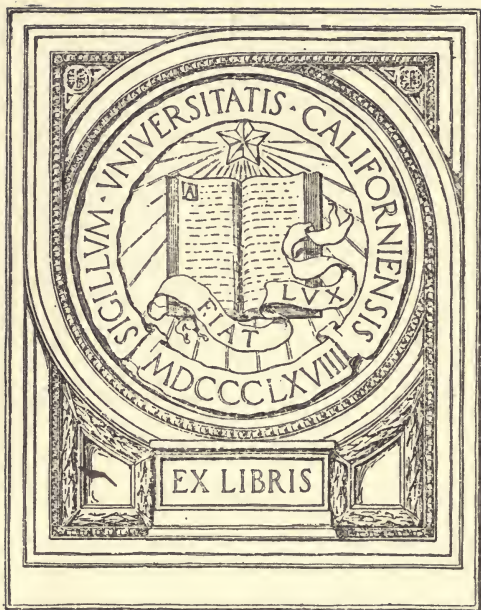


LUCY OF
THE STARS

FREDERICK PALMER



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LUCY OF THE STARS

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Now she brought the horn handle of the crop down upon the vase
with all the strength of her arm



LUCY OF THE STARS

BY
FREDERICK PALMER

Illustrated by Alonzo Kimball

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK : : : : : : : 1906

TO THE
ANNALS

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“Yes, you would bring something which kings cannot confer or millionaires buy, that little something in the nature which is lovable, that little something in the mind—found only in a woman’s mind—which is the greatest charm of the universe.”

483507

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Now she brought the horn handle of the crop
down upon the vase with all the strength
of her arm *Frontispiece*

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“It is like a fairy tale,” he said. “I am glad
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Lucy of the Stars

I

THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

A WORD, a glance, the smallest thing may tell half of the story. From the half to the whole there is the difference between a wireless which may still be ticking out its call when the ship goes down and a wireless which is answered. The shining moments of this work-a-day world come when, in joyous interchange of signals, word is met by word, or glance by glance, or thought by thought.

Lucy's shining moment came with a telegram from Arthur, although not with his first, in which, from Christiania, he announced that he had left Lord Mordaunt's yacht and was about to return to London. As she slowly tore up the form she wondered why this should concern her. Was she his agent, to meet him at the train? His butler, to have his house open for him?

Outrunning him on his journey came a letter:

Lucy of the Stars

"My hosts are very lovable," he wrote, in late August, "and nothing is quite so clear as that they are in nowise responsible for my being depressed and bored. I consult my diary and find that to-day is the twenty-eighth, and we left on the fourteenth. Undeniably, then, I have been only two weeks away. Possibly I am still in the coma of some new midsummer disease that will not let me concentrate my mind long enough to read even a novel through. I have tried three and finished none. Two weeks! It seems two months!"

There followed a page and more about people and places. This part Lucy skimmed, and, returning to the study of the sentences quoted, she found them one moment intelligible, the next confusing.

The second telegram, which came only a few hours after the letter, dispelled previous doubts; filled in previous lapses with sudden comprehension.

"I have found out the cause and the cure. I have something to tell you. Will you see me this afternoon, please?"

It was three already. He would come at four for tea. She pressed her cheeks with her fingertips and felt them burning. Her breath came in quick gasps as she thrilled with the significance of a crisis—new, strange, delicious, terrible.

"I must think! I wouldn't know what to say or do. I can't—I can't see him to-day!"

The Portrait of a Lady

She sprang up, rang the bell, and told the maid that she would be in to nobody for the rest of the day. Then she dropped again into the big chair before the glow of the low fire—which had been laid to take the chill out of the room in early September—to ponder upon herself and her position.

There was too much fear for the future for her to take time to bemoan what was lost. Nothing now could alter the fact that when she and Arthur met again it would be as two new beings. Their old, simple, charming comradeship was dead. What was to take its place?

Who was to know better than she, with her experience of the social world, that the son of an earl, story-books to the contrary notwithstanding, does not seek the daughter of a poor foreign scholar as his bride. No more does that world generally seek acquaintances in the old, unfashionable part of London where she lived. When Dr. von Kar came to England, eighteen years before, he chose the house which he had since occupied for a characteristic reason. It was even then a relic of days of more air and less gregariousness—this old mansion, which is still set in an oasis of green occupying space enough for half a dozen villas.

“I am within hearing of the roar of London, which I love,” said the doctor, with that German flattening of his *r*'s and French lengthening of his *i*'s

Lucy of the Stars

which made his tongue as cosmopolitan as his mind. "That roar is the sound of the surf which is England's border, and of her individual freedom and strife. At the same time, I have an English lawn between my gate and the porch and an English lawn at the rear, where I may pace up and down in the long twilight of June evenings."

Later, he had another reason, equally in keeping with his humour. He made the location of his house a test of friendship. "Those who really care for me," he said, "will come here as readily as they would go to the West End, and those who do not care for me I do not want." The scholars came primarily on account of his scientific achievements; but they also came partly, and some friends came solely, because he had that rare quality of being likeable without any effort on his part.

Carriages began to arrive in numbers soon after the daughter had reached womanhood. "You know that old German doctor man," to use the words of a certain lady who said that she was the discoverer of Lucy, "the one with the grand manner and that quaint accent which is so much prettier than native English? He is a great friend of old Brent's. They write pamphlets about bugs together—either bugs or beetles; I am not quite sure whether they are the same, are you?"

"His little girl, at all events, is wonderful. She

The Portrait of a Lady

even has his accent. She's hardly pretty, but *chic*—oh, so *chic*! A true sprite for week-ends. If you have Lucy, you can invite poets and M. P.'s and youth and crabbed old age, too. She is witty, she is a mimic, she can write a song and play and sing it while you wait. The witch must be in her blood—which is all Continental, by the way. There is some mystery about her. I have heard it whispered that she comes of great stock, really, and the tenth part that is interesting is not told. But that doesn't matter in these days, unless it comes to marrying into your family. Lucy is not of that order at all. She would always rather walk with two men than with one."

It would have been inconceivable to the world of the country-houses, which was finding her less and less inclined to accept their invitations, that the Lucy of their acquaintance was the same person as this relaxed heap of nerves and muscles gazing abstractedly into the fire. After a time, she rose and went into the book-walled study, which was empty, her father being absent in the city. Resting her hands on the arm of his chair, she leaned forward, while her eyes searched with staring intensity a small pencil drawing of a woman's face above his desk.

The portrait had always hung in the same place since the dawn of Lucy's memory, which was a

Lucy of the Stars

year or two after they came to London. Above it had always hung a carbine and a battered slouch hat. Strangers who recognised the association of these with the guerrillas who pestered von Moltke's lines around Paris wanted to know if the doctor had been a German soldier and had captured the owner. Such a question seemed always to breed in him the same distant and sunny surprise as if he had been asked if he were at the sacking of Troy.

"On the contrary, I was the *franc-tireur* myself," he would say, without further explanation, changing the subject immediately in his easy way.

As a result, conclusions were drawn that he had served against his own country. Had the doctor heard that such an impression was abroad he would have only smiled.

It was not the hat and the carbine which interested visitors most, however. Only the timid asked about them. The bold expressed their admiration of the portrait in such a way as to make the hint of their curiosity as to the lady's identity a question in sense if not in form. He always seemed to rise to the bait most delectably, centering his gaze for an instant on the lady as if he were about to tell the whole story:

"It was drawn on the back of an envelope," he would say, "and it shows deftness in the use of

The Portrait of a Lady

simple lines, certainly. If you were to take off the frame you would find the address still on the other side;" and with that, smilingly he passed to another topic.

He never said more in connection with the subject of the portrait, although there were rare occasions when, following the mention of the hat and carbine, his eyes, always glowing with a fine and knowing humour, would break into flame :

"I was born to a destiny of restlessness," he would say then; "yes, a destiny of restlessness, and here I have been in one house in London all these years. When I was young I conceived myself to be living in the age of knighthood. I set out to right the wrongs of the world with the sword. Later, I found that I was living in the age of steam and practical politics, and to-day I am a working chemist and something of an inventor."

He had told his own daughter no more than this. Yet she was of his heart and of his life—if his old life be excluded. The barrier was where the old life ended; a barrier which he would have made artificially as complete as nature makes that of our pre-natal existence. That he was not an exile in fact or in feeling she knew by their Continental visits, where they had studied and played together on many vacations without meeting any friends or acquaintances who were not noticeably the out-

Lucy of the Stars

growth of his new life and his scientific achievements. When she had pleaded with him; when she had coaxed; when she had demanded as a right the story of herself, he smiled and stroked her head. When she had wept, her tears had brought in response only tears of gentle reproach to his eyes.

“Lucie, dear, am I such a bad old father? Am I not content with you and with things as they are? Are you discontented with me?”

“But——”

“When you say ‘but’ to things which are and must be, you pluck the sweetness out of love,” he would say, drawing her steadily and irresistibly to him in his arms. It was then that she felt small and helpless and wrong.

To-day for the first time she was angry with him. She knew that he had robbed her of something which could never be replaced. The time had come when she must and would know the truth; and had he been at home he would have met a new Lucy—a Lucy in a storm of protest over his injustice.

“If I were as beautiful as you it would help.” She scowled at the lady of the portrait, who looked back at her bewitchingly and coldly. “All you need is to have a fine gown and enter a drawing-room and your victory is won. I—I’m French enough to use my wits, so that the world won’t see

The Portrait of a Lady

that my eyes are too far apart, that my nose is—what will you, messieurs?—a little *retroussé*, and my chin—my chin, they say that talks, at any rate. I did not care much before if—if I was Lucy of the stars. My father was enough; his arm was around me, and in the circle of his protection life was full and deep and charming. I did not know that I was ever coming out of the chrysalis like this. I do care now.

“Do you know?” she asked. “Is it possible that you are my mother, you who are so different from me? If not, who are you—guarding my father’s study ever since I can remember—you and the old hat and the carbine? If you are not my mother, what can you mean? Oh, what, what!”

She dropped into her father’s chair and buried her face in her hands. Tears? Yes, from Lucy, who was born for smiles. When she arose and went back to the chair before the fire in the other room, Boze, the family Great Dane, came from his position before the grate and rested his head on her knee. She ran her finger softly backwards between his eyes and smiled a little through her tears; for, be it said to her credit or discredit, Lucy could never weep long; which is not saying that she could not suffer for long.

“Boze, there’s a thing sprung into my heart to-day—a big, glorious, terrible thing. It’s odd that

Lucy of the Stars

it should have come to me. I'm an odd girl, and this is an odd house, and everything about it is odd except you, old dog. You are perfectly natural and regular. I love you for that.

"It's something, Boze, that every girl expects that she will find some day, though she does not think of it in that way except in the very back of her head—here where your bump is, the bump which made you bury your first bone when you were a puppy."

Lucy laughed a little, as she often did when alone at her own quizzical imageries.

"To me this marvel is like finding a great diamond in the street when you are poor and have no right to anything better than turquoises. You are nervous with the wonder and joy of it. You fear that you will lose it; you fear that you ought to give it up. You expect to hear people—to hear those who have admired you when you wore turquoises—calling out, 'What is she doing with that great diamond, that little girl from nowhere? She was so nice in turquoises. Where is her title? Where is her pedigree?' That is it, Boze. I do not want to give up the diamond, yet I must, and live on the thought that I had it and it was rightfully, rightfully mine. I ought never to see him again. I ought to close the chapter now, I ought, I ought! Oh, I don't know—I—I——"

The Portrait of a Lady

Her voice died into a whisper. Through the silence of the house came from without the clinking of a cab-horse's feet on the pavement and the cry of a tradesman. Then she heard the click of the garden gate and a step on the flags which was not her father's, and yet which she knew almost as well as she knew her father's.

Suddenly all that she had thought and said seemed ridiculous, silly, presumptuous. Why should she think that he had come to—she avoided the word even in her heart, now. Possibly his telegram meant no more than some whim, some plan of amusement in which he would enlist her services. How did he look? What had he to say?

She outran the servant's instructions and opened the door herself.

II

WHEN ARTHUR CAME

HAVING at the age of twenty-nine mortgaged all the property which his father had left unattached, Henry Edward Steadley, sixth Earl of Carniston, married the daughter of an American plough manufacturer. "The amiable Carny has turned under his wild oats and sowed a crop of stocks and bonds," ran the saying of the time. Lady Carniston had died at the birth of her only child, Arthur, who had grown to manhood with the distinction of the Steadley countenance softened by her own dollish good looks.

"There are a good many mothers of marriageable daughters"—if we may quote the same lady who has given us our information about Lucy—"who would like to know how much of the plough manufacturer's fortune is left. Arthur is very nice, even if he is so shy and prefers to spend his time with professors and dreaming by the sea. The earl has leased his town-house for fifteen years and lives modestly. Some think that this dandy of a past generation has turned miser as

When Arthur Came

well as hermit; some say Monte Carlo. However, he gives his son a good allowance—possibly because it keeps him away from home and he is amazed that a Steadley should have done well at Oxford instead of illy at the card-table.”

After he left the university Arthur pursued his bent for science, which brought him the acquaintance of Lord Brent and, later, of Dr. von Kar and Lucy. Upon his first appearance before a learned society the members received him with bland consideration owing to his station. They wished, besides, to encourage the example which he was setting to a class of society too much given to yachts and horses and automobiling. When he had finished his paper the earnestness of their praise was undeniable. He acknowledged their tribute with a blushing and girlish bashfulness which is not unbecoming if the recipient be erect and athletic. This characteristic, entirely contrary to all the records of the Steadley nature, was doubtless inherited from his mother, who was remembered by the few who knew her as a shy girl of twenty, a little overcome by her position.

Never had Arthur regretted so much his diffidence as on the afternoon when he stood on Dr. von Kar's doorstep, having come straight from Christiania. His plan of action had contemplated that Lucy would receive him at the tea-table. Her

Lucy of the Stars

sudden appearance when she herself opened the door stunned him a little and changed the lines of the play without previous notice to one of the actors. Lucy's eyes still glistened with the moisture of the tears which she had wiped away; she had never looked more lively or attractive.

"Back from Norway so soon?" she exclaimed, with a questioning pucker of her eyebrows.

"And in time for tea!" His answer sounded flippant and hopelessly inadequate to his own ears.

Ten minutes later nothing but commonplaces had passed between them, and tea had been brewed while he chatted aimlessly of his past fortnight. He realised that he was phonographic, and still he talked on. If only she would give him an opening, he kept thinking. But she had ceased to be sympathetic. She sat at the table volunteering no remarks, pretending to listen when she could not have repeated the idea, let alone the detail, of what he had been saying. As her cup in one hand came in touch with the saucer in the other, she felt them beating a little tattoo. Did he hear it? she asked herself, as she suddenly returned both to the table. Hardly. He had just caught his own cup and saucer at the same trick.

Her dream of the way the thing should happen had been as false as his. Her woman's subtlety and intuition had given him an opportunity with

When Arthur Came

the first words of her greeting. A man who went away for six weeks did not return in two unless he had some definite object. Hadn't she intimated as much, with the result that he had said that he was in time for tea? Lucy was trying to keep herself under control; to bring herself back to earth from the soarings which had followed her receipt of his telegram.

"I am talking like a parrot!" he said abruptly. "Does all this interest you?"

"Immensely!" she said, as nonchalantly as if she were asking him whether he would have one lump or two. Her manner made him fumble again.

"It—it isn't interesting to me," he said plaintively.

"Really!" she rejoined loftily. "That makes it all the more kind of you. A little sacrifice for the entertainment of others is good for young men, I've heard say."

He rolled up his gloves and thrust them absently in his cuff, where he usually carried his handkerchief.

"Lucy!" He uttered her name as if it were the call of a wounded officer for first aid on the battlefield.

"You will have another cup?" she asked.

He shook his head vacantly. "Lucy!" he re-

Lucy of the Stars

peated, "nobody else is coming this afternoon, is there?"

"My teas are not R. S. V. P., as you know," she rejoined.

"Oh!" was all he could say to that. He pulled at his little moustache, he blushed; and he was very handsome, as she had always thought. "Lucy—if you would play for me it—it would help!"

She lifted her brows in perplexity.

"I mean, won't you please play for me?" he went on.

"That is always a good plan when conversation is running low," she said, rising.

Not that he really wanted her to play. He wanted to break what seemed about to become an endless chain of mental confusion. Once her fingers were running over the keys he recovered himself. Suddenly, without warning—by prehistoric male right, perhaps—he reached down and seized her hands in his. Her hands were small and she was small, and he was tall and masculine.

