.

He was somewhat breathless and spent, having hastened here at top speed from the Minturn mansion, so as to lose no time. Indeed, there was none to lose, as his letter must be written and off to the Bishop by the 3.30 train.

"I wanted especially to see you this morning," he said with real emotion, coming to a standstill by the fireplace. "I have just received an important call, and *you* ought to be the first to know it."

"A call!" repeated Janet Noble interestedly, as she took up some plain sewing.

She was President of the Woman's Auxiliary, Secretary of the Parish Aid Society, and Soprano of the Church Choir, besides being a tall, handsome girl with bright brown eyes and a vivid color.

"Yes," Mr. Marble returned with enthusiasm, "I am called to Shooting Rock, Arkansas—a beautiful, lonely spot seventy miles from a railroad track. It is a great field—a splendid opportunity. A thousand miners who have never felt a civilizing or refining touch! Think of the good that might be done among them!" (His eyes soared ecstatically ceilingward.) "Think of the services, the Sunday-schools, the——"

"Oh, it would be glorious!" she interrupted him eagerly.

Her hands were clasped tightly together and her kindling eyes made his pulses throb exultantly. "Of course you must take up this great work! We shall miss you here undoubtedly"—there was the faintest tremble in her voice—"but one must n't think of oneself! Those poor people need you! It is your duty to go."

How beautiful she looked with the sunlight on her hair, the inspiration in her eyes!

"There is only one consideration that would induce me to go," said the Rev. Ronald with decision.

His moment had come. Mr. Marble felt convinced this time that it was *the* supreme moment of his life, and he seized it manfully, though her hand eluded him.

"Janet," he cried, "will you be mine? Will you make me the happiest of men?"

The words pouring from his lips had a strangely familiar sound, and, alas, it was with a strangely familiar pang that Mr. Marble listened to her answer.

When it was all over and he had dejectedly picked up his hat for the second time that morning, Janet walked with him to the gate he had opened so hopefully a half-hour ago.

"I 'm so sorry," she faltered, as he lingered in spite of himself at the wicket. "I wish I could help you with that great work!" There was a ring of genuine missionary regret in her voice. "You must see for yourself how impossible it is!"

Poor Mr. Marble, looking at her, could not see it at all.

"Then, there 's no hope for me!" he asked gloomily.

"I 'm afraid not, as far as I 'm concerned," she responded. "But there 's always hope! Might n't there be some one else, Mr. Marble—some other woman better fitted for you?"

The Rector of All Souls only gave her a scorchingly reproachful glance and turned away without a word.

As he bent his lonely steps towards his boarding-house, Mr. Marble became aware of other steps, feminine ones, approaching behind, and a furtive glance around showed him Miss Cornelia Wylde, his district visitor and devoted aide, in close pursuit.

She was an active, excellent creature of uncertain age, whose sterling worth Mr. Marble thoroughly appreciated in the abstract, yet at sight of her his steps quickened nervously.

But all in vain.

"What 's the matter?" she panted, overtaking the flying cleric just as he reached the corner. "You seem to be in a great hurry!"

Mr. Marble turned and faced her with a dazed smile.

"I am," he said, then quite involuntarily: "There 's a letter to the Bishop that ought to be written and off by the 3.30 train. I wanted especially to see you this morning." With astonishment he heard himself utter this last statement. The well-known formula had rushed unbidden to his lips, and helplessly, parrot-like, he floundered on: "I 've just received an important call to Shooting Rock, Arkansas, and *you* ought to be the first to know it!"

Miss Wylde's glance of pleased interrogation only added to poor Mr. Marble's confusion.

"Yes, it 's a good way off!" (By this time he was plunging ahead like an automaton, blindly, mechanically.) "A lonely field—splendid spot! A mission of a thousand miners, seventy miles from a railroad track that has never felt a civilizing or refining touch——"

The Rector of All Souls came to a horrified pause. There was a suspicious twinkle in Miss Wylde's shrewd black eyes.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" she inquired practically.

"Do!" ejaculated the Rev. Ronald, and with the recollection of the morning's wrongs hard upon him he gave an irrepressible groan. "What on earth do you expect a man to do, with never a woman to help him!"

Afterwards, when he was quite calm again, Mr. Marble saw clearly just how she had taken it—that innocent little speech of his—but in the blackness of the moment all he could realize was that Miss Cornelia Wylde had taken *him,* "for better for worse" and entirely without his own consent.

White and shaken he walked home with his most unexpected betrothed, listening mutely to her plans for the future, which were many and positive, from repapering the Wheatley Rectory (no Shooting Rock, Arkansas, for her!) to investing in a horse and buggy at the vestry's expense.

It was long after luncheon time that the Rev. Ronald turned his steps at last towards his boarding-house—engaged, he told himself blankly, to a lady he had never for a moment contemplated in a matrimonial light.

This was the result of his morning.

Crimson waves of mortification, horror, and actual dread surged up into his high cheek-bones at the thought of it all.

He, the Rector of All Souls, offering himself to three women in as many hours!

It was scandalous, unpardonable, in any other man! What would Wheatley say when it heard, as it must soon of its fickle, frivolous Rector?

What would *they* think of him, those two whom he had wooed so ardently in quick succession—sweet Mrs. Minturn and Janet Noble? His heart smote him! How he had pleaded with them!

Then upon his sombre meditation——

"Mr. Marble!" broke in a voice he knew, and, raising his head, the horrified Rector beheld at his very elbow Janet's mother—an exceedingly large woman—coming towards him with cordially outstretched hands.

Involuntarily he shrank from her beaming face. What did it mean? Mrs. Noble's next words enlightened him only too well.

"I just *had* to stop you!" she was saying warmly. "You do look so blue and down-hearted, Mr. Marble. Girls *will* be girls you know!"

Here her voice sank to a confidential whisper, as with elephantine subtlety.

"I think," she suggested, "it's just possible that if you happened to drop in this evening Janet *might* be glad to see you!"

The Rector of All Souls underwent no surprise at the sight of the dainty note he found in his room five minutes later.

"My dear Ronald," it began, and even that unwonted opening left him without emotion. He was past all that now.

> **I have been thinking earnestly over our talk this morning. After all, as you say, my duty is to the living, not the dead. Can't you come in and see me this evening? I shall be waiting for you in the balcony about dusk.**
>
> **Yours ever,**
>
> **LYDIA.**

That afternoon at 3.30 a telegram was despatched to the Bishop of X. in which the Rev. Ronald Marble accepted unreservedly and with enthusiasm the call to Shooting Rock, Arkansas.

He went *alone.*

◆

MEMORIAL

BY SUE JAUSS BIEBER

I STAND in the temple at vesper hour,
The temple with carpet of grass grown high,
And fringe of thickets and forests a-tower;
Whose font is the sea, whose ceil is the sky,
Pierced through and through by a single star.
The choir of crickets, near and afar,
Sings from the shelter of field and flower.
A curlew calls as it wings me by.

Alone in the temple, my temple of fame,
The burdens that bind and the bonds that fret
Wither away on the altar of flame,
From the old years that are youthful yet.
You have given me lilies of Lethe to wear,
The pulse of peace, for the fetters of care,
O heart of the beautiful, praise or blame,
That you bid me remember and not forget!

THE RACIAL POT-POURRI ON THE ISTHMUS

By Herbert Dunlap

◆

IN one of his interesting sketches of travel Richard Harding Davis has referred to Port Saïd as the human clearing-house of all the world. But he wrote that before a far-seeing President at Washington decided to take up the abandoned task of the discredited De Lesseps and complete the severing of the two Americas. There is now probably no spot on the face of the earth where there are congregated together the representatives of so many different nations as on the Isthmus of Panama.

It is related that a certain earnest seeker after facts, one of those beings who wallow in statistics and make boast of their shame, inquired of an authority concerning the number of distinct peoples officially recognized in the population of the Zone. Whereupon the authority desired to know how many branches of the human family there were tabulated; on being told fifty-two, or such a matter, he pointed out to the earnest one that he had most satisfactorily answered his own question.

The news that the "Big Ditch" was to be reopened was a veritable call to arms to the great polyglot brotherhood of the Wanderlüst. Uncle Sam pouring out his unmeasured millions in a second attempt at this half-mad project, before which France had already so ingloriously failed, with Heaven knows what fearful cost of men and francs. What a glorious lure to the adventurers of the earth! Danger and big rewards. Fever, the deadly curse of the tropics, to make promotion swift. A gambler's chance with every element of romance! No wonder they flocked to the standard from every hidden corner of the great New World. Aye, and the Old, for the spirit of Cortez and Drake, De Soto and the rest, is vibrant still; French, Spanish, English, Norse, while there is a six-foot plot of jungle or ice-floe left in nature's thrall, these peoples will have their pioneers at the front waging the endless battle so many ages old. To some it smelled of Graft—but they have not remained; to the most it was the scent of something big and something new that drew them here.

New York's lower east side can show many breeds and every conceivable accent; but there the boundary lines are marked, dividing one from the other—the Jew from the Christian, the Latin from the Hun. There are your "foreign quarters," here is a vast inchoate mass where the white, the yellow, and the black, yea, and the black and tan, sweat side by side, toiling together in this mightiest enterprise any part of the Great Family has yet attempted. Yankees and English, Spanish and French, Scandinavians and Irish, Hindoos and Mohammedans, Orientals and Africans, Latin Americans to the n^{th} place, on and on till the names cease from meaning, all these and more make up the highly cosmopolitan population of this strange mushroom dominion of "The States." Adjectives applied to it, to this strange foundling of the nations, are pallid, even as words are pitiful before the reality of Niagara. It is the incarnation of the New World and the New Century.

◆

The great "Pot-pie" takes its flavor primarily, of course—at any rate, so far as numbers count—from the army of men wielding the pick and shovel. This is composed in about equal parts of Spanish peasantry and West Indian negroes, though in recent months the importation of Europeans has far outrun that of the Africans. For both the construction and medical departments join in a very marked preference for the former. Indeed, our late foes have stepped in at a very opportune juncture, and obviated what seemed the most insurmountable problem of all the many confronting the Commission, namely, labor. There is now, *grace à Dieu,* no need to face the occult nameless terrors of the dread Yellow Peril, as long as the sturdy, efficient little men of Aragon and Castile continue to evince a disposition to follow the footsteps of their forebears, and seek fortune out of the West.

Next in evidence come the "spicketies," which, by the way, is generic slang of fo'castle origin, covering all the multitudinous varieties and degrees of mixture which the nations of the southern continent have achieved with every race with which they have come in contact. Small, languid, and dark, their large eyes still wide with wonder at the strange, weird energy of the Saxon, they fear us, contemn us, and leave us severely alone in our madness. Over them, their natural lords, are those of unstained Spanish lineage, aloof, cynical, and superior. Their ways are not our ways, and to them ours can bring but little good. What care they, queer flotsam washed up on these far shores and left, all but forgotten, centuries since, to have their strange seclusion broken by the pitiless advance of this stern age of commerce, and bald realities? They are a relic of an old Castilian grandeur which long ago passed to the realm of romance, whence it came, and where they belong.

And then their antithesis, the Chinese merchant, the familiar "Wong, Lee & Co." of Seattle and the West. Every camp has at least one, usually back in the native quarter, if it be upon the site of some Panamanian village. In a big, barn-like shack, half warehouse and half pagoda, short-haired and in store "pants," is our smiling friend of a colder clime. He dispenses ginger pop and boots, fans of sandalwood and Peruvian silk, ivory napkin-rings and Chicago tinned meats; a very epitome of Panama. Have you ever paused to consider what a simply wonderful contrivance he is, this Mr. Lee, with his hands discreetly sheathed in mysterious flowing sleeves, and the enigmatic grin? All things to all men, race, color, or previous condition of servitude no bar, he is the only truly consistent follower of the apostle Paul, and yet one really knows that at heart the suave merchant of this South American protectorate is only a bit more finished edition of the long queued coolie who so foully maltreated our shirts at his shop over on the corner back home. Not only does he successfully negotiate the fiendish incomprehensibilities of his own cryptic tongue, but he actually essays to chaff light-heartedly with foreign devils of some forty entirely distinct and different breeds, in as many different lingoes, and carries it to a successful finish without once losing his cheerful aplomb, or his sense of values.

❦

Storekeepers—that is popularly supposed in some parts to suggest Yankees, is n't it? Well, here we are, all of us, from Missouri to Maine, and some "men and dogs" from Kansas. And we dominate the Zone, which is proper, for it is ours and we made it. It is not French any more, and still less Spanish. The imprint of the Gringos is everywhere, from the stereotyped, red-roofed quarters which line the railroad, and the big American locomotives which draw more Gringos from the P. R. R. wharf at Cristobal, to the white, rambling "Tivoli," overlooking Panama from the side of Ancon hill, which was designed for a North Shore summer resort and then shipped south under some mistake in the bill of lading. Our stamp is on the foreign-born, digging in Culebra Cut, whose gaudy sashes and wide corduroys so quickly change to conventional overalls and unsightly braces. It is on the pert children of the Jamaicans, who have forsworn the courtly breeding of their dusky "British" sires, and often swear fluently in purest American. They also hop recklessly on the running boards of erratic switch engines in the yards, and disregard the stencilled warning to "keep off," exactly as bad white little boys do in bustling railroad towns at home.

Here are gathered in convention all the picturesque characters of Jack London, that ingenious hobo Homer of the West: tramp railroaders, tramp artisans, college-bred tramps, "Tropical tramps," and just plain tramps. All the motley crew that have followed the trail of the restless, from California to Nome, from Santiago to Colon. Indeed, where is not the Yankee "boomer" known, from Manchuria to the Soudan, and where can he not always find a job? Here are tried engineers, trained in that greatest of technical schools which stretches unbroken from the Alleghanies to the Missouri and thence on, past Great Salt Lake and the Salton Sink, over the record grades of the Rockies to 'Frisco and James J. Hill's made-to-order terminal at Tacoma. Is it remarkable that they should win where men used only to the conventional problems of a continent which Cæsar first surveyed, have failed? Here are clerks from Washington seeking a short-cut to bigger pay, and college boys wild for experience, which they are getting in quantities. And that most picturesque band of all, the Zone Police, who are picked men and soldiers, every one, from the regulars, the Marine Corps, and the Cuban War. Strays from every place, from the Islands to the Jefferson Guards, where a good pair of shoulders and a Riley seat in the saddle could win them a berth and the price of a kit. How gigantic their stature besides the undersized Latins and pygmy spicketies over whom they watch!

◆

And then our next of kin, the Irish—the blessed, devoted, ubiquitous Irish, whose bleached bones whiten Britain's battlefields. I found an Irishman on the La Boca flat where one of the monster dams is slowly taking form, standing knee-deep in oozy, shiny, tidewater mud, cursing tearfully and eloquently three detached-looking Jamaicans who, across a bit of a creek, were theoretically engaged in affixing a pile-line to a monster pile half-buried in the dreadful stuff. It was a loathly hole, and hardly inspiring to any man, much less these slothful and easily discouraged negroes. Far above them was the pile driver, reaching out over the end of the long, slender trestle which is the framework of the retaining walls of the structure, according to the plans. The task of raising a great heavy, water-soaked log, easily sixty feet long, to its proper position in the lofty "lead" was no easy one, and the blacks were handling the hardest end of it, working, as they were, waist deep in water, and worse. But their irate boss was suffering from the insidious strain of the weeks of wet-season, abounding in a most fiendish assortment of weather, from white heat to chilling rain, and when to that was added the manifest helplessness of the human material with which he had to work, his patience and forbearance could properly be denoted only by a minus sign.

"An' it's twinty-foive, gold, to shtrike the most worthless of thim," he ended with a sigh, exhausted in vitality and power of expression. He was a pathetic figure, weak though he proved, when the fire was hottest, fighting his lonely fight there in the mud, striving to force into a semblance of effectiveness beings whose barefooted fathers before them had trod the path of least resistance for so long that it must have been beaten hard as a native trocha.

But that scene explained in part the six-weeks' leave, the ample, furnished quarters, and the host of petty privileges at whose seeming of wastefulness some thoughtless critics have been so quick to strike. They earn it all, and more, these thin-faced, sun-tanned men doggedly driving on the mighty work in the face of almost every conceivable obstacle jealous nature can throw before their devoted, unconquerable hands and brains.

❦

I was glad enough to turn from my Irishman and his hopeless, stubborn task, into Corozal and the evening train for Panama which takes in the workmen from the neighboring territory. There I had a chance to see them more closely as individuals. One tall, gaunt Spaniard, plainly of a recent draft, was courageously trying to make himself intelligible to a brigandish-appearing Martiniquan whose rapid French ran in crackling accompaniment to the former's softer liquids. He wore a most incongruous set of Galways looped under a rakish, if drizzled straw, and held a cigarette loosely in his lips as he talked. Around them in the smoky lamp-light slouched as mud-stained, hard-bitten a crew of pirates as one could care to see. Only, just as a bit of Latin knife-play would seem due to complete the artistic verities, all of the negroes commenced chanting in a not inharmonious monotone a familiar camp-meeting air, which changed the tone of the impression surprisingly. They seemed peculiarly susceptible to its soothing influence, many assuming lost, rapt looks of utter abandon. I had noticed it before on the run from Kingston when we carried some fifty natives steerage. They would lie motionless about the forward deck for hours during the evening droning a seemingly endless melody, wholly oblivious to the watching passengers on the deck above.

They have a most inexplicable accent, which makes their English almost unintelligible at the first. They are very aggrieved if one does not understand them, for they use painfully correct diction, due, presumably, to their being products of the admirable, if paternal, British system of education on their island.

Panama City, hugged in by its massive old sea-wall from the fierce, twenty-foot Pacific tide, retains much of the old-time savor. Though even it is replete with improvements. The train enters under a stone viaduct, whose sides still bear the bullet scars of 1903, for on it Colombian troops made their last stand against the revolutionists, in the opera-bouffe "war" which recently added another point to Walker's star. On the left is a most interesting and typical row of edifices. First come what at first glance seem to be the originals of the fascinating nipa huts of the part on Africa in our geographies, until one discovers that the sides are patched with bits of packing cases bearing cruel, undeniable Yankee stencilling. But the roofs are thatched anyhow, and that at least is something. Next, three plain board, "false-fronted" stores which must have been quite lately moved from their old location opposite the G. N. depot at Cheyenne, Wyoming. Only here their lofty fronts advertise to the world "Unios y Cigarros" and they are run by a cross-bred native. Elbowing them are two broad verandahed, two-storied affairs which must be the "spickety" conception of the common, domestic apartment-house of commerce. One almost looks for a faded and decrepit shingle bearing "Bolivar Apartments" to bear the resemblance out. The name-plate must, of course, be faded and decrepit to preserve the proper "spickety" tone.

◆

That block is a fair sample of the town, always excepting the rows of brick palaces and well-to-do "apartment houses" grouped in the angle of the sea-wall where it bends in to form the market harbor to the South. There the more ancient houses must be several hundred years old and are decidedly picturesque and suggestive of romance. They are high and severe, rising sheer from the edge of the new American pavement, thin bricks worn and smooth and the mortar between fast crumbling away. What emblems of forgotten Spanish glory must not these secretive, tight-closed walls lock up around their sacred, inner court-yard? Some of them have been partially destroyed and abandoned, and the poorer natives have built shacks under and behind them, of the old French sheet-iron which is so convenient and abundant.

There is also the new Palace and, adjoining, the uncompleted Theatro Nacionale. President Amador has a soul for art and knows how to spend his new and plenteous Gringo dollars, for his theatre is a little gem, and, like his very imposing palace, thoroughly modern.

"Shows" are going to be imported from the "States" in the fulness of time, and a roof garden is contemplated as an adjunct. Imagine George Cohan, at Wagner prices; or Marie Cahill's coon-songs under the unutterable glory of this southern moon, with a dark, crumbly, romantic cathedral for a background!

Here, as throughout the Zone, the negroes were in constant evidence, and as they have brought their women, and multiply even more rapidly than the natives, Panama seems likely to be confronted in the near future with a very respectable negro problem of its own. But then a problem is to a Central American exactly what water is to a duck, so why worry? That is one thing *he* positively refuses to do—it is entirely too hot. Why should he with a competent, well-organized municipal force of Gringoes, foolish enough to take care of him? He has but to look out upon his new-paved streets, or turn on his convenient and previously unheard-of water spigot, and sigh contentedly.

But just the same there they are, negro, Chinese, British Indian, and Hun, here to stay; and the future really looks a little hopeless for the "spickety," were he sufficiently to arouse himself to realize it. At present we see the phenomenon of wholesale assimilation, already familiar to us at home. All are being merged into a conglomerate whole, conforming more and more to American standards and requirements, as witnessed by the fact that everywhere in the Republic English is the one common language. But the Americans, though few, are a strong and dominant race, moreover they will some time go away, while Panama is essentially Spanish and they are no longer a compelling force. Truly, for the ethnologist the future of this potpourri hath interest.

Thou laymen, pause, just for a fleeting instant, and, taking your reeling brain in a strong, metaphorical hold, give yourself over to the appalling thought—what will be the result when the process of amalgamation gets well under way, say a century hence? Did you ever, perchance, stir vigorously a pousse café?

◆

CRITICISM

BY HELEN TALBOT PORTER

WE bar the doors and close the shutters to,
And think that we are safe from prying eyes;
Then through a crack we peep to criticise
And are displeased by what our neighbors do:
But lo, men smile and whisper as they pass,
To think we do not know our house is glass!

THE LONE HUNTSMAN

By Joseph A. Altsheler

"YOU might git over the mountain, an' agin you might n't," said Gentry, the keeper of the unclean little tavern. "There 's a lot of wild and rough country atween here an' the Wood Creek Valley, an' some mighty smart men have been known to git tangled up in it. Still, there ain't no law agin tryin'."

When I left the train at Clay City, I had come by cart as far as the rough mountain roads would allow. But at last it became obvious that a wagon could go no farther, so I came on foot. The mountaineers might be in ambush for each other, but they would surely not disturb me if I did not meddle with their own pet feuds. It would be a pleasant adventure, a journey of exploration.

"Well, I 'm going to make the trip," I said to Gentry. "Can you tell me how the road runs?"

"Foller the road to the creek, stranger," said the landlord. "It 's easy 'nuff to cross about three miles beyant this place. It 's shallow there and you kin step from rock to rock. After that there ain't no road, and you kin foller your own ch'ice."

The loungers in front of the tavern gazed lazily after me as I trudged up the dusty road, and the last I saw of them they were whittling as industriously as ever. The thin, crisp mountain air expanded my lungs, and soon my muscles and nerves became firm and strong—I believed myself equal to any adventure. Though it was midsummer and the sun was hot, the road was too stony to be dusty. The dense thickets and stubby woods that bordered the path made good shade, and I proceeded with brisk and elastic step until I reached the creek. Here I knelt and drank, and when I had crossed the stream sat down on the bank to rest before attempting the slopes that lay beyond.

As the tavern-keeper had said, there was no road beyond the creek. Apparently everybody that came this way either went up the creek or down it. I was at liberty to imagine myself an explorer if I chose—and I chose.

Selecting a stout stick as a kind of alpenstock, I pressed my way through the bushes and began to ascend the slope. The thickets did not extend far, but the ground was much broken by boulders. A mile's hard travelling brought me to the crest of the ridge, and I found that I was somewhat short of wind. If all the miles of my journey were to be like that last one, it was well that I had brought Gentry's entire supply of cheese and crackers.

The Alleghanies are not high, but no mountains impress one more with the sense of wildness, the absence of human kind. It is not the wildness of the Rockies, where trees and grass grow not, but here it is a living, breathing wilderness of vegetation, without man, the vital spark of all.

I lay down under a tree to rest a while before pressing farther into the wilderness, and while I lay I let my thoughts run back to the time when the bold adventurers from the old Eastern colonies came over these mountains into the Dark and Bloody Ground and founded the first State across the Alleghanies. To me the founding of my State has always seemed most romantic. It is past my ken how any one can fail to admire the courage of the men who shouldered their long rifles and left the fields and woods that they knew for this mighty forest-clad wilderness.

Descending the mountain was less tiring than the ascent, but it had its difficulties, and they were not a few. I found that the dwarf trees had hid from view many boulders and little steeps which opposed themselves to my passage. I could afford to neglect no precaution, lest I should fall and sprain an ankle or suffer worse. When I reached the bottom of the mountain, the sun, reaching the zenith, had begun his crawl down the other side, so I sought the densest shade I could find and lay down. Tired to the bone with hard walking, I soon fell asleep.

I was aroused by a sharp report, and sprang up in alarm, for it was my first thought that some of the wild mountaineers, engaged in the prosecution of one of their feuds, had taken a pot shot at me. But when my eyes grew a little clearer, I saw that the skies were in blackest cloud, and a second violent crash of thunder quite as loud as that which had awakened me, followed by a bright flash of lightning, would have made it evident to the least weatherwise that a storm was coming. The lightning was so brilliant that it made me quiver. The thunder was terrifying. Soon I could see the streaks of rain across the distant sky. It behooved me to seek shelter. A large oak tree with many boughs grew near, and I found a comfortable position under it where I could sit on a stone and lean against the trunk.

A heavy wind that kept the bushes and trees bowing, preceded the arrival of the rain. Many boughs snapped before it; the edge of the wind became sharp and chill. Presently the rain came, humming in its speed and dashed about by the wind.

Cold whiffs of it were dashed under the boughs of the tree and into my face, sending the chill to my bones and making me wish that I was back at Gentry's. A feeling of loneliness and awe grew upon me.

I set my will to work to think out a plan for the night. With the earth soaking and the rain still falling, I could not sleep under a tree unless I expected to wake up shaking with a chill or burning with fever, either of which might mean death. Across one of the little valleys the mountain was precipitous and stony. I might find there a cave, or at least a hollow in the rock which would afford me shelter.

I seized my stick and ran along the mountain-side as fast as I dared. The rain had eased up a little, but the lightning seemed to know no rest. As I turned around a large rock, a tremendous blaze shot across the sky. My eyes were dazzled and then blinded. I felt a stunning sensation, as if I had been struck by a rifle ball, and fell to the ground senseless.

I do not suppose that I lay unconscious long, for when my senses returned and I struggled to my feet there was still a strong smell of sulphur in the air. But the rain and the fireworks which accompanied it alike had ceased.

My clothing was scorched. I felt strange and dizzy, and everything looked unreal. There was a roaring in my ears, but I was devoutly thankful that the bolt had done no worse.

I was in a sorry enough plight, however, for, though there were now no thunder and lightning, it began to rain again, and the need of shelter pressed upon me with increased force. I saw nothing for it but to attempt my original plan of seeking a night's lodging in some mountain cave or under some overhanging cliff, so I started again along the mountain-side, though I trembled with a chill.

The clouded sun was behind the mountains and the night was coming on fast. The loneliness oppressed me so heavily that I shouted aloud, endeavoring to cheer myself. My head was still dizzy from the lightning's stroke—the mountain-tops seemed to dance the Virginia reel with each other.

At length I reached the ravine in which I thought I might find shelter. It was a deep gash in the mountain-side, and darkness lay very heavy in it. I shrank from entering the chasm, but a sharper dab of rain than usual spurred me on and I dived in. Here I found that I had improved my condition only a little. It was darker, and but little dryer than on the open slope, and in the centre of the ravine flowed a stream of water a foot deep. I stumbled into it, slipping over some stones, and fell on my knees. But the water did not increase my discomfort, for already I was as wet as I could be. I dragged myself out and for a moment thought of leaving the ravine, but concluded that I had better follow it. It led along the mountain-side like a huge plough furrow, and, keeping clear of the flowing water, and using the bank as much as I could as a shelter from the rain, I pressed along, stumbling frequently, as it was now quite dark—so dark, in fact, that I could not see objects twenty feet before me. The ravine curved upward, and in a short time I reached the summit of the low slope. I felt very weak, and my head swam around. When I had managed to gather my senses together a little I made my way as best I could over the crest of the hill. Looking down the slope, I saw a point of light, and I staggered toward it, going as straight as I could; but the way was broken by huge rocks and trees, and though I tramped about from this place to that and always kept the light in view, I seemed to get no nearer to it.

For a moment I was in despair, a despair that was increased by my growing weakness and dizziness. Then I decided to shout, which perhaps would have been the better plan in the first place. I should have remembered the mountain feuds. Whoever was responsible for the light, if I proceeded noiselessly, might take me for an enemy and shoot me.

I shouted, "Help! Help!" and again, "Help! Help!" Instantly the point of light vanished. I was startled, but continued to shout. There came no answer to my cries, however, and I stopped, persuading myself that what I had seen was the phantasm of a deranged imagination.

I stood in silence for a minute or two, trying to think what next to do, and then I felt a breath over my shoulder. I shuddered convulsively and almost shrieked aloud. Some one was standing behind me, I knew, but for the life of me I could not turn to see who or what it was. All the blood seemed to gather in the top of my head and to freeze there.

"Well, stranger," said a deep voice, almost in my ear, "who are you, and why have you been yelling here in such rash fashion?"

I turned and saw a very tall and large man standing over me. The light was too scant for me to see his face or any further detail of his appearance.

"I was shouting for help," I said. "I am lost and sick. Can you give me shelter?"

"I won't refuse to help a white man," he said. "Come along with me, stranger, and make just as little noise as you can. You never can tell when enemies are about."

These injunctions confirmed me in the conjecture that I had met one who bore a part in some mountain feud, but I could not conceive how anybody could be fierce enough for blood to hunt it on such a night.

He turned among some trees and rocks, taking a course which, as well as I could remember, led directly away from the vanished light.

He walked slowly, but held his rifle before him as if he would be ready for the immediate use of it.

Again and again he changed his course. Sometimes I could make out the outlines of steep cliffs beside me, and again we were in thick woods. I had lost long since any idea of the direction in which we were going. Nor did I care. There was not room for many things then in my dazed brain. After a half-hour of such travelling my strength gave way again.

"I'm afraid I'm played out," I said to the man. "I've been knocked about so much by the storm that all my strength is gone. Then, too, a flash of lightning grazed me as it passed, and it set things inside my head to going round."

"It's not much further to my hut," said the man, "and I'll help you."

The word "hut" had a most welcome sound, for it meant shelter, and I grew stronger when I heard it. The man put his arm under one of mine, and helped me along as if I had been a little child.

"I saw a light before I began to shout. That was why I shouted," I said.

"Yes," he replied soberly, "it came from my hut, and I put it out as soon as I heard your voice. Here's the place. Come in."

We were at the door of the cabin before I saw it. The skies had brightened a little, and there was sufficient light to show a small but strong cabin, built of unhewn logs, against the perpendicular side of a hill.

"In with you," said the man.

He pushed me in and, coming in after me, quickly closed the door behind us. I heard him shoving a heavy bar in place. But I was too thankful for being out of the rain to wonder why he should be so cautious.

"Stand there a moment, stranger," he said, "and then you'll be able to see."

I heard him striking hard substances together and a feeble flame lifted up. With flint and steel he had lighted a piece of cotton wick in a pan of tallow. Next, he stirred up some ashes on a rude stone hearth and revealed a bed of glowing coals whose warmth was as grateful to me as manna to the hungry. This task finished, the man faced about and gazed at me with as much curiosity as I gazed at him.

It was a good as well as a strong face. His eyes had the look of one who is perpetually watching. His costume was antique and strange. He wore a long garment resembling a tunic made of tanned hide, probably deer-skin. It was fringed, and the fringe fell to his knees. A fur cap was on his head, and leggings and moccasins completed his attire. In the pictures of the old pioneers, I had seen men thus clothed, but I had never expected to meet one in the flesh.

There were furs and skins of many kinds on the floor and walls of the cabin. On hooks on the walls were two rifles. They were like that which the man carried in his hand, very long and slender in the barrel, evidently of an ancient pattern. The cabin was dry and snug. The wet night was shut out. A square of board covered a small window.

"You appear to wonder at me, stranger," said the man, "but not as much, I guess, as I wonder at you."

His comprehensive glance took in every detail of my face and dress.

"You have no arms, stranger," he said.

"No," I replied; "I'm a man of peace. I never carry them."

"You're wrong there," he said. "A man should never be without them."

He looked at me a moment as if he thought I needed a keeper. But his expression quickly changed to one of sympathy.

"You do look weak and sick," he said, "and I guess the first thing for me to do is to get you something to eat. While I'm cooking it, you can dry."

He put a wooden stool in front of the coals. I sat on the stool and, taking off my coat, hung it on my knees, where it could dry more rapidly. From some recess the man brought forth several strips of meat and hung them over the fire, where they soon began to broil, the savory odor tickling my nostrils and stirring up an almost painful hunger.

"That venison came off one of the fattest bucks I ever saw," said the man. "I shot him on the mountain not a mile from here."

"I have heard that the deer are getting scarce in these mountains," I said.

"I'd like to know who told you that," he said, with an inquiring look. "I reckon that few white men besides me were ever here."

He took down a wooden platter and handed me the venison on it. I ate with a great appetite. My evident appreciation of the venison pleased him, for he smiled.

"Deer meat's not bad," he said, "when it's fat and it's cooked well. But sometimes I like a buffalo steak too."

"Buffalo steaks are scarcer than diamonds now," I said. "I guess you have to keep on wanting."

"Hardly that," he replied. "It's a long tramp, it's true, but all I've got to do is to go down out of the hills and shoot one."

I stared at him, but he looked solemn and sane.

"Deer and buffalo are not the only game you shoot?" I said.

"No," he replied; "I kill wolves, bears, panthers, and catamounts, and the Lord knows what. The woods are full of big game."

I had supposed that the mountains had been swept clean of big game years and years ago. Still, this man ought to know. The fat steak that I was eating and the skins and furs piled about were proof that he did.

He went to the square of board on the wall and adjusted it a little.

"I can't afford to let the light shine through a crack there again, stranger," he said. "It was careless of me to do it before, but it may have saved your life. But them that I don't want to see might see it next time."

Evidently this was a man who bore an active part in the feuds. But he did not look bloodthirsty, nor did he resemble the shrivelled, hangdog, and back-bent race of mountaineers whom I knew. His face was fresh, and the seams in it were made by the weather, not by years.

My hunger was now satisfied and my clothes were quite dry. I felt strong, though the machinery inside my head was still behaving badly, jumping and jerking in the queerest fashion.

"Stranger," said the man, "you look better now, and I think I'll go outside and see if everything is quiet. There was a party sneaking through this country not long ago, and some of 'em may be hanging about yet. Bar the door behind me, but when you hear three knocks on it you may know it's me coming back and you can let me in. If you are attacked before I come, there are two loaded rifles on the wall."

I was about to tell him that I had no share in the mountain feuds and that surely they would not attempt to drag me into them; but before I could get the words out, he was gone. Obeying his command, I lifted the heavy bar into place and fastened the door.

Alone in the cabin, the sense of bewilderment grew upon me. I seemed to have known something of such men as this, but I could not remember where I had seen any like him.

I began to examine the cabin again. Barring the great profusion of skins and furs, it was much like an ordinary mountain cabin in the wildest parts of Kentucky. I took down one of the rifles from the wall and found that it was a flint-lock, of a style a hundred years old. By each weapon hung a great horn of powder.

Near the door and facing the path up which we had come I saw several stout pegs projecting at equal distances. I put my hand upon one of them and pulled. It came away and revealed a round hole through the wall, large enough to admit a rifle barrel.

I returned again to the stool and sat down by the fire. There was no blaze, merely the glowing coals. The wisp of smoke that arose passed up a little mud chimney and was probably lost before it reached the open air. I did not feel sleepy. Ordinarily I would have been unable to keep my eyes open under such circumstances. But now I was wide awake.

I heard three knocks on the door and promptly admitted my host.

"All 's quiet, stranger," he said.

He seemed to be pleased with his reconnoissance, and leaned his rifle against the wall, letting it go out of his hands for the first time. I noticed that the rifle was like the others, a flint-lock.

"Do you like that kind of rifle?" I asked. "Is n't it a little bit old-fashioned?"

"It 's as good as they make," he replied quickly. "I never heard of any better. If anybody's got one that he thinks he can shoot further and straighter with than I can with this, let him try me."

This, then, was a genuine mountaineer who had let the world slide by him!

"I suppose you are still voting for Andrew Jackson up here?" I said, meaning to be jocular.

"Andrew Jackson? Andrew Jackson?" he said wonderingly. "I never heard of him. I once knew a man named Tom Jackson, in the Virginia settlements."

I thought at first that he in his turn was trying to have a little sport with me. But his face was grave. There was no indication of guile there. He found another stool in the corner and sat down beside me in front of the coals.

"From the North?" he asked presently.

"No," I replied.

"Thought maybe you came down from Canada," he said.

"It 's a long journey from Canada," I replied.

"So it is," he said, "but it 's been taken often enough. So you 're not British, stranger?"

"No," I replied, wondering why he should take me for a Briton.

"I 'm glad of it," he said. "They 're a bad lot. They use the Indians to fight against us, and we 'll never have any peace until we drive 'em all back across the ocean."

I knew that the ancient prejudice against the English still lingered in many places, but I had got pretty well rid of it myself, though it would flare up now and then when I read the histories. But I had no mind to encourage such feelings in others, seeing how idle they were at this late day.

"I have no fault to find with the British, or Canadians either," I replied. "They 're like other people, some good and some bad."

"You 're not a Tory, are you?" he asked. His face expressed aversion.

"Oh, no," I said, smiling at his ignorance. "We don't have Tories in this country any more. I 'm a Democrat."

"Umph!" he said in a tone that expressed doubt. He continued to look at me as if he failed to understand. He was silent for a while, and so was I. The burning wick in the tallow gave but little light, and the form of the big man sitting on the other side of the hearth grew shadowy.

After a while he rose, removed the board, and looked through the little window. Then he came back and resumed his seat on the stool.

"The rain 's stopped," he said, "but there 's no moon. I 'm glad it 's a black night. It makes it harder for anybody to find my house."

"You 're not fond of visitors, then?" I said.

"Yours is the first white face I 've seen in two years," he replied.

I wondered why he should say "white face." I knew there were no negroes in these mountains. I wondered also why he should be so careful in watching for enemies if he had not seen any in two years. For one who loves a feud two years is a long time between shots.

He began to look me up and down again, as if he would see from my face whether or not he could trust me. When he had finished, he leaned over and asked me in a low tone, as if he were afraid some one would overhear him:

"Stranger, have you heard any news from General Washington?"

Astonished, I stared at the man. But there was not the slightest evidence of insanity about him. His clear eyes expressed the deepest interest.

"Well," I said, speaking truthfully, "I cannot say that I have had any very late news from General Washington, but I am confident he is doing well."

"I 'm mighty glad to hear it," he said in a tone of relief. "For a while I did n't like to ask you that question, for I was n't sure that you were n't one of the other side. The last white man that I saw two years ago told me the General and his men were hard pressed. Sometimes I think I ought to go back and help, but I like the wilderness best. I was made for it."

He was silent again for a little while, and I never thought to question him about the strange things that he said.

"That was a great fight at Bunker Hill," he said presently, his face lighting up. "A fur trader from the Virginia settlements told me about it. I wonder what King George thought when he heard how his regulars were cut up."

I said I had no doubt that King George took it very hard.

"But it will be a long fight," he said musingly. "Our people are not organized and they have n't the arms. Nobody can tell how it will go."

I could have told the result very well, but I did not.

"Maybe you have seen something of the war?" he said to me interrogatively.

I shook my head.

"Well, you don't look like a soldier, that's true," he said, "and it's a long distance from here to where they're fighting. You're a trader, maybe?"

I said that I had something to do with mercantile ventures. He nodded and looked satisfied.

"There's money in the fur trade for them that care for it," he said, "but it has its risks too. I take some skins and furs myself, but just enough to buy me powder and lead for three or four years, till the next time I go to the settlements."

What curiosity the man may have had at first concerning me seemed to have passed away. Nor did I ask him any questions about himself. I have often wondered since why I did not, but I suppose it was because my head was so queer and jerky that night.

"If you want to sleep," he said, "you'll find a pile of skins in the corner, and they'll make a soft bed. As for myself, I'm going to do some work."

I was not sleepy then, but I thanked him for his courtesy. I moved my stool near the wall and, leaning against the logs, felt quite comfortable.

The man set about his task. From a recess he brought an armful of small bars of lead, and placed them on the hearth. He stirred up the coals again until they glowed and threw out a strong heat. In an iron ladle which he placed on the fire he melted the bars of lead one after another and then began to cast bullets in a pair of small moulds.

He was as intent upon his work as an artist upon a picture. Sometimes the shining leaden pellets would drop from the moulds and roll to my feet. I would shove them back to him with my toe and he would gather up each carefully and put it in his pouch.

"I can't afford to waste my lead," he said, "for I don't know where I'd get any other nearer than the Virginia settlements. They say the British are sending guns and powder and lead to the Indians beyond the Ohio. It's a crime that they'll never get forgiveness for. White men are the only people that ought to have guns."

In order to help him, I took the pouch from him and held it. Then he would tip the molten lead into the mould, and the next moment throw the bullet out into the pouch. He worked rapidly, and the pouch grew heavy with its leaden load.

"It's a pity," he said after a while, "that some of our boys back in the colonies did n't have these to use against King George's men. I guess they need 'em bad enough. Stranger, if I had been at Bunker Hill with these and that rifle there I'd have made my mark."

He put two more bars of lead in the ladle and watched them as they slowly melted.

"Do you ever go far from here?" I asked.

"All the way to the Ohio and across it," he said; "and I've seen some of the finest country that God's sun ever shone on. If the war was to stop and the people across the Alleghanies was to find how good the land is over here, how they'd pour across the mountains! But maybe I ought n't to tell you, stranger. I don't want to see the hunting grounds turned into farms—not when I've come across the mountains to get away from the sound of the axe."

He looked at me with suspicion. I told him that he need fear nothing from me. This seemed to reassure him, and he turned his attention again to the bullets.

"That's ten more," he said, "twelve now, fifteen, eighteen, twenty-five. That's all, and the pouch is full. I'll take it now, stranger."

He took the pouch and put it away in the recess.

"Stranger," he said when he came back and sat on the other stool, "when you make bullets, what do you make 'em of?"

"The same as you do," I replied. "Lead."

"I mostly make 'em of lead," he said, "but I've got one here that's not of lead."

He reached his hand into the bosom of his deerskin tunic, and, producing something, placed it in my hand.

"That," said he, "is a bullet, but it's not of lead. What is it?"

The bullet shone like those that were fresh from the mould, but it had a different tint.

"It's silver, I guess," I said.

He nodded.

"It's for luck," he said. "I've carried that silver bullet three years. Everybody ought to carry one. There are some things, stranger, that a lead bullet won't touch. They are such things as are helped by the devil, but they've got no power against a silver bullet. I'm going to use this to-night."

He spoke in a significant tone, as if he were impressed with the weight and importance of what he was going to do.

"How?" I asked in surprise.

"Well," he replied, "I'm going to shoot it at something that goes on four legs; what it is I don't know, but it's more like a bear than anything else, I guess. I've shot four bullets of lead at it and never touched a hair. It never happened to me before to miss the same thing four times, and once at not more than twenty yards. Stranger, that thing was helped by the devil, and I'm going to use against it this silver bullet that the devil's got no power over."

He looked at me earnestly. Curiosity laid hold of me.

"Will you tell me about it," I asked, "and let me help you?"

"I'll tell you," he said, "but you can't help me, 'less you've got another silver bullet. 'T would be a waste of good lead. But you can go along. I 've got traps set by the beaver dam in the creek a couple miles from here, but something comes every night and takes the beavers out. I 've watched four nights and shot at it, but always missed. It 's past midnight now, stranger, and it will be coming. We must get ready."

He took his favorite rifle and drew the charge. Then he reloaded carefully with the silver bullet and an extra allowance of powder.

"It 's not worth while for you to take anything," he said. "Only this will reach the mark."

He slapped his rifle barrel with an air of great confidence, for which I knew the silver bullet was responsible.

It was very dark outside, too dark for me to see which way I was going or along what sort of a path. But the lone huntsman trod with firm and rapid step, and I followed close behind.

For an hour or more we wound in and out among rocks, trees, and thickets, and then I heard the trickling and bubbling of water.

"This is the creek," said the hunter, "and down there in that hollow are the traps. We 'll sit on this rock in the shadow of the trees and wait. Don't lean over too far, for you might fall, and it 's ten feet to the bottom behind you."

He rested his gun across his knees, drew his great shoulders up a bit, and sank into an easy position, keeping his eyes on the little hollow where the beaver trap lay. I sat by his side. Though the rain had ceased long since, the forest was still wet, and we could hear an occasional drop of water slipping from one leaf and falling on another below. Looking up at the heavens, I noticed that the clouds were passing away, and it grew lighter, though the light was a somber gray.

We waited more than an hour, neither speaking nor making the slightest movement. For the first time that night I began to feel sleepy. My head nodded. My eyelids came down. I shook myself and resolved that I would not yield. The silence of the forest, broken only by the soft drip of the water from one leaf to another, encouraged sleep. Inclination became too strong for will, and, sitting erect, I slept.

I was aroused by a punch in the side. The hunter laid his hand upon my shoulder, and then pointed into the hollow. A huge bear, the biggest and fiercest that I had ever looked upon, had come into the circle of light. He held up his pointed nose and sniffed the air. But the wind was blowing toward us. The boughs of the trees arched over us and concealed us.

For several minutes the great beast stood in the hollow, sniffing and looking about. Then, reassured, he proceeded toward the beaver traps, with his head to the ground.

The hunter raised his rifle and took aim. He was very long about it, but the hands that held the rifle were steady. I looked at the muzzle of the gun, and then my eyes travelled from it to the great brute, as if I would watch the passage of the silver bullet and see where it struck. Then my eyes came back to the hunter. I saw the contraction of the muscles as his finger pressed the trigger.

The report of the rifle in the still night was doubly loud. Before its echo ceased the beast uttered a growl, half of rage, half of pain. A great gout of blood appeared upon his side. He reared up and tried to tear the wound. Then, dropping back, he turned and rushed snarling into the woods.

"It 's found a mortal spot! I knew the silver bullet would n't turn aside," exclaimed the hunter in gleeful triumph. "He won't run more 'n fifty yards before he falls!"

He sprang from the rock and rushed down the hollow in pursuit. Excited, I sought to follow. But I was incautious. I slipped backward over the rock and fell full ten feet to the hard earth, where I lay stunned.

When I recovered there was a faint streak of gray in the East. I was stiff, but I felt of myself and found that no bones were broken. Above me was the big rock from which I had fallen. I went down into the hollow in search of the hunter, but did not see him. Some great tracks in the soft earth led into the adjoining woods. But at the edge of the woods they stopped, nor could I find further trace of them.

I shouted aloud again and again for the hunter, but no answer came. The gray light in the East was giving way to the red flush of the rising sun. Then I undertook to find the cabin, but I became lost in a maze of gullies and cliffs and steep hills. Half the day I hunted for it, becoming involved deeper and deeper in the mountains. At last, abandoning a task that I now saw to be hopeless, I started again for the Wood Creek valley, guiding my course by the sun.

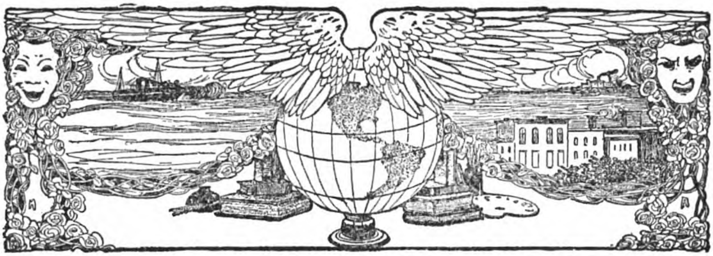
◆

Trusting *in* the Lord is very well, but trusting *to* the Lord is shiftless.

A little indifference is tonical, but too many "Don't care a hoots" end the game.

A bad husband has found cynical defenders, but for a bad son, mercy is not to be found on earth.

There are two persons in every normal man, and Heaven alone knows how many in every clever woman.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

◆

A CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

PHILADELPHIA is two-hundred twenty-five years old and Founders' Week will fittingly mark the anniversary. The whole nation unites to honor the birthday of the birthplace of Independence, but Philadelphia herself will do the chief rejoicing.

That the celebration might embrace every interest in the community, and all divisions of the population, the work of arrangement was divided and subdivided among one hundred and four committees, with a membership of eight hundred and ninety-two.

To further assure a popular character to the jubilee, subscriptions were asked from the public. Councils had already appropriated one hundred thousand dollars upon condition that the citizens subscribe at least a like amount. The total expenses of the celebration will be between two hundred and fifty and three hundred thousand dollars. To strike a distinctively high note to the Founders' Week celebration, the series of functions will open on Sunday, October 4, with an acknowledgment to the world, of Philadelphia's belief in, and thankfulness to, the Supreme Power. At sunrise the city will awaken with the ringing of the bell in Independence Hall, in unison with all church bells and chimes throughout the city. There will be special services in all places of worship in the morning, with sermons on the subject of the day, the Mayor and his official family attending Old Swedes' Church, the first church in the city, established even prior to the city's founding; the Governor and his staff will attend services at old Christ's

Church, hallowed by memories of Washington, and those who made the Declaration-period notable. Other bodies of authority will worship in other churches, notably a gathering of Grand Army officers in old St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church, the oldest Methodist church edifice in the world. Committees will visit every charitable institution and prison to distribute flowers and gifts to the inmates. There will be singing of the national anthems in every Sunday School, all at the same hour. At four o'clock special services will be held in the four original squares of the old city, with a meeting in Fairmount Park at which one hundred and fifty thousand persons are expected to be present, a choir of five thousand voices leading the singing.

Monday, Military Day, will be opened with a salute to the city from the thirteen United States war vessels in the harbor. At nine o'clock the new city seal will be used for the first time by the Mayor, followed by a reception at the City Hall to distinguished guests. The afternoon will be given to a parade of forty thousand National and State troops, including U. S. Sailors and Marines, and detachments from visiting foreign war-ships. The evening will see a municipal celebration in the Academy of Music, with the President of the United States and the Governors of all the States as guests.

Tuesday, Civic Day, will be marked by a parade, unique in many features and comprehensive in its illustration of the evolution of the several municipal departments. The city police and fire departments, the State police, and the Volunteer firemen of Philadelphia and of Pennsylvania, will combine in this great display. Marching men, costumed to represent the earliest types of police and firemen, will be a feature. In the evening there will be a remarkable assemblage in the Friends' Meeting House of fifteen hundred clergymen of all denominations, to listen to a discussion of William Penn as statesmen and champion of religious liberty.

Wednesday, Industrial Day, will be conspicuous for its unique parade, illustrating industrial conditions by a succession of magnificent floats, showing the evolution of each city industry from the crudest and earliest forms of the seventeenth century up to the most advanced processes of to-day. For example, "transportation" will begin with the horse and drag-shaft of the Indians and end with a model of the great locomotive of to-day, eighty-five feet long. Forty of the best bands in the East will participate.

Thursday will be Children's Day and River Pageant Day. At noon one hundred and fifty thousand children will sing in Independence Square. In the afternoon the River Pageant will take place, a great parade of five hundred craft steaming up and down the Delaware River, circling the long line of United States and foreign war-ships anchored in mid-stream. In the evening a pyrotechnic display will for a full hour make the Delaware River a blaze of light, from Fort Mifflin to Torresdale. There will be also a parade of ten thousand Red Men in the evening.

Friday, Historic Pageant Day, will witness the first historical pageant ever attempted within the limits of the United States. On the details of this function a committee of noted historians have been at work for five months, assisted by artists of national reputation. Forty large floats will depict the central features of historic events in the life of the city, the floats being supplemented by more than five thousand costumed men.

On Saturday, athletic sports will rule in the early hours. The afternoon will be given over to a great Knights' Templar parade.

As the parades will be confined to the afternoons, the mornings will be free for visitors to inspect the two hundred and fifty historic sites, all of which have been plainly marked. During the week there will be held some twenty conventions of scientific and commercial bodies. More than fifty Commercial Organizations in Philadelphia will keep open house to visitors. An important Historic Industries Loan-Exhibit will be held at City Hall during the week, and, coincidentally, a Historical Exhibit in the rooms of the Historical Society. On every evening there will be held on the great athletic centre of the East, Franklin Field, of the University of Pennsylvania, a monster performance showing in a series of tableaux, with illustrative music, the history of Philadelphia from its founding to the present day. A feature of Founders' Week that will leave a permanent record of the great celebration, will be the installation of a line of twenty-eight bronze lamp-posts encircling City Hall. Each is twenty-eight feet high and carries twenty-eight electric lamps of one hundred candle power. They represent the twenty-eight districts, townships and boroughs which consolidated with the old city in 1854 to form the present city. The lamp-posts will bear the seals of the original districts and will be dedicated by school-children from the respective districts.

On Tuesday, at Germantown, the oldest section of the city, the corner stone will be laid for the Pastorius Monument, to cost sixty thousand dollars, towards which the United States Government has appropriated thirty thousand dollars.

On Friday a monument to Verdi, the composer, will be unveiled in West Fairmount Park, as a gift from the Italian citizens to their adopted city. The same day there will also be unveiled in City Hall a tablet to the great Frenchman, Rochambeau, a gift to Philadelphia from citizens of French birth.

The week will end with a striking ceremony around City Hall, during which the Knights Templar will formally bring Founders'

Week to a close by extinguishing the three hundred thousand electric lights on City Hall building.

Thus Philadelphia will do honor to her long and honorable career as a centre of patriotism and of solid worth in a hundred lines of endeavor.

THE OPTIMIST

NOW is the time for all good optimists to come to the aid of their party; to offer a word of cheer to the long-faced. Now is the time to find the good which the ill wind inevitably blows. Let us remember what Goldsmith said:

Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.

Goldsmith made a decided hit with that remark. We continue to quote it year after year, as if we thought it true. If it is true, what about the converse? It ought to be just as true to say:

Come, jump for joy, all ye who are God-fearing,
When men improve and wealth is disappearing.

It is a safe bet, in these days of uncertainty, that the world is going to keep turning for awhile yet. Those who are badly off have nothing to fear, because they have already reached the limit. Those who are well off will suffer mainly from ills which are imaginary. It may come hard to cut out an occasional champagne dinner. But, for that matter, it is hard to have one's appendix cut out. However, one is benefitted as much by one operation as the other.

Adversity is a good thought-provoker, and thought never hurt any one. It is going along the same old way that hurts. There is no fun at all in being in a rut.

Prophetically speaking, something is going to happen, and to an extent we are the architects of these happenings. The more earnest thought we give to them the better.

Ellis O. Jones

VOL. LXXXII NUMBER 491

LIPPINCOTT'S
MONTHLY MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER, 1908

THE VIPER

BY WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT

Author of "Lady Thoroughbred, Kentuckian," "The Whited Sepulchre," etc.

CHAPTER I

RED BLOOD FOR THE CITY

TWO young men were trudging along a country road in a late afternoon of summer. The smoke-blackened sky miles ahead marked a big city of the Middle West. As the twilight drew on, the open fields changed into platted subdivisions with grass-covered streets, all richly-named, and boisterous with signs which announced immediate and vast activities. Factories were to be built, water and sewerage systems to be laid, city limits extended, and electric lighting and street-car service established. All this at once. It was explained to the young men that they need only to buy to become rich—explained in big black letters still animate in the dusk.

"But there are n't any houses," remarked the heavier of the two.

"It 's nothing but a real estate boom," the other said testily. He was really very tired and his feet were cruelly blistered. "I know all about that sort of thing," he added. "You buy the fields, have them cut up into streets and alleys and lots, all carefully mapped out on great sheets of paper in colors. Then you advertise in the papers, get after church folks and school-teachers, sell all the lots at big prices, and you 've made a fortune. The suckers are paying taxes on the prairie. That 's all."

"But that does n't sound honest," his companion declared with slow astonishment.

Copyright, 1908, by J. B. Lippincott Company. All rights reserved.

The young man of slighter build laughed. "Martin," he inquired, a trace of patronage in his tone, "why are you going to the city?"

"To build a career."

"That includes building a fortune, does n't it?"

"Exactly," Martin replied.

"Well, cutting up country fields into city lots has been found to be a quick way to make a fortune."

The pair was passing through the vast area of the outskirts now, where cheap, narrow-chested frame houses of city pattern had been brought out to meet the staunch old farm homesteads whose timbers were weather-bitten and blackened, but still rugged and rich of marrow—the thickest and choicest cuts of the forest to begin with. They reached the end of a car-line at last and a road-house.

"Shall we go into the city to-night?" Martin asked.

"No. We 're too dirty. We can stop here and rest and clean up."

That evening they sat on the road-house porch and stared long at the city-lights. A portion of their dreams were too deep and fine for words. Youths of the country on the way to the city, clean-bred youths of rhythmic health, eager brains, morals in untainted embryo, vague but colossal ambitions, startling innocence, the tints of the open upon their cheeks, the light of the outdoors in their eyes and its strength in their arms! They were like two colts that have suffered no wrong, that know barn-yards and pasture-lots and are full of exquisite tremors and burning desires about the rest of creation—ready to kick, bite, race, or rub noses. Their manes were wind-parted, as it were, and pinned by burrs.

Thus young Luther went to Wittenberg; Burns to Dumfries; Whittington to London; Garfield to Cleveland; Napoleon to Paris. Moreover, these two on the road-house steps, staring at the great field of lights, had travelled from the manhandled fields to the throng-blackened streets in the only way ideal in tradition—on foot.

The first car aroused them when the day had scarcely broken. They watched it start cityward with a species of wonderment. The conductor and motorman looked big and desirable to the provincial eyes. The quick familiarity of these men with money, passengers, electricity, city streets, and metropolitan affairs was not to be doubted. The hucksters and milkmen, too, were no doubt great in their ways, being on such close terms with the city. The curt "good-mornings" in the hall, and the voices of teamsters in the barns, were not without significance. These were of the city. Men did n't dawdle in the city. They thought quickly, spoke rapidly, moved with swiftness and accuracy. The immensity of the things to learn, before they could ever hope to become a desirable part of this majestic metropolitan system, rested impressively upon the mind of each youth. They confessed their misgivings, deplored their clothing and shoes, their sunburnt necks and calloused hands. Of course they were unworthy, but they would try not always to be so! How brief, but how delicious, is this first glamour of the metropolis for the country-boy!

Breakfast nerved them. They were allowed to board a car without being questioned or frowned upon. That marvellous forty minutes! For the first time they looked upon Nature collared and creased and cravatted.

The slighter, taller, and handsomer of the two manhood buds was James Danton; his companion, Martin Wells. Wells had toiled earnestly, contentedly, upon his father's farm. Danton, on a farm adjacent, had toiled erratically, dreamily; his hand upon the plow, but his mind and heart in the midst of the metropolis, its schemes and commerce and history.

Forty-six years were evenly divided between them. At home these youths had been called chums, but the word does not express their relation. Danton was master; Wells the slave. This was one of the mysterious and lasting arrangements of babyhood. Two mites, far too wee for any trousers ever made, playing on the floor together—Jimmy bossed, Marty obeyed. Jim did the planning; Mart the heavy work. James evolved the trick; Martin took the gad. So it was up the years.

Wells had a firm, good mind. It moved a little slowly when the going was heavy, but with directness, and arrived at the point in due time, full of substance for further ventures. Danton had tastes, mental as well as dietetic. He liked certain studies, for instance, and excelled in them without effort; others were repellent to his mind, in which case he called Wells to his aid, or ignored them entirely. Wells admired Danton. Danton needed Wells. The enduring body and compact brain bowed before agile shapeliness and passing brilliance.

There had been only one break in this arrangement in the twenty-three years. It was about a girl. There is no doubt whatever that Martin Wells was pressed by the other to the limit of human toleration. At all events, there was brief, decisive action. One was cut down as a bullet cuts a reed; the other bent over the fallen, crying for pardon. Insensibility for twenty minutes was Danton's portion. The agony and the tears were Martin Wells's. None but natural weapons had been used. As time went on, the subject was avoided, but Danton never forgave, and his determination to get even never cooled.

Danton was gray-eyed; his hair was red-brown and close-cropped; his features cleanly, sharply cut. He had a waist slender as a girl's, and the eye of a leader of men. In the light of what is to come, the face of this boy is not exactly an index. You might say that the gray eyes were cold and the lips thin; yet these very peculiarities are often found in the faces of men of great material success. If one could have seen James Danton in a certain compact apartment less than three years later, he would have called the clean, rapt countenance of the youth, now studying the streets of the city from the seat of an open trolley-car, a problem too intricate for ordinary human eyes.

Danton laughed suddenly but silently. A man on the seat in front had just related an anecdote the point of which appeared to hinge upon the fact that an innocent and sympathetic countryman was looted and dismayed by a pair of city ruffians. There is a ray of light here. The laugh of Danton was not as faultless as his face in repose. It was a straight, tense laugh. The lips whitened against his teeth, and his mouth opened but very narrowly. The eyes did not laugh.

On the contrary, Wells had a quiet, reserved smile that was winning. He laughed seldom.

The face of Martin Wells was square, enduring, and patient, like his body. A good brow, brown, steady eyes, strong white teeth, a glance of instant attention, and a low, honest voice—these were his features. They lacked a quick appeal, but grew upon you. The student of faces would perceive his probable destiny with ease—the modest honors of good citizenship, a staunch but purely local following of friends, the sound home-grown fruits of integrity and single-pointed endeavor.

Wells was the first to obtain a position. He went to work the third morning in the highly reputable establishment of Broad, Bridge & Company, wholesale dry-goods merchants. His work was to handle the freight-elevator, to assist in the loading of boxes of goods from the basement to the lift and from the lift to the trucks. This labor did not occupy his entire time. He constructed boxes, packed and covered them; familiarized himself with the systems of shipping and the various floors and departments of the building and business. He began at eight dollars the week and worked ten hours each day. Only three out of three hundred names were below his on the firm's payroll. They were office boys.

The times were good, but Danton had views and walked the streets with them. He was not exactly averse to beginning at the bottom, but he did not want to begin in a line of work which had manual labor for a base. Pride preyed upon his nerves, not because he was responsible for three extra holes daily in Wells's meal-ticket, but because Wells had obtained a position first and was so completely satisfied.

There followed a period of two weeks in which Danton's luck was really evil. He endured a series of maddening just-misses. A man would be accepted for a likely position while he was in the elevator on the way up; or the delay caused by missing a car would be the luck of another man. In the sting of this malignant fortune, as it certainly felt to him, Danton called at the local office of an Eastern publishing company which had just put a new encyclopedia in twenty volumes upon the market.

"Yes, we want book-agents," remarked a nervous individual with black hair and eyes and finger-nails, as he emerged from behind a grating. He wore a black bow-tie and a black worn suit. His eyes went up and down Danton, in and out and around Danton.

Danton paled. He remembered signs he had seen in office-buildings: "Book-agents not allowed to solicit here." He remembered how he had criticised Wells for running an elevator, and was gratified at the thought that Wells had n't been around enough to notice the aforementioned signs. Meanwhile the person of much black was fusing questions into Danton's understanding.

"Your clothes are a little off-color," he concluded, "but I 'll give you a trial. You 're a little out of the line of men who come here for work. They 're a half-baked set who have failed at everything else before they come to me. They don't believe in themselves nor in the books. They look into faces, without seeing them. They rig up a little superficial yarn and give it to everybody alike."

The man snapped the tip from a match, began to chew the stick and resumed:

"Now look here. You get a ten-case note for every contract you bring in. Say, do you know where *your* chance lies? It 's here. You 've got your original enthusiasm to begin with. You 're not one of the discards. But here I am blowing like a leaky gas-tank. I can't make you if you 're a mutt, and if you 're the real old grapes you 'll make yourself! Observe these few rules. Get after the women when you can——"

He halted suddenly and looked over Danton again from head to foot with a keen, dry smile.

"I should n't wonder," he observed slowly, "if that is n't your best lay—to play to the up-town parlors. But Lares and Penates! it 's a corking big game! Every one of them is a different weave. Look out for the madam of forty in an unswept house, spectacles, servant just left, literary class, paper to be read next afternoon. Get into the heart of that paper! Come and get our reference on the subject. Listen to her with sweet, boyish awe, like St. Paul at the feet of Gamaliel! Size up her library! Handle her pet books affectionately. Get away with a bid to come back, and bone on her paper stuff for next call! You 're apt to land that sort. Widows are always likely.

Something queer about widows. Maybe you 'll learn. School-teachers a great field, but pretty well cultivated by our sort. Still, they 're always ripe to the right man.

" Any way, they 're all different. And because they are different the game is big as the world. Five words are enough to let you know if there 's hope. When you find a weakness or a fad, jab at it, swing at it, upper-cut into it. When you 've got it jellyfied—get out your order-blanks. You 've got to be deep and natural and know your prey. You 've got to play a different system every trick.

" The man who can sell encyclopedias on subscription, who is game and has years to grow in, who can keep booze off his breath and inflations and distractions out of his head—such a man can sell any commodity in any market. The world wants such a man at his own price. Now, listen to this last word: the man who can sell books can sell bonds and real estate and railroads. The man who can sell the most books is the man who can see farthest at first glance into a pair of human eyes ! "

These words burned into the brain of Danton. He procured sample pages and bindings, all the available " literature " anent the work itself; absorbed further enlightenment from the chief of agents, and left the office in a sort of trance. All that afternoon he learned from door to door, building his story and trying to perfect it. A long evening was spent in studying the encyclopedia itself, with the result that at midnight he was too tired to sleep, so he planned digressions and supplements and revisions to meet the variety of cases. The failures of the afternoon returned to him, the face that answered each ring of the bell, its instant contraction and defense when he made his errand known, the peculiarities and mannerisms, the possible weaknesses of each. He thought of what he should do and say if he were allowed another chance at these failures. He studied to pass the stolid wall which the presence of a servant at the door reared before him.

So days and nights passed. He grew prodigiously in working knowledge of the books. He learned with joy that he was developing a natural gift of expression. Sometimes he wished that the city were larger. He studied as no book-agent ever studied before. He became formidable. On the eighth morning, he entered a house at eight-forty-five and staggered out at eleven-thirty with an order and a partial payment. He had strained every fibre in his brain. He was ready to yell for gladness, and to faint from fatigue.

With his first ten dollars Danton bought shoes, hat, neck-ties, collars, and other small matters, and continued to ventilate Wells's meal-ticket. In the fourth week he sold three sets and purchased a good suit of clothing. Wells, ten hours a day at his elevator, still took care of the incidental expenses with the grace which comes of a glad spirit. The clothes he had were good enough for his work, and stout shoes which bore the scratches of many a stony field were quite the thing for the heavy work in the basement.

And presently Danton began to save money. His winter's campaign among the schools will long be remembered in the local office of the Eastern publisher. The encyclopedia was being advertised extensively and it really was a conscientious and valuable work. Probably its most ardent explorer and tireless prospector was Danton.

Young, hopeful, unmarried women on salary, the school-teachers, could no more preserve their scepticism before his subtle leads, carelessly fluent discussions, and the psychic compulsion of a natural salesman than their classes could cope with adults of normal school training.

Besides, Danton was handsome and had lost no time to become richly attired. He had an unkillable persistence without impressing a prospect with the fact. He had become deep and natural and had learned his prey. He could appeal to the vanity of an educated young woman with such consummate delicacy that she found herself warmly admiring his modesty and thorough ingenuousness. The teachers listened to him in groups after the sessions; listened to him alone in their separate homes. He was impartially charmed—with what winning boyishness could he play this part!—with each and every personality in the great army of teachers. He called. He called again. He received orders and payments.

So much for the two boys from the country. Now for the men and the woman.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH THAT NEEDED A CHAPEL

A Sunday morning late in the following summer. Traces of the farm still lived in the manner and upon the person of Martin Wells, but Danton was studiously, perhaps a bit conspicuously, of the city. They still shared a room, and at the present moment were arraying themselves for the day. Danton stood upon a chair while the other set a brilliant polish upon his shoes. When this was done Martin took up the heavier work of his own. The original arrangement was to "shine each other," but the encyclopedia expert was frequently taken of late with fits of abstraction.

"Would n't it be fine to be back in the country this morning?" Martin said. "I 'd like to drive old Major into Yoebright—then out to Crooked Lake this afternoon."

Danton shuddered. "The mere thought of that bigoted, stuck-up old burg gives me the jerks," he muttered. "Nitroglycerine could n't blow me back to Yoebright."

"Of course, Jim, I should n't like to stay at home," Martin said quietly. "But I 'd like to see the little town and the roads and the old farm again to-day. Besides, all the folks are around there, and this weather makes me homesick."

There was a pause.

"I suppose you 're going to church?"

"Yes. Won't you come along?"

"Say, Mart, do you really go to church because you like to, or because there 's a wholly wondrous little girl there?"

Wells smiled shyly. "I like to go," he said.

"I 've a notion to try it this morning," Danton remarked.

The other looked up from his polishing with a quick, grateful smile. Almost every Sunday for a year he had asked Danton to accompany him. Until to-day he had been refused, and not infrequently with some irritation. He forgave this readily. Jim's work was racking, and three or four evenings a week he spent in furious study. At this period the plodder was earning twelve dollars a week and saving two. Broad, Bridge & Company had taken him out of the elevator and placed him in one of the upper apartments. Danton was averaging seventy-five dollars each week and was saving sixty.

"Where is she?" Danton whispered a moment after they had taken their seats in the church.

An indescribable emotion passed over Wells that moment. It seemed almost a sacrilege to designate the lady by gesture. He recalled Danton's attitude toward women in general, his narratives of easy business conquest, and the deeper possibilities—if he cared. Two or three incidents to which he had listened with some amazement and a distant repugnance recurred to him now with an intimate meaning, engendering a distrust that permeated his brain like a poisonous injection.

"Where is she?" Danton repeated, glancing curiously at his companion.

Wells cleared his throat. "Across the aisle—two seats down—sitting alone."

The languid eye of a connoisseur settled upon a hat. It was a broad-brimmed, droopy hat of flexible snow-white straw and trimmed with red roses—an adorable hat. Its freshness was inimitable; the perfume of its roses not to be doubted for an instant. There was a delicious joy about the creation, as if the straws had been selected and woven, the roses plucked and twined, all in a summer afternoon while a lover whispered. It seemed to have its own blushes and flutterings, its secrets and responses. Church was tolerable, of course, but the summer outdoors was better, where breezes had their swing, and the proper sort of a hat could blow and droop and kiss and cling to the softest, waviest brown hair in the world.

Besides, there was an ear—the perfect mould for feminine ears was broken after that was made! And a neck and shoulders—but it is quite impossible! Fonts of type can be arranged in such a way as to suggest a hat, describe a race-horse or a bit of ruching, but to depict all that a man sees subconsciously in the neck of a maiden, and the breathing shoulders beneath—this only can be done on the higher planes where thoughts have form. No material symbols are delicate or intense enough.

The face was turned for an instant toward the sunlit window, and the profile was carved forever upon Danton's inner consciousness, as it had graven itself in Wells's throne-room months before. It was n't pretty. When brain and heart and soul put their best into a woman's face, the result is n't pretty, but it may be beautiful. Certainly, it will have distinction.