"The sum of it all is, Lucy, that I love you," he said. "I have come back to you from Norway, as I would have come back to you from Peru or Thibet when the truth found me, to ask you to be my wife."

Less than an hour before, in a transport of imagination, she had seen him in the same attitude

When Arthur Came

as he stood now, and she had framed an answer. But what did she actually say when the time came, this Lucy?

“Arthur, it is not becoming to you to get so red!”

Was that her triumph for his delay, or only the inborn mischief of her? Of this we are at least sure—it was like her.

He did not frown or protest at her flippancy. He only went straight on in manly fashion.

“It’s my heart trying to find its way to you,” he said, unconscious of any gallantry, of anything except the truth. “I love you, Lucy. All I have I give, and for all I lack I crave your forgiveness and charity and help. I ask you to be my wife.”

“You love me?” she said softly.

“Adorably!” he answered.

She bowed her head a little lower. “I love you, too—adorably,” she could not help saying. As he released her hands they went upward to him and his went downward to draw her into his arms.

She was the first to break the bonds of their silence, and she broke them with a little sob as she drew away and looked at him with the steady counsel of a new familiarity, her hands still clasped in his.

“I must tell you,” she said, as if this were some sin to confess in order to clear her conscience, “that

Lucy of the Stars

after your second telegram I thought that you were coming to say this. I wanted to hear you say it—oh, that has been very sweet, Arthur—and I was afraid to have you say it, after all. I am only a girl, not a goddess of wisdom. I am proud and happy that you do love me and have told me so, and, Arthur——”

He could feel in her finger-tips the tremour that ran through her as she bent closer to him. Then she sprang away.

“You sit in that chair and I will sit in this!” she cried imperatively. “Our hands must not even touch. That fuses us and makes us forget that we are responsible beings. We must come down from the stars and be grave and brave and reasonable.”

Such was her directness and the authority of her charm that he obeyed instinctively.

“Our error, dear Arthur,” she said, slowly and insistently, “is that we forget that we are not living in a world composed solely of you and me. If there weren’t any other world—no world of ancestry, no living world around us—if I were cold enough not to have any crotchets in my head, everything would be so—so simple.”

Her hand was stretched toward him in an appealing gesture. He went to her, seized it in his own, and sank half kneeling beside her.

“I have learned in this month’s absence from you

When Arthur Came

that there is no world except that of you and me. Do the ancestors concern us? They are dead. If you need them, there are enough on my father's side for two. If you are in awe of them, why, my mother's father began life as a blacksmith. And the living world? Let that smile or weep, as it pleases. Even if I did not love you, I know of no girl so fit to be a countess as you!"

"I would be your choice as a countess as well as a wife?"

"Yes."

"You tempt me, great sir. Might I whisper in your ear that I have seen a number of grand dames who were not gifted with wit, wisdom, or the art of dress. Sometimes I thought that if I had their cards and their position I might—well, I might play the game almost as well as they."

"You shall have both cards and position," he added.

"You being the ace of trumps, with a long suit and a double ruff!" She caught the fever of the idea, and for the moment was veritably the Countess of Carniston. "I should always be busy. There is nothing I hate so much as being still. I feel like a plant, then. I need not always amuse others; sometimes others would amuse me. You could let yourself out and allow all your forces to play. A place all secure—kind to our servants,

Lucy of the Stars

just to our tenants—not only playing, but making the game together! That is it, *making* the game!”

Thus she carried herself to a pitch of excitement; and then, suddenly, the barrier which she could build as rapidly as she could tear it down rose between her and her vision of happiness. With fresh intensity her fear of the unknowable enveloped her.

“This comes of letting you hold my hand, wicked one!” she said, drawing away from him. “You forget that we are to be grave and brave and reasonable. Now, listen—no, no holding of hands!—to the story of this Lucy from nowhere.”

She told him all that her father had told her, and how her father’s serenity, his strength, his art of smiling and of tearful reproach, and her own fears of spoiling the enchantment of their happy existence, had kept the rest from her.

“My only memory is of this house, and always that portrait has hung over his desk—that beautiful woman, always young while my father grows old! To-day her features have burned themselves into my brain. Come! I want you to look at her and help me lay my ghosts. It is not all this—this thing itself so much as the way it has worked on my imagination that hurts,” she said, as they went together into the study.

“Can she be my mother?” she asked, after Ar-

When Arthur Came

thur had bent close to the portrait and studied it sharply.

He told himself that by force of nature this woman might have been the vessel which once held Lucy, but in letting the child go her selfishness had parted with none of her own flesh and blood. Before he spoke he smiled in the manner of one who closes the incident of humouring another's vagaries.

"I don't know, dear," he said. "Furthermore, I don't care, and I am not going to think of it again. I'm glad, if she is your mother, that you don't look like her."

"Oh, Arthur, you do think that!" For, naturally, Lucy's regret had been that she was not beautiful, not realising that beauty and charm do not always go together, and of the two charm is the more enduring. "Arthur, it's nice of you to say so, and still nicer of you to believe so. Believing! That is everything, isn't it?"

As they returned to the other room he was leading, and for the time being the ghosts were laid.

"After I had wired you that I was coming I received a telegram from my father saying that he wished particularly to see me," he explained at length. "He is at Burbridge. As soon as I have seen him I shall return to town. Then for our plans!"

Lucy of the Stars

"We've been too full of our happiness for such little details," she rejoined, laughing.

"And we will be married soon? Shall it be soon?"

Could she, resting in his arms, say him no? Lost in the joy of the present, the living moment, which shut out all yesterdays and all to-morrows, she answered:

"Soon—very soon."

Dr. von Kar had an engagement for the evening. When Lucy learned at dinner that it was not important, she pressed him to remain with her and send a note in excuse.

"It's such a chilly evening, father, that you can imagine you have a cold," she urged.

"I would like to," he said. "I don't see much of you, Lucie dear, since you know so many people. I ought really to go, though."

"I want you to-night," she pleaded. "I'm in a mood when I must talk. You will stay?"

He lifted his brows at her strange earnestness, regarded her thoughtfully, and then consented.

She sparkled in thanking him, and quickly was the Lucy who never seemed to have a thought that was not merry. Through the meal she kept him smiling, mostly by her accounts of the people she met and her mimicry. After coffee, when he had

When Arthur Came

seated himself for the evening, she dropped onto the arm of his big chair.

“Father, I’ve been good and patient, haven’t I? When I have asked you to tell me who I am, you have answered by bringing my love into question. It did not occur to you that I might turn the tables—I might bring your love into question if you refused longer to tell me about my mother.”

Her tone told him that this was a mood indeed, and a new mood, which he had long feared might come. He was quick to give her something, lest she might demand all.

“I will tell you about our ancestry,” he said easily. “It is like the registry of foreign legations, my dear. My father was German and his mother was Russian. My mother was a Frenchwoman—bless her!—and her mother was English. My father died when I was young. I love France, where I spent my youth. When the Germans were at our doors I fought for France with more than the ardour of a Frenchman. There is Italian blood, too. It is aristocratic, as is the Russian and the French, while the German belongs to burghers and plodding scholars. Do you wonder that I inherited a destiny of restlessness or you a talent for languages and music? Do you wonder at your cleverness, Lucie? Few have better blood,” he assured her.

Lucy of the Stars

Talent for languages or for music, or mere cleverness, meant nothing to her at this juncture except exasperations which had taken her into a world where other things were needed.

"But that does not tell me." She was intense, almost vehement. "Why have you kept that portrait over your desk for so many years? Was she my mother? Your wife? A time may come—oh, I don't want it to, but it may!—when my love will not stand secrecy."

The doctor realised that a crisis was at hand. His decision was quickly made.

"She was your mother in honourable marriage," he said; which was true.

"And where is she now?" she demanded. "Where?"

"She is dead." This was not true, as he knew. Boldly he had told the falsehood, thinking to bring himself peace and her happiness.

Lucy drew very close to her father. She had no more questions to ask, as she told him. Only a little of the mystery was solved, but enough for her. The strong current of her love ran back to him, bearing with it overflowing sympathy for that misfortune, whatever it was, that had sealed his past.

"This—this and something else makes me hap-

When Arthur Came

pier to-night than I have ever been before," she said.

The meaning of her words, which he dimly heard, wholly escaped him. He was enjoying the relief of a difficulty passed, and his recollection was carrying him back to the lady of the portrait.

III

“WHAT A BOY YOU ARE!”

WHEN there is no one in the big seats behind,” said Lucy, “I’m always fearful that the rear of the car may fall off, and I’m always looking back to see that it’s still fast.”

“Your luggage is in there,” Arthur observed.

“Which is myself. If I should lose that I could not appear for dinner. The older a woman grows the more she depends on it, till by and by she is only a skeleton and the luggage is the flesh. I once met an American millionairess who had a hundred and seventy-five boxes. My impression was that she would have been glad to have kept some of the flesh in the boxes and saved herself lacing. One, I believe, was for carrying her keys and another the card-index system by which the maids located her different gowns. The maids served in shifts.”

This nervous chatter of Lucy’s was only to carry on. When a couple have a hundred-and-thirty-mile ride before them, and they have a vital secret

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to discuss, they wait till they are out of the crush of the cabs, the omnibuses and the crowds.

“I like it,” Lucy went on, “with this big car and only ourselves. There’s a splendid luxury about it—especially this morning, Arthur.”

Her eyes, her chin, her mouth smiled at him in signal of their understanding—the understanding of the two in a motor which was crossing Waterloo Bridge.

“In a runabout you feel stuffy—as if you were living in a tiny apartment,” Lucy continued. “When two are in a big car and going twenty miles an hour, with the back seats empty, they own a town and a country-house; at thirty miles an hour they have added a shooting-box; at forty, they have added a villa on the Riviera; at fifty, you feel like a flying ghost who owns the world and wonders if he will spin off into space at the next turning or arrive at his ancestral home in time for dinner. To my imagination it is all in those empty seats. They make you mighty. How could anything stop you when they still keep on coming behind.”

He had a deal to tell her, once they were free of the traffic. The previous night she had received a telegram from the Earl of Carniston himself, asking her to spend a day and a night at Burbridge, his country seat. Her amazement measurably tempered her elation. As her father was at the house

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when Arthur came for her, there had been no time for explanation then. When they passed out of the suburbs into the country, and he gave the machine something under the lawful speed, she said:

"That's better than going so fast—better than vain things like villas and mansions and shooting. It's intimate and confidential. Come, it is time for the chauffeur to talk."

"You were a little surprised at such quick results, Lucy?" he asked, proudly. "There's even more and better news than you could have imagined. What will you say when I tell you that my father knows that we are engaged?"

"And he sent for me after that! Really!" She would not allow herself fully to credit the statement while it was still unqualified.

"Yes. I don't know what it was that my father wanted to see me particularly about, I'm sure. Three or four times in the last year he has sent for me. I never knew him to do that before. On each occasion he said that we must have a talk after dinner or to-morrow morning, and somehow he never came to the point. The most that he ever said was that I was twenty-seven years old and pretty soon I would have to settle down. On Thursday we had some Americans at the house—a Miss Hodges and a Mr. and Mrs. Belmore. Miss Hodges is a stunning girl of a type. Immensely

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rich; a good catch for some poor chap, I should say. I don't know just what to make of her. The Belmores are delightful—the kind of Americans who are certain of themselves, and seem to like their own way and their own country too well to think of changing, and yet not in the slightest degree aggressive. An American politician by the name of John Frane was along also. A decidedly clever man, I should say—one of those electric Americans—strong and outspoken. I liked him. He worships Miss Hodges, and Miss Hodges is learning to like castles. I'll be interested to know what comes of——”

“Arthur,” she interrupted in vexation, “let us pass over the discovery of America. What I am dying to know is why your father invited me.”

“Yes, the Belmores and Miss Hodges don't have much to do with that.”

“Not unless your father wants you to marry Miss Hodges,” she put in. “Most fathers want their sons to marry rich girls.”

“If he does, he's changed his mind. After they had gone yesterday he did ask me how I liked her. It was then that I found my tongue. I was full of you after being with those people for two days——”

“You were, Arthur—you were, just the same?” she asked intently.

Lucy of the Stars

"The loneliest man in England! So I told him that I loved you and was going to marry you, quite as if the whole thing was arranged and nothing could stop me."

"Bravo!" She liked his courage. "And what did he say? I'll not break into song till I hear that."

"My father does not talk much. You can never tell his thoughts by his face. He is most impersonal. As a father he is a mate for yours, in that respect. Precisely what he did was to whistle. Then he went over to the table and lighted a cigarette and stood with his back to the grate, smiling at me as if I were something new and rather pleasing.

"'I remember her,' he said. 'She plays billiards well for a woman, and she mimicked old Gracey perfectly. What a boy you are! How long has this been going on?'

"Then I told him everything, and why I had come back. He listened attentively, his features working in a strange way.

"'It's your affair, not mine, I see,' he said, still smiling beatifically. 'I have never believed that marriages made in heaven were exempt from catastrophes; nor has my scepticism on that point ever affected my opinion of those which are strictly earthy. She would make a very charming count-

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ess, I am sure. While we don't want to boil, of course, still we need the effervescence of an occasional clever woman among the peeresses. It's a sacrifice one should make for the good of the caste, I suppose.

“What a boy you are!” he said again, after a pause. “To think of you twenty-seven years old—and a Steadley, too! It's beautiful, I must say.”

“Those were his exact words?” Lucy asked keenly.

“Yes.”

“You say he smiled when he said it?”

“All the while, after that first whistle.”

Lucy made a grimace of perplexity.

“What is your father's method? Is he cynical?” she asked.

“No, I can't say that he is. To tell the truth, now you've put it that way, it doesn't seem to me as if I knew my father, except he's always amiable—‘the amiable Carniston,’ they call him.” Arthur hastened on with his story. “Then he suggested that he ought to know you better, and himself wrote the telegram which you received. That is all. Hasn't it worked out wonderfully?”

“Yes,” Lucy admitted. Where he saw clearly she was in doubt. She was going to an uncertainty which seemed worse to such a nature as hers than the anticipation of downright opposition.

Lucy of the Stars

"Lucy, you are sad and it's a triumph. I don't understand."

"No, I'm trying to take it all in. It seems as if we were in fairyland and I was waiting to wake up," she said dubiously.

"I understand. It's because you don't appreciate yourself. He has seen you once and felt your charm. That has opened the door of opportunity. All you have to do is to make him captive as you have me, which you will do to-night. You must be in your best form."

"Which means that I must be the play-actress."

"No, not at all."

"I myself being a play-actress—is that it?" she said, with a *moue*.

He frowned slightly. "You don't mean," he said, "that you don't want to appear at your best—not for me—not for our cause?"

"I do! I will! I'm only awed at the prospect of such a test. It's the test of my life, Arthur."

Though she smiled, it was as one who muses. At the inn where they made a long hour for luncheon, she asked him many questions about his father's nature and habits.

"Studying my part!" she interjected. "It's going to be an ordeal for me, Arthur, and you must help. Let's arrive a little late, so I shall have no time to talk to him before dinner."

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Accordingly, he regulated the speed of the machine to that end, and it was dusk when they reached Burbridge, where she was met on the landing by Mrs. Ormley, an elder sister of the earl, who was visiting her brother. Mrs. Ormley was a partial invalid, who made a good deal of the fact. On the plea of indisposition she asked Lucy to excuse her from going to dinner.

When Lucy came downstairs half an hour later, Arthur met her in the hall.

“If there are rocks ahead or the current is swift, look across the table and encourage me,” she begged. “It’s much more difficult than appearing in a play, you know. There you have to feel your part; here I am the part. And, Arthur, how do I look?”

“Divine!”

“You are staring straight into my eyes. I don’t mean my face; I mean my gown.”

“Divine!” he repeated, with a sweeping glance at the gown and a longer look into her eyes again. “You’ll carry it through. If you are on the wrong tack I’ll put some salt on my plate. You’ll carry it through, though; you won’t have stage fright. You’re always splendid.” He caught her hands in his and the kiss was sweet to her; for she was not certain that after the interview with his father she might, with propriety, have another.

Lucy of the Stars

"I haven't forgotten that game of billiards," were the earl's first words, "or the way you imitated old Gracey when he missed a shot. On my word, he is the most stupendous bore I ever played with."

"I'll try you another game after dinner," she rejoined brightly, "if you will give me forty."

"As I remember your playing, that is rather big-gish odds. However, I will take you on."

Carniston had not meant to be quite so affable. Lucy's slightness, her grace, the memory of her charm on another occasion, had inevitably made her appearance pleasant to him.

"From my window upstairs I saw you arrive," he said. "I didn't come to the door because I know how stiff and sticky one feels when he gets out of the motor-car. He does not want to parley at all, but to go straight to the tub."

"That's why we were late. I mean, I thought I would like to meet you first at dinner," Lucy said impulsively; and then she looked at Arthur's salt, but he was not taking any.

"Yes, in these days young women come to our doors looking like Polar bears who have been having a dust bath. They go upstairs, and when they come down they are out of the chrysalis. It's quite magical. We are going a new and fast pace, and it's far from me to disapprove because I'm old.

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It's good that women don't faint any more, and I don't mind their smoking cigarettes instead of carrying smelling-salts, if they will. But I do hope that we shall never come to dining in tennis flannels. Women should combine to keep the dinner hour sacred to feminine charm.”

“So say I!” said Lucy. She realised that she was chattering.

“To tell a secret out of freemasonry, a woman likes the contrast. If she has been admired by day for the way that she has ridden or played tennis, she never forgets that she has the evening in which to show another side of her character. I don't think that you need ever worry that the dinner fetish will be disturbed. Sex requires that; and, after all, we are women, as every one of us realises at the sight of either a Worth gown or a mouse.”

Arthur was going without salt for fear that he might interfere with her famous progress. However, it seemed to her that it was now the earl's turn to talk. She had been in many great houses, but this was the first time that she had ever sat at the head of the table as if she were the mistress of one; and she suddenly felt the enormity of this fact. In one of those glances when the mind sums up the eye's message as quickly as the eye receives an image, she took stock of the room with its high

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ceiling and heavy carvings. The effect was that of the chase and of war. Originally, everything in the room had conformed to the heads of the wild animals which were mounted here.

In this flash of comprehension she had a better glimpse of Carniston; such comprehension as one often gets swiftly by the soft light of a dinner-table. His gaunt, wrinkled features would have expressed pure boredom if it had not been for the way that he combed his moustache upward. It was a face belonging to the city, although he had lived so much in the country; of a man who rides hard not for riding's sake, but in order that he may have a better palate for his port. The chin was noticeably weak; the eyes were the best feature. They were still young and bright and infinitely sweet-tempered. The ease with which they would win forgiveness might well have destroyed all sense of discipline in the character of their owner. These eyes now looked up at Lucy, twinkling with amusement, as if they expected her to go on speaking.

"I am little acquainted with Burbridge," she said. "I've had a glance at all the tusks and fangs which look down on us. Who killed them?"

"The fourth earl, my grandfather, was a great hunter. He finally lost his life in a fight with a lion. A Rocky Mountain sheep looks across to

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a snow leopard from the Himalayas, you see; an American bison to a Cape buffalo. It was the third earl who took the Indian trophies under Wellesley. They hung in the hall upstairs for a long time until we brought them here, so that we should have the hunter's and the warrior's things together. Every Steadley has had his bent. Your own room, you noticed, was furnished entirely in Louis Quatorze. The second earl was more of a Frenchman than an Englishman. Arthur's bent, as you know, is science. Eventually, if the house lasts long enough, we shall have every department of human activity represented.”

“You will have to add wings to Burbridge to make room for the relics.”

“That I think we shall leave until another financier comes into the family,” he rejoined. “The hunter had the gift of making wise investments. Burbridge is to-day much as he left it. In his changes he pleased himself without too much regard for what had gone before. The founder of the family had not more distinctly the headstrong qualities of the progenitor than he.”

“And your own bent, my lord?”

If he had one she ought to have known it. She had made a mistake, she realised, before she saw Lord Carniston flush or Arthur half emptying his salt-cellar onto his plate.

Lucy of the Stars

"My friends in younger days," he answered, "said that it was too much affability." There was a catch in his voice. "I fear that age has made my bent futility."

"One who has a bent may indulge himself without being of service to others," she put in hastily. "The life of no British peer who lives on his estate and looks after his tenants is futile."

He laughed sceptically, almost harshly.

"That brings us to a new development in the history of the Steadleys," he said sternly, "for Arthur has told me your secret. Presently——"

"Now for the sting under his smile. I knew that it was coming," Lucy thought. "We shall have it as soon as the coffee is served and the servants are out of the way."

IV

THE DOWRY SHE BROUGHT

LIKE most men, the earl knew his own weaknesses well enough to imagine an allusion to them when none was intended. No matter what the distance he had to travel or the number of toll-gates he had to pass, he would choose the sunniest route around an obstacle rather than surmount it. He had a purpose in bringing Lucy to Burbridge, but the development of his hazy plan for accomplishing it was left to the inspiration of the moment.

By asking what his bent was she had reminded him of how gracefully she was making him the victim of it. His "presently" was spoken with a determination, not to impress his hearers, but to reassure himself that he would no longer allow his amiability to compromise his sense of duty once the three were assured of seclusion from eavesdropping. To Lucy it was in the nature of a challenge. Arthur saw that he had been too optimistic. He scowled irritably. Lucy became unnaturally bril-

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liant. She held the reins of conversation with a merry whip-hand till coffee was brought.

Then the room became oppressively silent, while she looked across to the earl, saying, with her eyes, that now was his time to be severe if he would break a girl's heart. His resolution was already faltering; he was again looking for a way around the obstacle, or, at least, a better path.

"I fancy that you two have no secrets apart," he said vaguely. "So Arthur must have told you my answer when he surprised me with the news of your—your engagement."

"Precisely, our engagement," said Arthur tartly. "I told her every word."

"And I studied every word," Lucy put in devoutly, "for I knew that our fate lay with your wisdom and kindness. I tried to be wise and honest myself. Has Arthur told you what I said when he proposed?"

"No," Arthur intervened. "It seemed beside the point. She was going to refuse. She asked me to consider the difference between our positions."

"Which made her all the more charming," added the earl. He did not see the flash of fire in Lucy's eyes, because he was bending over to knock the ashes off his cigar.

"I brushed aside her objections," Arthur went

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on. "They might have meant something to the world, but they meant nothing to me. I bring her this estate and a title, and she brings me something greater than either."

The earl looked admiringly at Arthur, whose earnestness made him the more handsome.

"Far greater!" he said agreeably. "I can have no doubt of that. The living proof is before me." He smiled across to Lucy. She blushed and then looked at him mischievously.

"By way of introduction—" she said, striking home to the difficulty he was having to express the thing he had started to say.

"When you first told me of your romance I didn't act like the heavy father in the Drury Lane melodramas, did I?" he asked, almost apologetically.

"Most fitly and respectably," Arthur said, laughingly. He was certain now that his father was coming round.

"It has been a most happy evening for me," said the earl. "I am looking forward to that game of billiards—and I know of nothing, my dear girl, that would please me more than to have you here every night for dinner. Too often I sit alone. I love light and cheer and wit. These you would bring to Burbridge, and with them ten added years to my life. Yes, you would bring something which

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kings cannot confer or millionaires buy, that little something in the nature which is lovable, that little something in the mind—found only in a woman's mind—which is the greatest charm of the universe. He who would take that out of your nature and that out of your mind—and they are very fragile things—would be a murderer. They come with a free existence among charming friends. Arthur, who is young and a bit socialistic—even he does not realise yet what the position which he is coming into means. Its limitations might stifle one of your fine spirit, Lucy. Such ambitions may well be left to stupid women.”

“It is not that I want to be Countess of Carniston!” Lucy said, hotly. “It is that I want to be Arthur's wife.” She fairly hated the earl at that moment. He had been playing with her as a cat plays with a mouse, she thought; he had chosen the cruelest way of saying no to a girl of her spirit. “I've only known him as Arthur. What is this thing of being a countess beside being myself!” she continued.

“True, true,” the earl interjected. He was already asking her pardon with those eyes which had been the source of forgiveness from his nurse as a child and from his friends and creditors as a man.

Her anger ebbed away. She caught herself

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thinking how he had striven to be kind, according to the lights of an old nobleman, when considering the daughter of a poor scholar as a possible daughter-in-law.

“If he becomes earl, can I help that?” she asked. “I must accept it in the same way that I do the fact that my father is German and my mother was French, or that I number French and Italian nobility among my ancestry.” Lucy could not resist this allusion, although she realised that it was priggish and sounded like Walter Scott.

“If it is a question of blood and breeding,” said Carniston, “you have the true flavour of both—which is something else that kings cannot grant nor millionaires buy. You do, indeed, bring us a dowry there.”

“If Arthur loses a leg or goes blind,” she continued, in her fervour, “if he goes bad or becomes a duke, he is still my Arthur. That is it. That is all. I confess myself to you so that you shall understand and Arthur shall not forget.”

“And I am the crabbed father who spoils the romance?” he said, regretfully.

“Not yet! No. We hope to make you a part of it. We hope to give you the added ten years of life. If we cannot—if we cannot, why, then, fate is fate.” Lucy bowed her head.

The earl moved uneasily in his seat, while

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Arthur, suffering to see Lucy put on trial in this way, burst out:

“And if we cannot, it takes only two, my lord, to make our kind of a bargain.”

Lucy now wished that her own salt-cellar had not been removed from the table. She tried in vain to reach Arthur with the toe of her boot. Carniston drew back as if his son had struck him a blow.

“Of course, Arthur, you can do that,” he said reproachfully.

“But it does take two,” Lucy put in. “You are, Arthur, still only one. Dear Lord Carniston, we want your consent.”

“My father speaks in riddles,” said Arthur impatiently. “And you—what do you mean, Lucy?”

“That I love you.” She reached across the table. Arthur’s hand went to hers slowly, but the clasp was ardent enough.

“You wish to say, my lord”—here Lucy in manner and tone was at her best—“that although I am, as you say, possessed of something in mind and something in nature which are the glory of the universe, yet I—I will not quite do for a countess.”

“I mean that you would make the most charming countess in England,” he said hastily, in some embarrassment.

“You, a peer of England, then, would rob Eng-

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quizzical audacity. The earl liked to hear such a spirit expressed in that room under the heads which the hunter earl had killed—a spirit that had been missing in this family for two generations.

“Nor must we forget,” Lucy continued, “the added ten years. Arthur and I together want to see you enjoy them.”

The earl sought in vain for further argument. He himself had granted the premises on which he had been beaten.

“Is it yes, father?” Arthur asked.

“Is it yes?” Lucy asked softly, bending toward him, her lips apart, her eyes calling.

Carniston arose smiling, and smiling he went toward Lucy and kissed her on the forehead, and she kissed him on the cheek, which seemed harsh and lifeless to her—so unlike his eyes, which were the kind that never grow old.

“It is like a fairy tale,” he said. “I am glad to be so much a part of it as to be number three.”

Arthur telegraphed to Lucy his delight with her triumph. Her smile in answer scarcely indicated that her opinion was the same as his. She was thinking of play-actresses.

“Now for the billiards!” said the earl. “Arthur may be a spectator of this contest of giants.”

He gave her the forty. It was a close game. He won narrowly, and in such a way as to please



“It is like a fairy tale,” he said. “I am glad to be so much a part of it as to be number three”

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his vanity. Then they bade her good-night at the foot of the stairs, and when the last sound of the rustle of her skirts had passed away, Arthur said:

"Father, you have been splendid! You can't realise how I love her, and when a man does love as I do I fear he seems impatient."

"I am glad to see you so happy. Only a brute would spoil such a pretty romance. Good-night," was the response.

Arthur and Lucy met at the breakfast-table early. He was all praise and congratulation, and she, a little pale, was smiling. He had slept well; she scarcely at all.

"There will be time enough for a long stroll," he remarked at length, "before my father is up. His hour is usually ten."

"I beg pardon, sir," said Horton, "but his lordship was up at six."

"Unprecedented! He must already be feeling those added ten years," Arthur declared.

"It is ruinous to his 'ealth, and I made bold to tell 'im so. But he said he had business with his solicitor in town, and he caught the seven-ten train for the first time in twenty years, I think, sir."

V

AMIALE TO THE END

ALTHOUGH neither said so, each tacitly recognised their common desire that the run back to London should be rapid. His father's departure before dawn had given Arthur an uncomfortable feeling which remained with him. The earl had seemed the last man in the world to be the subject of an energetic impulse; his affairs the last affairs in the world to be influenced by a schedule of morning trains. It was Arthur, now, who had become despondent. While he gave his scepticism no word, his companion, nevertheless, subtly knew of its existence.

Lucy, after a sleepless night and an experience which had drawn heavily on her strength, welcomed the car's bursts of speed over the long stretches of clear road between towns and villages, when she leaned closer to Arthur and he leaned closer to her, as if each was listening to the other, although both were silent. She wanted to be home, alone, where she could look herself in the face

Amiable to the End

again and rest, and think over all that had passed since yesterday.

The conditions of their outward journey were reversed in that she was now—or she assumed to be—the optimist of the pair. She spoke of the earl as kind and delightful; of how much easier their meeting had been than they anticipated.

“I’ll try—I’ll try ever so hard, Arthur, to be a countess worthy of you and Burbridge. With you to help me, and with me to help you, together we shall be wise and”—her eyes were moist—“and I’ll always love you, Arthur.”

Her old life was so completely gone, this great thing of the new life had so completely entered into possession of her, that she would not permit herself to conceive of the battle ending otherwise than in victory.

When he brought the machine to a standstill before the von Kar gate, he said:

“You are so fine, Lucy, so much finer than even I had supposed! It will be my duty to live up to you.”

That moment with his new seriousness—later to be recalled as a first signal—with his new look of pride in her, was to remain with her as a milestone on the highway at a point where it crosses a frontier.

Her invitation to luncheon he refused on the

Lucy of the Stars

ground that it was already two o'clock, and he hoped to find his father and take him back in the car. He stopped at the first tea-house and hastily ate some bread and meat, and then passed down Holborn into the City, where he had never gone before except to draw on his banker.

"His lordship was here from ten till twelve. We—er—had many details to go over," said Wormley, solicitor and man of affairs.

"Did he mention whether he was going back to Burbridge at once or not?" Arthur asked.

"I believe he did say that he would catch the one o'clock train." Wormley went with him to the door. "Ah, his lordship is very fond of you, sir—a most amiable father."

He seemed to have something more on the end of his tongue; but he had been a solicitor for twenty years, and had learned not to give unasked-for advice or information.

Arthur pondered on whether or not he should go back to Lucy for tea and dine there, and—was there any better time?—meet her father and tell him of their love. Had he done so, this would have been a different history. If one wished to enlarge on how small things change the courses of lives, one might say that he decided to the contrary because he was stuffy with dust and had no evening suit in town. But such was not the case.

Amiable to the End

Since the previous night his father had appeared to him in a new light. The old earl was no longer an institution; he had become human and affectionate in his son's eyes. He could not escape the thought that his father was making some sacrifice on his account; the wounded look in the earl's eyes at times while he had listened to Lucy, although not impressing Arthur at the moment had haunted him through the day as the something concealed, something intimately connected with his own existence, of which he had lived in ignorance.

He did not speed much on the journey homeward. One runs fast in order to escape preoccupation, not when one is preoccupied. Consequently, it was well past the dinner hour when he reached Burbridge. After he had bathed and dressed, he found the earl still at table over his last glass of port. There was a warmth in his father's welcome that disarmed some of Arthur's doubts.

"You quite broke all the settled habits of Burbridge this morning, sir," Arthur said, as he set to ravenously.

"Yes. When you are as old as I am, Arthur, you will now and then want to demonstrate to yourself that you have not lost your capacity for being active. I took a long nap yesterday afternoon. So I awoke at five, and as I had to see Wormley

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I took the early train, promising myself to be back before dark. Besides, your Lucy is so electric that she imparted some of her energy to me, I think."

"You did find her charming and a girl of quality?" There was much more that Arthur wanted to ask, but his father put a stop to conversation by rising.

"I have a letter to write, and I shall go to bed early. I found your Lucy all, quite all that you painted her. To you, happiness and good-night!" With which he drained his glass and, smiling fondly at Arthur, left the table.

"It's so hard to go straight to my father," Arthur mused. "He smothers you in amiability, and his eyes look at you in such a way that you feel that it is a sin to be unpleasant."

Tired after his long ride, his thoughts carried him little farther that night. He slept soundly. When he awoke, fresh and glowing with the quickly renewed strength of youth, he laughed at his doubts. The earl, who was never demonstrative over anything, had not been demonstrative in his acquiescence.