Neither Danton nor Wells was evolved sufficiently to read the profile, yet their minds thrilled with vague impressions. Danton saw laughter in the eyes of vivid darkness; Wells, tenderness. Danton caught an imperious quality in the exquisite cut of the nostril; Wells perceived sensitiveness in its quick dilation. Danton missed the delicate lines of the mouth (in which Wells found purity) to read the ardor of the rose-red lips. The rounded chin suggested to Danton a rather disconcerting power of will; to Wells it was an inspiration of loyalty.

In that full moment there was in the profile for Danton something of the mystery of fairies—a mystery that instantly challenged. It was the substance of dreams to the plodder, a face that had long been his ineffably to worship.

On this particular morning the regular services were put aside, and the task of raising money to build a chapel was in order. Wells was a little mortified that his companion's first visit should prove a business session, but Danton seemed rather interested in the proceedings. His brain was too fertile to become comatose on the Sabbath day. When the gentle soul of Wells was prevailed upon five dollars' worth, the other smiled forbearingly. The hour was almost over, and the last appeals were being made, when Danton arose and modestly subscribed twenty-five dollars.

The amazement of Wells was boundless. The act was entirely novel in his conception of the other. He was ashamed of himself in that he felt a pang because her bright eyes were turned for a second upon the generous stranger. Altogether, the morning was not one of soul expansion for the plodder. He felt himself utterly befouled with jealousy and suspicion.

The people gathered around to meet Danton after the service. The girl came forward, smiling, her hand outstretched to exchange greetings as usual—always the rarest moment of Wells's week—and tarried to meet and converse with Danton. The latter's ease of manner and graces of speech, qualities for which Wells hitherto had only the clearest admiration, incited him to envy now. He felt the weight of his limbs, the blood burning his face and a cruel hurt like a jagged piece of metal squirming in his brain, while the two stood together talking.

"What is her first name, Martin?" Danton asked as they strolled back toward the room.

"Why, I never heard, Jim."

Danton laughed. "You 're a queer old stick. Why, you 've talked to me for months about this perfect creature and have n't learned her first name."

"I never thought about it. I should n't have used it had I known."

Danton was silent a moment. Martin's attitude had been peculiar since they had entered church. It was hard to credit such an easy old shoe with a sudden passion of jealousy. Still, Danton felt that his questionings disturbed the other; therefore he kept on.

"Where does she live?"

"In the other direction—several blocks from the church."

"Have you ever been to her house?"

"One night with some other young people—I went to her door."

"Are her people well-to-do?"

"I don't know, Jim. In fact, I 'm not sure that she has any. I think—I think I 'll take a little walk. Dinner won't be ready for three-quarters of an hour."

"I 'll go along, too," Danton said quickly.

Poor Martin was dismayed. Still, he felt that he should atone in some way for the stubborn evils which had seized his mind. "Jim," he said sincerely, "I thought it was fine of you to give that twenty-five this morning."

"Sort of shocked you a bit for a minute, did n't it?"

"Well, I hardly expected it, but I was very glad."

"Did you notice how quickly she looked around?" Danton inquired, darting a glance into the other's face.

Martin winced. "Yes, she was interested at once," he said slowly. "In fact, everybody was interested. It was rather a surprise for a stranger—especially so young a man—to subscribe that amount."

"Queer you never heard her first name," Danton mused. "Let me see—Miss Cleghorn—what would go well with Cleghorn? Marion—Margaret—Edith——"

Martin halted. "It's hotter than I thought," he said huskily. "I think I'll go back to the room."

Danton followed with unusual good-humor. He noted that Martin answered volubly any question which did not relate to Miss Cleghorn, but that he became restless and suffered apparently under the fire of trivialities which had to do with her. In fact, the whole conduct of Martin augured a trend of affairs which interested Danton hugely. Inasmuch as Miss Cleghorn interested him as well, the outlook was fascinating.

"Martin," he said softly.

"Yes."

"You'd feel the heat less, if you didn't walk quite so fast."

Danton became a zealous churchman. On the third Sunday and thereafter, he was induced to remain for Bible study, joining a class of young men and women which met during the hour of the Sunday school session. Martin Wells was kept dosed with agony.

To the study of human faces, the ever-absorbing methods of business, and the encyclopedia, Danton now added a systematic study of the Bible. He had been brought up in a house of strict piety, in which family worship daily included a brief Scripture reading. As the youth had expressed it frequently, "I was dragged to church three or four times a week from rattles to razor-strops." The endless reel of Bible films which had been forced upon the adolescent brain was now developed. They formed a foundation for familiarity with the hallowed documents which could be obtained in no other way.

In the class of Bible study Danton began to shine. At first he offered only an occasional sizzling sentence, a meteoric flash here and there, but presently he assumed and held supremacy with steady brilliance. And always there was about him for those who listened a most enticing modesty.

Danton felt his powers keenly and respected them quite largely enough, but it is not likely that he realized exactly what his passion for increase and the peculiar line of its manifestation were doing for him. There was not a minute of routine in his day's work. He seldom, if ever, covered the same ground twice. Each prospect he invested for a sale was a campaign on a different field. Each victory or loss added to his own brain-surface, because he strained his limitations to the uttermost to enfold the intelligence pitted against him entirely in his own. He studied his man as a general studies his enemy, sent out flankers to prevent retreat, launched his main force against the weakest point of the opposing line, and held back reserves to meet unexpected sallies of strength.

Danton brooded constantly upon the problem which is as vast as life itself—the problem of human character. Inasmuch as he had no fixed standards and adjusted his strategy to fit each field, selling books was to him no more nor less than creative work, and the success of his methods entailed certain genius. Coral reefs augment with infinite slowness in the icy darkness of great deeps, but, reaching after centuries the warm, sunlit surface water, they stretch out monstrous arms with incredible swiftness. Thus a man's mind finds but tardy increase in the chill gloom of routine, but is quickened to splendid expansion when it evolves to the vital glow of creative thought.

Martin Wells felt weak beside his companion, hopeless ever to contend in the Bible-class or in the world; but if this had been all, his solid heart would have known only the joy of admiring the other's eminence. The crush and bitterness lay in the fact that Danton had invaded his dream.

In the sight of Wells, Danton had all the equipment—dash, fine looks, brilliance. For himself there was only worship for Louise Cleghorn. All the valor of his life had centred upon her. That she might be near him; that she might have all his honor, gentleness, all his faith and loyalty, all his heart and strength—this was his symphony. The Far Sometime was a thing of dreams.

Since the advent of Danton, Martin Wells had passed more hours in the presence of Louise Cleghorn, but at the cost of dividing them with his friend. Left alone, it would have been long before he presumed to attend all the services, his real purpose being so obvious; long, indeed, before he would have dared to sue for the privilege of walking home with her regularly. It is not likely that he would have been invited to her house so soon, had it not been for Danton's delightful manœuvres. The latter could clear the air of hindering conventions as a shower settles dust. Wells, on the contrary, complicated the young woman's frankest good fellowship by his colossal bashfulness and his perfectly evident adoration.

At the same time, Miss Cleghorn played most daintily a mystifying game. In one respect she was very obtuse. Nothing that Danton could suggest or declare proved effective to convince her that he was an entity completely apart from Wells. She chose to regard the pair as inseparable. One Wednesday evening, at the close of the meeting, the pastor beckoned to Wells and engaged him in conversation for several moments. Danton meanwhile sought Miss Cleghorn and whispered a request to accompany her to her door.

"Gladly," she said with fine ingenuousness. "Miss Vandeleur goes our way, too. And where's Mr. Wells? Oh, there he is in front! We'll wait and see if he'll come."

Martin was radiant. Danton, in his pique, set about more determinedly than ever to wreck the system.

CHAPTER III

THE OPERA, THE ICE, AND THE INK

Miss Cleghorn's superb impartiality fed the soul of Martin Wells. He did not profess to understand it. He could only attribute her consideration of himself to immeasurable goodness of heart. He was quite certain that had he been in her place, the being called Martin Wells would entirely have been eclipsed in the bedazzlement of Danton. And it was quite true that the average young woman would not have hesitated to choose between them. To such the casting away of the nobleman would have been inevitable, but Louise Cleghorn lifts the average.

Wells had certain other towers of hope, although so many of his hours were miserable with fears. From a boy, Danton had vowed never to marry. Another thing, Danton was not, at least up to the present moment, overwhelmingly enamoured. His work remained god; his sleep and appetite unbroken. His commercial and personal conquests among the salaried fair continued. The easy accessibility of a woman's heart was still a favorite theme of the salesman when he was alone in the room with Wells.

"Appeal to her vanity, and she's yours, as a rule," he would say. "If the vanity door is closed, a nicely judged fervor is apt to win, but the trouble with that is, her answering fervor does n't die down when the encyclopedias are delivered. . . . Then, again, you've got to swing religion sometimes to land them; still again, culture. There's always some point of susceptibility; at least—well, you've got to allow for an occasional failure."

Wells hated these moments; and yet he was sure that a man who talked so carelessly about the sex, flaunting the very corpse of chivalry, could not be in love with one woman. Moreover, Danton had allowed himself to become a favorite with the entire feminine element of the church. Courtesies and gallantries emanated as naturally from him as rays from a gem. No handsome young pastor ever caused such heart-beats. Mothers set him apart as a shining example for their sons. The marvellous thing about it all was that encyclopedias never entered the sacred precincts.

The fact that Danton had quickened the general feminine pulse was responsible for many of Martin Wells's brighter moments. "He could n't let such a thing be," the latter reasoned, "if he felt as I do about Louise Cleghorn." And yet the shadow deepened and deepened over the plodder's romance.

Wells reasoned correctly. Danton was not in love, but he was on his mettle. Louise Cleghorn had put him there with her impartiality. That Martin, soft old Martin, totally devoid of woman-winning equipment, should cope with him, full distance, was not to be thought of. That he, Danton, should continue to engineer opportunities for being with Miss Cleghorn—only to have them shared by the other—this was out of the question as well. He had no intention of handicapping his career with a marriage, but he determined to win the heart of this intricately fascinating young woman, partly out of love for the game itself, and partly because looting the treasure out of Martin's heart appeared a singularly fitting way to settle the old score.

As a matter of fact, his companion had long bored Danton. Martin normal was bad enough; but Martin in love was becoming insufferable. Their paths had diverged since the first month in the city. The book-agent was making money. A *coup* was forming in his brain to land a fortune. Martin was available in this plan. After that the deluge.

In the last week of October Broad, Bridge & Company held its semi-annual inventory. The services of Martin were required in the evenings at the store. On the nights of Monday and Tuesday it was nearly eleven when he reached the room. Danton went alone to the Wednesday evening meeting at the church. Miss Cleghorn was there. He joined her at the close.

"And where 's Mr. Wells to-night?" she asked.

Danton explained. "It happened unfortunately, too," he added. "We wanted to arrange a little party of four, if possible, for Friday night and ask you and Miss Vandeleur to hear the Bostonians. You know they sing 'Robin Hood' here then."

"It 's a shame—nothing less," she exclaimed.

"But Martin suggested that there was no need of your missing it," he added. "I promise to take the best of care of you—if you will go with me."

For just a second she considered. "Why, thank you. Of course I will."

At this juncture, Miss Vandeleur bore down upon the pair, and naturally the subject was not enlarged upon.

Now, it happened that on that Wednesday Martin Wells had dwelt with an inspiration. It began early in the morning, when he overheard a clerk mention to another clerk that the Bostonians were to sing in town Friday night. In the ensuing conversation many things were said about the musical event which the members of that famous old troupe doubtless would have been glad to hear. All of which

Martin assimilated. As all things goodly in the world were related in his mind with Louise Cleghorn, the music and the lady mingled for a space. Then he trembled at the daring of a sudden thought.

It held its own—finally compelled a decision. By working later Thursday night, and possibly Saturday night, he would be allowed to skip Friday. But not later than to-day Miss Cleghorn must be approached. In the noon-hour, Martin secured permission to leave the store that evening at eight, and to arrange his extra hours so as to have Friday evening as well—if Miss Cleghorn wished. Let it be impressed that Martin's first intimation of the Bostonians' local call came from the two clerks.

At eight-fifteen that night he rushed into his room, washed, changed his linen, and reached the church by eight-forty-five. He was tossed by trepidations, but his resolve held him from drifting. People were leaving the church as he reached the vestibule, but he breasted his way through to the auditorium, where the more social elements of the membership lingered, chatting, in segregated groups among the aisles.

Danton's back was turned to the door. Miss Vandeleur had nailed him with her vivacity. Martin caught the eyes of Miss Cleghorn, and she came forward to meet him. The quick ungloved hand lost none of its self-reliance, even in the pressure of his big, hard fingers.

"I'm glad I got here in time," he began a little breathlessly. "I wanted to see you."

"Mr. Danton told me you were working night and day at the store."

"Yes, but Miss Cleghorn, I've arranged—that is, if you find it possible—to get off Friday night."

"If I find it possible?" she repeated.

"That is—I won't need to work Friday night—if you find it possible to go with me to hear the Bostonians. You know, they sing and are fine——"

"Good! Then we'll all four go—the original arrangement?"

Martin's faculties quickened as one who suddenly senses an evil which impends. "The original arrangement?" he muttered lightly.

"Don't you know—you suggested it to Mr. Danton—that Miss Vandeleur and I should go with you two?"

"Then Jim has spoken to you?" The words were slowly and harshly uttered.

"Why, yes, of course—just a few minutes ago—and I promised to go with him. He thought you would have to work."

The situation penetrated Martin's understanding like a destroying dryness. Danton's face was directed upon him now. It was marked with a queer expression—a sort of frightened laugh. Miss Cleghorn's eyes were peering into his own. Wells felt their search in his brain—felt their troubled intentness.

"Yes, of course," he muttered dully. "He thought I would have to work."

"Then, possibly we can all go—since you are free?" she observed doubtfully.

"Has Miss Vandeleur been spoken to about it?" he asked.

"No."

"Well, then, Miss Cleghorn, we 'll let the matter rest as it is. I 'll work Friday night. Yes," he added thoughtfully; "I 'll work Friday night."

Danton approached with a genial greeting.

"Hello, Martin! How did you happen to get home so soon?"

"By leaving a little extra work for to-morrow."

Miss Cleghorn noted, as it is not likely she would have done another time, that Wells did not return Danton's cordiality. The four walked home together. Miss Cleghorn did not ask them in. Miss Vandeleur was left at her door.

"What 's the matter, Mart?" Danton asked nervously.

Wells did not reply.

"I say, what 's the matter?"

"Everything considered," Wells said in peculiar slow way, "I don't think you had better speak to me any further to-night."

He turned at the first corner and walked away swiftly. Danton laughed.

Wells went back to the store and worked for an hour. Then he walked the down-town streets until midnight, and took a hotel room, but did not sleep. As he had to work Thursday night, he had supper down-town, and returned to the room about eleven. Danton was studying.

"Hello, Mart! Been out of the city?" he asked pleasantly.

"No, Jim. I 've been at the store all day. I did n't feel like coming back here last night."

"Have you got squared away so you can talk?" Danton inquired in a humoring tone.

"No," said Martin; "I 'm tired to-night. I don't feel like talking."

He disrobed quickly and went to bed.

Danton regarded the heavy figure under the coverlets. His mind was full of savagery. He did not want to break with Wells now. The ancient friendship of the two young men had been commented upon approvingly at the church. Danton, as a principal in this friendship, did not want the slightest jar to occur that would detract from the clear idyllic attitude in which he stood before the members. Moreover, he was not through with Wells in a commercial way. Hence he had borne lightly and without open offence so far the lugubrious mood of the other.

Still, his rage was deep and bitter. It did not occur to him that Martin could have asked Miss Cleghorn to go to the musical performance. As Danton understood it, Martin was boiling with jealousy, having heard that his adored one was to enjoy a pleasant and profitable evening in the company of his fancied rival. Just one point, Danton missed. He forgot the little subterfuge which he had used to lead up to his invitation—that the original suggestion from Martin was that Miss Cleghorn should not miss the performance on his account. The encyclopedia expert employed so many of these little sappers daily to cut roads for his artillery that they came subconsciously and left but a phantom trace behind. Had he known exactly what had passed between Miss Cleghorn and Martin the evening before, he would have been uneasy at the lie and exultant over the other's discomfiture.

Just an added thought about Danton's mental anchorage at this stage of his career. He felt an immeasurable intellectual superiority over nineteen out of every twenty people he met in his day's work. Frequently he was right, though he should not have known it. Certain phases of his church connection disgusted him. The mental stature of the membership, with one or two exceptions, in his estimate, was placed somewhere in the low ranges of animal culture which arouse in a mind really enlightened mingled pity and disgust. Martin went with the crowd.

Danton had brought only the embryo of this vivid self-sense from the country. His city triumphs had matured it. He was tasting financial success at twenty-four. Fate has no harsher method of dealing than this. There is no viler soul-poison than power fusing in a boy-skull.

Danton was more than ever puzzled as to the processes of Miss Cleghorn's mind before that Friday evening was done. He had ordered a carriage, and she had insisted upon him sending it away, declaring the trolley-service excellent. Begging her to share a little supper after the performance, he had encounterd a smiling but indomitable resistance. Their compromise was an ice at a drug-store soda fountain. And while they spooned this frozen absurdity, Danton's mind was dragged for memories of old farm days and Martin's entrances into the general boyhood scheme.

"You know I've always lived in the city," she said, "and it's a most enticing thing to me to hear or read about boys growing up in the country—and then coming here. You remember, I asked Mr. Wells to tell me what was his impression of the city when he first saw it from the car-window. I never shall forget the funny look that came over his face. 'Car-window?' he said in that big voice. 'We saw it first from a country-road, and our first impression was that we 'd better carry our shoes afoot the rest of the distance, blisters or not.' Oh, it was splendid to come to town that way!"

"Seems mighty long ago to me," Danton said musingly.

"And did n't you ever quarrel?" she asked. "Girls always do."

"We just had one real fight," he replied. "A new girl came to school. She had long brown curls, and they hung over on the desk behind—Martin's desk. Most distracting, brown curls are, brushing over anybody's desk. Martin took on wearing shoes to school. Then we began to notice that his face was as shiny as an apple-skin. Soft-soap mornings. I caught him at it. Between the lye and the shoes, how he must have suffered!"

"Please don't spoil it now!" Miss Cleghorn implored laughingly. "You were ravished, too, by Brown Curls!"

"Of course, but I was banished to one of the big back seats on account of knees. I came when the gang called, 'Soup-bones!' ten years ago. . . . And the fight,—oh, yes. Martin was at the board one morning, chin-deep and eyes-blurred in long division. The teacher paused and gave him a hand. Little Jem Todes of impish inspirations left his seat in the corner, and sat down in Martin's the better to hear the demonstration. I remember the blind pretense his face wore.

"Martin had just filled his ink-well. The glass protruded from the socket, and there was a deep crack in the rim of the protruding part. Jem Todes's little freckled hand fell upon one of the brown curls, and sunk a strand into the crack in the glass. Just in time. The teacher suddenly raised his pointer to an example on the board across the room—to make his explanation plain. Brown Curls flipped to follow the pointer. You know how a fish is yanked out of water. Martin's ink-well is the fish. Ink was honestly made in those days, and wells were ample. There was enough for us all, and poor little Brown Curls got the back-sweep. The teacher rubbed his eye and drew out a black wet line that ended only at the point where his finger left his face. We were all spotted with black plague. In school it was an accident; outside the richest event of the semester. A legion of honors for little Jem Todes.

"Martin and I differed. Brown Curls had wept. That killed his humor. I took exception as to his right of looking at the thing from any particular standpoint. There were a lot of words. I remember his face grew livid. It 's all vague—the rest. I learned his temper that day. He 's been afraid of it ever since—runs off alone when he feels it coming. We went at it. I tripped on a root—struck a stone with my head and went out. When I came to, Martin was squalling over me."

Considering Danton's inner attitude toward Wells, the manner in which he related the episode is a remarkable achievement in self-repression. Before the entire church connection he had played Jonathan to Martin's David. To one of Miss Cleghorn's acumen especially, he dared not now relax.

"A temper like that is man's strength—chained," she said as they waited for a car. "He builds his character ruling it."

The seats were mostly filled. Danton had to stand, so that conversation was impossible. The walk from the car to Miss Cleghorn's home was very short; indeed, there was little more than time for her to thank him and announce that she meant to ask Miss Vandeleur, Mr. Wells, and himself to spend an evening with her soon.

Danton dropped from a sense of vague rebellion against things in general to a really dangerous condition of mind as he walked home. So seldom did his strategies miscarry that he was not reinforced for defeats. The evening with Miss Cleghorn had brought nothing. She had manacled his craft, leashed all the little innuendoes, rendered him absolutely helpless to narrow the relation of his orbit to hers, or to widen Martin's. How had she done this? By a wit and a will that matched his own. By a frankness so genuine that it penetrated his understanding with its laws and penalties for their transgression.

Martin was asleep apparently. The gas was turned low. Danton, while having no excuse to waken the other, was bitten with an added irritation, inasmuch that he could not vent his ill-temper. . . . To think that he had been forced good-naturedly to endure the moody silence of this mucker for two days! He was like a man who has been brooding long on a fancied evil, and, taking suddenly to drink, breaks all the bonds which have held him to inactivity. In the disorder of the moment, he all but forgot the part of Martin Wells in his future. . . . Turning up the gas, he perceived with a start that Martin's eyes were wide open.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUGGLE IN THE DARK

"WHY, hello, Martin! You awake?" he said quickly.

"Hello, Jim."

Danton turned to the mirror, removing his scarf, and repeated flippantly, "Can it be that you 're awake?"

There was no answer. Danton had simmered; he began now to boil. His collar resisted. He jerked it loose. The silent staring of the other from the shadows on the bed was a draught upon his inner fires. In such an uprising of rage, there comes a warning moment in which the mind glimpses the red havoc. Had Danton been capable of deep shame, this inner spectacle might have roused him, even then, to control his brutish obsession. Lacking it, the passion lashed itself.

"Not very long, Jim. I 'd about made up my mind to look for another room."

Danton was silenced for a moment. Martin's slow voice, his entire sureness of self, together with this absolutely new thought that the slave might be the first to break the life-bond, had a queer effect. . . . Wells never made a careless threat. He would do as he said. The work ahead would be harder. There was a crush in this. . . . And yet, if to-night were destined to be the end, he was determined that Martin Wells should not have the ordering of it. . . . The furious workings of Danton's mind were manifested in the speed with which he undressed.

As he swung into the coat of his pajamas, lean, splendid shoulders gleamed in the light beneath his rumpled red-brown hair. His swift hands shot the bolt of the door, turned out the gas, and released the spring of the window-shade. An incandescent street-lamp sent in a rectangle of light, which spread itself upon the floor like the ghost of a rug of silver threads. Danton crossed the area of light and stood in the shadows by the bed.

"So you are going to find another room, are you?" he said in a low, menacing voice. "Well, I propose to know before you leave just what has been gnawing at you for two days. Do you hear?"

"Yes," came from the shadows near the wall.

"Has any one delegated you to supervise the comings and goings of Miss Cleghorn?"

"No."

"What right have you to infect this place with your dirty temper because I ask Miss Cleghorn to go out with me?"

"No right—only a general objection, which carries no weight whatever."

Things were coming to suit Danton. He sat down on the edge of the bed, conscious of the return of his whip-hand. "What do you mean—this general objection?"

"I mean this," Martin said in his controlled voice: "that a man who has such a slight respect for the intelligence and chastity of women in general, as you have taken pains to show me is yours, is not clean-minded enough, in my opinion, to associate with Miss Cleghorn. I recognize, however, that my views will not mend the matter."

Danton laughed blithely. "No, I don't think they will," he said. "That is good—that 's original! And so—and so you have n't spoken to me for two days, because you are sore at the prospect of my dreadful morals contaminating the pure Miss Cleghorn?"

There was no answer for a few seconds. Martin felt a vague bruise in his brain, which Danton's last words, "the pure Miss Cleghorn," had caused. He resisted it. He did not want to acknowledge that it was there; and yet the air was harder to breathe. He wanted to get out-of-doors.

"Jim," he said, bending forward on his elbow, "I want you to be careful what you say to-night—just careful. I don't want any misunderstanding. Now, I'll answer you. I did n't stay down-town Wednesday night, and I did n't refrain from discussing matters with you last night, because you invited Miss Cleghorn. I confess I am sorry that it happened so. I am sorry that among all the women you have met and conquered there is not one who deeply attracts you. I repeat that I do not consider you high-minded enough to devote attentions to Miss Cleghorn, but these are things I cannot help. I did not become an infliction upon you in this room—on their account."

Curiosity had an instant domination. "Then why?" demanded Danton.

"Because you lied."

"What?"

"Because you lied! . . . You represented to Miss Cleghorn that I suggested her going with you to-night, and I bore out your falsehood to save you from being caught."

Danton was relieved both at the lack of seriousness of the lie in his eyes, and that the other had shown the presence of mind to protect his word. It was all clear now. He had suffered Martin to arraign him in order to get it all clear. The present moment, he felt, was to mark the beginning of his inning. His shafts and venoms were at hand.

"If one is allied to a farm-hand who never thinks of the little amenities which may please a woman, and he brightens up the farm-hand's chances by attributing to him a clever thought—he lies, does he?"

"Yes, that is the word."

"Say," Danton inquired softly, "do you think it was necessary for me to mention your name in order to have her come with me?"

"You used it—you can answer that."

"And so you are going away?" Danton said in a strange light tone. "I did n't think it was in you. I thought I'd have to say out and out, 'Martin, you've been a good old bore, but you won't do any longer. Go and get a room close to your elevator.' . . . Here you are taking it right out of my hands! . . . And you have morals! And I must be careful—'just careful'—what I say! . . . Great hell! Martin Wells, I shall say exactly what I please."

"Yes, about me," Martin said wearily; "say exactly what you please and get it over. Still, I'm afraid you can't add anything. I have long felt your estimate of my intelligence. I have always granted your superiority."

"Yes, and you shall find out soon," Danton whispered, exasperated to madness by the other's apathy—"you shall find out soon whether your saintly worship or my low-mindedness gets first to the heart of the immaculate Miss Cleg——"

A startled cry of pain came instead of the last syllable of the woman's name. A hand had shot out from the dark, and the fingers had sunk like blunt hooks of steel into Danton's forearm; then words in a voice of horrid hoarseness:

"I don't like the way you said that. Look out for your life this time. I have warned you!"

Sudden pain; the clutch; the darkness. One frenzied but futile effort for release. Danton cowardice in an instant's terrible conflict with Danton hatred. The furious impetus of the latter triumphing in these words:

"Let go, you beast! . . . I don't mean to marry her either. You—you can marry her after——"

Danton was struck as if by a man-sized rock suddenly launched from the corner of the shadows. He was hurled backward from the bed to the floor. There was the snap of a bone—a smothered scream—the crash of a flying chair. The two huge night-garbed figures battled on the carpet—out of the dark into the pallid rectangle from the street-lamp. From one came throaty, bestial horrors. . . . A woman was shrieking in an outer room. There was a sound of bare running feet in the hall—then a terrific pounding against the door.

The feel of a body suddenly gone inert in his hands, and the face in the ghastly light beneath him, aroused Martin Wells. He gained his feet slowly.

"Open the door! Open the door!" shouted a man's voice. The furious banging against the panels continued.

Martin obeyed. It was the man of the house.

"In God's name, what is the matter with you two?"

"I think I have killed Danton," Martin answered dully. "You'd better shut the door before you light the gas. We—I am not dressed."

The landlady was weeping hysterically outside.

"Shut the door and stop squalling," her husband ordered, striking a match. "Get in shape to talk through the 'phone. We'll want the police if murder is done here, and a doctor, if not," he added.

The door was shut, the shade drawn and the gas relit. Martin sank into a chair. The other knelt over the still, crumpled figure on the carpet, and began feeling in a knowing way for wounds.

"Plenty of pulse," he muttered. "Ah, left arm broken! . . . Two places, what? . . . Skull bumped—but it does n't feel fractured. . . . Oh, I say," he called toward the door, "a doctor will do for the time. Hurry up and 'phone."

"Better call the police, too," came a voice from the chair. "I think I tried to kill him—for a minute!"

For the first time in the light, the man darted a glance at Martin. The latter's face was grayish-white, his cheeks sunken, eyes staring, the lower jaw dropped loosely. The right shoulder of his night garment was soaked with blood.

"Don't talk about trying to kill anybody till you're called upon—do you hear?" he commanded. "Did he cut you?"

Martin shook his head vaguely.

"What's the matter with your shoulder?"

"Nothing."

The man arose, stepped close to Wells, and pulled the shirt back. High on the chest, two inches below the collar-bone, was a raised oval of flesh, reddish-purple, angry, and bleeding. Its outline was marked by deep skin-breaks which merged into one another. The man of the house whistled.

"He did cut you—bad tools, too! Tools barred among gentlemen."

Martin drew back his shirt quickly. "I didn't know it," he muttered; "didn't feel it at all. That shows I might have killed him and not known it—until afterward. . . . Oh, I say, don't tell the doctor about this—on my chest. It isn't likely that Danton meant to bite me."

"I always knew you were a queer chap, Wells," the other replied. "You'd better put a few thicknesses of cloth against that—wait."

His wife had returned from the telephone and renewed her sobbing in the hall. "They were always such perfect gentlemen," she moaned. "Why, they've been here over a year—regular members of the family—and now to think——"

"Please stow that racket out there," the man interrupted briskly, "and fetch the antiseptic fluid from the medicine-case."

Presently a hand and a bottle were admitted to the room. Martin's wound was cleansed and covered, and he was ordered peremptorily to get into some clothes. The doctor arrived shortly, and on the stairway his mind was prepared by the weeping landlady to encounter horrors unspeakable in a chamber long tenanted by irreproachable young men—"regular attendants at church."

The doctor paid no attention to the arm, and, after a hasty examination of Danton's chest, in which nothing was found amiss, he exerted himself to restore consciousness. Danton presently opened his eyes. There was a sigh of relief from the man of the house. He had begun to fear that his establishment was to be ticketed to a murder sensation after all. He turned a look of congratulation to Wells, who did not appear to be moved by the sign of life. . . . An hour afterward the arm had been set, and the patient, having shown no dangerous symptoms, was asleep under the influence of a sedative. Martin arose.

"You have said that there is no reason why I should be held, so I will go," he announced. "But if I am wanted to-night I shall be at the Hotel Trevor, and to-morrow I shall be at my work as usual—Broad, Bridge & Company."

Martin walked down-town, fully two miles. The thought of entering a lighted car and bearing the scrutiny of men was repugnant. He was ill and walked slowly, weakly. The pith had gone out of his limbs; the lights of peace and pleasantness from his brain. The actual pain of his wound, while intense, was nothing compared to the psychic torment connected with the heinous fashion in which it had been received. Each throb brought back that awful moment in the dark. It would not let him sleep.

The next afternoon being Saturday, Martin was free early. Securing a room farther down-town, he hired an expressman and went with the latter to the old house where he had roomed and boarded with Danton for more than a year. It took but a few moments to gather his belongings together. Danton followed his every movement with the strangest expression the other had ever seen in those icy gray eyes. There was something more subtle, possibly more infamous, than hatred in the steady twin gleams turned upon him from the face of the wounded man. The expressman carried the trunk away.

And so the plodder began the solitary life. A gloom was fixed upon his brain. It was not a degeneration of faculties, since no vestige of the passionate anger of the night remained; and there could be no hardening in an arable nature like his, so ardent and fruitful with love for Louise Cleghorn.

Danton had much time to think, while his arm mended. He improved the days. His brain had sustained no hurt. The enforced rest was an advantage to a mind that had long been rushed. It gave him time to assimilate and concentrate. He drew in his prospects, so to speak, and pinned them firmly to the clearing perspective of his city life. Thus the future became grippable.

His absence from the following Sunday services, together with Martin's, was of course felt. When the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting was similarly desolated by the non-attendance of these young pillars, the pastor, the Rev. Raydick Eames, determined to learn the cause. Accordingly the next day he called. Danton permitted a slight gravity to tinge the eager gratitude which he chose to evince as the worthy man entered the room. The early exclamations at the sight of the arm in cast are easily to be imagined.

"But, Mr. Danton," the pastor said in astonishment, perceiving his young friend's embarrassed evasions, "am I not to hear how this unfortunate accident occurred?"

"The broken arm is nothing," Danton answered with emotion, "but I would give my unhurt right arm at this moment if the circumstances had not arisen which caused my wounds."

"You mystify and alarm me," said Mr. Eames. "I do not wish to intrude in any delicate personal matter, but if my aid can be of any avail, you may rely upon it certainly."

"It is that, my dear pastor, and only that point, which would tempt me to disclose the matter," Danton said, "for the secret is not altogether mine to give. But if you can help him—and you can if any one—I shall feel that I have done rightly!"

"To whom do you refer?"

"To my best friend—one of the best men on earth!"

"Martin—Mr. Wells?"

"Yes."

"It cannot be that you quarrelled!"

"Yes."

There was a world of contrition in the single utterance. A cloud fell upon Danton's brow, seemingly to remain.

"Then are you room-mates no longer—you inseparables from babyhood?"

Danton bowed.

"Ah, but young men clash and love again."

"But Martin Wells is as slow to forget—as he is slow to arouse. I was shocked and grieved and acted unwisely, but I will tell you all. Last Friday night I came in late. There was a queer, sweetish odor in the room. I turned up the gas a little. To my surprise, I found Martin staring at me. The look of his eyes, his face, told me that he had met his old enemy—and lost."

"Drink?" whispered the pastor.

"Yes."

"You pain me deeply, indeed."

"As I knew I should," Danton continued gravely; "but now that he is gone from me, Martin needs your friendship more than ever. Formerly we feared the worst for him. He went a dreadful pace for a year before we came to the city. His taste for alcohol was hereditary. Still, his work here, the new life, the church, the splendid influence of so many fine friends, his renewed ambitions and strong will when normal—all these combined to vanquish the disease. He became the same old nobleman to me.

"If I only had been with him that Friday night I might have saved him," Danton exclaimed. "At least, I should not have left him alone. When I saw him fallen, I was at first crushed; and then gave way to anger. I abused him for his condition, for not letting me know—for betraying himself and his friends. It was a deadly wrong. I should have known that he was not Martin Wells that night. He got out of bed and grappled with me. I laughed at him, but, feeling his strength and intent, I begin to resist. This was wrong again, for had I continued to laugh, had I suffered him to handle me as he pleased, quickly would he have lost his rage. I shudder to think of the horrible struggle which followed. He is a giant in natural strength. He was superhuman that night. I do not know how long my resistance lasted. I felt that I was fighting for my life. Suddenly I was lifted and hurled to the floor. When I regained consciousness a doctor had arrived."

Danton continued more slowly, his words charged with feeling:

"Martin was completely sobered, but would not speak to me. He remained until my arm was set and then went down-town. The next day he came for his things, was perfectly normal, but had no word for me. Something I said before—or in the heat of the struggle—has wounded him to the heart. If you will tell him that I am sorry, that I will make any apology, that I was tired and irritable that night, perhaps it may soften him toward me. Assure him that I take all the blame. And even if he does n't forgive me, do not let him get away from the church influence. Persuade him to continue there. Honestly, sir, I shudder to think what may happen to him if he cuts himself off entirely from us. That 's all."

The pastor was silent a moment. "Mr. Danton," he said, extending his hand, "I want to say that you 're acting very nobly. I am glad to be in touch with a young man of your character."

"I can't see it so, sir," Danton replied deprecatingly. "I was wrong. In whatever Martin did that night, his real self had no part. I should have quieted him, instead of arousing his anger. But most important, let me beg of you, don't let him know, even by the vaguest hint, that I have told you regarding his weakness. He would never forgive me then, never enter the church. His sensitiveness on this point is a veritable passion."

"You may rely upon me with utmost confidence."

"Of course you understand, sir," Danton added, "my motive in explaining this pitiful thing. It was that you might have a deeper sympathy—a closer insight into the case. An especial interest shown by you whom he admires so thoroughly may be the means of casting out this devil—even if I must remain to him a stranger."

The pastor departed presently. Left alone, Danton appeared gradually to emerge from the pits of self-denunciation.

CHAPTER V

DREAMS AND ELMS AND STARS

The Rev. Raydick Eames was deeply disturbed as a result of his interview with Danton. He had admired both of the young men exceedingly, Martin Wells quite as much as his more intellectual companion. The world possibly might have classed the pastor in the department of small arms, rather than of field or coast ordnance, but, whatever his calibre, Mr. Eames was well and fully packed. He prided himself, among other things, on his judgment of human character. Danton's revelation had for him, therefore, a personal hurt, inasmuch as he had erred so grossly. Moreover, the disclosure affixed to Martin Wells an unspeakable defilement. While he did not hesitate a moment to take Danton's view that the unfortunate needed now more than ever the influence of the church; and while he was fully determined to extend to their limits his offices of friendship and affiliation, the motive had fallen from esteem to pity.

He called at Broad, Bridge & Company's store the next morning. Martin approached in a dark aisle between two tables heaped high with woollens, and greeted the caller with quiet warmth. The pastor accompanied the other out to luncheon, and the two sat down shortly afterward at a quiet table. Mr. Eames said:

"Of course your absence from church led to my call, and, naturally enough, Mr. Danton in bed with his arm in splints led to questions from me. He told me something of what happened."

Martin nodded.

"Certainly there is only one plea for a third person entering an affair like this. That is to try to mend the break."

"That cannot be done," said Martin.

"Mr. Danton scarcely dared to hope that you would resume at once your old room and boarding-place with him, but he thought you might perhaps call and see him."

Martin shook his head.

"His attitude interested me greatly," the pastor went on, "because he allowed you none of the blame, but scored his own part on every hand. He said that he willingly would go to any length toward reparation—to make you forget that night! He was tired and irritated, he declared, and was n't himself at all. Really, Mr. Wells, when a man goes the full distance seeking reconciliation, having apparently no memory save for his own faults, I think that such zeal should cover a large area of error."

"So should I—usually," said Martin thoughtfully. He did not pretend to explain why Danton was invariably transformed, as if by magic, from a mere man to a noble creature of dilated soul, whenever there fell upon him the least ray from the church.

"Why, he never mentioned that his arm had given him pain, or what he was losing in a business way by enforced confinement!" the pastor enthused.

"Did he tell you all that happened—all that passed between us?"

Here the Rev. Mr. Eames met a dilemma. He hesitated a moment, and Martin relieved him by further questions:

"I mean did he tell you what he said that angered me? Did he mention, for instance, that he referred to a third person?"

"No. The main fact that he had caused you a moment of rage was made very clear, but he mentioned no outsider, that I recall."

"It is not likely that he would," Martin said. "Please don't think hard of me, but I can't forgive him."

The pastor regarded him for a moment in silence, trying to adjust in his mind this repellent hugging of hatred with the calm, kindly eyes of the young man before him. He went farther, and, glancing closely at Martin's face, tried to find a trace therein of a contaminating passion for drink. He failed.

"I am sorry, Martin, deeply sorry," he said. "I hoped to bring about that fine chum spirit again. At all events, you'll come to church again, won't you?"

"I have thought that out, too," Martin replied. "To cut myself off from you all would be hurting myself, lifting out the best part of my life. At present, however, I don't feel like merging into Danton's path there. If you don't see me for awhile, you may know the reason. But I intend to come back."

This ended the substance of the interview. The pastor went away with the incorrigible stubbornness of Martin Wells dominant in his mind.

Danton's activity in the church reached its highest point that winter and during the following spring. The revival spirit passed like a conflagration over the Middle West, and the congregation of the Rev. Raydick Eames caught the flame. An evangelistic firebrand, "Get-Right-With-God" Giddings, kindled the furnaces of piety and they continued to blaze for weeks after he left under the more cultured zeal of the regular pastor. For two months the nightly meetings endured. Danton was present almost every evening. Although banked under an invariable dignity, the intense fervor of his inner fires was not for an instant doubted. Two or three times a week Miss Cleghorn attended. There was sometimes a startled look in her eyes, and always a native repression of manner which covered—who can tell what depth of spiritual glowing?

In April the old Sunday School leader died of exhaustion, and Danton was chosen to take his place. At this time he was also given charge of the local encyclopedia agency, with a percentage on all the sales in his territory. A good income was thus secured him with very little labor. In fact, he canvassed but little personally now, preferring to make his agents employ his methods and reflect his energy. He kept the worthier of his men in a state of continual inspiration by occasionally closing deals which they had begun and lost. The important point is, he had considerable leisure and nearly three thousand dollars in savings.

He also had an idea—Father Time's note for a million.

In June he bought two thousand dollars' worth of property in the least developed portion of the city's suburbs, the northwestern section, and secured a six months' option on a larger parcel of land adjoining. This tract was surveyed—planned into lots, streets, alleys, all expensively mapped on heavy, cream-laid paper and named the "Evening-Red Subdivision." A few convincing statements and the name, "James Danton, Agent," in illumined initials, adorned the lower portion of the plat.

Many other matters pertaining to this real estate campaign were in process of accomplishment. Danton worked with quiet haste. For instance, there was a local weekly religious journal which had a rather extensive circulation among the members of his church. Danton inserted a large and compelling "Evening-Red" advertisement in this paper. On the Sabbath following the date of issue he subscribed (plentifully observed, but without ostentation,) sixty dollars for foreign missions. In the interval between the preaching service and the children's session that day, one of the elders and moneyed men of the church buttonholed him.

"It is n't my custom," the person of substance whispered, "to discuss business affairs on the Lord's Day, but I wanted to inquire if that was your advertisement—relating to the Evening-Red property in the outskirts."

"Yes, I am interested there," Danton acknowledged.

"But why have n't you told us all about it?"

"Well," Danton declared with fine frankness, "the venture is young. I wanted to find myself; and then I hesitated to bring a matter like this into my church home. Indeed, I withheld the preliminary advertising until I got a unanimous verdict down-town as to the intrinsic richness of the enterprise. I would rather fail out and out among strangers than to fare even indifferently and involve my friends."

The elder patted his shoulder appreciatively. "The proper spirit, Mr. Danton!" he exclaimed warmly. "But call at my office in the morning and tell me all about the subdivision."

This was the first of several references that day to the advertisement. Danton was now the arch and idol of the church. His secular interests demanded instant attention, especially since his astonishing success with the encyclopedias had become known entirely through outside sources. The glow of achievement was bright upon his brow for the eyes of those who loved him. "Evening-Red" became the theme of an animated undertone vibrating from pillar to pillar of the church.

That June Sunday was Danton's own day. He read the result of his long planning. The single word stood clear and golden above the days to come—Victory. He heard the people whispering his name, not in the old tiresome connection of the church, but allying it with Commerce and the World! For twelve solid months, day and night, he had breathed his purpose into the brains and hearts of the people. He had fascinated, hypnotized them, all for this day. His vitality now energized the mass. A word in a weekly paper, and the gathered force which had emanated from him suddenly assumed form and direction. The impetus bore him along. There was an exquisite thrill to all his senses, to feel, perceive, and breathe this fruition which he had timed to the hour and calculated to a nicety.

His exaltation endured until the end of the evening services. His mind had turned with a subtle attraction to Miss Cleghorn—across the aisle two seats down—during this dreary routine of hymns and preaching and prayers. His veins were filled with the fervid lure of the world that night—not the world into which he had plunged with boldness and cunning—not the world of daylight and work and dollars. Already he was master of its strategies; already he had heard the music of its magic metal. He smiled behind his hand at the thought that the church at this moment was straining in preparation for a splendid offertory to him.

He dreamed of a world yet unwon, just glimpsed—the vast play-world beneath the stars! It was this which enchanted his brain like some tinted fragrant mystery from orient isles. He had peered into the big hotels at night, into the after-theatre cafés, into carriages and mansions, into the cages of the *demi monde* in the lustrous hour. Women bloomed at night to his eyes. They were mere humans in the gray or yellow days, but goddesses in the white brilliance of the pleasure places. To move among these bare-shouldered queens, in the midst of wine, music, perfumes, dazzling eyes, white throats—this was life's gorgeousness—the supreme nuptial flight of man! All that was left of the country-boy lived in this vision of Danton's. The key was golden and it was in his grasp.

Meanwhile the choir made sounds, the congregation made sounds, and the Rev. Mr. Eames made sounds, and across the aisle two seats down was a brown-haired girl beneath a droopy hat. So much for his actual consciousness. . . . He shut his eyes for a moment to bar the light from an inner vision. There was Louise Cleghorn in a gilded, dazzling room—alone—ravishing! Marvellous attractions of light, her eyes, her arms, her hair! He approached. She saw him and smiled. Only once in her life does a woman smile like that! An arcanum of witchery in curve of her parted lips, glory and mystery in her eyes!

Danton aroused himself to look at the reality. Her profile was slightly turned to him. The preaching was over, the last song announced, and she was fingering the pages of the hymn-book. His heart and breath quickened at a thought. It became a furious intent within him, as he arose for the song with the others, to emerge from this under-life of the church, this pent, dim chrysalis, and to bear her with him for the sake of the one time in her life when she might smile at his coming!

The service was over. The Rev. Mr. Eames caught Danton's eye and hurried down from the pulpit. It was evident that he had something to say. Meanwhile two members hastened forward for a word. Danton was held. Miss Cleghorn greeted him, and passed by up the aisle, his eye following her. Her step suddenly quickened; her eyes raised eagerly. He swept the rear of the church with a glance to learn the cause. She stretched out her hand to Martin Wells.

"Did you notice that Martin had come back?" the pastor whispered.

"Yes," said Danton.

"Does it mean that a reconciliation is possible, do you think?"

"I cannot—it is not for me to know."

He summoned all his presence of mind to answer questions from the two members interested in the advertisement, and yet his utterance was vague and his eyes fixed upon the pair standing near the outer door. . . . Miss Vandeleur and others interrupted the two to greet the stranger. The Rev. Mr. Eames joined them for a moment, found an opportunity to whisper a word in Martin's ear. The latter drew back and shook his head. It was all clear to the watcher. Presently Martin and Miss Cleghorn passed out together.

Danton broke away from his detainers with a smothered courtesy. Eames passed him, shaking his head gravely. Miss Vandeleur, hovering near the door, met him with a troubled face.

"I am so sorry for you, Mr. Danton," she said softly. "I saw you looking at him so wistfully. It is dreadful to me that he will not relent."

Danton's throat was hot, his brain full of cruelties and desires. Stella Vandeleur was a blithe, red-blooded girl, an ornament with a heart. The book-agent believed her to be the type of woman he had dealt with understandingly and with profit. Standing at the door, his heart alive with hate and hunger, Danton studied the face before him for the first time. It was like ripened fruit, vivid, enticing.

"Come on. Let's walk together," he whispered.

His manner struck her queerly; yet she took his arm with a swift inner gladness dilating her veins. It was a soft June night glorious with stars. They walked swiftly. He turned from the street in which she lived. The girl did not demur. His arm pressed hers tightly. They had passed out of the ken of the church people.

"How queer you are, Mr. Danton!" she said. "Are you so deeply hurt, then, because Mr. Wells still remains angry? I am very sorry."

"If you loved a man who drank, would you marry him?" he asked strangely.

"Why, what a question! Who drinks? Who loves a man who drinks?" She felt shrunken and disappointed.

"Would you?" he persisted.

"If I loved a man, I would not let him drink."

"If your dearest friend loved a man who drank, and did not know about it, and you knew—would you tell her?"

"Oh, how do I know in a moment about such things? Please tell me all that you mean! . . . It might be best to tell her; and yet, in her place, I do not know that I should like to be told."

His steps became slower. "Forgive me for distressing you with such things," he whispered. "I have been thinking so much about Martin lately. I heard he came near losing his position two weeks ago——" Danton halted abruptly. "Martin has always been so close to me," he went on nervously, after a few seconds. "It upset me, I think, to see him to-night and not be able to go up to him in the old way. I scarcely know what I am saying. Promise me that you'll forget it all—won't you, Miss Vandeleur?"

"Of course I will," she said.

"What a royal-hearted girl you are!" he exclaimed. "Do you know you almost compelled me to a lot of confidences which I am not quite sure are altogether mine to divulge? You've listened to my blunderings and promised to forget them. A man's best friend could do no more than that—a man friend, I mean."

His step had become quick and elastic again. He raised his eyes to the stars and breathed deeply. For months she had been on the verge of loving him—months of dreamy, restless, poignant days and nights. There were moments in which she had despised herself because she desired to be alone with him as at this moment. . . . And yet she was afraid now! A whisper from him, and her heart would answer with instant ignition. . . . She had felt the gloom pass from him. She was borne along in an ecstasy of tension.

"Don't you think we are going too far?" It was a whisper. She had tried to speak naturally.

"No," he said imperiously. "What a splendid night it is! No, not yet—let 's go on to the old house with the big elms in front. It 's only a little farther!"

They paused a little later on the rutty tile walk before the ancient homestead. The house was far back through the trees, decadent, abandoned. He leaned upon the rust-bitten iron gate between the huge stone posts. It swung inward with a creak under the pressure. Far down the street were the lights of a pharmacy, and not a human movement or shadow between. Her face was faintly white, hardly visible at all, in the dense shade of the elms. A young night-wind passing set all the great feminine branches to whispering. Danton bent quickly and kissed the girl's mouth.

It forced a cry from her and a protest incoherent.

"But I could n't help it!" he whispered. "You are so wonderful to-night! Hate me if you must, but I could not—I cannot help it! . . . Ah, let me kiss you again!" His arms were light about her, and yet so strong! "Please—please——" fell again and again upon her brain. She could not turn her lips farther away; and yet he found them.

There was a step at last. They saw a figure bobbing between them and the distant lights.

"Come—we 'll go in the grounds for a little. The gate is open," he pleaded softly.

"No, no—I 'm afraid."

"What? When we are together? . . . I am afraid of to-morrow —Monday—work—no Stella—no stars! Come, for a little while! . . . There . . . there, you will come——"

CHAPTER VI

CERTAIN WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Louise Cleghorn was unreservedly glad for Martin's return and made no effort to hide the fact. She had been less active than any of the closer friends of the young men in trying to bring their estrangement to an end. She felt that she was intimately identified in the ugly affair, and could not put away the sorrowful conviction that if she had refused Danton's invitation to hear the Bostonians, there would have been no scene of mysterious horror when the roommates met late that Friday night.

Louise held firmly to the opinion that it was not innate stubbornness in Martin Wells which repelled all efforts toward reconciliation. She believed that he had a grave and potent reason, and remembered what had happened after their boyhood battle, as related by Danton. Martin had wept frantically then over the friend whom he had felled. Moreover, the young woman persisted in a deep liking for this diffident, substantial strongheart, and often rebelled inwardly because conventionalities and her sex had forced her thus far to act as a mere lay figure. Often, too, she had wished that Martin might come to her in his great trouble.

Her feeling for Danton was entirely different. He puzzled and fascinated her in turn. There were moments when she was vaguely afraid of him—afraid of herself in his presence. More than once her reason had sent envoys to arbitrate the case of Danton before the blinder forces of her heart.

"And now that you are back with us, Mr. Wells," she said when they had reached her door, "I don't feel like letting you get away. Won't you come in for a little while?"

Martin acquiesced, of course. They remained indoors only long enough for her to make a pitcher of lemonade, then brought chairs to the veranda. He was manœuvred into talking about himself.

"Yes, I have been lonely," he said. "I don't seem to belong here in the city somehow when I 'm alone. My work is n't hard enough to tire me out, and the evenings are so long. I walk and read, occasionally go to the theatre or some lecture, but always, going back to the room, I keep wishing that there was somebody there; and often I look up from a book, even though it is a mighty interesting book, and wish I had somebody to talk to."

Miss Cleghorn leaned toward him, listening. There was something infinitely pitiful to her in the heart-hunger, so boyishly expressed, of this huge, calm-voiced man. What a serenity he would bring to a woman's life, and how simple would it be to make him happy!

"But always at work I 'm glad I did n't stay in the country," he went on. "Broad, Bridge & Company have been wonderfully good to me. I don't think there can be a finer firm to work for. They took me green and raw and clumsy, and gave me every chance for advancement. Yesterday they transferred me to the ground floor, where I am to become better acquainted with the general buyer. My salary is to be increased, and I 'm to start on the road next year."

"What stimulating news!" she exclaimed.

"It 's a little thing really," he hastened to say. "A man can't help rising if he stays with Broad, Bridge & Company, and does n't dislike work. . . . Miss Cleghorn, is it wrong for me to tell you that it makes me feel all new and fine to see you again?"

He had swung into the heart-current with absolute spontaneity. The joy of being near her had simply overflowed into words. The girl was thrilled and dismayed. She had been totally unguarded for this instant veering from work to wooing. Had it been otherwise, indeed had her companion been any one but Martin Wells, she might have turned the point of his words, dealt with them as a rather tumultuous compliment and prevented him from going further. As it was, had she studied to leave the way open to him, her answer could not better have been designed.

"It is n't wrong," she faltered, "but—but you surprise me!"

"I did n't mean to," he answered. "I would n't have dared to plan such a thing. You 'll believe that, I know."

The contrition and diffidence left his voice. A subconscious vein of eloquence opened to his tongue, as he went on:

"And yet I 'm sure it can do you no wrong to tell you, because it 's all I have that is good! None of my other thoughts ever reach *you* in my mind. You are high and pure and always wonderful. I have—loved you for two years this way, and so long as I live it will be so—always pure, always high above everything else."

"I am thankful to be held in such honor, Martin Wells," she whispered quickly, leaning toward him. "There could be no finer thing for a woman to hear, even if she knows in her heart that she does n't deserve it. I can thank you, be grateful always, but that is not enough. Such an ideal in a good man's mind demands more than a woman's gratitude."

"No," he replied huskily, "not if gratitude is all that he can arouse. Sometimes I think that there would be no purpose in things if you did n't respond a little, because the whole vision of my life is fixed upon you. And then again I think that it would be far more wonderful if you *did* respond to the love of a commonplace, unlit fellow like me—than that my life should be purposeless apparently."

These matters had fed the thoughts of the solitary young man so long and constantly that words were adjusted to them now without the slightest effort of his mind. A great and glorious conviction had leaped ascendant over all his faculties. It was this: If Jim Danton had won her heart, Louise Cleghorn could not quietly have listened thus far. Even a tithe of hope was an exaltation in a quest so mighty to him.

The girl was bewildered by the formidable nature of the romance this man had woven about her. She felt herself enmeshed, in spite of what he said, in spite of her actual inner relation to him. There was not a single feminine evasion or subtlety that would serve with this lover who brought her such chaste tokens of his worship, and seemed to have a profundity of adoration to draw upon. She was amazed at herself, because she listened without trepidation. For the first time in her life, her heart was besieged by a male, but this heart did not flutter. And yet at this moment Martin Wells was huge in her sight, animate in her life.

Louise Cleghorn did not understand until afterward that no miracle was wrought upon the virgin elements of her being, for the reason that the appeal of Martin Wells was not to her passions, but to the pure spirit of woman within her.

"I have felt that you cared for me, Martin, felt it from the first," she said bravely. "It seems to me now as if I must have been careless and wrong, because I did not attach such a deep meaning to it—as you have made clear. I am proud that you have found it possible to create such an ideal out of the mere woman that I am. It cannot fail to make me try to be more—as you see me. I have always admired and believed in you, Martin. I admire and trust you more—to-night. That—that is all I can say."

The following forenoon Miss Cleghorn dropped in upon her neighbors, the Vandeleurs. Stella proved to be out in the rear yard, building string ladders for young cypress vines. Louise stepped quietly across the grass toward the bare-headed, collarless figure, bending with deep intent over her work in the fence-corner. The face which darted upward when the caller spoke was pale and startled; yet there was a contrasting vividness in the eyes and lips.

"I must have been dreaming. You frightened me, Louise. . . . Is n't it hot?" she added, yawning.

"Yes. I wanted to ask you," the other said, laughing quietly, "if you thought I was selfish in monopolizing the Returned One last night? I did bear him off rather emphatically."

"I forgave you for his sake," Stella replied. "There was such rapture on his face as he passed out of the church that I had to forgive you. How is he?"

"Improved."

"Louise, do you think it big of him to repel all of Mr. Danton's efforts to be friends again?"

"Not knowing what passed between them, I have n't any judgment in the matter at all."

Miss Vandeleur considered a moment, then said, "I was just thinking if there was anything that *could* pass between them that might excuse such an unyielding attitude on the part of Mr. Wells. It was really pathetic to me to see how deeply Mr. Danton was affected by the cut. I should have been angry in his place, but he was only sorry. It's strange—all of it."

"Things might have happened that would make Martin Wells blameless, but I dislike to think of them," Louise said hastily. The subject was distasteful to her. She sought to change it by remarking, "By the way, Mr. Wells was promoted with a salary increase last week, and will go out on the road for his firm next year."

"Did he tell you that?" Miss Vandeleur asked quickly.

"Why, yes. How should I know?"

"I did n't think. Naturally, you would n't know if he did n't tell you. It's good to hear of him getting along, is n't it?"

Miss Vandeleur bent over one of the frail lacy seedlings and twined the stalk about a string. Miss Cleghorn went home presently, a trifle mystified. The other stared thoughtfully at the ground for several moments after she was left alone.

"I believe she is fonder of him than anybody knows," Stella mused, "and is n't it dreadful for him to lie to her that way? . . . I wonder—I wonder if Jim meant me to warn her?" . . .

Danton had made the biggest mistake of his life and knew it—knew it the moment he kissed Stella Vandeleur. He had given way to a mere animal impulse which severely complicated, if, indeed, it did not ruin, one of the dearest purposes of his life. This thought attracted to his brain all the self-hatred it could hold. The June night; the day so big with inward joys and self-approbation; the chafing restrictions never felt so keenly before, which the church imposed upon his life; the return of Martin, the gladness of Louise Cleghorn, and their departure from the church together seemingly by spontaneous agreement—these had weakened and enraged him. And then Stella Vandeleur appeared before him in the climacteric instant when his normal balance was destroyed. She was animate, feminine, desirable. She appealed to his twin-passions. She could be hurt, and she could be fondled. Thus was the commercial instinct of the man obliterated beneath the mystic stars.

He faced maddening consequences. In the parlance of chess, this woman for whom he cared nothing with one move had checked his king and attacked his queen. It has been suggested, through Danton's revery during the Sunday night's service, that his feelings had undergone a change toward Louise Cleghorn in the months following the night of the Bostonians. It cannot be said that his aspiration was loftier, but it was exceedingly more intense. His growing acquaintance with women had given him a larger appreciation for the individual. He wanted to rifle the treasure-house of Louise Cleghorn's nature for the intrinsic values contained therein, as well as to despoil Martin Wells's dream ever of entering.

And now he had protected her against himself, walled her in a fortress not built by hands, surrounded her with the subtlest and most enduring works in the conception of romantic engineers—all this in arousing the heart of another. Parents and sisters and brothers of a wooed woman may be discountenanced by an imperious lover, but one feminine institution must remain sacred and sexless to his eyes, lest he fail—the beloved's closest companion. But Stella Vandeleur was more than this—a co-worker in the church with Louise Cleghorn. More still: the whites of a caller's eyes could be seen from porch to porch of their respective homes. Altogether it is difficult for an outsider to conceive of Miss Cleghorn's immediate capitulation to Danton, apart from the sudden death of her friend.

An added word on the situation: "Evening-Red" lots must be handled hot. Danton foresaw an inevitable reaction not far away. If Miss Cleghorn was not won before this reaction set in, she would be out of his range for her present incarnation at least. The merest whisper of his real attraction falling upon the ears of Stella Vandeleur would not only ruin his chance with her friend, but wreck his reputation in the church, the absolute integrity of which was essential to "Evening-Red" sales.

Danton had deep reason to believe that nothing of that which happened Sunday night would reach Miss Cleghorn's ears, so long as he kept Stella Vandeleur happy. It may as well be stated that in the face of his appalling handicap, Danton had the audacity to adhere to his purpose and set about the heaviest work of his career.

The elder of the church who had first spoken to him about the advertisement was the initial buyer of "Evening-Red." It was not a heavy subscription, but a wedge, and more was counted upon from the same source. Later in the week a young widow of the church with a sorrowing heart and two thousand dollars insurance was called upon. When Danton departed the lady had dried her eyes and was happy in the thought of a life-long competency from "Evening-Red" real estate.

CHAPTER VII

"EVENING-RED" AND COFFEE-CUPS

DANTON felt the eyes of Martin Wells upon him as he cut the riper edges of his crop. Not that the plodder ever was present at the deals, but Danton regarded him as a break in the general current of supreme faith in which he was held. And yet Martin had always been slow, the other reflected, to express his views on matters removed from the sphere of his immediate concerns. He was a persistent enemy but not an aggressive one.

It must not be forgotten in this rather intimate study of Danton's moods and deeds that the real man was covered by a consummate artist in all of his church relations. Then he was clean, handsome, finished in manner and dress, and distinguished by that fine look of calibre which in artists is often graven entire upon a single feature, but which in his case was evident in all. He has appeared cruel and sensuous and petty outside, but in the strained atmosphere of the church he was ever a master, and none but a psychic could have penetrated to the wormy activities at the core of the man.

With his first gains he put a few smiles on certain corners of his subdivision, and added a few dreams in regard to its future. His advertising, moreover, was considerable and deeply planned. On fine afternoons he drove various members of the church out to "Evening-Red," and the great city's field of future growth was viewed with something like awe, stimulated by Danton's low voice and the dollar-spell.

"Evening-Red" was approached in a roundabout way in these rides, via the boulevard and the open north-end roads. Danton drove a good horse. His vehicle was upholstered to fit the back and springed to take the curse from the worst pavement. In the sunset glow he would draw rein at the fairest edge of the prairie, and begin to muse aloud, possibly in a strain like this.

"I declare, it 's good to breathe out here after a hard day! Vitality returns in the stillness and pure air. A man lives again. He has peace to reflect; he becomes a fuller man. . . . What are flats but a higher order of tenements? What justice can a man do his wife, his children, or himself when crowded into a dresser-drawer, with seething streets below him; unknown children mingling with his own little ones in the halls; strangers for neighbors; pavements for gardens? Why, his floor is another man's ceiling; his very walls are only half his own; every half-drawn curtain is the attraction of a hundred eyes; his back porch is a public thoroughfare; the romping of his children is another man's torment! Think of watching over your child, dangerously ill, and the sounds of a neighbor's jollification mocking you through the single wall!"

It is possible that in a juncture like this the big, dusty suburban car would come bowling in from the country like a tired and heavy-laden bee winging to hive along the last red-gold rays of the day. Danton would bore closer in toward the heart of the game.

"In thirty-five minutes that car will swing into Monument Square, the king-bolt of the city. Think of it, and here is silence and fresh earth and open distance to rest the eyes! In two hours it will be dark, and the city will be a great sweeping crescent of lights. All that a city means is at your hand. You are of it—yet apart. A mere half-hour and you are in the midst of its stores, churches, and culture;

a mere half-hour again and you are away from its infected air, restless influence, its crime and glare and pandemonium!"

Danton would resume presently with his inimitable modesty, "It has become an inspiration to me—this 'Evening-Red.' My whole life is centred upon it. I mean to make it a district of separate homes, broad yards, and ample shaded avenues. The people who buy here will build, on their own ideals, houses to live in! Not painted shells to sell or rent, but solid homes. Of course the city will grow out to and around this subdivision, but all pernicious, cheap, haphazard systems of growth shall be barred from 'Evening-Red.' No saloons, no pool-rooms——"

Thus with the setting sun in his fine eyes Danton carved broad avenues upon the prairie, planted splendid elms, built broad homes on lines of strength and beauty, and peopled his Utopia with men and women and children leading clean, fine lives. All this with words low-spoken, quietly flowing on and on about their miracles. Here he was at his best; these were his highest hours. He manœuvred in that perfect balance between dreams and realities which is almost irresistible. At no time losing the brute force of matter, such as a statement of facts, yet he tinted and warmed material with an art Dantonesque.

To a large degree, also, Danton created his facts. In the logical growth of the town, the place called "Evening-Red" could never be anything but a manufacturing district with its inevitable plethora of laborers' cottages and dingy lodgings. A really desirable residence section, such as he painted, can obtain only in an outlying portion whose means of approach from the down-town district are reasonably wholesome to the eye over the entire route. The suburban car which punctuated Danton's commercial musings at the edge of "Evening-Red" passed through three solid miles of squalor, the packed, fetid slums of the West Side, on the way to Monument Square. Nothing more need be said of the future of "Evening-Red." But Danton was dealing with a people who loved him, and he approached his slice of prairie in the roundabout way of the clean north-end and the boulevard.

He went after the big game—the staunch churchmen and financial pillars. These were business men. So was Danton, and his record and his enthusiasm won them. To the young man, a babe in arms was an opportunity. The tiny fists which he stuffed with confections returned to him in dollars of the realm a hundred-fold. He worked terrifically, night and day; his past and his presence worked; the advertisements worked; those with money already in worked; the mothers and daughters—this is pathos, eyes of night and smiles of morning, eyes of azure and hearts of mid-day—ah, how they worked! Here he was master again, something to each (as to the school-teachers) and nothing to all.

Block after block on the cream-laid paper subdivision was marked with the red stamp, "Sold." The church stood to own "Evening-Red."

Long ago the book-agent had said, "You 've got to be deep and natural and know your prey." Danton had not forgotten. And how pitiably often in man and woman did he find that vanity had eaten the rent in armor through which their dollars might be reached!

Yet, in the midst of all this surpassing fruition, Danton was lashing himself against the chains which kept him from Louise Cleghorn. There was something devilish in his hatred for Martin Wells, all the more so because he had to cover it under a simulation of sorrow and humbleness for the eyes of the church; all the more because Martin seemed defended by peculiar conditions from any expression of this hatred.

Wells had a few hundred dollars in savings. In the natural course of events, he would have been the first to cast his "little all" into the "Evening-Red" proposition. Partly on this account Danton had kept up a semblance of their close relation months after the plodder had begun to bore him. Indeed, after the night of his struggle he had left himself beautifully open to reconciliation—for two reasons. First to play Martin to the limit on "Evening-Red" and second to play the part of one who bears an inextinguishable sorrow before the church-folk. Though he had failed utterly in the first, the second had proved a deep fountain of value. No design could have appealed deeper. His attitude was conceded to arise from the purest and rarest spirituality.

Miss Cleghorn's open interest in the hated one held Danton more or less from her. Besides, Stella Vandeleur—how he cursed his untimely weakness in her connection!—was constantly in the way. Secure in her fancied right of being near him, she lost not a single second in which she might burst into bloom under his eyes.

It was now early in July. The master of "Evening-Red" felt that his church-work would be over in another month. He did not intend to wear the pale coat of piety longer than necessary, and doffing it would mean to leave Louise Cleghorn, the dearest part of the loot, to his enemy; that is, unless she became his own beforehand. His ardor for this lady waxed mightily in the days of his marvellous financial harvest. She was identified in his mind with his approaching triumphal entrance into that luring other world where men were kings, and women temporal properties bought with gold and gallantry—lovely exotics which thrilled the senses, and were passed down, quickly fading, for the plodding slaves to worship—toys of wondrous price and delicacy for the princes of creation to break and grooms to mend.

Danton was frank to himself in this matter. He believed that there was a chord in Louise Cleghorn's nature which the rough fingers of Martin Wells could never touch into harmony. He believed that, given one long summer day alone with Louise Cleghorn, he could move her to a gorgeous capitulation. He believed that money and taste could array her, so that she would adorn the highest planes of social life. He believed that beneath all that was demure and wise, shy and gentle and saintly, a splendid fervor slept. It was a haunt of his heated brain to bring Louise Cleghorn to look at him in life as she had appeared to him in revery.

The day approached of the Sunday School picnic. The day would be long in the open places; there would be many comings and goings, changes and chances. The enemy would be there clumsily wooing his dream. The Vandeleur girl would be there, panting for his glances and his whispers, an eternal hamper to his hand. The day held the crisis. Danton realized it. He arranged certain plans to meet a variety of exigencies. He was willing to go any length that did not imperil his own standing and liberty.

Danton met the church party at the boat on the day of the excursion. Martin was to work in the forenoon and reach the Island in time for dinner at one. The hour's ride on the river was peculiarly festive. All was anticipation; yet in reality it was the finest period of the day. The sullen heat had not yet begun its pressure; no one was weary, nor yet drugged with ozone. The river had caught the treasure of the Indies, every ripple-point a dazzling golden coin. The spirit of the sun, creative essence of roses and rubies and women, wavered in the air, a visible enchantment.

Danton and the two young women sat together forward beneath the awnings. He looked as one who had the luck of the world for a lover. The gilt of success had touched his brow. All the subtle gauds and plumes which Nature gives the human male lived in the light of him. He seemed one of those starry Greeks returned to a baser day—Pericles on a sectarian picnic. The guardian spirit of Martin Wells, so frozen in her favors, granted him *one* that day in keeping him apart from the morning on the boat.

Stella Vandeleur watched Danton with beseeching, adoring eyes. Louise Cleghorn glanced at him raptly from time to time. What she felt is not in words to tell. It was human, some nameless delight of the senses, but so delicate that it brought no immediate reproach of self. There is an orchid of regal purple which blooms in the shady glooms of Brazil. Direct sunlight would blast it with passion in an hour; but if one tiny flickering leaf let fall into the cup of the queen for an instant the merest checker of a sunbeam—who can tell the stir in the soul of the flower?

Yet Danton was battling with himself to preserve a tithe of peace in the brain of Stella Vandeleur. The whole life in him struggled against his iron-fisted will to burst into anthems of devotion for her companion. To his eyes the form of Louise Cleghorn had the softness of a morning-lit cloud. There was the faintest dawning of his dreamed-of mysteries in her eyes. His veins expanded with the toxin of his ardor, yet he had to turn again and again from this rose of Bourbon to the fleshly peony beside her, straining toward him, as to the sun-god.

The children were served at noon upon long rustic tables beneath the trees. The provisions were gathered together upon tables adjoining. By one o'clock the youngsters were abroad in the woods again (save the wee martyrs to the sand-man's persecutions), and the dishes were washed and the tables reloaded for the grown-ups. Danton was implored to take his seat with the main party, and be waited upon as a man should, but he laughingly prevailed to the contrary, and took his stand by the huge coffee-boiler, declaring that it was his duty as a Sunday School leader to see that the cups were properly filled. The crowd was served when Martin appeared on the ferry road and was welcomed joyously. Stella Vandeleur, ever at the side of her own, gathered together upon a plate salad, pickles, sandwiches, jelly, and other matters for the new arrival. Danton pressed a final cup into her hand, saying in a low tone:

"Here 's coffee for Martin."