"It shall be soon—very soon!" He found himself at breakfast repeating his words to Lucy. He would go to London that afternoon and see the doctor, he was concluding joyfully, when Horton laid a letter on the table before him.

Amiable to the End

“His lordship said that I was to give it to you this morning, sir. He was very pointed about it, and that I should not disturb him till he called.”

A glance told Arthur that the envelope in his hand contained more than a note of something which is a bedtime after-thought. It was sealed in wax with his father's ring and bore the superscription “Personal” in the upper right-hand corner, while in the lower left-hand corner was the legend: “After you have finished your breakfast and lighted your cigarette, Arthur”—a final touch of that courtesy which gave Lord Carniston his character before the world.

“MY SON:

“During the last forty-eight hours you have given me the intensest pain and the intensest happiness that I have ever known. By grace of the one the other has been concealed. That was inevitable—for so I was born—strive as I would to the contrary.

“I was known in my younger years as the ‘amiable Carniston.’ To-day I am not known at all, for such is the end of amiable people. I hear this moment, as plainly as if they were uttered yesterday, the words of a woman of the world some thirty years ago, spoken when she did not know that I was within hearing: ‘Oh, Carny is too amiable not to do anything you ask, and if he cannot do it he will apologise and run away.’ The

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offence of her remark is not more clear than the truth of it, even to the end of my career. I am still amiable, which is a polite way of saying that I am weak.

“When you first told me, with colour in your cheeks and your eye flashing determination, of your love for Lucy, I could not resist you. I am proud of you, Arthur. At your age I was a scapegrace, running through my father’s fortune. You are so simple, so single-minded, so clean, so manly, such a fine type of a young English gentleman, and you were so straightforward in your suit, that I had the infection of your happiness, and I invited the little girl to Burbridge, thinking that a way out of my difficulty would show itself. She, in turn, made herself mistress of my affections. I could not in your presence and hers lay a destroying hand on your dream. I should like to see it come true—none more than I.

“Believe me, my son, I am writing only because if I began telling you, especially with your charming Lucy at your elbow, I should compromise; I should be amiable; I should yield; and this is the time when I must not yield unless I wish to bring you to disaster.

“You will be charitable enough, I know, to give me credit for the one virtue of my amiability, which is that you have had three thousand pounds a year while I have rubbed along of late on a quarter of the amount. At least, I was not weak when Wormley demanded that I should cut your allowance.

Amiable to the End

By my economy for your sake, by my effort to make some reparation to you, I have gained a kingdom of happiness new to me.

“For I have seen you living like a gentleman, never having to think of money—no gentleman should. You have never spent more than your allowance—no gentleman should—although formerly I practised, if I did not hold, different convictions. You are handsome, the handsomest of the Steadleys. I hope that you may be a strong Steadley, as the first earl and the great hunter were. You have the manner, the qualities, the gifts fitting you for the place to which birth has called you.

“What have I, your father, your guardian, left you with which to fill your position? Nothing, and less than nothing; and out of it for the last six years I have given you three thousand. My amiability with creditors, Wormley says, amounts to genius.

“Be thankful that your hobby is science. Mine was gambling. Your mother’s dowry I have exhausted, as I exhausted such mortgageable resources of the estate as remained after my father’s death. If I had another fortune, doubtless I should let it slip through my fingers in the same way. Penniless as I am by my own fault, I should have no sense of humour if I did not apologise for pointing a moral to my own son. It was ever so; age cautioning youth. Thirsty youth is asked to keep away from that fount of which age has drunk its fill.

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“Yet there I think that I do myself a little wrong. If the quarter of a million that we need had fallen to me at any time in the last six years, I believe I should have kept it, thanks to your inspiration, my son. Since you became twenty-one I have been a different man. When I heard so much praise of you from others I began asking myself, What am I leaving him? Thereafter, my amiability, I think, was something of a mask—an easy mask, indeed, for one of my character to assume. While I yearned for your affection and your confidence, I kept you at a distance for fear that you might learn the truth which, for the gratification of seeing you free and happy, I concealed.

“Your love romance has taught me the wrong I have done you in this respect. You thought that you had three thousand a year forever. This income was as much a part of your existence, thanks to me, as the air you breathed. You had every reason for thinking that the condition of our estate was as sound as that of the British Treasury. Then why should you not marry as you pleased? I grant you, as your choice well attested, your quality of mind is such that you could not have chosen one unfitted for the place to which you called her. Too late I realise that I ought to have bred you by degrees to the necessity which now suddenly descends upon you to break her heart, your heart and my heart. No kindness could have been more unkind than mine. But you will admit that headstrong marriage for love is not among the char-

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acteristics of our caste—which makes it all the more charming in you.

“You will find all the papers with Wormley, Arthur—all the ghosts of my father’s misdeeds and mine. In six months, at the latest, Burbridge and all that we possess will go under the hammer. We have to deal with facts, as Wormley said yesterday, ‘and funds are the stubbornest of facts, my lord. The world entertains respect for the position which it grants you as a peer of England; but, at the same time, it insists on collecting its debts from peer as well as commoner. The patent of receipted bills is mightier than any patent of nobility.’

“Shall I say more? You have my confession, and you have the truth at last. Either we must have money, or alien footsteps will soon sound in this hall, and aliens will sit under the heads of the beasts which the great hunter killed.

“In facing the problem which my weakness has left you, I would have you first realise that you are something more than Arthur Steadley from this day forth. Arthur Steadley or John Smith may do as he pleases, but not so the seventh Earl of Carniston. You become a link in the career of a great house; you become an institution. You have a duty to your family, to your caste.

“It is the *noblesse oblige* of our nobility that preserves England. As a whole, our aristocracy has always retained some sense of duty. Other nations have risen and fallen, other nobilities have

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gone to the guillotine, and still England has survived and will survive, and with her the peerage, long after present-day rivals have run the swift race instead of the sure race of our customs and our climate. The people have demanded liberties and we have yielded them liberties—but always yielded as if we gave—while we had only to take the Radical leaders into the peerage in order to make them Tories. Down in the City, to the ends of the empire, in every walk of life, men are striving for titles; striving toward the standard which our caste sets. Their ambition is to have their descendants like us. When their sons have attained that end the family property is dissipated, the family eventually becomes extinct, and thus there is always room for the climbers who are coming up the ladder. I think they are coming too fast. Too many are entering on motors fresh from the market, with money as their only passport.

“The question you have to ask yourself, Arthur, is whether the time has come when our family, too, must pass away. Will you make another place for the newcomers? Will you give up your heritage? Observe how our portionless younger sons accept their lot and carry our character abroad in the rule of our colonies. Our whole social system is one of playing the part that falls to you. Thus we keep up our checks and balances. But you may say, with your new ideas which are imbibed in laboratories, that our time has come, and let us accept the in-

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evitable. Then let me say to you, my son, out of the depth of my experience, that when you have reached my age no love of woman will ever atone for your loss of Burbridge. By marrying Lucy you may yet bring yourself and her such unhappiness as neither would have known had you done your duty to that fate which has made you seventh in the line of a great house.

“No, you cannot have your Lucy and have Burbridge, too. Again I hear you repeating bitterly that question which has haunted me these last two days, ‘Why did you not tell me all this before?’ Because I did not do my duty; and, on awakening to it, I am going to pay the penalty and make you the only reparation in my power. To the last I am the amiable and easy-going Carniston; so take warning lest you be known as the romantic Carniston. If I seem to ramble, forgive me. I dare not start to write the letter over again, lest I should weaken and fail in my purpose.

“I have often thought of a rich marriage for you. I would have planned to that end if I had not been weak. You know how little I have kept in touch with the world of late. When I brought Miss Hodges to Burbridge it was with the idea of a romance of wisdom, instead of a romance of folly such as broke upon me within an hour after she had left the house. She is attractive; she would do credit to you as Countess of Carniston. I know that she is not Lucy; she is not an English girl; but in a year she would be English in speech and

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thought, and she would spurn her own country as the climber always spurns the ladder when the ascent is made and footing on the crest is secure.

"I foresee for you such a journey as I once made. It is one not without interest and amusement. In romantic days a nobleman rode out of his castle with his followers and brought the lady home on the back of his saddle. In this money age he takes an Atlantic liner. You will find some prejudice in America against what they call fortune-hunting lords. There the only standard of position is money. To our cousins—many of whom you will find speak a strange sort of English—the man who has not money and cannot make it and marries rich is much the same as a knight of Round Table days who hired a man to fight in the lists in his place. Instead of saying, 'I have conquered a province,' or 'I have defeated my enemy in battle,' the American demands the love of his lady on the score that he has made a million.

"To the rich American, as a rule, life means greed of dividends and a kind of electric massage. They know how to keep their money. It were better if they knew how to lose it gracefully. Thus they would make room for others. Instead, they are perpetuating an aristocracy whose future is a problem. When you come to know them you will be thankful for our forms and our prejudices, and thankful that the first earl served the State. You cannot serve the State without some sense of duty to the whole. A girl of the second generation

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from the West, although she is handicapped with a common mother, comes frequently of yeoman rather than trading stock and, having had the advantages of a foreign education, as Miss Hodges has had, will the more readily conform to our life and bear you better and healthier children.

“Money you need as the coal; the machine is the earldom. In bringing your lady’s fortune home you are serving England as much as the emigrant who brings his millions back to spend in the mother country. We are making America a country of absentees. We shall keep the paradise of our country-places, our stoicism, and self-restraint, and renew our bank accounts and freshen our blood from the workshops across the sea. The other day when that extraordinary man Frane was here, he used an expression, ‘the love of the land,’ which has stuck in my mind. It expresses the spirit that has made England, and it sounded strange on the lips of an American. Some Americans boast a great deal, but ‘the love of the land’ most of them do not understand at all. It is a good phrase. The land you should love, Arthur, is your acres at Burbridge. You see, according to your position, you must do your part for England. Only in America does one do quite as he pleases.

“Your personal distinction is a valuable adjunct in your quest. But you have something even more valuable, according to the standard of calculating American mothers. It is the delight of the American rich, who too often hold their own government

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in cynical contempt, to buy for their daughters the rank which another government bestows. As I enter you for the race, it is only right that I should remove your handicap. Yesterday you were the son of a bankrupt old nobleman, who might have kept a faltering hold on life for twenty years. By that time you would be so old that you would have to marry the widow rather than the daughter of a millionaire. To-day you are Carniston—Carniston at twenty-seven.

“Yesterday I haggled for the last time with Wormley. I arranged a credit of two thousand pounds for you, and a respite in our affairs for six months.

“I rely on your discretion to burn this letter; and, in respect to a more delicate matter, I rely on that of Dr. Judson, who has continually warned me that my heart was weak. Yes, you can depend on Judson.

“I ask you lastly, Arthur, to bear this in mind: For your sake I have absented myself from town; I have given up the Riviera and a summer watering-place; and I have foregone many little pleasures. If your romance has made that seem an unkindness to you, why, it is a reflection only on my wisdom and not on my love, which makes this final act of reparation to you.

“CARNISTON.

“P. S. If you do decide to send Burbridge under the hammer, then I beg of you to destroy all

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the heads, or arrange that they be given to a museum. Let no stranger have them. But keep one—that of the lion over the mantel—and hang it in the Bloomsbury lodgings where you and Lucy will have the awakening from your dream. You know that the hunter killed the lion that killed him. I like him the best of all the Steadleys. How often have I craved a little of his strength!”

The door of the earl's room was unlocked. He was stretched on his couch in the attitude of overwhelming slumber after exhaustion. An unopened bottle filled with laudanum had fallen from his hand to the floor. He who at last had the determination to carry a plan through, found in his passing that the world toward which he had been so amiable was still amiable to him. The pressure upon his heart of distress and excitement had obviated the need of any discretion on the part of the family doctor.

VI

CRAVING THE HUNTER'S STRENGTH

LUCY first learned of the Earl of Carniston's death in the newspapers, which recalled, as if noting the salient point of his career, that the "amiable Carny" had been a famous beau in his younger days. She sent one of the servants immediately to Burbridge with a note which at once expressed her feelings and her sense of the situation.

"It seems so unnatural," she wrote, "for me not to go to you, and yet I comprehend that to the world it would be unnatural, not to say scandalous, if I did. The secret that holds us together keeps us apart. Please know, dear Arthur, that I am thinking of you every moment in this your terrible ordeal, and please feel that I am sending you through space all the love and sympathy that my heart can hold."

When Dr. Judson had pronounced life extinct in Carniston's body he addressed Arthur as "your lordship," remarking, in the comforting way of the

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medical profession on such occasions, that the late earl had blessedly passed away without pain.

"If one must go, as we all must," he said, "one would certainly choose to go in this manner. He felt a little tired; he lay down on the couch, and he went to sleep."

At that moment Arthur's fingers were in his coat pocket beside his father's letter and clasping the bottle of laudanum which he had taken from the floor. In the hour that had elapsed before the doctor's arrival he had not spoken a dozen words, but aghast had stared alternately out of the window and at the still figure before him.

When the doctor led him from the death chamber Horton brought "my lord" a glass of brandy, which was refused. First the undertaker and then the members of the family and the tenants addressed him by his title as naturally as if he and not his father had always borne it. Whether the callers expressed their sympathy easily and superficially or awkwardly and sincerely, they seemed in a conspiracy against the thing which was master of his heart. They were showing him that he was not a free agent, but a link in the chain.

In company of Mrs. Monckton, a friend of the family, Lucy came to the funeral, returning to town immediately after the obsequies. She did not see Arthur to speak with him. Their eyes met

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as the rest of the congregation were waiting for the mourners to come out of the church. In his was an appeal for sympathy which hers sent swimmingly in answer.

He wanted to go to her the next day, and he dared not. He wanted to go to her in the same frame of mind in which he had gone when he returned from Norway; but he knew that that was as impossible as to bring his father to life. Instead, he was pacing the floor of the library when he was not at his desk writing to Lucy. The long letter in which he told her all his thoughts and in which he submitted to the inevitable he tore up at last with a cry of "I cannot!" Then notes which he called cowardly and notes which he called quixotic or deceitful followed one the other into the wastebasket.

"How you helped me," he wrote at last, feverishly, in the exhaustion of his wits, "yesterday in church! You have the art of goodness as well as goodness itself. It was like you to come, and, coming at a time when words are hollow and thought is full and supreme, to make your presence near me felt. How our natures are attuned, sweetheart! What a bulwark of strength your note was—and the knowledge that you have been thinking of me through it all! You can realise how the shock has overwhelmed me and left me numb. I feel that I

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must go away for a few days, to rest, to think, and to find myself. Then, when I am a little recovered, I shall come to see you."

What right had he to call her sweetheart? he asked himself. But who else ever had the right or could have the right? "This, too, is deceitful and cowardly and clumsy," he thought. "But if I try again I shall do no better."

He knew of a quiet hotel by the sea where he could be completely isolated. There, by himself, he would decide whether it was to be Lucy without Burbridge or Burbridge without Lucy. He tramped over the cliffs till his legs ached from fatigue, but not more than his brain ached from the pain of battle. Free from the surroundings of his position, his inclination was the weightier of the two antagonists which were struggling in his mind for victory. When his bag was packed for his return he had come to a decision. He had chosen Lucy without Burbridge.

Still his determination was not founded on the rock. He felt that he needed the strengthening advice of some older man, used to the world. Lord Brent, with his liberal ideas and his contempt for rank and anything but merit, must agree with him. On the way home he stopped over for a morning at the old scientist's country-place, expecting to be told that he had shown a fine self-

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reliance and independence of tradition in making battle with the world for a livelihood in the name of the girl of his heart.

Of all men Lord Brent, gentle, venerable servant, was the last to consult on an affair of love, which is not a thing for chemical analysis. Arthur did not show the old scientist his father's letter, but he told him candidly and confidentially of the situation and of his engagement to Lucy. Brent was as abstract as usual. It seemed that he who had been called the socialist peer was not so much of a radical after all when you scratched him.

"Lucy is a practical girl," he said. "She will not want to marry a penniless earl any more than you will want to marry her. The revelations of your father's insolvency dissolve any contract which was made on the understanding of his solvency. Of course, when one is young he has fancies. I believe I had one that I should marry a tall, dark girl because of my theory of opposites. However, I married a blonde girl, who has made me an excellent wife and borne me five fine children. One grows out of these things; or he gives them up in the face of events, if he is at all a man of reason. As for you, my dear Carniston"—previously Lord Brent had called him Arthur—"I should say"—and he looked him over—"that with your title and your appearance you will have no

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trouble in contracting a marriage which will set your affairs right. An income, indeed, is the first premise for one who pursues science for its own sake."