He saw the plate and the cup properly delivered, and then allowed himself to be persuaded to leave the boiler and accept some nourishment. The bit of word-worn melodrama which follows must be forgiven on the ground of the actor's tremendous handicaps. The situation would have baffled an Iago, and Danton only descended to conventional villany because of the stress of times and the paucity of means. . . . Toward the end of the dinner, Martin became suddenly silent. Miss Cleghorn, sitting beside him, glanced into his face and perceived drops of perspiration upon his forehead and an extraordinary look in his eyes.

"Are you ill, Martin?" she whispered quickly.

"Why, no," he answered, his tongue moving fumblingly, "I never —why, I never felt better until a moment ago——"

"Can't I do something? Tell me! Would n't you like to leave the table—and walk around a bit—with me?" She spoke swiftly, her voice audible to Martin's ears alone. She was conscious of a pitying glance from Jim Danton. It wrought upon her with a misery mysterious and poignant.

"Possibly that would be well," Martin mumbled. "The heat is furious in the sun—and I walked in a hurry—up from the boat. . . . It is certainly good of you—mighty good——"

She arose from the bench to give him room. He extricated himself totteringly, gained his feet apparently unconscious of the presence of others, but the girl felt the eyes of the mute crowd like tangible horrors invading her brain.

"Mr. Wells is a little faint from the heat," she said slowly. "He thinks he had better walk about a little. I 'll go with him."

He started off, his legs moving stiffly, his shoulders heaving. A child's voice sounded like a peal in the silence:

"Oh, see how funny! Mr. Wells is walking like a drunken man!"

The end of the dinner was a ruin.

"It is n't like him," Danton whispered to Miss Vandeleur. "He usually avoids a crowd when he 's this way. I noted he was wrong the instant he appeared."

"Is n't it horrible?" the girl whispered. "I could cry for Louise!"

The pastor drew Danton aside.

"Is it the cursed drink?" he whispered.

"Yes," said Danton bitterly. "But I can't imagine how Martin so far forgot himself as to come here! He usually avoids a crowd like poison—when he is this way. I noted he was wrong the instant he appeared. God! if he would only let me take care of him. How I pity him!"

"I pity Miss Cleghorn," the pastor said slowly.

Martin and Louise were two hundred yards from the dinner party when something of realization penetrated the drugged faculties of the former. He turned upon her a drenched, tortured, twitching face.

"You must go back—yes, leave me!" he managed to say, through clenched teeth. "People are everywhere. It is n't good for you to be seen with me—staggering—when no one understands. . . . I am going to be ill—nausea! Please go back now—yes, yes!"

He swayed from her, and made his way alone into the denser growths of wood.

CHAPTER VIII

A WHITE FACE AND SOME SHADOWS

Danton was washing the coffee-cups when Louise Cleghorn returned from the grove. She was very pale.

"I don't know whether he is better or not," she said in response to his eager question. "He wanted to be alone—that was why I left him."

She had spoken loud enough for the others to hear, and no one asked further questions. The Rev. Mr. Eames, perceiving that she was greatly troubled, sought an opportunity to draw her aside.

"Don't you think that some one had better go to him?" she asked anxiously. "I should have stayed—save that it appeared to pain him. But a man might be of service——"

"I think," the pastor said with gravity, "that he is better left entirely alone."

"Why, how can you say that?" she demanded. "A touch of sun is dangerous. It does n't seem like you to neglect any one in need——"

"The heat has not hurt Martin Wells, Miss Cleghorn."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean that if he had fallen ill from natural causes, no one would be more zealous to perform any service in his behalf than myself. As it is, there is little danger of him dying, and what he suffers, he deserves for brutalizing his body and destroying the brightness of our day."

She drew away from him, white-lipped, her senses dulled for the moment by the impact of emotions. "If you have something dreadful to say, do not keep me waiting——"

"Martin has been drinking. It is not the first time, and I 'm afraid not the last—when he is low enough to act this way."

"I don't believe it. I repeat, I do not believe it!"

"Miss Cleghorn, do you think it is pleasant for me to impart this information?" the pastor inquired quietly. "Do you think that I willingly would hurt you? Please don't doubt my purpose. I have felt that you should know it before to-day—for your own sake. As a duty of mine, it could be put off no longer. And let me say that I admire your loyalty and feel deeply your pain."

"Tell me all!" she demanded.

It is hardly necessary to set down the fact that the pastor was sterling in his conviction and intent. He was prejudiced by nature against a man who drank, and did not credit such a man with brief bigness or even erratic virtues. Moreover, he was deeply troubled to perceive that Martin Wells was apparently winning the affections of a supremely fine woman like Louise Cleghorn. To this woman now, he stated clearly all that which had become inflexible truth in his own understanding.

She listened with calmness. Her heart was as gloomy as a heathland in a beating storm. She felt herself in some way identified with this awful shame of Martin Wells. She rebelled against the pity of the people. She was conscious of a sense of repugnance for the white mournful face before her, who filled her mind with poisonous words—for her own sake, as he said. Her own inherent wickedness shocked her—crippled children of her brain that had never revealed themselves before.

"It may be all as you say, Mr. Eames," she declared when he had finished, "but I have never known Martin Wells to drink. He sat beside me to-day for fifteen or twenty minutes before he was taken ill, and he was perfectly normal."

Her inner sense was amazed at these words from her own lips. Her doubts, in reality, had been broken down. The savage wound deep in her heart came from her acceptance of the seemingly irrevocable facts. But it was a secret horror to her mind that she believed. She hated herself and him who witnessed against the demolished ideal. Her whole nature, of its own volition, rushed to cover the wreckage, and to hold her lips from words that would show the pastor she believed him.

"I can only repeat," said the Rev. Mr. Eames, "that I admire your loyalty."

They rejoined the company without further words. Louise felt the hush as she approached. It angered her, as the pastor had done. She did not understand the strong and spiteful incentives which dominated her; she felt, indeed, that they were evil, that they came from secret passages of her being, the opening of which despoiled her purity—yet she suffered them to rule, as she moved in the midst of her altered people.

"Louise dear, I'm so sorry for you—that this has happened!" Stella Vandeleur whispered.

"I am very sorry that Martin is ill."

"But the disgrace——"

"I do not see where it is disgraceful for one to be taken ill suddenly."

"It can't be that they have n't told you that Martin——"

"Yes, they have told me, and it is against belief."

"Surely, Louise, you would n't doubt Mr. Danton's word?"

"No, nor your word, nor Mr. Eames's word, nor Martin's—and yet you cannot all be right on this matter. I don't see why all your minds should have been prepared for such a scene to-day—that it should be a foregone conclusion to you all that his illness was drunkenness—when I was in the dark! I do not see why Mr. Danton told you and Mr. Eames that Martin drank."

"Ah, Louise dear, while you were away with Martin just a few moments ago, Mr. Danton explained to me why he was impelled to tell the minister. It was long ago—just after the quarrel. Mr. Danton was afraid for what would become of Martin Wells *alone,* knowing his dreadful appetite for drink, so he begged the minister to take his place as a friend—to watch over Martin, see him often, bring him back into the church—to defend Martin against himself! He had to tell Mr. Eames all—so his work would be clear!"

A man of the world would not have been driven to tears by Danton's grandeur of soul, as thus painted by the woman who loved him, nor would such a man have passed upon Danton's alleged motive for revealing a moral lesion on the part of his one-time best friend, as flawless. And yet Louise Cleghorn accepted it all. Danton's pure white conduct, prolonged and unvarying, had woven itself into Nature; and the glamour of his personality had never before compelled her as upon that day.

"And I—I did not *really* know until to-day," Miss Vandeleur added. "As for the others, I think it was that horrible sentence from the child that made the truth clear, although Mr. Eames plainly showed his disgust."

If Louise Cleghorn had followed her strongest impulse early that afternoon, she would have returned to the city alone and locked herself in her room to think. She wanted to ascertain just what it meant to her to suffer the demolition of the clean, valorous dream which Martin Wells had reflected in her mind. He had seemed adjusted to the years. His appeal had been neither an ecstasy nor a torment. There had been something fairer than flesh in her conception of the future, and the faint possibility of union between herself and this strong, still potential man. It was removed from frost and fever, free from illusions and secret taints of the soul. There could be no revelations; no mutual descent into arcane shadows under the sanction of social laws. Honor and chastity welded in the crucible of marriage, yet each would preserve its integrity—such was the manner of the mating hidden in her mind, even though she was far from granting yet that she loved him.

The loss of it all now was not an instantaneous death-thrust. She did not suffer the physical havoc which comes with a sudden stoppage of a current of furious passion. Rather, it was a slow inner withering, a gradual laying waste of field after field of peace and verdure, the hardly perceptible encroachment of twilight which rubs out the traveller's distant land-mark, and leaves him lost while day is yet bright in his eyes.

Louise resisted the desire to leave the Island, because the people would sense the depth of her hurt. She played with the children, drew them apart to free herself from the pang of the elders' presence. The long and dreadful afternoon began to wane. She refused all invitations for boat-rides and similar excursions, not dismally at all, but choosing with apparent gladness to become the most faithful of the camp-watchers. Moreover, days before she had promised Stella Vandeleur to stay for the band-concert in the evening, and she did not change her plan. Only a few were minded to remain after the long day, and these were the young people of the church. The last of the weary mothers and children took the six o'clock boat. Louise felt that she had earned the boon of solitude and slipped away while the others were merrily gathering up the remains from supper.

She was alone. She could relax the tense aching lines of her face so long forced into smiling. She was clear from the buzz of words, the whispers, the laughter—the little chattering world which the church had become in a single day. She breathed the cool still air and unlocked all the pent pain in her breast. The anguish swept over her more poignantly, as blood replenishing frozen tissues; and yet it was a relief to loose from about her heart this heaviness of ice.

The thin wiry grass of the grove which the fervid day had drained of its juices crinkled under her shoes. The river through the trees on the left shone like slender ribbons of silvery azure. Farther and farther behind sounded the voices. She strode forward hastily to put them entirely away. There was a quickening, an expansion of every human element within her. She called it wickedness, but it was an unfolding of all that was rich and positive and dynamic of this woman of earth. It was a revolt, largely subconscious, against the conventions which long had hampered, the platitudes which had swayed her, and the decorous follies of the herd in which she had participated; a revolt against negative sanctity and the group-souled life she had led (stifling her own identity by which she must be judged at the end of things, whether she stand with brutes or gods) in the identity of a community.

These were flittings in the background of her brain, as she strode along. She caught but a tithe of them, and in the bewilderment of awakening she called them heresies. Martin, Danton, Stella Vandeleur, Mr. Eames, and the others were fleeting figures in her consciousness, but above all, lording over all, there was a wounded, though still imperious, *Self*—a Louise Cleghorn she had never dreamed of. This being was like a ship that has been torn from her pier in a storm, and is frantically finding herself in the drag of the tide, the counter-sweep of the harbor current, the thrashing of winds and the menaces of the other shipping.

Twilight was a reality. She had reached the upper point of the Island, where nature had been thinned less, where thickets were subtler and the floor of the woods swept more rarely of the minutiæ of shade-struggling plant-life, where the edge of the land was laced and fringed and dotted with fronds and sedges and lily-pads. . . . Here she sat motionless, upon a stone, and stared at the darkening river. Once she was startled by the quick leap of a fish in the shallows; once again by the crackle of a dry twig behind.

It was Danton. His face seemed carved of ivory and his garments a part of the woodland dusk. The blood bounding in her veins sent a quiver over the surface of her flesh.

"Why, Miss Cleghorn!" he said in a quick low voice. "You were so still, I almost stumbled over you. How long have you been here?"

"I don't know. I was thinking. I suppose I had better go back."

The calm note of her voice puzzled him. There was always about her some formidable womanhood which baffled, disconcerted, yet made her immeasurably more dear.

"Yes, we'll have to go back shortly any way," he said, sitting down beside her, "but can't we rest a minute? Did you ever come to this spot before?"

"No."

"Queer that you should have found it," he went on in a drowsy, lingering fashion. "I've looked upon it as peculiarly my seat—and the most soothing and restful place I know. It's a delightful place after a hard day—and this has been a hard day." He had never been there before. The lie was characteristic.

"There is little profit in thinking or talking of the day," she said quickly.

"You are right."

There was something which stirred her in the way he spoke those three words and in the silence which followed. She turned to him presently and found his eyes fascinated upon her face. Yesterday she would have darted to her feet and hastened from him affrighted; to-morrow she would have chilled him with a single utterance. To-night she was uncentred, dual, enduring the swift miracle of transition.

"May I speak of something else?" he whispered.

"Why do you look at me that way?" she returned, her voice tense as his own, though she had tried to speak lightly.

"Because I cannot look away!"

"Then I shall go back. It is all but dark any way." She arose without haste.

"Miss Cleghorn, I beg of you not to go back for a moment!"

"How strange you are, Mr. Danton! Why not?"

With an agility almost magical he leaped from the ground and stood before her. "Because I love you—love you!"

She shrank back, startled by his height and nearness. His hand sped forth to stay her, and she became actually frightened. Though her arm eluded his, the action seemed to rob her limbs of strength. At the same time there was a cool mistress of defense in her brain which prompted her to say with an echo of a laugh, "Surely you are beside yourself, Mr. Danton! It is Miss Vandeleur you mean. What a day this has been for all of us!"

Then from Danton an impetuous rush of words:

"Beside myself loving you! . . . Louise Cleghorn, I have loved you for a year. You must have known. You must have seen me in dreams. . . . Do you know what it has meant to me—your seeming to favor Martin Wells? It has meant a death each day! Your low laugh in his presence, the murmur of your low words spoken to him, the movement of your hand before him—these were the tortures of death! To-night, when some Fate led me here to find you—my God! all the resistance went out from me——"

His face in the dark was livid with passion. She was afraid to turn and hurry away, lest he grasp her. Facing him, she drew back continually, but he followed, followed, burning her with words. . . . To her there was wildness in the moment. She had listened with serenity to the heart-story of Martin Wells, but this towering creature of the dark withered her vital forces in blasts of desire. There was no exaltation, but the crippling fear of one who is drawn through the blackest passages of life. It was not what he said, but the warm breath of the man that touched her cheek, the fever of his presence which enveloped her, and his eyes lurid in the night which showed how brutal, pitiless, and momentary was his siege!

"Mr. Danton," she said hoarsely, "there is much that you have said and done already that is unforgivable. I command you to add nothing further. I command you to come no nearer——"

"Can it be possible that you are in love with Martin Wells?" he asked in a quick, harsh way.

"The time is past for me to answer that," she replied.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that in honor you should have asked that question before venturing to say that I meant something to your life."

"But may not a man be blinded by a woman's glory?" he returned, pressing forward.

She darted toward the path, but he was swifter and caught her arm.

"In God's name—do you mean to hurt me?"

"I mean to win the world and give it to you! I mean that you are the bride of the world to me—that you must love me——"

"Oh, you viper—you——"

The rest was a scream half-stifled in his kisses. As a leaf whipped into a vortex, she was drawn to his breast. . . . More swiftly, if possible, his arms fell. From the thicket came a woman's agonized cry which Heaven must have heard.

"Oh, Jim—Jim!"

Louise Cleghorn, swaying back, saw Danton apparently beaten to the grass and trampled by a huge, voiceless being, resistless as the night.

CHAPTER IX

SANCTUARY AND CONFESSIONAL

PARTING from Miss Cleghorn, Martin had reeled away into the woods. One after another the lights went out of his brain, until only one instinct remained—to crawl into a dark place and sink to the ground. Yet he must have kept his feet for a half-hour longer at least, since the dense thicket into which he was finally led by some strange inner sense having nothing to do with familiar consciousness, was at the upper end of the Island, more than a mile from the place where the girl left him.

It was getting dark when he was aroused by the confused assembly of his faculties. He stared long at the dimming skies through the foliage. Lying still, he could feel the throb of his temples, each beat a crashing pain. The walls of his throat were harsh and dry as plaster, the localized point of a consuming bodily need; and yet his will was so burdened and his limbs so lax, that many minutes elapsed before he could bring the two to a concerted effort. Coherent recollections were at once a mystery and a misery.

Martin made his way down to the river's edge and drank and drank in the twilight. He bathed his face long in the cool water and straightened his hair with his fingers, then walked back slowly toward the ferry landing, his mind unfolding many dismal phases. This looked-for day had proven only a thing of shame and acute distress. The rarest felicities possible had been denied him. He had clouded the day for all. . . . A woman's voice broke in upon his thinking:

"Oh, Mr. Wells—is n't that you, Mr. Wells?"

Stella Vandeleur was hastening toward him in the dusk.

"Have you seen Mr. Danton or Louise?" she asked nervously. "I beg your pardon, are you feeling better?"

"No, Miss Vandeleur," he said. "I have n't seen Danton—or Miss Cleghorn. I 'll help you look for them, if you like. Yes, I am better, but I feel a little shot up——"

"It is almost time for the band-concert," she interrupted. "Mr. Danton went away an hour ago, and Miss Cleghorn has been gone longer. I wonder where they can be—or if they are together?"

"Oh, they can't be far. We 'll find one or both of them presently, no doubt," Martin observed.

He was a trifle hurt and puzzled in that Stella had given him no chance to explain how he had passed the long hours of the afternoon, but this matter was quickly overshadowed by the encompassing interest which he shared with her in the quest at hand. They spoke little and walked swiftly along the weaving paths, peculiar to holiday places. In the full dark, before the moon, and at the upper end of the Island, Miss Vandeleur clutched his arm and stopped abruptly.

"Hush," she whispered, "don't you hear voices?"

He did not answer, but led the way forward silently. In each mind was the imminence of horrid events. Smothering seconds of advance in the darkness—and then the revelation! . . . Louise Cleghorn's utterance of deadly fear (as her arm was seized), Danton's impassioned answer, and the woman's stifled scream. Martin leaped forward.

Before a blow was struck, Danton dropped to the ground and lay tense, face down, his arms wrapped about his head. . . . It all came back to the brain of Martin Wells, the horrid sensations of that other night—as he felt the body now beneath his knees, the neck in his hands. There was no resistance to incite him. Stella Vandeleur was dragging at his collar, tearing at his cheek with her fingers, shrieking for the life beneath. Her strength could not have complicated his purpose to kill had it been full-wrought, but one meaning formed of her frenzied words held his fingers from tightening! It was the final sentence which ulterior conditions can wring from the heart of a woman who has loved much.

"Get up, Danton. I have n't hurt you, and I won't!" he said hoarsely.

Martin then turned to look for Miss Cleghorn, but she was gone. He heard her rapid foot-steps down the path toward the ferry-landing.

"Miss Vandeleur," he said, "do you want me to walk back with you to the others?"

Danton was now hovering among the denser shadows.

"Thank you, no," she answered dully.

Martin hesitated a second, then hurried after Miss Cleghorn. In a moment or two he heard her steps again and called her name softly.

"Yes, Martin," she answered, and waited for him to come up.

They walked on together without speaking for several moments. The lights of the pavilion showed ahead.

"You will forgive me," she said unsteadily at last, "for not telling you to-night—that I am grateful to you!"

"I would rather you would not, Miss Louise," he answered.

"I was afraid you would begin to talk about it all," she said feverishly. "I ran to get away! . . . I think I would have let you kill him. . . . Oh, God! I feel utterly defiled!"

He loosed her fingers from his sleeve, drew her hand through his arm and held it firmly. Something big in the man was manifested in his voice: "When I think that I was held from murder, I am full of praise, and when I think that I might *not* have been at hand when I was needed, something starts singing inside of me, because I was there. . . . Of course there are moments we all shall try not to remember."

He spoke on quietly, mere nothings, but they steadied her. She needed this pressure upon her arm, needed his calm, low voice. To the woman that moment he was like a temple of the elder French world, like Notre Dame, which if once reached by a hunted human rendered life free from seizure. Danton had been the wolfish street-horde; Martin was the sanctuary.

"I did n't know you could baby one so," she panted. "You would do well in a sick-room. . . . Oh, let 's hurry. I can walk a little faster! What a mockery that music is!"

The band-concert had begun.

"We will cut a big circle around the crowd," he said soothingly. "The next ferry will not be crowded, and those of our party who are still on the Island will stay until the concert is over, so we shall see no one. We 'll get a quiet place aft, out of the glare of lights, and the cool wind and the quiet will make you better. You are safe, dear one——"

She shuddered. "Oh, don't, Martin! I am too wretched!"

"There, there," he answered, "believe me, I won't trouble you any more."

He had meant to avoid all the lights, but they were frequent now along the paths, and it was impossible. The music had magnetized the crowd, so that in keeping aloof from the musicians they were removed from all. Louise halted impulsively beneath one of the low lamps and looked up into his face.

"Martin," she said strangely, "don't judge me to-night! I think —I think that if you had not come, I should have gone screaming now among these paths. Tell me, Martin Wells, are all men double? I did not know until to-night that any man could be so horrible! Do you know what I mean? I thought it was always written upon a man's face when he is so vile inside! . . . Martin Wells, tell me—you are honest to yourself, aren't you? You are what your face tells me you are—clean and brave—as you seem? In God's name—tell me truly!"

"I am honest to myself," he answered strongly, filling her need. "I could not look into your eyes and lie. Knowing you, I could not live with myself—and lie!"

One side of his face was in a shadow. She touched his chin, turning his features fully to the light. There was blood upon his collar. His neck and the lower part of his cheek, which he held from her, was welted and the skin broken a little from Stella Vandeleur's nails. Louise tucked her handkerchief inside his collar, and glanced again, swiftly, deeply, into his eyes.

"I can never be the same again, after this day!" she said slowly. There was condemnation in her tone which awoke new dreads and harked back his ancient miseries. "The world will never look the same to me again, nor human beings, nor myself; and yet, Martin Wells, when I look at you—I cannot lose all my faith."

"But you must not think ill of yourself," he said, his heart heavy with trouble. "It makes me rebel—almost as if some one else thought ill of you! That is something I cannot bear. I know you!"

"No, Martin, you do not—or you would see my wickedness!"

"Louise, I beg of you—not to speak that way——"

"No, no! Don't touch my hand! . . . Listen. I learned to-day what it is in men and women which makes their souls abandon them! It is something in the flesh which lures and thrills and blinds; and if you do not put it away, it crawls through you stronger and stronger until it holds you—as you are held helpless in a dream! I know, because I felt it to-day."

The man was utterly cast down by such words from her. He was by no means virgin to the illusions of the senses, but that she could have been misled by them was unthinkable. The remnant of his youth and the splendid ideals of the man repelled such a concept.

"If it is because I am with you," he said bitterly, "that you torture your poor, wounded self with such thoughts, I shall leave you at the ferry—for your own sake!"

"It is not because you are with me, Martin," she went on, in the same intense way. "It has been lucky for me that you were here, because I have n't lost all my guide-posts. I must finish what I was going to say, because I may not have the strength again, and no matter what the future may hold in store—it is only being honest to tell you—as you are honest! I have been a different creature all day. It was as if some poisonous vine which has been growing, growing within me, suddenly burst into bloom! There was something insidious about it, which kept me from crushing it out at once. It distorted everything. The people of the church and the pastor seemed petty—poor little manikins all jerked by the same string——"

They passed over the gang-plank now. The steamer brought a crowd, but started back with only a few passengers. They found a quiet place aft, as he had said. A feeling of hopelessness came over him, since she was not to be diverted from her pitiless self-arraignment. She felt him wince at her next words:

"I looked with delight on Jim Danton this morning! . . . Don't think I am evil to hurt you now, Martin! I can never feel clean—and keep this thing back. It was on the boat coming over. I sat with him and Stella Vandeleur. There was something that seemed to me so imperiously fine in his eyes; his life has been so admirable, his mind so rich! No, no, I have never loved him—never coveted his attentions to Miss Vandeleur, but this morning—oh, God, as I look back, there was no chastity in the way I let him please my eyes! . . . Then you were gone this afternoon. I was troubled about you. There is much I cannot understand. I was not the same, but stayed all afternoon in the camp, watching the things. At dusk I went away alone—to the far end of the Island—alone. I was watching the water and the night thickening so slowly upon it. I was thinking about many things, about you, and what had happened, and what people——"

She checked herself with a quick gasp, and strained her eyes upward toward his face in the gloom. She had almost touched the secondary cause of the entire scene, his alleged weakness, but the purpose was swept from her in a rush of emotions. The meeting with Danton had overwhelmed for the time her primary distress over the disgraceful cause of Martin's illness. It seemed a remote and rectifiable evil now comparatively. Yet she dared not ask him. If he lied, her last bulwark was gone, for she would find out. If he told the truth—what she actually believed to be the truth—the pith would be gone from the honor she read in his eyes. She believed he drank, but she could not suffer him to tell her so. She was not the first or the last human soul, deep in the valley of the shadow, that has pinned faith to an illusion and been borne upward upon it to substance and sunlight.

"And what people——" he repeated.

"Oh, I was thinking many things, there alone by the gloomy water—when he came!" She covered her eyes with her hand; her voice became scarcely audible; yet each word was distinct, memorable, carved of her shame. "He startled me. Still, I did not rise from the stone. Something played in my brain like a challenge. I should have known that something was wrong—that the place was lonely—that Stella Vandeleur was not with him. Oh, I do not know how to tell it—but something kept me there! It was as if that poisonous vine stealthily tightened its coil!

"He chatted. I remained. It was darker. Suddenly I felt his eyes burning my cheek. I could have hurried back then. Nothing had been said. I could have spoken some word to kill his intent. Any woman might have done that. Instead, I sat there—not innocent of danger like a child—but held by the devil in him or the devil in myself or both, to think that I was powerful enough to fence with him, to laugh at him—to stifle flames with my hands!"

She looked as if she might fall. Martin led her to a chair by the railing, and brought another beside it.

"And now," she added pitifully, "I have despoiled all your ideals, which I wanted to keep bright for you—even——"

"I am a crude being, dear," he interrupted softly, "but I know this for true, that a lady who can suffer so in spirit for being just a little human and marvellously imaginative, is very close to being an angel. You could n't be any closer without spoiling my ideal, because it is of a woman and not an angel."

The wide eyes fixed upon him filled with tears.

"Let me put you straight, Louise," he went on gently. "You were tired—worn out from the long, hot day. You sat alone by the river in the dusk, dreaming dreams. He came. You had known him for many months. The life he had lived before your eyes was fair as a babe's and brilliant as only a young man's can be. Louise Cleghorn, I thank God for your word that you did not love him! Why, Danton blinded me for years, and in spite of his faults seemed all that a man should be! . . . You say that you felt something wrong when he sat down beside you. You are unjust to yourself. How could you be afraid of a man who has lived before your eyes like Danton. You remained thoughtlessly—playfully—until——"

"He touched my arm!" she exclaimed with a shudder. "Oh, what a blast of horror was that instant! It was like picking up a pretty stick that warms into a viper!"

"Let's not speak of it any more, Louise," he whispered. "You are safe—altogether safe from him now. You can never know, I think, what that means to me! . . . Louise, my—there I came near forgetting! You make me feel so helpless when you cry. And yet I know it is lots better for you than hating yourself dry-eyed. We are at the dock, almost."

A half-hour later they stood together on the walk before her door.

"Martin," she said, "I am going away for awhile—to-morrow—into the country. I do not know how long I shall be gone. I must burn out this thing, as much as I can, from my life, and do it alone. You have been wonderfully dear, to-night—to make so light of it—but it is dreadful, dreadful!"

He was lost in a moment in tundras of ice and primal dark. He cleared his throat, but his voice was still husky as he said, "I am sorry you are going away."

"It is the better—the only way, but I shall write to you. And, Martin," she added impulsively, "always you will be honest to yourself—won't you?"

"Yes, Louise."

"Thank you—then good-by!"

"And may I not see you to-morrow—possibly at the train?"

"No, I shall go early. You shall hear from me."

He held out his hand. There was a moment of strange hesitation on her part which tortured him, but she gave hers at last hastily. He lifted the hand toward his lips, but she snatched it away.

"Oh, Martin, no!" she whispered, with furious intensity. "I shall not feel that I am pure—for seven years—until every tissue that he touched is gone out of my body!"

He was alone, and conscious for the first time since he had heard her voice in the dark of the painful sledging in his brain.

CHAPTER X

UNDER THE CITY'S HEEL

Danton, alone of the four, went to church the following Sabbath morning. He had heard that Miss Cleghorn was out of the city, a fact affording pure relief. He was rather sure that Martin would not be present at the service; and as for Miss Vandeleur, it did not matter greatly. He was sure of her. Moreover, it happened that the Rev. Raydick Eames had started a day or two after the excursion on his dearly-earned vacation. As the pastor was the only person who had the authority to poke among the cinders, so to speak, and the only person who would immediately attempt to probe for causes, his elimination served Danton well. In a word, "Evening-Red" had lain without the zone of fire.

To make a permanent breach in Martin's life through Miss Cleghorn was now impossible. Forcing a kiss on a woman's lips by brute strength does not mean her lasting ruin, socially or ethically, and Danton knew it. His heart was not broken by her repulse. He had touched off a mine of purity absolutely new to him, and he hated her a little for possessing it; and himself a little for ignoring the possibility of such a possession in his strategy. Fundamentally it was clear to him that he had failed for lack of time. The matter of the coffee-cups had been managed perfectly, but his venom for Martin Wells was by no means expended. Time would clear Martin from the charge of drunkenness. Manifestly, however, nothing further could be done at present. "Evening-Red" was the thing. Thus Danton summed up the gains and losses of the Island day.

Of course there was the subject of Stella Vandeleur, but she did not menace his commercial project. She had personal reasons for reserve; and, free from the possible tampering of Mr. Eames, she did not appear as a reçkonable factor in the work that remained.

In the next three weeks Danton disposed of his "Evening-Red" property, together with his option holdings, to the last lot. Fourfifths of the property belonged to members of the church; the remaining one-fifth was sold to friends of the members, and members of other religious connections. There is pathos and humor in his zeal during those latter days. The young superintendent was presented with a handsome gold watch by the Sunday school shortly after the excursion. Modestly he would show this to the prospective buyers of the outer churches, musing fondly upon the inscription, "To our Beloved Superintendent, from the affectionate members of the Sunday school," and adding, "Your name, my dear sir, is a household word among the families of our church."

The cream-laid paper subdivision with its illumined initials was fully splashed with red; and old "Evening-Red" itself, far out beyond the slums, slept on tanned and tawny under the sun. It had changed hands before. It had drunk the blood of Indians and whites in the early days; devoured the bodies and bones of who can tell what tribes of elder years? What matter to old "Evening-Red" the destiny of one man or the dollars of one church?

Returning from his vacation, the train which bore the Rev. Raydick Eames stopped for a moment at the little town of Yoebright, and an old preacher of the place boarded the coach, taking a seat beside the city pastor. The topic of common interest was the two young men whom they both knew. The Yoebright preacher scored Danton severely, implying that his home reputation was undesirable.

"But I could forget all the little things which set me against Jim Danton here," the minister went on, "if he had been better to his mother since he went away. He has only been home once—to attend the funeral of his father. The farm is a stony old place and has run down. The mother is not well off, and she confided to me that she has had no help from Jim. What is more and harder for her to bear is that his letters are cruelly brief and infrequent. The fact is, Jim Danton is breaking his mother's heart."

Mr. Eames assured himself by probing questions that there was no mistake. He was shocked, dismayed. The Yoebright preacher, on the contrary, dilated upon the values and virtues of Martin Wells, his irrefragable honesty, clean habits, and filial excellences.

"Martin Wells—drink?" exclaimed the other, when Mr. Eames broached the matter. "Such a thing was never breathed in Yoebright."

"Has he not some hereditary inclination toward intoxicants?" Mr. Eames persisted.

"None whatever, sir! His mother is a saintly woman and his father one of the solidest men in this community."

The Rev. Raydick Eames regarded the other helplessly. "I confess I am dazed," he said. "I wish I could thresh this matter out entirely. I have been misinformed."

The Yoebright pastor arose at the next station. "We heard out here that the two boys had separated," he said quickly. "There is something behind this story of Martin's drinking. I 'll hazard that you heard it first from Jim Danton. Good-by."

By the time the city was reached three hours later, the Rev. Raydick Eames was weary from pondering. He called to see Danton that evening, but learned at the house that the young man had given up his room and left the city two days before. He walked home, his mind increasing its painful labors. Telephoning various members of the congregation, he learned that none of them had known of Danton's departure. He had been at church the Sunday previous. The pastor called upon Stella Vandeleur the next day, but was only allowed a moment with her and dared not broach the matter at heart. She had been very ill, her mother said. Louise Cleghorn had been away for a month, and the date of her return was unknown. At the local office of the encyclopedia publishers it only could be ascertained that Danton had given up his position.

Mr. Eames girded up his loins to call upon Martin Wells. It was not easy for him to humble himself before a man he had wronged, and his doubts were not yet altogether vanquished. Martin was out temporarily, and the minister followed an impulse to learn of the young man's character in the eyes of his employers. The member of the firm to whom he talked expressed himself with perfect freedom upon learning that the caller was Martin's pastor.

"We have only the best to say of Martin Wells, Mr. Eames," he declared. "He has been with us two years now, and has steadily increased in value. From what we know of him here and outside, there appears nothing before him short of a successful and admirable career."

The pastor waited for Martin to return.

Danton took thirty-five thousand dollars to New York, and tripled the amount in three months. His success was indirectly due to the fact that Hugo Mutterman, "the Dutch Colossus," president of the Blix Petroleum Wells and a power in numerous other consolidations, had an inordinate interest in forcing the careers of a certain class of young men. Danton had only been six weeks upon the Street when Mutterman accosted him hastily and dropped a word of information. The young man learned that the speaker was one of the human wonders of the metropolis, acted upon the information, and profited exceedingly. Several other hints followed at intervals, the merest skeletons of suggestions, which Danton used wisely and without ostentation. It had become clear that Mutterman was watching him, and would presently begin to use him vastly if he were not found wanting.

Now, there was another young man on the Street who had been consistently kind to Danton. This was Lannigan, of Blaine & Lannigan, brokers, a shrewd, erratic, big-hearted young giant, whom Fortune chose to favor brazenly and against the world. Lannigan was a millionaire of mushroom growth. The pillars and walls of commerce prophesied tragic ruin for Lannigan, but meanwhile he cheerily continued to do the Midas touch. In his quick-breeding success, Danton ranged Lannigan in his own class, envied him as a rival, and grew in the belief that there was craft in the other's kindness.

Danton was hardly twenty-five. "Evening-Red" and his quick, vital grasp of affairs at the Top had given him a sense of personal infallibility. It was inevitable to any save a flawless character.

In November, four months after his arrival in New York, Danton was called to the office of the "Colossus." Mutterman's three hundred pounds was hunched forward upon a rosewood desk, and he was raining figures from a fountain-pen upon a pearl-gray Bristol board. He had a singular passion for mathematics; and it was said that his schemes and manipulations of finance were evolved subconsciously while his active brain was grappling with intricate problems in calculus.

The massive hairy head, within six inches of the paper, was suddenly upturned as Danton entered. It was a face to remember. The forehead was brown, expansive, and multi-wrinkled; the eyes were small black brilliants, mouse-like in point and shine, and hung with heavy sacs which come from king's tables and go with apoplexy. The rest was dense black beard. The fair child of Yoebright took the great white paw of the most notorious plunger and most inscrutable loser on the continent.

"We have watched each other for a long time. I want to meet you better. Let us go out to lunch," said Mutterman. His English was thickened. For instance, he said "lunge" for "lunch."

They passed together out of a suite of offices which surpassed the most unruly dreams of the boy from the West. They were together for hours, Danton talking much and toying with refreshments; Mutterman listening much and refreshing himself after the manner of giants. The intense appreciation of Mutterman warmed the other, and a psychic magnetism drained him of all he knew. Encyclopedias, school-teachers, "Evening-Red," and the church were dilated upon.

Danton departed exulting, and fatigued as he had been after his first sale of books. He felt that the resources of the Colossus and his prolific ideas were his own. He would use them and make the metropolis proclaim his presence and his passing. Danton had found it harder to be noticed in New York than to augment his fortune.

"Bah!" snarled Mutterman when he was left alone.

He then yawned, and said "Bah!" again, but more good-humoredly, and added as he ground a cascade of cigar-ashes into his vest:

"I am disappoint. I think that I make me a new partner, and I find that he is a woman-robber. Never me mind, I will take what he has!"

The time was ripe for the enterprise. The day before Danton's call, a telegram in cipher had come from the Texas oil-wells (which formed the keystone of the Blix Company's wealth), bearing expert information that the petroleum supply was slowly but surely flagging. The Blix fields were historic, one of the gushers having filled eighty thousand barrels a day for months. Within two hours Mutterman had despatched confidential agents to the fields. The mouths of the experts already there were stifled with gold and they were commanded to expend a universe of pressure, if necessary; but to keep the supply normal or above until further orders. The Blix wells would clear expenses for years, but Mutterman had no time for mere expense-makers. He set about secretly to unload what was believed to be one of the choicest commodities in the land.

Some germ gradually impelled the minds of men to Blix Petroleum. The germ weighed three hundred pounds. For months the stock of the company had not varied more than two points, being anchored between 131 and 133. Late in the week following Danton's conference with the financier, Blix opened one clear morning at 133¼ and closed at 134. The next day Blix gained a point; and the next, another. The day following was the Sabbath. Monday, Blix opened at 137½ and closed at 139¾. Newspapers commented upon the rise as healthful, and published telegrams from the field, stating that the yield of the wells had increased.

Most men would have sweat blood to sustain and increase such an inflation, but the lungs of Mutterman were strong, and he did not neglect his plaything, calculus. Mutterman did not tell Danton to buy; he merely said, "It will go higher!"

It did.

Lannigan was in rather deeply; still, he laughingly confessed that he was a trifle sceptical. Blix at 147, and Danton in for every dollar he owned. Body and soul he was hypnotized by his gains, but galled to the quick that he had not more money to invest.

At 147, "Old Tartaric" Brett sent for Danton. Brett was one of the richest and sharpest men of the Street, with a globe of resources and a personality harsh as ground glass.

"Can you get me ten thousand dollars' worth of this Blix stuff and keep quiet about it?" Brett asked.

"Yes," said Danton.

"Do it, and sell at 152 if you don't hear from me before."

The agreement was written and witnessed. Brett's hate for Mutterman was a black prodigy. Hence his purpose in buying through the boy.

Blix at 148 and no one particularly anxious to sell. Danton and Lannigan met in the exchange.

"It 's rather a new one on me," Lannigan declared coolly. "It 's certainly making us the hall-bedrooms, but I won't be a pig, if you want some more. I 'm loaded for lions with it."

That instant the marker erased 148 and put up 148¼. The deal for Brett went on the former figure. Lannigan was called away for a moment, and Danton remarked to himself very softly, but jovially:

"I 'll clip your wings a bit closer next time, Mr. Lannigan!"

A messenger-boy, one of Lannigan's especial pets, was standing by and heard the whisper. He reproduced it exactly at headquarters.

Lannigan was surprised at first; then he became sore at Danton, for whom he had always felt kindly and acted so.

"It 's too deep for me," he mused. "Blix must be good because Danton is close to Mutterman and thinks he 's hurting me by buying my stuff at 148. . . . My God, I wonder if Mutterman can be playing him!"

Blix at 150.

"It will go higher," said Mutterman, and it did.

Blix at 151—at 152. It was in the last hour of the Exchange on a Tuesday.

"It will go higher," said Mutterman.

It did—one-fourth of one point, and closed there for the day. Danton was white. Mutterman's word was law and gospel to him. He had not sold for Brett at 152, resolving to make the gains of a point or two on the other's capital. It was certain. Still, Danton was white—when the day ended.

Meanwhile down in the Texas field princely salaried engineers were applying every mortal means to keep throbbing a little longer the dying heart of the wells. It was ghastly work, like administering saline injections to rally a near-corpse. It required relaxation. Rhodes, a Combined Press man at Blix, happened to be sitting near a pair of these oil-experts on that same Tuesday night. They were fagged and flush, and had been handicapping the hot evening with cool bottles of beer for some time. Their voices were not quite so low as they had been an hour before. Rhodes caught the game. He did not have to be tied down and malleted to absorb an idea. He verified the trend of talk. He knew the wells and had sensed the strangeness for days. In an hour he had the world at his feet—the newspaper world.

On that night of the gathering seismic forces, Lannigan planned to get rid of more Blix on the morrow, and Danton dreamed that he had unlimited funds to buy more, and yet more! That same evening, Mutterman, who had changed to thrilling gains what was logically a ruinous loss, felt various twinges in his heart. He had felt them before. They meant that he was to eat and drink less and get away to sea. Mutterman always rested at sea. A slow steamer sailed for Europe at midnight. The "Dutch Colossus" smoked his last cigar aboard.

The next morning the Street was torn by an earthquake—a newspaper earthquake.

Danton's stenographer shrieked at the sight of the shrunken figure that shambled into the office early the next morning. The face was yellow and sunken, the eyes vacuous, staring.

"Mutterman! Mutterman!" mumbled the gray, twisted lips.

This was the Yoebright youth, so brilliant, so valiant in victory. This was the remains of the man whom "Old Tartaric" Brett had met five minutes before in the lower hall of the building—all that was left of him who had not sold at 152.

Brett entered with an officer. The brain of the other creature crawled before them; his body grovelled.

"God! what a cur you are!" "Old Tartaric" muttered. "Take him away!"

This last was to the officer.

The cell seemed to stifle its occupant into silence. All the way thither he had screamed for Mutterman.

One of the desk officers put down the telephone receiver, and walked to the cell-door, saying: "The clerk at the hotel where your man stops says that Hugo Mutterman left for Europe last night."

There was no sound from the cell for an hour; then a hoarse cry was raised for Lannigan.

The desk officer got the young financier by 'phone, talked a moment, and returned to the cell-door. "You'll have to quiet down now. We'll bother no more for the present. Mr. Lannigan says he can't do anything for you."

Later in the forenoon it was deemed wise to call a physician. Danton was put asleep. Six hours afterward, he awoke with a name on his lips that had never failed. The imperious master of emotions and strategies had harked back to the old reliance of his youth.

A stimulant was given him which the doctor had left. He asked leave her errors to the tardy punishment of the Fates. There was something rarely rugged in the woman who thus passed weeks of reparation for one day's dreaming. . . . For the first time, she encountered an aggressive lover in Martin Wells. The train was thundering down upon the station now, and people were about them. Her hand was suddenly lost in the burning strength of his, and his face was close to hers, whispering:

"I know I can't change you—but I love you! I love you!"

"Martin—ah, don't! I am not ready!"

"I can stand anything," he spoke on unheeding, "except to have you torture yourself. You have n't anything to fight out here alone. Come back—come back to the city!"

The train had only stopped an instant. It was pulling out now and he had to run. He gave her no time to answer.

"A week from Saturday, if you are not there—I shall come here!"

These were the last words she heard. The train was gone and she had not cried against them. Slowly she walked back to the still house, her mind clinging to the withered spirit of her penance, her heart counting the days.

He came every fortnight after that. The value was gone from her exile, and she returned to the city on the verge of autumn. Evenings and Sundays together were wearing away the last of the woman's repressions. The shudder of the summer was not gone, but she did not feel it when Martin was with her. The plodder with hands still hard from toil, his eyes still adjusted to the distances of the Open, was filling the woman's heart. Indeed, the door of the final chamber had trembled. Within was the tender of dreams awaiting some nameless mysterious touch of his fervor. There were moments in which she had hung in the balance between the imperious passions of Nature which rule the animal kingdom, and that exquisite feminine *shrinking,* one of the rarest crowns of evolution to distinguish the human from the brute. She was not swiftly to be won. Vast provinces of fabulous glory unfolded before the eyes of the besieger, but he mellowed in the conquest.

They were together in her home one November evening of chill rain and gusty winds. The bell rang, and Stella Vandeleur entered. Martin had not seen her for weeks and was startled at glimpse of her pale face and restless, feverish eyes. He waited fully twenty minutes while the two women whispered in the hall; then they joined him.

"Martin," said Louise quietly, "Stella has just received a letter from Mr. Danton. He is in New York and in prison."

He could not speak for the time. He felt the blood depleted in his veins. A premonition that he was to be called back into the abhorrent sphere in which Danton moved, that some hateful tribute was to be demanded of him, grew in his brain from the imploring look in Stella Vandeleur's eyes. . . . Danton had briefly outlined in his letter the cause of his arrest. Louise was explaining the substance of it now. He scarcely heard her words.

"But what concern have I with it all?" he interrupted hoarsely.

"He says that there is no one in the world who can furnish bail for him but you."

Louise spoke apparently without deep emotion, yet it was a moment of vital intensity. Before her Martin Wells was undergoing a trial almost cruel in the sharpness of its demarcations. It was a moment of power in his future—and hers.

Martin Wells thought of the lies that had blackened his name, of the oval viperine scar upon his breast.

"The letter came this afternoon," Louise added, in the same controlled tone. "Almost the same time a telegram arrived stating the amount of the bond. It is twenty-five hundred dollars."

"Why should n't he lie in jail and await his trial?" he demanded.

The two women whispered again.

"Because, Martin," Louise answered bravely, at length, "the life of a woman here—all that life means to a woman—hangs in the balance in the days before the trial. If he is imprisoned, she is lost in her own and in the world's eyes. If the trial sets him free—how much chance is there that James Danton will keep his word—to her?"

It was clear to him. He was given the chance to sacrifice his savings of the past two years and mortgage his future—to preserve the friend of Louise Cleghorn from the frowning countenance of the world. . . . He glanced pitifully for some sign into the eyes of the woman he loved, but she gave him none. The impulse came to him to ask her what she would have him do, but something in her expression forbade. Her eyes seemed to penetrate the very founts of his life. . . . She wanted him to do this great thing. Having done it, Martin Wells could never sink to the dead levels of commonness in her thoughts. He would not refuse, if she asked, but she had no intention of putting her desire into words. He must do it or not for poor Stella Vandeleur. . . . The man did not know all that the moment meant to him, but the face of his beloved made him afraid.

He turned to Stella Vandeleur. She did not look into his eyes, but seemed to shrink farther into her cloak and hid her cheeks in its fur collar.

"And he wrote to you, Miss Vandeleur," he whispered, "to ask me to get him released?"

"Yes."

"And you want me to do this?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He said," she forced the answer, "if I would bring you to New York with the money—we could be married—at once."

Unspeakable pity slowly possessed him. He did not speak for a moment. He felt the eyes of Louise Cleghorn bright in his soul. In the silence, Stella Vandeleur glanced up affrighted, lest he meant to fail her. Her face was like that of a dead woman, save for burning eyes.

"And you intend to go to him—now?"

"Yes, if you——" she could not finish.

"If I make it possible for him to be free? I will do it," he said.

The arrangements had been made. Louise and the other were parting in the hallway. Martin heard a kiss, a final whisper, and the slam of the front door. Then the gloom went out of his brain. . . . The loved one halted an instant beneath the hall arch, her lips parted, eyes shining—then ran to him, seizing his hand in both of hers.

"Oh, I'm so thankful—so proud of you, Martin Wells!"

"I could n't help it——" He was dazed, embarrassed.

"That's just it—*you* could n't help it—that is why I am happy. . . . And, Martin, when you come back—I'll have something to tell you."

On the second afternoon following they reached New York. It had been a miserable journey for them both. Miss Vandeleur seemed anxious to be left alone, and Martin confined his attentions to the simplest needs of a companion. He had much time to think. His entire savings did not amount to half the sum of the bond, and he had been forced to borrow the remainder from his father. He must begin all over again and in debt. There was dreariness in the thought. The culmination of his life, the dreamed-of union with Louise Cleghorn, was indefinitely postponed, even though he was nearer than ever before to winning her. Still, when he thought of a certain few minutes following the call of Stella Vandeleur, his body became alive with thrilling currents; the unkillable spirit of youth grew mighty within him; and the idea of money compared to the joy of a lovely woman in what he had done was paltry as a glow-worm's little ray beneath the lustrous moon.

It was too late in the day for business when they reached the metropolis, and Martin had not the heart to call upon Danton until the preliminary details were covered. These finished early the next morning, he reached the jail. Far down the corridor was the haggard face pressed between the bars. The havoc wrought by loss of fortune and six days' imprisonment appalled the rescuer. His wrongs grew vague and something very near pity took possession of him as he looked into the tortured eyes which stared at him almost ravenous with hope. Approaching, Martin saw the tight twitching mouth, sunken cheeks, and the angular chin covered with a short red-brown beard. Danton did not offer his hand, for he knew it would not be taken. He tried to smile, but it was a twisted, harrowing attempt.

"We need n't waste any words, Jim," Martin said hastily. "I have come to get you out on bail."

"Good old Martin," the other murmured hoarsely.

"There are a couple of conditions. First, you drugged my coffee at the picnic last June—to make the people think I was drunk—did n't you?"

Danton shrank from him.

"Did n't you?"

"Yes," came in a throaty quaver.

"Write it, and sign it."

Danton obeyed. Martin pocketed the paper. "And now before the order for your release is served," he said, "I 've only to learn if you are ready to marry Stella Vandeleur or not."

"Yes—yes," the other said, not without eagerness.

An hour later the two stepped out into the street. Danton straightened his shoulders and breathed deeply again and again.

"My God! My God!" Martin heard him mutter.

At the suggestion of the latter, the two halted at a barber-shop. The razor-artist and a hour-hour's liberty made a marked change for the better, both in the face and manner of Danton. Martin then led the way to the hotel where Miss Vandeleur was waiting. She met them, as was prearranged, in one of the upper parlors. For just an instant her eyes were raised to her old lover's. She spoke no word of greeting. Danton had advanced eagerly, but halted at the sight of her. He seemed afraid to speak, lest he be rushed back to the cell that slowly murdered him. Martin had stepped to the door, his purpose being to leave them alone together for a little while.

"Please don't go, Mr. Wells!" the woman said in a low, frightened voice. "May we not get the rest of—the rest over quickly?"

"Yes, at once—if you wish," he answered.

Only one feature of the ceremony impressed itself upon the brain of Martin Wells. It was the face of Stella Vandeleur as it was turned to Danton for the nuptial kiss. The eyelids were shut, the skin white as chalk, the lips compressed. . . . The three passed out into the street.

"I can see that I am not required—now that the formality is over," Danton said with effort, addressing the woman.

She drew back without sign or answer, waiting for Martin to join her.

"Jim," the latter said, "my part is finished. You are at liberty now to go where you please, but I trust you'll face your trial."

"Yes, of course," Danton answered quickly.

He hesitated an instant, turned to the woman, then disappeared in the conflicting human currents of the street.

In an upper hallway of the hotel, Martin parted from Stella Vandeleur. She was leaving in the afternoon on an up-river steamer to visit relatives in Troy. By the look of her face, the man knew that she would weep when she was alone. She held out her hand and said unsteadily:

"Martin Wells, you have been a nobleman to me. I may not ever be able to repay you, but I can pray that your life may know princely happiness."

And so he was left alone with his work done. He felt cold, filled with inner bruises, and hungering in heart to be home.

CHAPTER XII

A RIBBON TO FASTEN

Martin awoke a little after daylight, as his train was nearing the suburbs of the home city. It was Sunday morning and singularly bright. He dressed hastily and went to the rear platform. His sleeper was the last coach, so that half a world of morning stretched before his eyes. The air was warm, the distances hazy. It was one of those gorgeous days of mid-November which summer leaves with her lovers for a remembrance. He was stepping out of the train-yard swiftly with the crowd and had just passed the station-gates when a hand touched his arm lightly.

There stood Louise Cleghorn laughing delightedly at his surprise.

"I could n't wait at home for you, Martin."

There was a touch of humor in his first utterance: "But I have n't shaved," he gasped.

"Surely there must be some place for a man to shave in a great big station like this," she said, impressed with the importance of the matter. "Try it, and I'll wait. Then if you have any money left, we'll have some breakfast. Then we'll go somewhere and talk all day."

The plodder placed his suit-case carefully down upon the stone, passed his hand over his eyes vaguely, as if to clear away the mists of joy from his eyes, then regarded her long.

"Is all this true?" he inquired presently.

She tweaked his arm sharply. "Yes, I'm here, and I've lots to say to you, and it is the prettiest morning——"

"That I ever stumbled into," he finished.

Martin managed the shaving operation without great bodily harm and joined her at the breakfast-table in the station with an inspiration. "There is only one place in the world to go, Louise—that winding road to the woods outside of Orchard Landing; the old still house for dinner; the night train home——"

"Exactly," said she. "I was hoping you would suggest it. A train leaves in a little less than an hour—from this very depot."

He held his arm across the table. "Don't mind if I ask to be pinched every little while."

High noon, far out the winding road, and the woods enfolded them all about in gilded silence and rainbows of falling leaves.

"Martin Wells," the woman whispered, halting before him, "do you still need to be told what I promised to tell you when you returned? Do you still need to be told?"

"Yes—yes!"

"It is—I love you, Martin Wells. I love you all, and will love you always. That is why last night was like seven years. That is why the day is glorious. That is why we are here alone."

Dinner at the old still house was forgotten. Hours and growing shadows and depths of woodland were forgotten. Mother Nature found delight in them, led them into marvellous little arbors, showed them great trees she had felled with storms long ago and upholstered in moss for them to rest upon; thrilled them with the mysteries of each other; scented the air with pine and sassafras, and touched them with her healing silences.

Out upon the winding road in the dusk, hungering still only for each other. . . . Station lights ahead; moving shadows of the country people on the platform; the far-off scream of the night train; a pause in the darkness for a last kiss. . . .

"If only he would have the courage to stay in New York and face his trial," he said, when they were seated in the train. "But he won't. I know him. Danton will run. The bond will be forfeited. . . . It isn't the money, dear, but it keeps us—from the Little House——"

"No, no, Martin, don't say it," she whispered fervently. "It made me love you—as I love you now. It gave us to-day and Now and to-night and the Little House to come!"

THE "TRULY" THANKSGIVING

By Edwin L. Sabin

◆

ALL have arrived—aunt and uncle and cousin, and the big brother home from mysterious college. All have arrived, and the house is filled with rustle and clumping, unusual voices, laughter, and interchange of Christian names sacred in family chronology. The turkey also has arrived: enormous creature, clammy cold, paly yellow, headless, lying upon his back in imploring attitude, with truncated legs stiffly up-sticking.

In a brisk preliminary canter the faithful kitchen stove has been demonstrating its best; emboldened by the extra supply of wood brought in by yourself, out of honor to the assembled company and as proof of what it can do to the enormous beast aforesaid it has been turning forth ripe mince pie and pumpkin pie and apple pie, so that the cheeriness of warmth and smell irradiated from its black surface and its constantly opened oven have permeated deliciously the premises. You have read of the "odors of Araby the blest," and now you know what they must be: Thanksgiving pies.

Alas, in such a kitchen there is no place for a boy, save when he fetches wood; so you can only linger on the outskirts, with dilated nostrils, sniffing.

In this truly Thanksgiving time the earth has its first snow, conducive to tracking rabbits and to resurrecting the sled; and the pond and the creek have their first ice, strong enough for skating: and the two natural events make mightily for the appetite.

If busy is the kitchen upon the day before, much busier is it upon the morning *of*. Breakfast is merely a perfunctory operation (exciting although it is, with "comp'ny" present); for after breakfast occurs the ceremony of prime importance: stuffed and trussed, into the avid oven is to be stowed the turkey.

You are not present to witness this; ah, no. Dressing and combing and polishing of shoes must there be, and then the decorous procession to church. Some kids don't have to go; they can play and get in trim for the dinner; but *you do*. However, all through the irksome service you may have this saving consciousness: in the oven the turkey is browning, browning, browning.

Other progress is being made, too; for when you are home again, there, behold, is the dining-table, twice as long as customary, covered with a white cloth, preparatory, and set already with knives and forks and like paraphernalia individual and general. It waits, a table of vast possibilities; and which is your seat, you wonder.

Spick and span, you have naught to do but to loiter; in Sabbath constraint of garb but with thoughts most weekly and secular. What will there be? Let us enumerate again, delightfully hypnotized by the prospect. Stewed squash (do *you* like squash?), and mashed white potato, and baked sweet potato (the sweet are best, ain't they?), and cranberry, and cider—and turkey, and—and celery, and—oh, yes, hot biscuits and stuffing and gravy and pie and pudding and nuts and—

Will dinner never be ready?

In the parlor the household all, except mother, who is bustling at the fount of those Araby odors abovementioned and still prevalent, are gathered in studiously indifferent circle. Of course, to such the eating part is nothing. They can wait, enjoying conversation. The reminiscences of the evening before, around the lamp and hearth, are resumed; fascinating then, but now—huh!

"Do you remember, Lou?" asks father. Uncle Lou does. Ha, ha! Ho, ho! Nevertheless——

Will dinner never be ready?

Aunt and uncle and grandparent draw you to them, to fondle and banter and query. But how may one know how old one is, or where was Moses when the light went out, or why a hen crosses the road, when one has resolved into stomach and nose, and all one's thoughts are in that adjoining room?

Will dinner never be ready?

Grandmother is telling you, in her gentle voice, of when she was a little girl and not so old as you, and they had Thanksgiving. Interesting should such a recital be; out of due respect you must stand by her knee and attend. Grandmother softly strokes your hair, as she croons on: "*Wild* turkey—your great-grandfather shot it—and venison, and corn-bread, and honey——" Whew!

Oh dear! won't dinner *ever* be ready?

"Where are you going, Johnny?" demands father sternly.

You want a drink of water. Just a drink of water—in the other room.

"No; you stay right in here with us. You'll bother mother."

W-well. But——

Won't dinner ever—— Ah! mother stands upon the threshold; flushed, warm, and triumphant, she bids: "Come out, all."

Since then you have heard, by the Dutch ovens of the round-up fire, the cook's long yelp of "Chuck!" or on ship-board you have sprung to the galley-boy's beckoning wake; you have dropped most willingly into place at the logging-camp long table, or, tired and spent by a day of strenuous business, in the club café you have sighed with relief as the silent waiter bore in the soup and bread-sticks. But mother's smiling "Come out, all," can never be o'ershadowed.

Nose first; now eyes; but when for luckless mouth? What a table—incense-breathing, smoking with sacrifice, the turkey, all a golden brown, reposing at one end. Beautiful turkey, pointing straight at you a drum-stick. Uncle and aunt and cousin and big brother and mother and father—and you—down you sit, with scuffling of chairs and expectant good humor.

Double in quantity is the blessing. That being over, father carves. You watch anxiously; father is the great provider.

Grandmother is served; a morsel of the breast for her, and "tastes" of the various et cetera. Aunt Jane next; Aunt Lucy next; grandfather next; the turkey dwindles. Ladies first; but will your turn never come? Will there be enough? Is there anybody in the whole world, or in the town, at the least, as empty as you? Like a hungry spaniel you sit, and gaze, and almost you drool. Oh dear!

"Serve the boy next," says Uncle Lou generously. "I can wait; he can't." (Bless Uncle Lou!) "I know what *he* wants—a drum-stick."

How did he know? Some time you will ask him.

Will father, now—or will he not? He is quite an autocrat, and punctilious as to etiquette, is father. But see, there goes a drum-stick upon the plate—and a chunk of white—and a huge spoonful of stuffing (maybe this *is* yours, after all!)—and a mountain of mashed potato, and a fat sweet potato, and a clump of squash, and a deluge of gravy—*is* it yours? Is——?

Father passes it.

"Johnny's," he announces gravely.

"Gracious on me!" comments grandmother, in her sweet old tones. "I am afraid that Johnny will surely burst."

Yet it is n't so very much. You will want more, of course. And even as it is, 't is incomplete. Cranberry, celery, biscuits, pickled peaches—you will have much of these; and later three kinds of pie, plum-pudding, nuts and raisins, candy.

However, square away. Time is precious. Eh, what?

"Where are you going to put all that, Johnny?" inquires somebody.

You flush, embarrassedly. What a question! *You* know.

"GOD HAVE MERCY ON US"

A STUDY IN PSYCHO-THERAPEUTICS

By Edith Robinson

◆

"BLESS you!" exclaimed the Assistant Professor of Philosophy, as his wife sneezed.

"When you pride yourself on not being superstitious!" she returned reproachfully.

"It was n't superstition, darling," explained the Professor. "In the days of which we were speaking a sneeze was commonly the first symptom of the Plague, and the words commended the stricken one to God's mercy."

"What came after the sneeze?" queried Isabel.

"Happy if it was death," answered the Professor gravely. "Yet indubitable as was the awful reality, even then the question was asked, 'Which slew the more, Plague or Fear?' 'None may account for the possessions of fear when it takes hold of the mind,' the astute old chronicler declares."

"You might have held then those 'health conferences' in which our humble little university has taken the lead, and which would no doubt have given yonder village the miraculous reputation of Lourdes," suggested Isabel.

"But unfortunately, at that time," said the Professor, "no adequate means, whether of medicine or Psycho-Therapy, had been discovered for dealing with the scourge; and it has vanished so completely from civilized countries that should a sporadic case appear in England to-day, I doubt if the average practitioner would be any the wiser."

It was their first long holiday since their marriage, and they were spending a good part of their time taking long tramps over the countryside, where magnificent Gloire de Dijon roses covered every cottage wall, and the ivy by the roadside added joy to existence. Steeping themselves in local history and tradition, they seemed at times to have cut loose from the present and to be living in the days of long ago.

The hamlet that was the objective point of their present trip was in sight—some score of cottages strung along a winding road, a gray church tower rising in their midst.

"How did such a visitation happen?" queried Isabel presently.

"One would have thought that the place's isolation would have spared it from its terrible fate."

"A midsummer festival was at hand, and a woman sent to London for new clothes," explained her husband. "It was the time the Great Plague was raging. In the midst of the rustic merrymaking, somebody sneezed.

"The Plague was among them!

"The rector besought the people not to spread the scourge over the countryside; his words prevailed, and they took oath to live and die here together. Soon upon one door after another was placed the warning sign: a red cross and the words, 'God have mercy on us!'

"When at last the summer was over, only some two-score people remained out of four hundred. Everything save what sufficed for bare shelter and covering was burnt. They do not keep that festival now in yonder village," added the Professor gravely.

The hamlet did not boast an inn, and Isabel suggested that they take tea at a cottage, as they frequently did on their rambles. She paused before one of the most picturesque. In the dun thatch of the roof, sagging here and there into mossy nests or broken into a perfect witchery of curves and angles, tufts of grass waved, golden green in the sunlight. Mingled with the ivy that half enveloped walls and roof were the glorious roses of the countryside—cream-colored, with hearts aflame.

The old woman who came to the door smilingly acceded to their request. The Professor kept on to the church, where the Plague death records were kept, in the rector's unshaken handwriting. Isabel would not go; she was tired and had had enough of tragedy.

She was ushered into a tiny, low-ceiled room; on one side was a deep stone fireplace, with high hobs; the chimney had not been drawing well lately, the old woman explained, in apology for the smokiness of the room. She had had some one in to mend it, but matters had not been thereby perceptibly improved. Her daughter and little grandson, who were visiting her, had just gone again in quest of the stone-mason. Nothing had ever been done to the chimney before, since the day the cottage was built. It was the one in which the Plague had broken out, three hundred years ago, she added, with manifest pride. Presently she went into the back room on some housewifely errand, and Isabel looked about with some gruesome access of interest.

One of the stones by the side of the fireplace was loosened. Led by mere impulse, undefined curiosity, she pried up the stone with the point of her umbrella. It could be easily removed—which she straightway proceeded to do. Behind was a small orifice, partly in the masonry of the chimney, partly in the wall of the cottage itself. There was something in the hole—she could not see what. She thrust in her hand and drew out the mysterious object.

The door had opened and the Professor entered. His wife was standing in the middle of the room, with wide-open, horror-stricken eyes, apparently stricken dumb as well as motionless.

"What has happened?" cried the Professor. "Isabel, can't you speak?"

His voice, his touch upon her arm, partially restored her self-possession.

"Take me from this awful place!" she gasped.

Whatever its cause, her terror was too real for dalliance. Hastily placing a coin upon the table, the Professor led her from the room.

"Farther—farther yet," she pleaded, when again and once again he would have stayed their flight. Nor would she pause till they reached a little wayside pool, at some distance from the village, in whose disinfecting water the heroic rector had been wont to place the money that was to buy food from the countryside for his stricken people.

"You will excuse me, dear, if I confess to some curiosity as to your behavior," said the Professor, upon whom the immediate effect of his wife's emotion had perceptibly lessened. "Was it anything worse than a spider or a mouse? If it was a ghost, you might have introduced me," he added reproachfully. "You know I have always wanted to meet a genuine spook!"

"It was no laughing matter," returned Isabel solemnly. "Oliver, in a hole behind the chimney, I found a pair of stays. They were of a style quite unfamiliar to me, yellow, discolored in spots, the fine lace with which they had been trimmed crumbling to pieces at the touch. The awful truth burst upon me. In my hand was a relic of the Plague!

"Don't you see," she went on breathlessly, while the Professor stared, hardly knowing whether to treat this communication with seriousness or levity, "when, at the end of the pestilence. the people were commanded to bring forth all their clothing to be destroyed, a woman's vanity led her to conceal those precious stays? They were of a sort one hardly associates with humble folk. Suppose—suppose"—Isabel's voice grew weak and faint—"they were among the contents of that fatal box from London? It was the very cottage where the Plague first made its appearance."

Something of his wife's emotion may have communicated itself to the Professor, for his face was perceptibly paler as he asked quickly:

"What did you do with them?"

"Put them in the fire," answered Isabel, with energy.

"You could n't have seen much in that smoky hole," returned the

Professor, recovering himself. "I could probably have told to what era of English costume they belonged. I wish you had waited."

"Darling, that was just what I was most afraid of," returned Isabel solemnly: "that you would return and catch it!"

"But, my love, even admitting that the stays were a relic of that time, the germs could not have retained their virulency for three hundred years! You did not handle them long enough for harm to have come. The imagination that constantly dwells on germs courts the very evil that it dreads," said the Professor gravely.

"The Plague raged in hot weather. What if its germs, instead of being made innocuous by their long exposure to the heat, had been conserved—rendered a thousand-fold more virulent—thereby?" questioned Isabel, in a low voice. "What came after the sneeze?"

The Professor tossed a pebble carelessly into the pool. Isabel, leaning over the brink, gazing into the fern-shadowed depths, saw her own image suddenly distorted, its lines spasmodically drawn: its shattered flesh was a livid green, patched and splashed with mottled yellow-brown, like the belly of a toad.

Husband and wife looked at each other in silence.

"Let us go," said the Professor quietly.

The following morning the Professor and his wife ate their bacon and eggs with their usual appetite, with the exception of a slight languor on the part of Mrs. Mordaunt.

"If you don't mind, darling," she said presently, "I won't take a walk to-day. I 'm rather tired and must sew the braid on my skirt."

"I might put in the day on the moors," suggested the Professor.

"Do. You know I hate scrunching over the heather," assented Mrs. Mordaunt. "You 'll be back for luncheon, won't you?" she added carelessly.

"Probably—only, there 's no knowing, when one sets out on a tramp, when he 'll be back," added the man of learning, who had a habit of lapsing into a temporary oblivion of his surroundings, sometimes with untoward results. "So don't be alarmed about me, dear, if I don't turn up till a little later."

Presently two curious things happened. Professor and Mrs. Mordaunt, who had hitherto scarcely concealed a thought from each other, belied all their previous marital character. On reaching the end of the lane on which their lodgings were situate, the Professor, instead of taking the path to the moors, climbed the stile in the opposite direction —with a backward glance toward the house. Mrs. Mordaunt, regardless of the claims of needle and thread, left the house—with a glance up the lane—and returned in an hour or two with a small flat package.

When the Professor appeared at last the long mid-summer twilight had set in. Isabel was not, as usual after any brief separation, at the gate to meet him. He ran up the stairs two at a time, but entered the little sitting-room with the air of a man returning from a long holiday tramp.

Isabel was nowhere visible. He called cheerily by name—twice—thrice.

"Oh, Oliver," murmured Mrs. Mordaunt, from the couch, "how sweet the air is!"

The Professor staggered. For a second—just one—he leaned against the wall, almost as a man who has received his death-thrust.

"God!" he muttered, under his breath.

Then, even as one who rallies all his vital forces for some last terrible conflict, whose issues are of untold value, he drew himself together.

"The casement is open, love, and the roses are most fragrant at this hour," he made answer quietly

He crossed the room to where the matches were kept, but in the obscurity fumbled for an instant in vain. Some unguarded movement resulted in a heavy crash that sounded in the stillness as though some mischievous schoolboy had taken a heavy book by the corners and dropped it flat on the floor. Isabel, who had subsided again into a doze, started up. Before she could make an effort toward wakefulness, however, the effect of the shock had seemingly spent itself, and she was about to lay her head again upon the pillow when her husband seated himself by her side.

"Isabel, wake up!" he called cheerily. "I want to tell you something interesting; I 've something to show you!"

She reluctantly raised her heavy lids. The pungent odor of burnt linen filled the air, as he displayed a small pair of stays, yellow and discolored, as with age.

Into Isabel's dull eyes crept a look of comprehension, of horror. She shrank involuntarily from her husband's side, though still keeping her gaze, as by a species of fascination, fixed upon the stays.

"I lost my way on the moors," continued the Professor, unabashed. "I can't tell how the thing happened, when, as you know, I have a positive genius for locality. Before I knew it—any one would have said it was in the opposite direction—I had struck yesterday's village. Your thrilling tale occurred to me; unlikely as the fancy was, I must confess that the dramatic as well as the historic interest of such a possibility appealed to me. I suspected that something was wrong with the data, however, the moment the old woman opened the door," he went on ruefully. "She demanded instantly why the lady who came yesterday to ask for tea should have burnt up her corsets. Her amazement at such a proceeding would have equalled her indignation only that she evidently held an American capable of any madness."

The Professor paused to light his pipe.

“Were—they—really—hers?” queried Isabel at last, thickly.

She touched the stays with her finger-tips.

“Yes, those are the ones. But how could they have come into such a curious place—when no repairs had ever before been done on the chimney?” she added with a faint interest, but turned directly to the pillow again.

The pipe was drawing freely, and, amid the thickening puffs, the Professor went on.

“The corsets had been brought to the old woman by a daughter from Manchester, who, with a little grandson, was visiting her. The child was in the room when the stone-mason was there and was greatly interested in the man’s work, particularly when a ‘cubby-hole’ back of the chimney was laid bare. Out of mischief, he thrust the stays into the hole and straightway forgot all about them, even in the noise of the subsequent inquiries. The old woman came into the room directly after our flight, and there were the precious corsets—in the fire! The boy remembered, too late, hiding them. I thought you were somewhat disturbed about the affair, and brought the stays home to show you that, as I told you, your imagination had taken fright quite unnecessarily.”

Mrs. Mordaunt examined the stays gingerly. On the lining, scorched, but still plainly legible, was the trade-mark,

Withersp & Brownl
57, Hi Ma ch t

There were several unopened letters on the table. The Professor glanced them over one by one.