"My father's idea—the world's idea! I am to be put up at auction," Arthur thought bitterly.

"So far from having any scruples on this score," Lord Brent continued, "you must realise that you are giving the lady a *quid pro quo* in the position which she attains. She will be preoccupied with that, and you will have the leisure for your researches, which, as you grow older, will become more absorbing. Indeed, when we graybeards are gone I expect you to become one of the leaders."

"Suppose I do not see it that way. I myself—I count a little—the personal equation," said Arthur, amazed at this soft-spoken materialism from such a source, and trying to make his point clear to the scientific mind.

It was Lord Brent's turn to be astounded.

"You can scarcely choose," he said. "*Noblesse oblige*, my dear fellow."

"I may if I will. Why should not Burbridge go under the hammer? Let those who have money to maintain it fall heir to that which my ancestors have lost by their failure to play the game, as I heard Frane, an American, say the other day. You yourself have often spoken of the democracy of

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our aristocracy and of its continual renewal from the commons as a most beneficent feature of our institutions.”

“Ah, yes, I did make that point only last year in the Lords, and rather got the better of Moxbridge on the argument. Er—you did not quite follow my reasoning to its logical end. However, that is beside the point. My dear Carniston, you are not one that needs renewing.” Lord Brent laughed a little over his mild humour.

“Suppose I do take Lucy. Isn't it possible that I could earn my own living? Dr. von Kar does as a working chemist,” cried the enthusiast. “At least, I could try.”

Lord Brent was not a self-made peer. This subject of earning a living was entirely out of his orbit.

“Ah, yes, von Kar is a remarkable man. He seems to have many compartments to his brain, each sealed to the people who deal with the others. The compartment that I know is that of the experimenter. No, no, you must put away such vagaries. You must fulfil the destiny for which you were born. You must accept the part which the world has assigned to you. By the way, I have just received a most interesting pamphlet from Professor Werner of Vienna, in which he gives the results of his investigation of how a bird is

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enabled to keep his perch or a bat his hold on a rafter despite the relaxation of the tendons and muscles in sleep. I trust that you will enlarge the laboratory at Burbridge when you have brought your rich bride from America—which is the place where the rich brides come from these days, I believe—and that we may have many pleasant meetings of fellow-spirits there. This Carniston, I am sure, will be known as Carniston the scientist.”

On the train journey homeward Arthur thought again of all that his father had told him, and of the earl's love and sacrifice. At Burbridge the letters which awaited him were further testimony of how conventionality makes puppets of those born to position. The first, to his father from an old friend visiting in America, began “Dear Carny.” The second was also addressed to the Earl of Carniston. It was a note of sympathy from one of his own friends, then in Switzerland, who had always called him Arthur. It also began “Dear Carny.” Thus the nickname which his father and grandfather had borne was bestowed on him as a matter of course. He was Carny and he was Carniston, with all the responsibility which the title entailed. There was no way of escape.

Two tenants came to him that morning, thinking that they would be beforehand in noting their wants directly to the new lord. The rector called.

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A member of the council of the nearest town waited on him to ask if he would take the place on certain boards which had been made vacant by the lamentable death of the late earl. When he took a ride for exercise down the lanes which were his and his ancestors' he felt for the first time the pride of primogeniture, which will never permit a man to give up that which he complains is irksome to him. The man of title envies the freedom of the commoner and clings closer to his title. The rich man envies the happiness of the poor man and clings closer to his millions. Every one's true rivals who make the race for him are on the track where he runs.

If he had money he could meet the tenants' desires; he could make the repairs for which the rector pleaded; he could provide the hospital in town with the funds it needed. He cursed the grandfather who had begun the extravagance; he could not forego a feeling of resentment toward his own father. The hunter earl, who had always seemed a savage, suddenly became noble and praiseworthy, as the lion who brings home the prey is noble and praiseworthy to his young. On his travels the hunter had seen opportunities and made investments which the fifth earl could not altogether expend, and which had been the sixth earl's best security.

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The next morning, as he turned out of the gate on his way to London to his solicitor and to Lucy, he wondered how it would seem never to re-enter that gate again except as a visitor; to have the village people looking up to one who was not a Carniston; to have the hunter's heads in a museum. He put the car at full speed to escape his thoughts, and drove so fast that he was at Wormley's office by eleven.

The solicitor expressed his profound grief over "the sudden and terrible" news, and gradually approached the point where form ends and business begins.

"Lord Carniston," he said, "was a man of extraordinary discretion; and although he expressed to me his intention of taking you into his confidence at once about your affairs, I can scarcely conceive that he had the time to carry out his design—which was, in fact, a part of our agreement by which I gave him a further credit on your behalf. If I could be sure of your own knowledge of the state of his affairs, my lord, I should know where to begin in my accounting to you."

"I think that my father told me all," said Arthur, flinching a little, "including the security for the new credit."

"Er—quite right," said Wormley, taken by surprise. The new earl was apparently a different

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type from the old, who would have reached the same point by many coughs and much leading. "It means a saving of time," thought the practical man.

"My father also said that you had all the papers in order so that I might go over them and inform myself of my responsibility."

The mass of them amazed Carniston—as we must call him now—who as he examined document after document of the record of his family's wisdom and folly felt them clutching his own existence as a part of theirs. Wisdom lay in the will of the first earl, and more than wisdom—foresight and cunning and plunder—in the contracts and the letters of the hunter.

"A wonderful man, the fourth earl," Wormley ventured. "If we had that real estate he bought in Chicago, which I am told is to-day worth five million pounds on a basis of five per cent. net! See what he says here:

"The thing is to travel for yourself and see. Never trust one man's report till you check it off with another's. Do not allow insular prejudices or the reigning political passion to divert you from the basic idea that investments in a growing land mean increasing income and increasing capital as well. Railroads will plant cities throughout the West. Immigration will pour in from Europe.

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There need be no fears of the stability of the government, however vulgar and stupid and provincial it is. In a country where so many own property the government is a government of property. Hold these barren lands; they will be a part of the city one of these days.' ”

“And we sold them thirty years ago because their loss affected us sentimentally less than that of any other asset,” observed Arthur. “To-day the wolves are snapping their jaws at the very horses’ heads and—thank you, Mr. Wormley.”

Arthur assisted the solicitor in tying up the bundles. When they had finished and he rose, the freshness of his complexion and his height showing to advantage in the dingy city office, Wormley observed, with a touch of admiration and loyalty:

“I must say, your lordship, I don’t think that you will have any difficulty in making your mission to America a success.”

“I seem to have been bred and fashioned by my Maker for the purpose of contracting a wealthy marriage,” Carniston thought angrily.

“And if it should happen,” Wormley continued, “that you did not wish to hurry matters, and your engagement was announced, there would be no trouble in securing another thousand or so from the creditors.”

This brutalising touch put Arthur on edge.

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"When I have sold myself do you want a bill of sale?" he demanded in a temper.

Wormley, too, had his dignity. It was he who had secured the two thousand pounds by leading the creditors to put in a little more to save what had gone before.

"You will pardon me, Lord Carniston," he said, "but you deal with me as a business agent; and as a business agent, when your father's wishes were expressed, I dealt with him as I deal with you."

Arthur appreciated the logic of the answer. He found himself liking Wormley better than he had at first.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Please accept my extremity as an excuse. If your own son—if you have one—had to go across the sea to marry a woman for her money—I am not putting it with polite indirection—do you think that he would like it?"

"Our situations are different," said Wormley, in astonishment. "The funds are ready for you whenever you decide to start." He laid stress on the qualifying clause, which indicated that the money was not to be spent in England.

"Yes, thank you," said Arthur absently.

As he swung his car out of the alley where Wormley had his offices into the stream of traffic, and looked at the striving crowds in the new light

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of the training of each unit for the battle of individualism he was waging, and thought of himself at twenty-seven without a single lesson in the business of earning a living, he realised his helplessness. He had been fitted for a destiny; they had been trained for tasks in which success was the reward of effort.

"The hunter was a beast," he told himself, "but, oh, he was a beast who could fight beasts. He was a lion. I, too, wish with my father that I had his strength. He would have had Lucy, and he would have kept Burbridge, too. How, I do not know; but he would."

This was still the circle of his whirling thoughts when he stopped before the von Kar gate.

VII

DISPENSING WITH PLATO

HIS delay in coming to her had cut Lucy deep. She tried to read his letter as written and to avoid the fear thrusting its head out between the lines to say that fate was working against their love. Since the earl himself had smiled on their betrothal, since they themselves had made solemn faith, she had unfurled the flag of confidence and shut her ears to scepticism.

Had Carniston gone to her with a clear outline of obstacles, however threatening, to be overcome in a union of counsel and effort, he might have found in her some of the fearlessness and creative qualities for which he liked the hunter, and with them the womanly sympathy which hardens resolution. As he approached the door he became conscious that although he had something which he must say he was going inside without any idea of how he was to say it.

“If I began telling you, especially with your charming Lucy at your elbow”—this section of his father’s letter ran through his mind—“I should

Dispensing with Plato

compromise, I should yield; and this is the time when I must not yield unless I wish to bring you disaster.”

Fearing the descent of his father's weakness upon him when he needed the hunter's strength, Carniston had a rush of firmness and resolution—so he flattered himself. Under this false spell he became unkind to himself and to her.

She was going to give him a sweetheart's embrace, but something in his face forbade. Theirs was the compromise of clasped hands which may indicate either rapture or separation. Although his expression was one of constraint, her eyes were brimming with sympathy as she spoke.

“You must feel as if you had lived a hundred years in a week,” she said. “You are pale and worn, as I knew you would be. I could imagine you and see you going through it all, while I sat here with my hands folded.”

He did not respond this time by saying how she had helped him. Our romanticist was priding himself upon being a man of decision who accepted the inevitable; an automaton who, having recognised the mistake of having a heart in his caste, intended to go through the part which society had set for him. He was afraid of his own will; so afraid that he could not be himself, which was the self that she knew and loved.

Lucy of the Stars

"Once you asked me to sit in that chair while you sat in this," he said, "in order that we might be brave and grave and reasonable."

"Yes," she returned, with a gasp; and then, recovering herself, she added: "That was yours and this was mine, as I remember. Pray, be seated."

"When I came to you from Norway"—it seemed to him that he was saying this out of a book—"I did not know life. Then I thought of myself as a man with no cares and three thousand a year, who was one day coming into an estate which enjoyed an income sufficient for all rational needs. Intentionally, I practised no deceit. I was only a youthful abstraction who had never used my eyes at Burbridge. I did not know that I was not entitled to sixpence a year, that the estate was bankrupt. Such is the truth."

Will men never learn that while they are making false starts woman's prescience has already run the course of their intentions and found their goal? Lucy understood before he had finished speaking that he was making an excuse rather than a plea. She closed her eyes for a moment, and when she opened them again their gaze and her nerves were steady.

"Was it three thousand?" she remarked. "I did not ask. Inventories were not in my mind. I was in another gallery."

Dispensing with Plato

Her nettling pride brought the sentences out with an aloofness whose softness and absence of affectation made it none the less clear. He had scarcely heard her, let alone observed the inflections and glances by which a woman more than a man forms judgments. Even if he had then put on the brakes, he would have speeded on from the momentum of his false determination. He drew from his pocket his father's letter and gave it to her.

"If it is confidential to me, it is also confidential to you," he said. No act of his that afternoon meant so much to her in proof of his manliness as this. "I beg of you to read it through," he continued, "and to read it in the light of unselfishness, as I have tried to read it."

She turned her head so that the manuscript would not be in shadow. Her only movement was the quivering of her nostrils. The profile realised no artist's ideal; but the artist who could have transferred the life of her features to canvas would have made a marvellous picture. The intensity of concentration which she showed could never appear upon a face of classic outline. He looked on her only to feel his love surging back with desire for possession. To him, striving as he was to restrain ancestral weakness, she seemed to read with a deadly slowness, as if digesting each sen-

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tence before she went on to the next. She offered no comment; there was no change of expression till she came to the part where the late earl wrote of the idea of "a rich marriage for you . . . when I brought Miss Hodges to Burbridge."

"Cad!" she cried, under her breath.

He was dumfounded. She, the woman of his heart, was saying that about his own father! Yet—yet—cad! That expressed his own feeling about parts of the letter; only he could not give the thing that name.

When she came to the earl's reflections on Americans—the Americans from whom he was to draw the wealth to repair the fortunes of the Steadleys by a marriage—she spoke above her breath, heedless of Carniston's presence, of anything but her own thoughts.

"Cad!" she cried again. "What a man's inmost thoughts are, where his personal interests are concerned, that he is. The Americans may love money. It means power and promotion to them—it meant fear to him."

"Cad!" she repeated, for the third time. "This man had not right feelings. They are the greatest thing in the world. Thank God if you are born with them. If not, try to transplant them. Inborn or grafted, be true to them. Then you may close your eyes and they will lead you straight."

Dispensing with Plato

"He was my father!" Carniston said slowly.

"Yes." She looked up as she spoke the word, and then went on reading. He knew the letter by heart, and could follow her in every line and keep the pulse of her feeling.

"Coward—coward!" she exclaimed, when she laid the sheets down. "It is not brave simply to die. It is brave to live and fight." Hers was not a soul to be in sympathy with that Eastern philosophy which teaches death when by dying you can best serve your honour and your family. "He shifted responsibility. He ran away from the battle. He would not remain to face the disaster which his folly had sown."

"Oh, Lucy—you—" Carniston cried. "I——"

"Wait!" she said coolly. "I have yet to read the postscript." This she perused with the same tantalising deliberation.

When she looked up her face was like ashes, but her voice was the same as if she were asking whether he would have one lump or two.

"When do you sail, Arthur?" she inquired.

Think now, Carniston, if you would fight with her at your side to keep Burbridge, what an asset you would have in the power of self-control in that small frame!

"I—I don't know," he said chokingly.

She rose with the dignity of a hostess when a

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distinguished guest has signified his intention of going.

"Of course there are steamers almost every day now, and you have six months for the affair," she said lightly. "That is ample, according to what little Lord Dingwall said. He married the daughter of a Western miner and was back in England in half the time that you have. Your friends do not expect you to break records, perhaps, but certainly they do not expect you to be a laggard."

Suddenly the rush of manhood—which is the one powerful argument man has where the affections of a true woman are concerned—took a direction beyond his control. He went toward her imploringly; indeed, he seemed about to kneel.

"Lucy—I——"

She smiled at him with the mischief of old—the mischief of week-end parties, not of intimacy.

"Arthur, if you do that"—and she did manage to keep her poise and not to say that he would open the heart which she had sealed and bring her misery which only her pillow should know—"Miss Hodges will not approve, on the ground of your title, of *noblesse oblige* and form."

He still had presence of mind enough to see that she had moved toward the door. As she

Dispensing with Plato

opened it he started to proclaim the old formula of friendship in place of that which had passed.

"No, Arthur," she remonstrated. "We will dispense with Plato as superfluous in these days of high finance. Good-bye. You see that I still call you Arthur."

He passed out in a daze and saw before him at the gate a creation of metal with leather seats; and, his mind growing clearer, he realised that he knew the levers to shift in order to take him back to Burbridge and his new life.

Lucy was a heap on one of the drawing-room chairs.

VIII

BACK TO EARTH

O H," she thought, "if he had only come to me with his face flushed and his eyes shining and said, 'Lucy, it is too late, now that you have entered into my heart, to talk to me of duties which were my father's and my grandfather's, not mine. I have chosen you. You are greater to me than Burbridge or peerdoms or the heads of beasts shot by a savage ancestor. I want you. We will go to the colonies together; we will make the fight.'

"The worship of that! The joy of it!" She lifted her head from her pillow, fairly smiling through her tears. "Then it would have been my place to have told him that we must be brave and grave and reasonable. He should have left that to me, at least," she quavered. "I would have bidden him to forget me and face his responsibilities and the destiny for which he was born. I would have told him that I loved him too well to stand in his way.

"And then—ah, then, if he had suddenly turned despondent and reproached me, and said that now

Back to Earth

that he had no fortune and his title was a barren one I no longer cared for him—then, if in answer to the indignation of my denial he had come to me like the wind and thrown his arms around me—why, I”—her breath came in long gasps—“I would have given him up smiling, and I should have known that he was mine; and I should have had something to remember always.