“Ah, there is to be a Congress.” He ran his eye rapidly over the remainder of the page. “I am invited to give a paper on ‘Recent Developments in Psycho-Therapeutics.’ I can’t afford to miss such a chance!” He took an excited turn or two up and down the room. “There’s a boat from Liverpool to-morrow afternoon. We might be able to make it. Where’s Bradshaw? There’s a train from here—if we went cross-lots. There’d be some everlasting waiting at junctions, but I think we could do it!”

Isabel was standing at the casement, drawing in deep breaths of the vivifying air of the moors. She turned her head slightly at her husband’s words, but gave no other evidence of having heard him. The Professor, however, apparently satisfied that she had grasped the situation, bustled about the sitting-room and bedroom, dragging out, noisily, the contents of bureau and wardrobe, and tossing everything into a heap in the middle of the room, as though awaiting the junkman.

“I’ve upset the ink!” he exclaimed ruefully—“the only black ink in all England! I can't write with that nasty blue stuff they tell you is ink. Really, it is the refuse of the laundries. I don't wonder that the foreign policy of England is obscure, when she writes her protocols and ultimatums in all-but-invisible ink. Isabel, love, do you hear?" he lamented. "It's all gone—every drop"—holding the ink bottle upside down—"and it's gone into your best hat!"

"My new hat! Oh, Oliver, how could you!"

Lovers though they were, there was no restraining the note of indignation in Isabel's voice as she hastened from the window.

"Can't you do something—oxalic acid—wring it out?" suggested the Professor.

Mrs. Mordaunt seized the dripping mop, that erstwhile had been a lovely confection of nodding plumes and silken blossoms from a Regent Street shop—her one extravagance of the summer—and thrust it out of sight before trusting herself to speech.

"I'll do the packing—it never takes me long, you know," suggested the Professor contritely. "You had better lie down again, dear. I'm not at all tired; only, I'd like some tea. I shan't get to bed to-night."

"Thank you, dear, but I'll pack my own things," returned Isabel, with energy. "I will make the tea."

Through the few intermediate hours of darkness, they worked together, the Professor's spirits over his proffered honor effervescing in snatches of song and boyish pranks. Once or twice he even insisted upon a two-step with his wife, to hilarious, if discordant whistling. The last of the odds and ends of a summer's wanderings was fastened into the "hold-all" when dawn was in the sky.

They made the boat by a hair's-breadth and were occupied in the ordering of their stateroom. The "hold-all," unwarily unstrapped by the Professor, shot out an avalanche of incongruous properties. Among them was a small sombre-hued book. Its leaves fell apart—as though pressed open at a given place—and certain words upon the printed page flashed before the Professor's eyes.

> followed as by the perception of an overpowering sweetness
> in the air. The fatal coma

He turned to the title page. It read:

"History of the Great Plague in London, 1665, by Daniel De Foe."

The Professor and his wife looked at each other furtively—with growing suspicion, with open question.

"Where did you get the book?" asked the Professor.

"In the next town—it's something of a resort, you know, and has a fairly good book-shop," admitted Isabel. "I wanted to know what came after the sneeze. I could n't be sure I had the symptoms unless I knew what they were. Where did you get the stays?"

"At the nearest market town, and scorched them over a bonfire in the fields, coming home," confessed the Professor. "I did go to the cottage, but not a vestige of the stays remained, and the old woman knew nothing of them. They had probably been the cause of the chimney refusing to draw, by choking some unsuspected draught."

Isabel noted that the hand holding the book shook a little.

"Oh, Oliver, was it real, after all?" she questioned breathlessly.

The freshening sea air was blowing the cobwebs from their brains. They were two young people now of a vivid, actual present. Perhaps, unconsciously, he, too, had been living too much in the atmosphere of bygone days—gone by forever!—and had been viewing a mere curious happening in the bull's-eye light of the specialist. Still——

He made answer slowly,

"Whether it was Fear or Plague; whether it was a nervous manifestation, stimulated by fright and a vivid description of 'symptoms' upon a sensitive organization, or we have been, in very truth, the actors in a striking illustration of Psycho-Therapeutics, God knows! The incident will be excellent material for my paper at the coming Congress—of which, by the way, I knew before we left home. But, personally," added the Assistant Professor of Philosophy thoughtfully, "it is not an experiment that I should care to repeat."

◆

LEAVES

BY CHARLES L. O'DONNELL

YE play with the Wind to-day,
Yielding the kisses he craves—
Fools, know ye not next month
He shall hound ye to your graves?

Your mothers, a day ago,
He won as he woos ye now,—
Hags in their tattered brown,
What count makes he of a vow?

So blows the world away,
The moment, the moment is all;
Life is a promise in spring—
How often fulfilment in fall?

A MISOGYNIST IN THE MAKING

By Blanche Goodman

◆

IF the world's most renowned hypnotist, Professor Vernon Du Voy, had not come to town—if Chick Broxton had not suggested going—if Bud Everett had not been called upon to prove to Minnie Wells that the elements of fear abode not within him——

"Say, Bud," Chick had said on their way to school, "this is Friday, and there won't be any old lessons to dig at to-night. S'pose we take the girls to see that hypnotist that's in town this week. I heard he was great."

"What girls?" asked Bud, with palpably assumed innocence.

"Aw, Minnie and Belle, of course. What girls do you think? The whole high-school layout?"

At the mention of Minnie's name a dull red crept over the smooth tan of Bud's cheek. "Do you suppose their mothers 'd let 'em go out at night with us?" he demurred, attempting to rein in his tones to a phlegmatic calm.

"Let 'em!" Chick's nose curled scornfully. "Why, they'd be so tickled, they'd fall all over themselves letting 'em. Ain't the girls old enough to get a start in society? And ain't we all right, I'd like to know?" His chest swelled to more noble proportions.

There was a far-away look in Bud's eyes, and he made no answer, being busily engaged in a mental casting up of his finances. "It takes a lot of money, don't it, Chick?" he queried finally. "I've heard that girls expect to be taken to a caffy afterwards, and all that sort of thing."

"Caffy your foot! They're not going out with millionaires. We'll treat 'em to an ice-cream soda."

So it was arranged that the girls signal the maternal answers: two coughs for "yes," one for "no."

Belle coughed twice.

At a quarter past seven Friday night, a scene not down on the bills was being enacted in Bud's room. The place looked like a realistic representation of that far-off time when chaos preceded the present order of things. The contents of closet and drawer had been hauled out and strewn over all available space, Bud standing in their midst, a Napoleon surveying the wreckage of empire. A bloody scratch on his cheek, the result of inexperience with the razor, combined with haste, added a note of ferocity to his aspect that gave an impressive finishing touch to the surroundings.

He walked to the head of the stairs, and called down in a tone bristling with irritation, "Mother!"

"She 's not here," answered his sister. "What do you want, Bud?"

"What 've you gone and done with my clean shirts?" he demanded hotly.

"Did n't they come home in the wash?"

"Wash nothing!" he fumed. "I can't find 'em anywheres. Here it 's a quarter past seven, and me not half ready. Oh, this is a lovely household, this is. Fellow might as well look for a needle in a haystack, as expect to find anything around here."

"Now, see here, Bud," she commanded as she entered, "stop your fussing. Are you perfectly sure you put them in the wash?"

There was elaborately veiled sarcasm in his reply: "Oh, no, of course I 'm not *sure*. I guess I 'm just talking to hear myself talk." Then he broke forth with, "Why, I rolled those three shirts in a bundle myself, and threw 'em in there."

"In there" was an adjoining trunk-room, wherein stood the hamper used for soiled clothes. Into the room went his sister. In a few moments she reappeared, accusingly holding up to his disgusted gaze a tightly wadded bundle rescued from behind the hamper. Bud sat down on the bed, limp.

"This is a swell mess," he observed, "and not a store open this time of night."

"You could n't wear the one you have on, could you?" she asked, not very hopefully.

Bud looked down at the grimy article in question.

"Why, I would n't take a girl to a dog fight in this thing," he said drearily. "We had a practice game after school."

"How would it do to *borrow* a shirt from some one?" ventured his sister.

Bud snorted wrathfully. "Now, don't that sound just like a fool girl?" He appealed to the furniture for corroboration. "Borrow one, and have it get all over that I could n't take a girl out without running 'round the neighborhood to beg a shirt like a blooming hobo. Don't you want me to ask for cold victuals too?"

Her suggestion shrivelled beneath his withering scorn.

"But, Bud, I *have* an idea," she announced, her face brightening. "Only, you do jump and growl so at everything I start to say."

"Come on with it." His tone conveyed little enthusiasm.

"Wait a minute;" and she ran to her room. She returned triumphantly waving a white dickey that had survived a coat suit of the previous winter. Bud regarded the dickey dubiously. "You mean for me to wear that thing, and make a regular Molly of myself?"

"Goose! Who's going to know that it isn't a shirt when you've buttoned your vest and coat over it?"

The dickey's mannish collar and front were silently and insistently making their appeal. Besides, the clock down-stairs had just struck the half-hour.

"Let's see how it works," grunted Bud.

He shifted his weight impatiently from one foot to another, holding his hands behind him, while his sister made vain attempts to fasten the topmost collar button.

"Hold your head up," she directed authoritatively.

"Ow! You're choking me," spluttered Bud, as, with purple face, he jerked away and rubbed the skin which she had caught up along with the collar button.

"It's the other neckband underneath that's in the way. You'll have to take your shirt off," was her decree. "The dickey won't meet unless you do."

"And go to the theayter in my undershirt?" he gasped.

"Oh, do as you like!" she cried, out of patience at last; and, slamming the door, she ran down-stairs.

Left alone to consider the matter, her suggestion seemed to Bud more practical, and, doffing the offending garment, he found that he could make the dickey meet about his neck.

Reënforced with other adjuncts, including a flaming tie and clean cuffs pinned to the inside of his coat-sleeves, he presented such an orthodox appearance that he was moved to fling over his shoulder a grateful "Good-night, Sis," as he dashed out of the front door.

Not until he had closed the Wells's gate behind himself and Minnie did he begin to feel the irresponsible sense of gayety that such an occasion should inspire.

Crooking his arm stiffly in Minnie's direction, he said with all the elegance at his command, "Like chicken? Take a wing."

He had seen the thing done one night when returning from the circus, and it had made a peculiarly strong appeal to him.

A thrill shot up his sleeve, out of all proportion to the size of the little hand shyly placed on the proffered arm. Bud was in Elysium. He would have liked to walk on and on thus until—until they reached the moon, with nothing to break the silence, save the sound of their footfalls and Minnie's voice floating up to his enraptured hearing.

"Do you know," remarked Minnie confidingly, as she fell into step with him, "mamma wouldn't have *thought* of letting me go out on a night like this, but being it was you——" The rest of the sentence melted into an upward sidewise glance at Bud. Involuntarily his right hand slid around to the small gloved one on his left arm and enclosed it. Then he grew numb at the thought that the owner might express indignant disapproval.

But his fears were groundless.

Belle and Chick were waiting for them at the entrance to the theatre. "Oh," greeted Chick, with an injured air, "thought maybe you were dressing for a ball." His tone grew more caustic. "Guess you don't know we 've been waiting for you about twenty minutes or more." Bud's answer was lost in the general talk, and presently the four were seated inside.

As in a dream, Bud felt Minnie's shoulder now and then touching his own, or a wisp of her golden hair brushing his cheek, as she craned her neck to note new arrivals.

Not until the world's most renowned hypnotist had quite completed his introductory remarks did the four centre their attention on the stage. Chick leaned over and touched Bud's knee.

"Say, Bud," he questioned, "are you going up when he calls for volunteers?"

"Going up? Volunteers?" Belle cast a puzzled look at Chick.

"You see," he explained, "the fellow that does the hypnotizing always calls for men from the audience to come up and be put to sleep. That 's where the fun comes in"—this with an air of worldly experience.

"You were n't ever asleep, were you?" asked Belle.

"Sure," responded Chick, with magnificent carelessness. "Dozens of times. It 's nothing at all." He was rewarded with an admiring shudder from the girls.

"Were n't you ever hypnotized, Bud?"

It was Minnie who put the question. Chick was absorbing the lion's share of attention, and Belle's evident pride in his prowess rankled.

"Who? Me?" Bud sat up with a start. "Huh! Catch me trying to make a fool of *my*self in public. That ain't in *my* line."

"Oh, Bud Everett, I 'll bet you 're afraid!" teased Belle.

Bud reddened. "I 'll bet he is n't," retorted Minnie. "Are you, Bud?" The look her blue eyes sent him would have nerved a man to challenge an army to combat, single-handed.

"Well, I rather guess not," Bud swaggered. "Nothing to be afraid of."

"Here 's your chance to show it, then," chuckled Chick maliciously. "He 's calling for volunteers right now."

Bud gulped. Then he made a hesitating forward movement, glancing at Minnie. "It—it would n't look right for me to leave you and go up there, would it?"

"I won't mind it a bit," she smiled sweetly at him, then whispered eagerly, "Go on, and show them you 're not afraid."

Only a craven could have withstood such an appeal.

Once on the stage, Bud occupied himself chiefly with keeping his extremities as much out of evidence as possible, and attempting to smile nonchalantly at the audience, while one after another of the raw youths who with himself formed a semicircle were put into varying degrees of somnolence.

He determined that dignity, in as large a measure as possible, should characterize his first appearance.

"Say," he cautioned in an undertone, when his turn had arrived, "I don't want to be made a blamed monkey of. I 'm just up here to let some friends of mine know that I ain't afraid of this sort of thing. Have me do something short and easy."

"Certainly, sir, certainly, sir," suavely responded Professor Vernon Du Voy. "I always make it a point to respect the wishes of my patrons."

Then he proceeded in a louder tone, "Now it will be necessary for the gentleman's mind to be perfectly passive, perfect-ly pas—sive——" It was the stereotyped formula, and as he stood before his subject, going through the usual gymnastics and talking in a soothing tone, Bud felt drowsiness steal upon him. Minnie's image swam for a moment before his blurred vision. Then all was darkness.

He awoke to a thunderous roaring sound, accompanied by the snapping of fingers near his ears. The hypnotist's voice, coming as from a distance, was repeating briskly, "All right, old fellow, all right. Wake up! You 're not in a hot climate any more."

Peal after peal of mighty laughter assailed his hearing.

He found himself in the centre of the stage, breathing heavily as he mopped his forehead with his sleeve.

Something unaccustomed in the feel of the latter attracted his glance downward. The sight that met his eyes almost froze the blood in his veins.

As a triangle of late snow might flaunt its whiteness against some dun-colored mountain-side, so the dickey disported its meagreness flamboyantly upon an ample background of gray undershirt.

For a moment he stood as if turned to stone, then with a howl he sprang towards the coat and vest that lay on the floor beside him, and, clutching them to his breast, dived precipitately from the stage. There were less conspicuous ways of exit, but Bud did not tarry to make a choice. Down the aisle he bounded, the sound of wild shrieks and cat-calls accompanying him in his progress towards the door, to haunt his memory forever after, like some hideous nightmare.

When he came to himself, he was at home in his room, tearing off the dickey—that fatal, betraying dickey!—and calling down maledictions on the evil hour that ever prompted him to wear woman's apparel.

And Minnie! What *would* she, *could* she, think?

He tortured himself exquisitely until sleep came to relieve him.

The sun was high when Bud sat on the edge of his bed, and with mingled feelings regarded the contents of a note in his hand.

From time to time he uttered fervent ejaculations and gazed with crimson cheeks and tingling ears upon an open parcel beside him.

They had been brought to his room by his mother (he laid claim to a severe headache), but he had vouchsafed no reply to the Widow Everett's gentle look of inquiry. Instead, he had placed the note and parcel on the bed, and drawn the covers about him, a sickening suspicion tearing at his heart as he awaited her exit.

And now the worst of his fears was realized.

The note, addressed to Mr. Frederick Everett, bore the signature of Minerva Elizabeth Wells in a stiff, uncompromising hand.

"I am returning all of your presents and letters by the bearer of this," it ran, "and I wish to say right here that all is over between us. No girl could be friends with a person again after they go and place her in such an ignominious position as what you placed me in last night. If they really thought anything of her it would not have happened." (Bud groaned.) "All the girls will kill themselves laughing at me, and I feel like I never want to show my face in public again. I have sent back everything except the bead necklace which you dropped in the creek when you were wading in it the day of the picnic, and I asked you to hold it. Also I lost the ammythist out of the ring, but if you want me to I will buy another one."

The decree, somewhat foggy as to construction, though perfectly clear as to purpose, ended abruptly.

Bud rolled over and buried his head in the pillows, while for the hundredth time the memory of the evening before sent a hot wave of shame over him. He saw himself an enforced auditor to the hilarious comments of his school-fellows, and heard "The Song of the Shirt" rendered with varied improvements, such as only high-school boys are capable of devising. He saw his mother's horrified face as some officious neighbor unctuously communicated to her the story of his undoing. He saw——

A cold wet nose pushing against his tightly clenched fist interrupted his agony of self-abasement. He turned, and met the steady, inquiring gaze of his fox terrier, Biff, whose stump of a tail very inadequately expressed its owner's emotion at his master's glance of recognition.

"Hello, old pal!" Bud grabbed the dog affectionately by the ears. "Want to come up?"

With a sharp bark of assent, Biff sprang into the arms of the boy, who regarded him with unwonted tenderness.

Here was friend worth a dozen Minerva Elizabeth Wellses.

"*You* think I'm all right, don't you, old fellow?" he murmured as Biff snuggled closer. "Would n't make any difference to you if I never had a shirt to my back, would it, Biffy?"

And Biff, whose affections, once placed, were unwavering, barked an emphatic affirmative.

◆

A SONG OF THE MOUNTAIN

BY ROBERT LOVEMAN

I CRIED unto the mountain,
"What art thou,
With thy brow
Soothed and smoothed,
And kissed and caressed
At the fountain of the sky,
Of the sky?

"Are the clouds that cling about thee,
Are the winds that sing about thee,
Robe and voice?
Dost rejoice
In thy station of elation, upon high?"

The mountain spake to me:
"O thou child,
Wayward, wild,
Be thou strong in storm and calm;
Peace will pour its oil of balm
On the waters of thy soul;
And the goal,
Oh, the goal,
That lies glistering up-piled,
Thou shalt grasp it,
Thou shalt clasp it,
O my child, O my child!"

THE TRADITION OF THE FRENCH STAGE

By Mrs. John Van Vorst

❧

IN Paris perhaps more than anywhere else we are impressed by the fact that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

There is something in the Catholic education which, at the cradle, does away with the "self-consciousness" that is the curse of our introspective puritanism. To appear ridiculous, this is the Frenchman's bane, but to appear animated, vivacious, dramatic, all arms to gesticulate and all features to grimace, this is his natural method of expression. And if to us who are by instinct and by cultivation desperately self-contained, so much demonstration seems, though it is not, insincere, the same Frenchman thereby comes first hand by his acting capabilities.

It is this primary education in self-forgetfulness which makes of the French people better actors than we—for am I not right in my interpretation of public opinion? Is not the very intonation with which these words "the French stage" are pronounced a tacit compliment to this especial school of acting as the best which the world has yet encountered?

Once the primary education in abandon is accomplished—for it must not be forgotten that even the little French girl of excellent family is taught to look upon self-consciousness not as a social but as a moral defect—what is it, then, that creates their superiority?

Training, training, nothing but training!

We are so young in our scarcely secular republic! We cannot expect the nursery to give what the *salon* gives. We can, on the other hand. expect it to give something different, and something more hopeful—and perhaps for the very reason more interesting.

But to go back to the French tradition. It is built upon certainties wherein the "hopeful" plays a very little part.

As long ago as—oh, so long ago that the mere mention of it would be tiresome—the French *stage* took its start in the—it seems incredible, but it is history—in the *church!*

The *mystères,* or religious plays, were the first ever to be given.

At Christmas-time, in celebration of the birth of Christ; at Easter, in commemoration of His death and Resurrection, these mystic acts—the last survivance of which is the decennial representation at Oberammergau—were played in the cathedrals, whither penetrated, as comedians, the children to whom were confided the various rôles; and also certain animals. It is from this entrance of the cock, the donkey, and the ox into the church that the first comedy dates. There were—for the nativity of Jesus was joyous and merited a celebration such as would provoke a smile on every lip—Latin phrases sung by the chorus in imitation of the ass's braying, the lowing of cattle, the crowing of the chanticleer.

Needless to say, no programmes were printed on the occasion of such representations. The Mystery Plays were given with a desire only for an *ensemble* which would seem harmonious. It is this very taste for harmony which has been the key-note of the French stage since those days so far away we dare not mention dates.

The American stage is obviously a spot that seems satisfactorily occupied for the public only when a "star" is figuring, and perfectly void during the absence of the same star.

In France the star is a slight breach of theatrical etiquette. She is the figure who has stepped down out of her frame where she made part of a pleasing group—and who has declared that she has a personality, and wants to "make something of it."

If the primary education to which we alluded a moment ago bars out self-consciousness as a moral fault, it teaches also the dangers of *"personality."* To be a person, to stand for something by oneself, is to forget momentarily the general interests of society. Come, away with individual aspirations! (Thus the French primary education proceeds.) Let us be each the anonymous part of a general whole. Let our entire interest be, not in ourselves, never in ourselves, but in that whole.

Now, the whole may be marriage, it may be the family, it may be the latest play composed for the most *boulevardier* theatre. The *milieu* changes nothing for the principle. The French, no matter how or where they may be situated, work always for an *ensemble.*

But to return to the far-away tradition.

The time soon was reached, in natural course of events, when the *mystères,* or Passion Plays, became too important for the church. The first real comedies were then, with the collaboration of the travelling *saltimbanques*—whose acquaintance we have already made—given on the public squares of the towns and cities.

And so great was the success of these *débutants* professionals that it grew to be a fashion among the *grands seigneurs* who, shut up in the popular are here given their chance for execution and interpretation. The Opéra and the Opéra Comique, also fostered by the government, keep alive the character of the greater and the lesser musical drama. From the conservatory the young pupil of talent is not thrown out broadcast into a world of competition. She and he have their chance to *débuter* in one of these national playhouses. And the young playwright whose talent sends a shiver through the Parisian public is eventually encouraged to present a piece at the Français or the Odéon, the progressive steps toward the Academy, where the epitome of national thought and national feeling receive their crown of glorious laurels.

And still all this does not quite explain the reason for the general superiority of acting in France.

In America every man, woman, and child has an ideal of some sort. No matter what the sort, the ideal is his own. He believes in it. He is ready to live and die for it—or to be disgusted with himself for not having done so. He forges ahead in his own particular line. There is room in the land for his thought and his word. This gives him his hope. His hope is the chance untried, and the chance untried is his ideal.

Now, the French are an old, old people, not in the least degenerate—whoever says the contrary does not know whereof he speaks—but old in the wisdom that has years, generations, centuries, of experience to verify it. They have lived as a united nation on a bit of ground one-eighth the size of Texas since before Columbus ever caught sight of our national shores.

In young America everything social, dramatic, ethical, is under discussion. In old France everything has been decided. There is no "untried chance." Obviously this puts a restraint upon the individual: we find no longer the sporadic case, but the distinct, accomplished type.

And the effect upon the drama and literature and thence upon acting is important. The "character study" play, the life studies, like "David Harum" and "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," do not exist in France, because the characters which inspired them are not there to be portrayed. Again, the delightful and improbable sort of farce such as the Rogers Brothers play, the category of poignant dramas like "The Great Divide," the very touching plays such as "The Music Master," are never written by the Frenchman for his national stage. French people, no more than old people, do not like to roar with laughter, nor to weep real tears, nor to be all "stirred up" in public.

A word of illustration makes more patent this declining propensity for real emotion in a people so mature that a word to them is sufficient. In Anglo-Saxon countries and in Germany we are accustomed to see on the stage at the same time one, two, three persons, a dozen pretty girls, all dressed alike, all doing the same song, act, or dance. On the stage of the café concert the French woman appears alone. She sings or speaks with almost no gestures, moving but little and conveying every shade of meaning by her voice or her eyes. In Italy, the oldest of countries we are wont to call "decadent," the person executing a number on a vaudeville programme is entirely hidden except for the face, which appears in a frame, like some portrait which has the power to speak, but only of such things as a very trifling change of expression renders comprehensible.

The French actress who has had no training can have no career. It has happened occasionally that an actress of repute has become the wife of some man of the world—as, for example, Mademoiselle Reichemberg, who married the Baron de Bourgoing; or "Croisette," who married the millionaire, Mr. Stern. *The contrary has never happened:* no woman of the world has ever become an actress in France!

We remember in this connection the phrase which ran the rounds of New York at the début of a certain "society woman" who some years ago acted on the professional boards:

"Well, what do you think of Miss X?"

"Oh," was the verdict, "she is such a perfect actress off the stage, and such a perfect lady on it."

It does not suffice for the Parisian public that an actress, no matter what her station in life, should be an actress merely off the stage.

To be a star, when all is said and done, is to be oneself. Those who reach this agreeable degree of liberty are favorites of the people whom they have captivated by their personality. Of the star we hear it said, "I don't care what she plays, she is always good." She is, in other words, always herself, and it is herself that we like. Bernhardt and Réjane have for a long time succeeded in personally pleasing the public in France. But, as a rule, the Frenchman wants an illusion, he wishes to be persuaded not by the actress, but by her acting. And to this end the acting must be very perfect. There must be no trusting to chance inspiration, no waiting to "feel like it" at the last moment. Acting in France must be a consummate profession.

To feel a thing while you are writing about it—so Flaubert declared—is disastrous to art. To feel a thing while you are acting it—so Diderot wrote—is disastrous to dramatic effect. Here is the confession of a young actor as Diderot gives it: "When I have a pathetic passage I always feel moved myself; my tongue gets tangled, my voice changes, I stammer, I am miserable, the tears begin to roll down my cheeks."

"And your effect is great?"

"In real life, yes, but on the stage I am a failure. Why? Because people come to the theatre not to see real tears, but to hear something that will make them weep themselves."

In order to mimic with perfection, in order to render the author's meaning with a glance, like the Italian *pierrot,* infinite preparation, infinite study, infinite training, are necessary.

This formula, given by a great critic, is the true rule adopted by actors in France:

"It is intense feelings which make a mediocre actor; it is mediocre feelings which make the multitude of bad actors; and it is the absolute suppression of any feeling which prepares the sublime actor."

If, as generally conceded, the Paris theatre is better than the American, it is for this very reason: French people like acting, we like actresses. So long as our predilections lend their favor to the personal, we shall have remarkable stars; but not until the art rather than the artist interests us can we have a national theatre.

◆

ECHO CONSOLATRIX

BY FLORENCE EARLE COATES

I SAID, "She is gone from the grieving earth—
The Maiden,—Spring; in the realms of Dis,
She reigns o'er a world of tears and dearth,
With a homesick heart that yearns for this:
Frozen the meadows, the fields lie bare,
And afar, mid the fragrant dusk of her hair,
The violets dream of the light, in vain.
She is gone!—ah, will she return again?"
A voice breathed low, "Again."

I said, "In this joyless heart of me,
Is a winter chill and comfortless:
I tire of the wail of the wind-swept sea,
My soul is afraid of its loneliness.
Is there a land, as poets tell,
Where beauty and love—as the asphodel
Unchanging—inhale an immortal air?
And my little lad?—shall I find him there?"
The voice made answer: "There"!

LITTLE SAINT THOMAS

By E. Ayrton-Zangwill

“DELICATE” was the word that rose to my consciousness as he came in, a slight, pale little boy with gray eyes and straight fair hair. “A boy,” I call him, but in sooth he was little more than a baby. “P’ease, I will be four in one month and thirteen days,” he informed me later, when I asked his age. It was a surprise; I had credited him with at least two extra years.

We were standing in the drawing-room when little Thomas appeared. That was what they called the child, and it sounded strange and old-fashioned in these days of abbreviations. He advanced and shook hands with me gravely. “How do you do? I hope you had a p’easant journey.” The lunch gong sounded suddenly, drowning his polite inquiries. Thomas started nervously at the reverberating clangor, but with a blush he recovered himself. “Anow me,” he said. Looking down—a very long way down—I saw a little arm crooked. Was not Thomas the son of the house and I a lady visitor?

Solemnly we entered the dining-room, and with some difficulty Thomas pushed my chair into place. Then he clambered up and settled himself in his own seat. He began carefully to wipe his tumbler with his serviette. “Might I have a ’ittle p’ate and knife for my bread?” he asked his mother. “Thomas does not like to see crumbs on the cloth,” she explained laughingly. Otherwise he held his peace, a model of propriety.

Suddenly the door opened and another baby came in view. This one was a good deal younger, rosy, and very fat. “Tim want his din-din!” he shouted as he tottered tumultuously into the room. “Din, din, din!” The new-comer’s words were truer than he wotted of. He was lifted into his high-chair beside his brother, and began to drum the table with his spoon. “Din, din, din, din!”

Thomas looked distressed. “Hush,” I heard him whisper. He vainly tried to take the spoon from Tim’s chubby fist. “Good din-din coming for Tim!” was the baby’s jubilant cry.

“Tim is on’y very ’ittle,” the elder brother explained apologetically.

Tim’s plate had now been filled, and the nurse was feeding him.

He was too busy for much speech. "Good, good," he murmured ecstatically. It was surprising what his little body could hold.

I turned my eyes to Thomas. The child was sitting there quite still, and surely—yes, surely his eyes were full of tears. I drew his mother's attention to him.

"What is it, dear?" she asked.

"P'ease, I should so 'ike the 'ittle pot of pink sweet peas in front of me, and not these ugny b'ue ones."

The vases were changed, and Thomas sighed happily. He began once more to eat his pudding, although without zest. Every now and then he laid down his spoon and touched the flowers softly. He was evidently glad when the meal was over.

"More din-din," clamored Tim.

"No, Tim; now it is grace time," Thomas said gravely. He folded the baby's hands into the proper attitude, but the sturdy rascal began clapping them delightedly.

"P'ease, God——" murmured Thomas, with eyes devoutly closed.

"Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake——" chanted the irrepressible baby.

"B'ess father and mother and 'ittle Tim——"

"Baker's man," Tim added.

"B'ess ev'ybody that I 'ove, and——"

"Bake me a cake——" shouted Tim.

"Make me a good boy."

"As fast as 'ou can."

"For what I have received may I be truly thankful. Amen," Thomas concluded hurriedly, evidently upset by the interruptions.

"Amen, 'men, 'men, 'men!" yelled the little Nonconformist as his nurse bore him out of the room.

Hearing the length of Thomas's grace, I was half inclined to sympathize with the baby's revolt. It was Thomas's own desire to prolong it thus, his mother told me, and his evening prayers were still more interminable. Yet, strangely enough, when she had once tried taking him to church, the result had been disastrous. After a few moments the child had burst into tears and had clung to his mother, trembling. The solemnity, the strange colored light coming through the stained glass, the swelling organ notes, seemed too much for the sensitive little soul. "I 'm frightened, I 'm frightened," he had sobbed; even when they got him home he would not be comforted. This experience still formed his worst nightmare. "Oh, I was in that dreadful p'ace!" he would wake up screaming. "Sing me 'Genty Jesus,' mother."

Yet, with all this, little Saint Thomas, as we sometimes called him, was not a prig. He was too unself-conscious for that. No, it was the term that I had first applied that best described him: he was "delicate." I do not mean only in health, though that, alas, was never strong. His manners, his affections, his quaint reasoning, his babyish morals, all cried for the same epithet. His clear-cut profile and little waving gestures seemed of a fairy delicacy. His voice too, his very phrases, were characterized by a certain delicate precision, unusual in our day. Other people's talk sounded coarse and slovenly after little Thomas had spoken.

One night Thomas allowed me to put him to bed. It was a rare privilege, for Thomas had his own ideas as to decency, and did not consider that strangers should view him in too intimate a fashion. Such modesty seemed unchildish, but it was quite untaught. The shyest maiden could not have shielded herself from prying eyes more heedfully. Tim might, if he so chose, laugh and crow in his nightly tub to a casual and admiring throng. "I do not 'ike 'adies to see me without my c'othes," Thomas would say with gentle dignity.

With me, however, for some reason, an exception was made. And when I saw him, when I saw the tender grace of his curves, the wondrous whiteness of his skin, I felt that such a miracle was fitly guarded. I had never seen a child like this before, a child quite so white, so smooth. The little marble figure stood before me without a stain or blemish. It did not seem like bathing a baby; it was a sacrament, a revelation of infinite purity.

After this I wondered less that sometimes as his mother looked at him her eyes grew dim. She must have felt that he could not always remain thus; she could not always have this little white figure at her knee. No, he must coarsen and harden as he grew older, as he became a man among other men. He must harden or he must die. Sometimes I wondered which alternative were better. To think of little Thomas on the Stock Exchange—one dismissed the idea with a shiver. Even to picture him as a busy professional man, a British paterfamilias, appeared unsuitable. The common lot of humanity seemed too gross for such as the little Saint Thomas.

One day I had a conversation with him on the vexed subject of matrimony. I had found him shedding silent tears in a secluded corner of the garden. "What is the matter, Thomas?" I asked.

"Nurse says she 'll get me a wife because I 'm so fussy," sobbed he.

I tried to comfort him. "Wives are n't so bad," said I. "Even your father has got one."

"What wife has father got?" he asked, in shocked surprise.

"Mother," said I.

"Oh!" The relief was evident; he even smiled. "Then mother can be the wife for me."

Perhaps it was unkind, but I undeceived him. I pointed out that such a course was forbidden by the law of the land.

"Then Nurse will get me a wife; she'll get me that 'ittle Jennings child." He wept again at the prospect.

"What is her name?" I asked carelessly.

"Johnny," said he.

Poor little innocent! He was discussing marriage, and did not yet know of which sex a wife should be.

It is not to be supposed that Thomas was never naughty, but his crimes were delicate like the rest of him. "Once Tim and me were very bad boys. We runned away," he told me.

"Where to? Out into the road?"

"No, but we meaned to; only, Nursie caught us in the garden. It took me so long to put on Timmy's g'oves." The dreadful desperadoes!

Sometimes, too, the babies quarrelled and even came to blows, but on these occasions poor Thomas came off badly. Tim's sheer weight stood him in good stead; with lowered head, he would take a staggering run and butt against his elder brother, who found it upsetting both to his person and his dignity. "Tim has such a horrid way of battling," the prostrate victim would complain as he rubbed his aching stomach. Indeed, the baby's elemental simplicity often served to shock him.

It was owing to Thomas's delicate susceptibilities that the great tragedy took place. We were sitting indoors one summer morning, when suddenly the door burst open and the child appeared; we hardly knew him, this little Thomas, wide-eyed and pale, with despairing hands outstretched towards his mother. "He's s'ain, he's s'ain, and I'm the Cain!" he screamed, and broke into wild and incoherent sobbing.

"Hush, hush, darling," his mother was saying. "What can he mean?" we asked each other.

"He's s'ain, he's deaded. I'm the Cain." The child was trembling all over.

"What? Who? Is n't Timothy asleep outside in his perambulator?" The mother was beginning to grow anxious.

"He—he was b'owing bubbles with his mouth in his s'eep very dirtily, and I gave the perambunator one 'ittle push just to make him to stop. And it all went over. And he won't speak. He's deaded, he's deaded, and I'm the Cain!"

We ran out into the garden. Upon the gravel path was the overturned perambulator. The wheels were still rotating foolishly.

We lifted it up, a quick fear clutching at our hearts. And there, there among the cushions, lay Tim, quite silent, with his eyes closed.

We bent down over him. Suddenly the lids flickered. "Din-din," came a drowsy murmur. Surely only Tim could have slept through such a revolution.

And under the drawing-room sofa we found the other baby. But he was sobbing, sobbing bitterly. For he felt himself a fugitive and a vagabond and cursed from the earth. "I 'm Cain, I 'm Cain!" he cried.

Our little Saint Thomas a Cain!

THE WIGGLY PEOPLE

BY MAZIE V. CARUTHERS

WHEN nurse has snuffed the candle-wick
And tucked my covers tight,
She draws the curtains, tiptoes out,
And leaves me for the night.
Then, cuddling over on my side
Before I fall asleep,
I watch the open fire, where
The Wiggly People keep!

At first they 're shy, maybe—because
They know I 'm waiting here
(They never come till it is dark,
Those Wiggly People queer);
But soon a fire-brand snaps—oh, then
It is the greatest fun
To see them scamper into sight
And leap and dance and run!

They wave to me; they bow and scrape;
They play their nightly games,
These slender, twisting, shadowy things
That live within the flames!
But all too soon I 'm fast asleep,
So that I do not know
How long they stay each night, or where
The Wiggly People go!

FOOD FOR REFLECTION

By George Wetherill Earl, Jr.

❧

OF course you know Mrs. Jack Kent—Mazie Masters that was? Well, Mazie and I had a little affair of the heart. No, I am not sighing—the wound is healed. As for Mazie—well, Mazie is Mrs. Kent. Heart wounds frequently heal without the long-ribbed, ever-pulsating scar. Ask Mazie.

Before I left the transport *City of Peking* with my company—"K" of the 54th Volunteers—to tramp through the wilds of Luzon in chase of the wily Filipino, I carefully tied up Mazie's letters—dear, sweet letters they were, too—together with sundry partly-worn gloves, delicately violet-scented handkerchiefs, hair-pins, and other trifles too numerous to mention; wrapped them in oilskin, sealed surreptitiously in the ship's commissary office with government sealing-wax; and placed them in a flat emergency ration tin, the contents of which I had hastily removed; after which I secreted the tin in the depths of my haversack. If you have never had the experience of carrying a heavy ration-laden haversack suspended by an entirely too narrow strap across your shoulder in tropical hiking, you cannot know the agony caused by the aforementioned strap as it burnt and ate into sensitive flesh. Tempted to throw it away, you ask? Often—the men in my company, to a man, relieved themselves of these heart-breaking burdens when the five days' rations they contained became exhausted. But poor me! there was the treasured tin down in the depths of my haversack . . . Yes, I suppose I should have worn those letters next to my heart, but the package was too bulky.

At night, when our tired and often hungry outfit bivouacked, awaiting the too-soon coming of dawn, I would take the tin from its hiding-place and fondle it.

"Why don't you open up that emergency ration and have a whack at it?" I frequently was asked.

"Too precious!" was my invariable rejoinder.

We followed the illusive native army along the killing sandy shoreline of Laguna de Bay, through the *montes* of Cavite, until six months of fruitless hiking brought our outfit north again to Bacoor, within easy reach of Manila and home mail.

My heart almost stopped beating while the mail was distributed to the waiting bunch of officers and company mail orderlies in the adjutant's office. The first letter handed to me was in Mazie's inimitable, imitative English handwriting—post-marked three months back. Then came numerous papers and magazines, and letters from my immediate family, and last of all another letter from Mazie, with a post-mark seven months old. "Can she be ill?" was my thought as I quickly hid myself in the native shack which had been assigned to me as quarters.

I opened the later dated letter. It contained but a few lines. Our engagement had been a mistake . . . Mazie had met Jack Kent . . . They were made for each other . . . What should she do with my ring? My letters—she always would keep. She had asked Jack's advice. "Treasure them up," he had told her. "They are peaches!"

Hot under the collar? Phew! don't mention it! I'd have those letters back, and return hers with a dignified and cold reply. My fountain-pen fair sailed over the white paper with sputter and scratch. In this the moment of inspiration I was interrupted—a knock at my closed lattice-like door.

"Come in!" An orderly entered.

"The adjutant's compliments, sir." And he handed me an order directing company commanders to draw three days' subsistence, two days' field rations, and one day's emergency rations, as the regiment was to change station.

When the proper ration returns were prepared and signed, and the subsistence drawn from the commissary, I went back to my shack and the unfinished letter, and scribbled away for dear life—time was now a precious commodity. I was adding my signature when a knock again interrupted me. My quarter-master sergeant entered burdened with my food for the next two or perhaps three days.

"Thank you, sergeant," I said to him, when he suggested that he pack my haversack.

Do you know, I read and reread that letter in the ill-lighted interior of my shack until my eyes ached; then folded, sealed, and addressed it.

"Lord!" I exclaimed, "I've forgot her letters!" and went to the peg where the sergeant had hung my stuffed haversack, reached into its depths and drew out the tin. Do you know, I foolishly kissed that yellow painted thing several times before I realized what I was doing, and, with tear-filled eyes, carefully wrapped it together with my letter, placed the proper address on the package, then walked over to the adjutant's office, dropped it, with a huge sigh, into the waiting mail-pouch, and immediately proceeded to prepare my company for its two or three days' hike.

That change of station will ever be a nightmare to me, in more senses than one. It should have been accomplished in two days, easy going, but unreliable guides, broken bridges, and many unthought of obstacles placed on the trail by the cunning insurgents, delayed our advance. At the end of the second day out we had hardly covered two-thirds of the distance.

The men arose grumblingly on the morning of the third day, and sullenly went about the preparation of their breakfast. There was almost a mutiny when they discovered the emergency ration contained no coffee—concentrated or otherwise. A mixture of tea and sugar was supposed to take its place. I thanked my lucky stars that, owing to the forethought of my quarter-master sergeant, I had sufficient field rations remaining for two meals.

The trail became more practicable as the day lengthened, but the men, no matter how much the urging, only went forward in a dispirited manner. When the sun had dropped below the western horizon, we were still some miles from our destination. The men threw their tired and hungry bodies along the trail-side and murmured in their discontent.

I built a small fire, put my half-filled tin cup among its embers in anticipation of a cup of emergency tea, and prepared to open my ration tin. I was reaching into my haversack for this much coveted article when an orderly interrupted me:

"Adjutant's compliments, sir. Commanding officer directs the march be continued."

Indang—our new station—at last. The men soon ceased their grumbling; rations in plenty were supplied. That night I occupied the well-equipped native house of an irreconcilable insurgent.

Time fairly flew. Our new station was in a long since pacified locality, and we lived in such comfort as was in keeping with the obtaining conditions. Some two months later I received the announcement of Mazie's marriage, and in the same mail a letter addressed in her characteristic chirography. She had received my letter and the accompanying tin, and would consider them as a wedding gift—particularly as my letter was so touching. She had read it to Jack: "Do you know, poor Jack had tears in his eyes before I had finished. He said: 'Mazie, that fellow's heart is in the right place.'"

Was n't that a pretty kettle of fish?—adding insult to injury. But I was slightly appeased. There was a postscript:

> The tin of letters I will hold secretly sacred. I promise Jack shall not see them until I am an old, old woman, and then only to prove to him, if necessary, that he was n't the only pebble.

I formally congratulated Mr. and Mrs. Kent in the very next mail, and then—forgot it.

A year had taken wings to itself when I received another letter from Mazie. She had a son. This is what she wrote: "He shall be a soldier in emulation of your splendid achievements in the Philippines."

Hot stuff, was n't it? I guess it meant a silver cup or pap spoon. But they had grabbed the wrong porcine individual by the ear, if it did. That soldier-intended son took his pap from plebeian glass, china, or pewter, so far as I was concerned.

By the time another year had almost winged towards eternity I had returned from the Philippines and been mustered out of the volunteer service. I was busily engaged at my old desk in my father's counting-house, when I received, through military channels, with many official indorsements, a communication from the Chief Commissary of Subsistence, United States Army.

The last indorsement read:

> **Sir:**
>
> **I am directed by the Military Secretary to forward you the inclosed Emergency Ration Tin and contents found among the commissary supplies turned in to the Commissary of Subsistence, Department of the Philippines, to be credited to your Company. You are indebted to the United States Government in the sum of Thirty-one (31) Cents for one Emergency Ration issue unauthorized.**

When I removed the cover the tin fell from my hands. My ejaculations brought several of my fellow clerks to my side. We all stood gazing in surprise at an assortment of letters, gloves, filmy handkerchiefs, and hair-pins spread upon the floor in painful confusion. A slight odor of long confined violet perfume scented the air.

◆

BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY

Play is work that you don't have to do.

Never hire a travelling man whose waistcoat is more insistent than his personality.

Don't rise so high in your calling that you see only one side of your fellows.

It's true that a marble statue has no faults,—but then it has no friends, either.

There are plenty of doors labelled "Pull," but the majority, after all, bear the legend "Push."

There are self-made men in this world who ought to be suffering from remorse.

Warwick James Price

THE DREAM

THE STORY OF A WOMAN'S HAPPINESS

By Mabel Nelson Thurston

I.

MISS MATTIE LOVELL, people said, was "getting along." Often—for all Canterbury loved Miss Mattie—they called her "poor Mattie Lovell." The phrases used to puzzle us very much, for we knew perfectly well that Miss Mattie was not old at all—scarcely any older than we—and, as for being poor, had she not lived all her life in the Glory of a Dream? And no one—it is one of the wise things that childhood understands and maturity too often forgets—no one can be poor who owns a Dream.

Miss Mattie lived in a gray old house, one side of which bordered the alley leading to Cupp and Haven's livery stable, so that all the funeral processions (for the hearse, too, was kept in the stable) passed beneath her windows. Many a sunny afternoon, standing on the bank under the old mulberry tree and peering over the wall, our hands probably full of caraway cookies, we watched the six old hacks and the black-plumed hearse creep one by one from the stable. It was the influence of the Dream far more than our Sunday School teaching—which, being confined to strict dealing with the orthodox questions, left no space for imagination—that made the procession seem, not the trappings of sorrow, but the beginning of some far-shining adventure of the soul.

The old house, gray and still without, was no less gray and still within. Sometimes, for a "dare," the bravest of us would creep softly into the parlor, and stay till we counted a hundred, gabbling it as fast as our tongues could go, while icy chills crept up and down our spines. It would be difficult to tell why the parlor, with its red velvet chairs, faded till there was a soft gray bloom upon them, and two square velvet ottomans guarding the low window, should be a place of terror. Indeed, the wax cross, with a white ivy twined about it (like an anæmic vine from a milliner's window), which, under a glass shade with red chenille about the bottom, decorated the marble-topped centre-table, was considered by all of us the pinnacle of art. But the heaviness of the silence—that unmistakable hush of a room that has been dead many years—terrified us unspeakably. There were other places, too, scarcely less formidable—the front stairs, which no one ever used; the little office where Mr. William "worked"; the bleak, dark store-room where Miss Mattie kept her fruit-cake. Indeed, Miss Mattie's own room—full of sunshine and odds and ends of life, and incorrigibly disorderly—and the big kitchen were the only friendly rooms; but they were enough.

It was in Miss Mattie's room that the Dream lived. The kitchen had its own points, and they were by no means to be ignored. To our imaginations, kindled by memories of cookies and hot gingerbread, a spicy fragrance lurked alluringly in its corners, so that when we first read of the odors of Araby the Blest, we fancied them blowing adown the ages from a row of kitchens like Miss Mattie's. It was a place of large and glorious liberty, unhampered by any of the curious prejudices which dominated other kitchens—as, that children should not be underfoot, and that floors must be kept immaculate. Yet notwithstanding its great attractions, it was in Miss Mattie's room that we spent our most golden hours—with Miss Mattie and the Dream.

Miss Mattie could tell exactly when the Dream first came to her. It was when she was a little girl and had reached the page in her geography which was adorned with a cut of a large domed building beneath which was the legend, "The Capitol, Washington, D. C."

"I can feel this minute, my dears," Miss Mattie would say, the delicate pink deepening in her soft, faded cheeks—"I can feel this minute the thrill that came over me as I gazed at the representation of that magnificent building, and felt that there the genius of our country dwelt—that through its stately corridors passed the greatest men of our age, as within its halls were perpetuated by heroic statues the memories of the greatest men of the past. And I determined then that some day I should see for myself its splendid halls, its marvellous pictures ('The Marriage of Pocahontas' among them—I was always so interested in Pocahontas!), its marble stairways and unparalleled dome. Not," Miss Mattie said humbly—"not, of course, that I could ever be intellectually capable of appreciating its glory, as Dr. Pemberton would be and Miss Summer—Miss Summer is a highly intellectual woman—and, I do not hesitate to say, Brother William; but I could admire with reverence and awe, and, my dears, reverential admiration is at least a sincere tribute, humble though it is, and therefore one should not be ashamed to offer it at the great shrines of history. It gives me the greatest pleasure to recall that, though I have not yet made my pilgrimage, I have been the means of inducing three others to go. Abby Lee and Mr. Edmund Parsons went upon their honeymoon—though perhaps I should not mention such things to you—and Mrs. Henry Edgar stopped over three days upon her way to visit an aunt in Norfolk. They have since assured me many times that they considered the visit to the Capitol the most notable event in their lives."

"Do you think you'll go next winter, Miss Mattie?" somebody would ask curiously.

But at that Miss Mattie would rise briskly. "No, I hardly think it will be possible to go next winter," she would answer. "Brother William's work necessitates such arduous devotion that I doubt whether we shall be able to go at such an early date. But the winter after—yes, I should not be at all surprised if the succeeding winter—— But how I am running on, my dears. If one of you cares to go down to the pantry and bring up a plate of seed-cakes——"

There was an instant and a joyous stampede down the winding back-stairs. After all, what did it matter whether Miss Mattie went to Washington next winter or the winter after? Did not dreams always come true some time?

II.

Miss Mattie had not reached the place where people called her poor Mattie Lovell without several times having almost touched the realization of her dream. Many years before, when she was a young girl, and a pretty girl too, people said, and Mr. Jesse Althorpe was paying her a great deal of attention—having walked home from church with her two Sundays in succession—the aunt for whom she was named planned to take her to Washington for a week. Miss Mattie was greatly excited, and committed the extravagance of having two new gowns made, a white India muslin and a green and lavender barege; but only three days before she was to start, her father was taken ill with inflammatory rheumatism. Miss Mattie never thought of questioning her duty. She stayed at home to take care of him. She stayed home for nine years, in the third of which Mr. Jesse Althorpe grew tired of waiting and married Lucy Benton, and in the last of which her aunt died. Then old Mr. Lovell having ended his long battle by a splendid defeat, Miss Mattie woke to find herself adrift upon that most terrible loneliness of life—the consciousness of being no longer needed. To be sure, there was William, but William was very deeply engaged in courting Miss Ellen Daly, a pursuit in which, beyond the most scrupulous attention to his clothes and a sweet and unflagging interest in all his monologues concerning Ellen, Miss Mattie could not share. It was then that Dr. McGruder suggested that she plan to go to Washington with him and his wife in the spring.

"William and Ellen won't want you," he declared—"at least, they'll think they don't, though they'll be glad enough to have you come back, if all I hear of Ellen's cooking is true. It will be the chance of a lifetime to get yourself appreciated. You won't deserve anything of fate if you let it slip. You'd better snap it up, Mattie."

"Oh, I wonder if I could," Miss Mattie breathed with shining eyes. "You don't think it would be selfish?"

"Selfish fiddlesticks!" the doctor answered. "Whom would it be selfish to, William or Ellen?"

"But it will cost so much money," Miss Mattie hesitated, "and there are the heathen, Dr. McGruder."

"You need n't worry about the heathen—you 'll have enough of them in your life," Dr. McGruder answered. "You 'll help 'em more if you take a little recess before you plunge in again."

"If you think it really won't be selfish," Miss Mattie yielded, and then she looked up at him resolutely. "But you must n't think William is n't appreciative—of course I know that you could n't—it was only your way of putting it. William is very kind. Only yesterday he expressed his appreciation of my light cake; it was very nice and very economical, he said. Pray forgive my mentioning it, only I wanted you to understand how considerate William is."

Dr. McGruder smothered an exclamation in his big beard, and then begged Miss Mattie's pardon for sneezing. "There 's no danger of my being unjust to William," he assured her.

It was several days before Miss Mattie could muster up courage to speak about it to William, but finally she did it one night when she had made him his favorite shortcake for supper—even Miss Mattie was not above the small guiles of her sex.

William frowned. "It will cost a great deal of money," he said.

"I told Dr. McGruder that I really felt as if I ought to give it to the heathen," Miss Mattie answered a trifle breathlessly, "but he assured me that it would not be wrong for me to go. I could not entirely follow his argument, but he was quite emphatic. But if you feel that I ought to donate the sum to the heathen——"

"I was not thinking of the heathen," William replied.

Miss Mattie waited, the color coming and going in her face.

"Ellen and I," William stated elaborately, "have agreed not to go away upon a honeymoon. With excellent good sense, Ellen expressed her entire concurrence with my conviction that such journeys are an extravagant waste of money."

"Yes, dear William," Miss Mattie acquiesced. She was a little confused, but she knew that that was her stupidity. William was always right.

William glanced at his sister's timid, eager face. After all, he was fond of her; even Dr. McGruder was not always infallible.

"However," he declared, his chest expanding with the magnanimity of his sentiments—"however, if you feel that your conscience permits you to go, I have nothing whatever to say in opposition."

Miss Mattie drew a long breath.

"Oh, William, you always were so generous!" she cried, and there were actually tears in her soft eyes.

After that began a period of thrilling excitement for Miss Mattie. The India lawn she had given to little Daisy Reed after Mr. Jesse Althorpe was married, but the green and purple barege was still in a chest in the attic, and Lydia Holcomb said that she could easily make it over into the prevailing fashion. Besides this, upon the advice of Dr. McGruder, Miss Mattie purchased a cinnamon silk. She felt that it was a fearful waste of money, but she had really grown almost reckless in her joy. And, besides, underneath everything else, was the feeling, scarcely defined even to herself, that only in new and worthy raiment could she approach the shrine of her dreams.

The party was to start for Washington Wednesday. Saturday Miss Mattie went over to Lydia Holcomb's for the final trying-on of the brown silk. It was very handsome—oh, very!—but she was troubled for fear that it was too youthful for her. Lydia assured her that it was not, and of course she could not doubt Lydia, only, being a dressmaker, she might possibly look at things from a little different standpoint. Yet undoubtedly it was exceedingly fashionable. Miss Mattie, recalling the figure that had faced her from Lydia's pier-glass, blushed at the memory.

The sound of William's steps on the flag-walk startled her, and she looked in bewilderment at the clock. It was one of William's evenings for calling upon Ellen Daly, and he never returned till quarter after ten. Alarmed—she could not tell why—Miss Mattie started up and stood with one trembling hand upon her chair. At the sight of William's face she gave a little cry.

"William dear, oh, what is the matter?"

William flung his hat upon the table. He was really suffering as much as he was capable of suffering.

"Ellen Daly," he said in a hollow voice, "has jilted me. My life is blighted. I shall never trust again."

III.

Of course Canterbury said many things. There were those who said that Ellen Daly had had a fortunate escape, but Miss Mattie heard nothing of that. Ellen McGruder, when, trembling and red-eyed, Miss Mattie ran over the next morning to tell her that she could not go to Washington, sympathized with her and cried with her ("I could n't explain, could I," she defended herself to the doctor afterwards, "that I was crying over her trip, and not over William?") and comforted her as best she could.

"It seems to me," Miss Mattie declared, her soft eyes frightened over the wickedness of it—"it seems to me that I *cannot* do anything more than bow in the most formal way to Ellen Daly after this. I know that it is wicked of me, but I cannot."

As for Dr. McGruder, he blustered and fumed and muttered, and smothered words in his big red beard.

"Why can't she leave William, I'd like to know? If his heart really is broken, does she think waffles and cream-pie are going to cure it? If he's got any manhood at all, do you suppose he'll want a woman hanging over him and pitying him? He ought to thank Ellen Daly for giving him an opportunity to show that he has a spinal column—if he has one. I'll go and see Mattie Lovell myself. I'll bring her round."

But although he went to see Mattie Lovell, he did not bring her round. In fact, when he saw her poor red eyes and trembling hands, he gave up any hope of attempting it, and with a self-control that verged upon heroism let her pour out her rhapsodies of dear William, the nobility with which he was bearing his suffering, his patience, his magnanimity.

"He actually said this morning that doubtless it was all for the best. Of course I knew that it was his consideration for me that made him say it, because he wanted to keep me from suffering. But I know that he never will be the same again—his delicate and sensitive nature has received a wound from which it will never recover. You cannot think, Dr. McGruder, how grateful I am that I am permitted to be with dear William now."

"And of course," the doctor grudgingly conceded, "the Capitol is n't going to blow away. Perhaps another year——"

"Yes," Miss Mattie agreed hurriedly; "oh, yes. Perhaps some other year——"

So the doctor and his wife went alone, and, since they could not take Mahomet to the mountain, so far as it was possible they brought the mountain to Mahomet. Miss Mattie was overwhelmed by the souvenirs they brought back to her—photographs of all the most famous places, a purse made of two mussel-shells, with "Washington, D. C." stamped upon it in gold, a hat-pin, programmes and badges, a silk flag, a red, white, and blue pin-cushion with "Washington, D. C." in pins, a cup and saucer with a picture of the White House, a napkin ring decorated with the Capitol.

The first one of us who saw these treasures (it was Fanny Wheeler) spent the rest of the day spreading the news, and the following afternoon Miss Mattie held a reception. Already half the gifts had gotten buried under, and we had the joy of burrowing for them in the accumulations of the table and running them down among the mantel-piece decorations. When, in addition to all this, fate chanced to be in one of her lavish moods, and tossed in the funeral procession of old Mr. Alvin Waters, we felt that life could press no more excitement into one brimming afternoon.

But for Miss Mattie the day had not yet exhausted its possibilities. That night Mr. William, who was clerk in Wheeler and Green's, came home a little early. Several times during supper he looked across at his sister as if he was about to say something, and as often apparently changed his mind. Finally, after supper, he spoke.

"I have resigned," he said, "my position in Wheeler and Green's."

Miss Mattie, who had just put the lamp back on the table and was drawing up William's chair, stopped in bewilderment.

"I felt," William pursued, not looking at her—"I felt, after the wound I had received, that I could no longer continue in mercantile pursuits. My whole desire is to withdraw myself from the world."

"But," Miss Mattie stammered, "what shall we do, dear William? How shall we live?"

"I hope you know me well enough," William replied, frowning—"I *hope* you are well enough acquainted with me, Mattie, to be confident that I shall not allow my gifts to moulder in idleness. Indeed, it is for that purpose—to develop my latent talent—that I have decided upon this step. Deepened by suffering as I have been, I am sure that I have things to say to the world to which it will listen. I intend to devote myself to the art of composition—an art, I am confident, for which I have a native gift."

Miss Mattie drew a long breath.

"Oh, William, I am so glad. You always did express yourself with such elegance. You remember Miss Elizabeth Vogel used to remark upon it when you went to school to her. Oh, William, if you should become an author!"

William slightly turned his head and closed his eyes for a moment, as though communing with some inner voice. When he opened them he said, "I shall occupy one of the offices and pursue my literary occupations from nine till five, with an intermission for dinner and a slight rest. Of course, just at first, I may receive small recompense; but your income, though humble, if frugally expended, will suffice for the two of us until I arrive at a comfortable competence. Of course we shall have to live carefully and not entertain."

"Yes, dear William, certainly," Miss Mattie rejoined, glowing with pride and excitement. "It will be such a privilege to do it. Oh, William dear, I am so glad!" And her pride and her confidence were so great that to give up her entertainments which, small though they were, had been one of the greatest joys of her life, seemed a paltry price to pay.

So Miss Mattie entered upon the long path which she was to follow the rest of her life. For William's literary productions met with an unhappy reception, or, more accurately speaking, with no reception at all, at the hands of an unappreciative public; and after two or three attempts, he gave up trying to publish anything or even to write, and devoted himself to making notes for a Work which he was to produce in the distant future. Perhaps, after all, the pretext was not wholly unserviceable. If it furnished an excuse for William's idleness, it was the innocent pride of Miss Mattie's life, and the meekest soul carries itself a little more erectly if it possesses some small pinnacle of triumph.

"Dear William," she would say, folding her hands carefully over a mended place in her second-best gown—"dear William is devoting himself to the notes for his Work. It is his method to make copious notes, and then revise them rigidly. He makes me quite anxious often, he devotes himself so arduously to his task." What matter if meals were often slim, garments mended over and over, so long as one was assisting, though ever so humbly, in the production of a Work?

At first, being unable longer to invite people to tea or entertain the Sewing Circle, Miss Mattie tried to refuse invitations, but nobody would consent to that, and, being too simple and sincere herself to doubt the sincerity of others, after a little she fell into the old ways, with the difference that she always carried some small gift to her hostess as a token of her appreciation for a hospitality she could not return. Nobody wanted to accept them, but nobody could hurt her by refusing, though we well knew that the three new-laid eggs, or glass of jelly, or bowl of custard, meant so much from her own scanty fare. Two luxuries only she allowed herself: once a year she invited the minister to tea, and "our" jar—the earthenware one with the queer blue figures on it—was never known to be without its store of seed-cakes or cookies.

It was fortunate that during those years Miss Mattie had the cinnamon silk, for assuredly she never could have saved the money to buy a new gown. She wore that for six years just as it was, and then, the sleeves being hopelessly out of fashion, attempted to remodel it. But Miss Mattie's gifts did not include happiness with the needle. The result was so pathetic that Lydia Holcomb worked for a whole winter and finally succeeded in getting an invitation to spend the day.

"It will be such a pleasure, dear Lydia. I must confess that it is a sacrifice to forego seeing my friends as I should like to; I am really ashamed to speak of it when it is all I can do to assist Brother William in his great Work. He is entirely absorbed even at meal-times, and I endeavor not to disturb him. So I cannot often invite people, but you, being an old friend, will understand."

"Oh, I'll be mum as a mouse," Lydia returned cheerfully, conceding anything so that she gained her point. When, however, the real object of her visit was revealed, Miss Mattie's distress was so great that, although she accomplished her end that time, Lydia sorrowfully confessed that she would not dare attempt it again. She was compelled to accept a piece of fruit-cake (kept, she knew, for Christmas and the minister's yearly tea-drinking) and only escaped one of the treasured Washington souvenirs by her protest that she did n't know enough about Washington to be worthy of its possession.

"But at least," she declared, extracting what comfort she could from the affair—"at least, I 've fixed Mattie Lovell up for three years."

It proved to be for many more than three years. And it was somewhere about that time when Lydia's "fixing over" was six or seven years old, that people began to speak of "poor Mattie Lovell." It was foolish, of course, for with a Dream to companion her silent evenings, and all the town for her friends, and dear William to be proud of, Miss Mattie's life was full and happy, since, curiously enough, it seems to matter little whether the object of one's love and pride is worthy the tribute. Perhaps, after all, this may account for the spiritual value of many otherwise useless lives in this strange world of ours. So Miss Mattie was as poor as she could be, and absurdly contented, and when she was fifty something happened.

IV.

It was Alison Deering who thought of it. She had been married only three months, and was so radiantly happy that her joy brimmed over upon every one about her; and one day she had her inspiration. For a moment she stood fairly dazed at the brilliancy of it; then she snatched up the first thing handy—it happened to be one of her kitchen aprons—threw it over her head, and ran across the street to Mrs. McGruder's.

"I 've the loveliest idea!" she exclaimed, her cheeks pink with excitement under the apron. "I could n't wait a minute to tell you. I—there, I 've got the button caught in my hair! Will you help me, please? Oh, never mind if it comes down! It 's about Miss Mattie Lovell. *Why could n't we send her to Washington*—all of us—everybody who loves her? If she had ever married, we 'd have given her wedding-presents, would n't we? I never did think it fair that people who miss the—the real thing—should miss all the fun of getting married, too—the presents and the new house and everything. We can tell Miss Mattie it 's her jubilee present, and *our* jubilee because we 've had her for fifty years. Oh, *don't* you think we can manage it?"

"I think," Mrs. McGruder answered warmly, "that that 's the happiest thought we 've had in Canterbury in twenty-five years, and the doctor and I will want to be the first subscribers. You may put us down for five dollars apiece."

"Five dollars *apiece?*" Alison cried. "I thought a dollar would be the most——"

"She will want clothes," Mrs. McGruder reminded her, "and many little extras, and spending money."

Alison fairly danced about the room. "I believe I was n't a bit more excited over my own wedding!" she cried.

The plan "took" at once. Of course there were people who thought the idea foolish, and were conscientiously compelled to decline to contribute. "If we took up subscriptions for everybody who wanted to go somewhere," they said, "we should soon be bankrupt. No doubt Miss Mattie is a very worthy person, and personally we should be pleased if we could help, but it is a matter of principle." Doubtless this was all very sound, but, after all, a world governed entirely upon the soundest principles might lack something of charm. And nearly everybody was not only willing but eager to have a share in Miss Mattie's party. For before very long the idea had developed into a full-fledged surprise party, with a glorious provisioning of cakes and jellies and creams and confections, to say nothing of cold meats and fresh biscuits and coffee. There would be so much left over, Mrs. McGruder assured Alison, that a dozen Williams could n't dispose of it all, and Mattie would *have* to eat for a week to keep things from spoiling.

"Oh, do you suppose she will?" Alison cried. "Miss Mattie has so many ways——"

"No," Mrs. McGruder answered; "I *don't* suppose she will. Mattie Lovell never yet used anything for herself. Yet it does n't seem possible that even Mattie Lovell could give all the stuff away."

The night of the party came, a keen November night, with the world dark and still under the frosty stars. The guests, laden with their bundles, met at Dr. McGruder's and walked down the frozen road together. They made so much noise, even though they stopped talking before they reached the house, that Alison was in a fever of fear lest they should be heard or discovered. But they were not, and Miss Mattie's first glimpse of them was when she answered the knock at her side-door. Nobody remembered exactly what happened after that, only presently Alison found herself beckoned into a corner by Miss Mattie, whose cheeks were pink and whose eyes were shining with excitement.

"Do you think it would be proper for me to slip away for a moment, my dear?" she asked. "It seems so discourteous—this old gown and my black silk apron. William has already retired to put on his best coat. If you think I could escape observation for a moment——"

"Of course, Miss Mattie; I 'll come and help you," Alison said. She whispered a word to Mrs. McGruder and then followed Miss Mattie upstairs. Miss Mattie, radiant but agitated, was working with happy, blundering fingers. Alison helped her with her gown, tried to smooth her hair (but in that, it must be confessed, she was not very successful), and fastened on the cameo pin which was Miss Mattie's one treasure.

"Her silk is beginning to give out under the sleeve," she whispered to Mrs. McGruder when they both returned. "Oh, I am so glad!"

It was a wonderful evening. Everybody talked all at once, and then they played games, and after that (several of the ladies having taken possession of the kitchen) they were called out into the dining-room for the supper, and they had toasts and drank Miss Mattie's health, and Miss Mattie tried to reply but broke down, so they gave three cheers for her instead, and then finally they all wound up with the Virginia reel.

It was after they had all gone that Miss Mattie found a little package addressed to her lying upon the table. She opened it wonderingly. Inside was a purse with eighty dollars, "To send Miss Mattie Lovell, our best-loved representative, to Washington." For a moment Miss Mattie sat staring at it incredulously. Then suddenly she put her happy, bewildered face down upon her arms.

"Oh, everybody 's so good!" she sobbed.

V.

Alison was right. Breakfast was scarcely over before Miss Mattie, flushed and eager, appeared at Mrs. McGruder's door with nearly a whole loaf of cake, which was followed by a plate of lady-fingers at Alison's. All day long she was trotting up and down the streets, beaming with delight, giving away her "party." Nearly everywhere they asked her about Washington, and only then did the brightness shadow a little. It was so wonderfully good of them, she told everybody; she did n't think anybody ever did have such a beautiful thing happen before. As for Washington, she had n't quite decided when—no, perhaps not the first excursion. Dr. McGruder might go later, and it would be very pleasant to have him to consult about things, and, any way, it was so wonderful that she wanted to think about it all first. "For you know, my dear, somehow I never felt that I really was going, not even the first time. It seemed too wonderful to be true."

"That 's just where you 've made your mistake," Lydia Holcomb told her. "If people say things are too good to be true, life takes them at their word. You just want to take hold good and strong and hang on, to get things."

"Yes, Lydia dear, I suppose you 're right," Miss Mattie replied.

"When are you going to get the stuff for your new gown?" Lydia asked inexorably. "I 'm going to the city next Wednesday—you 'd better plan to go with me then."

"I believe I will," Miss Mattie decided a little breathlessly. "It seems almost wicked to think of spending so much on myself when there are the heathen, but Dr. McGruder assured me—perhaps I should have asked Dr. Pemberton, Dr. McGruder being a physician and not a minister, but still he seemed very certain—yes, I really believe I will go with you Wednesday, Lydia, if you——"

"The land's sake!" Lydia interrupted, peering out the window, "what 's Tommy Crupp running that way for? He ain't going to the doctor's." She flung the window wide and thrust out her head. "Tommy! Tommy Crupp!" she cried. "You tell what 's the matter!"

"Boston 's burning up!" he cried.

"Did she say *Washington?*" Miss Mattie asked, turning quite white.

"No, Boston. It 's terrible, is n't it?—if it 's true. I suppose we 'll know by night."

But long before night everybody knew, and for the next three days nothing else was thought of. Before the fire was out, Canterbury, like hundreds of other towns all over the country, was busy raising its fund for relief. There was little ready money in Canterbury, but everybody gave ungrudgingly, and not a soul mentioned Miss Mattie's surprise party. Late in the afternoon of the day the subscription was being raised, Alison Deering, going to the parsonage, found Miss Mattie in the study with Dr. Pemberton. Miss Mattie's bonnet was on one side and her thin hair straggled wildly, but her eyes were like an eager child's.

"Of course," she was saying, "I do not consider it my gift—you understand that. I told William so this morning"—her bright face shadowed for a moment—"but I am happy to have had the privilege of bringing it. Alison dear, what a pleasure to meet you! I was going up to your house this afternoon, to carry a few jumbles. If it would n't be too much trouble for you to stop on your way home—— Good-by, Dr. Pemberton—thank you so much."

As the door closed behind Miss Mattie, Alison's young, rebellious eyes met the minister's. Between them, on the table, lay a roll of bills.

"Did she bring it all?" the girl asked.

The old minister smiled. "All," he answered.

"Oh!" the girl cried, with a half sob, "I can't *bear* it! She has never had anything all her life, and now, when we thought she was going to once, to have this happen—it is n't *fair!*"

"Alison," the old man said, "if Miss Mattie had gone, what would she have had afterwards?"

"She would have had the memory of one good time," Alison answered, and, notwithstanding the reverence in which she had been brought up, there was almost defiance in her voice—she was so disappointed.

"And now," the quiet voice went on, "she has her dream. They are both God's gifts. What! are you and I to choose for her and say that one is good and the other is not? You are young, child; some day you will understand better."

There was silence in the study. Outside, a whitening pear-branch brushed one of the windows, and a child's laugh sounded from the street. Alison lifted her head.

"I—came to bring my contribution," she said.

SOME GUIDES I HAVE KNOWN

By Horatio C. Wood, M.D.

OWING to some hereditary instinct which may have drifted down from the days when Great Britain was inhabited by savages living by the chase, or which perchance came with a Scotch strain in the blood, in early life I manifested a fondness for going into the wilderness, and my wanderings have extended from Mexico nearly to Hudson's Bay. In this experience I have met various guides whose personalities have been sufficiently picturesque to be worthy of note. Most of them were "mountain men," the canoe guides usually being more commonplace.