“But no! Why, when he was so business-like, did he not save himself time by sending his solicitor? He tried to be kind to this Lucy from nowhere and to soften the blow with an introduction of whereas and resolved. And the letter of his cowardly old father who was afraid to live and face bankruptcy himself and so left his son, with his blessing, to face it! Yet, I suppose that the old earl was wise. It is only I that am unwise. He meant to be kind. He—he, too, liked to see me act. Arthur was kind. There is nothing quite so cruel as kindness.

“Did Arthur think that I was going to prolong that interview forever? Did he think that I could go on keeping cool the whole afternoon when I was on fire inside? Before he spoke his intention was all clear to me. And after that, when he knew that I knew—when I had read the letter which he left to explain for him, I thought that he was going to try to put his arms around me and kiss

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me. For a moment he lapsed from his resolution; for a moment he wanted me again. I could not let him come near—I could not! It was wise that I did not. When a man only wants you for moments, what chasms of terror the between-times must be—the times when you drop from the stars to the earth! He will learn to want the American for moments—when she is ready for the opera, when she comes down to dinner, yes. But he must want me for all time and forever, or there could be no bargain—and it's vulgar to have sentiments and emotions in these mechanical days, anyway."

She saw how he looked when they parted. Her thoughts followed him through the streets in his car. By this time she estimated he must be out of London. Of what was he thinking? Probably that he was well clear of a dilemma. Then why should she be thinking of him? She was a fool to do so, she told herself abruptly and imperiously.

Thereupon she began talking nonsense to Boze, who had sat through the gusts of human passion with the nonchalance of a bronze dog on a lawn in a hailstorm. The words of a little never-care French song began to run "by request" through her head. She went to the piano and played the air, which she lightly sang, still "by request"—her own. When she whirled around on the stool after-

Back to Earth

wards she was reminded that she ought to go upstairs and answer a couple of notes that had come that morning. As she rose she saw a glove—Carniston's glove, which he had dropped.

"I will send it by parcels-post to my lord, the Earl of Carniston," she said laughingly. But she did not. She pressed it out carefully, and laid it at the bottom of the drawer of her dressing-table under some dinner and dance souvenirs.

In rising from her writing-desk she turned so that she caught a glimpse of herself in her mirror, and she bent closer instinctively as if she would learn whether or not the change wrought that day in her was visible to the world.

"My father must not know that I have been crying," she thought; "he must not suspect or ask questions or ever surmise what has happened between Arthur and me. I've never had much experience, but I have heard that cold bandages are good"—she laughed over her illusion—"when you have been having a flirtation with a member of the House of Peers."

She folded a towel and soaked it in the basin. Lying very still, holding the compress fast to her eyes, she started to sing the never-care song again, but it died on her lips and her thoughts soon gained such headway that she was repeating them half aloud.

Lucy of the Stars

“My heart is all my father’s again,” she said, “and it is his in a way that it never was before. I am back to earth. I wonder if the lady of the portrait found that he had no fortune or if she met a man with a title before she died. I am glad that I don’t know. I am glad that he never told me. After my own lesson I see how it is that there may be some secrets which you want to share with nobody. It was my place to trust father, not to doubt, not to ask. He is right and good, and if he has a secret it is right and good that he should keep it.

“Can I, who have sounded that thing—that thing which he has sounded—remain as sweet-tempered as he is? I will work with him in his laboratory. I am Lucy from nowhere, and I am glad of the nowhere because my father came from there. I was Lucy from somewhere long enough to know that somewhere is a place of landslides, earthquakes, volcanoes and lies; and they shan’t call me out of nowhere to amuse them.

“Still, not to dance or play or go to week-ends—that keeps the ghosts out; it makes turnings in the road; it makes you forget. No, I’ll not go any more. Why am I afraid? Am I such a fool that I cannot forget that a young man proposed to me and I accepted him all on an early autumn afternoon just at dusk, when romance was in the air,

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and by the light of day in banking hours we broke off the engagement? Why, that is happening all over England every day without materially affecting the death statistics from syncope. I don't see how father keeps that photograph if my mother broke his heart, as I believe she did. I want nothing to make me think of Arthur."

But the glove, Lucy!

IX

CASTING OUT FRACTIONS

THE room where the hat and the carbine and the portrait of the lady hung, properly speaking, was more of a library and lounging-room than a study. On the shelves which ran from a row of drawers on the floor to the ceiling were books in the five languages which Dr. von Kar read. Many were old, bound in morocco and stamped with coats of arms.

The doctor seated himself here regularly before retiring, to write in his diary, one of the old customs to which he adhered sacredly, and to write such letters as were not of a professional or a business nature; and here, on the evenings when he was in the mood for reading for pleasure's sake, he turned the pages of his favourite authors, the prime favourite being Cervantes, and in order after the Spaniard, Dante, Horace, Heine, the Iliad, and La Fontaine. Any one who sought to draw a line on his mind or his character from this list was sadly mixed.

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"I could not help learning French and German when I was a child," he said in answer to any compliments on his acquirements. "English I could not speak fluently at all when I came to England. Italian and Spanish I speak illy, although I read them well enough. Languages are a power in yourself for yourself which have the fault of dimming the creative faculty and making you rely on others' brains instead of your own. To me they serve the mind as moving-picture machines serve the eye. I can come in here in the evening and for an hour be a Greek, a German, or a Frenchman of the last century or the century before, and travel the orbit of his thought and experience, and then go to bed in London as usual."

The farther door, itself a part of the book-lined wall, opened out of the library into what the doctor was pleased to call the "home shop," in contradistinction to the "city shop." This consisted of one vast room which had been built onto the old mansion as an ell. It was fitted with all the apparatus of a modern laboratory. By both the east window, to catch the morning light, and the west window, to catch the afternoon sun, was a high desk such as bookkeepers use. When he was writing reports or making calculations he alternated between the two, according to the time of day.

Lucy of the Stars

A total absence of chairs was discouraging to the type of caller who announces his intention of staying forever by saying that he really must be going. The doctor was a prodigious worker, who valued the disposition of his time according to his own programme. If he wished you to remain for a chat he conducted you to the door in the book-wall. When one of his friends told another that he had been calling on the doctor, the inevitable query was, "Library or shop?" Young scientists, when they had anything which they thought would interest him, went in the hope of "library," and the rarity of this condescension had to them the value of a royal decoration.

On the afternoon of Carniston's visit to Lucy the doctor had returned early from the City, with an unusual light in his calm face and an unusual springiness in his step.

"Young Steadley's motor, I think," he observed, as he entered the gate. "He seems to be coming here pretty often, and to see Lucie and not me. Hm-m-m—I wonder——"

However, he did not wonder long. He was too much engrossed in other things to be drawn off at any tangent of passing speculation. This had been a famous day in the career of a certain "working chemist and something of an inventor." After a business consultation at luncheon he had

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signed a contract with an American capitalist, Lindley Belmore, for the erection at Kearn's Ford of an extensive works for the manufacture of his new roofing material; and on this account he was about to go to America for the first time.

It is on an occasion like this, when one has brought some plan to a happy conclusion, that, in the extending glow of his satisfaction, he looks back on the sum of his victories or of his good deeds, or counts his fortune. The doctor could the better enjoy the review of his successes because their nature and extent were known only to himself.

His friends had so far taken everything with the doctor for granted, as he wished they should, that they had never considered that his manner of living in an unfashionable part of London, the excellence of his cookery, and the delicacy of his wines represented an expense which would have maintained a first-class house in the West End well within the accepted standards of living there. Never, indeed, had it occurred to Lucy, such was the art with which her father managed her on this score, that the bills for her gowns could scarcely be included in the income of the average "working chemist and something of an inventor." "Possibly you would like a new frock, *ma chérie*," he would

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say. "Well, I think we can afford it"—after some thought. It would scarcely be fair to say that he was as proud of his success in business as he was of his researches and his taste in imaginative literature. Cervantes was the greatest prose writer who ever lived, of course.

Now he bent over the high desk at the west with the evening sun on his gray head, his pencil setting down the values of the different properties which he had accumulated since he had concluded that he was living in "the age of steam and practical politics." When he had made a total of low estimates he cast out the fractions, and there remained a fortune of three hundred thousand pounds, with an annual income, including royalties, of thirty thousand.

"For a man who was a romanticist until he was forty, I haven't done so badly," he mused.

He would have been the last man in the world to think of himself as a miser. Least of all would he have thought of himself as playing a part suited to a melodrama. Consciousness of a scholarly breadth of view had made his drift the easier. As he tore the memorandum into extremely small bits and let it fall into the basket he was back again with the lady of the portrait. There had been a time when the only three things in the world to him were books and love and fighting.

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As for money, put your hand in your pocket and if there was none—what would you?

Then came a day when the need of money awakened him, and he found himself left alone in the world with Lucy and poverty and a resolution. He would never be caught penniless again, he determined. This was for her sake, but she was not to know it. The ingenuity that this brilliant man had shown as a soldier was turned to the conservation of energy as a scientist and an inventor. No one except himself knew or even suspected the amount of his wealth. So vast is London, so many are the fortunes centered there to-day, that it is the easiest of financial wildernesses in which to conceal one. Belmore knew of the roofing material; others knew of the gaslight mantle, the smoke consumer, and other inventions which, by his choice, did not bear his name.

He had been amazed himself of late by the rapidity of the accumulation, which had made him a little more contemptuous of that thing which had destroyed his happiness in youth. Meanwhile, he had taken care that Lucy should never think of money. The side of him which she saw was that of the library where he communed with his friend Don Quixote. More than once he had told her that, according to his romantic, old-world notions, an only daughter ought not to know how to add

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and subtract. A fortune should be to her as a blessing, and not as an object for living. His joy in its possession was that it made her safe. Such was the rule of life he had fastened on himself for want of the check of intimate criticism.

He was thinking how he could spend a liberal sum on his holiday without Lucy suspecting that he had more than a modest income, when, happening to look out of the window, he saw that the automobile was gone. This brought to mind again the frequency of the earl's visits; and following that train of thought arose all the dangers that lay in Lucy's position, without any mother to advise her when she was at a marriageable age.

"It must come some day," he told himself. "Young Steadley—and he has come into his title now, of course—I like. He is straightforward, and will mature into solidity. Lucie does not need a mercurial husband. If his estate should be crippled, as most great estates are in these days, why, I have ample to put it into shape. But—no! My fortune is not to be thought of in that way. He must come to her for herself, and she must come to me with him. Afterwards, my all is theirs; but not before—no, not before! I know by experience—and *that thing* shall not happen to her."

Here his face took on an almost savage expression, and under his contracted eyebrows the keen

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gray eyes could see the hat and the carbine and the portrait of the lady as plainly as if he were at the desk in the library.

“What folly!” he said, rallying himself. “She is only twenty-one. How she would laugh at me for my thoughts! She is transparent as crystal. I shall know soon enough when her affection is placed.”

It occurred to him then that he had not yet told Lucy the news. He had come home early partly on that account, and he was going to her when he saw Lord Brent’s carriage.

“The old dilettante has some pamphlet which I have already seen,” the doctor muttered. “In coaching days, before the telegraph, he would have been more useful.”

Lord Brent mingled science and gossip affably. Scientists took his science for gossip, and gossips his gossip for science. After a weighty consideration of the affair he had decided, such was his trust in the doctor’s good sense, to approach him on the subject of the information which he had received from Carniston.

“Ah, von Kar,” he said as he entered, “having a moment to spare—and only a moment I find on looking at my watch—I drove over to pass the time of day and to show you a pamphlet by Dr. Werner of Vienna, involving the results of his in-

Lucy of the Stars

vestigation of the phenomenon of a bird keeping its grasp on its perch or a bat on a rafter when asleep."

"Yes, I have wanted to see it," said the doctor, who had had it on file for a week.

"There is another subject I purpose calling to your attention," Lord Brent continued. "I think that you know my views on marriage, which, I have always held, should be a matter of scientific adjustment rather than mere temporary emotional attachment. Therefore, I am led to——"

The doctor foresaw a disquisition.

"Yes, I remember," he said. "You had a letter in *The Times*. Er—I was about to tell you some news of myself."

Brent pricked his ears at once. If he had been born the son of a clergyman instead of a peer he would probably have been a journalist.

"I am going for a little tour to America," the doctor added; and Brent began a homily on America.

"You will have to put up with some discomforts, so my friends who have been there tell me. It will be a change and enjoyable, no doubt. America has done some good work, especially in palæontology. However, the Americans come to us; we never go to them. This will be true, even after the Yankees and the Russians have swallowed us, as surely as

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the Romans of the Empire sent their sons to school in Athens. Ours is the intellect and the settled standard of culture. But when do you sail, my dear von Kar?"

"On the *Oceanic*, Wednesday week."

"Ah, we must have ten or a dozen choice spirits for luncheon at the Mowbray—ah—Tuesday week—at one o'clock, shall we say?"

Lord Brent was a born host at his own table, where and where alone he personally forewent generalities while he so directed those of his guests that each of them thought his theories proved. When he went to other people's dinners he had an unfortunate habit, after refusing coffee on the ground that it kept him awake, of falling sound asleep, evidently on the hypothesis that he was off duty that night.

"That is settled, then," he concluded. "I will have some letters for you, too."

If a friend were only crossing the Channel, Brent presented him with a sheaf of introductions; for he knew almost all the important scientific men in the world without their knowing exactly what important scientific work he himself had done. With the menu for his luncheon to arrange—a thing that he always did in person on scientific principles which were certainly agreeable to the digestion—he quite overlooked speaking to the

Lucy of the Stars

doctor upon what was, at the best, a delicate matter. If he had not, again the novelist might have been without a plot.

The doctor saw his guest to the door, and then sought Lucy, who, with the bandage off her eyes and full of courage, was coming to him.

"Was it Carniston's car that I saw at the gate when I came in?" he began.

"Oh, yes," she answered easily. But his question had set all the little devils of self-consciousness dancing in her brain. Had he overheard anything? Had he surmised anything? Fresh from that scene which had seemed so mighty as to embrace the universe, her suspicions were quick; and the one thing she had determined was that her father's happiness should suffer no shock from the knowledge of that incident, which was closed beyond his or any worldly assistance.

"Yes," she ran on rapidly, "he had been two or three hours with his solicitor, and stopped over on the way home for tea. He says that one gets no such tea anywhere in London as ours—a compliment we owe to that friend of yours, the China merchant. The young earl is very amiable and much impressed with his responsibilities. He is going to travel for a time in order to rest. His father's death was a great shock. He came to say good-bye to us both, and we had no idea that you

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were home so early. I think I know the girl he is going to marry, and I expect that the engagement will be announced when he returns."

Lucy felt that if she was not speaking a lie direct, she was acting one. Are such lies wrong? Are they wrong if they bring the result you desire? The doctor smiled happily, all thought of anything more than simple acquaintanceship between her and Carniston having passed.

"Lucie, I have had quite a piece of luck—for a poor working chemist."

"And something of an inventor," she put in laughingly.

"Ah, you know all your father's pet phrases, and now that his hair is white he repeats his old ones instead of coining new ones. I wonder if I am such a bore that you will not go with me to America, where I have to supervise the building of a manufactory?"

"Do you mean it?" she cried, putting her hands on his shoulders.

"Yes, on Wednesday week, on the *Oceanic*."

She threw her arms around his neck and hugged him and called him all the dear names in her rich vocabulary.

"Do you know, daddy," she said, as they drank their tea together and made their plans, "this helps me to escape from a lot of stupid engagements.

Lucy of the Stars

I think that I have pretty well analysed society, and I am about ready to set down my observations and conclusions, as you would say. I have been treading in a circle, and have felt as if I were on a moving train and could not step off even if I wanted to. You have given me the opportunity. When I come back I want to settle down to work with you, and I am going to ask you to give up your scientific dinners and dine at home with me and Don Quixote and the noble Boze."

The doctor beamed. It was, indeed, a day of beams for him. The sharp little fear of increasing estrangement which had been growing in his heart passed away.

"Possibly my Lucie is not a marrying girl, after all," he thought. "I am glad for my own selfish sake, and I am glad, too, for hers, although it is against nature; for I know her blood, and know that if she did love, it would be intensely."

"We are going to America, you and I, father!" From the piano she looked over her shoulder at him and mischievously said, "Comrades!" before she sang:

"You and I, dear, buckling on our swords before the light,
With the songs we sing to aid the merry sunbeams' flight,
Never care, never care!
Panoplied in armour of the rosy, breaking day,
See us start to slash a path across the Milky Way,
Never care, never care!"