It was an Adirondack guide who first brought me to a sense of my own verdancy. While on a hunting trip in or about 1868, a buck came into Lake Raquette in such a way that in order to cut him off from shore we had to row a mile while he was swimming one-fourth the distance. I was in the stern, and, thinking in my conceit that I knew how to paddle, set to work, when "—— you, put up that paddle! We want to go fast," from the guide, so ruffled my self-complacency that it was n't smoothed out till years afterward, when on a Maine lake I happened to be paddling in the guide's place at the stern, and, landing at a much-used "carry," met a "city dude," who said to me, "What do you fellows do for a living in the winter, when there is no guiding?" What a joy to be mistaken for a real, genuine woodsman!

Peter, a Canadian guide whom I have often employed, is remarkable for the picturesqueness of his scanty English, which he has picked up about the wharves of Quebec. The English "h" is his in all its additions and elisions, while his only adverb of intensification is "like 'ell." a woman is "purty" or "ugly" "like 'ell"; winter is "cold like 'ell"; summer is "'ot like 'ell."

The French Canadian canoemen are remarkable for their musical aptitude. Once, when returning to camp from the far side of the lake, in the late gloaming, I heard them singing an old Canadian boat-song, the music of which is not in print. The blended voices grew louder and louder as the boat drew nearer, rising and falling in the half-barbaric tune, wonderfully sweet in its mingling of the music of the late-mediæval France with the voices of the forest of the north.

Of the score or more of mountain guides I have employed in the past thirty years, the best hunter and tracker was Nels, a Dane. I hunted with Nels only two days, for I had assigned him as special guide to my daughter. We were riding along the rough, densely-thicketed sides of a mountain the first day, when suddenly Nels leaped from his horse and whispered, "Deer!" We went on foot some distance, when he pointed to a dense thicket, saying, "There!" I looked and looked, at first in vain, but at last made out one point thicker than another and seemingly more grayish, and in the end had the good fortune to kill a yearling buck, yielding excellent meat.

Again we rode on, always ascending, until we reached the tree-line, when we proceeded on foot. The forest did not end abruptly, but in long, cape-like points running up into the broken stone surface of the higher mountain. Out one of these points we walked; and whilst we were yet concealed in the trees there suddenly stalked out into the open from a point some one hundred and fifty yards off a magnificent black-tail buck! I shot at him, and, "You've got him!" cried Nels, and started down the mountain on a full run—not following the trail at all, but taking the direction that he thought the deer had gone. After a mile or two of heart-breaking pace, Nels said, "See!" and, following the line of the pointing finger, I made out the dying buck in a little glade. Finding the first deer, which Nels had dressed and hung up, was very like looking for a needle in a haystack, but Nels did it, and there was feasting in the wigwam, for this was our first kill.

The second day we crossed a chain of mountains and were on the slope of the second range when we separated. Naturally I got lost, but not rattled. I thought I might possibly find my way over the mountains on the back track to camp, but was a little afraid to attempt it, as it was late in the day, and the woods were often dense, with precipices abounding. One thousand feet below me, through a meadow-like valley, ran a creek which I knew flowed into the larger stream we were encamped upon, and if I could get down to it, I could follow its course till I came to the camp. So down the mountain I started, over smooth granite rocks and through woody glades. All went merrily as a marriage-bell until we—*i.e.*, my horse and I—came to a fire-slash—huge trees which had been killed by fire and later blown down, piling one over another in inextricable entanglement, and lying some five feet above the ground. I led my sweating brute, dodging his hoofs as best I could when he leaped or clambered over the tree-trunks, and wondered how soon he would break a leg or I be disabled or killed by his hoofs or a fall. Very welcome was the voice of Nels, suddenly heard in a distant

"Holloa!" He had succeeded in tracking me, and we were soon journeying homeward.

As an evidence of Nels's remarkable sight, I may mention that once when he was hunting with my daughter and they stood on a mountain with a densely fir-covered valley below them, he suddenly pointed down and said, "There 's an elk asleep under a tree down there. Let 's go after him." Blackish-green tree-tops were all that Diana could see, but down they went. By the time they reached the place the elk was just rising, and in another moment a bullet from the young woman's rifle stretched him in his dying throes.

To me the most wonderful faculty of Nels was his capability of going anywhere he wanted to even in the darkest night, amidst rough, untrailed mountains, over many of which he had never before made his way. We were once in camp in a Wyoming basin, thirty miles from a human habitation. Above us were ridges and peaks which towered three thousand feet, and were the home of a band of mountain sheep. With my guide I went after these shy animals, riding upwards about two thousand feet, making a camp, and the next day climbing after the game on foot. At the time I was nearly sixty years old, healthy, strong; now I know that an elderly denizen of the city who attempts to kill sheep in a country where they are wild and wary from being hunted, is a fool. The work is about as hard as a man can attempt. We climbed the peak, with glasses spied out the sheep on a distant ridge, and made towards them, only to find, when we got within apparent shooting distance, that they had moved away. I found later that the guide had been badly frightened for fear I would give out before he could get me down. The result of the hunt was that one mountain sheep was shot through the body at four hundred yards' distance, but retained strength enough to get into an inaccessible place before my guide could reach him. I was sorry that my guide could not say to me as an Irish gamekeeper said to a huntsman who was bitterly bewailing his own bad shooting: "My lord, you do much better than Lord ——. You misses them so clane."

The distance between our upper and lower camps was about six miles, through a trackless mountain country, as rough as may be with precipices, torrents, deep gorges, and dense fir forests. In the thickest of one of these wildernesses we had set a bear-trap. A few days after my fruitless sheep-hunt, I said to my son, "Take Nels and go up to the upper camp, but be sure to be back not later than next Sunday night. Bring the bear-trap back with you." Saturday afternoon my son found himself hanging onto a precipice, with a sheep within rifle range.

"We can get no closer," said the guide. "Fire."

"How can I?" said the boy. "I have two sets of toes in two crevices, and two sets of fingers clinging to two stony points."

"You have got to do it," was the answer.

So, finally, one hand was loosened, the rifle cracked, and the animal rolled down the steep five hundred feet or so, killed by the bullet and the fall.

By the time the two reached their camp it was nearly sunset, and Nels proposed going home that evening, saying that he could find his way despite the darkness. By the time supper was eaten, the light camp-equipage packed, and the start made, twilight was upon them. Soon it was so dark that in the forest it was impossible for the riders to see the heads of their horses, whilst in the open places my son could just make out the white horse the guide bestrode. After an hour or so the guide said, "Your father told us to bring down the bear-trap."

"You can't find it," was the reply. "You will be lucky if you find the camp."

"Well," answered Nels, "I am going to try to find the trap. It is, I believe, not far off."

So they went into the woods, and by-and-by ferocious growls, a smashing of bushes, and the wild plunging of the horses told them that the trap had been found before they reached the place.

"There is a bear in that trap, and he has not been there an hour," said Nels. "If it is a grizzly cub, and the mother is near by, we are in a nice scrape. I cannot locate the beast, but it is not a hundred yards away."

His head down on the horse's neck, holding fast by mane and saddle as best he could, the boy said, "The beast is to the right, and *I* am going to the left."

"All right, I 'll go too," came from the guide, and in a few minutes no sound was to be heard.

"Let us make a fire and wait here until the moon rises; then we can go back and kill the bear," said Nels.

"No," was the emphatic reply; "I have no use for hunting grizzlies by moonlight. I want to go to my mother."

So on they went, reaching camp at one or two A.M. The next morning I went with a guide, found, after some tracking, an old cinnamon bear caught by the trap, and shot the beast, comforting myself for thus desecrating the Sabbath by the thought that the shooting was an act of mercy.

Monday morning we broke camp for home, and had that day another sample of Nels's sense of locality. It was proposed that he should take my daughter hunting, and meet us at a place some twenty miles away, on the road running down the valley of the Green River. About seven A.M. they left, crossed a range of mountains, failed to find elk, went over another range, and found the next valley filled with a herd of cattle just driven in for summer grazing. Then in the growing darkness they started over a third range, arriving about 10.30 P.M. on the main road, two hundred yards or so from our camp. Nels had forgotten to take any lunch, so they had had but one meal in twenty-four hours, and had been in the saddle about thirteen, with only a rest of half an hour at noon. The girl staggered when she first dismounted, but was all right after she had had supper, and awoke from a sound night's sleep fresh as need be. So much for physical education.

The only guide I ever knew equal to Nels in his sense of locality was July Jesus, a Seminole Indian scout who was with us one August in a United States exploring expedition through the Mexico-American desert in the extreme south of Middle Texas. I have called him an Indian, because such he was officially, but, in fact, the Seminoles have so intermarried with their negro slaves that July Jesus looked and talked like a full-blooded negro. The expedition was following the valley of the Tornellias Creek, down to the great bend of the Rio Grande. At one place the creek cut through a jet-black limestone or marble cliff, making a small cañon, not over three yards wide, with brightly polished sides. The bed of the creek was so dry that we rode some miles before we could find pools of water sufficient to slake the thirst of the beasts we were riding. This was about four P.M.; at seven P.M. the creek was a raging torrent, one hundred feet or more wide, as the result of a cloud-burst, which while it lasted flattened our army mules to the ground as though they had been stalks of corn. The heat was frightful, 110° F. at midnight. If during the day we shot a flying blackbird, by the time it reached the ground its feathers were all singed off and it was broiled ready for eating! Exaggeration aside, it really was so hot we could not touch a gun-barrel or pick up a stone with bare hands, and the coffee in our canteens, made at daybreak, at noon was as hot as we could drink it.

For some reason, our commandant felt impelled to leave the open valley and climb the steep Chesos (Jesus) Mountains. At twelve P.M. we found that in some manner—possibly through the malice of an angry soldier or teamster—the plugs of our water-casks had been drawn, so that we had just enough water left to make a cup of coffee in the morning for each officer, the men going without. We were so deep in the mountains it was very difficult to get the pack train out. There was little reason for going back, because we knew that by the time we could make the Tornellias Creek the water would have drained through the small cañon that had acted as a dam, and have left its bed dry or nearly so. We could not reach the Rio Grande, south of us, because of impassable precipices. Finally, it was decided to let July Jesus decide on the direction in which we should proceed, although he had never been in the country before. July struck due north, directly away from the river. We had a fearful march in the heat; the country was so rough that we had to walk and drag our horses after us, but after eight hours we came to the river where it enters the Great Cañon of the Rio Grande. Orders had been given not to allow the animals to drink too deeply, but the pack-mules were no more to be restrained than a cyclone, and in a moment were up to their bellies in the water.

As soon as we had satisfied ourselves with fried bacon and hard-tack, I sent for July Jesus and asked him how he knew which way to go to get to the Rio Grande. The only answer was, "Lawd, doctah, I had to go to de ribber! I had no wahter. I *had* to go to de ribber."

One year I had good guides engaged for a trip into the Jackson's Hole country, but from a concatenation of circumstances, chief among which was a New York multi-millionaire who bought up every bribable guide, our party was stranded at the Mammoth Springs, Yellowstone Park, with no prospect of getting an outfit, when a man named Phillips came forward and said he was a good hunter, could get two men, and so on. As it turned out, Phillips's actions were often unseemly, and his language, while sometimes picturesque, was more often disgusting even to those hardened to the loose talk of the American frontiersman. He was so poor, his outfit consisted of borrowed or hired odds and ends. Indeed, later, speaking of his own financial condition, he said he "was too poor to buy a lunch for a humming-bird." He was no hunter, and we should have had five weeks of "salt grub" had not my son and myself been fortunate enough to kill a fine bull elk and a buck antelope.

One anecdote about Phillips will suffice. On our way home, near the Yellowstone Park Hotel, the bears, which are a perpetual nuisance to campers there, got among our horses at night and scattered them to the four quarters of the globe. The next day Phillips was in the saddle from shortly after daylight until about four o'clock in the afternoon, and, with the aid of one other man, had collected fifteen out of eighteen horses. He knew that I must go on and would make a night march to get forward, so that his three horses would have to be left. He was in a furious temper, and made use of many profane expressions. After a time Jack Tansy, our "horse wrangler," interrupted the blasphemous torrent by saying, "Phillips, do you know what God will do with you?"

"No, what?"

"Why, he will put hobbles on you and turn you loose in hell."

Phillips collapsed, whilst Tansy did as he always did when Phillips had worked him up to the fighting point—wrapped himself up in a big tarpaulin until it was not easy to perceive that there was a man in the heap and lay perfectly still for from one to three hours, until his rage had subsided, when he would come forth laughing and apparently as happy as a darky-boy in the July sunshine, with a cold watermelon out of the spring where in the early morning twilight he had put it fresh from the farmer's patch.

Jack Tansy was himself one of the most remarkable men I have ever met. The son of a poor Methodist clergyman in Ohio, he had managed to educate himself until he won in a competition offered by the Congressman of his district a cadetship at West Point. When he appeared before the army doctors for physical examination, however, he was rejected. As I saw him, he was one of the handsomest of men when stripped, small but beautifully proportioned. Broken-hearted by his failure, Jack had run away to the frontier. In time he became a noted packer, and after one of the most trying of the Indian campaigns in the Northwest, he was commended by the general in command as being the only man who had succeeded in taking his train through the hardships of the summer.

Jack had served several years with the United States Geological Survey, and had picked up the botanical names of most of the ordinary flowers and trees of the country. So I dubbed him *Tanacetum vulgare* instead of Jack Tansy.

"*Tanacetum* is all right," he said, "but I don't like *vulgare*."

"But *vulgare* is the only species that grows in America," I replied.

"Then I 've got to knuckle under," said Jack; and *Tanacetum vulgare* he remained.

Jack was the only guide I ever corresponded with after pay-day. From the last letter I received from him, some years since, I learned he was in the Klondike and was making his "pile."

❦

OUT IN THE FIR-BLUE HILLS

BY MARY BYERLEY

OUT in the fir-blue hills, my heart, in the autumn weather,
Heareth the lullaby croon of the Earth-Mother rocking her children;
Seeketh, in evening shade, the fragrant breath of her bosom;

Feeleth the placid repose of her being in ripples of motion
That, urged by her voice into waves of quiescent rejoicing,
Go pulsing the shores of the ego in rhythms of magical splendor.

Out from those blue-rimmed hills my heart return not, lest knowing
Once more the old discontent, thou hear not the Earth-Mother crooning,
Crooning of love ever faithful, of joy on the Hill-rim dreaming.

WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

◆

A PLEA FOR AN AMERICAN PEERAGE

THOSE who keep tab on worldly matters tell us that within the past generation upward of four hundred American girls have married more or less decorated Europeans, and that the sum total already paid for titles is close to the four-hundred-million mark.

Truly, this is bad management on our part. We have allowed our independence and our imperial scorn of rank and heraldry to cheat us most ingloriously.

If our American beauties must have titles, to complete their native queenliness and crown their fortunes, would it not be blending good sense with gallantry to ourselves supply the needed tinsel? Indeed, ought we not to be ashamed—big, brawny, handsome specimens that we are—to stand by in passive onlooking and see some of the fairest of our daughters compelled to purchase coronets with such funny little valentines attached to them?

Before God or a bear, a duke has no points of superiority above a lumber-jack. "Your lordship" rises no nearer to heaven than "Mike, old boy." It is so writ in the gospel of democracy; and there lives to-day no sound-chested, healthy fellow on this side the Atlantic who would swap his title of American "Mr." for any string of princely names and decorations. "Mr." stands for Master.

If, therefore, a badge of nobility is a thing so empty, there would seem to be no more reason why we should be so skittish about it than there is for a horse to stand on its hind legs in the presence of a paper bag. Would any one of us be any less a sovereign if Willie Sniffle-Jones of Newport were dubbed a baron? It is not likely. And when we consider what this innocent ennoblement would mean from the viewpoint of good statesmanship we shall be astonished that we have so long tolerated in our imperious Constitution the fear-inspired clause forbidding the granting of titles. For, besides making Willie happy and in no wise hurting anybody, we should thus be enabled to juggle him from a social liability to a very appreciable asset.

As Lord Sniffle-Jones, with a plenitude of good nature and rich relations, and with a pedigree which through the aid of an expert genealogist could be worried back through the *Mayflower* to William the Conqueror, he would prove irresistible bait for some golden dower which would otherwise have taken wings beyond the sea. For it may be at once assumed that our daughters of the rich, in their bargain-hunts for crests and embroidered names, would instinctively prefer such as were tagged with a familiar species of husband.

An American nobleman, however apish his love of pomp, could generally be reckoned upon to be chivalrous and clean-blooded and labelled with a name that would at least sound like it looks and not appear to have been coined in a fit; a man who, besides the coveted scutcheon, could give in return something more than a rheumatic old castle and a mouldy lineage of soft-headed drones, and who, furthermore, through training and heritage, whatever be his vices or shortcomings, would never forget—what the foreign nobleman has not yet learned—that his American wife is his social peer and not a mere woman thrown into the bargain with the purchase price of a title.

And thus, with a duke here and a marquis there, and a becoming number of earls and barons sprinkled about among the right sort of eligibles, we could supply the market with a peerage that would for all time shut out foreign competition and enable us to retain to our own immense profit the lovely women and the no less lovely gold that are now going from us at an ever increasing rate.

CLIFFORD HOWARD

WE AND THE WEATHER

WHAT a great misfortune this is, the habit of considering the weather!—of thinking that we must consider the weather. It is largely due, is it not, to clothes? No mention is made of rain in the Garden of Eden; but we must not, therefore, contend that rain was disagreeable and omitted; we must recollect that Adam and Eve did not need to consider rain; furthermore, in blessed ignorance, they did not know that it was anything to *be* considered.

To mind the rain no more than the May sunshine, but to plunge into it and let the drops pelt as they will; to accept snow without a thought of discomfort, but, rather, to enjoy the thronging presence of it; to pursue one's daily stint regardless of whether the sky be dun or blue,—this is a state which we, especially of the cities, long, long have lost.

We regain it, some of us, in the wilderness camp, where we hunt, or fish, if the day be dark or if the day be bright. And where we find that the dash of the soft rain on one's face is not death, after all; that wetness and dryness are merely relative terms.

All the centuries of fussing and fuming with the weather have not affected the weather one particle; it still rains, and snows, and sleets, and blows, just as dictated by circumstances. Therefore what's the use? Are your puny diatribes, or mine, of any greater potency than those of others gone before? Evidently not; accordingly, try the plan of being friendly with the weather—of agreeing with it instead of fighting it—and, 'pon my word, presently it will be agreeing with *you.*

EDWIN L. SABIN

THE BENEFICENT SCRAP-BASKET

SO long has the editorial scrap-basket been looked upon as the foe to literary progress, that it is difficult to convince the casual observer that it should be classed with the benefactors of mankind.

It is high time that it was paid something of the homage that is its due, both by the reading public and by those literary craftsmen who are beneficiaries by its eliminating quality.

The mission of the scrap-basket is that of the preserver of literary standards, yet we unreasonably persist in classing it with the destroyers, as if all progress did not mean merely the survival of the fittest. It is quite customary to regard it as a foe to the finest literary effort—a cruel dragon with open jaws, forever seeking for whom, or what, it may devour. Especially is the spleen of the disappointed literary aspirant directed towards this editorial accessory. According to his indignant protest, the waste-basket stands ready to consume all that is new, original, unique; it swallows ruthlessly, and so nips in the bud, the promising productions of those "inglorious Miltons" who are not "mute."

If there is any tragedy connected with the mission of the scrap-basket, it is its failure to consume much that is rightfully its own. That such is the case is feelingly deplored by a contemporary lecturer in a recent discourse on "The Development of the Newspaper"; "but," he remarks regretfully, "it is n't possible, with all care, to get everything into the waste-basket that belongs there." He goes on to protest that few give the waste-basket the credit it deserves, especially in the matter of keeping up literary standards and protecting a helpless reading public.

The beneficent scrap-basket! It tells no tales, but buries in tranquil oblivion at least a portion of the great mass of literary misdoings. It clears the air of literary sayings that had been better left unsaid. It dispels the illusions of the misguided ones who have blindly mistaken their vocation, and bids them seek another road to fame or fortune. It brushes aside blunders, and withholds mischievous suggestions. It is a literary guide, philosopher, and friend, and if at times it makes trifling mistakes, it yet persistently keeps full in view worthy ideals. It stubbornly rejects that which it deems of any special value, and gives the yearning aspirant the benefit of many doubts. It snatches eagerly at misdirected effort, and prevents sorry muddling of complicated affairs. It quashes scandal and blots out much vulgarity. It punishes misdeeds in letters and wipes out anomalies in literature. How many precious reputations it saves by the art of elimination, and how much pleasure it confers by cancellation!

Salvation in the world of letters comes ever by selection, and were there no literary scrap-baskets, how could the world of letters hope to be saved.

Caroline Ticknor.

◆

TO SHAKESPEARE'S MOTHER

BY GEORGE HERBERT CLARKE

DID he, madonna, on thy bosom turning,
Look in thy woman-eyes and see soft fires
Glowing and melting, passioning and yearning,
Lit with the mother-light of far desires?
Oh, did he fix his still regard upon them,
Learning their meanings manifold and strange,
Climbing with wonder up to count and con them
Ere they should vanish and the moment change?

The visions that thy soul revealed him then,
Though thou hast died, madonna, may never die:
They dwell eternal in pure Imogen,
Cordelia's truth and Desdemona's sigh,
Rosalind's Arden, Miranda's island wave,
Girlish Ophelia's love, and Juliet's grave.

VOL. LXXXII NUMBER 492

LIPPINCOTT'S
MONTHLY MAGAZINE

DECEMBER, 1908

SEVEN DAYS

BY MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

Author of "The Circular Staircase," etc.

I.

WHEN the dreadful thing occurred that night, every one turned on me. The injustice of it hurt me most. They said *I* got up the dinner, that *I* asked them all to give up other engagements and come, that *I* promised all kinds of jollification, if they would come; and then when they did come and got in the papers, and every one—but ourselves—laughed himself black in the face, they turned on *me!* *I,* who suffered ten times to their one! I shall never forget what Dallas Brown said to me, standing with a coal shovel in one hand and a—well, perhaps it would be better to tell it all in the order it happened.

It began with Jimmy Wilson and a conspiracy, was helped along by a foot-long piece of red paper and a Japanese butler, and it enmeshed and mixed up generally ten respectable members of society and a policeman. Incidentally, it involved a pearl collar and a box of soap, which sounds incongruous, does n't it?

The trouble was, I think, that no one took Jim seriously. His ambition in life was to be taken seriously, but people steadily refused to. His art was a huge joke—except to himself. If he asked people to dinner, every one expected a frolic. When he married Bella Knowles, people chuckled at the wedding, and considered it the wildest prank of Jimmy's career, although Jim himself seemed to take it awfully hard.

Copyright, 1908, by J. B. Lippincott Company. All rights reserved.

It is a great misfortune to be stout, especially for a man. Jim was rotund and looked shorter than he really was, and as all the lines of his face, or what should have been lines, were really dimples, his face was about as flexible and full of expression as a pillow in a tight cover. The angrier he got the funnier he looked, and when he was raging, and his neck swelled up over his collar and got red, he was entrancing. And everybody liked him, and borrowed money from him, and laughed at his pictures (he has one in the Hargrave gallery in London now, so people buy them instead), and smoked his cigarettes, and tried to steal his Jap. The whole story hinges on the Jap.

Well, on the anniversary of the day Bella left him—— (Yes, Bella left. She was terribly intense, and it got on her nerves finally to have everybody chuckle when they asked for her husband. They would say, "Hello, Bella! How's Bubbles? Still banting?" And Bella would try to laugh and say, "He swears his tailor says his waist is smaller, but if it is he must be growing hollow in the back." But she got tired of it at last.) Well, on the second anniversary of Bella's departure, Jimmy was feeling pretty glum, and I am very fond of Jim. The divorce had just gone through, and Bella had taken her maiden name again and had an operation for appendicitis. We heard afterwards that they did n't find any appendix, and that the one they showed her in a glass jar *was not hers!* But if Bella ever suspected, she did n't say. Whether the appendix was anonymous or not, she got box after box of flowers that were, and of course every one knew it was Jim who sent them.

To go back to the anniversary, I went into Rothberg's to see the collection of antique furniture—mother was looking for a sideboard for father's birthday in March—and I met Jimmy there, boring into a worm-hole in a seventeenth-century bed-post with the end of a match, and looking his nearest approach to sad. When he saw me he came over.

"I'm blue to-day, Kit," he said, after we had shaken hands. "Come and help me dig bait, and then let's go fishing. If there's a worm in every hole in that bed-post, we could go into the fish business. It's a good business."

"Better than painting?" I asked. But he ignored my gibe and swelled up alarmingly in order to sigh.

"This is the worst day of the year for me," he affirmed, staring straight ahead, "and the longest. Look at that crazy clock over there. If you want to see your life passing away, if you want to see the steps by which you are marching to eternity, watch that clock marking time. Look at that infernal hand staying quiet for sixty seconds and then jumping forward to catch up with the procession. Ugh!"

"See here, Jim," I said, leaning forward, "you're not well. You can't go through the rest of the day like this. I know what you 'll do: you are going home to play Grieg on the pianola, and you won't eat any dinner." He looked guilty.

"Not Grieg," he protested feebly. "Beethoven."

"You 're not going to do either," I said with firmness. "You are going right home to unpack those new draperies that Harry Bayles sent you from Shanghai, and you are going to order dinner for eight—that will be two tables of bridge. And you are not going to touch the pianola."

That was my entire share in the affair, and to say, as some of them did afterwards, that I brought it on them—well, it was downright malicious.

I really put myself out a lot. I took the Mercer girls myself in the electric cab father gave me for Christmas, because their brougham was in use, and the chauffeur had been gone for twenty-four hours with the touring-car. They had telephoned the hospitals and police stations, and they were afraid there had been an awful smash. (They could easily have replaced Bartlett, but it takes so long to get new parts for those foreign cars.)

The Dallas Browns walked; they lived in the next block. And they brought with them a man named Harbison, that no one knew. Anne said he would be great sport, because he was terribly serious, and had the most exaggerated ideas of society, and loathed extravagance, and built bridges or something. She had put away her cigarettes since he had been with them—he and Dallas had been college friends—and the only chance she had to smoke was when she was getting her hair done. And she had singed quite a lot off—a burnt offering, she said.

Jim had a house well uptown, and it stood just enough apart from the other houses to be entirely maddening, later. It was a three-story affair, with a basement kitchen and servants' dining-room. Then, of course, there were cellars, as we found out afterwards. On the first floor there was a large square hall, a small, formal reception-room, behind it a big living-room, then a den, and back of all a Georgian dining-room, with low windows, high above the ground. On the top floor Jim had a studio, like every other one I ever saw,—perhaps a little mussier. Jim was really a grind at his painting, and there were cigarette ashes and palette knives and buffalo rugs and shields everywhere. It is strange, but when I think of that terrible house, I always see the halls, enormous, covered with heavy rugs, and stairs that would have taken six housemaids to keep in proper condition. I dream about those stairs, stretching above me in a Jacob's ladder of shining wood and Persian carpets, going up, up, clear to the roof.

We all arrived about the same time, and Anne Brown and I went upstairs together to take off our wraps in what had been Bella's dressing-room. It was Anne who noticed the violets.

"Look at that!" she nudged me, when the maid was examining her wrap before she laid it down. "What did I tell you, Kit? He's still quite mad about her."

Jim had painted Bella's portrait while they were going up the Nile on their wedding trip. It looked quite like her, if you stood well off in the middle of the room, and if the light came from the right. And just beneath, in a silver vase, was a bunch of violets. I think it proper to emphasize Jim's fondness for his divorced wife, in view of what was coming. Even Bella herself said afterwards that I had certainly done the best I could under the circumstances, and for Anne Brown to talk the way she did—saying I had always been crazy about Jimmy, and that she believed I had known all along that his Aunt was coming—for Anne to talk like that was sheer idiocy. Oh yes, there was an Aunt. The Jap started the trouble, and Aunt Selina carried it along.

We all met downstairs in the living-room, quite informally, and Dallas Brown was banging away at the pianola, tramping the pedals with the delicacy and feeling of a football centre rush kicking a goal. Somebody shouted the Harbison man's name to me, and then I saw Jimmy beckoning crazily to me from the den. The Harbison man—he was nice looking, in a large, much-shaven way—saw him too, and stepped back. It was easy to see that something had occurred to upset Jim: he looked quite yellow, and he had been running his fingers through his hair.

"For heaven's sake, come in, Kit!" he said. "I need a cool head. Did n't I tell you this is my calamity day?"

"Cook gone?" I asked with interest. I was starving.

He closed the door and took up a tragic attitude in front of the fire. "Did you ever hear of Aunt Selina?" he demanded.

"I knew there *was* one," I ventured, mindful of certain gossip as to whence Jimmy derived the Wilson income. Jim himself was too worried to be cautious. He waved a brazen hand at the snug room, at the Japanese prints on the walls, at the rugs, at the teakwood cabinets and the screen inlaid with pearl and ivory.

"All this," he said comprehensively, "every bite I eat, clothes I wear, drinks I drink—you need n't look like that; I don't drink so darned much—everything comes from Aunt Selina. Buttons," he finished with a groan.

"Selina Buttons," I said reflectively. "I don't remember ever having known any one named Buttons, although I had a cat once——"

"—— the cat!" he said rudely. "Her name is n't Buttons. Her name is Caruthers, my Aunt Selina Caruthers, and the money comes from buttons."

"Oh!"—feebly.

"It's an old business," he went on, with something of proprietary pride. "My grandfather founded it in 1775. Made buttons for the Continental Army. Aunt Selina is the owner now; I will be some day."

"I hope you will make *good* buttons, James," I said. But again he interrupted.

"It's like this," he went on hurriedly. "Aunt Selina believes in me. She likes pictures, and she wanted me to paint, if I could. I'd have given up long ago—oh, I know what you all think of my work—but for Aunt Selina. She has encouraged me, and she's done more than that: she's paid the bills."

"Dear Aunt Selina!" I breathed.

"When I got married," Jim persisted, "Aunt Selina doubled my allowance. I always expected to sell something, and begin to make money, and in the meantime what she advanced I considered as a loan." He was eying me defiantly, but I was growing serious. It was evident from the preamble that something was coming.

"To understand, Kit," he went on dubiously, "you would have to know her. She won't stand for divorce. She thinks it is a crime."

"What!" I sat up. I have always regarded divorce as essentially disagreeable, like castor oil, but necessary.

"Oh, you know well enough what I am driving at," he burst out savagely. "She does n't know Bella has gone. She thinks I am living in a little domestic heaven, and—she is coming to-night to hear me flap my wings."

I don't think Jimmy had known that Dallas had come in and was listening. I am sure I had not. Hearing his chuckle at the doorway brought us up with a jerk.

"Where has Aunt Selina been for the last two or three years?" he asked easily.

Jim brightened perceptibly.

"Europe. Look here, Dal, you're a smart chap. She'll only be here about four hours. Can't you think of some way to let me out of this? I want to let her down easy, too. I'm mighty fond of her. Can't we—can't I say Bella has a headache?"

"Rotten!"—laconically.

"Gone out of town?"—hopefully.

"And you with a houseful of dinner guests! Try again, Jim."

"I have it," Jim said suddenly. "Dallas, ask Anne if she won't play hostess for to-night? Be Mrs. Wilson *pro tem?* Anne would love it. Aunt Selina never saw Bella. Then, afterwards, next year, when I'm hung in the Academy and can stand on my feet"—("Not if you're hung," Dallas interjected)—"I'll break the truth to her."

But Dallas was not enthused.

"Anne would n't do at all," he declared. "She 'd be talking about the kids before she knew it, and patting me on the head." He said it complacently: Anne flirts, but they are really devoted.

"The Mercer girls?" I suggested, but Jimmy raised a horrified hand.

"You don't know Aunt Selina," he protested. "I could n't offer Leila in the gown she 's got on, unless she wore a shawl, and Betty is too fair. Well, it 's up to you, Kit."

I had n't really known what was coming, and of course I declared at once against it. And then Leila Mercer came and pounded on the door and said they were famishing, and dinner had been announced ages ago, and what with the hurry and stress, and poor Jim's distracted face, I weakened.

"She might stay longer than four hours," I objected. "She might miss her train."

"You 're not game, Kit," Dallas scoffed. "You 're a four-flusher. Why, it 's the biggest prank I ever heard of. It will save the old lady a shock and save Jim's feelings. When you 're an elderly person yourself, Kit, you 'll appreciate what you are doing to-night."

So in the end they persuaded me. Oh, I am not defending myself: I suppose I deserved everything that happened. But they said Aunt Selina was to be there only between trains, and that she was as deaf as a post; and instead of my getting the blame, the way I did, the real culprits were Dallas Brown and Jim. I can't remember all the arguments they offered—I do remember they stooped to bribes—but when they put it to me that it was in my power to save a fellow being from complete ruin, I capitulated.

When they opened the door into the living-room, Max Reed had arrived and was helping to hide a decanter and glasses, and somebody said a cab was at the door. And that was the way it began.

II.

THE minute I had consented, I regretted it. After all, what were Jimmy's troubles to me? Why should I help him to impose on an unsuspecting elderly lady? And it was only putting off discovery anyhow. Sooner or later, she would learn of the divorce, and—— Just at that instant my eyes fell on Mr. Harbison—Tom Harbison, as Anne called him. He was looking on with an amused, half puzzled smile while people were rushing around hiding the roulette wheel and things of which Miss Caruthers might disapprove, and Betty Mercer was on her knees winding up a toy bear that Max had brought her. What would he think? It was evident that he thought badly of us already—that he was contemptuously amused, and to have to ask him to lend himself to the deception!

With a gasp I hurled myself after Jimmy, only to hear a strange voice in the hall and to know that I was too late. I was in for it, whatever was coming. It was Aunt Selina who was coming—along the hall, followed by Jim, who was mopping his face and trying not to notice the paralyzed silence in the library.

Aunt Selina met me in the doorway. To my frantic eyes she seemed to tower above us by at least a foot, and beside her Jimmy was a red, perspiring cherub.

"Here she is," Jimmy said, from behind a temporary eclipse of black cloak and travelling bag. He was on top of the situation now, and he was mendaciously cheerful. He had *not* said, "Here is my wife." That would have been a lie. No, Jimmy merely said, "Here she is." If Aunt Selina chose to think me Bella, was it not her responsibility? And if I chose to accept the situation, was it not mine? Dallas Brown came forward gravely as Aunt Selina folded over and kissed me, and surreptitiously patted me with one hand while he held out the other to Miss Caruthers. I loathed him!

"We always expect something unusual from James, Miss Caruthers," he said, with his best manner, "but *this*—this is beyond our wildest dreams."

Well, it 's too awful to linger over. We got Aunt Selina upstairs, and gave her to Hannah, one of the maids, and then Jimmy went into the den and closed the door, and we heard him unlock the cellarette. Mr. Harbison, who had been standing alone by the fireplace, came over to me, where I had collapsed into a chair.

"Do you know," he said, looking down at me with his clear, disconcerting gaze—"do you know that I have just grasped the situation? The piano was making such a noise that I did not hear your name, and I have only just realized that you are my hostess! I don't know why I got the impression that this was a bachelor establishment, but I did. Odd, was n't it?"

I positively could n't look away from him. My features seemed frozen, and my eyes were glued to his. As for telling him the truth—well, my tongue refused to move. And upstairs that awful old woman would be coming down soon, and asking me how much I paid the cook, and what had become of the vase Cousin Jane sent us as a wedding gift!

Dinner was a half hour late when we finally went out, Jimmy leading off with Aunt Selina, and I, as hostess, trailing behind the procession with Mr. Harbison. Dallas took in the two Mercer girls, for we were one man short, and Max took Anne. Leila Mercer was so excited that she wriggled, and as for me, the candles and the orchids—everything—danced around in a circle, and I just seemed to catch the back of my chair as it flew past. Jim had ordered away the wines and brought out some weak and cheap Chianti. Dallas looked gloomy at the change, but Jim explained in an undertone that Aunt Selina did n't approve of expensive vintages. Naturally, the meal was glum enough.

Aunt Selina had had her dinner on the train, and so she spent her time asking me questions the length of the table, and getting acquainted with me. She brought a bottle of some sort of medicine downstairs with her, and she took a claret-glassful, while she talked. The stuff was called Pomona: shall I ever forget it?

It was Mr. Harbison who first noticed Takahiro. Jimmy's Jap had been the only thing in the *ménage* which Bella declared she hated to leave. But he was doing the strangest things: his little black eyes shifted nervously, and he looked queer.

"What 's wrong with him?" Mr. Harbison asked me finally, when he saw that I noticed. "Is he ill?"

Then Aunt Selina's voice from the other end of the table.

"Bella," she called, in a high clear voice, "do you let James eat cucumbers?"

"I think he must be," I said hurriedly aside to Mr. Harbison. "See how his hands shake!" But Aunt Selina would not be ignored.

"Cucumbers and strawberries," she repeated impressively. "I was saying, Bella, that cucumbers have always given James the most fearful indigestion. And yet I see you serve them at your table. Do you remember what I wrote you to give him when he has his dreadful spells?"

I was quite speechless; every one was looking, and no one could help. It was clear Jim was racking his brain, and we sat staring desperately at each other across the candles. Everything I had ever known faded from me; eight pairs of eyes bored into me, Mr. Harbison's politely amused.

"I don't remember," I said at last. "Really, I don't believe——"

Aunt Selina smiled in a superior way.

"Now, don't you recall it?" she insisted. "I said: 'Baking soda in water taken internally for cucumbers; baking soda in water externally, rubbed on, when he gets that dreadful, itching strawberry rash'!"

"I am going to write that down," Max said earnestly. "You have no idea, Miss Caruthers, how I suffer from strawberry rash."

I believe the dinner went on. Somebody asked Aunt Selina how much over-charge she had paid in foreign hotels, and after that she was as harmless as a dove.

Then half way through the dinner we heard a crash in Takahiro's pantry, and when he did not appear again, Jim got up and went out to investigate. He was gone quite a little while, and when he came back he looked worried.

"Sick," he replied to our inquiring glances. "One of the maids will come in. They have sent for a doctor."

Aunt Selina was for going out at once and "fixing him up," as she put it, but Dallas interfered.

"I would n't, Miss Caruthers," he said, in the deferential manner he had adopted toward her. "You don't know what it may be. He 's been looking spotty all evening."

"It might be scarlet fever," Max broke in cheerfully. "I say, scarlet fever on a Mongolian—what color would he be, Jimmy? What do yellow and red make? Green?"

"Orange," Jim said shortly. "I wish you people would remember that we are trying to eat."

The fact was, however, that no one was really eating, except Mr. Harbison, who had given up trying to understand us, considering, no doubt, our subdued excitement as our normal condition. Ages afterwards I learned that he thought my face almost tragic that night, and he supposed, from the way I glared across the table, that I had quarrelled with my husband!

Well, that 's the picture as nearly as I can draw it: a round table with a low centrepiece of orchids in lavenders and pink, old silver candlesticks with filigree shades against the sombre wainscoting: nine people, two of them unhappy—Jim and I; one of them complacent—Aunt Selina; one puzzled—Mr. Harbison; and the rest hysterically mirthful. Add one sick Japanese butler and grind in the mill of the gods.

Every one promptly forgot Takahiro in the excitement of the game they were playing. Finally, however, Aunt Selina, who seemed to have Takahiro on her mind, looked up from her plate.

"That Jap was speckled," she asserted. "I would n't be surprised it 's measles. Has he been sniffling, James?"

"Has he been sniffling?" Jim threw across at me.

"I had n't noticed it," I said meekly, while the others choked.

"The difference is this," Max said distinctly and with dignity, apropos of nothing. "Kit is a pessimist—just now. The true optimist sees the doughnut; the pessimist sees the hole."

As every one wanted to laugh, they did it then, and under cover of the noise I caught Anne's eye, and we left the dining-room. The men stayed, and by the very firmness with which the door closed behind us, I knew that Dallas and Max were bringing out the bottles that Takahiro had hidden. I was seething. When Aunt Selina indicated a desire to go over the house (it was natural that she should want to: it was her house, in a way) I excused myself for a minute and flew back to the dining-room.

It was as I had expected. Jim had n't cheered perceptibly, but the rest were patting him on the back, and pouring things out for him, and saying, "Poor old Jim!" in the most maddening way. And the Harbison man was looking more and more puzzled, and not at all hilarious.

I descended on them like a thunderbolt.

"That's it!" I cried shrewishly, with my back against the door. "Leave her to me, all of you, and pat each other on the back, and say it's gone splendidly! Oh, I know you, every one!" (Mr. Harbison got up and pulled out a chair, but I could n't sit: I folded my arms over the back.) "After a while, I suppose, you'll slip upstairs, the four of you, and have your game." They looked guilty. "But I will block that right now. I am going to stay—here. If Aunt Selina wants me, she can find me—here!"

The first indication those men had that Mr. Harbison did n't know the state of affairs was when he pushed back his own chair and got up.

"Mrs. Wilson is quite right," he said gravely. "We're a selfish lot. If Miss Caruthers is a responsibility, let us share her."

"To arms!" Jim said, with an affectation of lightness, as they all rose, and threw open the door. Dallas's retort, "Whose?" was lost in the confusion, and we went into the library. On the way Dallas managed to speak to me.

"If Harbison does n't know, don't tell him," he said in an undertone. "He's a queer duck, in some ways; he might n't think it funny."

"Funny!" I choked. "It's the least funny thing I ever experienced. Deceiving that Harbison man is n't so bad—he thinks me crazy, anyhow. He's been staring his eyes out at me——"

"I don't wonder. You're really lovely to-night, Kit, and you look like a vixen."

"But to deceive that harmless old lady—well, thank goodness, it's almost ten, and she leaves in an hour or so."

But she did n't. That is the story.

Jimmy and the Mercer girls took Aunt Selina around. Anne Brown, with Dallas and Max, sneaked up to the studio for a cigarette, and Mr. Harbison stayed with me. He said he thought I looked white, and he got me a cushion, and told me not to worry about the butler. Everything had gone off well, and he was probably not seriously ill. And then, when he found I was not talkative, he let me alone and sauntered around the room, and finally disappeared into the den.

It was then that the real complexity of the situation began to develop. Some one had rung the bell and had been admitted to the hall, and a maid came to the door of the library. When she saw me she came over uncertainly. Even then it struck me that she looked odd and that she was not in uniform. However, I knew nothing—then—of bachelor establishments, and the next thing she said knocked her and her clothes clear out of my head. Evidently she knew me.

"Miss McNair," she said in a low tone, "there is a lady in the hall, a *veiled* person, and she is asking for Mr. Wilson."

"Then why not get Mr. Wilson?" I asked. My head was bursting. "He is in the studio, probably."

The girl hesitated. "Excuse me, miss, but Miss Caruthers——"

Then I saw the situation.

"Never mind," I said, rising. "I 'll find Mr. Wilson."

But as the girl left by one door, the person in question appeared at the other, and raised her veil. I was perfectly paralyzed. It was Bella! Bella in a fur coat and a veil, with the most tragic eyes I ever saw, and entirely white except for a dab of rouge in the middle of each cheek. She came right over and clutched me by the arm.

"Who was being carried out into that ambulance?" she demanded, glaring at me with the most awful intensity.

"I 'm sure I don't know, Bella," I said, wriggling away from her fingers. "What in the world are you doing here? I thought you were out at Pemberton."

"You are hiding something from me!" she accused. "It is Jim! I see it in your face."

"Well, it is n't," I snapped. "It seems to me, really, Bella, that you and Jim ought to be able to manage your own affairs, without dragging me in." I was not pleasant, but if she was suffering, so was I. "Jim is as well as he ever was. He 's upstairs somewhere. I 'll send for him."

She gripped me again, and held on while her color came back.

"You 'll do nothing of the kind," she said, and she had quite got hold of herself again. "I do not want to see him: I hope you don't think, Kit, that I came back here to see James Wilson. Why, I have forgotten that there *is* such a person, and you know it."

Somebody laughed in the next room, and I was growing nervous. What if Aunt Selina should come down, or Mr. Harbison come in?

"Why *did* you come, then, Bella?" I inquired. "He may come in."

"I was passing in the motor," she said, and I honestly think she hoped I would believe her, "and I saw that am——" She stopped and began again. "I thought Jim was out of town, and I came to see Takahiro," she said brazenly. "He was devoted to me, and Evans is going to leave. I 'll tell you what to do, Kit. I 'll go back to the dining-room, and you send Taka there. If any one comes, I can slip into the pantry."

"It 's immoral," I protested. "To steal——"

"My own butler!" she broke in impatiently. "You 're not usually so scrupulous, Kit. Hurry! I hear that hateful Anne Brown."

So we slid back along the hall, and I rang for Takahiro. But no one came.

"I think I ought to tell you, Bella," I said, as we waited, and Bella was staring around the room—"I think you ought to know that Miss Caruthers is here." Bella only shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, thank goodness," she said, "I don't have to see her. The only pleasant thing I remember about my year of married life is that I did *not* meet Aunt Selina."

I rang again, but still there was no answer. And then it occurred to me that the stillness below-stairs was almost oppressive. Bella was noticing things, too, for she began to fasten her veil again with a malicious little smile.

"One of the things I remember my late husband saying," she said, "was that *he* could manage this house, and had done it for years, with flawless service. Stand on the bell, Kit."

I did. We stood there with the table, just as it had been left, between us, and waited for a response. Bella was growing impatient. She raised her eyebrows (she is very handsome, Bella is) and flung out her chin as if she began to enjoy the situation.

I thought I heard the rattle of silver from the pantry just then, and I hurried to the door in a rage. But the pantry was empty and full of dishes, and all the lights were out but one, burning dimly. I could have sworn that I saw one of the servants duck into the stairway to the basement, but when I got there the stairs were empty, and something was burning in the kitchen below.

Bella had followed me and was peering over my shoulder curiously.

"There is n't a servant in the house," she said triumphantly. And when we went down to the kitchen, she seemed to be right. It was in disgraceful disorder, and one of the bottles of wine that had been banished from the dining-room sat half empty on the floor.

"Drunk!" Bella said with conviction. But I did n't think so. There had not been time enough, for one thing. Suddenly I remembered the ambulance that had been the cause of Bella's appearance—for no one could believe her silly story about Takahiro. I did n't wait to voice my suspicions to her; I simply left her there, staring helplessly at the confusion, and ran upstairs again: through the dining-room, past Jimmy and Aunt Selina, past Leila Mercer and Max, who were flirting on the stairs, up, up to the servants' bedrooms, and there my suspicions were verified. There was every evidence of a hasty flight; in three bedrooms five trunks stood locked and ominous, and the chests yawned with open doors, empty. Bella had been right: there was not a servant in the house.

As I emerged from the untidy emptiness of the servants' wing, I met Mr. Harbison coming out of the studio.

"I wish you would let me do some of this running about for you, Mrs. Wilson," he said gravely. "You are not well, and I can't think of anything worse for a headache. Has the butler's illness clogged the household machinery?"

"Worse," I replied, trying not to breathe in gasps. "I would n't be running around—like this—but there is not a servant in the house! They have gone, the entire lot."

"That 's odd," he said slowly. "Gone! Are you sure?"

In reply I pointed to the servants' wing. "Trunks packed," I said tragically, "rooms empty, kitchen and pantries full of dishes. Did you ever hear anything like it?"

"Never," he asserted. "It makes me suspect——" What he suspected he did not say; instead, he turned on his heel, without a word of explanation, and ran down the stairs. I stood staring after him, wondering if every one in the place had gone crazy. Then I heard Betty Mercer scream and the rest talking loud and laughing, and Mr. Harbison came up the stairs again two at a time.

"How long has that Jap been ailing, Mrs. Wilson?" he asked.

"I—I don't know," I replied helplessly. "What *is* the trouble, anyhow?"

"I think he probably has something contagious," he said, "and it has scared the servants away. As Mrs. Brown said, he looked spotty. I suggested to your husband that it might be as well to get the house empty—in case we are correct."

"Oh, yes, by all means," I said eagerly. I could n't get away from there too soon. "I 'll go and get my——" Then I stopped. Why, the man would n't expect *me* to leave; I had to play out the wretched farce to the end!

"I 'll go down and see them off," I finished lamely, and we went down the stairs.

Just for the moment I forgot Bella altogether. I found Aunt Selina bonneted and cloaked, taking a stirrup cup of Pomona for her nerves, and the rest throwing on their wraps in a hurry. Downstairs Max was telephoning for his car, which was n't due for an hour, and Jim was walking up and down, swearing under his breath. With the prospect of getting rid of them all, and of going home comfortably to try and forget the whole wretched affair, I cheered up quite a lot. I even played up my part of hostess, and Dallas said, aside, that I was a brick.

Just then Jim threw open the door.

There was a man on the top step, with his mouth full of tacks, and he was nailing something to the door, just below Jim's Florentine bronze knocker, and standing back with his head on one side to see if it was straight.

"What are you doing?" Jim demanded fiercely, but the man only drove another tack. It was Mr. Harbison who stepped outside and read the card.

It said "Scarlet Fever."

"Scarlet fever," Mr. Harbison read, as if he could n't believe it. Then he turned to us, huddled in the hall.

"It seems it was n't measles, after all," he said cheerfully. "I move we get into Mr. Reed's automobile out there, and have a disinfection party. I suppose even you *blasé* society folks have not exhausted that kind of diversion."

But the man on the step spat his tacks in his hand and spoke for the first time.

"No, you don't," he said. "Not on your life. Just step back, please, and close the door. This house is quarantined."

III.

There is hardly any use trying to describe what followed. Anne Brown began to cry, and talk about the children. (She went to Europe once and stayed till they all got over the whooping-cough.) And Dallas said he had a pull, because his mill controlled I forget how many votes, and the thing to do was to be quiet and comfortable and we would be out in the morning. Max took it as a huge joke, and somebody found him at the telephone, giving it to one of the papers. The Mercer girls were hysterically giggling, and Aunt Selina sat on a stiff-backed chair and took aromatic ammonia. As for Jim, he had collapsed on the lowest step of the stairs, and sat there with his head in his hands. When he did look up, he did n't dare to look at me.

The Harbison man was arguing with the impassive individual on the top step outside, and I saw him get out his pocketbook and offer a crisp bundle of bills. But the man from the Board of Health only smiled and tacked at his offensive sign. After a while Mr. Harbison came in and closed the door, and we stared at each other.

"I know what I 'm going to do," I said, swallowing a lump in my throat: "I 'm going to get out through a basement window at the back. I am going home."

"Home!" Aunt Selina gasped, almost dropping her ammonia bottle. "My dear Bella! Home?"

Jimmy groaned from the foot of the stairs, but Anne Brown was getting over her tears and now she turned on me in a temper.

"It 's all your fault," she said. "I was going to stay at home and get a little sleep——"

"Well, you can sleep now," Dallas broke in. "There 'll be nothing to do but sleep."

"I think you have n't grasped the situation, Dal," I said icily. "There will be plenty to do. There is n't a servant in the house!"

Then there *was* a row. We had worked back to the den now, and I stood in front of the fireplace and let the storm beat around me, and tried to look perfectly cold and indifferent, and not see Mr. Harbison's shocked face. No wonder he thought them a lot of savages, browbeating their hostess the way they did.

"It 's a fool thing anyhow," Max Reed wound up, "to celebrate the anniversary of a divorce—especially——" Here he caught Jim's eye and stopped. But I had suddenly remembered. *Bella down in the basement!*

It was after midnight before they were rational enough to discuss ways and means, and of course the first thing suggested was that we all adjourn below-stairs and clean up after the dinner. I could have slain Max Reed for the notion, and the Mercer girls for taking him up.

"Of course we will," they said in a duet. "What a lark!" And they actually began to pin up their dinner gowns. It was Jim who stopped that.

"Oh, look here, you people," he objected, "I 'm not going to let you do that. We 'll get some servants in to-morrow. I 'll go down and put out the lights. There will be enough clean dishes for breakfast."

It was lucky for me that they started a new discussion then and there about who would get the breakfast. In the midst of the excitement I slipped away and carried the news to Bella. She was where I had left her, and she had made herself a cup of tea, and was very much at home, which was natural.

"Do you know," she said ominously, "that you have been away over an hour? And that I have gone through agonies of nervousness for fear Jim Wilson would come down and think I came here to see him."

"No one would think that, Bella," I soothed her. "Everybody knows you loathe him—Jim, too." She looked at me over the edge of her cup.

"I 'll run along now," she said, "since Takahiro is n't here. And if Jim has any sense at all, he will clear out every maid in the house. I never saw such a kitchen. Well, lead the way, Kit. I suppose they are deep in bridge, or roulette, or something."

She was fixing her veil, and I saw I would have to tell her. Personally, I would much rather have told her the house was on fire.

"Wait a minute, Bella," I said. "You see, something queer has happened. You know this is the anniversary—well, you know what it is—and Jim was awfully glum. So we thought we would come——"

"What are you driving at?" she demanded. "You are a sea-green, Kit. What 's the matter? You need n't think I mind because Jim has a jollification to celebrate his divorce."

"It—it was Takahiro—in the ambulance," I blurted. "Scarlet fever. We—Bella, we are shut in, quarantined."

She did n't faint. She just sat down and stared at me, and I stared back at her. Then a miserable alarm clock on the table suddenly went off like an explosion, and Bella began to laugh. I knew what that was—hysteria. She always had attacks like that when things went wrong. I was quite desperate by that time; I hoped they would all hear and come down and take her upstairs and put her to bed like a Christian, so she could giggle her soul out. But after a bit she quieted down and began to cry softly, and I knew the worst was over. I gave her a shake, and she was so angry that she got over it altogether.

"Kit, you are horrid," she choked. "Don't you see what a position I am in? I am not going upstairs to face Anne and the rest of them. You can just put me in the coal cellar."

"Is n't there a window you could get through?" I asked desperately. "Locking the door does n't shut up a whole house."

Bella's courage revived at that, and she said yes, there were windows, plenty of them, only she did n't see how she could get out. And I said she would *have* to get out, because I was playing Bella in the performance, and I did n't care for an understudy. Then the situation dawned on her, and she sat down and laughed herself weak in the knees. She wanted to stay, then, and see the fun out. But I was firm: she would have to go. Things were complicated enough without her.

Well, we looked funny, no doubt. Bella in a Russian pony automobile coat over the jet dinner-gown she had worn at the Clevelands' dinner, and I in cream lace, gathered up from the kitchen floor, with Bella's ermine pelerine around my bare shoulders, and dishes and overturned chairs everywhere.

Bella knew more about the lower regions of her ex-home than I would have thought. She opened a door in a corner and led the way through a narrow hall past the refrigerating-room, to a huge, cemented cellar, with a furnace in the centre, and a half-dozen electric lights making it really brilliant.

"Get a chair," Bella said over her shoulder, excitedly. "I can get out easily here, through the coal-hole. Imagine my——"

But it was my turn to grip Bella. From behind the furnace were coming the most terrible sounds, rasping noises that fairly frayed the silk of my nerves. We stood petrified for an instant. Then Bella laughed. "They are not all gone," she said carefully. "Some one is asleep there."

We tiptoed to where we could see around the furnace, and, sure enough, some one *was* asleep there. Only, it was not one of the servants; it was a portly policeman, with a newspaper and an empty plate on the floor on one side, and a champagne bottle on the other. He had slid down in his chair, with his chin on his brass buttons, and his helmet had rolled a dozen feet away. Bella had to clap her hand over her mouth.

"Fairly caught!" she whispered. "Sartor resartus, the arrester arrested. Oh, Jim and his flawless service!"

But after we got over our surprise, we saw the situation was serious. The policeman was threatening to waken. Once he stopped snoring to yawn noisily, and we beat a hasty retreat. Bella switched off the lights in a hurry and locked the door behind us. We hardly breathed until we were back in the kitchen again, and everything quiet. And then Jimmy called my name from up above somewhere.

"I am going to call him down, Bella," I said firmly. "Let him help you out. I 'm sure I don't see why I should have all this when the two of you——"

"Oh, no, no! Surely, Kit, you would n't be so cruel!" she whispered pleadingly. "You know what he would think. He—oh, Kit, let them all get settled for the night, and then come down, like a dear, and help me out. I know loads of ways—honestly I do."

"If I leave you here," I debated, "what about the policeman?"

"Never mind him"—frantically. "Listen! There 's Jim up in the pantry. Run, for the sake of heaven!"

So—I ran. At the top of the stairs I met Jimmy, very crumpled as to shirt-front and dejected as to face.

"I 've been hunting everywhere for you," he said dismally. "I thought you had added to the general merriment by falling downstairs and breaking your neck."

I went past him with my chin up. Now that I had time to think about it, I was furiously angry with him.

"Kit!" he called after me appealingly, but I would not hear. Then he adopted different tactics. He took advantage of my catching my foot in the lace of my gown to pass me, and to stand with his back against the door.

"You 're not going until you hear me, Kit," he declared miserably. "In the first place, for all you are down on me, is it my fault? Honestly, now?"

"Is it my fault"! I refused to speak.

"I was coming home to be miserable alone," he went on, "and—oh, I know you meant well, Kit; but *you* asked all these crazy people here."

"Perhaps you will give me credit for some things," I said wearily. "I did *not* give Takahiro scarlet fever, for instance, and—if you will permit me to mention it—Aunt Selina is not *my* Aunt Selina."

"That 's what I wanted to speak to you about," Jimmy went on wretchedly, trying not to look at me. "You see, when they were row-ing so about who would get breakfast—I never saw such a lot of people; half of them never touch breakfast, but of course now they want all kinds of things—when they were talking, Aunt Selina said she knew *you* would get it, being the hostess, and responsible, besides knowing where things were kept." He had fixed his eyes on the orchids, and he looked shrunken, actually shrunken. "I thought," he finished, "you might give me a few pointers now, and I could come down in the morning, and—and fuss up something, coffee and so on. I would say you did it! Oh, hang it all, Kit, why don't you say something?"

"What do you want me to say?" I demanded. "That I love to cook, and of course I 'll fix trays and carry them up in the morning to Anne Brown and Leila Mercer and the rest; and that I will have the shaving water ready——"

"I know what I 'm going to do," Jimmy said, with sudden resolution. "Aunt Selina and her money can go to blazes. I am going right upstairs and tell her the truth, tell her who you are, what I am, and all the rest of it." He opened the door.

"You 'll do nothing of the kind," I gasped, catching him in time. "Don't dare, Jimmy Wilson! Why, what would they think of me? After letting her call me Bella, and him—— Jim, if Mr. Harbison ever learns the truth, I—I will take poison. If we are going to be shut up here together, we will have to carry it on. I could n't stand the disgrace."

In spite of a heroic effort, Jim looked relieved. "They have been hunting for the linen closet," he said, more cheerfully, "and there will be room enough, I think. Harbison and I will hang out in the studio: there are two couches there. I 'm afraid you 'll have to take Aunt Selina, Kit."

"Certainly," I said coldly. That was the way it was all along. Whenever there was something to do that no one else would undertake—any unpleasant responsibility—that entire mongrel household turned with one gesture and pointed its finger at me! Well, it is over now, and I ought not to be bitter, considering everything.

It was quite characteristic of that memorable evening (that is quite novelesque, I think) that my interview with Jimmy should have a sensational ending. He was terribly down, of course, and as I was trying to pass him to the door, he caught my hand.

"You 're a girl in a thousand, Kit," he said forlornly. "If I were not so damnably, hopelessly, idiotically in love with—somebody else, I would be crazy about you."

"Don't be maudlin," I retorted. "Would you mind letting my hand go?" I felt sure Bella could hear.

"Oh, come now, Kit," he implored, "we 've always got along so well. It 's a shame to let a thing like this make us bad friends. Are n't you ever going to forgive me?"

"Never," I said promptly. "When I once get away, I don't want ever to see you again. I was never so humiliated in my life. I loathe you!"

And of course then I turned around, and there was Aunt Selina with her eyes protruding until you could have knocked them off with a stick, and beside her, very red and uncomfortable, Mr. Harbison!

"Bella!" she said, in a shocked voice, "is that the way you speak to your husband! It is high time I came here, I think, and took a hand in this affair."

"Oh, never mind, Aunt Selina," Jim said, with a sheepish grin. "Kit—Bella is tired and nervous. This is the h—deuce of a situation. No—er—servants, and all that."

But Aunt Selina did mind, and showed it. She pulled the unlucky Harbison man in through the door and closed it, and then stood glaring at us both.

"Every little quarrel is an apple knocked from the tree of love," she announced oratorically.

"This was a very little quarrel," Jim said, edging toward the door; "a—a green apple, Aunt Selina, a colicky little green apple." But she was not to be diverted.

"Bella," she said severely, "you said you loathed him. You did n't mean that."

"But I do!" I cried hysterically. "There is n't any word to tell how I—how I detest him."

Then I swept past them all and flew to Bella's dressing-room and locked myself in. Aunt Selina knocked until she was tired, then gave up and went to bed.

That was the night Anne Brown's pearl collar was stolen!

IV.

Of course, one knows that there are people who in a different grade of society would be shoplifters and pickpockets. When they are restrained by obligation or environment they become a little over-keen at bridge, or take the wrong sables, or stuff a gold-backed brush into a muff at a reception. (You remember the ivory dressing set that Theodora Bucknell had fastened with fine gold chains? And the sensation it caused at the Bucknell cotillion when Mrs. Van Zire went sweeping to her carriage with two feet of gold chain hanging from the front of her wrap?)

But Anne's pearl collar was different. In the first place, instead of three or four hundred people, the suspicion had to be divided among ten. And of those ten, at least eight of us were friends, and the other two had been vouched for by the Browns and Jimmy. It was a horrible mix-up. For the necklace was gone—there could n't be any doubt of that—and although, as Dallas said, it could n't get out of the house, still, there were plenty of places to hide the thing.

The worst of our troubles really originated with Max Reed, after all. For it was Max who made the silly wager over the telephone, with Dick Bagley. He bet five hundred even that one of us, at least, would break quarantine within the next twenty-four hours, and of course that settled it. Dick told it around the club as a joke, and a man who owns a newspaper heard him and called up the paper. Then the paper called up the Health Office, after setting up a scare-head, "Will Money Free Them? Board of Health Versus Millionaire."

It was almost three when the house settled down—nobody had any night-clothes, although finally, through Dallas, who gave them to Anne, who gave them to the rest, we got some things of Jimmy's—and I was still dressed. The house was perfectly quiet, and, after listening carefully, I went slowly down the stairs. There was a light in the hall, and another back in the dining-room, and I got along without any trouble. But the pantry, where the stairs led down, was dark, and the wretched swinging door would not stay open.

I caught my skirt in the door as I went through, and I had to stop to loosen it. And in that awful minute I heard some one breathing just beside me. I had stooped to my gown, and I turned my head without straightening—I could n't have raised myself to an erect posture, for my knees were giving way under me—and just at my feet lay the still glowing end of a match!

I had to swallow twice before I could speak. Then I said sharply:

"Who 's there?"

The man was so close it is a wonder I had not walked into him; his voice was right at my ear.

"I am sorry I startled you," he said quietly. "I was afraid to speak suddenly, or move, for fear I would do—what I have done."

It was Mr. Harbison.

"I—I thought you were—it is very late," I managed to say, with dry lips. "Do you know where the electric switch is?"

"Mrs. Wilson!" It was clear he had not known me before. "Why, no; don't you?"

"I am all confused," I muttered, and beat a retreat into the dining-room. There, in the friendly light, we could at least see each other, and I think he was as much impressed by the fact that I had not undressed as I was by the fact that he *had*, partly. He wore a hideous dressing-gown of Jimmy's, much too small, and his hair, parted and plastered down in the early evening, stood up in a sort of brown brush all over his head. He was trying to flatten it with his hands.

"It must be three o'clock," he said, with polite surprise, "and the house is like a barn. You ought not to be running around with your arms uncovered, Mrs. Wilson. Surely you could have called some of us."

"I did n't wish to disturb any one," I said, with distinct truth.

"I suppose you are like me," he said. "The novelty of the situation—and everything. I got to thinking things over, and then I realized the studio was getting cold, so I thought I would come down and take a look at the furnace. I did n't suppose any one else would think of it. But I lost myself in that pantry and nearly went down the dumb-waiter." And, as if in judgment on me, at that instant came two rather terrific thumps from somewhere below, and inarticulate words, shouted rather than spoken. It was uncanny, of course, coming as it did through the register at our feet. Mr. Harbison looked startled.

"Oh, by the way," I said, as carelessly as I could. "In the excitement, I forgot to mention it. There is a policeman asleep in the furnace room. I—I suppose we will have to keep him, now," I finished, as airily as I could.

"Oh, a policeman—in the cellar," he repeated, staring at me, and then he moved toward the pantry door.

"You need n't go down," I said desperately, with visions of Bella Knowles sitting on the kitchen table, surrounded by soiled dishes and all the cheerless aftermath of a dinner party. "Please don't go down. I—it 's one of my rules—never to let a stranger go down to the kitchen. I—I 'm peculiar—that way—and besides, it 's—it 's mussy."

Bang! Crash! through the register pipe, and some language quite articulate. Then silence.

"Look here, Mrs. Wilson," he said resolutely. "What do I care about the kitchen? I 'm going down and arrest that policeman for disturbing the peace. He will have the pipes down."

"You must not go," I said, with desperate firmness. "He—he is probably in a very dangerous state just now. We—I—locked him in."

The Harbison man grinned and then became serious.

"Why don't you tell me the whole thing?" he asked. "You 've been in trouble all evening, and—you can trust me, you know, because I am a stranger—because the minute this crazy quarantine is raised I am off to the Argentine Republic" (perhaps he said Chili) "and because I don't know anything at all about you. You see, I have to believe what you tell me, having no personal knowledge of any of you to go on. Now, tell me—whom have you hidden in the cellar, beside the policeman?"

"Come," I said, with sudden resolution, and led the way down the stairs.

He said nothing when he saw Bella, for which I was grateful. She was sitting at the table, with her arms in front of her, and her head buried in them. And then I saw she was asleep. Her hat and veil lay beside her, and she had taken off her coat and draped it around her. She had rummaged out a cold pheasant and some salad, and had evidently had a little supper. Supper and a nap, while I worried myself gray-headed about her!

"I would n't rouse her," Mr. Harbison said, as if the situation were quite ordinary. "If she can sleep like that where she is, let her alone. There are only enough beds upstairs, I understand."

She began to rouse at that. She lifted her head with her eyes shut, and then opened them one at a time, blinked, and sat up. She did n't see him at first.

"You wretch!" she said ungratefully, after she had yawned. "Do you know what time it is? And that——" Then she saw Mr. Harbison and stood glaring at him.

"It 's like this," I began, to him. "You see, we—I—— Bella, this is Mr. Harbison, and he is going to help you out." Then Bella came to my help.

"I am Miss Knowles," she said loftily (of course the court gave her back her name), "and I stopped in to-night, thinking the house was empty, to see about a—a butler. Unfortunately, the house was quarantined just at that time, and—here I am. Surely there cannot be any harm in helping me to get out?" (pleading tone). "I have not been exposed to any contagion, and in the exhausted state of my health the confinement would be positively dangerous."

She rolled her eyes at him, and I could see she was making an impression. Of course she was free. She had a perfect right to marry again, but I will say this: Bella is a lot better looking by electric light than she is the next morning.

The upshot of it was that the gentleman who built bridges and looked down on society from a lofty, lonely pinnacle agreed to help one of the most gleaming members of the aforesaid society to outwit the law.

It took about fifteen minutes to quiet the policeman. Nobody ever knew what Mr. Harbison did to him, but for twenty-four hours he was quite tractable. He changed after that, but that comes later in the story. Anyhow, the Harbison man went upstairs and came down with a Bagdad curtain and cushion to match, and took them into the furnace-room, and came out and locked the door behind him, and then we were ready for Bella's escape.

But there were four special officers and three reporters watching that house (that was the result of Max Reed's idiocy). Once, after trying all the other windows and finding them guarded, we discovered a little bit of a hole in an out of the way corner that looked like a ventilator and was covered with a heavy wire screen. No prisoners ever dug their way out of a dungeon with more energy than we attacked that screen, hacking at it with kitchen knives, whispering like conspirators, being scratched, frozen with the cold air one minute and boiling with excitement the next. And when the wire was cut, and Bella had rolled her coat up and thrust it through, and was standing on a chair ready to follow, something that had looked like a barrel outside moved and said, "Oh, I would n't do that if I were you. It would be certain to be undignified, and probably it would be unpleasant—later."

We coaxed and pleaded, and tried to bribe, and that was one of the worst things we had to endure. For the whole conversation came out the next afternoon in the paper, with the most awful drawings, and the reporter said it was the flashing of the jewels we wore that first attracted his attention. And that brings me back to the robbery.

For when we had crept back to the kitchen, and Bella was fumbling for her handkerchief to cry into, and the Harbison man was trying to apologize for the language he had used to the reporter, and I was on the verge of a nervous chill—well, it was then that Bella forgot all about crying and jumped and held out her arm.

"My diamond bracelet!" she screeched. "Look, I 've lost it."

Well, we went over every inch of that basement, until I knew every crack in the flooring, every spot of the cement. And Bella was nasty, and said she had never seen that part of the house in such condition, and that if I had acted like a sane person and put her out, when she had no business there at all, she would have had her freedom and her bracelet, and that if we were playing a joke on her (as if we felt like joking!) we would please give her the bracelet and let her go and die in a corner; she felt very queer.

At half past four o'clock we gave up.

"It 's gone," I said. "I don't believe you wore it here. No one could have taken it. There was n't a soul in this part of the house."

At five o'clock we put her to sleep in the den. She was in a fearful temper, and I was glad enough to be able to shut the door on her. Tom Harbison—that was his name—helped me to creep upstairs, and wanted to get me a glass of ale to make me sleep. But I said it would be of no use, as I had to get up and get the breakfast. The last thing he said was that the policeman seemed above the average in intelligence, and perhaps we could train him to do plain cooking and dish-washing.

I did not go to sleep at once. I lay on the chintz-covered divan in Bella's dressing-room, and stared at the picture of her with the violets underneath. I could n't see what there was about Bella to inspire such undying devotion, but I had to admit that she had looked handsome that night, and that the Harbison man had certainly been impressed.

At seven o'clock Jimmy Wilson came up and pounded at my door, and I could have choked him joyfully. I dragged myself to the door and opened it, and then I heard excited voices. Everybody seemed to be up but Aunt Selina, and they were all talking at once.

Anne Brown's pearl collar had been stolen from the dressing-table in her room!

When we had all gathered in Anne's room (and we were a strange-looking lot. I gave my word to the others I would *not* put in the story what we wore that day until our trunks came) Jimmy held up his hand, and signified he wanted to say something.

"It 's like this," he said: "until this thing is cleared up, for Heaven's sake let 's try to be sane! If every fellow thinks the other fellow did it, this house will be a nice little hell to live in. And if anybody"—here he glared around—"if anybody has got funny and is hiding those jewels, I want to say that he 'd better speak up now. Later, it won't be so easy for him. It 's a mighty poor joke."

But nobody spoke.

V.