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Who was this joining in the refrain of the new song whose words had flashed into her mind as some expression of the release from bondage which travel in a strange land meant to her at that moment? None other than the venerable "working chemist and something of an inventor," who made occasional journeys not only into the realms of abstract science and practical finance, but into those of Don Quixote. They caught themselves humming these never-care songs, some of them Lucy's own, more of them *chansons* of France, between the courses at dinner; and they sat up till late in the free comradeship of old days.

The supremely happy father, when he went upstairs, was congratulating himself on his finesse in telling Lucy that he had had a little piece of luck which enabled him to spend money on her without the risk that she would suspect his wealth.

When Lucy found herself in the stillness of her room the ghosts which she had banished came back. Were they always to be with her when she was alone? Her glance fell on the two notes on her writing-table. One of the invitations which she had declined was from Mrs. Bainbridge, in Kent. She could go down on a late Saturday train and return on an early Monday train. Over Sunday she could do nothing in the way of preparation. She tore up the refusal and sent an acceptance.

Lucy of the Stars

If you had only known, Lucy, that in your father's safe-deposit vault at your call were enough credits to balance all the Carniston debits and more! Be it a good or a bad lie which you told him, your last thought, as you passed into fitful slumber, was to your honour:

"I've made father very happy. I—I don't count. I've played and lost."

X

NO CIRCLES FOR THE SHORE

WHEN a girl is going on such a long journey as you are, I fancy she would like some frocks," said the doctor to Lucy at the breakfast-table.

He had awakened even happier than when he had fallen asleep, and he had grown happier as he dressed and with the passage of each minute, as his imagination ranged over the widening prospect of his coming holiday. The harness was off and there came over him a boyish desire to begin playing in the new fields at once. If we digress here a little, it is the doctor's fault primarily, Madame Celestin's secondarily; and, moreover, the gowns were to play their part in America, too.

"If my memory and sense of association serve me right, the place for frocks is Paris. Then, when one has had a little piece of luck, why not spend some of it on frocks? The truth is, in view of the expected arrangement with Belmore, I have been quietly making my own preparations for a

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week or more. Besides, my affairs are very simple. Really, I could be ready to go aboard tomorrow. Now that I have made up my mind to travel"—a deal of circumlocution is necessary, it seems, doctor, in order to remain consistent when one has had a little piece of luck!—"I find myself restless to begin. We have ten days yet. We can run over to Paris before we sail."

Was there ever any girl who could resist buying frocks? After all, is any sober matron sorry in her heart that Eve took to the fig-leaf, that basis for elaboration which, more than the apple these days, is responsible for the downfall of man? You, madam, who bear the stamp of sex-emancipation on your forehead where your hair is brushed straight back, have you never looked into a window where the draped models call and not wanted to hear the rustle of the silk of this or that train behind you?

With Lucy there was no hesitation. Still another note was written to Mrs. Bainbridge, in Kent, whose modest early autumn party meant nothing in keeping ghosts out of one's mind beside the privilege of spending two thousand francs—for that was the amount the doctor had allowed—at Madame Celestin's.

There was also a Monsieur Celestin. You saw him in the Bois in the afternoon in Madame's car-

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riage. Some rumours said that at other times he was wrapped in cotton, with one hand free in order that he might indulge his passion for chocolate caramels, while other rumours said that he was occupied in the basement curling his moustache.

Lucy went to Madame Celestin's, not commandingly, but with an open heart. Candidly in French—and what a language French is!—she told Madame of a little piece of luck which had befallen her father, who was a poor scholar, and how she was going on a journey where she might have to wear nice gowns, and how she wanted Madame's kind assistance. Nor was it so much what she said as the way she said it that gained her object.

"You see," she explained, with a *moue*, "I am not as tall as the Venus de Milo, who was dressed only with the shadow of her hands—and now she has lost the hands, poor thing! No, no! I am not like the Venus at all." How quick Madame's overhearing girls were to understand that! They had seen the Venus in the Louvre. Theirs was an experience which taught them that many women thought they were Venuses, when the very fact that they were not explained the existence of dress-makers.

"I mustn't have a gown to make me look big," Lucy continued, "for then I would look smaller than ever. I want a gown for me, you see, and I

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am bold enough to come to the foremost *artiste* and ask her to make a gown for *me*."

The French are supposed to have no real heart sympathy; to have only politeness. But a neighbour who has no knowledge of a neighbour's language is always misunderstanding that neighbour. Say, if you will, that the French become *en rapport* when they show unselfish enthusiasm. That, of course, is not sympathy—not even when it is called *la sympathie*.

The girls of Celestin's, then, were *en rapport* with Lucy, and likewise Madame herself, with reservations which were trained rather than inherent. Her little moustache of black and her air of being a diplomatist before and a martinet behind the scenes had come with age and with success which she valued more and more. It was a short time to fill an order, but they would undertake it especially on Lucy's account. This from Madame Celestin and not the girls, who knew that she would have said the same to anybody. Their sympathies were all with Monsieur.

"Then behold what you have to build on," said Lucy, with a downward sweep of her hands, "and the sum is two thousand francs and the frocks a simple morning and an afternoon and one evening gown."

There was a movement of the big screen which

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hid the stairway into the basement, and from behind it sprang none other than Monsieur Celestin himself with the energy of a cavalry leader in action, only instead of a sabre he had a pad and a pencil; for both groups of gossip-mongers were wrong, and we should say that the creative talent of the house of Celestin was masculine if we were sure that Monsieur would consider that a compliment, and judging by the way he swore on occasion he might.

Not knowing what else to do, Lucy made the family apparition a bow, which he returned with one as profound as if the President of the Republic were making him a Chevalier of the Legion.

"Mademoiselle, you have a soul!" he cried, as he moved about her, rapturously observing the fine proportions of her slight figure. "You are a woman—a woman, Mademoiselle"—this Monsieur shouted as if in face of vigorous denials—"a woman and not a model like those in the windows. You cannot imagine, Mademoiselle, what a pleasure it is to me to meet a woman! When I do meet one I come out from behind the screen. No more than an artist would decorate a room till he has seen it, no more should an artist create a gown till he has seen the woman who is to wear it. The more the woman appreciates this, the greater the artist's inspiration, the greater the gown. The

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wearer is the theme. This little girl knows this herself," he observed with pedagogic insistence to all present. "She knew out of her nature without being told. Wonderful! I see—I see," he cried, rising on tiptoe and tapping his head with a finger, "I see three gowns for five thousand francs!"

"Two!" put in Lucy quickly. She was frightened at the price, as it was; and yet she could not resist the temptation her father offered.

Monsieur did not know that Dr. von Kar had taken Madame to one side and whispered that other three—"entre nous"—into Madame's ear.

"Two!" he said. What did it matter if he lost a little! At all events, he would carry out his artistic conceptions. If Monsieur had been in charge of the management of the shop he would have ruined it financially in six months. "When the world sees that evening gown, Mademoiselle," he proceeded, "they will not say, 'What lace! what diamonds!' No, they will say, 'What a woman!' They will say, 'What a gown!' afterwards. It is because they say it afterwards—that is the compliment to the gown. Thank you, Mademoiselle, for honouring me. Madame's seamstresses shall accomplish the task and have all ready by Thursday if they have to work their fingers off. Lace? I will cut it and play with it as if it were tissue paper.

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Good morning, Mademoiselle. Thank you for this honour."

One complaint of their customers was the amount of trying on which Celestin's required, but the results made them overlook this. In the large fitting-room reserved for the highly favored Madame always presided with the eye of artistic finality. The real eye, however, looked through a hole in the wall behind the palm which stood in the corner, and when the subject was asked to turn around it was for Monsieur's not Madame's benefit. The girls were amazed at the extraordinary manifestation of Monsieur on Lucy's behalf. They gasped and looked at Madame, the martinet. What would she say to this exposure of the shop secret? Madame was triumphant, resplendent.

"Isn't he a king? Isn't he an artist?" she cried. "My Armand!"

Armand refused to drive in the park on ensuing days. He swore with astonishingly vivid and descriptive oaths at the mention of one Madame Sheecawgo, from whom they had large orders. His whole existence was centered in an artistic enthusiasm because a little girl with a *retroussé* nose and eyes too far apart—but what eyes!—had confessed her faults and asked his help.

Voilà! Thursday had come and Lucy had tried

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on the gowns for the last time. Monsieur himself had been present on each occasion. When the final touch of change had been incorporated by the needles, he made her walk up and down while he gazed on his creation raptly. There was no break in her enjoyment of the play—you see, not being beautiful she had no affectation—until Monsieur remarked that when her knight came and saw her thus he would be won at a glance. Then the walls of the shop seemed so close that the girls were within a foot of her face and whirled about her.

“For my dowry,” she said, recovering, “I will refer him to Monsieur Celestin.”

“If you had been in the time of the Revolution, Mademoiselle,” he said, “you would have needed no dowry. You would have been a duchess, and I, Mademoiselle, may it please you, would have designed the Empress’ coronation robes. Madame Beauharnais, of Martinique! Zut-t-t! Why did all the world wear the hideous creation of the Empire? Because it became Josephine, who set the fashion!”

Lucy promised to write to him how her evening gown was received at its “first night” in America. She was pleased to make him happy; she was pleased that she had won the friendship of the girls in Celestin’s. It is good to do that when you have ghosts. True, simpering casuist, you may

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say that she had a selfish interest; but those who are bad in heart do not, as a rule, choose such a method of keeping ghosts away.

It was after one, now, and since eleven the girls had been wondering, with sighs of dread of a thing which grows worse the longer it is delayed, why Madame Sheecawgo—for so they pronounced the name—had not come at the hour set. There were her gowns hung on the holders awaiting her; and when she did come, they knew that in the name of the god Mammon they must be polite and hold their tongues.

“It is all in the way of custom,” said the smartest of the girls, Marianne. “If the hippopotamus came with a pocketful of money we would clothe her. *Hein!* the hippopotamus is bigger than even Madame Sheecawgo and could carry more lace, not to mention the breadth of satin skirt required!”

Not that the girls altogether disliked Americans. Mrs. Belmore, for example, was most charming and considerate—so considerate, Marianne said, that you had to keep reminding yourself of her beauty—and Miss Hodges. Ah, Miss Hodges! To think that she was truly the daughter of Madame Sheecawgo! Miss Hodges, so beautiful and quiet, was like the Venus in the Louvre, oh, quite. Mrs. Hodges really was from Kearn’s Ford and Washington. The girls had heard that all for-

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tunes in Chicago were made out of lard. As they were sure that Mrs. Hodges' was made in that way they had named her Madame Sheecawgo.

"Madame Sheecawgo lives in a continual Mardi Gras. She throws dollars instead of confetti. But dollars will not buy her a figure. You could make that only with a carving-knife. In her heart she hates that Madame Belmore." Thus Marianne's intuition had discovered a thing which Mrs. Belmore herself had never suspected.

The luncheon hour was long past and still Madame Sheecawgo had not come. The girls were ravenously hungry. Madame was upstairs at luncheon with Monsieur.

"Probably she rose late," Lucy observed, "and is at luncheon herself. I would go, too, if I were you." So they hurried out, leaving only Cécile, a new girl, on watch.

Lucy herself was waiting for her father, who, at eleven, had promised to be back in half an hour. But the doctor had become more oblivious to the passage of time than if he were working out a problem. One usually is when buying a birthday present. His puzzle was not how much he could afford to spend, but how much he dared to spend. That pearl necklace which he had seen in the first shop kept calling him as he went from shop to shop. To spend the great sum it would cost for

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his Lucy; to see the gleaming string about her white neck when she never imagined its value!

"Only an expert can tell the imitations from the real?" he asked again and again.

"Yes, Monsieur; try for yourself."

He tried and he could not. Yet his eyes were old and Lucy's young and sharp. Thus it was temptation battling with fear that kept him loitering on the Rue de la Paix in a state of nervous indecision.

Two o'clock came and still he had not returned. It was then that a coupé drew up before Madame Celestin's, and sidling out of it was the *embonpoint* of a lady who was unmistakably Madame Sheecawgo. She came into the modiste's with the air of one who expected her gentility to be disputed on the threshold and stood ready to defend it at any cost.

"Everything has gone wrong this morning. My maid did not wake me. When I did get up I drank too much coffee. I suppose these gowns will make me look a fright. Where is Madame?"

"Upstairs," stammered the newest and youngest girl. "I will call her."

"No. I like that Marianne better. She is smart. Where is she?"

"At lunch."

"All at lunch! The shop deserted! Didn't you

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know that I was coming? Didn't I have an appointment?" (At home Mrs. Hodges explained her liking for Europe on the ground that one's inferiors treated one with much more respect there.)

"I am very sorry. I—" was the stammering response.

Lucy pitied the newest and youngest girl. She saw an opportunity for play which she could not resist. Besides, she wanted relief from the ghosts which were already making harvest of her father's dilatoriness.

"*Excellence*, pardon me," said she, rising. Mrs. Hodges' face softened at the title, just as it always did when she received a bill in the German countries beginning "High-well-born lady." "May it please you, *Excellence*, I belong in the back shop. Usually I do not assist at trying on. Allow me to help you till Madame herself comes."

Now she began playing her part—how beautifully it kept the ghosts away!—with the same eagerness and acuteness of execution and shrewdness of observation which she had shown in her interview with the old earl. Were she ever reduced to poverty she had always said that she would turn modiste or milliner rather than give lessons in music.

Madame came in and Lucy winked at her. Mrs. Hodges added a compliment, for she was

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delighted with Lucy, who had praised her complexion and hair. Madame never interfered with the happiness or the self-deceit of a customer. The girls came in and Lucy also winked to them. You may be sure that they were not going to spoil the fun. Monsieur Celestin at his peep-hole was seeing Mrs. Hodges, but not enough of Lucy. When in a whisper Lucy sent for him he came. As he bent to arrange the train Monsieur looked up at the breadth and thickness with the same sigh which painters had drawn when Mrs. Hodges posed for them.

"*Excellence*," Lucy translated for Monsieur, "Monsieur Celestin suggests that it is quite impossible to make artistic use of such a large piece of lace on this gown without cutting it."

"But I must have it so. Why, I have never worn it—once! I paid ten thousand francs for it. It must not be cut. I got it for one of Geraldine's heirlooms." With a financier's impatience of deficits, Mrs. Hodges had determined that her daughter should lack nothing which a family requires.

Monsieur excused himself and went downstairs, where he swore villainously for five minutes. Later he came up to watch Lucy. The last gown was being tried on when Mr. and Mrs. Belmore and Miss Hodges and John Frane appeared. Mrs. Hodges walked out into the reception-room

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to show them the creation with which she was going to "flabbergast" Washington that winter. Lucy, half kneeling, glanced up to see a tall and distinguished-looking girl who called Madame Sheecawgo "mother," a couple in the middle thirties whom she liked at once, and behind them a face much too lined for its years, but lighted up with fighting, boyish blue eyes.

"It makes you look grand, *Excellence*," said Lucy, finally.

That wicked Marianne started the smile which ran around among the girls, who instantly saw the French application of the word. Madame would have discharged Marianne long ago if Monsieur would have permitted it.

"Grand as the hippopotamus," said Marianne in an aside.

But the newcomers understood French, if Mrs. Hodges did not. Miss Hodges was crimson. This time the girls sniggered aloud. Mrs. Hodges herself began to comprehend that she was an object of ridicule. Madame Celestin's scowl of rage toward Marianne, if nothing else, would have told her so. Lucy realised the situation; her quick conscience told her that she was partly responsible for wounding another's feelings. She held up a finger with a drop of blood on the end.

"Marianne asks me if I am trying to sew my

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finger onto the gown," she said to Mrs. Hodges. "It does not take much to make a joke in France," she continued in English, and that was meant as a cut for Marianne's impertinence. "You see, it is not like America."

Mrs. Hodges burst out laughing and Miss Hodges bit her lip. Only John Frane had observed that Lucy's prick was self-inflicted.

"Do you know," said Mrs. Hodges to Lucy, "I'm very much taken with you, little one. You speak English so prettily. It's wonderful how few French people do. How would you like to come and live with me in America as a sort of—of superior maid?"

"*Excellence*, you are too kind," said Lucy. "I—I would have to ask my father."

The girls scattered with their handkerchiefs to their mouths and the awkward pause was broken by the entry of Dr. von Kar, who was carrying a jeweller's box, which he thrust into his pocket at sight of Belmore.