It was Betty Mercer who said she was hungry, and got them switched from the delicate subject of which of us was the thief to the quite as pressing subject of which was to be cook. Aunt Selina had slept quietly through the whole thing—we learned afterwards that she customarily slept on her left side, which was on her good ear. We gathered in the Dallas Brown room, and Jimmy proposed a plan.

"We can have anything sent in that we want," he suggested speciously, "and if Dal does n't make good with the city fathers, you girls can get some clothes anyhow. Then, we can have dinner sent from one of the hotels."

"Why not all the meals?" Max suggested. "I hope you 're not going to be small about things, Jimmy."

"It ought to be easy," Jim persisted, ignoring the remark, "for nine reasonably intelligent people to boil eggs and make coffee, which is all we need for breakfast, with some fruit."

"Nine of us!" Dallas said wickedly, looking at Tom Harbison. "Why nine of us? I thought Kit here, otherwise known as Bella, was going to show off her housewifely skill."

It ended, however, with Mr. Harbison writing out a lot of slips, cook, scullery-maid, chamber-maid, parlor-maid, furnace, and butler, and as that left two people over—we did n't count Aunt Selina—he added another furnace and a trained nurse. Betty Mercer drew the trained nurse slip, and of course she was delighted. It seems funny now to look back and think what a dreadful time she really had (Aunt Selina took the grippe, you know, that very day).

It was fate that I should go back to that awful kitchen, for of course my slip said "cook." Mr. Harbison was butler, and Max and Dal got the furnace, although neither of them had ever been any nearer to a bucket of coal than the coupons on mining stock. Anne got the bedrooms, and Leila was parlor-maid. It was Jimmy who got the scullery work, but he was quite crushed by this time and did not protest at all.

Max was in a very bad temper: I suppose he had not had enough sleep—no one had. But he came over while the lottery was going on and stood over me and demanded that I stop masquerading as another man's wife and generally making a fool of myself—which is the way he put it. And I knew in my heart he was right, and I hated him for it.

"Why don't you go and tell him—them?" I asked nastily. "Tell them that, to be obliging, I have nearly drowned in a sea of lies; tell them that I am not only not married, but that I never intend to marry. Tell them that we are a lot of idiots with nothing better to do than to trifle with strangers within our gates, people who build—I mean, people that are worth two to our one! Run and tell them."

He looked at me for a minute, then he turned on his heel and left me. It looked as though Max might be going to be difficult.

While I was improvising an apron out of a towel, and Anne was pinning a sheet into a kimona, so she could take off her dinner gown and still be proper, Dallas harked back to the robbery.

"Anne put the collar in the silver box there," he said. "I watched her do it, for I remember thinking it was the sole reminder I had that Consolidated Traction ever went above thirty-nine."

Max was looking around the room, examining the window-locks and whistling between his teeth. He was in disgrace with every one, for by that time it was light enough to see three reporters with cameras waiting across the street for enough light to snap the house, and everybody knew that it was Max and his idiotic wager that had done it. He had made two or three conciliatory remarks, but no one would speak to him. His antics were so queer, however, that we were all watching him, and when he had felt over the rug with his hands, and raised the edges, and tried to lift out the chair-seats, and had shaken out Dal's shoes (he said people often hid things and then forgot all about it), he made a proposition.

"If you will take that infernal furnace from around my neck, I'll undertake to find either the jewels or show up the thief," he said quietly. And of course, with all the people in the house under suspicion, every one had to hail the suggestion with joy, and offer his assistance, and Jimmy had to take Max's share of the furnace. So they took the scullery slip downstairs to the policeman.

"In the first place," Max said, standing importantly in the middle of the room, "we retired between two and three—nearer three. So the theft occurred between three and six-thirty, when Anne woke up. Was your door locked, Dal?"

"No. The door into the hall was, but the door into the dressing-room was open for ventilation, and we found the door from there into the hall open this morning."

"From three until seven," Max repeated. "Was any one out of his room during that time?"

"I was," said Tom Harbison promptly, from the foot of the bed. "I was prowling all around somewhere about four, searching"—he glanced at me—"for a drink of water. But as I don't know a pearl from a glass bead, I hope you exonerate me."

Everybody laughed and said "Of course," and "Sure, old man," and changed the subject quickly. While that excitement was on, I got Jim to one side and told him about Bella. His good-natured face was radiant at first.

"I suppose she *did* come to see Takahiro, eh, Kit?" he asked delicately. "She did n't say anything about me?"

"Nothing good. She said the house was in a disgraceful condition," I said heartlessly. "And her diamond bracelet was stolen while she took a nap on the kitchen table"—he groaned—"and—oh, Jim, you are such a goose! If I could only manage my own affairs the way I could my friends'? She 's too sure of you, Jimmy. She knows you adore her, and—how brutal could you be, Jim?"

He eyed me thoughtfully.

"Fair," he said. "I may have undiscovered depths of brutality that I have never had occasion to use. However, I might try. Why?"

"Listen, Jim," I urged. "It was always Bella who did things here: she managed the house, she tyrannized over her friends, and she bullied you. Yes, she did. Now she 's here, without your invitation, and she has to stay. It 's your turn to bully, to dictate terms, to be coldly civil or politely rude. Make her furious at you. If she is jealous, so much the better."

"How far would you sacrifice yourself on the altar of friendship?" he asked.

"You may pay me all the attention you like, in public," I replied, and together we went to Bella.

There was an ominous pause when we went into the den. Bella was sitting by the register, with her furs on, and after one glance over her shoulder at us, she looked away again without speaking.

"Bella," Jim said appealingly. And then I pinched his arm, and he drew himself up and looked properly outraged.

"Bella," he said, coldly this time, "I can't imagine why you have put yourself in this ridiculous position, but since you have——"

She turned on him like a fury.

"Put *myself* in this position!" She was frantic. "It's a plot, a wretched trick of yours, this quarantine, to keep me here."

Jim gasped, but I gave him a warning glance, and he swallowed hard.

"On the contrary, Bella," he said, with maddening quiet, "I would be the last person in the world to wish to perpetuate an indiscretion of yours. For it was hardly discreet, was it, to visit a bachelor establishment alone at eleven o'clock at night? As far as my plotting to keep you here is concerned, I assure you that nothing could be further from my mind. Our paths were to be two parallel lines that never touch." He looked at me for approval, and Bella was choking.

"You are worse than I ever thought you," she stormed. "I thought you were only a—a fool. Now I know you—for a brute!"

Well, it ended by Jim graciously permitting Bella to remain—there being nothing else to do—and by his magnanimously agreeing to keep her real identity from Aunt Selina and Mr. Harbison, and to break the news of her presence to Anne and the rest. It created a sensation beside which Anne's pearls faded away, although they came to the front again soon enough.

The Harbison man came down while I was standing hopelessly in front of the gas range, and showed me about it.

"I don't know that I ever saw one," he said cheerfully, "but I know the theory. Likewise, by the same token, this teakettle, set on the flame, will boil. That is not theory, however. That is early knowledge. 'Polly, put the kettle on; we'll all take tea.' Look at that, Mrs. Wilson. I didn't fight bacilli with boiled water at Chickamauga for nothing."

And then he let out the policeman and brought him into the kitchen. He was a large man, and his face was a curious mixture of amazement, alarm, and dignity. No doubt we did look queer, still in parts of our evening things and I in the white silk and lace petticoat that belonged under my gown, with a yellow and black pajama coat of Jimmy's as a sort of breakfast jacket.

"This is Officer Flannigan," Mr. Harbison said. "I explained our unfortunate position earlier in the morning, and he is prepared to accept our hospitality. Flannigan, every person in this house has got to work, as I also explained to you. You are appointed dish-washer and scullery maid."

The policeman looked dazed. Then, slowly, like dawn over a sleeping lake, a light of comprehension grew in his face.

"Sure," he said, laying his helmet on the table. "I'll be glad to be doing anything I can to help. Me and Mrs. Wilson—we used to be friends. It's many the time I've opened the carriage door for her, and she with her head in the air, and for all that, the pleasant smile. When any one around her was having a party and wanted a special officer, it was Mrs. Wilson that always said, 'Get Flannigan, Officer Timothy Flannigan. He's your man.'"

My heart had been going lower and lower. So he knew Bella, and he knew I was not Bella, although he had not grasped the fact that I was usurping her place. And the odious Harbison man sat on the table and swung his feet.

"Don't you think you had better attend to the table?" I asked coldly, and to my immense relief he went at once. Sounds of banging silver came down the stairs, and once the crash of broken china. And Officer Timothy Flannigan ground the coffee and gave his opinion of the Board of Health in no stinted terms. As for me, I burned my fingers and the toast, and felt myself growing hot and cold, for I was going to be found out as soon as Flannigan grasped the situation.

Then, of course, I did the thing that caused me so much trouble later. I put down the egg poacher—at least, the Harbison man said it was a poacher—and went over and stood in front of the policeman.

"I don't suppose you will understand—exactly," I said, "but—but if anything occurs to—to make you think I am not—that things are not what they seem to be—I mean, what I say they are—you will understand that it is a joke, won't you? A joke, you know."

Yes, that was what I said. I know it sounds like a raving delirium, but when Max came down and squizzled some bacon, as he said, and told Flannigan about the robbery, and how, whether it was a joke or deadly earnest, somebody in the house had Anne's pearls, that wretched policeman winked at me solemnly over Max's shoulder. Oh, it was awful!

And, to add to my discomfort, the most unpleasant ideas *would* obtrude themselves. *What* was Mr. Harbison doing on the first floor of the house that night? Ice water, he said. But there had been plenty of water in the studio! And he had told me it was the furnace!

VI.

(*Letters found in the post-box after lifting of quarantine.*)

From Thomas Harbison, late Engineer of Bridges, Peruvian Trunk Lines, South America, to Henry Llewellyn, c/o Union Nitrate Company, Iquique, Chili.

DEAR OLD MAN:

I think I was fully a week trying to drive out of my mind my last glimpse of you with your sickly grin, pretending to be tickled to pieces that the only other white man within two hundred miles of your shack was going on a holiday. You old bluffer! I used to hang over the rail of the steamer, on the way up, and see you standing as I left you beside the car with its mule and the Indian driver, and behind you a million miles of soul-destroying pampa. Never mind, Jack; I sent yesterday by mail steamer the cigarettes, pipes and tobacco, canned goods and poker chips. Put in some magazines, too, and the collars. Don't know about the ties—guess it won't matter down there.

Nothing happened on the trip. One of the engines broke down three days out, and I spent all my time below-decks for forty-eight hours. Chief engineer raving with D. T.'s. Got the engine fixed in record time, and have n't got my hands clean yet. It was bully.

With this I send the papers, which will tell you how I happen to be here, and why I have leisure to write you three days after landing. If the situation were not so ridiculous, it would be maddening. Here I am, off for a holiday and congratulating myself that I am foot free and heart free—yes, my friend, heart free!—here I am, shut in the house of a man I never saw until last night, and would n't care if I never saw again, with a lot of people who never heard of me, who are almost equally vague about South America, who play as hard at bridge as I ever worked at building one (forgive this, won't you? The novelty has gone to my head), and who belong to the very class of extravagant, luxury-loving, non-producing parasites (is n't that what we called them?) that you and I used to revile from our lofty Andean pinnacle.

To come down to earth: here we are, six women and five men, including a policeman, not a servant in the house, and no one who knows how to do anything. They are really immensely interesting, these people: they all know each other very well, and it is "Jimmy" here, and "Dal" there—Dallas Brown, who went to India with me; you remember my speaking of him—and they are good-natured, too, except at meal-times. The little hostess, Mrs. Wilson, took over the cooking, and, although luncheon was better than breakfast, the food still leaves much to the imagination.

I wish you could see this Mrs. Wilson, Hal. You would change a whole lot of your ideas. She is a thoroughbred, sure enough, and of course some of her beauty is the result of the exquisite care about which you and I—still from our Andean pinnacle—used to rant. But the fact is, she is more than that. She has fire, and pluck, no end. If you could have seen her this morning, standing in front of a cold kitchen range, determined to conquer it, and had seen the tilt of her chin when I offered to take over the cooking—you need n't grin; I can cook, and you know it—you would understand what I mean. It was so clear that she was paralyzed with fright at the idea of getting breakfast, and equally clear that she meant to do it. By the way, I have learned that her name was McNair before she married this would-be artist, Wilson, and that she is a daughter of *the* McNair who financed the Callao branch!

I have not met the others so intimately. There are two sisters named Mercer, inclined to be noisy—they are playing roulette in the next room now. One is small and dark, almost Hebraic in type, named Laura and called Lollie. The other, larger, very blonde and languishing, and with a decided preference for masculine society, even, saving the mark, mine! Dallas Brown's wife, good-looking, smokes cigarettes when I am not around—they all do, except Mrs. Wilson. Then there is a maiden aunt, who is ill to-day with grippe and excitement, and a Miss Knowles, called Bella, who came for a moment last night to see Mrs. Wilson, was caught in the quarantine (see papers), and, after hiding all night in the basement, is sulking all day in her room. Her presence created an excitement out of all proportion to the apparent cause.

From the fact that I have reason to know that my artist-host and his beautiful wife are on bad terms, and from the significant glances with which the announcement of Miss Knowles's presence was met, the state of affairs seems rather clear. Wilson impresses me as a spineless sort, anyhow, and when the lady of the basement shut herself away from the rest to-day and I happened on "Jimmy," as they call him, pleading with her through the door, I very nearly kicked him down the stairs. Oh, yes, I'll keep out, right enough; it isn't my affair.

By the way, after the quarantine and with the policeman locked in the furnace-room, a pearl necklace and a diamond bracelet were stolen! Just nine of us to divide the suspicion! Upon my word, Hal, it's the queerest situation I ever heard of. Which of us did it? I make a guess that not a few of us are fools, but which is the knave? The worst of it is, I am the only unaccredited member of the household!

This is more scandal than I ever wrote in my life. Lay it to circumscribed environment, and the lack of twenty miles over the pampas before breakfast. We have all been disinfected, and the officious gentlemen from the Board of Health have taken their grins and their formaldehyde and gone. Ye gods, how we cough!

The Carlton order will go through all right, I think. 'Phoned him this morning. If it does, old man, we will take a month in September and explore the Mercator property.

Do you know, Hal, I have been thinking lately that you and I stick too close to the grind. Business is all right enough, but what's the use of spending one's best years succeeding in everything except the things that are worth while? I'll be thirty sooner than I care to say, and—oh, well, you won't understand. You'll sit down there, with the Southern Cross and the rest of the infernal astronomical galaxy looking down on you, and the Indians chanting in the village, and you will think I have grown sentimental. I have not. You and I down there have been looking at the world through the reverse end of the glass. It's a bully old world, Hal, and this is God's part of it.

Burn this letter after you read it: I suspect it is covered with germs. Well, happy days, old man.

Yours,

TOM

P. S. By the way, can't you spare some of the Indian pottery you picked up at Callao? I told Mrs. Wilson about it, and she was immensely interested. Send it to this address. Can you get it to the next steamer?—T.

From Maxwell Reed to Richard Burton Bagley, University Club, New York.

Dear Dick:

Enclosed find my check for five hundred, as per wager. Possibly you were within your rights in protecting your bet in the manner you chose, but while I do not wish to be offensive, your reporters are damnably so.

Yours,

Maxwell Reed

From Officer Flannigan to Mrs. Maggie Flannigan, Erin Street.

Dear Maggie:

As soon as you receive this, go down to Mac and tell him the story as I tell you hear. Tell him I was walkin' my beat, and I 'd been afther seein' Jimmy Alverini about doin' the right thing for Mac on Monday, at the poles, when I seen a man hangin' suspicious around this house, which is Mr. Wilson's, on Ninety-fifth. And av coorse, afther chasin' the man a mile or more, I lose him, which was not my fault. So I go back to the Wilson house, and tell them to be careful about closin' up fer the night, and while I 'm standin' in the hall, with all the swells around me, sparklin' with jewels, the Board of Health sends a man to lock us all in, because the Jap that 's been waiter has took the scarlet fever and gone to the hospitle. I stood me ground. I sez, sez I, you can't shtop an officer in pursute av his duty, I rayfuse to be shut in. Be shure to tell Mac that.

So here I am, and like to be for a month. Tell Mac there 's four votes shut up tight here, and I can get them for him, if he can stop this monkey business.

Then go over to the Dago Church on Webster Avenue and put a dollar in Saint Anthony's box. He 'll see me out of this scrape, right enough. Do it at once. Now remember, go to Mac first: may be you can get the dollar from him, and mind what you tell him.

Your husband,

Tim Flannigan

From Bella Knowles (ex-Wilson) to Mr. Reginald Barry Wolfe, Palm Beach, Fla.

Dear Reggie:

I 've been thinking it over, Reggie, and I find I just can't. I 'm a wretch, I know. You cannot think any worse of me than I do of myself. I honestly thought I meant it when I said "Yes," but I have n't the courage after all. Now, don't be silly enough to regret me, Reg. It 's the best thing that ever happened to you; you will find a nice girl who has some illusions left, and who thinks you are perfect—you know I don't—and you will be a great deal happier than you deserve to be, and not half as much so as I wish.

Ever faithfully—ought this to be "faithless"?

Bella Jeannette Knowles

P.S. How is the chestnut mare Toddy wrote me about? Have her looked over and let me know, will you? One has to watch Toddy.—B.

From Miss Katherine McNair to her mother, Mrs. Theodore McNair, Hotel Hamilton, Bermuda.

DEAREST MOTHER:

I hope you will get this before you read the papers, and when you *do* read them, you are not to get excited and worried. I am as well as can be, and a great deal safer than I ever remember to have been in my life. We are quarantined, a lot of us, in Jim Wilson's house, because his irreproachable Jap did a very reproachable thing—took scarlet fever. Now read on before you get excited. *His room has been fumigated.* The danger is nil. I am well and happy. I can't be killed in a railway wreck or smashed when the car skids. Unless I drown myself in my bath, or jump through a window, positively nothing can happen me. So gather up all your maternal anxieties and cast them to the Bermuda sharks.

Anne Brown is here—see the papers for list—and if she cannot play propriety, Jimmy's Aunt Selina can. In fact, she does n't play at it: she works. I have telephoned Lizette for some clothes—enough for a couple of weeks, although Dallas promises to get us out sooner. Now, dear, do go ahead and have a nice time; on no account come home. You could only have the carriage stop in front of the house, and wave to me through a window.

Mother, I want you to do something for me. The Manning boy is down there, and—this is awfully delicate, Mummy—but he 's a nice boy, and I thought I liked him. I guess you know he has been rather attentive. Now, I *do* like him, Mumsy, but not the way I thought I did, and I want you to—very gently, of course—to discourage him a little. You know how I mean. He 's a dear boy, but I am so tired of people who don't know anything but horses and motors.

And, oh, yes,—do you remember a girl named Lucille Mellon, who was at school with you in Rome? And that she married a man named Harbison? Well, her son is here! He builds railroads and bridges and things, and he even built himself an automobile down in South America, because he could n't afford to buy one, and burned wood in it! Wood! Think of it!

I wired father in Chicago for fear he would come rushing home. The picture in the paper of the face at the basement window is supposed to be Mr. Harbison, but of course it is n't any more like him than mine is like me.

Anne Brown mislaid her pearl collar when she took it off last night, and has fussed herself into a sick headache. She declares it was stolen! Some of the people are playing bridge, Betty Mercer is doing a cake-walk to the Rhapsodie Hongroise—Jim has no every day music—and the telephone is ringing. We have received enough flowers for a funeral—somebody sent Lollie a Gates Ajar, only with the gate shut!

There are no servants—think of it, Mummy. I wish you had made me learn to cook. Mr. Harbison has shown me a little—he was a soldier in the Spanish war—but we girls are a terribly ignorant lot, Mummy, about the real things of life.

Now don't worry. It is more sport than camping in the Adirondacks, and not nearly so damp.

Your loving daughter,

KATHERINE

P. S. South America must be wonderful. Why can't we put the *Gadfly* in commission, and take a coasting trip this summer? It is a shame to own a yacht and never use it.—K.

(Sent by messenger.)

Mr. Alex. Dodds, City Editor, Mail and Star,

DEAR D.

Can't get a picture. Have waited seven hours. They have closed the shutters.

McCORD

(By return messenger—written on back of previous note.)

Watch the roof.—D.

VII.

Resuming Miss McNair's Narrative

THE most charitable thing would be to say nothing about that first day. We were baldly brutal—that's the only word for it. And Mr. Harbison, with his beautiful courtesy—the really sincere kind—tried to patch up one peace after another and failed. He rose superbly to the occasion, and made something that he called a South American goulash for luncheon, although it was too salty, and every one was thirsty the rest of the day.

Bella was horrid, of course. She locked herself in the dressing-room—it had been assigned to me, but that made no difference to Bella—and did her nails, and took three different baths, and refused to come to the table. And of course Jimmy was wild, and said she would starve. But I said, "Very well, let her starve." Not a tray left my kitchen. It was a comfort to have her shut up there anyhow: it postponed the time when she would come face to face with Flannigan.

While Betty Mercer was fussing with Aunt Selina—she was the nurse, you remember—trying to fix her pillows to suit her, and scalding her with a hot water bottle, and being called everything unpleasant, Max led a search of the house. He said the necklace and the bracelet must be hidden somewhere, and that no crevice was too small to neglect.

We made a formal search all together, except Aunt Selina, and we found a lot of things in different places that Jim said had been missing since the year one. But no jewels—nothing even suggesting a jewel was found. We had explored the entire house, every cupboard, every chest, even the insides of the couches and the pockets of Jim's clothes—which he resented bitterly—and found nothing, and I must say the situation was growing rather strained. Some one had taken the jewels; they had n't walked away.

It was Flannigan who suggested the roof, and as we had tried every place else, we climbed there. Of course we did n't find anything, but after all day in the house with the shutters closed on account of reporters, the air was glorious. It was February, but quite mild and sunny, and we could look down over Riverside Drive and the Hudson, and even recognize people we knew on horseback and in cars. It was a pathetic joy, and we lined up along the parapet and watched the motor-boats racing on the river, and tried to feel that we were in the world, as well as of it, but it was very hard.

Betty Mercer had been making tea for Aunt Selina, and fussing a lot about it. Of course, when she heard us up there, she followed, tray and all, and we drank Aunt Selina's tea and had the first really nice time of the day. Bella had come up, too, but she was still standoffish and queer, and she stood leaning against a chimney and staring out over the river. After a little Mr. Harbison put down his cup and went to her, and they talked quite confidentially for a long time. I thought it bad taste in Bella, under the circumstances, after snubbing Dallas and Max, and of course treating Jim like the dirt under her feet, to turn right around and be lovely to Mr. Harbison. Of course I was thinking of Jim: it was hard for him.

Max came and sat down beside me, and Flannigan, who had been sent down for more cups, passed the tea, putting the tray on top of the chimney. Jim was sitting grumpily on the ground, with his feet folded under him, playing Canfield in the shadow of the water tank, buying the deck out of one pocket and putting his winnings in the other. He was watching Bella, too, and she knew it, and she strained a point to captivate Mr. Harbison. Any one could see that.

And that was the picture that came out in the next morning's papers, tea-cups, cards, and all. For when some one looked up, there were four newspaper photographers on the roof of the next house, and they had the impertinence to thank us!

Flannigan had seen Bella by that time, but as he still did n't understand the situation, things were just the same. But his manner to me puzzled me; whenever he came near me he winked prodigiously, and during all the search he kept one eye on me, and seemed to be amused about something.

When the rest had gone down to dress for dinner, which was being sent in, thank goodness, I still sat on the parapet and watched the darkening river. I felt terribly lonely, all at once, and sad. There was n't any one any nearer than father, in the West, or mother, in

Bermuda, who really cared a rap whether I sat on that parapet all night or not, or who would really be sorry if I leaped over onto the dirty bricks of the next-door yard—not that I meant to, of course.

The lights came out across the river, and made purple and yellow streaks on the water, and one of the motor-boats came panting back to the yacht club, coughing and gasping as if it had overdone. Down on the street automobiles were starting and stopping, cabs rolling, doors slamming, all the maddening, delightful bustle of people who are foot-free, to dine out, to dance, to go to the theatre, to do any of the thousand possibilities of a long February evening. And above them I sat on a roof and cried. Yes, cried.

I was roused by some one coughing just behind me, and I tried to straighten my face before I turned. It was Flannigan, his double row of brass buttons gleaming in the twilight.

"Excuse me, miss," he said affably, "but the boy from the hotel has left the dinner on the doorstep and run, the cowardly little divil! What'll I do with it? I went to Mrs. Wilson, but she says it's no concern of hers." He was evidently bewildered.

"You'd better keep it warm, Flannigan," I replied. "You need n't wait; I'm coming." But he did not go.

"If—if you'll excuse me, miss," he said, "don't you think ye'd bether tell 'em?"

"Tell them what?"

"The whole thing—the joke," he said confidentially, coming closer. "It's been great sport, now, has n't it? But I'm afraid they will get on to it soon, and—some of them might not be agreeable. A pearl necklace is a pearl necklace, miss, and the lady's wild."

"What do you mean?" I gasped. "You don't think—why, Flannigan——"

He merely grinned at me and thrust his hand down in his pocket. When he brought it up he had Bella's bracelet on his palm, glittering in the faint light.

"Where did you get it?" Between relief and the absurdity of the thing, I was almost hysterical. But Flannigan did not give me the bracelet; instead, it struck me his tone was suddenly severe.

"Now look here, miss," he said: "you've played your trick, and you've had your fun; the Lord knows it's only folks like you would play April fool jokes with a fortune! If you're the sinsible little woman you look to be, you'll put that pearl collar on the coal in the basement to-night, and let me find it."

"I have n't got the pearl collar," I protested. "I think you are crazy. Where did you get that bracelet?"

He edged away from me, as if he expected me to snatch it from him and run, but he was still trying in an elephantine way to treat the matter as a joke.

"I found it in a drawer in the pantry," he said, "among the dirty linen. And if you 're as smart as I think you are, I 'll find the pearl collar there in the morning—and nothing said, miss."

So there I was, suspected of being responsible for Anne's pearl collar, as if I had not enough to worry me before. Of course I could have called them all together and told them, and made them explain to Flannigan what I had really meant by my delirious speech in the kitchen. But that would have meant telling the whole ridiculous story to Mr. Harbison, and having him think us all mad, and me a fool.

In all that overcrowded house there was only one place where I could be miserable with comfort. So I stayed on the roof, and cried a little, and then became angry and walked up and down, and clenched my hands and babbled helplessly. The boats on the river were yellow, horizontal streaks through my tears, and an early searchlight sent its shaft like a tangible thing in the darkness, just over my head. Then, finally, I curled down in a corner with my arms on the parapet, and the lights became more and more prismatic and finally formed themselves into a circle that was Bella's bracelet, and that kept whirling around and around on something flat and not over-clean, that was Flannigan's palm.

I was roused by some one walking across the roof, the cracking of tin under feet, and a comfortable and companionable odor of tobacco. I moved a very little, and then I could see it was a man—the height and erectness told me which man. And just at that instant he saw me.

"Good Lord!" he ejaculated, and throwing his cigarette away he came across quickly. "Why, Mrs. Wilson, what in the world are you doing here? I thought—they said——"

"That I was sulking?" I finished disagreeably. "Perhaps I am. In fact, I 'm quite sure of it."

"You were not," he said severely. "You have been asleep, in a February night, in the open air, with less clothing on than I wear in the tropics. Your arms are not half covered."

I had got up by this time, refusing his help, and, because my feet were numb, I sat down on the parapet for a moment. Oh, I knew what I looked like—one of those "Valley of the Nile After a Flood" pictures.

"There is one thing about you that is comforting," I sniffed. "You said precisely that same thing to me at three o'clock this morning. You never startle me by saying anything unexpected."

He took a step toward me, and even in the dusk I could see that he was looking down at me oddly. All my bravado faded away and there was a queerish ringing in my ears.

"I would like to!" he said tensely. "I would like, this minute—I'm a fool, Mrs. Wilson," he finished miserably. "I ought to be drawn and quartered, but when I see you like this I—I get crazy. If you say the word, I'll—I'll go down and——" He clenched his fist.

It was reprehensible, of course, he saw that in an instant, for he shut his teeth over something that sounded very fierce, and strode away from me, to stand looking out over the river, with his hands thrust in his pockets. Of course the thing I should have done was to ignore it altogether, but he was so uncomfortable, so chastened, that, feline, feminine, whatever the instinct is, I could not let him go. I had been so wretched myself.

"What would you say?" I called over to him. He did not speak. "Would you tell me that I am a silly child for sulking?" No reply; he struck a match. "Or would you preach a little sermon about people—women—loving their husbands?"

He grunted savagely under his breath.

"Be quite honest," I pursued relentlessly. "Say that we are a lot of barbarians, say that because my—because Jimmy treats me outrageously—oh, he does; any one can see that—and because I loathe him—and any one can tell that—why don't you say you are shocked to the depths?" I was a little shocked myself by that time, but I could n't stop, having started.

He came over to me, white-faced and towering, and he had the audacity to grip my arm and stand me on my feet, like a bad child—which I was, I dare say.

"Don't!" he said, in a husky, very pained voice. "You are only talking: you don't mean it. It is n't *you*. You know you care, or else why are you crying up here? And don't do it again—don't do—it—again—or I will——"

"You will—what?"

"Make a fool of myself, as I have now," he finished grimly. And then he stalked away and left me there alone, completely bewildered, to find my way down in the dark.

I groped along in the darkness, holding to the rail, for the staircase to the roof was very steep, and I went slowly. Half way down the stairs there was a tiny landing, and I stopped. I could have sworn I heard Mr. Harbison's footsteps far below, growing fainter. I even smiled a little, there in the dark, although I had been rather profoundly shaken. The next instant I knew I had been wrong: some one was on the landing with me. I could hear short, sharp breathing, and then——

I am not sure that I struggled; in fact, I don't believe I did—I was too limp with amazement. The creature, to have lain in wait for me like that! And he was brutally strong: he caught me to him fiercely, and held me there, close, and he kissed me—not once or twice, but a half-dozen times, long kisses that filled me with hot shame for him, for myself, that I had—liked him. The roughness of his coat bruised my cheek: I loathed him. And then some one came whistling along the hall below, and he pushed me from him and stood listening, breathing in long, gasping breaths.

I ran: when my shaky knees would hold me, I ran. I wanted to hide my hot face, my disgust, my disillusion; I wanted to put my head in mother's lap and cry; I wanted to die, or be ill, so I need never see him again. Perversely enough, I did none of those things. With my face still flaming, with burning eyes and hands that shook, I made a belated evening toilette and went slowly, haughtily, down the stairs. My hands were like ice, but I was consumed with rage. Oh, I would show him—that this was New York, not Iquique; that the roof was not his Andean table-land.

Every one elaborately ignored my absence from dinner. The Dallas Browns, Max, and Lollie were at bridge, Jim was alone in the den, walking the floor and biting at an unlighted cigar; Betty had returned to Aunt Selina, and was hysterical, they said, and Flannigan was in deep dejection because I had missed my dinner.

"Betty is making no end of a row," Max said, looking up from his game, "because the old lady upstairs insists on chloroform liniment. Betty says the smell makes her ill."

"And she can inhale Russian cigarettes," Anne said enviously, "and gasoline fumes, without turning a hair. I call a revoke, Dal: you trumped spades on the second round."

Dal flung over three tricks with very bad grace, and Anne counted them over with maddening deliberation.

"Game and rubber," she said. "Watch Dal, Max; he will cheat in the score if he can. Kit, don't have another clam while I am in this house. I have eaten so many lately my waist rises and falls with the tide."

"You have a stunning color, Kit," Lollie said. "You are really quite superb. Who made that gown?"

"Where have you been hiding, *du kleine?*" Max whispered, under cover of showing me the evening paper, with a photograph of the house and a cross at the cellar window where we had tried to escape. "If one day in the house with you, Kit, puts me in this condition, what will a month do?"

From beyond the curtain of a sort of alcove, lighted with a red-shaded lamp, came a hum of conversation, Bella's cool, even tones and a heavy masculine voice. They were laughing; I could feel my chin go up. He was not even hiding his shame in a corner.

"Max," I asked, while the others clamored for him and the game, "has any one been up through the house since dinner? Any of the men?"

He looked at me curiously.

"Only Harbison," he replied promptly. "Jim has been eating his heart out in the den ever since dinner, Dal played the Sonata Apassionata backwards on the pianola—he wanted to put through one of Anne's lingerie waists, on a wager that it would play a tune; I played craps with Lollie Mercer, myself, and Flannigan has been washing dishes. Why?"

Well, that was conclusive, anyhow. I had had a faint hope that it might have been a joke, although it had borne all the evidences of sincerity, certainly. But it was past doubting now: he had lain in wait for me at the landing, and had kissed me, *me,* when he thought I was Jimmy's wife. Oh, I must have been very light, very contemptible, if that was what he thought of me!

I went into the library and got a book, but it was impossible to read, with Jimmy lying on the couch giving vent to something between a sigh and a groan every few minutes. About eleven the cards stopped, and Bella said she would read palms. She began with Mr. Harbison, because she declared he had a wonderful hand, full of possibilities: she said he should have been a great inventor or a playwright, and that his attitude to women was one of homage, respect, almost reverence. He had the courage to look at me, and if a glance could have killed he would have withered away.

When Jimmy proffered *his* hand, she looked at it icily. Of course she could not refuse, with Mr. Harbison looking on.

"Rather negative," she said coldly. "The lines are obscured by cushions of flesh; no heart line at all, mentality small, self-indulgence and irritability very marked."

That was all I heard, for at that moment Betty burst into the room like a cyclone, only to collapse into a chair. "She 's a mean, cantankerous old woman!" she declared, feeling for her handkerchief. "You can take care of your own Aunt Selina, Jim Wilson. I shall never go near her again."

"What did you do? Poison her?" Dallas asked with interest.

"Got—got camphor in her eyes!" snuffled Betty. "You never—heard such a noise. I would n't be a trained nurse for anything in the world."

"You 're not going to give her up, are you, Betty?" Jim asked imploringly. But Betty was, and said so plainly.

"Anyhow, she won't have me back," she finished, "and she has sent for—guess!"

"Have mercy!" Max cried, dropping to his knees. "Oh, fair ministering angel, she has not sent for me!"

"No," Betty said maliciously. "She wants Bella—she's crazy about her."

VIII.

Really, I have left Aunt Selina rather out of it, but she was important as a cause, not as a result, at least at first; she came out strong later. I believe she was a very nice old woman, with strong likes and prejudices, which she was perfectly willing to pay for. At least, I only presume she had likes; I know she had prejudices.

Nobody ever understood why Bella consented to take Betty's place with Aunt Selina. As for me, I was too much engrossed with my own affairs to pay the invalid much attention. Once or twice during the day I had stopped in to see her, and had been received frigidly and with marked disapproval. I was in disgrace, of course, after the scene in the dining-room the night before. I had stood like a naughty child, just inside the door, and replied meekly when she said the pillows were over-stuffed, and why did n't I have the linen slips rinsed in starch water? She laid the blame for her illness on my heartless conduct of the night before, and she had made Jim read to her part of the afternoon from a book she carried with her, "Coals of Fire on the Domestic Hearth," marking places for me to read.

She sent for me that night, just as I had taken off my gown, so I threw on a *liseuse*, and went in. To my horror, Jim was already there. At a gesture from Aunt Selina, he closed the door into the hall and tiptoed back beside the bed, where he sat staring at the figures on the silk comfort.

Aunt Selina's first words were:

"Where is that flibberty-gibbet?"

Jim looked at me.

"She means Betty," I explained. "She has gone to bed, I think."

"Don't—let—her—in—this—room—again," she said, with awful emphasis. "She is an infamous creature."

"Oh, come now, Aunt Selina," Jim broke in; "she's foolish perhaps, but she's a nice little thing." Aunt Selina's face was a curious study. Then she raised herself on her elbow and, taking a flat chamois-skin bag from under the pillow, held it out.

"My cameo breast-pin," she said solemnly, "my cuff-buttons with gold rims and storks painted on china in the middle; my watch, that has put me to bed and got me up for forty years, and my money. Five hundred and ten dollars and forty cents! Taken with the doors locked under my nose." Which was ambiguous, but forcible.

"But, good gracious, Miss Car—Aunt Selina!" I exclaimed, "you don't think Betty Mercer took those things?"

"No," she said grimly; "I think I probably got up in my sleep and lighted the fire with them, or sent 'em out for a walk." Then she stuffed the bag away and sat up resolutely in bed.

"Have you made up?" she demanded, looking from one to the other of us. "Bella, don't tell me you still persist in that nonsense."

"What nonsense?" I asked, getting ready to run.

"That you do not love him."

"Him?"

"James," she snapped irritably. "Do you suppose I mean the policeman?"

I looked over at Jimmy. She had got me by the hand, and Jimmy was making frantic gestures to tell her the whole thing and be done with it. But I had gone too far. The mill of the gods had crushed me already, and I did n't propose to be drawn out hideously mangled and held up as an example for the next two or three weeks, although it was clear enough that Aunt Selina disapproved of me thoroughly, and would have been glad enough to find that no tie save the Board of Health held us together. And then Bella came in, and you would n't have known her. She had put on a straight white woollen wrapper, and she had her hair in two long braids down her back. She looked like a nice, wide-eyed little girl in her teens, and she had some lobster salad and a glass of port on a tray. When she saw the situation she put the things down and had the nastiness to stay and listen.

"I am not blind," Aunt Selina said, with one eye on the tray, "and you cannot hide things from me. You two silly children adore each other; I saw some things last night."

Bella took a step forward; then she stopped and shrugged her shoulders. Jim was purple.

"I saw you kiss her in the dining-room, remember that!" Aunt Selina went on, giving the screw another turn.

It was Bella's turn to be excited. She gave me one awful stare, then she fixed her eyes on Jim, who wriggled—simply squirmed.

"Besides," Aunt Selina went on, "you told me to-day that you loved her. Don't deny it, James."

Bella could n't keep quiet another instant. She came over and stood at the foot of the bed.

"Please don't excite yourself, *dear* Miss Caruthers," she said, in a voice like ice. "Every one knows he loves her; he simply overflows with it. It—it is quite a by-word among their friends. They have been sitting together in a corner all evening."

Yes, that was what she said; when I had not spoken to Jimmy the whole time in the den. Bella was cattish, and she was jealous, too. I turned on my heel and went to the door; then I turned to her, with my hand on the knob.

"You have been misinformed," I said coldly. "You cannot possibly know, having spent three hours in a corner yourself—with Mr. Harbison." I abhor jealousy in a woman.

Well, Aunt Selina ate all the lobster salad, and drank the port after Bella had told her it was beef, iron, and wine, and she slept all night, and was able to sit up in a chair the next day, and was so infatuated with Bella that she would not let her out of her sight. But that is ahead of the story.

At midnight the house was fairly quiet, except for Jim, who kept walking around the halls because he could n't sleep. I got up at last and ordered him to bed, and he had the audacity to have a grievance with me.

"Look at my situation now!" he said, sitting pensively on a steam radiator. "Aunt Selina is crazy. I only kissed your hand, anyhow, and I don't know why you sat in the den all evening; you might have known that Bella would notice it. Why could n't you leave me alone to my misery?"

"Very well," I said, much offended. "After this I shall sit with Flannigan, in the kitchen. He is the only gentleman in the house."

I left him babbling apologies and went to bed, but I had an uncomfortable feeling that Bella had been a witness of our conversation, for the door into Aunt Selina's room closed softly as I passed.

I knew beforehand that I was not going to sleep. The instant I turned out the light the nightmare events of the evening ranged themselves in a procession, or a series of tableaux, one after the other: Flannigan on the roof, with the bracelet on his palm, looking accusingly at me; Mr. Harbison and the scene on the roof, with my flippancy; and the result of that flippancy—the man on the stairs, the arms that held me, the terrible kisses that had scorched my face—it was awful! And then the absurd situation across Aunt Selina's bed, and Bella's face! Oh, it was all so ridiculous—my having thought that the Harbison man was a gentleman, and finding him a cad, and worse. It was excruciatingly funny. I quite got a headache from laughing; indeed, I laughed until I found I was crying, and then I knew I was going to have an attack of strangulated emotion, called hysteria. So I got up and turned on all the lights, and bathed my face with cologne, and felt better.

But I did not go to sleep. When the hall clock chimed two, I discovered I was hungry. I had had nothing since luncheon, and even the thirst following the South American goulash was gone. There was probably something to eat in the pantry, and if there was not, I was quite equal to going to the basement.

As it happened, however, I found a very orderly assortment of left-overs and a pitcher of milk, which had no business there, in the pantry, and with plenty of light I was not at all frightened.

I ate bread and butter and drank milk, and was fast becoming a rational person again; I had pulled out one of the drawers part way, and with a tray across the corner I had improvised a comfortable seat. And then I noticed that the drawer was full of soiled napkins, and I remembered the bracelet. I hardly know why I decided to go through the drawer again, after Flannigan had already done it, but I did. I finished my milk and then, getting down on my knees, I proceeded systematically to empty the drawer. I took out perhaps a dozen napkins and as many doilies without finding anything. Then I took out a large tray cloth, and there was something on it that made me look further. One corner of it had been scorched, the clear and well defined imprint of a lighted cigarette or cigar, a blackened streak that trailed off into a brown and then into yellow. I had a queer, trembly feeling, as if I were on the brink of a discovery—perhaps Anne's pearls, or the cuff-buttons with gold rims and storks painted on china in the centre. But the only thing I found, down in the corner of the drawer, was a half-burned cigarette.

To me, it seemed quite enough. It was one of the South American cigarettes, with a tobacco wrapper instead of paper, that Mr. Harbison smoked!

IX.

(Clipped from the Evening Chronicle of February fifth.)

ATTEMPT AT ESCAPE FRUSTRATED

MEMBERS OF THE FOUR HUNDRED DEFY THE LAW

SPECIAL OFFICER McCLOUD, on duty at the quarantined house of James Wilson, artist and clubman, on Ninety-fifth Street, reported this morning a daring attempt at escape, made at 3 A.M. It is in this house that some eight or nine members of the smart set were imprisoned during the course of a dinner party, when the Japanese butler developed scarlet fever. The party shut in the house includes Miss Katherine McNair, the daughter of Theodore McNair, of the Inter-ocean system; Mr. and Mrs. Dallas Brown, the Misses Mercer, Maxwell Reed, the well-known clubman and whip, and a Mr. Thomas Harbison, guest of the Dallas Browns and a South American.

Officer McCloud's story, told to a *Chronicle* reporter this morning, is as follows: The occupants of the house had been uneasy all day. From the air of subdued bustle, and from a careful inspection of the roof, made by the entire party during the afternoon, his suspicions had been aroused. Nothing unusual, however, occurred during the early part of the night. From eight o'clock to twelve McCloud was relieved from duty, his place being taken by Michael Shane, of the Eighty-sixth Street Station.

When McCloud came on duty at midnight, Shane reported that about eleven o'clock the searchlight of a steamer on the river, flashing over the house, had shown a man crouching on the parapet, evidently

> surveying the roof across, which at this point is only twelve feet distant, with a view to making his escape. On seeing Shane below, however, he had beat a retreat, but not before the officer had seen him distinctly. He was dressed in evening clothes, and wore a light tan overcoat.
>
> Officer McCloud relieved Shane at midnight, and sent for a plain-clothes man from the station-house. This man was stationed on the roof of the Bevington residence next door, with strict injunctions to prevent an escape from the quarantined mansion. Nothing suspicious having occurred, the man on the roof left about 3 A.M., reporting to McCloud below that everything was quiet. At that moment, glancing skyward, one of the officers was astounded to see a long narrow board project itself from the coping of the Wilson house, waver uncertainly for a moment, and then advance stealthily toward the parapet across. When it was within a foot or two of a resting place, McCloud called sharply to the invisible refugee above, at the same time firing his revolver into the ground.
>
> The result was surprising. The board stopped, trembled, swayed a little, and dropped, missing the vigilant officers by a hair's breadth, and crashing to the cement with terrific force. An inspection of the roof from the Bevington house, later, revealed nothing unusual. It is evident, however, that the quarantine is proving irksome to the inhabitants of the sequestered residence, most of whom are typical society folk, without resources in themselves. Their condition, without valets and maids, is certainly pitiable. It has been rumored that the ladies are doing their own hair, and that the gentlemen have been reduced to putting their own buttons in their shirts. This deplorable situation, however, is unavoidable.
>
> The vigilance of the Board of Health has been most commendable in this case. Beginning with a wager over the telephone that they would break quarantine in twenty-four hours, and ending with the attempt to span a twelve-foot gulf with a board, over which to cross to freedom, these shut-in society folk have shown a characteristic disregard of the laws of the State. It is quite time to extend to the millionaire the same strictness that keeps the commuter at home for three weeks with the measles; that makes him get the milk bottles and groceries from the gate-post and smell like dog-soap for a month afterwards, as a result of disinfection.

I was quite ill the next morning—from excitement, I suppose. Anyhow, I did not get up, and there was n't any breakfast. Jim said he roused Flannigan at eight o'clock, to go down and get a fire started, and then went back to bed. Anyhow, Flannigan did not get up. He appeared, sheepishly, at half past ten, and by that time Bella was down, in a towering rage, and had burned her hand and got the fire started, and taken up a tray for Aunt Selina and herself.

As the others straggled down they boiled themselves an egg, or ate some fruit, and nobody put anything away. Lollie Mercer made me some tea and scorched toast, and brought it, about eleven o'clock.

"I never saw such a house," she declared. "A dozen housemaids could n't put it in order. Why should every man that smokes drop his ashes wherever he happens to be?"

"That's the question of the ages," I replied languidly. "What was Max talking so horribly about a little while ago." Lollie looked up aggrieved.

"About nothing at all," she declared. "Anne told me to clean the bath tubs with oil, and I did it, that's all. Now Max says he could n't get it off, and his clothes stick to him, and if he should light a cigarette he would explode. He can clean his own tub to-morrow," she finished vindictively.

Jimmy came in then, bringing Anne for propriety—a concession to Bella—and read me the paper.

"Now, what do you think of that?" he demanded. "What sort of a newspaper lie do you call it? It makes me crazy: everybody with a mental picture of me leaning over a parapet, waving a board, with the rest of you sitting on my legs to keep me from overbalancing!"

"Maybe it is true," I suggested. "Not of you, Jim—but some one may have tried to get out that way. In fact, I think it extremely likely."

"Who? Flannigan? You could n't drive him out. He's having the time of his life. Do you suspect me?"

"Come away and don't fight," Anne broke in pacifically. "You will have to have luncheon sent in, Jimmy; nobody has ordered anything from the shops, and I feel like old Mother Hubbard."

"I wish you would all go out," I said wearily. "If every man in the house says he did n't try to get over to the next roof last night, well and good. But you might look and see if the board is still lying where it fell."

There was an instantaneous rush for the window, and a second's pause. Then Jimmy's voice, incredulous, awed:

"Well, I'll be—blessed. There's the board!"

I stayed in my room all that day. My head really ached, and then, too, I did not care to meet Mr. Harbison. It would have to come; I realized that a meeting was inevitable, but I wanted time to think how I would meet him. It would be impossible to cut him, without rousing the curiosity of the others to fever pitch; and it was equally impossible to ignore the disgraceful episode on the stairs. As it happened, however, I need not have worried. I went down to dinner, languidly, when every one was seated, and found Max at my right, and Mr. Harbison moved over beside Bella. Every one was talking at once, for Flannigan, ambling around the table as airily as he walked his rounds, had presented Bella with her bracelet on a salad plate, garnished with endive. He had found it in the furnace room, he maintained, where she must have dropped it. And he looked at me stealthily, to approve his mendacity!

Every one was famished, and as they ate they discussed the board in the areaway, and pretended to deride it as a clever bit of press work, to revive a dying sensation. No one was deceived: Anne's pearls and the attempt at escape, coming just after, pointed only to one thing. I looked around the table, dazed. Flannigan, almost the only unknown quantity, might have tried to escape the night before, but he would not have been in dress clothes. Besides, he must be eliminated, as far as the pearls were concerned, having been locked in the furnace room that night. There was no one among the girls to suspect. The Mercer girls had stunning pearls, and could secure all they wanted legitimately; and Bella disliked them. Oh, there was no question about it, I decided: Dallas and Anne had taken a wolf to their bosom—or is it a viper?—and the Harbison man was the creature. Although I will say that, looking over the table, at Jimmy's breadth and not very imposing personality, at Max's lean length, sallow skin, and scrubby black mustache, at Dallas, blond, growing bald and florid, and then at the Harbison boy, tall, muscular, clear-eyed, and sunburned, one would have taken Max at first choice as the villain, with Dal next, Jim third, and the Harbison boy not in the running.

It was just after dinner that the surprise was sprung on me. Mr. Harbison came around to me gravely, and asked me if I felt able to go up on the roof. On the roof, after last night! I had to gather myself together; luckily, the others were pushing back their chairs, showing Flannigan the liqueur glasses to take up, and lighting cigarettes.

"I do not care to go," I said icily.

"The others are coming," he persisted, "and I—I could give you an arm up the stairs."

"I believe you are quite good at that," I said, looking at him steadily. "Thank you, I may go, but not—with you."

He really went rather white. Then he bowed ceremoniously and left me.

Max got me a wrap, and every one except Mr. Harbison and Bella, who was taking a mass of indigestibles to Aunt Selina, went to the roof.

"Where is Tom?" Anne asked, as we reached the foot of the stairs.

"Gone ahead to fix things," was the answer. But he was not there. At the top of the last flight I stopped, dumb with amazement: the roof had been transformed, enchanted. It was a fairy-land of lights and foliage and colors. I had to stop and rub my eyes. From the bleakness of a tin roof in February, to the brightness and greenery of a July roof garden!

"You were the immediate inspiration, Kit," Dallas said. "Harbison thought your headache might come from lack of exercise and fresh air, and he has worked us like nailers all day. I've a blister on my right palm, and Harbison got shocked while he was wiring the place, and nearly fell over the parapet. We bought out two florists by telephone."

It was a most amazing transformation. At each corner a pole had been erected, and wires crossed the roof diagonally, hung with red and amber bulbs. Around the chimneys had been massed evergreen trees in tubs, hiding their brick-and-mortar ugliness, and among the trees tiny lights were strung. Along the parapet were rows of geometrical boxwood plants in bright red crocks, and the flaps of a crimson and white tent had been thrown open, showing lights within, and rugs, wicker chairs, and cushions.

Max raised a glass of benedictine and posed for a moment, melodramatically.

"To the Wilson roof garden!" he said. "To Kit, who inspired; to the creators, who perspired; and to Takahiro—may he not have expired."

Every one was very gay; I think the knowledge that to-morrow Aunt Selina might be with them urged them to make the most of this last night of freedom. I tried to be jolly, and succeeded in being feverish. Mr. Harbison did not appear to enjoy what he had wrought. Jim brought up his guitar and sang love songs in a beautiful tenor, looking at Bella all the time. And Bella sat in a steamer chair, with a rug over her and a spangled veil on her head, looking at the boats on the river—about as soft and as chastened as an acetylene headlight.

And after Max had told a most improbable tale, which Leila advised him to sprinkle salt on, and Dallas had done a clog dance, Bella said it was time for her complexion sleep, and went downstairs, which broke up the party.

"If she only gave half as much care to her immortal soul," Anne said when she had gone, "as she does to her skin, she would let that nice Harbison boy alone. She must have been brutal to him to-night, for he went to bed at nine o'clock. At least, I suppose he went to bed: he shut himself in the studio, and when I knocked he advised me not to come in."

I had pleaded my headache as an excuse for avoiding Aunt Selina all day, and she had not sent for me. Bella was really quite extraordinary. She was never in the habit of putting herself out for any one, and she always declared that the very odor of a sick-room drove her to Scotch and soda. But here she was, rubbing Aunt Selina's back with chloroform liniment—and you know how that smells—getting her up in a chair, dressed in one of Bella's wadded silk robes, with pillows under her feet, and then doing her hair in elaborate puffs—braiding her gray switch and bringing it, coronet-fashion, around the top of her head. She even put rice powder on Aunt Selina's nose, and dabbed violet water behind her ears, and said she could n't understand why she (Aunt Selina) had never married, but of course she probably would some day!

The result was, of course, that the old lady would n't let Bella out of her sight, except to go to the kitchen for something to eat for her. That very day Bella got the doctor to order ale for Aunt Selina (oh, yes: the doctor could come in; anything could come in, but nothing could go out) and she had three pints of Bass, and learned to eat anchovies and caviare—all in one day.

Bella's conduct to Jim was disgraceful. She snubbed him, ignored him, tramped on him, and Jim was growing positively flabby. He spent most of his time writing letters to the Board of Health and playing solitaire. He was a pathetic figure.

Well, we went to bed fairly early. Bella had massaged Aunt Selina's face and rubbed in cold cream, Anne and Dallas had compromised on which window should be open in their bedroom, and the men had matched to see who should look at the furnace. I did not expect to sleep, but the cold night air had done its work, and I was asleep almost immediately.

Some time during the early part of the night I wakened, and, after turning and twisting uneasily, I realized that I was cold. The couch in Bella's dressing-room was comfortable enough, but narrow and low. I remember distinctly (that was what was so maddening: everybody thought I dreamed it)—I remember getting an eiderdown comfort that was folded at my feet, and pulling it up around me. In the luxury of its warmth I snuggled down and went to sleep almost instantly. It seemed to me I had slept for hours, but it was probably an hour or less, when something roused me. The room was perfectly dark, and there was not a sound save the faint ticking of the clock, but I was wide awake.

And then came the incident that in its ghastly, horrible absurdity made the rest of the people shout with laughter the next day. It was not funny then. For suddenly the eiderdown comfort began to slip. I had heard no footstep, not the slightest sound approaching me, but the comfort moved; from my chin, inch by inch, it slipped to my shoulders; awfully, inevitably, hair-raisingly, it moved. I could feel my blood gather around my heart, leaving me cold and nerveless. As it passed my hands I gave an involuntary clutch for it, to feel it slip away from my fingers. Then the full horror of the situation took hold of me: as the comfort slid past my feet I sat up and screamed at the top of my voice.

Of course people came running in in all sorts of things. I was still sitting up, declaring I had seen a ghost and that the house was haunted. Dallas came rushing in, struggling for the second armhole of his dressing-gown, and Bella had already turned on the lights. They said I had had a nightmare, and not to sleep on my back, and perhaps I was taking the grippe.

And just then Jimmy came running down the stairs, and fell over something, almost breaking his wrist. It was the eiderdown comfort, half way up the studio staircase!

X.

Aunt Selina got up the next morning and Jim told her all the strange things that had been happening. She fixed on Flannigan, of course, although she still suspected Betty of her watch and other valuables. The incident of the comfort she called nervous indigestion and bad hours.

She spent the entire day going through the store-room and linen closets, and running her fingers over things for dust. Whenever she found any she looked at me, drew a long breath, and said, "Poor James!" It was maddening. And when she went through his clothes and found some buttons off (Jim did n't keep a man, and Takahiro had stopped at his boots) she looked at me quite awfully.

"His mother was a perfect housekeeper," she said. "James was brought up in clothes with the buttons on, put on clean shelves."

"Did n't they put them on him?" I asked, almost hysterically. It had been a bad morning, after a worse night. Every one had found fault with the breakfast, and they straggled down one at a time until I was frantic. Then Flannigan had talked at me about the pearls, and Mr. Harbison had said, "Good-morning," very stiffly, and nearly rattled the inside of the furnace out.

Early in the morning, too, I overheard a scrap of conversation between the policeman and our gentleman-adventurer from South America. Something had gone wrong with the telephone and Mr. Harbison was fussing over it with a screw-driver and a pair of scissors—all the tools he could find. Flannigan was lifting rugs to shake them on the roof—Bella's order.

"Wash the table linen!" he was grumbling. "I 'll do what I can that 's necessary. Grub has to be, and dishes has to be washed—I 'll admit that. If you 're particular, make up your bed every day; I don't object. But don't tell me we have to use thirty-three table napkins a day. What did folks do before napkins was invented? Tell me that!"—triumphantly.

"What 's the answer?" Mr. Harbison said absently, evidently with the screw-driver in his mouth.

"Used their pocket handkerchiefs! And if the worst comes to the worst, Mr. Harbison, these folks here can use their sleeves, for all

I care—not that the women has any sleeves to speak of. Wash clothes I will not."

"Well, don't worry Mrs. Wilson about it," the other voice said. Flannigan straightened himself with a grunt.

"Mrs. Wilson!" he said. "A lot she would worry. She's been a disappointment to me, Mr. Harbison, me thinking that now she'd come back to him, after leavin' him the way she did, they'd be like two turtle doves. Lord! the cook next door——"

But what the cook had told about Bella and Jimmy was not divulged, for the Harbison man caught him up with a jerk and sent Flannigan, grumbling, with his rugs to the roof.

It did not seem possible to carry on the deception much longer, but if things were bad now, what would they be when Aunt Selina learned she had been lied to, made ridiculous, generally deceived? And how would I be able to live in the house with her when she did know? Luckily, every one was so puzzled over the mystery in the house that loads of little things that would have been absolutely damning were never noticed at all. For instance, my asking Jimmy at luncheon that day if he took cream in his coffee! And Max, coming to the rescue by dropping his watch in his glass of water, and creating a diversion and a laugh by saying not to mind; it had been in soak before.

Some time that afternoon Lollie hunted me out in the tent. I had fled to the roof to avoid Aunt Selina, who did not dare to brave the February air. Lollie wore an air of mystery, and although no one could possibly have overheard, she closed the door to the steps, and, coming over, drew a chair close to mine.

"Have you seen much of Tom to-day?" she asked, as an introduction.

"I suppose you mean Mr. Harbison, Lollie," I said. "No—not any more than I could help. Don't whisper, he could n't possibly hear you. And if it's scandal I don't want to hear it."

"Look here, Kit," she retorted, "you need n't be so superior. If I like to talk scandal, I'm not so sure you are n't making it."

That was the way right along: *I* was making scandal; *I* brought them there to dinner; *I* let Bella in!

And of course Anne came up then, and began on me at once.

"You are a very bad girl," she began. "What do you mean by treating Tom Harbison the way you do? He is heart-broken."

"I think you overestimate my influence over him," I retorted. "I have n't treated him badly, because I have n't paid any attention to him."

Anne threw up her hands.

"There you are!" she said. "He worked all day yesterday fixing this place for you—yes, for you, my dear. I am not blind—and last night you refused to let him bring you up."

"He told you!" I flamed.

"He wondered what he had done. And as you would n't let him come within speaking distance of you, he came to me."

"I am sorry, Anne, since you are fond of him," I said. "But to me he is impossible—intolerable. My reasons are quite sufficient."

"Kit is quite right, Anne," Leila broke in. "I tell you, there is something queer about him."

Anne stiffened.

"He is perfect," she declared. "Of good family, warm-hearted, courageous, handsome, clever—what more do you ask?"

"Honesty," said Leila hotly. "That a man should be what he says he is."

Anne and I both stared.

"It was your Mr. Harbison," Leila went on, "who tried to escape from the house by putting a board across to the next roof!"

"I don't believe it," said Anne. "You might bring me a picture of him, board in hand, and I would n't believe it."

"Don't, then," said Lollie cruelly. "Let him get away with your pearls; they are yours. Only, as sure as anything, the man who tried to escape from this house had a reason for escaping, and the papers said a man in evening dress and light overcoat. I found Mr. Harbison's overcoat to-day lying in a heap in one of the maids' rooms, and it was covered with brick dust all over the front. A button had even been torn off."

"Pooh!" Anne said, when she had recovered herself a little. "There is n't any reason, as far as that goes, why Flannigan should n't have worn Tom's overcoat, or—any of the others."

"Flannigan!" Leila said loftily. "Why, his arms are like piano-legs; he could n't get into it. As for the others, there is only one person who would fit, or nearly fit, that overcoat, and that is Dallas, Anne."

While Anne was choking down her wrath, Leila got up and darted out of the tent. When she came back she was triumphant.

"Look," she said, holding out her hand. And on her palm lay a lightish brown button. "I found it just where the paper said the board was thrown out, and it is from Mr. Harbison's overcoat, without a doubt."

Of course I should not have been surprised. A man who would kiss a woman on a dark staircase—a woman he had known only two days—was capable of anything.

"Kit has only been a little keener than the rest of us," Lollie said. "She found him out yesterday."

"Upon my word," Anne said indignantly, preparing to go, "if I did n't know you girls so well, I would think you were crazy. And now, just to offset this, I can tell you something. Flannigan told me this morning not to worry; that he has my pearl collar spotted, and *young ladies will have their jokes!*"

Yes, as I said before, it was a cheerful, joy-producing situation.

I sat and thought it over after Anne's parting shot, when Leila had flounced downstairs. Things were closing up: I gave the situation twenty-four hours to develop. At the end of that time Flannigan would accuse me openly of knowing where the pearls were; I would explain my silly remark to him, and the mine would explode—under Aunt Selina.

I was sunk in dejected reverie when some one came on the roof. When he was opposite the opening in the tent, I saw Mr. Harbison, and at that moment he saw me. He paused uncertainly, then he made an evident effort and came over to me.

"You are—better to-day?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"I am glad you find the tent useful. Does it keep off the wind?"

"It is quite a shelter"—frigidly.

He still stood, struggling for something to say. Evidently nothing came to his mind, for he lifted the cap he was wearing, and, turning away, began to work with the wiring of the roof. He was clever with tools; one could see that. If he was a professional gentleman-burglar, no doubt he needed to be. After a bit, finding it necessary to climb onto the parapet, he took off his coat, without even a glance in my direction, and fell to work vigorously.

One need not like a man, to admire him physically, any more than one needs to like a race-horse or any other splendid animal. No one could deny that the man on the parapet was a splendid animal; he looked quite big enough and strong enough to have tossed his slender bridge across the gulf to the next roof, without any difficulty, and coördinate enough to have crossed on it with a flourish to safety.

Just then there was a rending, tearing sound from the corner, and a muttered ejaculation. I looked up in time to see Mr. Harbison throw up his arms, make a futile attempt to regain his balance, and disappear over the edge of the roof. One instant he was standing there, splendid, superb; the next, the corner of the parapet was empty, all that stood there was a broken, splintered post and a tangle of wires.

I could not move at first; at least, it seemed hours before the full significance of the thing penetrated my dazed brain. When I got up I seemed to walk, to crawl, with leaden weights holding my feet.

When I got to the corner I had to catch the post for support. I knew somebody was saying, "Oh, how terrible!" over and over. It was only afterwards that I knew it had been myself. And then some other voice was saying, "Don't be alarmed. Please don't be frightened. I 'm all right."

I dared to look over the parapet, finally, and instead of a crushed and unspeakable body, there was Mr. Harbison, sitting about eight feet below me, with his feet swinging into space and a long red scratch from the corner of his eye across his cheek. There was a sort of a mansard there, with windows, and just enough of a coping to keep him from rolling off.

"I thought you had fallen—all the way," I gasped, trying to keep my lips from trembling. "I—oh, don't dangle your feet like that!"

He did not seem at all glad of his escape. He sat there gloomily, peering into the gulf beneath.

"If it was n't so—er—messy and generally unpleasant," he replied, without looking up, "I would slide off and go the rest of the way."

"You are childish," I said severely. "See if you can get through the window behind you. If you cannot, I 'll come down and unfasten it." But the window was open, and I had a chance to sit down and gather up the scattered ends of my nerves. To my surprise, however, when he came back he made no effort to renew our conversation. He ignored me completely, and went to work at once to repair the damage to his wires, with his back to me.

"I think you are very rude," I said at last. "You fell over there and I thought you were killed. The nervous shock I experienced is just as bad as if you had gone—all the way."

He put down the hammer and came over to me without speaking. Then, when he was quite close, he said:

"I am very sorry if I startled you. I did not flatter myself that you would be profoundly affected, in any event."

"Oh, as to that," I said lightly, "it makes me ill for days if my car runs over a dog." He looked at me in silence. "You are not going to get up on that parapet again?"

"Mrs. Wilson," he said, without paying the slightest attention to my question, "will you tell me what I have done?"

"Done?"

"Or have not done? I have racked my brains—stayed awake all of last night. At first I hoped it was impersonal, that, womanlike, you were merely venting general disfavor on one particular individual. But—your hostility is to me, personally."

I raised my eyebrows, coldly interrogative.

"Perhaps," he went on calmly—"perhaps I was a fool here on the roof—the night before last. If I said anything that I should not, I ask your pardon. If it is not that, I think you ought to ask mine."

I was angry enough then.

"There can be only one opinion about your conduct," I retorted warmly. "It was worse than brutal. It—it was unspeakable. I have no words for it—except that I loathe it—and you."

He was very grim by this time. "I have heard you say something like that before—only I was not the unfortunate in that case."

"Oh!" I was choking.

"Under different circumstances I should be the last person to recall anything so—personal. But the circumstances are unusual." He took an angry step toward me. "Will you tell me what I have done? Or shall I go down and ask the others?"

"You would n't dare," I cried, "or I will tell them what you did! How you waylaid me on those stairs there, and forced your caresses, your kisses, on me! Oh, I could die with shame!"

The silence that followed was as unexpected as it was ominous. I knew he was staring at me, and I was furious to find myself so emotional, so much more the excited of the two. Finally I looked up.

"You cannot deny it," I said, a sort of anti-climax.

"No." He was very quiet, very grim, quite composed. "No," he repeated judicially. "I do not deny it."

He did not? Or he would not? Which?

XI.

Max was still hunting Anne's pearls, using them, the men declared, as a good excuse to avoid tinkering with the furnace or repairing the dumb-waiter, which took the queerest notions, and stopped once, half way up from the kitchen, for an hour, with the dinner on it. Anyhow, Max was searching the house systematically armed with a copy of Poe's "Purloined Letter" and Gaboriau's "Monsieur Lecocq." He went through the seats of the chairs with a hat-pin, tore up the beds, and lifted rugs, until the house was in a state of confusion. And the next day, the fourth, he found something—not much, but it was curious. He had been in the studio, poking around behind the dusty pictures, with Jimmy expostulating every time he moved anything and the rest standing around watching him.

Max was strutting.

"We get it by elimination," he said importantly. "The pearls being nowhere else in the house, they must be here in the studio. Three parts of the studio having yielded nothing, they must be in the fourth. Ladies and gentlemen, let me have your attention for one moment. I tap this canvas with my wand—there is nothing up my sleeve. Then I prepare to move the canvas—so. And I put my hand in the pocket of this disreputable velvet coat, so. Behold!"

Then he gave a low exclamation and looked at something he held in his hand. Every one stepped forward, and on his palm was the small diamond clasp from Anne's collar!

Jimmy was apoplectic. He tried to smile, but no one else did.

"Well, I'll be flabbergasted!" he said. "I say, you people, you don't think for a minute that I put that thing there? Why, I have n't worn that coat for a month. It's—it's a trick of yours, Max."

But Max shook his head; he looked stupefied, and stood gazing from the clasp to the pocket of the old painting-coat. Betty dropped onto a folding stool, that promptly collapsed with her and created a welcome diversion, while Anne pounced on the clasp greedily, with a little cry.

"We will find it all now," she said excitedly. "Did you look in the other pockets, Max?"

Then, for the first time, I was conscious of an air of constraint among the men. Dallas was whistling softly, and Mr. Harbison, having rescued Betty, was standing silent and aloof, watching the scene with non-committal eyes. It was Max who spoke first, after a hurried inventory of the other pockets.

"Nothing else," he said constrainedly. "I'll move the rest of the canvases."

But Jim interfered, to every one's surprise.

"I would n't, if I were you, Max. There's nothing back there. I had 'em out yesterday." He was quite pale.

"Nonsense!" Max said gruffly. "If it's a practical joke, Jim, why don't you 'fess up? Anne has worried enough."

"The pearls are not there, I tell you," Jim began. Although the studio was cold, there were little fine beads of moisture on his face. "I must ask you not to move those pictures." And then Aunt Selina came to the rescue: she stalked over and stood with her back against the stack of canvases.

"As far as I can understand this," she declaimed, "you gentlemen are trying to intimate that James knows something of that young woman's jewelry, because you found part of it in his pocket. Certainly you will not move the pictures. How do you know that the young gentleman who said he found it there did n't have it up his sleeve?"

She looked around triumphantly, and Max glowered. Dallas soothed her, however.

"Exactly so," he said. "How do we know that Max did n't have the clasp up his sleeve? My dear lady, neither my wife nor I care anything for the pearls, as compared with the priceless pearl of peace. I suggest tea on the roof; those in favor——? My arm, Miss Caruthers."

It was all well enough for Jim to say later that he did n't dare to have the canvases moved, for he had stuck behind them all sorts of chorus girl photographs and life-class crayons that were not for

Aunt Selina's eye, besides four empty siphons, two full ones, and three bottles of whisky. Not a soul in the house believed him: there was a new element of suspicion and discord in the house.

Every one went up on the roof and left him to his mystery. Anne drank her tea in a preoccupied silence, with half-closed eyes, an attitude that boded ill to somebody. The rest were feverishly gay, and Aunt Selina, with a pair of arctics on her feet and a hot-water bottle at her back, sat in the middle of the tent and told me familiar anecdotes of Jimmy's early youth (had he known, he would have slain her). Betty and Mr. Harbison had found a baseball, and were running around like a pair of children. It was quite certain that neither his escape from death nor my accusation weighed heavily on him.

At a quarter before six Dallas put down his tea-cup and grunted his way to the furnace; the men usually attended to it before dressing for dinner, and this was Dal's day. Flannigan had been relieved of that part of the work, after twice setting fire to a chimney. In five minutes Dal came back, and spoke a few words to Max, who went down with him, and in ten minutes more Flannigan puffed up the steps and called Mr. Harbison. Aunt Selina was busy with the time Jimmy had swallowed an open safety-pin, so I could not go at once, but I knew something new had transpired. As soon as the pin had been coughed up, or taken out of his nose—I forget which—I slipped away quietly and went down the stairs.

There was no one in the studio, or even in the library. I could hear voices from somewhere, faint voices that talked rapidly, and after awhile I located the sounds under my feet. The men were all in the basement, and something must have happened. I flew back to the basement stairs, to meet Mr. Harbison at the foot. He was grimy and dusty, with streaks of coal dust over his face, and he had been examining his revolver. I was just in time to see him slip it into his pocket.

"What is the matter?" I demanded. "Is any one hurt?"

"No one," he said coolly. "We 've been cleaning out the furnace."

"With a revolver! How interesting—and unusual!" I said drily, and slipped past him as he barred my way. He was not pleased; I heard him mutter something and come rapidly after me, but I had the voices as a guide, and I was not going to be turned back like a child. The men had gathered around a low stone arch in the furnace-room, and were looking down a short flight of steps, into a sort of vault, evidently under the pavement. A faint light came from a small grating above, and there was a close, musty smell in the air.

"I tell you it must have been last night," Dallas was saying. "Wilson and I were here before we went to bed, and I 'll swear that hole was not there then."

"It was not there this morning, sir," Flannigan insisted. "It has been made during the day."

"And it could not have been done this afternoon," Mr. Harbison said quietly. "I was fussing with the telephone wire down here. I would have heard the noise."

Something in his voice made me look at him, and certainly his expression was unusual. He was watching us all most intently while Dallas pointed out to me the cause of the excitement. From the main floor of the furnace-room, a flight of stone steps surmounted by an arch led into the coal cellar, beneath the street. The coal cellar was of brick, with a cement floor, and in the left wall there gaped an opening about three feet by three, leading into a cavernous void, perfectly black—evidently a similar vault belonging to the next house.

The whole place was ghostly, full of shadows, shivery with possibilities. It was Mr. Harbison finally who took Jim's candle and crawled through the aperture. We waited in dead silence, listening to his feet crunching over the coal beyond, watching the faint yellow light that came through the ragged opening in the wall. Then he came back and called through to us.

"Place is locked, over here," he said. "Heavy oak door at the head of the steps. Whoever made that opening has done a prodigious amount of labor for nothing."

The weapon, a crowbar, lay on the ground beside the bricks, and he picked it up and balanced it on his hand. Dallas's florid face was almost comical in his bewilderment; as for Jimmy—he slammed a lump of coal at the furnace and walked away. At the door he turned around.

"Why don't you accuse me of it?" he asked bitterly. "Maybe you could find a lump of coal in my pockets if you searched me."

He stalked up the stairs then and left us. Dallas and I went up together, but we did not talk. There seemed to be nothing to say. Not until I had closed and locked the door of my room did I venture to look at something that I carried in the palm of my hand. It was a watch, not running—a gentleman's flat gold watch, and it had been hanging by its fob to a nail in the bricks beside the aperture.

In the back of the watch was a picture of a girl, cut from a newspaper, and the initials T. H. H.

It was my picture!

XII.

I WAS the first one down for dinner that night, and I had Mr. Harbison's guilty watch in my girdle. I found him in the library, staring through the February gloom at the blank wall of the next house, and quite unconscious of the reporter with a drawing pad just below him in the areaway. I went over and closed the shutters before his very eyes, but even then he did not move.

"Will you be good enough to turn around?" I demanded at last.

"Oh!" he said, wheeling. "Are *you* here?"

There was n't any reply to that, so I took the watch and placed it on the library table between us. The effect was all I had hoped. He stared at it for an instant, then at me, and with his hand outstretched for it, stopped.

"Where did you find it?" he asked. I could n't understand his expression. He looked embarrassed, but not at all afraid.

"I think you know, Mr. Harbison," I retorted.

"You opened it?"

"Yes."

We stood looking each at the other across the table. It was his glance that wavered.

"About that picture—of you," he said at last. "You see, down there in South America, a fellow has n't much to do in the evenings, and a—a chum of mine and I—we were awfully down on what we called the plutocrats, the—the leisure classes. And when that picture of yours came in the paper, we had—we had an argument. He said——"

"What did he say?"

"Well, he said it was the picture of an empty-faced society girl."

"Oh!" I exclaimed.

"I—I maintained there were possibilities in the face." He put both hands on the table, and, bending forward, looked down at me. "Well, I was a fool, I admit. I said your eyes were kind and candid, in spite of that haughty mouth. I said you would be incapable of deception. You see, I said I was a fool."

"I think you are exceedingly rude," I managed finally. "If you want to know where I found your watch, it was down in the coal cellar. And if you admit you are an idiot, I am not. I—I know all about Bella's bracelet—and the board on the roof, and—oh, if you would only leave—Anne's necklace—on the coal, or somewhere—and get away——"

My voice got beyond me then, and I dropped into a chair and covered my face. I could feel him staring at the back of my head.

"Well, I 'll be"—something or other, he said finally, and then he turned on his heel and went out. By the time I had got my eyes dry (yes, I was crying; I always do when I am angry) I heard Jim coming downstairs, and I tucked the watch out of sight in my belt. Would any one have foreseen the trouble that watch would make!

Jim was sulky. He dropped into a chair and stretched out his legs, looking gloomily at nothing. Then he got up and ambled into his den, closing the door behind him without having spoken a word. It was more than human nature could stand.

When I went into the den he was stretched on the davenport with his face buried in the cushions. He looked absolutely wilted, and every line of him was drooping.

"Go on out, Kit," he said, in a smothered voice. "Be a good girl and don't follow me around."

"You are shameless," I gasped. "Follow you! When you are hung around my neck like a—like a——" "Mill-stone" was what I wanted to say, but I could n't think of it. "And you dared to tell Mr. Harbison. You—you wretch!"

He turned over and looked up from his cushions like an ill-treated and suffering cherub.

"I 'm done for, Kit," he groaned. "Bella went up to the studio after we left, and investigated that corner."

"What did she find? The necklace?" I asked eagerly. He was too wretched to notice this.

"No, that picture of you that I did last winter. She is crazy—says she is going up to sit in Takahiro's room and catch the fever and die."

"I 'm not interested in Bella," I said coldly. "If she recognized that picture of me, she 's the first person who ever did. And if you want my opinion about your telling Mr. Harbison, I think you did it because you were jealous of him and Bella."

Jim sat up and nursed a pillow. He was growing more complacent.

"I was, for a fact," he admitted. "But it seems there 's nothing to it. He—he as much as told me so. He was keeping Bella away from me on *your* account."

"Fiddlesticks!" I said rudely, and somebody hammered on the door and opened it.

"Pardon me for disturbing you," Bella said, in her best dear-me-I 'm-glad-I-knocked manner. "But—Flannigan says the dinner has not come."

"Good Lord!" Jim exclaimed. "I forgot to order the confounded dinner!"

It was eight o'clock by that time, and as it took an hour at least after telephoning the order, everybody looked blank when they heard. The entire family, except Mr. Harbison, who had not appeared again, escorted Jim to the 'phone and hung around hungrily, suggesting new dishes every minute. And then—he could n't raise the Central. It was fifteen minutes before we gave up, and stood staring at each other despairingly.

"Call out a window, and get one of those infernal reporters to do something useful for once," Max suggested. But he was indignantly hushed. We would have starved first. Jim was peering into the transmitter and knocking the receiver against his hand like a watch that has stopped. But nothing happened. Flannigan reported a box of breakfast food, two lemons, and a pineapple cheese, a combination that did n't seem to lend itself to anything.

We went back to the dining-room from sheer force of habit and sat around the table and looked at the lemonade Flannigan had made. Anne *would* talk about the salad her last cook had concocted, and Max told about a little town in Connecticut where the restaurant keeper smokes a corn-cob pipe while he cooks the most luscious fried clams in America. And Aunt Selina told about how, in her family, they had a recipe for chicken smothered in cream. And then we sipped the weak lemonade and nibbled at the cheese.

"To change this gridiron martyrdom," Dallas said finally, "where 's Harbison? Still looking for his watch?"

"Watch!" Everybody said it in a different tone.

"Sure," he responded. "Says his watch was taken last night from the studio. Better get him down to take a squint at the telephone. Likely he can fix it."

Flannigan was beside me with the cheese. And at that moment I felt Mr. Harbison's stolen watch slip out of my girdle, slide greasily across my lap, and clatter to the floor. Flannigan stooped, but luckily it had gone under the table. To have had it picked up, to have to explain how I got it, to see them try to ignore my picture pasted in it—oh, it was impossible! I put my foot over it.

"Drop something?" Dallas asked perfunctorily, rising. Flannigan was still half kneeling.

"A fork," I said, as easily as I could, and the conversation went on. But Flannigan knew, and I knew he knew. He watched my every movement like a hawk after that, standing just behind my chair. I dropped my useless napkin, to have it whirled up before it reached the floor. I said to Betty that my shoe buckle was loose, and actually got the watch in my hand, only to let it slip at the critical moment. Then they all got up and went sadly back to the library, and Flannigan and I faced each other.

Flannigan was not a handsome man at any time, but up to then he had at least looked amiable. But as I stood with my hand on the back of my chair, his face grew suddenly menacing. The silence was absolute: I was the guiltiest wretch alive, and opposite me the law towered and glowered, and held the yellow remnant of a pineapple cheese! And in the silence that wretched watch lay and ticked and ticked and ticked. Then Flannigan creaked over and closed the door into the hall, came back, picked up the watch, and looked at it.

"You're unlucky, I'm thinkin'," he said finally. "You've got the nerve all right, but you ain't cute enough."

"I don't know what you mean," I quavered. "Give me that watch to return to Mr. Harbison."

"Not on your life," he retorted easily. "I give it back myself, like I did the bracelet, and—like I'm going to give back the necklace, if you'll act like a sensible little girl."

I could only choke.

"It's foolish, any way you look at it," he persisted. "Here you are, lots of friends, folks that think you're all right. Why, I reckon there is n't one of them that would n't lend you money if you needed it so bad."

"Will you be still?" I said furiously. "Mr. Harbison left that watch—with me—an hour ago. Get him, and he will tell you so himself?"

"Of course he would," Flannigan conceded, looking at me with grudging approval. "He would n't be what I think he is, if he did n't lie up and down for you." There were voices in the hall. Flannigan came closer. "An hour ago, you say. And he told me it was gone this morning! It's a losing game, miss. I'll give you twenty-four hours, and then—the necklace, if you please, miss."

Max came in just then, and, adroit as Flannigan was, I think he saw the watch. He said nothing about it, however, and only asked if we had seen Mr. Harbison.

"Can't find him," he said, "and Dal's put the telephone together and has enough left over to make another. Where do you suppose Harbison put the tools? We're working with a corkscrew and two palette knives."

They worked the rest of the evening, but the telephone refused to revive and every one was famishing. Individually our pride was at a low ebb, but collectively it was still formidable. So we sat around, and Jim played Grieg with the soft stops on, and Aunt Selina went to bed. The weather had changed, and it was sleeting, but anything was better than the drawing-room. I was in a mood to battle with the elements or to cry—or both—so I slipped out, threw somebody's overcoat over my shoulders, put on a man's soft hat—Dal's, I think—and went up to the roof.

It was dark in the third-floor hall, and I had to feel my way to the foot of the stairs. I went up quietly, and turned the knob of the door to the roof. At first it would not open, and I could hear the wind howling outside. Finally, however, I got the door open a little and wormed my way through. It was not entirely dark out there, in spite of the storm. A faint reflection of the street lights made it possible to distinguish the outlines of the box-wood plants, swaying in the wind, and the chimneys and the tent. And then—a dark figure disentangled itself from the nearest chimney and seemed to hurl itself at me. I remember putting out my hands and trying to say something, but the figure caught me by the shoulders and knocked me back against the door-frame. From miles away a heavy voice was saying, "So I 've got you!" and then the roof gave way, and I was floating out on the storm, and sleet was beating in my face, and the wind was saying over and over, "Open your eyes, for God's sake!"

I did open them after awhile, and finally I made out that I was lying on the ground in the tent. The lights were on, and I had a cold and damp feeling, as if some one had been rubbing snow on my face.

I seemed to be alone, but in a second somebody came into the tent, and I saw it was Mr. Harbison, and that he had a double handful of half-melted snow. He looked frantic and determined, and only my sitting up quickly prevented my getting another snow bath. My neck felt queer and stiff, and I was very dizzy. When he saw that I was conscious he dropped the snow and stood looking down at me.

"Do you know," he asked grimly, "that I very nearly choked you to death a little while ago?"

"It would n't surprise me to be told so," I said. "Do I know too much, or what is it, Mr. Harbison?" I felt terribly ill, but I would not let him see it. "It is queer, is n't it,—how we always select the roof for our little—differences?" He seemed to relax somewhat at my gibe.

"I did n't know it was you," he explained shortly. "I was waiting for—some one, and in the hat you wore, and the coat, I mistook you. That 's all. Can you stand?"

"No," I retorted. I could, but his summary manner displeased me. The sequel, however, was rather amazing, for he stooped suddenly and picked me up and the next instant we were out in the storm together. At the door he stooped and felt for the knob.

"Turn it," he commanded. "I can't reach it."

"I 'll do nothing of the kind," I said shrewishly. "Let me down; I can walk perfectly well."

He hesitated. Then he slid me slowly to my feet, but he did not open the door at once. "Are you afraid to let me carry you down those stairs, after—Tuesday night?" he asked, very low. "You still think I did that?"

I had never been less sure of it than at that moment, but an imp of perversity made me retort, "Yes."

He hardly seemed to hear me. He stood looking down at me as I leaned against the door-frame.

"Good Lord!" he groaned. "To think that I might have killed you!" And then—he stooped suddenly and kissed me.

The next moment the door was open, and he was leading me down into the house. At the foot of the staircase he paused, still holding my hand, and faced me in the darkness.

"I am not sorry," he said steadily. "I suppose I ought to be, but I 'm not. Only—I want you to know that I was not guilty—before. I did n't intend to now. I am—almost as much surprised as you are."

I was quite unable to speak, but I wrenched my hand loose. He stepped back to let me pass, and I went down the hall alone.

XIII.

I DID N'T go to the drawing-room again. I went into my own room and sat in the dark, and tried to be furiously angry, and only succeeded in feeling queer and tingly. One thing was absolutely certain: not the same man, but two different men, had kissed me on the stairs to the roof. It sounds rather horrid and discriminating, but there was all the difference in the world.

But then—who had? And for whom had Mr. Harbison been waiting on the roof. "Did you know that I nearly choked you to death a few minutes ago?" Then he rather expected to finish off somebody in that way! Who? Dal, Max, Jim, or Flannigan? It was queer, too, but suddenly I realized that no matter how many suspicious things I mustered up against him—and there were plenty—down in my heart I did n't believe him guilty of anything, except this last and unforgivable offense. Whoever was trying to leave the house had taken the necklace, that seemed clear, unless Max was still foolishly trying to break quarantine and create one of the sensations he so dearly loved. This was a new idea, and some things upheld it, but Max had been playing bridge when I was kissed on the stairs, and there was still left that ridiculous incident of the comfort.

Bella came up after I had gone to bed, and turned on the light to brush her hair.

"If I don't leave this mausoleum soon, I 'll be carried out," she declared. "You in bed, Lollie Mercer and Dal flirting, Anne hysterical, and Jim making his will in the den! You will have to take Aunt Selina to-night, Kit; I 'm all in."

"If you 'll put her to bed, I 'll keep her there," I conceded, after some parley.

"You 're a dear." Bella came back from the door. "Look here, Kit, you know Jim pretty well. Don't you think he looks badly? Thinner?"

"He 's a wreck," I said soberly. "You have a lot to answer for, Bella."

Bella went over to the cheval glass and looked in it. "I avoid him all I can," she said, posing. "He 's awfully funny; he 's so afraid I 'll think he 's serious about you. He can't realize that for me he simply does n't exist."

Well, I took Aunt Selina, and about two o'clock, while I was in my first sleep, I woke to find her standing beside me, tugging at my arm.

"There 's somebody in the house," she whispered. "Thieves!"

"If they 're in they 'll not get out to-night," I said.

"I tell you, I saw a man skulking on the stairs," she insisted.

I got up, ungraciously enough, and put on my dressing-gown. Aunt Selina, who had her hair in crimps, tied a veil over her head, and together we went to the head of the stairs. Aunt Selina leaned far over and peered down.

"He is in the library," she whispered. "I can see a light."

The lust of battle was in Aunt Selina's eye. She girded her robe about her and began to descend the stairs cautiously. We went through the hall and stopped at the library door. It was empty, but from the den beyond came a hum of voices and the cheerful glow of firelight. I realized the situation then, but it was too late.

"You can argue all you like," Bella was saying, in her clear, high tones. "You have forfeited your right to make love to me. It 's—it 's highly improper, under the circumstances."

And then Jim! "You swallow a camel and stick at a gnat. Why did you meet me here, if you did n't expect me to make love to you? I 've stood for a lot, Bella, but this foolishness will have to end. Either you love me—or you don't. I 'm desperate." He drew a long, forlorn breath.

"Poor old Jim!" This was Bella. A pause. Then—"Let my hand alone!" Also Bella.

"It is *my* hand"—Jim's most fatuous tone. "*There* is where you wore my ring. There 's the mark still." Sounds of Jim kissing Bella's ring-finger. "What did you do with it? Throw it away?" More sounds.

Aunt Selina crossed the library swiftly, and again I followed. Bella was sitting in a low chair by the fire, looking at the logs, in the most exquisite *liseuse* of chiffon and ribbon. Jim was on his knees, staring at her adoringly, and holding both her hands.

"I 'll tell you a secret," Bella was saying, looking as coy as she knew how—which was considerable. "I—I still wear it, on a chain around my neck."

"You darling!" Jim said, and slid his arm around her.

Then Aunt Selina turned to me and gave me a push. "Go right up to bed," she said in her most awful tone. "Just leave this affair to me."

Jim and Bella were both on their feet by that time.

"Now," Aunt Selina began, turning on them, "how long has this shameless condition of things existed?"

It was hardly my affair then, so I left, and locked myself in my own room, and waited for things to happen. But everything was quiet, and after awhile they all came up, almost amiably, and at first I thought they had n't told her. But she stopped outside my door and said very distinctly: "Bad as this affair is, I can understand every part in it but Miss McNair's!" And with that parting shot she went to bed. As I said before, it was that way all the time. They blamed *me* for the quarantine; Aunt Selina turned on *me;* Flannigan accused *me* of every crime in the calendar; and if any one was to be kissed, they kissed *me!*

I did n't go to sleep again, and toward morning I distinctly heard the knob of the door turn. I mistrusted my ears, however, and so I got up quietly and went over in the darkness. There was nothing to be heard, but when I put my hand on the knob I felt it move under my fingers. The counter pressure evidently alarmed whoever it was, for the knob was released, and nothing more happened. By this time anything so uncomplicated as the fumbling of a knob at night had no power to disturb me, and I went back to bed and to sleep.

In the morning Mr. Harbison repaired the telephone, and he reported that it had been deliberately disconnected by some one. The wires were cut through, where they came into the house, and it looked as though it had been done by some practised hand. That was Friday.

The first thing we did, of course, was to order something to eat, and Aunt Selina went to bed with indigestion just after luncheon. No one was very sorry, for she had been unpleasant all morning. In the afternoon she thought she was dying, and she sent for Bella and Jim, and they made it all up. She went to sleep holding a hand of each of them, and slept three hours and never let go!

About two in the afternoon the sun came out, and the rest of us went to the roof. The sleet had melted and the air was fairly warm. Two housemaids dusting rugs on the top of the next house came over and stared at us, and somebody in an automobile down on Riverside Drive stood up and waved at us. It was very cheerful, and hopelessly lonely. Max, who had been almost savage to me for two days, came over and sat down on the parapet beside me.

"Have you happened to notice," he began, "that our friend Jim ate no luncheon?"

"I have n't noticed Jim at all," I flashed, my last night's humiliation still in my mind.

"If somebody would put the question up to me," Max went on didactically, "I would say that James is not well. He looks queer, and, to be quite truthful, I think he has a rash."

"Don't be an alarmist," I said. "Anyhow, Jim may have anything he wants, for all I am interested."

I stayed on the roof after the others had gone, and for some time I thought I was alone. After awhile, however, I got a whiff of smoke, and then I saw Mr. Harbison far over in the corner, one foot on the parapet, moodily smoking a pipe. He was gazing out over the river, and paying no attention to me. This was natural, considering that I had hardly spoken to him since Thursday.

I would not let him drive me away, so I sat still, and it grew darker and colder. He filled his pipe now and then, but he never looked in my direction. Finally, however, as it grew very dusk, he knocked the ashes out and came toward me.

"I am going to make a request, Miss McNair," he said evenly. "Please keep off the roof after sunset. There are—reasons." I had risen and was preparing to go downstairs.

"Unless I know the reasons, I refuse to do anything of the kind," I retorted. He bowed.

"Then the door will be kept locked," he rejoined, and opened it for me. He did not follow me, but stood watching until I was down, and I heard him close the roof door firmly behind me.

It is hardly necessary to go into the incidents of that evening: how they took Jim aside and inspected him, and how Max was right; how they tried to talk Jim over, and how he refused to be quarantined and said he always got a rash from early strawberries, and that they were a lot of fools, and he hoped to thunder if he *did* have it they'd all get it. The only way they got him shut away in one of the servants' rooms was by Bella promising to sit outside in the hall and read to him through the closed door. When the doctor came he said it looked suspicious, and he put him on a liquid diet and said he could tell us positively in the morning.

Late that evening Betty Mercer and Dallas were writing verses of condolence, to be signed by all of us and sent to Jim, when Bella came running down the stairs.

"Jim's delirious," she announced tragically from the doorway. "You shut him in there, all alone, and now he's delirious. I'll never forgive any of you."

Dal wanted to go up at once, but Anne wouldn't let him. So Max went, with Bella following, and I telephoned for the doctor again. But Max came down after awhile, and said Jim wasn't delirious at all, and then he took Dal and Mr. Harbison into the den, and they talked for an hour. Just before they came out they sent for Flannigan. It was very mysterious.

Nothing more happened that evening, and the next day, Saturday, was quiet enough. The doctor was still in doubt about Jim. Max proposed to me in the afternoon, while the rest were conversing with Jim through a closed door. He said he had n't really had any hope, but he thought he would feel better if he got it out of his system. And he said if he took anything from Jim and died, he wanted me to remember him kindly.

From that Saturday night until Monday night, when the final event occurred, there was a succession of mysterious events. In the first place, that evening Flannigan came upstairs to the library and called all the men into the hall. Before they closed the door I had time to see a sort of rope, that seemed to be made of all kinds of things tied together, trunk straps, bed sheets, and something of Flannigan's that he pointed to with rage, and said he had n't been able to keep his clothes on all day. When the men came back, they refused to discuss the matter, and long after the feminine contingent had gone to bed, I could hear them talking downstairs.

Betty Mercer came into my room very early Sunday morning and said Anne Brown wanted me. I went over at once, and Anne was sitting up in bed, crying. Dal had slipped out of the room at daylight, she said, and had n't come back. He had thought she was asleep, but she was n't, and she knew he was dead, for nothing ever made Dal get up on Sunday before noon.

There was no one moving in the house, and I hardly knew what to do. It was Betty who said she would go up and rouse Mr. Harbison and Max, who had taken Jim's place in the studio. She started out bravely enough, but in a minute we heard her flying back. Anne grew perfectly white.

"He 's lying on the upper stairs!" Betty cried, and we all ran out. It was quite true. Dal was lying on the stairs in a bath-robe, with one of Jim's Indian war-clubs in his hand. And he was sound asleep!

He looked somewhat embarrassed when he roused and saw us standing around. He said he was going to play a practical joke on somebody and fell asleep in the middle of it. And Anne said he was n't even an intelligent liar, and went back to bed in a temper. But Betty came in with me, and we sat and looked at each other and did n't say much. The situation was beyond us.

On that evening—Sunday—the really serious event of the quarantine occurred. It had grown stormy again, and Mr. Harbison went up to the roof to see how the tent stood the strain. He was gone a long time—fully an hour—and finally Betty Mercer, who had really hung around him quite noticeably all day—Betty said he must have blown away, and Dallas went to look for him. In a few minutes Dal came racing downstairs and called Max, and of course the entire party followed like the tail of a comet. We passed Bella, fast asleep in the upper hall, in a chair, her head against a sheet wrung out of disinfectant nailed across the door of Jim's room. She roused when she heard us, and followed, still yawning, along the hall and up to the roof.

Max had turned on the electric lights, and was kneeling over something that lay prone on the tin. It was Mr. Harbison, quite unconscious, and bleeding from a cut over one eye. I tried to ask if he were dead, but my lips were stiff with horror. And then he opened his eyes, and said he was awfully sorry but he did n't dance, and went off again.

Well, it 's too terrible to go over. They got him downstairs to the studio and made him as comfortable as they could, and we sent for the doctor again. By daylight there was a trained nurse in charge, and we were all shut out, and there was nothing to do but sit and wait. It was awful!

About noon they let Jim out. It seems there was nothing the matter with him but a stomach rash. Then the four men, including Flannigan, went to the roof and stayed a long time. I know, for I was in the upper hall outside the studio. I stayed there most of the day and got things that the nurse needed. I don't know why mother did n't let me study nursing—I always wanted to do it. And I felt so helpless and childish now, when there were things to be done.

I caught Max as the men came down, and drew him aside.

"You 'll have to tell me something, Max," I said. "I 'm going crazy. What does it all mean? Who hurt him?"

Max looked at me quite a long time. "I 'm darned if I understand you women," he said gravely. "I thought you disliked Harbison."

"So I do—I did," I supplemented. "But some one has injured him——"

"Pooh! Ran into a chimney," Max interrupted. "Or do you think I tried to brain him?" But his lightness did not deceive me.

The day dragged on. Downstairs people ate and read and wrote letters, and outside newspaper men talked together and gazed over at the house and photographed the doctor coming in and the doctor going out. As for me, I sat in Bella's chair in the upper hall, and listened to the crackle of the nurse's starched skirts.

About midnight that night the doctor made his final trip, and when he came out he was smiling.

"He 's doing very well, Miss McNair," he said. "He 's partly conscious now, and in about an hour you can let the nurse here have a little sleep. Don't let him talk."

And so at last I went through the familiar door into an unfamiliar room, with basins and towels and bottles around and a screen made of Jim's largest canvases, and some one on the improvised bed tried to turn and look at me. He did not speak, and I sat down beside him; after awhile he put his hand over mine as it lay on the bed.

"You are much better to me than I deserve," he said softly. And because his eyes were disconcerting, I put an ice cloth promptly over them.

"Much better than you deserve," I said gently, and patted the cloth to place. We were very quiet for a long time. I think he dozed, and when he roused he was more himself. He took the cloth off at once, and looked around for me.

"Can't you sit here beside me?" he asked. "You are miles away." It was three feet. So I sat down close to him, for he was not to be excited.

"It's awfully good of you to do this," he said finally. "I've been desperately sorry, Kit—about the other night. I was mad—crazy."

"Don't talk about it," I interrupted, and tried to give him his medicine. He pushed the spoon aside.

"But I want to talk about it," he persisted. "I think about it all the time. You seemed so convinced that I was a blackguard that—somehow—nothing seemed to matter."

"What is happening downstairs?" I asked, for there were all kinds of sounds coming up. But the man on the bed was not going to be put off.

"When I thought you were married to Wilson, it was bad enough, God knows. And then—I learned you were not, and it went to my head. I was almost delirious that night. The instant I held you in my arms it was all over. I loved you the first time I saw you, Kit. I suppose I'm a fool to talk like this."

"Then there must be two of us," I said, half crying, half smiling. And I slid on my knees beside him.

At that instant Dallas opened the door and stepped into the room. He was covered with dirt and he had a hatchet in his hand. He was a fierce and triumphant object. "Well, the mystery is solved," he shouted. "Why, Kit, I'm ashamed of you! Get up off your knees."

XIV.

LETTER from Thomas Harbison, late Engineer of Bridges, Peruvian Trunk Lines, South America, to Henry Llewellyn, Union Nitrate Co., Iquique, Chili.

DEAR OLD MAN:

This will go on the same steamer as my last letter of six days ago—or is it six years? Read the other one first. It may prepare you for this. Hal, she wasn't married at all! She was the victim of a conspiracy to deceive the spinster aunt—that is all. The real wife

is Miss Bella Knowles, the lady of the basement, you remember, who divorced her liege and then regretted it. So she was n't married,—Miss McNair,—but she will be soon. You 're to take the very next boat and come up here, and we 'll all go back on the *Gadfly*.

We cabled her mother at Bermuda, and talked to her father over long distance to Chicago this morning. We will have to wait until they get back, I suppose.

I think I am excited, and I know I am not lucid, but the quarantine was lifted two hours ago. It seems there was nothing much the matter with the Jap. For the other events, read the enclosed clipping from this morning's paper. You can imagine the excitement we had. Now it is all over, I don't mind telling you that I put in a bad seven days. We were a lot of idiots not to have thought of the real explanation. We had stepped over that box of soap dozens of times.

Now remember—the next steamer for yours. I believe it 's to be in a church, and you 'll have to stand by me, old man. I 'm in a blue funk when I think about it. Happy days.

Yours,

Tom

Bella Knowles (ex-Wilson) to Mr. Reginald Barry Wolfe, Palm Beach, Fla.

Dear Reg:

Don't bother about the mare, Reg. I am going to Italy and shall not need her. Of course by the time you get this you 'll have heard. I think people owe me a vote of thanks for giving them something to talk about. Now, Reg dear, Jim and I are going abroad until the excitement is over, and I want you to see that the *real* version gets out. Tell everybody that I was thrown out of the car just at the corner of Ninety-fifth and West End Avenue, and while I was unconscious the policeman on the beat recognized me and carried me to Jim's. We were quarantined there, policeman and all. The enclosed newspaper cutting will prove this, for you see the policeman is mentioned.

We are all getting ready to leave, but such an excitement as we have had! One of the men, a Mr. Harbison, was almost murdered. In fact, I wonder we were not all assassinated.

Would you like to help Jim again through the ceremony? He says he never feels married unless you are around.

Hastily yours,

Bella

Clipped from the *Evening Chronicle* of Monday, February the tenth.

ROBBERIES SOLVED

QUARANTINE AT WILSON HOME LIFTED UNDER UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

On the discovery that the Japanese butler was suffering from nothing more serious than chicken-pox, the quarantine at the home of James Wilson, millionaire and artist, was lifted to-day. Immediately after, the representative of the *Chronicle* obtained from the several victims a detailed account of the strange events which culminated in the call for the police at two o'clock this morning.

Eleven persons were shut in the house seven days ago, during a dinner party. Of the eleven, nine were well known New York people, prominent in social and financial circles. A tenth, Officer Flannigan, suffered imprisonment in pursuit of his duty, and has been mentioned for promotion in his district.

Immediately after the quarantine, and while the house was closely guarded by health officers and newspaper men, strange events began to take place. The first night a pearl collar and a diamond bracelet were missing. Shortly after, Miss Caruthers, an aunt of Mr. Wilson, was robbed of ten thousand dollars in cash and some antique jewelry of great value. A watch also disappeared, and telephone wires were mysteriously cut.

The culmination of the mystery came on Saturday night, when Mr. Thomas Harbison, one of the party, was found unconscious and badly injured on the roof of the house. When Mr. Harbison became conscious, he told certain suspicions to the masculine members of the party, but, notwithstanding vigorous efforts, nothing was discovered until one o'clock this morning. At that time, according to the victims of this miscarriage of municipal justice, the entire household was asleep, except one man, Mr. Dallas Brown, well known as the M.F.H. of the Cloverly Hunt Club. Mr. Brown, for certain reasons, had stationed himself in a dark corner near the head of the lower stairs. For some time the house was quiet. Then his attention was aroused by peculiar scraping noises in the rear of the house. Hastily arousing Mr. Maxwell Reed, whose room was near, they proceeded to investigate. The noises were finally traced to the dumb-waiter shaft, and on investigation the cage was found to have stuck fast between two floors. Stifled oaths and groans were proceeding from the cage, and the cables were being violently agitated. As soon as the two gentlemen understood the situation, they sent in a police call, and after two hours of hard work the cage was lowered to the basement kitchen and the prisoner released.

Gaunt, unshaven, and dirty, the police had no difficulty in recognizing Lawrence McGuirk, better known as "Tubby McGuirk," celebrated second story-man and all-round thief, whose absence from his accustomed haunts has troubled the central station for a week.

Realizing that he was caught, McGuirk led the way to a box of soap in the cellar, and unearthed, or unsoaped, his booty. Of his experiences in the quarantined house, of his attempts to escape by means of a board, a home-made rope, and a hole in the cellar, of his midnight prowlings in search of food, of days in a closet in one of the servants' rooms, and of nights when he wandered, shivering, in search of bedclothing—all these things McGuirk described feelingly. He seemed glad to talk, after his week's silence, and spoke at length of the struggle he had made to hide the pearl collar. For three days, he said, it was concealed in the pocket of an old smoking-coat in Mr. Wilson's studio.

Surrounded by hapless society folk whose plight he had helped to render unendurable, McGuirk was hand-cuffed and led away. At the doorway a rather unusual incident occurred. Miss Caruthers, aunt of Mr. Wilson and chaperon of the party, stepped forward and confronted the prisoner.

"Young man," she said grimly, "I 'll thank you to return what you took from *me* last Tuesday night."

McGuirk stared, then shuddered and turned suddenly pale.

"Good Lord!" he ejaculated. "On the stairs to the roof! *You!*"

Miss Caruthers and the remainder of the party professed absolute ignorance as to his meaning,—and quite broken, McGuirk was taken away.

At the door he waved his hand to the circle of reporters and policemen who had so faithfully guarded the house for a week.

"Good-by, fellows," he called feebly. "I ain't sorry, I ain't. Jail 'll be paradise after this."

Note to Miss Kit McNair written by Mr. Thomas Harbison on the back of a trunk tag.

Don't you know I won't see you until to-morrow? For heaven's sake, get away from this crowd and come into the den. If you don't, I will kiss you good-by before everybody. Are you coming?

T.

(Written below, in a feminine hand)

No indeed.

(This was scratched out and beneath)

Coming.

◆

A SONNET OF SPOUSAL

BY GEORGE HERBERT CLARKE

OVER the mountain hangs the hush of dawn,
Irresolute to be or cease to be;
The mist-bathed valley and each lonely tree
Stretch motionless, as on a canvas drawn;
Afar, ahark, a flight-arrested fawn
Stands tense, th' eternal sacrament to see—
The quickened sky, that pulses tremblingly
Till red with day's-blood lighting hill and lawn.

So is it with the love that 's born in me:
Silent it waited, wavered; risen now,
The sky of life it climbs with steady power;
Sweetheart, its day is ours. Oh, may we see
Together its high noon, together bow
And worship in its holy evening hour!

THE NATIVITY

A MIRACLE PLAY

By Charles L. O'Donnell

PERSONS

The Holy Family
Matthias Rebecca
Their Infant Son
Shepherds Angels

SCENE I.

Bethlehem, the night of Christ's birth. Early evening, near the house of Matthias. Enter Joseph, leading an ass upon which the Virgin Mary is seated.

Joseph. A wind hath blown the heavens into flame
About us; earth is silver to our feet.
By night, by day, God's hand hath guided us,
Pillar and cloud His firmament hath been
To bring us hither; this should be the town
Of David, city of our sire.
Mary. Even so.
Joseph. Here where the unknowing workman left an arch
In the broad wall we pass; thus Israel's God
Comes stooping to His own.
Mary. Whereto He leads
We can but follow now as ever, yet
Methinks I hear, over the din of song
That beat about our temples all the way,
The night-song of a mother for her babe.
Hark!
(*Crooning on the wind.*)
Baby, sleep, my child;
Deep the night hangs o'er thee.

High the wind and wild;
Dreaming is before thee.
Come, come the happy slumber;
Bright dreams be thine in number.
Ah, baby, on thy mother's breast
Is sleep for thee, for thee is rest.

JOSEPH. Let us approach; the inn mayhap is far
And crowded by the mandates of our king.
(*He knocks at the door of the house.*)
MATTHIAS. (*Within.*) Who is it starts the peacefulness of night
With clamorous knocking?
JOSEPH. Two of David's house
Come far, and weary: may we lodge to-night
Beside thy hearth?
MATTHIAS. Mine house is all too strait
For mine own household. (*Opens the door.*) Beggars and their beast,
Begone.
REBECCA. Hush; houseless, in the night, with child.
Surely some room can still be made——
MATTHIAS. But no,
We are too poor. (*To Joseph.*) The inn is farther down
The road. (*Looks at Mary.*) And yet—and yet——
Good night.
(*Mary and Joseph turn sorrowfully away.*)
MARY. (*Looks at Rebecca.*) Good night.
REBECCA. Houseless, with child—O husband, call them back.
MATTHIAS. Peace, they will elsewhere shelter find and rest.
REBECCA. (*Musing.*) Her eyes were like the pools of Hesebon
That mirrored her sad soul.
(*Their infant begins to weep.*)
MATTHIAS. Lo, here thy child
Hath need of thee, and of thine every thought.
REBECCA. He sickens, yea, his eyes begin to blur.
MATTHIAS. His temples burn; it is some malady
Of sudden, unknown power.
REBECCA. Give me the child;
Fetch thee yon herbs medicinal and oil.
MATTHIAS. His eyes are fixèd; how his bosom lifts!
REBECCA. O God of Jacob, leave us still our son.
(*The infant dies. There is much lamenting.*)

SCENE II.

The stable. Midnight. Mary and Joseph, with shepherds and angels, adoring at the crib.

(*Chorus of angels.*)

From heaven He came,
The Eternal Flame,
To fire men's hearts
With Love's own darts,
To conquer sin
And mercy win
Of God above.

Lo, in the straw—
Near may ye draw,
For God is weak
That ye may speak,—
The God of peace;
Let earth's war cease—
Toward men good will.

REBECCA. (*Without.*) God knows, God knows, my heart is bleeding sore;
My son had hardly come to months that knew
His mother's lips, his mother's face and voice;
Warm with my kisses slept he, in an hour
Cold in mine arms.
But she, that pilgrim spouse,
With all the lights of mother in her eyes,
In dewy deeps the trembling wistfulness
Of hopes unfathomable,—pleading eyes,
Ye draw me from the shrouding of my babe,
For she hath need of me. (*Entering stable.*) What wondrous light,
What music is there here! The Mother, ah,
Her Babe. O God, stop all the clocks of time
And never ring the passing of this hour!
JOSEPH. Woman, thou look'st upon the face of God.
REBECCA. I saw Him in His Mother's waiting eyes,
And I have come from mine own babe's stark form
With swaddling bands I ne'er may need again.
MARY. The heart of Abraham is in thy breast.

(*Giving her the cloths that were around Jesus*),
Lay these upon thine infant's quiet side,
Sister, that hast this night befriended God.

SCENE III.

The flight. Night. Near the house of Matthias and Rebecca. Enter Joseph, leading an ass upon which is seated Mary with the Child.

JOSEPH. Ye stars, that run before the winds of heaven,
Hide in the frowning cliffs of mountainous cloud;
Thou, planet, wimpled as a maid, with light,
Tell not our steps; God's finger points us far;
The way is His who is the way. (*Lullaby on the air.*)
MARY. Soft, listen!
REBECCA. (*Within, singing.*)

Baby, sleep, my babe;
God's own night is o'er us.
Jesse's rod hath flowered;
Heaven opes before us.
God sleeps as thou art sleeping,
While angels watch are keeping.
Sleep, sleep, until the songful dawn;
God's day is here, sin's night is gone.

MARY. Yet, ere another westering sun his way
Hath crimsoned, earth shall lie in their blood washed,
The sons that sleep this night on mother breasts.
JOSEPH. This woman's child hath died that he may live,
Romping forever in the fields of heaven.
(*They pass along. Singly the stars drop out. The moon meets a cloud. Rebecca's lullaby dies away in the darkness.*)

THE THING

By Will Levington Comfort

◆

I.

A GAWKY girl of ten was speaking a piece at a child's party. She spoke in a way so different from the ordinary routine of speaking pieces, and she was so strikingly homely and straight-haired, that a boy in the room laughed. Another boy immediately arose and bored in upon the scoffer, struck and downed his enemy, and was endeavoring hopefully to kill him with bare hands, when the gawky girl interfered. At the touch of her hand, her champion writhed clear from the punished figure beneath, and the pair walked home together, leaving a wailing and disordered company.

The dramatic society of Danube, Kentucky, gave "A Tribute to Art" ten years afterward. Where the piece came from is forgotten. How it got its name never was known outside of the sorry brain that thrust it, deformed but palpitating, upon the world. Mrs. Fiske would have trouble in making the heroine in "A Tribute to Art" more than a stick. The hero is larger timber, only too dead for vine-leaves. But there is a Big Sister—put there in blindness or by budding genius—in whose character there are glorious possibilities. Indeed, there is a moment toward the end of the piece—a moment of windy gloom and falling leaves, a black-windowed farm-house on the left, the rest a desolate horizon—in which the Big Sister is alone on the stage, to rant her tragedy or pluck out her heart and show the running death there—according to the artist.

Because the gawky girl had persisted in dramatic work in and out of season up the years, and because the Big Sister had no need to be beautiful, Selma Cross was given the part. What she made of it, weaving the lines tighter and sharpening the concept in every rehearsal, caused the others in the cast to tingle with fears, not that she would outshine them, but that she might disgrace the society on the night of nights.

Danube is not quite metropolitan enough to attract the topmost few of the stage. The visiting drama is therefore a mode of expression for limited trains, trap-doors, blank cartridges, and falling cliffs. Had Selma Cross been a poet, and come up in the past decade through the columns of the local semi-weekly and the advocate of the county-seat, and broken finally, as the brook and river meet, into the Lexington press, she would never have needed New York, nor personal beauty, to round out her fame. But she challenged an arena where, in the ethics of Danube, only beauty was eligible, and she plunged her audience without ceremony into waters deeper and stormier than "Nobody's Claim" and "Shadows of a Great City." This was manifestly monstrous.

A spring night, hot, damp, star-lit—that terrible night of "A Tribute to Art." All who stood high and in the middle distances of Danube were on hand to see the younger generation perpetuate the ineffable culture of the place. Grandmothers were there who had played "East Lynne" upon the same stage before the raids of Wolfert and Morgan; and daddies who sat like deans, of dimmed but artistic eyes, watching the young idea progress upon familiar paths.

The heroine did very well, and looked as sweet as the first hill daisy. This could not be said of the Big Sister. Selma Cross was a camel beside the other. There was something implacable in her stride and voice; something rousing, vital, but misplaced in the plain, rangy creature who played about the flower, raging and caressing. . . . And the last dark moment when she was alone with her tragedy! The voice fell from full-throated baying to horrid whispers of exhaustion, and Danube saw a huge, unfinished human—passion pouring from her like a flood through a broken dam—beating her breast in the gloom.

Danube felt itself brutalized. Upon every brain was left the rampant thing, and a corrective impulse to squelch the perpetrator for all time. And Danube was by no means altogether wrong. Selma Cross was bad; her lack of self-repression scandalous. The part, as she had evolved it, was out of all proportion to the piece, to Danube, to amateur theatricals. Still, she struck no false note; her error lay in over-expression.

It had been to her an instant of singular glory. She had felt her other lives rise imperiously in her brain, other tragedies and triumphs on this identical path to art. It had seemed to her that her body was an instrument for a moment played upon by the fuller-blown perfecting Masters. Danube could not see that she was combustible fuel, freshly-lit; that she was bound to burn with a steady flame, when the pockets of gas were exploded.

The dazed Kentuckians did not leave the hall at once. They had taken strong medicine and vaguely studied the effect upon each other. Selma Cross strode at last out of the stage-door and up the aisle, where she was joined by her old champion, Calhoun Knox, who pressed her hand. They entered the periphery of the crowd about the door. This sentence reached her:

"Some one—the police, if necessary—must prevent Selma Cross from making another such shocking display of herself!"

It was a woman who spoke, and the man at her side laughed.

Selma Cross had no time nor thought to check her own companion. Calhoun Knox darted forward to the male who had scoffed. "Laugh like that again," he said coldly, "and I'll kill you!"

Danube turned to him; then to Selma Cross behind him! Her face was mist-gray, and she swayed from her wounds. Every word had knifed her.

"Oh, you cat-minds!" she flung at them at last.

Calhoun Knox took her arm, and they left the theatre together.

Far out on the Lone Ridge pike, the two halted at the foot of the Knobs. The night was ceiled with glistening world-dust and wondrously still. The man's brain was torn with pity for the woman.

"I can't stand for you to go away, Selma!" he was saying. "I want you to stay and be mine always. You seem to finish out everything I think. You seem to be needed in everything I do. You—are—beautiful—to—me!"

His honor and simplicity pulled her out of herself. Her arm, so long, so strange and swift, darted to his shoulder, and the hand closed there like a mountaineer's. "If ever living man deserved a woman, Calhoun," she said impetuously, "you do; but there is no marriage in me now! I like you—like you better than all the world. I would fight for you to the death—with beasts or men—as you fought for me to-night and long ago. I think—I think I should hate any woman who got you for a husband; but there is no love, no home, no wife in me to-night! I have failed to win Danube, Kentucky, but I shall win the world! I may be a burnt-out hag then, Calhoun, but I shall come back—when I have won the world! Then, if you wish, I will give you myself and my possessions. . . . Listen, Calhoun Knox,—if ever the common noun 'man' means anything to me—you shall be the substance. But to-night! My God, I am not a woman—just a thing at war with the world!"

II.

You must pay a terrible price for supremacy. Hundreds fall on the slopes, in the foliage of the duller, smaller bay-leaves, while one gasping valiant lives to pluck the noble laurels at the Top. You are a child of Art in the beginning, or you would not attempt the gruelling climb; and then to win you must have bone and blood and brain and a cheer from below. In the fearful annals of these ascents, there may be another such struggle as that of Selma Cross. If so, let it be told with delicacy and expression, and with the trophies of conquest at hand.

Ordinary women always hated her. She was told that she was too unsightly to be a waitress; she was forced to do kitchen pot-boilers and scrub tenement stairs for bread. Word was passed about that she was mad because she repeated the lines of drama in the horrid halls. She learned the feel of the lust for self-murder in the brain, felt her breast ache for death and her hand rise gladly to the act. Once she debased her soul by playing a freak part. She went down into hell and was forgiven. But there is no profit in lingering over these details.

The Kentuckian within her burning mightily for Home—this kept her sweet. The thought that Calhoun Knox loved her and waited for her—this kept her sane. The time came when she dared not write as the months piled high, and his letters grew farther apart and ceased entirely. Only God knows. And God took pity on her at last, gave her the wonderful fruits of agony—Power, Power of shuddering depth and starry reach. She had gone against the steel until something broke—the steel, not her spirit. Danube was four years behind when she won an audience with Vhruebert—the man at the gate where the star stuff passes through.

Vhruebert smoked and watched the woman. She was telling him quietly what she could do. He reflected that she was stunningly original in her ugliness. Vhruebert was no dead soul. His perceptions could leak out on occasion through the veneer of dollar-poison. It happened just now, as he regarded the length and reach, face and structure, of the creature before him, that his mind reverted to a play in his desk—a play about to be sent back. It was a raw, brutal piece, with spots of the boy all over it, but it contained moments. These moments showed Vhruebert that the writer was a four-star boy—having gift, gall, patience, and punch.

Vhruebert noted with interest that his stenographer, a woman, shrank from the caller. It was a theory of his that the fibre of a real artist grinds at first touch upon the human commonplace, like glass contracting chalk. He had felt the man behind the play in his desk. He felt now this huge, intense stranger before him. He felt the two come together for glory or ruin of his own. . . . But the conception was too big and disturbing! These crude genii might be buckled together, but was the public ready? . . . Again the unpent fury of the play was strong in his understanding; and here was the woman the play pictured, God-made and sent for the part, big-mouthed, clear-skinned, yellow-eyed, of thrilling voice and feline agility. Vhruebert could hear her heart beat. . . . But it was all too daring, too new! Might he not continue to feed the public Routine with variations, and so add unto his riches?

"I can't do anything for you, Miss Cross," he said impatiently; but in spite of himself, he added, "Come to-morrow." That night Vhruebert thought it all out and concluded that he was rich enough to take a chance. He wished, however, that he was not forced to take a chance both ways. For instance, if Ibsen had only done the play!

The next day Selma Cross waited in Vhruebert's reception-room until she could have screamed at the half-dressed women on the walls.

"I don't know exactly why I asked you to come again," was his greeting when he finally appeared. "What is it, once more, that you mean to do?"

"I mean to be the foremost tragedienne manifested in my time upon this planet," she said.

"Sit down. Tragedy does n't pay."

"I shall make it pay."

"Um-m. How do you know? Have you a private wire reaching into the future?"

"I can show you that I shall make it pay."

"Mercy, not here! We will go to the outskirts."

It was in mid-winter. He took her to a little summer theatre up Lenox way. The place had not been opened since Thanksgiving. Shivering in his great coat, Vhruebert sat down in the centre of the dim dress-circle. He was a thin-lipped, smileless person, a great deal more kindly than he looked. Just now he blew out his breath repeatedly. He seemed absorbed in the effect the steam made in a little bar of sunlight which slanted across the frosty theatre. To such a court of appeal, Selma Cross gave Sudermann, Boker, and Ibsen.

He raised his hand finally, and when she halted he called in a bartender from the establishment adjoining, and commanded her to give something from Camille and Sappho. She obeyed, the white-aproned one standing in the cold meanwhile.

"What do you think of that, Mr. Bar-tender?" Vhruebert inquired pleasantly at length.

"Hot stuff," said the man. "It makes your coppers sizzle."

The criticism delighted Vhruebert. "Miss Cross, you make our coppers sizzle," he declared, offering her some wine. "Please be at my studio to-morrow at eleven. I want you to meet a man. At least, I think he is a man, though I only know him by mail."

She knew she had won, but it had come after so many days, and she had so long felt sure of her power, that the triumph was small coin and alloyed with irony. The next forenoon at Vhruebert's, she was presented to the hunchback Stephen Cabot, author of "The Thing," a play. . . . The long white face seemed to have little to do with the rest of him. After the first glance, she did not see the rest of him. His pain-lit eyes gleamed marvellously at the sight of her. She wanted to take him in her hands and make him perfect.

"Vhruebert is a wizard to bring you to me," Cabot said. "You are the woman I wrote about."

"May I see the play?" she asked.

The manuscript was given her. A few moments afterward Selma Cross and Stephen Cabot had forgotten the place and the world. Vhruebert rang a bell for his office-boy.

"Please tell that lady and gentleman I am still here," he commanded the boy.

"Miss Cross and I are going out to luncheon together," Cabot said laughingly.

Then Vhruebert took his place before his discoveries and delivered himself: "You two, listen to the father of what you are to be. Listen to the soulless Vhruebert, who brutalizes the great American stage. You two who are Art, listen to Commerce. It took me twenty-five years to learn that there must be humor in a play. There is not enough humor in this 'Thing' to lift the lip of a bee. I learned that there must be joy at the end and wedding-bells. This 'Thing' ends, as near as I can see, over the hills to the mad-house. Twenty-five years have proved to me what I knew the first day—that women of the stage must be beautiful. Miss Cross may be beautiful according to the standards of Mars, but Earth is not yet evolved to her style. Now, listen. There are one thousand people in this country writing plays with humor and happy endings. There are ten thousand girls in this country expiring to spend their beauty upon the stage—and yet you two are the chosen of Vhruebert! When you look into each other's eyes and whisper how wonderful you are, and say, 'To hell with Commerce and the Pinhead Public!'—remember Vhruebert, who advances the money!"

III.

But they did not remember Vhruebert in the fairy days they passed together. They were too happy to remember Vhruebert, but they ate his bread with joy, and drank his wine with a merry heart, for had not God accepted their works? The cripple loved her, and the vibrant heart of the woman covered him, mothered him. Well she knew that he would never ask her to take the broken vessel of his body; and so she was safe and glad, for her heart was a Kentuckian's by the old covenant. But she let her heart have its new and perfect dream, and her heart paid her in coloring and poise. She was so used to self-repression, so big to battle, that she said she could love this man of white fire and go her way at the end. She had come up through a furious country, and suffering had reinforced her so, that she felt sometimes as if there was no power, earthly or occult, that could change her from her chosen way.

Months afterward, on the first night of "The Thing," she played it all to Stephen Cabot—to the lowest, finest head in that curious, startled throng. Something from that long white face got to her very heart and steadied and exalted her!

"The Thing" was Vhruebert's single dissipation, his first liberty with a public whose principles of taste he believed he knew. Vhruebert's name brought the crowd; the venture was his to the curtain. Then, when Selma Cross took the stage, he felt himself fall back into the merchant. Between acts, and when the cumulative prowess of the woman could be crowded for an instant out of mind, Vhruebert watched a gray-bearded man of seventy, Alton Somers, the dean of the New York critics. He wondered if Somers had heard the hate of the women in the audience.

By some new mastery of style, Selma Cross had managed to keep her profile to the audience. The last act was half gone before the people realized that there were qualities in her voice other than richness and flexibility. She had held them thus far with the theme and conserved feeling. Now came the rising moments. Full into the light she turned her face. With a gesture of the great bare arm, she turned loose upon the men and women a perfect havoc of emptiness. She made them see how a mighty passion suddenly bereft of its object turns to devour the brain that holds it. They saw the great gray face of "The Thing" slowly rubbed out—saw the mind behind it soften and run away into chaos.

Vhruebert gasped. The face of Alton Somers was blanched and aged. "The Thing" was laughing as the curtain crawled down over her—an easy, wind-blown, chattering laugh.

"Where did you get that diadem, Lucky One?" Somers questioned, as the crowd passed out. "Come over across the street for a few minutes. I want a stimulant and a talk with you."

Vhruebert laughed. "She makes your coppers sizzle—eh? Wait until I tell her she has won, and I 'll go with you," he said quickly.

Her manager found Selma Cross behind the scenes, stroking the head of Stephen Cabot, who was deathly ill. Having done "The Thing," he could see more deeply than others into her art and into his own words. Vhruebert seized the woman's free hand. She nodded and beckoned him away.

Six months later they finished a historic season at Cincinnati.

"Stephen," Selma Cross said to him, "I am going to take the company down into Kentucky to play to-morrow night in my home. I do not want you to go."

She had seen his face shine out through physical pain so many times! He looked the master now in his deeper hurt. They were a pair of self-fighters—champions set together.

"And are you to stay long at your home?" he asked steadily.

They were in the upper parlor of the Granville. It was Wednesday night, within a few minutes of midnight. She took his cool, slim hand.

"I cannot tell, Stephen," she said, "but if it befalls that I must live permanently there—at home—I shall come back here for a day—to tell you!"

No one could have seen by his face then that creation had ceased to be habitable. "I 'll wait here until you come," he said cheerily.

She saw to her amazement that he was the stronger; that now, with her work all but over, her own heart was calling for him imperiously. She felt a strange self within her, a self all woman, all human, desiring nothing that crowds could give nor art inspire—a self that called only for its mate. Her talk became flighty as she watched the face before her, so brave and so white. . . . She knew his heart. She knew that the ardor which his poor, wrecked body held for her would have burned to the brute husk coarser stuff than he was made of. She arose at last and strode to the window. She could see the Ohio, the moving river-lights. Beyond was Covington, Newport, Ludlow—Kentucky's outer wall. She shuddered.

"Selma," he said quietly, "the season has racked you. I don't want you to go home ill. You must go to your room now and sleep. . . . Good-night," he added at the door.

"You could smile up at them, could n't you, Stephen—as—they—stoned—you?" she faltered.

"Good-night!" he said again.

IV.

She reached Danube in the late twilight of the spring day. Having supped en route, she was driven directly to the theatre—which was new. There was a pang in this. Memories were interpenetrated with the streets and buildings, with the sounds and odors; even with the sunset patch at the head of Main Street. But all dreams of greatness of the savage, homely girl had found their source and culmination in the old house of melodrama, parts of which, she was told, now formed the structure of darky shanties down by the river. She felt that her success was qualified a little, in that it had not come in the life of the old house.

She joined her company at the theatre without seeing any of the Danube folk. The audience was already gathering. Through an eyelet of the curtain, she perceived Calhoun Knox enter alone, and take a seat in the centre five rows from the orchestra. He seemed smaller.

The good brown tan was gone from him. There was a twitch about his mouth that put a tightened replica in her own bosom. The head, the face, the throat, were not as she had remembered, not as she had wanted them to be.

Other faces were the same—even the lips that had spoken her doom nearly five years before. She had no hate for them now. . . . She looked at Calhoun Knox again! Where was the charm of clean simplicity? The very heart of her was wrenched by the force of will. There should be no Stephen Cabot in her heart or brain to-night! Before her was the stalwart who had fought for her when she needed a champion. . . . She was pulled away from the eyelet. "The Thing" was on. She was moving about among the shadows of the stage.

Selma Cross could feel the group-soul of the audience. She responded to its every thought, as if a nerve system of her own was installed in every mind. They were listening to the creature who had startled New York. She felt their awe. It was not sweet, as she had dreamed the moment would be. She wanted the love of these home-hearts, not their adulation. These were her people. There had been moments back in the East when Selma Cross, feeling her audience, had turned loose her genius with utmost daring, knowing that five—or two—of the throng could follow her. To-night she played slowly, played down, that all might vibrate. It was not a concession to the public, but a reconciliation with her own people. And at the last she moved and spoke pityingly, lest she hurt them; she played to the working face of Calhoun Knox with all its limitations—as you tell a story to a child and hasten the rescue to steady the quivering lip.

And from the flies the men and women of her company watched her hungrily. They were to catch the night train back for Cincinnati in an hour. When the curtain had fallen she bade them all good-by. And then it came to her slowly that Danube was roaring for its own. She stepped out from behind the curtain.

"Once in the days of tumult and misunderstanding," she told them, "I was naughty because you did not love me. Now I know that I was not lovable. And now that I feel your goodness and your forgiveness—I pray you not to thank me any more, lest I falter with too much joy. Bless you and thank you!"

She was down among them. A woman kissed her, but the moment was so big and her eyes were so clouded with thankfulness that she did not remember the face. . . . Then real consciousness came again. Danube had dropped back to the doors. Her hand was in the hand of Calhoun Knox.

Far out on the Lone Ridge pike they halted, at the foot of the Knobs. The lights, save those above, were all behind. She stopped, breathing full the smell of her old mountains.

"I have come back to you, Calhoun," she said at last, struggling to hold her fingers still and to keep her voice bright. "Danube would not have tolerated me until I won, and the times got so hard for me that I could not write to you."

"I should not be here," he said harshly. "You did n't write to me, and I 'm married!"

Her rock had sunk into the sea. She was like a mariner who sees Spain, but no Gibraltar. Her eyes were lost in the florid Southern country. She screamed.

"You let me come out here alone with you, Married Man!"

His pitiful answer was lost to her. She was striding back toward the city. But shame came over her at last. She waited for him to come up, holding out her hand.

"Listen, Calhoun," she said brokenly. "I had hungered for days and walked nights away in New York—like a man with no place to go. And I had my Art, but no one would hear me. They told me different things, but the words all meant, 'Selma Cross, you are hideous!' I was going to drown myself when a message came to me from you, not by mouth or letter, but some thought from your mind, it seemed to me. It was, 'Selma Cross, you are beautiful to me! I will give you my hand, and my heart, and my house!' . . . You saved me—my Kentucky gentleman! For what I have done and what I am to do, Calhoun Knox, I have you to thank. . . . God bless your big, bright heart! I wish you kingly happiness!"

She had left him far behind. She wanted to run and cry aloud. The tides of joy were so new and so vast that she could scarcely hold and direct them. Miles away she heard the night train whistle. Her baggage was at the hotel, but she had no care for that. She reached the depot platform in time. The cast of "The Thing" was there, but she remained apart. The members of her company entered a Pullman, she a day coach. She heard their laughter before the train started, laughter born of joy and hope and the year's work well done. She sat rigidly in the thin-backed seat. There were snoring, sprawling groups on every hand.

At last some one in a seat behind stirred and muttered "High Bridge!" The brakeman came through at age-long intervals, calling stations that had once seemed to her the points of a far country. And then, across the aisle, a babe awoke and wailed. The mother had others—a sweet little woman, weary unto illness. Selma Cross asked for the littlest one, which was quieted in her fresh strong arms. . . . There was wonder and rapture to the tragedienne in fitting her body about the soft, helpless, warm thing. Dawn dimmed the Kentucky meadows when she gave up the child to be fed—but begged it back again!

In the full yellow day, as the train was crossing the Ohio, she held, for a last time, the wet, restless lips to her cheek—and gave the darling back. Ahead was the great, uneven ribbon of windowed rock—the brown river below, brown, sun-shot smoke-clouds above. It seemed as if she had been gone ages, instead of only since yesterday noon. Unhampered by baggage, she sped out of her coach far ahead of those in the Pullman. Her throat was dry, her eyes smarting, her heart a cosmos of emotions. The carriage was almost insufferably slow. The elevator in the Granville dragged. Far down the hallway she could see her reflection in the mirror, as she knocked at his door. It was only eight in the morning, but she knew his ways—how little he slept.

She heard the crinkle of the morning paper, and his voice responded from within.

"Stephen! Stephen, are n't you almost ready for breakfast?"

In the open doorway he stood before her, his head just as high as her breast. "Selma, do—I—live?"

"Yes—as I do. I could not let you be alone long in a strange city, Stephen."

His face was hallowed, but his body seemed to weaken. She crossed the threshold to help him.

◆

DESIRE OF SERVICE

BY STEPHEN TRACY LIVINGSTON

COULD I but know, beyond all questioning,
That what I am, or, rather, what I strive
To be, means help to you, and keeps alive
At times the strength or cheer or other thing
You greatly crave, the thought would straightway bring
Large days for me. Old gladness would revive,
And with a scourge of cords arise and drive
Alien distrust forth from my temple, fling
The coinage of life's market-language out,
And sound the note of triumph. Could I know
That something I have done, or some chance word
Of mine has come to you, in hours of doubt,
And lighted up the path where you must go,
I could forget how often I have erred.

JESUS UNTO MARY

ON THE TENTH CHRISTMAS

By Chester Firkins

◆

"WHY came the angels, Mother dear,
Upon the night when I was born?"
"Perchance sweet Heaven was forlorn,
Thou being here."

"And were they beautiful to see?
Say o'er the tale the shepherds told."
"Ay, they were robed in shining gold;
They sang of thee."

"And was not that a wondrous thing—
That holy choirs cried my birth?"
"Nay; to all mothers of the Earth
Bright angels sing."

"But yet, thou sayest, from the skies
Strange fires wreathed my brow with gold."
"Yea, miracles are manifold
To mother-eyes."

"When I within a manger lay,
Why came great kings from distant lands?"
"They did but kiss thy baby hands,
Upon their way."

"Didst thou not tell me that a star
Shone on their path with wondrous light?"
"Oh, little son, 't is late;—good night—
Dreams bear thee far."

"Oh, Mother, there is in my heart
A dream I may not understand."
"Sleep; thou shalt roam in Samarcand,
And Sidon's mart."

"Nay, I shall hear the Heavens call:
'O Son of God! Go forth! Redeem!'"
"My son, that is indeed a dream
Most strange of all."

"They call me, Mother, when I sleep,
Or when I wake, or when I play."
("God, give me but another day
My boy to keep.")

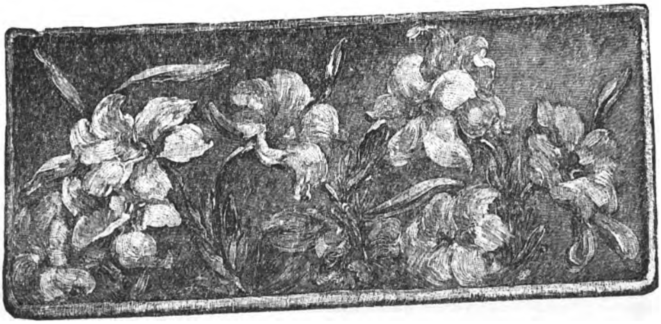
"What say'st thou, Mother? . Must I fare
Alone into the darkness? I?"
("He is so little, God,—I cry!—
Earth's woe to bear!")

"Yea, I must follow; even now
The angel voices speak my name."
("Again, I see, the holy flame
Doth gird his brow!")

"Yet, Mother, I am sore afraid;
Oh, let me bide a little while."
"Whom God hath called for earthly trial,
His course is laid."

"Mother, I see an angry throng:
The face of Death upon me stares."
"I give thee to the God who cares
For weak and strong."

"I go,—and yet, within my heart,
The wholly human hunger cries."
"Sweet, those who meet in Paradise
Shall never part."



BIG-I AND LITTLE-YOU

By Augusta Kortrecht

◆

MY mother used to embroider fine little dresses for me, and as she tried them on, turning me this way and that on the carpet stool before the mirror, she would tell how much my father loved me. And she explained that when the angel flew down out of Heaven and brought me as a gift from God, my father was so happy he stood at the old front gate—right on the bottom step, I always thought, the broken one that we had to look out for so as not to trip—and shook hands with everybody that passed by. Even if they were colored folks, or he did not know them at all, he shook hands just the same, and told each one: "I 've got a little girl in the house there. I 've got a little daughter. Ellen Abercrombie, we are going to call her." And I understood that each one answered that he wished the young lady a long and "phosphorous" life.

Father had always been a stern judge, mother said, and made sinners tremble; but on the day after the angel flew in at the window nobody who had been wicked got punished a bit, and the children at the "Orphum-House" had ice-cream for dinner. Moreover, father had let home discipline go to the winds since I came, seven years ago; that was what mother said—to the four winds of Heaven.

"Was it the very first time the angel ever came?" I used to ask.

"No," said mother; "there were your brothers, you know. But the angel came back and carried them away again; and I——"

"And put all my little died brothers in a row out in our lot," I interrupted, "with big stones to keep them down till day of judgment do appear, and shell walks and flowers blooming. I can count higher 'n six brothers. Want to hear me?"

There was silence for a moment, and I saw that mother was no longer thinking of me, so I looked at us both in the glass. I was a heavy little girl, with very wide blue eyes, and straight black hair parted in the middle and held smooth by an elastic with a pale blue bow on top; and my mother was tall and delicate, with tiny wrinkles in her face, which I knew were there because she had not been young for so many years,—at least a hundred, I used to think.

"Were you glad too, mother," I asked, "and stood by the gate shaking hands with the lady next door and the market-man when he brought apples in his green wagon? I wonder if old Crazy Jane went by and father told her he had a little girl in the house there. Did he, mother?"

But she still did not answer. She was thinking about Charce now, and there was a far-away look in her eyes as she helped me out of the filmy little frock and gathered it up from the foot-stool. I knew that expression very well. She was afraid the angel would come back again and put my last brother out in the row under the blue periwinkles, with a marble lamb over him.

Of course my brother's real name was Charles, but by the time I had learned to say it right we were all used to the wrong way instead, and we all call him Charce.

When I was seven years old Charce was five, and mother said he was tall for his age, and as beautiful as the little Stuart kings. He would smile when he heard that, and his brown eyes would look like gold just for a flash; and sometimes he laid his fingers against her lips so that she could kiss them or bite them without hurting; but he never said anything, because my brother had not learned to talk. That was one reason mother looked so sad. She never could find out whether Charce wanted to stay with us, or if he hoped the angel would come back and get him.

I, on the contrary, was quite remarkable in the family for my gift of speech; I had talked very young, and I talked a great deal, listening to all the sounds about me, negro dialect and grown folks' conversation, and rolling off great phrases from my tongue with a wonderful glibness.

Charce could make curious vowel sounds which were not words at all, and nobody but I could understand what he meant,—not even mother; his way of talking was to gurgle out things to me, making gestures to help me guess, so that I might give his message to the household. Sometimes it was hard, because Charce thought of such strange things,—butterflies when there had not been any around for weeks and weeks, and whether our Gypta-Cat, being black, would go to Heaven with our colored nurse, Aunt Mandy, or with us white folks.

Mother used to say words to Charce slowly over and over, and beg him to try them. "'Mother,' she would say; "'Mother'; just that one, my darling, just that." When only the queer gurgle came she would hug him to her with tears in her eyes; and once she looked at me in a way that frightened me, and I must not speak to her at those times, because she could not bear to hear my voice.

But I liked to talk for Charce. In the first place, I was truly fond of him, and then I was proud that no one else could do this, and I kept greedy watch lest the power should slip from me. The doctor had said Charce would burst into speech some day. A sudden fright might bring it on, or perhaps a tempest of rage—anything that moved him sharply out of himself. But mother only smiled faintly at that and was unconsoled, for there was nothing to frighten him, and as for rage, why, everybody adored my serene-tempered brother, and there was little possibility of his ever being put into a temper.

"Keep that parrot-girl quiet, if you can," the doctor had concluded, "and give the lad a chance. She will not let him talk if he wants to." I hated the doctor.

When Lent came Charce and I went to church every day and did not wait for it to be Sunday. We knelt on red cushions, and as I looked away up the black silk dress beside me I saw that mother's eyes were shut and her lips were whispering, so I whispered too. I said to myself all the interesting things I had heard in Effie Buckingham's Sunday School, when mother let me go there once. Effie did not know about who was the oldest man and who made you out of dirt, but the things they had in her church would make a splendid play, I thought.

After we were home again, on the long back porch upstairs, I accordingly announced:

"Now, look-a-here, Charce. Over there where the rocker is, that 's going to be a Weary Land, and you must not go near it or look or peep in, 'cause—don't you remember?—'Jesus is a-rocking in a Weary Land?' Of course nobody could go in there."

My brother gave no sign that he heard me, but remained lost in thought. So I began with fresh enthusiasm:

"And you and me will be Little Jewels, His bright crown a-darning. We 'll play like the old wagon wheel is the bright crown; it 's pretty big, but that won't matter. We can darn with needles out of the nursery bag, and I 'll say off the church sermon while we darn."

I accordingly began to spout it as I remembered: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, and pernounce us impudent sinners, the pumps and vanities of our Christian faith. Amen! Amen! We beseek thee to hear us, Good-Lord." Oh, how I loved the sound of words! I wished I could think up new words that nobody in all the world had ever said before.

But Charce only smiled when I had finished. "I did n't listen," he told me in his slow gutturals. "They say the same thing every time. I thought. Say this for me, Ellen."

Then he almost sang off what he had thought up in his head in church,—in a measured chant, once, twice, three times, before I caught the meaning of it; bending his slim body in rhythmic explanation, and his face ashine with the light of creative power. The third time brought me perfect understanding. It was poetry! Poetry for mother! I knew right away how she would kiss his forehead when she heard it. I would be saying the words, but they would look only at each other and would not think of me at all. Charce was already as beautiful as a Stuart king, and now he had made up poetry! It seemed to me very hard to bear. So many, many times I had wished that just one little once mother would look sadly at me as she did at him, and say I was pretty *some,* any way, but she never did; she only told me that pretty was as pretty did, and that I must be happy that I could talk for my brother; it was a great blessing to be able to do for others, and especially for our loved ones.

And now Charce had made up poetry! I repeated it haltingly for him to hear:

"Make a bow to each,
Make a bow to other,
Make a bow to every one,
And make two bows to mother."

That was my brother's poetry. When I had said it twice out on the porch he caught me by the hand and said:

"Come, tell it to my mother."

"*Our* mother," I begged jealously.

"No," he laughed; "*my* mother. I made the poetry for her."

"But you can't talk to her," I cried; "I have to tell her every word you want to say." With that I turned my back and played alone in my corner of the porch, looking no more across the way.

I had no dolls—the set-eyed, helpless creatures never appealed to me—but by father's orders I was allowed to have a half-grown chicken brought from the hen-house every morning and tied by one leg to my portion of the play-porch railing. This living toy gave me untold joy because of its decided opinion as to being dressed in doll-skirts and sunbonnet. The chicken on that particular day was kept sternly at home, and there was no lady-come-to-see with the marble bust of Homer, the only child of Charce's household.

But after a while I cast an eye toward the opposite corner and was disturbed in soul by my brother's happy calm. He seemed to have forgotten me. He seemed entirely oblivious of my having turned my back upon him. Perhaps even now new rhymes and beautiful ideas were coming to him, and later on he would have me tell them to *his* mother after all. I was terribly afraid I would be the one to make advances toward peace, because I always was. Not that I ever repented my actions; the contrite heart was a thing unknown to my experience; but I could not bear loneliness, while Charce could sink into himself and remain placidly aloof for hours at a time. And yet there came a sweet drop of balm. When he did turn back to mundane affairs he could not give mother the poetry without me. He needed me, and sooner or later he must acknowledge it. I braced myself to bide my time.

Charce had fastened his share of the buttercups from my last summer's hat into a tiny wreath, and the marble bust—always a docile child, to the perpetual shame of its chicken cousin—now wore it becomingly on top of its smooth white curls. Charce thought of such dainty things to do!

I squared myself further around that he might not see what a copy-cat I was, and plucked the sun-bonnet from my indignant fowl's head. Then I began to twist buttercups together. But my fingers were fat and slow, and when at last I did get the flowers nearly into shape the chicken stretched out its yellow claw in a sudden attack and scattered my wreath to the winds.

Charce laughed. He laughed softly but unmistakably. I looked his way and caught the smile upon his lips. It was a knowing, tantalizing smile, for even in that mild creature the eternal masculine awoke now and then to mirth, to sheer delight in being the favored vessel and the more self-contained.

I heard him laugh, and next moment my angry passions rose. I swooped down upon him without warning. The beloved son of his house went spinning over on a fine, classical nose; the buttercup wreath was tossed to a far corner; a hot little voice, shaking from the rage within me, panted out:

"Take that, you ole Stuart king! You ole king!"

Blindly I slapped the delicate face upturned to me; again and again I slapped, it seemed to me a thousand times in after recollection—until I was taken in a mighty grasp from behind and drawn, still fighting, to the nursery.

"I won't say your poetry for you; I won't; I won't," I insisted over and over. "You—ole Charce, you! You beautiful Stuart king!"

It was Aunt Mandy, our nurse, who put me to bed as punishment; for mother was not consulted about these matters, unless the case was a flagrant one indeed, when she invariably looked up from her needlework or her Tennyson book to say gently: "Do what you think best, Aunt Mandy; only you'd better not cross the children, please. Their father says it breaks their spirit."

Aunt Mandy scolded me through the whole undressing process.

"You ain't no sho-nuff Abercrombie," she told me. "You ain't no lady. You plumb rotten aig."

I was meek enough now to all outward appearances, but here I had the law on my side.

"Mother says you shan't call us chil'ren names," I exclaimed triumphantly.

"Uh-huh, you mighty right," agreed Aunt Mandy, with pleasing promptness. "Yo maw sho done say so. Yas'm. But you *is* a rotten aig, and dar you is. Big-I and Little-You. Dat's Ellen. Huh!"

"I don't care," I whispered to myself defiantly; "I like to be a—egg. I like to be a—egg."

Nevertheless, while she was giving my straight Indian hair its hundred licks with the brush, I squirmed about and looked up into her wrinkled face.

"Aunt Mandy," I ventured rather shyly, "won't you please say Charce or somebody else 'sides me is one too; an egg what 's bad, you know. Please, Aunt Mandy. I 'll call 'yes, ma'm,' all the time, if you will. And you can have my new ribbon for Ruby Pearline."

She sniffed contemptuously. "What I want wid ribbins?" she demanded. "I lay you ain't got nary ribbin what ain't been round dat pesky chicken's neck."

And not another word could I extract from her, until at the door she halted a moment and spoke again:

"True repentance is de only means er grace," she warned me. "What I wants to see f'om you is de scaldin' tears er sorrow, chile; an' now you better ruminate about de devil wid his crooked horns an' spiked tail."

But I was not afraid of the devil—that is, not very much. This was my father's own house; there were locks on all the doors, and the devil would not dare come in.

In the twilight came my mother, with anxious face, and asked me what the matter was. This show of sympathy made the tears come to my eyes, and I moved closer to her as she sat beside me.

"Mother," I wailed brokenly, "mother, I don't feel very well. I reckon my stomach 's out of water."

Even in this tragic moment my imperfections did not escape her notice. "Out of order, you mean, Ellen," she told me. Then she felt my forehead and said my stomach was all right. She was afraid it was something else that had gone wrong. Could I not guess what it was that made me so unhappy? She reminded me that the Good-Lord cared only for children who were sweet and loving to each other. Charce, for instance, never let his evil passions rise.

I choked back my sobs. The Good-Lord seemed far, far away, and mother was near by. I clutched her with both hands, and we mingled our sobs, neither one understanding the other, but both very much moved by love. Before we spoke again my father came and carried me downstairs to my place at the supper table. While the general conversation lingered about the choice between fried chicken and fish, I inquired irrelevantly:

"Would it be a lie if you did not really say it was something you did, but let somebody think so?"

Father laughed and asked me to try to say that again. Mother looked hard at me and said:

"You can always know in your own heart, little daughter, whether you tell a lie—or do anything else that is wrong."

"If you don't get punished," I persisted; "and nobody fusses at you."

"The worst punishment there is," instructed mother, "is when you are very, very sorry you 've been bad; especially when you 've hurt some one you love. That must be a terrible feeling."

I returned silently to my waffles. How impossible it seemed to get an answer to a simple question! I had not meant to reopen the subject of events already gone before; I only sought information as to a possible future.

Mother and Charce lingered behind to feed the Gypta-Cat and the young Gypta-Kittens, and father carried me off to sit in the big chair with him while he read his paper.

A great hunger for approval was upon me. I smarted under the recollection of a whole afternoon for a deed not in the least regretted. It had been impressed upon me that all but I were good, and I found it galling to be a single vile thing in a world of beauty and holiness, but no one had convinced me of my sin. I was not sorry for what I had done, because I did not understand wherein I had broken the law. I felt that they were all unjust to me.

Only my father loved me. I felt sure of that. I leaned back and studied his face above me—not the face of the stern judge, but of the father who had been glad the angel brought a little girl, and had never complained that it was a fat and plain one. I would have put my well-kept little body to torture to give him pleasure, I thought intensely; but at the same time I did not want him to read papers and be absorbed. I wanted him to talk to me. I longed to hear him say I was smart, sweet, beautiful—anything that was nice and was about me, Ellen Abercrombie.

"Father," I said presently, pursuing a thought that had haunted me during the afternoon of loneliness, "would you like poetry that was made up just for you?"

He laid aside the papers and looked down with encouragement in his eyes. He said he would like poetry made up just for him. He would give a whole bushel of kisses to the one that made it. A half-bushel was the biggest price ever offered before for any achievement.

I hesitated one more second, then was swept along by the temptation which beset me.

The poetry came from my tongue rapidly and with little coherence. I took no joy in it, and the lines ran together in a frightened half-whisper which could not have been very impressive to my listener. I finished with:

"And make *three* bows to father."

That seemed to reduce the sense of theft somewhat, for Charce had not mentioned father in his poetry, and had been inspired to but two bows.

Just at the end mother came in. Father greeted her proudly.

"Listen, Alice," he said. "The child has made some rhymes. She has a marvelous sense of language, as I've always maintained. Say it again, Ellen. Say it distinctly for your mother."

The coveted words of praise made the hot blood rush to my face just for an instant; then I grew cold and sick. I looked beyond my parents to the slender figure in the doorway, and two clear brown eyes looked back at me in question. I tried to speak, and found myself utterly dumb and tongue-tied.

"Say your poetry, Ellen," my father urged once more, and even prompted me:

"Make a bow to each—"

I trembled before the hurt look that swept my brother's face. Something tight melted about my heart with a little splash I could positively hear. He looked so *young*. The hair about his forehead was so soft and curly. The mouth was so red, and the cheeks so smooth and delicate. Why, he looked just like a baby, and for the first time in my life I had a sudden fear that, sure enough, the angel might come; and Charce might *want* to go. How could he be happy here where nobody would talk for him and tell mother his wonderful poetries? I had *robbed* him, and yet it was not that which smote me, but that I had *stabbed* him. He had trusted me and had been betrayed.

While that first look of pain still struck home to my wretched soul sitting in guilt, discovered to itself, other expressions followed on Charce's face; the sense of outraged justice, of resentment growing into righteous rage. But it was the first hurt look that cut me to the quick, and taught me what all the preaching had not done.

Charce's mouth and chin began to quiver, his breath came quickly; then, turning his gaze from me to mother, he burst into speech, so long denied him.

"Mother," he said quite distinctly, "mother. For you:

"Make a bow to each,
Make a bow to other,
Make a bow to every one,
And make two bows to mother."

She folded him in her arms with a little cry of gladness. She noticed my part in the drama no more when I was villain than when I played the patient go-between; for the time she forgot she had a daughter, either for good or for evil, and they two were lost completely in each other's joy.

Father took a step in their direction, and I stood quite alone, my head hanging low in shame. I was very, very sorry I had been bad. But then he turned back, and with my chin in his big, soft hand he silently lifted my face. He had a look I had never seen before; it was the judge now who searched me—not stern exactly, nor hard, nor cruel; only grave and great. I felt him read to the bottom of my wicked, jealous heart; and all at once under that tender gaze Big-I dissolved and vanished away, and a wee and humble I, new born into the world, clung piteously to him.

"Poor hungry baby!" he said at last. And with father's smile the sun shone once more into my fretted little soul.

◆

A CHRISTMAS LULLABY

BY BLANCHE ELIZABETH WADE

BETHLEHEM town is fast asleep.
(One, two sheep, and a star, and a hill.)
There where the shepherds watch their sheep,
Out in the night, the shadows creep
Over the hill so high and steep.
(Three, four sheep, and a hill, and a star.)

Over the plain come three wise kings.
(One, two camels, a star, and a hill.)
Out of the East, lo, each one brings
Beautiful gifts and precious things.
Loudly the chorus of angels sings.
(Three, four camels, a hill, and a star.)

Down in the town is a lowly shed.
(One, two cows, and a star, and a hill.)
There, to the Christ-child's manger bed,
Shepherds and three wise kings are led.
Brightly the star shines overhead.
(Three, four cows, and a hill, and a star.)

Over the hill go one, two sheep.
(One, two sheep, and a camel, and cow.)
Over the hill more camels creep;
There goes a lamb with joyous leap;
Here—but the baby is fast asleep!
(Three, four sheep, and a hill, and a star.)

IRISH COURTSHIP

By Seumas MacManus

◆

THE story has often been told of the pupil in an Irish composition class, who, being directed to select what subject he pleased, and set down all that was to be said on the subject, chose Irish snakes, and composed his essay complete in one sentence: "There are no snakes in Ireland." When I elect to write upon Irish courtship, remembering, as I do, many absurd traditions regarding the non-existence of such a thing—current among people who know not Ireland—the Irish snakes joke forces itself into my mind.

But though the slanderer saith that our boys and girls oftentimes wed without wooing, even the most partial will admit that they frequently woo without wedding—just for the fun of it. Even the innocent little woman of seven who was being examined for confirmation by his lordship, Dr. MacGrath, Bishop of Raphoe, knew better upon the subject than did those smart foreigners who always pride themselves on being more familiar with the conditions of a country than are they who live in it.

"What 's the proper preparation for matrimony, my good girl?" the kind bishop inquired.

The little woman blushed and hung her head, but, bravely raising it again and looking his lordship in the face, replied, "A little courtship, my lord." And she probably knew better than his lordship; for such is a necessary preparation in Ireland as elsewhere, let libellers say what they will.

It is true that sometimes in Ireland—as well as in every other country under the sun—marriages are contracted between parties who never courted—each other, I mean. This, though, takes place only in a minority of cases, and the outsider who is thereby misled to the conclusion that these parties have never enjoyed courtship is pitiably mistaken.

In Ireland love-making, like Molshie McGrath's griddle-bread, is never done—at least, until the boy meets the girl of his final choice. Then he eschews wooing, which was his pastime, and prepares himself for wedding, soberly and seriously, as befits the momentous undertaking. He bids good-by to fun and frolic, fair faces, and delightful meetings at the market, and takes on a look of care and fortitude.

After marriage, when he has become habituated to the new aspect of affairs, he will relax, and woo his wife, making rich amends for his previous absent-mindedness. This wooing differs from all former ones, inasmuch as this is done for home-happiness, while those were simply followed for fun.

I have often heard an Irish boy say, "It 's not the girl I court that I 'll marry"—this because, though in courtship he was partial to the girl who loved nonsense, for the serious business of life he wanted sense—and probably pence; whilst she whom he courted may have been poor as a starved partridge. Do not think, though, that even the staid and the sordid ones (who, after all, form only a small proportion of our boys) look for sense and pence only; they like appearance as well. I remember Johnny Donnigan, who had married for money, making complaint (when asked how he liked his wife), "She 's a likely woman enough for a week day, but a sorry show for a Sunday." Johnny's better instincts had awakened, alas, too late. Had he to make choice again, he would undoubtedly expect his woman to be beautiful as well as dutiful.

Yet a neighbor of Johnny's, Morris Monoghan, of Augher Beg, did not require beauty in his affinity—though a handsome appearance must be the *sine qua non* of his father-in-law. It was a father-in-law, in fact, that Morris pursued—the wife was to be an incident. Morris's philosophy was, "Sure, what 's the needcessity for good looks in a wife? When you 're married to her, she 'll be stuck in the house, wrastling with her housework the remainder of her days, and who 's to see her? But if you have n't a decent-looking father-in-law, you *would* be ashamed for the neighbors to see you meetin' him in the market."

Neither Morris Monoghan nor Johnny Donnigan was a fair specimen of our boys—who always prefer having something tasteful to look at in their chimney corner, even if neighbors never come to admire. Accordingly most of our marrying boys travel far in search of the best-looking girls. If they seek to make a girl's father fortune her favorably, it is surely not wrong; a trifle of money, they say, never spoiled good looks. I think this belief is not confined to the Emerald Isle.

We have some match-making in Ireland still. In years gone by there was more of it with us. Then most parishes had their match-maker—generally an old woman who, having failed to match-make for herself, was considered proficient to match-make for the rest of the world. An insinuating manner and a glib tongue, together with a wide and deep knowledge of every person in the parish, and of all family affairs, conditions, and circumstances, were the qualifications for her profession.

Her services, seldom demanded, were persistently obtruded, with the natural result that they proved serviceable. With careful eye she watched "each slip of a girl growing," she ferreted out the girl's fortune, how much money, land, and cattle would be coming to her, and then she put the girl upon offer before fathers of the parish possessed of sons whom they wished to see settled. After that the bringing together of the heads of both houses for a comparison of dowries was a simple matter. The parents of the girl must know exactly what duties will be required of the daughter they are parting with, and what kinds and quantity of work she will be called upon to perform. Here there is fine scope for difference.

"I see," said a girl's indignant parent, when, having heard the claims of the opposite party, which included an amazing number of duties more fitted for masculine muscle than tender woman's—"I see, it isn't a wife your son wants at all, but a donkey. Good-night to ye, and good luck!"

An Irish boy marries when he has a rid house, and an Irish girl just when she pleases. Sometimes she so pleases while yet her years are few; at other times she is content to wait upon wisdom. In the latter case, of course, she makes a wise choice; but in the former almost always a lucky one—for Luck is the guardian angel of the Irish.

"You're too young to marry yet, Mary," the mother said, when Mary pleaded that she should grant Laurence O'Mahony a particular boon.

"If you only have patience, mother, I'll cure meself of that fault," was Mary's reply.

"And she's never been used to work, Laurence," the mother said to the suitor, discouragingly.

"If you only have patience, ma'am," was Laurence's reply to this, "I'll cure her of that fault." And he did, too.

There are occasionally to be found boys like Laurence, who, wisely, not willing to take "any man's daughter to support her," insure that she shall bring her support with her—or else earn it when she comes. These worldly-wise boys—they are usually boys of fifty and upwards, who have been belated—are not always above looking for proper proportions in the woman of their choice. I do not mean to say that they harbor any poetry in their hearts. It is not artistic symmetry they seek for, but agricultural. Ned Dunnion, who was a fair specimen of this class, warned the matrimonial envoy whom he sent to scour the neighboring country in his interest, not to choose for him "one of them lassies that was likely to br'ak in the middle." Ned wanted his wife built upon the milk-churn model, "strong around the middle," as he knew that bespoke capital staying powers where heavy farm-work was to be undertaken.

Fifty and upwards, of course, is not a usual, but an unusual, marrying age. Half of fifty is rather a good average. I knew two boys to marry at seventeen. The experiment was not successful in either case. In the light of after-experience, one of them told me that with him it was, marry in haste and repent at leisure. And the other, after he had spent seventeen years of married life besides seventeen of single, vowed he would never marry so young again, even if he "lived to the age of Methuselah." Though he was not granted the remarkable years of that patriarch, he was as good as his word so far as he went.

There was the case of bachelor Neil Dornin, who, when he undertook to become a benedict, found himself overmatched. He rightly deserved this, for he was a niggardly, near-going fellow, any way. By the strong recommendation of his old mother, he was induced to accept a strange woman from another parish, who "had the name of money" and who was offered to him by Peggy the matchmaker. When he married her he discovered that her reputed fortune had to be divided by four to yield actuality. On the day after he brought her home his mother killed a large duck for dinner in honor of the occasion. It was intended that the duck should do the family two days. The new wife was left at home to cook the dinner, whilst Neil and his mother went to their work in the field. When they came again at dinner-time no duck was to the fore.

"Where's the duck?" said Neil's mother.

"I ate it," said the new wife satisfiedly.

A convenient chair saved Neil from collapse on the floor. But he looked at the new wife open-mouthed while he gasped.

"Ate the duck!" said the mother, astounded. "You don't mean to say that you could ate a whole duck?"

"Troth, could I—and more if I had it."

Poor Neil lost consciousness, and when he revived again—so the story goes—could say nothing but, "And more if I had it!" And he kept repeating to himself plaintively and constantly, "And more if I had it!" The neighbors came in and asked Neil what was the matter with him, and he only replied, "And more if I had it!" The doctor was hurriedly sent for, but he could get nothing from Neil save "And more if I had it!" The priest, too, came and tried to reason with him. But to all he said Neil only shook his head and replied, "And more if I had it!" Then he took to his bed, dying (so runs the story, told by an old woman who knew Neil), and the new wife, who evidently had all her senses, got pens, ink, and paper, and sat down to write Neil's will.

She said, "Neil, I suppose you will leave the farm to me, your dearly beloved wife?"

"And more if I had it!" Neil said.

So she set that down.

"You will be leaving me the farm-stock, I expect, likewise?"

"And more if I had it!"

"And all cash in your possession, and cash comin' to you?"

"And more if I had it!"

"All other properties and belongings of yours, Neil, I suppose you will leave to your dearly beloved wife likewise?"

"And more if I had it!"

And she had Neil put his hand to the pen, making his mark. Neil remarked as he did so, "And more if I had it!" Thus, to the dire disappointment of all his relatives, she settled herself sole legatee of Neil, to whom, however, she gave decent waking and burial.

Our girls have more faith in early marriage than, I think, have our boys—more faith, in fact, in marriage altogether. Moreover, when the girl forms a resolution to get married, it is useless for parents to cross her. When a woman will, she will—anywhere on the world's map.

"Mary, asthore, you 've time enough to get married yet."

"Time enough, mother, lost the scon."

"And you heard Father Dan, no later than last Sunday, read out St. Paul's advice to young people—'they that marries does well; but they that don't marry does better.'"

"Well, mother, I 'm determined to do well. Let who likes do better."

Falsifying the statement of the libellers (who say that in Ireland these things are always done by proxy), our boys act up to the belief that with courting as with hair-cutting, you must be there yourself if you want it well done. Their courting is done at fair and at market, at the dance and on the green hillside, going to chapel and coming from it—almost everywhere, in fact, except at the girl's father's fireside; for here the girl would be doubly shy, and the boy would be shy, though he knew not its meaning elsewhere. Some boys, however, being of a very practical turn of mind, know not shyness under any circumstances, and choose this particular place, and this only, for doing their courting. Generally they court the girl's mother or her father. Some of them profit by this style of procedure, but some of them live to repent it. The law is,

Court the girl, and get honey;
Court the mother and get money;
Court the father and get done, aye.

For when the boys come with their blarney, small is the green in the white of the father's eye, and if he bestow his daughter on one of them, he will expect the fortunate fellow to consider that she is treasure enough in herself. The boy who has courted after that reprehensible fashion richly deserves his disappointment, when he has to swallow the pill plain, which he expected to be heavily gilt. But though the multitude of boys are far too wise or too manful to go courting the father, the noblest and the keenest-witted of them will not scorn him in the market-place. The treat dutifully given at such time softens to the boy a spot in the heart of the prospective father-in-law, and insures for him a seat in the sheltriest chimney-corner when he at length musters courage to come to the girl's house.

All of them are kind to the girl's mother when they meet her in the market—not from any ulterior motive in this case; only natural heart-prompting. For the mother can always be depended upon to like him whom her daughter loves; and she it is who will break down the old man's opposition, should he be obstinate. The winning of the father is generally the more difficult task, and oftener he yields less to coercion than to coaxing. How the girl herself is won must, of course, remain a mystery—to all except two, neither of whom is likely to divulge it. All that a too-prying one once discovered when he set before him the solving of one of these mysteries was that the boy said to the girl:

"I wish I was in jail for the stealin' of ye."

And her reply, "And och, sure, I wish that I was the jailer!"

After all, we only know that in his courting an Irish boy gives practical proof of his faith in the old maxim, "If a thing is worth doing it is worth doing well." And in his match-making he takes for his motto, "If you want a thing well done, go; if not, send—but be discreetly suspicious of your messenger." For it has happened before now that an unscrupulous messenger, having gone to negotiate for his friend, remained to receive for himself.

Patrick Gillespie did this. Patrick, having already made his own match, and a-waiting the time for his wedding, was thought by Thomas McGroarty a safe hand. But in the course of his negotiations, having discovered that this girl was rich in prospects, he strongly recommended himself to her father's consideration, and won the promise of her. Then, by a master-stroke, decorously tendering to Thomas his own first-intended, he would heal two sores. He did heal two sores, indeed; but poor Patrick proved the sufferer himself, for, with the unanticipated altering of an aunt's will, she whose prospective wealth had won Patrick's heart became suddenly poor as the dog that led Lazarus—and Patrick was very angry indeed (somewhat irrationally) with Thomas McGroarty when Thomas bade him as a guest to a wedding that should have been his own.

Why an Irish boy should (as is notorious) go around with so many girls before he finds that one which he takes to wife may seem strange to a stranger, who would ask, "Are the Irish girls, then, of such very poor quality?" No, it is n't because they are so bad, but because they are so good, that the boys are distracted in making choice.

"Och, I wish," said one of these over-puzzled ones—"I wish I was Solomon." And Father Dan, who was listening, asked, "Which do you mean, Solomon when he had the wisdom, or Solomon when he had the wives?"

"Well," said Charlie—it was Charlie Monghon who had made the remark—"sometimes I wish the one, and sometimes I wish the other, but most times I wish I could be both at wanst."

"'T would be as sensible for you to wish to be both ends of my stick at the one time," Father Dan replied. Yet it is true that Charlie, in after years, frankly avowed to Father Dan that he wished he had chosen to be Solomon Wise. Father Dan consoled him that it was n't too late to be that yet—"for," said he, "Solomon Wise would bear without grumbling the burden he brought on himself."

Of course it would be utterly impossible to expect that there could be no exception to the rule of happy married life in Ireland. Father Dan had met with more than one in his long career in Donegal. He married Jemmy Lunny on tick, as Jemmy, unfortunately happening to be out of work at the time, found low-tide in his purse. After marriage, Jemmy, true to the debtor's tradition, occupied much of his time in evading the priest. The fox runs long, etc. One day Jemmy found himself in a cul-de-sac, with his creditor commanding entrance and exit. Father Dan with a fair measure of success endeavored to repress the smile that the humor of the thing called up. What made the humor keener was the knowledge that Jemmy's marriage was not a phenomenal success. Jemmy's wife had turned out a termagant.

"Jemmy," said Father Dan, "are you going to pay me the money you owe me?"

"Do I owe you money, Father Dan?"

"To be sure, you owe me the marriage-money."

"And did I never pay you that yet?"

"Don't you know you did n't?"

"Och, but it 's me is the forgetful man! And how much do I owe you on that score, Father Dan?"

"Sixteen shillings."

"Sixteen shillin's? Sixteen shillin's. Let me see—would you mind taking twicet sixteen, father, and let me loose again?"

And as Father Dan could n't see his way to agree to this, Jemmy begged him for the sake of his priestly character never again to crave him for money for doing him the biggest wrong that was ever done a man. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Father Dan," he said, his eye flashing with just indignation as he walked away.

It may be supposed that Jemmy's wife was, temperamentally speaking, built very much after the fashion of the famous County Monaghan woman, who, coming from a pleasurable day's outing and finding her poor, broken-spirited husband meekly smoking a pipe over the fire, stamped upon the floor as she undid her bonnet, and said sharply, "Silence!" Whereat poor Barney, drawing the pipe from his mouth, looked around in wonder. "Silence, I say!" again spake she who was mistress and master in this house, as she stamped more emphatically still. Barney, in deeper wonderment, opened wider his mouth, and stared.

"I said 'Silence!'" and she stamped a third time, with a stamp that shook the house.

"But, Mary," Barney pleaded, "sure I was n't speakin' at all, at all."

"For fear you would," Mary said, as with eased conscience she continued divesting herself of her fineries.

Such a wife as this, Jemmy's must have been. And I am borne out in this belief by the fact that when, one time, Jemmy's wife was ill and sympathetic neighbors came to Jemmy to condole with him, saying feelingly, "Jemmy, do you think she will die?" Jemmy, who was the possessor of a nice caustic humor, remarked, with deep concern, "Troth, I 'm afeared she 'll not."

If, in such exceptional cases as these, there is unhappiness in Irish married life, it may almost always be traced to the fact that their marriage was not preceded by any romance. All Irish boys and girls nowadays realize that, as the old saying goes, courting is like dying—one must do it for oneself—and they practise accordingly. Where they court and how they court, and under what circumstances, would be most interesting to readers, if I consented to set it down here, but—Irish courtship is too tender to tell about. The reader has got to come and experience it if he—or may I say, she?—can.

◆

RANDOM THOUGHTS

The world recalls a blunder after a sin has been forgotten.

A gentleman measures Religion, Love, and Citizenship upon the same golden foot rule.

A woman of sense is tolerant because ere she goes moting she removes the beam from her own eye.

Lovers should not extend their "sweet sorrow" beyond the conventional hour or a closed front door.

Minna T. Antrim

THE AMENDMENT OF M. DE CHIRAC

By H. C. Bailey

M. LE MARQUIS DE CHIRAC was concerned for his mustaches. They were small and beautiful, but they would not turn up. M. de Chirac desired infinitely that they should turn up, because it was not the fashion. Auguste, who daily had the honor of assisting M. de Chirac to achieve perfect beauty, suggested wax.

"Auguste," said M. de Chirac pensively, "you have the heart of a hangman." And he caressed the mustaches. "So young, so amiable! Shall I force them? Wax? Animal! You would eat babies—with a brown sauce. I am sure that you would choose a brown sauce." He continued to caress the mustaches. "Virginal, dainty! Shall I constrain your young desires? Oh, Phœbus Apollo!"—for the mustaches had consented to remain erect. M. de Chirac let himself fall lightly into his chair and admired them in the mirror. "Phœbus Apollo!—who, if I remember, never had any. The incomplete Phœbus. Auguste, I meditate upon my own completeness."

"Monsieur requires breeches," said Auguste.

"I think I had desired the tailor to refer you to a woodland bank of violets?"

"But yes, monsieur!" cried Auguste, and with the gesture of Hyperides unveiling Phryne drew back a curtain of tapestry.

M. de Chirac had the felicity to behold a lay figure clad in violet and green. "It is," said M. de Chirac, "deeply impertinent to make a dummy in my proportions."

"But what would you, monsieur?"

"That," said M. de Chirac, "I never know." And became melancholy.

In an hour or two he was covered. A work of art, he bestowed himself upon the long gallery of the Louvre. His shoes were dark green, his stockings and breeches green of a lighter tone. His long cassock coat was embroidered without in varieties of green, but, falling open, revealed itself violet within. Violet was his undercoat, and pale violet his ruff and his ruffles; violet also his hat, adorned with a clasp of great sapphires and gold. A bunch of violets peeped out of his golden hair above his left ear, all of him was fragrant with the scent of violets. And the mustaches still turned up. So M. de Chirac displayed himself to the admiring sun in the year of grace 1586.

Then he beheld afar off a woman. She was silvery gray, with something of crimson at her breast. She progressed swiftly for two steps, then slowly for three. M. de Chirac compared her in appearance to a wounded dove, in gait to a kicked dog. She arrived at monsieur and stopped and looked at him.

M. de Chirac made her a bow. "Mademoiselle, I await your criticism with confidence."

"Can you tell me where I shall find M. le Comte de Canillac?"

"Probably, mademoiselle, where he ought to be. He has no imagination, the good Canillac."

"But where ought he to be, monsieur?"

"Finally, mademoiselle, in hell. To bore the devil. Temporarily, I know not."

"Oh, will you not tell me?" she cried, clasping her hands. "I have asked so many, and they laugh, but——"

"In fact, it is a little laughable. To desire Canillac!" M. de Chirac delicately shrugged his shoulders. "Madame, I trust you are unique."

A moment, biting her lip, she gazed at monsieur, who presented to her a calm smile. Then she swept past him and on down the gallery.

"She has the audacity to produce tears—and she is not beautiful enough," said monsieur.

While he watched her, Auguste came out to the gallery. She stopped and spoke to him. Auguste bowed. Auguste pointed her to the haven where she fain would be—the quarters of M. de Canillac—and bowed again. She went on, her hesitating gait grew slower, she waited a long time before she knocked at the door. Auguste as well as his master watched her till she went in.

Then, "Auguste," said M. de Chirac, and Auguste turned with a start. Monsieur beckoned him nearer. "Auguste, you have the impertinence to be more polite than I."

"Impossible, monsieur!" cried Auguste. Monsieur put up his eyebrows. "Monsieur, the lady was crying."

"That also was impertinence. She is hardly even pretty."

August bowed. "Is that all, monsieur?" said Auguste.

M. de Chirac looked him over a moment before he said, "Yes." Auguste bowed again and went his way. Then monsieur looked after him. "Decidedly he becomes a satirist," said monsieur; then lazily went to keep an appointment with the Duchesse de Contal. He was half an hour late and she an hour.

M. de Chirac, extremely bored, returned to wait upon the most Christian king Henri III.

The King sat beneath pictures obscene and pictures saintly. The King was yawning over his comfit-box. M. de Chirac stood still before him and yawned. They finished together. "Sire," said M. de Chirac, "I offer you my profound sympathy."

"Chirac, amuse me," the king drawled.

Chirac surveyed him from the pearls in his cream-colored shoes to the amethysts in his white ears. "Do you not amuse yourself?" inquired Chirac. The King shook his head. "I am not nearly so amusing as your Majesty," said Chirac. The King smiled languidly and offered a comfit-box. "Sire, no," said M. de Chirac with decision. "I have a complexion."

The King sighed.

M. de Canillac bustled in, and M. de Chirac groaned and turned away. M. de Canillac was full-fleshed and exuberant; he wore crimson from head to heel.

The King bent and picked up a spaniel. "You are very red, Canillac," the King drawled. "So is sin. Try to be equally amusing."

Canillac laughed loudly, and M. de Chirac shuddered. "I will amuse you at once, sire. Sire"—Canillac knelt and stretched forth his hands and spoke dramatically—"sire, I pray for a man's life."

"Who has bought it?" the King drawled.

Canillac laughed again and rose. M. de Chirac in great haste brushed his mustaches down, for he saw that Canillac's stood up. "I have this day seen a love of my youth," said Canillac, smiling.

"That is always discouraging," said the King, and gave his spaniel a sugar-plum.

M. de Chirac found a pack of cards and began to build a house with them.

"It appears that when I was young I loved her. I had forgotten. She remembers." Canillac laughed, and the King yawned. "But she has had the insolence to love some one else. She loves M. de Vivonne." The King yawned again. "Vivonne, sire, you remember: who lies in the Bastille. And my well beloved Mademoiselle de Mortain comes to me to beg for his life!" Canillac laughed heartily.

"Vivonne?" the King drawled. "Some officious person accused him of a correspondence with the Béarnais. But was I going to kill him? I do not think that I was going to kill him."

"I regret to have announced otherwise, sire. I told his dear love that you had ordained his death."

The King pulled his spaniel's ears. "It may be so. Vivonne makes no difference. What did she say, Canillac?"

"Little coherent, sire. She embraced my knees and bedewed them."

"They will," said the King. "It is sometimes amusing."

M. de Chirac with great care put a fourth story upon his house.

Canillac was laughing. "In fact, sire, I was touched."

"That would not be amusing at all," said the King and turned. "Chirac."

But M. de Chirac, who was preparing his fifth story, waved his Majesty away.

"Oh, sire, believe me!" cried Canillac. "It was most pleasing. I was touched. I offered mademoiselle to save this dear life which is not in danger provided that mademoiselle would enter into my embraces."

The King yawned. "You are not at all original, Canillac."

"But yes, sire, by your leave. Consider. I who do not desire mademoiselle at all shall wed her, that she may save her dear love from the death he was never going to die. Comedy in the high strain!"

M. de Chirac imposed his fifth story.

The king took a sweetmeat. "It is a little amusing. She yielded easily, I suppose?"

"Quite otherwise. There were storms of words and tears. I have the honor to inform your Majesty that Mademoiselle de Mortain considers me the most vile, the most loathsome, of men. That will make her more comfortable as my wife. *Enfin*, then, she yielded. She professes that she will kill herself afterwards—we shall see—and if I have any honor at all I shall never tell M. de Vivonne why and how he was set free. Again, we shall see."

"It might have been amusing to hear her," said the King and yawned. "But I have had all the emotions before."

M. de Chirac imposed his sixth story.

"Cecile has not, *pardieu!*" laughed Canillac. "So, sire, I have the honor to beg that to-morrow about this time M. de Vivonne shall be set free. That will be—after."

"I never wanted the man," said the King. "Chirac!" and he turned in his chair. M. de Chirac's six stories fell down. "What do you think?"

M. de Chirac stood up. "I think that your Majesty has knocked down my house," said he.

"What do you think of Canillac?"

M. de Chirac shrugged his shoulders. "Sire, he has no imagination. Let us talk of something pleasant."

Canillac flushed more darkly and started forward. The King peevishly motioned him back. "I do not like spasms, Canillac. Chirac, can you make it more amusing?"

"In a thousand ways, sire."

"One suffices."

"I have the honor to make the amendment that Canillac turn his mustaches down, and that M. de Vivonne be brought to witness mademoiselle his love lying upon the altar—that is to say, when she espouses Canillac."

The King smiled, and Canillac laughed. M. de Chirac bowed to one and the other. "Certainly it shall be so," said the King.

"Canillac," said M. de Chirac, "turn down your mustaches. Order of the King!" Canillac, laughing, obeyed. M. de Chirac gave a great sigh of relief and made his own stand up again.

Then the King spent an hour in elaborating the plan so that M. de Vivonne and his love should not fail of drinking deep passion and pain. M. de Chirac yawned vastly. But his Majesty had an interest in psychology.

"Sire," said M. de Chirac, rising, "I have yawned till my face aches. Does it suffice?"

"You will find nothing anywhere else more amusing, Chirac," said the King, whose eyes had grown bright.

"I shall find M. de Veviers, sire—who does not talk;" and Chirac made his bow.

On the morrow Chirac and Canillac shared the King's tardy *déjeuner*. By a simple process of deduction we may discover that the meal was gay; for we have it upon the authority of d'Aubigné, that austere person, that when M. de Chirac was interested he was interesting; and in a too brief memoir of himself M. de Chirac has left it upon record that he was interested in Canillac and his King on that day. He adds that the sensation was unique, and that he wore sky blue with sapphire buttons.

M. de Canillac, who was naturally impatient, arose when the sweets arrived. The hour appointed to Mademoiselle de Mortain for the marriage was well past, and, "*Mordieu!*" said Canillac, "I bade her be punctual in chapel."

Still Chirac and his King were ingenious, still the meal was prolonged. But M. de Chirac leaned back in his chair and took the King's favorite toy, a cup and ball of ivory and ebony, and began to play with it as he sipped his wine.

It seems to have been about this time that M. le Baron de Veviers rode into the courtyard of the Louvre and reined up by the gate to speak to Crillon.

At last Canillac rose to seek his delight. "One hundred and one, one hundred and two," said Chirac as he rose also. He was counting his catches with the cup and ball. "Come, *mon galant*," said he and opened the door for Canillac.

"May Venus smile!" cried the King, and Canillac went out with a laugh.

"One hundred and three, one hundred and four," said Chirac as he followed.

Together Chirac and Canillac went down the corridor and past the Swiss on guard and down the stairs and out to the courtyard. There were some horses in waiting, and M. le Baron de Veviers still talked with Crillon, whom he hated. Still Chirac continued his play. They mounted the stairs to the long gallery.

"One hundred and ninety-one, one hundred and ninety-two," said Chirac, "one hundred and ninety——" he stumbled against Canillac and lost the ball. "Bah! Boor!" he cried and flung Canillac away.

Canillac turned as he staggered. "Chirac!" he cried, his face aflame.

"Boor! Yes, *pardieu,* I said boor. I baptize you."

"M. de Chirac!" Canillac started forward, hand on his sword.

Chirac flung the ebony cup in his face.

A moment, and Canillac plucked out his sword and dashed on. M. de Chirac broke ground, found his sword, and the blades clashed and grated. Canillac was fierce and light-footed; he sprang in and out again, lunging furiously. He was wont to make an end soon. But Chirac never shifted his place. It lasted long; it was doubtless good to see. Canillac dared more as the minutes passed. Again and again he lunged to his full reach—then wildly something beyond. Chirac drew himself up and straightened his sword arm. Canillac ran his neck upon the point.

Canillac's sword fell clattering. He coughed and caught at the blade in his neck. But Chirac whipped it back and sheathed it still wet, springing to Canillac. He threw an arm about him and drew him on.

"Come, *mon galant,*" said M. de Chirac.

Coughing and spitting blood, Canillac was borne on to the woman, his prey. There was none in the long gallery to see him save Chirac's man, Auguste. Cloaked and booted, Auguste stood out in the middle, but gave no sign. Canillac was brought to the chapel door.

A lackey opened it, a lackey who began mysteriously, "Mademoiselle is——" and ended in a cry: "Ah, *mon Dieu,* monsieur is wounded! But I will run—I will run for a surgeon."

"Certainly, run," said Chirac, and the man ran.

Canillac could only cough and spit and the blood welled out of him. Chirac bore him on up the aisle.

All over the Louvre the clocks were striking three. The tardiest note died. Then prompt to the ordered hour came the tramp of feet.

Two of the Swiss guard led on M. de Vivonne, brought punctually to behold his shame.

Chirac bowed. "M. de Vivonne, welcome and in good time! This good Canillac yearns to do a deed of charity before he goes—somewhither." And Canillac groaned and Vivonne stood gaping. M. de Chirac lifted up his voice: "Mademoiselle, 't is your cue! Mademoiselle de Mortain!" A moment of silence while the Swiss stared round-eyed at each other, at Canillac and his blood, at Chirac flushed and laughing, and Vivonne's face turned white. Then a door opened. Slowly, timidly, her hand at her throat, all in black, came Cecile de Mortain, led by a grimacing priest. Vivonne sprang at her; she gave a great cry and reeled. "Softly, softly," said Chirac, laughing, and caught her in one arm, holding off Vivonne with the other. "Canillac, this dear Canillac, his is the joy of joining your hands!" and, moving swiftly, he took Canillac's limp hand in his and made it give Vivonne's to Mademoiselle de Mortain.

But Vivonne snatched her in his arms and clasped her close, there before the altar, while Canillac groaned in his blood.

M. de Chirac held Canillac's dying arms aloft. "Receive, monsieur and madame," said he with unction—"receive the benediction of M. le Comte de Canillac." And Canillac's glazing eyes were set upon her. But she did not know it; she was sobbing on her man's shoulder and quivering while he whispered silly tender names.

A lean figure, a lean, cream-colored, bejewelled, perfumed figure, came into the doorway. "*Dame!* What is this?" The two Swiss saluted. "What is this, Chirac?" cried the King.

The woman's sobbing stilled. "Sire!" she gasped. "Sire!" and tried to come to him. The man would not let her go.

M. Chirac in his pale blue and his sapphires still held on high the red arms of Canillac's benediction. M. de Chirac still smiled amiably. "It is, sire, M. de Canillac, who desires at the last to save his soul."

"*Notre Dâme de Chartres!* He is dead!" the King cried. Canillac's head was fallen forward in the blood on his breast.

Chirac let the arms fall and swing limp. "Certainly he is dead. But he lived long enough," said Chirac.

The King came forward to look. "But how? Chirac, who has done it?"

Chirac caught Vivonne and his wife and whirled them away past the Swiss to the door. "Run, *mordieu!* Run!" he cried, and as the Swiss made after them, he whipped out his blood-stained sword and held the path. "I have had the honor, sire, to send him whither he ought to go," cried Chirac.

And without was heard Auguste: "*Par ici, par ici, monsieur et madame,*" as he hurried the two away.

"You!" cried the King and stared at Chirac and the smeared sword.

"Congratulate me, sire," said Chirac.

The King flushed. "Fools, cowards, take him!" he cried to the hesitating Swiss.

But it was not easy to take M. de Chirac from behind that yard of flickering steel. Chirac held the two in play an instant.

"You behold, sire, the amendment of M. de Chirac!" he cried, and suddenly turned and ran hot-foot.

He took the stairway in three bounds, he was down, he was out to the courtyard, before the King had broken open the window and cried, "Crillon! Crillon! Take him! Take Chirac!"

Crillon, who was still talking to M. de Veviers, started forward, shouting and tugging at his sword, but the Baron de Veviers drove spurs to his horse and reined back, and its plunging sent Crillon rolling on the stones. Thence he roared for the guard, thence he bade the sentries shut the gate. But Veviers reined round into the gateway again and held the gate back with his horse's quarter. From without came the clatter of moving horsemen.

M. de Vivonne and madame were mounted now, and Auguste. Chirac sprang to his saddle and urged them on. Before any Swiss musketeer had his wheel-lock under way, they were hurrying through the gate. "Chirac! Chirac!" the cry came pealing, but they vanished and sped clattering away.

"Good day, Monsieur Crillon," said Veviers politely, and spurred after them.

Crillon ran to the gate, cuffing and cursing whom he found in the way. He had the pleasure of seeing that M. de Veviers was but the rearguard of a column. M. de Chirac, suddenly provident, had marshalled the troop of his household. Crillon was for some days bad company.

The troop had gone a league out of Paris before M. de Veviers forsook the rear and came up abreast of Chirac, who rode bareheaded still, his yellow curls adorning the breeze.

"Whither now?" grunted Veviers.

"Whither? To *le Vert Galant,* to Henri de Navarre, *cordieu!* Let me find a man—for variety."

Veviers grunted. "I did not know that you liked men."

"I have seen so little of them," said M. de Chirac.

"But you are much a man yourself, *cap de Bious,*" cried the grateful Vivonne.

M. de Chirac made him a bow. "Hitherto, monsieur, only women have told me so. First among men you perceive my mustaches." M. de Chirac turned them up to the blue heaven.

THE "TRULY" CHRISTMAS

By Edwin L. Sabin

❧

ALL the earth is white, all the air is jingly with bells and voices, all the world is brimming with an excitement only half suppressed. For to-morrow is Christmas Day.

What to-morrow holds for you, you may not know. But in the times of the truly Christmas everything was possible. Money nor experience had placed a limit; any anticipation was reasonable. The truly Christmas bore no burden of rancor, sordidness, jealousy, value given and received. The good were spontaneously rewarded; and measured by that standard, the world was a good world.

To-morrow is Christmas Day. Lodged in your consciousness, but warm and quick and swelling, ready to burst forth upon the slightest excuse, is the pleasurable knowledge that father's present from you, and mother's present from you, and Susan-the-girl's present from you, are ready and waiting, to astonish. Muffler, card-case, and handkerchief, as suggested they readily secured your approval. That was all there was to it. In the times of the truly Christmas you were a billionaire. Somebody paid for things. That was sufficient, evidently.

To-morrow is Christmas Day, and now is Christmas Eve. The house is a store-place of packages; a regular Aladdin palace, where the rubbing of the lamp is yet forbidden. There are drawers that must not be opened, shelves that must not be rummaged, cupboards that must not be investigated. You have exhausted the three guesses allowed by mother and have not hit upon the specially and particularly delightful article sent by Uncle Ben. You do not even know what Susan-the-girl is to give you. But only a few hours more, and dreams may come true. For to-morrow is Christmas Day. *Can* you wait?

In concert with mother, beside the evening lamp, you may recite "Night Before Christmas," and listen and soberly reflect while she tells of the miracle of the Christ-child, born in the manger at Bethlehem. Soberly reflect, say I? Well, as soberly as can be expected, when brain is whirling, dancing, darting, in dazzled flights of boundless hope and uncertainty. Father imperturbably reads the paper. Will you ever be so old that *you* can sit and read the paper, on Christmas Eve?

To bed, then? Must it be—this leaving of the warm, cheerily lighted room, and of father and mother and their secrets? Not five minutes more——? No; the clock and father, mother abetting, are inexorable. To-morrow is Christmas (you are reminded), and you will want to wake up early—another suggestion superfluous. But to-morrow is still such a long way off. The truly Christmas was an event of infinite procrastination.

"Good night," then, with backward, suspicious look.

"Sleep tight," then.

For to-morrow——!

Chill is the little bedroom, chillier the sheets betwixt which one must insert cringing soles and curling toes. Without, the bright, steely stars spangling the blue-black dome afar gaze winking down upon the snow of street and house-top. Footsteps pass, crunching and creaking; voices, laughter; chime of sleigh-bells and whine of cutter-runners; all breathing expectations, and all typical of Christmas Eve, in those times of the truly Christmas.

Below, father and mother are moving about; softly, talking in undertones, amidst faint rustle of papers. Ah, the house is disgorging. The Aladdin lamp is being rubbed, and from their hiding-places the treasures are forthcoming, to be arranged—heaped—*piled* at the spot set apart for *you*.

For to-morrow is Christmas.

A new sled—a clipper sled like Hen's? A watch that goes? A book of fighting! Or another whole set of Optic's as good as the "Boat Club" series! Just an old handkerchief, you bet, from Auntie Jane. Candy—nuts—an orange—sled—watch—books—air-gun——! Ah, you could see that sled, conjured out of the ideal into the real, reposing, ready and waiting, there below: polished, shiny, brand new, squat and pert and pointed, a veritable clipper, equal to, even better than, Hen's! You wriggled ecstatically. And you could hear that watch tick—a genuine watch, that kept time and had to be wound; a watch and chain both, perhaps. And again you wriggled. For such are the poignantly beatific visions sent before by the truly Christmas.

It seemed monstrously out of proportion that you must be lying thus prone and helpless, while below dreams were materializing into facts. What *was* below, any way? You did not dare to peek. It would not be right to peek. Custom did not sanction peeking; no, not even although Christmas was to-morrow, and to-morrow was close at hand. Until to-morrow had arrived by the calendar, only the dreams, above, was your privilege.

The house cracks and twangs, as the beleaguering cold presses hard upon the ever weakening fires within. Mother and father have gone to bed. All is still, save for the cracking, the ticking of the clock downstairs, and the belated footfall outside. And to-morrow is Christmas.

Farther and farther down have you pushed reluctant soles, tempering a way for legs to follow. In your oasis of warmth amidst the desert of frigidity you are cozy and comfortable. You may bid defiance to the frosted window-pane through which a star, like the eye of winter, peers steadfastly, and you may wait, thus ensconced, for Christmas. There is no Santy Claus; only littlest kids believe in that; there is no Santy Claus, of course; but *should* there be, you may hear him! It is very late, is it not? Perhaps you can stay awake all night!

Ten o'clock? Is that all? How time drags! You will shut your eyes, to think better, and will count five hundred, by fives; and then another half-hour will have passed—will it not? Now: five, ten, fifteen, twenty—tick-tock, tick-tock—clipper sled?—watch?—lots of candy!—seventy-five, eighty, eighty-five, ninety—and turkey—hundred! Five, ten, fifteen, twenty—tick-tock, tick-tock—go to sleep, go to sleep—yes, a sled like Hen's—and a watch that keeps time—and plum-pudding—seventy-five, eighty, eighty-five, ninety, ninety-five, hundred. *Two* hundred! Five, ten, fifteen, twenty—mixed candy, you hoped!—five, ten, fifteen, twenty—you would get something on the Sunday-school tree, too—fifty-five, fifty—might n't it be a Shetland pony that Uncle Ben was sending?—fifty, fifty-five, fifty, fifty—tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock——

The clock struck the half-hour, but you noted it not. Saint Nicholas plied as he pleased his mythical vocation—he might have driven a squad of elephants instead of light-footed reindeer across the gable roof over your head, and you would have known no difference. Passed unheeded by you the "holy midnight clear," told of by mother, but you paused not "to hear those angels sing." You only sped on, and on, and on, nearer and nearer to the clipper sled and the watch that goes and the book of fighting, awaiting you below. Unconsciously you crossed into the to-morrow.

To-morrow is Christmas? No! *To-day* is Christmas! What? Already! See, the room is gray, morning is here! Shame upon your slothfulness! Christmas has stolen a march. Open those traitorous eyes, throw off those enervating covers and the beguiling hand of sleep, plump with your bare feet on the floor and stagger to the stairs.

"Merry Christmas!" mother is calling; she has heard the plump. "Merry Christmas!" You go paddling down the stairs. Hurry! Something may vanish. "Merry Christmas, papa!"

"Merry Christmas, boy!"

Hurry! Aye, there they are, there they really are (for this is the truly Christmas) just as you had imagined; mysterious in shape, bewildering in profusion, yours to explore and unwrap and gloat upon unreproved. Oo-o-o-o-e-e-e-ee!—with father and mother spying from the doorway of their room adjoining. And oo-o-o-o-e-e-ee! again.

"Merry Christmas!" to Susan-the-girl.

The sun rolls up, flashing broadly athwart the white, sparkling world of the truly Christmas. Bells are chiming joyously, fires of dining-room and of kitchen are snapping and crackling like mad, figures are trudging by, brisk and gift-laden—each a Santa Claus. Breakfast is sizzling, father and mother are almost dressed, you must drag yourself away, briefly, up-stairs, to dress, also.

Hurrah! It is Christmas—the truly Christmas without alloy; for as far as you yet know there is not a person in the whole universe whose heart is unhappy, whose thoughts are embittered, who views the day as anything but a perfect and glorious dispensation for the doing and receiving of pleasure; a bequeathment, to old and young, by an omniscient and benign Providence.

The clipper sled, the watch that runs, the book of fighting—you had wanted them, you have them. They came freely, out of life's treasure-store, freely to be accepted. Christmas contained no mental reservations. It was the truly Christmas, in pristine purity.

Hurrah! Blessed memory.

◆

THE LITTLE BOY'S BABY PRAYER

BY S. M. TALBOT

DEAR God, I need You awful bad;
I don't know what to do;
My papa 's cross, my mamma 's sick;
I hain't no fren' but You.
Them keerless angels went an' brung,
'Stid of the boy I ast,
A weenchy, teenchy baby girl.
I don't see how they dast!

Say, God, I wish 't You 'd take her back.
She 's jest as good as new;
Won't no one know she 's secon'-hand,
But 'ceptin' me an' You;
An' pick a boy, dear God, *Yourself,*
The nicest in Yer fold;
But please don't choose him quite so young.
I 'd like him five years old.

THE MAN WHO WAS "HORSE-CRAZY"

By Caroline Lockhart

◆

LONG-LEGGED Jim Gaylord sat on the edge of the empty manger and looked reflectively at five silver dollars which lay in the palm of his hand. Then he looked at Phœbe.

"It 's a question, Phœbe," said he, "which of us eats to-day—you or me. Them Saddlerock restaurunt beefsteaks have a turrible takin' smell when you passes the door. If only I could fill up on alfalfy or timothy, it would reduce my livin' expenses considerable; but I can't and be comfortable, so I gotta get resigned to the idea of goin' on eatin' the rest of my days. But fortunately," he continued in his low, husky voice, "I has the ch'ice of what I eats. I can eat beefsteaks or I can eat them blamed breakfast foods. If I eats beefsteak I has to cut out your oats, but if I eats breakfast foods you has all the oats that 's good for you and the best timothy what 's hauled into town. When it comes to a question as to who eats, Phœbe, I guess you wins, as usual. If I heard you whinnyin' for oats, and I had n't none to give you, I reckon it would set me to stealin'."

Jim Gaylord slid from the edge of the manger and slipped his gangling arm about the little brown mare's neck, patting the white star in her forehead with his other hand.

The mare's eyes grew soft and limpid, as a horse's eyes will when caressed by some one he trusts, and, turning her head, the mare pushed him a little with her velvet nose.

"Meal-time, Phœbe? Gittin' empty, eh?" He gave her a farewell pat.

There was a horse in the other stall, big and showy, and far handsomer than Phœbe, but he only slapped the horse's flank good-naturedly as he passed.

If Jim Gaylord had been forced to speak the truth, he would have had to admit that he loved the little brown mare some better than his life. He exercised her each morning at daybreak on the half-mile track east of town long before any one else was up, and at night by moonlight and starlight when every one else was in bed.

It was stated in a vague way that Jim Gaylord had a couple of old plugs that he thought could run, and the town described him as "horse-crazy" and let it go at that.

He ate his breakfast foods three times a day, sitting on the edge of the manger, and his blankets, tattered relics of the old days on the round-up, were spread on the hay near the stalls at night.

As Jim crossed the street to the feed store, a stranger on a high stepping sorrel rode into town. The stranger sat his horse with the air of a man who believes he is riding the best, and Jim's glance took in the small pointed ears, the shining coat, the slim legs and neat hoofs which bespeak the blooded horse.

There was a little shine in his eyes, and a slight increase in the quickness of his movements, when he returned to the stall with the oats. As Phœbe ate, he slipped his hand the length of her slender legs. The inside muscles were like steel springs. He lifted her front foot. There was no fever in the frog or the small ankle. He went back to the street and sauntered into the saloon in front of which the stranger's horse was tied.

"He only weighs ten hundred and fifty pounds," the stranger was saying in a loud voice. "I weigh one hundred and forty, and he can carry me for half a mile and outrun anything that wears hair."

Jim sat down at a table and regarded the stranger with calmly contemplative eyes.

"Ain't that some of a weight for him to carry for that distance?" inquired the bar-tender.

"It would be if he was packin' a feller that did n't know how to ride. But me? Say, maybe you 've heard of me? They call me 'Mormon Slim.' I can ride a flyin'-squirrel!"

Did the corners of Jim's mouth lift a little—just a little?

"Wisht we had some runnin' horses in town. I 'd like to see a good race onct more," said the bar-keeper wistfully. "I ain't seen one sence I left the East. I 'm from Nebrasky," he added proudly.

The bar-tender's eye fell upon Jim.

"Say, feller," he called, "ain't you got anything that kin run?"

"Oh, I dunno. I got a little old skate of a pony that can sift along some." Jim's voice was hesitating, almost timid.

"Kin he jump out a-tall?" demanded the bar-tender.

"She does tol'able—for her size."

"What 's her weight?"

"Eight and a quarter."

"Eight and a quarter? This ain't a pack-rat you 're talkin' about, is it?" "Mormon Slim" and the bar-keeper laughed.

"I have n't any money, either," added Jim.

"I 'll tell you what I 'll do, feller, just to show you I 'm a good sport. I 'll run you horse for horse—my horse against yours. I price him at five hundred dollars, and if your mare ain't any heavier than you say, seventy-five dollars would be a plenty for her. That's big enough odds to suit anybody."

"She's been on the range," Jim demurred. "She's lookin' turrible rough."

"Oh, well, if you're afraid——"

"Gimme a couple of hours to think it over, and I'll let you know."

"Mormon Slim" winked at the bar-keeper as Jim went out.

"He'll never come back," he said.

But Jim did come back. He came in with a half-scared look on his face not more than an hour later.

"I—I b'lieve I'll take you up," he stammered.

"Good!" cried "Mormon Slim." "I'm needin' of a new pack-pony."

Jim dropped into a chair at the table and his head sank upon his breast in an attitude of troubled thought.

"Losin' your sand?" inquired the bar-tender.

The saloon was filled with local sports, who exchanged knowing looks as they noted Jim's dejected attitude.

"N-no, but my mare seems a little foot-sore, and I can't get hold of the kid I aimed to get to ride her. I'll have to ride her myself, and I weigh one hundred and sixty-five." Jim's voice choked and the tears came into his eyes.

"He must be nutty to take the bet," whispered the bar-tender. "He's beat to a pulp before he starts."

Jim borrowed a hundred dollars on his saddle horse.

"If I'm goin' broke," he explained, "I might as well go broke right."

Then he placed the hundred dollars, getting odds of ten and twenty to one, which he had no difficulty in doing, as the crowd snapped at each dollar he offered.

"He'll be afoot by this time to-morrow," said the wise ones.

A murmur of delight and admiration swept over the grand-stand at six that evening when "Mormon Slim," in a red silk shirt and black silk trunks, rode out on the track on the high-stepping sorrel. He looked the real thing in the way of a jockey, did "Mormon Slim," on his racing saddle, and the gamblers already had Jim's money spent as the sorrel warmed up to his work on the preliminary gallop.

A spontaneous shout of laughter went up from the grandstand when Jim rode out. The mare's mane and tail were matted with cockle-burrs. Her coat was dusty and as rough as though each hair had been brushed the wrong way. Jim's long legs did not look to be more than a foot and a half from the ground. He was riding bareback, he was barefooted, and he wore a pair of faded blue overalls and a salmon pink undershirt. "Mormon Slim" grinned in Jim's face as the sorrel dashed past on a spectacular gallop. The hopeless race was made more so by the fact that Jim drew outside place.

When the race was called the sorrel fought the bit and fretted to be off. The little brown mare stood still, her nose out, her soft eyes shining.

"Go!"

The leap she gave startled the sorrel. It floundered, and scarcely eight jumps from the line she had the rail. But the sorrel had heart, and he gathered himself and gained and gained until they were neck and neck. The crowd shrieked and howled.

"Why don't he let him out?"

"He's holdin' him in for the finish!" yelled the wise ones.

"But look at the mare! She has no feet—she flies!"

At the quarter of the half-mile track they were still running neck and neck—even, like a team. The sorrel did not lose, but he did not gain.

"Now!" roared the grandstand. "On the last quarter!—on the turn!—on the home-stretch watch the sorrel!"

"Good Lord!" yelled a man who had bet Jim twenty to one. "The Mormon's whipping!"

He whipped at the beginning of the last quarter. He whipped around the turn. He was whipping on the home-stretch. The gravel flew behind them. The rat-a-tat-tat of their hoofs was like the roll of a drum. Down the stretch they came, but no longer neck and neck! The little mare was running low, like a hound, her neck stretched, her tail lying out on the breeze. She swept by the paralyzed grand-stand, game, graceful, reaching out like an antelope with her slim legs and tiny hoofs while the stretch of daylight grew between her and the pounding, straining sorrel behind. And crouched on her shoulders was Jim, who turned his head to throw one glance of exultation and derision at the grand-stand.

"I'll tell you wot," said Jim, as he took a hatful of money from the stake-holder, "I had a turrible time a-sheddin' of them crocodile tears and a-huntin' cockle-burrs."

ANATOMY FOR BEGINNERS

By Thomas L. Masson

◆

ANATOMY is the science of knowing all our parts and telling them from one another, while at the same time we treat them with equal consideration.

When we have conscientiously learned all the parts that belong to us, then we can add them up and find out just what our sum total is.

There are some people so ignorant that they cannot discriminate between their stomachs and their brains. This shows us the importance of the study of anatomy.

When we have learned our parts by heart, we can add them up. Subtracting the result from ourselves, we have our soul as a result.

We cannot see our soul, but by this simple arithmetical calculation, we know that it is there. This should convince us of the power of numbers.

Beginning with the main parts of the body, we have first the torso.

The torso is plastered with ribs to keep it from caving in; also to prevent the insides from breaking out. No respectable person could do without a torso, upon which all the other parts are placed. When people are murdered the torso is always the one talked about most.

Above the torso are the arms, which hang alongside and sometimes swing wildly in their sockets; the shoulders, the neck, and the head, which sometimes contains the brain.

The brain is the headquarters of the nervous system and contains the central offices of the Anatomical Telephone Company.

When the suburban nerve-centre says, "Hello, Central," the brain either replies, "What number?" or "Busy," or "Out of order," as the case may be. Sometimes the wires are crossed and the company fails to declare any dividends, thus placing the entire brain in the hands of a receiver.

From the brain issues the spine, which is sometimes useful in matrimony, although rarely strong enough in man for practical purposes, and constantly growing weaker the longer he is married.

On top of the head the hair grows, or is supposed to. In some cases, however, it fails to grow despite the most painstaking efforts.

In ladies there are two kinds of hair: viz., imported and domestic;

in gentlemen also two kinds, namely, permanent and transient. The permanent is seen in wild men; the transient in civilized men, when young.

At one time all the hairs were carefully numbered, but the practice has been discontinued owing to great pressure of other matters.

Around the head, arranged in the utmost disorder, without any evidence of design, are grouped the ears, the nose, the eyes, the eyebrows, and other well known features.

The ears are firmly fixed at the side, and although every small boy would like to remove them and have them laundered once a week, this has hitherto been found impossible. In ladies they are often used in place of show windows, to display jewelry.

The nose projects beyond the head in front, and is used by many to steer with. Other people are led by it. It varies in color from light pink to deep purple.

Above the nose are the eyes, by means of which we read the stock quotations; and below the nose is the mouth.

The mouth is the main boulevard of the system, and travellers of all kinds are passing each other on their way in and out, from the conversation band-wagon to the dyspepsia caravan.

At the end of the arms are the hands, which are useful in holding money and other hands. Although constantly shaken, they are always present.

Proceeding in a southerly direction from the torso, we have the hips, useful for padding, and the legs. The legs hold up the body, and are sometimes used in walking, but when riding in automobiles they take up valuable space which otherwise might be employed to better advantage.

Attached to the legs are the feet. Some varieties of feet are cold. Some people are born with cold feet, others acquire cold feet, and still others have cold feet thrust upon them.

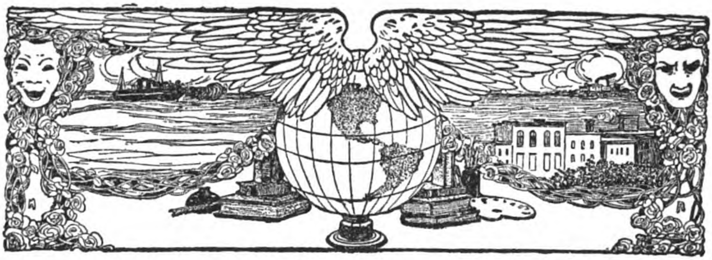
The surface of the body is covered with cuticle, which either hangs in graceful loops or is stretched tightly from bone to bone.

On the face it is known as the complexion, and is used extensively for commercial purposes by dermatologists, painters, and decorators.

Between the cuticle and the bones are the muscles, which hold the bones together and prevent them from falling out and littering up the sidewalk as we walk along.

Packed neatly and yet compactly inside the body are the heart, the liver, and the lungs; also the gall, which in Americans is abnormally large.

These organs are used occasionally by the people who own them, but their real purpose is to furnish surgeons a living.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

◆

THE MOULDING OF MEN

MR. HERMAN SCHEFFAUER, in the September issue of LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE, ascribes "the hideous reign of graft and crime" to the lack of masculine influence in our public school system, and cites Harry Thaw and Stanford White as "lamentable products of this system of loose restraint and the absence of strong hands at the helm of popular education." As he admits that "up to the age of fourteen the boy may be trained perhaps equally well by a man or woman," and as college faculties consist almost entirely of men, the discussion is practically limited to the high school.

With few exceptions, and these mainly for economic reasons in the case of small schools, which often consist of only primary grades, almost every American public school of either grammar or academic grade has a male principal, whose duties include not only business management and discipline in the narrow sense, but "character moulding." The average high school faculty also includes a considerable number of men who share this function of the principal, and who, according to their individual capabilities, enter into a considerable part of the athletic and social life of the school. That similar duties often devolve upon the women teachers, especially in regard to the conduct of the large assembly or study rooms, is by no means due to lack of male teachers, nor to perversity of school authorities, but to recognition of peculiar ability and, in so far as the *esprit de corps* of the school is concerned, often depends directly upon the choice of the students themselves.

The woman teacher, far from being "hampered . . . because of sex miscomprehension . . . and a lack of that clear knowledge, intimacy, and sympathy that the teacher must depend upon for success," often possesses the advantage over the male teacher because of the chivalry of youth. To imply that high school boys are "unruly charges" is not only a gross injustice, but entirely contrary to the usual experience that the discipline of most high schools is carried on with very few arbitrary rules and with only an occasional appeal to the common sense and conscience of the pupils, and the very exceptional need of harsher measures in individual cases.

While teachers, like most other efficient workers in any field, usually are young when they begin to teach, very few high school teachers are "mere girls"; neither are any appreciable number of them deserving of either sympathy or censure as being "poor, overworked, nerve-racked women." It is a very exceptional community in which "the records of boards of education bristle with instances" of their "futile influence over a class of boisterous irrepressibles," and the majority of such instances occur in grammar schools." In my personal experience as a pupil, I recall only three instances in which the control of a teacher over a class, either in the sense of ordinary discipline or character moulding, was inadequate, and these all involved male teachers, two in college and one in the high school. On the other hand, four of my female teachers were preëminently successful in this regard, and my present acquaintance includes several other women of the younger generation, of equally marked ability, so far as I can judge from the standpoint of a mere interested observer not engaged in teaching.

Without any knowledge of where Thaw and White were educated, so far as they are types they represent not the influence of the public school system, but of unsystematic education by private tutors and gilded private schools, and even this influence is overwhelmed by the various factors incident to the rearing of youth in a stratum of society marked by undue accumulation of wealth and self-indulgence.

It is open to question whether there is "a hideous reign of graft and crime" in our country, still more so that the average grafter or criminal is due to a defect in our public school system. Indeed, there is a very prevalent impression, which is supported by actual statistics so far as juvenile criminals are concerned, and by the biographies of many of our notorious political grafters, that this undesirable class is lacking in education in general, and that instead of having had too much feminine influence, it has suffered by lack of this factor.

On the other hand, graft and crime have lately been brought into undue prominence by a general awakening of the public conscience, which demands a practical application to public and private business of the very principles of ethics which every conscientious teacher has been reiterating to successive classes of boys and girls. The breadth and depth of the reform movement are so great that it cannot be ascribed to any single influence. It has arisen spontaneously from many centres, it is a movement of the people, and without minimizing the influence of the home, the pulpit, the press, and various other factors, it must be ascribed in some degree to the public schools, in which the great mass of the people, and especially those of recent importation, which outnumber the original stock two to one, have received their education.

DR. A. L. BENEDICT

THE STAGE AND MORALS

THE effect of the stage and its environment upon those who enter its ranks, especially upon the girl of the spear-carrying type, has long been discussed. The open question is, can a cultured, refined girl remain so after becoming associated with the stage? The semi-religious emphatically say, " No "; the wholly religious (asking pardon for the pun) evasively answer, " Possibly," with a slight shrug; while the broad-minded reply, " Why not? " But the plainest and truest answer is, " She can if she will." In other words, adopting footlight phraseology, " It 's up to the girl."

After-the-show champagne suppers, can-can dances on dining-tables, automobile rides during the infant hours with stage-door acquaintances, paste diamonds or genuine stones " that was give t' me by the cute guy in th' last stand," breach-of-promise suits, and yellow-journal scandal do not necessarily constitute any part of a chorus-girl's life. It is the germ in her blood, and not her employer or her work, that requires her to plunge into the stream of dissipation which runs unchecked.

The fight for recognition in the performer's profession is a hard one, because the very atmosphere is full of treacherous pitfalls ever ready to receive those who are too weak-willed to think twice. It is a profession in which only the highest ideals, the truest ambitions, and the cleanest principles survive. There are but two clearly defined divisions—good and bad; and it is just as easy for a chorus-girl to enroll and maintain her position in the first division, if she so determines, as it is to join the second, which, doubtless, is more alluring to some.

Two years ago, when the famous Torrey evangelistic wave swept over the country, its influence spread to the chorus ranks of a large spectacular production then being presented for a run of several weeks in Philadelphia. An announcement was posted on the call-board stating that an evangelist would address the girls in their costumes after certain matinées every week.

The entire company, consisting of one hundred and fifty girls, was present during the first meeting merely because of curiosity, but this number dwindled to thirty-eight on the next afternoon and remained so during the ensuing six weeks. Of this small aggregation two were the daughters of clergymen, four were experience-seeking choir-singers with grand opera aspirations, twelve were graduated college girls who had signed with the hope that they might be "noticed" and later given a "tryout" with one of the dramatic companies under their employer's management, and the others were girls of smaller ambitions, who were working hard nine months of the year for the privilege of spending three months with the folks at home. Would it be unfair to assume that the one hundred and twelve belonged to the second division?

The success or failure of every man depends mainly upon the stuff that is potent in his make-up. And so with the chorus-girl. She can be what she wills—it 's up to the girl.

W. Dayton Wegefarth

◆

THE UNPARADISED

BY ISABEL S. MASON

POOR Eve! How lingering went thy faltering steps,
How many glancings back from woe-swept eyes
Across the flawless beauty of those ways;
O'er all the golden glory of those days,
And silver of thy moonlit Paradise.
Till He of the great fire-gleaming sword
Had closed the star-gemmed gate upon thy sighs.

And still throughout the weary years we see
Thy dragging footsteps o'er life's scorching plain;
Still longing for the vision lost to sight,
Ahunger for what ne'er shall come again.
We hear thy pleading, cry the dark in vain,
And know each day that, even as of yore,
Some poor Eve weeps—unparadised once more.

RETURN TO: **CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT**
198 Main Stacks

LOAN PERIOD 1 Home Use	2	3
4	5	6

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS.
Renewals and Recharges may be made 4 days prior to the due date.
Books may be renewed by calling 642-3405.

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW.

FORM NO. DD6
50M 5-02

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
Berkeley, California 94720–6000

PERIODICAL
STACK

~~NON-~~CIRCULATING BOOK

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES
C022898325

263976

H9
L2

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Google