"My daughter," said the doctor, presenting Lucy.

"Good Lord!" said Mrs. Hodges, who had occasional lapses back to her normal, her good self when taken by surprise. It was a round, flat "Good Lord." "Ain't that a strange thing for a lady to do!"

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“Maude Adams or Ethel Barrymore could not have done it better,” said John Frane, all aglow with admiration.

“Oh!” said Lucy; and she thought, “of course—actresses.” Then she asked Mrs. Hodges’ pardon for the trick she had played. But Mrs. Hodges was never to forget *Excellence*. She saw in that a satire which its author never intended. As Lucy and her father excused themselves she overheard Mrs. Belmore—who thought that the information would delight Mrs. Hodges—say to that lady before she returned to the dressing-room:

“Lin has just had a note from the young Earl of Carniston saying that he is taking a trip after the shock of his father’s death and he is going to New York on the *Oceanic* with us”—and Mrs. Hodges began at once to think of herself as the mother of a countess.

Lucy wondered if she revealed her emotion to her father on hearing this news. She thought of finding an excuse for transferring their passage to another steamer. But if she was so afraid of being near Carniston, what hope had she of ever killing those ghosts altogether? She was weak, but not quite so weak as that. If you are on thin ice, sometimes it is better to skate swiftly and straight ahead, and sometimes it is not. Lucy had declared against any circles for the shore.

XI

ON A NEW FOOTING

WITH nothing to do before the departure of the train to Calais, with the whole afternoon of a fine day before them, the doctor, his face like the September sunlight itself, waited on a propitious moment at the luncheon-table for the disclosure of his purchase to Lucy.

"They're imitation, dear, I confess," he said, "but it pleased me to buy them for you as a birthday gift in that very Rue de la Paix where I once fought behind barricades and in this very Paris where you were born; and it will complete my happiness if when you wear your wonderful gown you will wear these also."

Lucy blushed with pleasure, and she blushed, too, because his suggestion went against her nature.

"I almost fear they will burn little holes in my neck," she said at length. "They wouldn't if I had their duplicates in a safe-deposit box. A real duchess, I believe, need never take the originals out, but a countess must occasionally if she would

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keep the faith. What a remarkable thing the human conscience is."

"No one but ourselves will know that they are not real, and your charm, dear, will make them real to me," he persisted; "and my pleasure at seeing you wear them, I hope, will make them real to you. Please—you see this is my Paris; I have a touch of my old Parisian madness as I call it—please humour me!"

"What a courtier you must have been in your time!" she exclaimed, and knew instantly she had spoken that she had struck a false note by that contraction of the muscles of his face which was the signal of a tide of recollection of the days when he had been a gallant indeed, and a devil as well, in this same Paris.

She smiled brightly to dissipate his cloud and, surrendering herself to the deception, clasped the pearls around her neck that he might see the effect.

We have already said that the doctor was happy and that he beamed; and in lieu of other adjectives as fitting we will only add that he beamed more than ever and was happier than ever, while he digressed from his rule of silence into reminiscences of the days when he dined on a crust and was heroic. Not that he told anything of his life-story where it concerned Lucy, for his narrative was impersonal.

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"There is no —— like an old ——!" No, we will hardly say that of the doctor yet, when he has been out of school such a short time in the delightful havoc of having Lucy and her talents all to himself. He had his bad moments, but I fear we may not credit them to conscience, for they were entirely concerned with the business of making a falsehood of a size and nature which would be credible.

When he and Lucy went aboard the *Oceanic* at Liverpool and the steward, with that due appreciation of the power of wealth never wanting on Atlantic liners, showed them to what the company's folders called a "palatial suite," Lucy's surprise was so manifest that the doctor felt he must tell the biggest one yet.

"You see, my dear," he explained, "it is quite surprising the number of friends one makes; and when one announces that he is going on a vacation they come forward in their real, thoroughbred English way, which never mistakes politeness for favours, and do something tangible for him, as the manager of this line has done. Sir Henry Eversham insisted that I should accept these rooms. Could I do otherwise?"

"I certainly shouldn't want you to be rude to your friends," said Lucy, who was not altogether indifferent to personal comfort. As her glance

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swept her own room, with its luxurious appointments, she added, "I'll write a letter to Sir Henry myself telling him how lovely it all is."

That *franc-tireur*—who had saved his life by the promptness and ease of his German in expressing his delight at escaping in disguise from the French—was too old a hand ever to lose countenance. He foresaw that he should have to take charge of posting Lucy's letters when they landed.

"That will be very charming of you," he said. "Now let us go on deck to see the late ones come aboard."

Among the last was Carniston, who was with the Belmores. Travelling direct from Burbridge and not by the regular train, he had met them on the pier among the litter of baggage only five minutes before, and he had heard nothing of Lucy's crossing by the same steamer.

Whenever his passion had come surging back he had sternly told himself that this chapter of his life was finished. It would be as unwise to wish ever to see her again as to wish a wound reopened. Her cold attitude at their parting, though at the time seeming cruel, had latterly been a source of gratification to him. If he had killed her love, as he thought, he was relieved of remorse, and his alone was the pain. It was burning the bridges,

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too, between him and his duty. He felt that he could not go back to her now, for she would not have him. From that of a light-hearted youth his mind had been transformed into that of a middle-aged man who was subjecting his personality to the one idea of the rescue of his estate.

Yet, outwardly, as he walked to the gangway behind the others chatting to Geraldine Hodges, he was the same Carniston that his friends had always known, if you except the subdued manner and somewhat drawn face which were inevitable considering the ordeal of bereavement through which he had just passed. John Frane's quick eye ranging the deck saw Lucy, and he called Mrs. Belmore's attention to her as he lifted his hat. Mrs. Hodges was altogether engrossed in her footing on the gangway cleats, and her arduous progress delayed the advance of the others. When Carniston looked up and saw pressed against one of the uprights, smiling in the flesh, that face which had haunted him for weeks, he was wholly dumfounded.

Her greeting was that of the good fellowship of man and girl who have been chums. She waved her muff and called out a vibrant "How do you do!" while he saw her pointing him out to her father. He thought that she was poking fun at him for being with Miss Hodges; he could hear

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and see her as she would mock his suit for Geraldine's wealth.

It was plainly his duty to go to the upper deck at once and greet Dr. von Kar, whom he was conscious of having neglected even before his father's death. But he went to his cabin, where he tried to adjust his mind to this new situation of being on the sea for seven days with Lucy. Why had she chosen the *Oceanic* when she might as well have gone by some other steamer? But questions were futile. She was aboard! He must put his resolutions to the test of temptation. He could not hide in his cabin throughout the voyage.

In the meantime, Lucy had left her father's side in the hope of speaking to Carniston before the doctor should see him. The two met on deck with no one they knew in sight. While he was undecided and embarrassed as to what to say or do, she held out her hand blithely and he took it solemnly and awkwardly.

"Of course," she said, with a smile that tempered the impulse of her remark, "there was no reason why I shouldn't go to America after a rich husband at the same time that you went after a rich wife. Shall we promenade for a moment?"

The very quality of the unexpected in her character renewed in that instant all its attraction for him. He who had sworn a score of times that he

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never wanted to see her again, experienced his old pleasure in being near her, in hearing her voice, in watching the vivacity of her expression. He shortened his step and she lengthened hers, as they had so often done in intimate strolls.

"Arthur—I am never going to call you Carniston," she began. Arthur—that name which he had not heard since she used it last. It marked the point where joy ended and misery began.

"Yes, do call me Arthur, Lucy," he could not help saying. "I—I like to hear a little music occasionally."

"Then, later on I will sing you a never-care song to pay for the favour I am about to ask. You know that father knows nothing of our—of what has passed between us. I want him never to know. You have a duty to Burbridge; I have a duty to him. He had observed that of late you had been coming to the house often and that you were always seeing me instead of him, as in the old days. I told him that you saw me because you happened to call when he was not at home and because you said that we had the best tea in London. Now, won't you make a point for me, please, of being just the same to him, one of his protégés in science, as you have always been, and not let—and not let our little flirtation, Arthur——"

"Don't say flirtation!" he exclaimed, almost

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angrily. "It wasn't that. It's shameful to call it that!"

"Our romantic betrothal, then, which was forced into liquidation for want of capital to float the undertaking."

"Yes, yes. I'll not interrupt again," he remonstrated. "You have too many arrows in your quiver."

"Please not let that in any way change your relations with him. Please tell him that I was sure he was not at home the other day when you called to say good-bye. Your neglect hurt him a little. He is very fond of you. And ask him if he has any more of that special brand of tea aboard. He has, but ask him just the same. It will please him. If you will be nice about this, Arthur, I'll do anything I can to help you with Miss Hodges. It is to be Miss Hodges, isn't it? I hear she is immensely rich."

"Lucy, you are—you aren't kind," he complained.

"Kind? Why not? You have an ambition and I want to help you. Isn't that kind? We will have tea every afternoon in our cabin, and you must bring Miss Hodges when it is not rough."

"I—I think I would better not," he said, in the sternness of self-command.

"But she doesn't know. I am just an acquaint-

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ance—an acquaintance who serves good tea. Of course if you wish to refuse, Arthur, I beg your pardon. I—” She spoke as if he had injured her feelings.

“I shan’t miss a day,” he said, “and I’ll bring Miss Hodges by order. Now I’ll find your father, and try to say exactly what you have told me to say.”

Why did she come on the *Oceanic* when she knew that it was my steamer? he asked himself again. Why did I talk to him in that way and not confine myself to what I had started to say? she asked herself. It was a relief to him to leave her, to be away from the glance of her eyes and from the rhythm of her step with his.

XII

IT BECOMES A TALE OF FOUR

SNUG in her rugs in mid-Atlantic Lucy von Kar laid down the book which she had been reading and let her fancy play with the shots of spray and the swirls of foam when the waves broke. The *Oceanic*, stretching her bulk the breadth of its trough, little minded the heavy sea that was running. A floating hotel she was, doing her eighteen knots steadily, laying her own track as she went, following it as straight as a limited train the rails, and equally sure of arriving at her destination on time with the pilgrims who had been to the old land and were returning to the new land.

As she looked down the long line of chairs at the varying faces she felt that she was already in America. College students who had had a taste of Europe before settling down to work, sight-seers who had at last enjoyed the tour of their fireside imaginings, transatlantic drummers, country school teachers whose savings for years had bought a membership in a Cook party, the millionaire and his clerk—all had the manner, the countenance,

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the speech which the world calls American. Even the man with an income, living partly abroad and partly at home, hybridised and uncertain of himself, still bore the marks which the conditions and the climate of a new land set upon the immigrant's children.

None of the passengers to Lucy's mind was more distinctly un-European than John Frane, who was at that moment pacing the deck with the vigour of one in a race for time. She was always expecting that the next time he approached her he might address her by her first name, and was wondering if she should resent it or if she could, considering his manner.

"Splendid, isn't it!" he cried, stopping before her with a nod of his head out to sea, which made the lady next to Lucy close her eyes in a sensation of disgust deeper than the region of her heart.

"Yes, I like the feel of it in my nostrils, don't you?" she said. "I am always thinking that no one ever breathed that breathful before."

"There you have the English of it! You always want to be in your own hansom on your own island, or on your own steamer in your own sea."

"Isn't that better than being in somebody's else? In America, I believe, your hansoms are provided with travelling companions. I was surprised to find first and second class on this steamer."

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"Because some people have money to afford better passages than others," John remarked.

"That destroys any idea of caste, of course," she said.

"At all events"—and this was like the man—"I wish all the tired people in America could have a taste of this salt air; and you'll get more of it yourself if you feel like walking."

He unwound the mummy of her rugs, as she put it, and as soon as she was galvanised into life again she tried to keep step with his strides as they ranged the deck.

"This is America already; what do you think of it?" he asked, as he nodded toward the people on the deck.

"They seem dry and sharp-looking," she said, "very different from the ruddy Germans and English from whom they are descended. They are like pen-and-ink sketches. The women seem superb and leisurely. The men are over-earnest drudges who, panther-like, concentrate all of their faculties on their work. I like their candour. Five or six have already told me how they made their fortunes."

"Yes, when they have made their money they put in their vacations telling how they made it. One listens to another's story in the smoking-room in order that he may have somebody to listen to his.

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Each dresses up his women and worships them. It is this type which has made our country what it is, in one sense, and in another sense has squeezed it as if it were a lemon. Every one has been so preoccupied with his own fortune that he hasn't had time to see what was going on around him or to take an interest in the affairs of the whole country. But they are mine—my people—and I love them because I know them."

"I only hope that all Americans are as nice as the Belmores," said Lucy softly.

"Lin is my best and oldest friend," said John. "As for Fanny, you seem to find her what we at home all find her."

"Simple, unaffected and genuine," Lucy responded.

"To be genuine—that is the cardinal point," Frane plunged on, in the superabundance of his energy, which found insufficient outlets aboard ship. "Is that fitting genuine brass? Is the man genuine, be he stoker or captain? Is the pearl necklace on my lady's neck genuine?"

"It would be pardonable," said Lucy, "don't you think, if she had a real string in the safe-deposit vault? I do think we are sailing on a genuine sea, judging from yesterday's storm, and I am sure that most of the sea-sickness I have seen is genuine."

"You are certainly excellent company," said

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Frane. "You can take the opposite side for the sake of argument, and that is the life of talk. People may say that you are inconsistent. They say that I am because I agree with both the Methodist presiding elder and the Catholic priest that are aboard, but I am not. I agree with them only so far and get a grip of them with that little. They are both doing good work and they are both genuine. I go mining for the good that is in them. If you don't do that sort of thing you are a pessimist who sits twiddling his thumbs and intoning calamity. The whole art is in keeping the good that is in men busy and the bad idle."

Frane and Belmore had been at school and college together. In manhood, as in boyhood, they had taken each other for granted. At football Lindley played steadily and evenly and John played brilliantly. If Lindley made a fumble it was never forgotten; if John made a fumble everybody forgave and sympathised with him. When Belmore made a star play people said, "Good for Belmore!" in a matter-of-fact way. When Frane made a star play it was the wonder of the world because it was Frane's.

It was in the fifth year, while they were in the law school, that a combat of famous memory occurred between these friends. Although not yet a

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custom in their club, Lindley, as a rule, dressed for dinner, not from affectation, but because he was Lindley and that was his way. One night when he had been meeting a tirade from his friend with cool and characteristic satire, John said, explosively:

"Lin, that shirt front of yours is too immaculate. It is a whited sepulchre of respectability. I have about come to the conclusion that a man who dresses for dinner every night among a lot of students is a snob, and I am going to throw this bowl of salad at you."

The tomatoes landed on the shirt front with unerring impact.

"And by way of refutation, John, I am going to thrash you," said Lindley, rising as coolly as if to a point of order.

"You'll have to catch me first—you're covered with tomatoes, untidy thing," said John, bolting.

But he waited for Lindley outside in the yard and they set to, while the others who had left the table gave them room. Frane was as brilliant and ferocious in his attacks, Belmore as steady, as usual. Although his tactics were against him in a long struggle, every spectator thought that John would win because they believed in him. For the same human reason the people had learned later to believe in him and vote for him and forgive his faults.

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The bout was stopped by the passing of a professor, who remarked that an exhibition of such bad blood between young men of their years was most immoral, and such a scrimmage—here he was very emphatic—in plain view of the village people was most unbecoming.

“Oh, we adore each other,” said John, laughing, as he rose.

“Yes, I assure you, sir, it is only a difference between friends,” added Belmore, whose torn clothes were slippery with oil, tomatoes and vinegar.

“I mean I adore him,” John corrected. “Plato is never quite that vulgar. At all events, Lin, I don’t think you are really a snob, though it was a little mean of you to pig all the salad just because I offered it to you. Besides, to finish your dinner in negligée will be a lesson to you.”

When John returned from his studies in Europe, Lindley, despite all the pressure of responsibility which had fallen to him with his father’s death, travelled five hundred miles in order to meet his friend at the pier. John, when he took up his life-work, had known precisely what he wanted to do, and Lindley had known precisely what he must do. The energy of the one was to be devoted to his country and that of the other to the conservation of one of those great fortunes

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which, according to John's dogma, represented one of the foremost national dangers. Each was submerging self in an idea, and possibly this was the basis of sympathy that kept their friendship warm.

John had set up a law office in Kearn's Ford, where he began practising politics at once with the same intensity of effort as a young Irish boy in New York. He was now in his third term as a member of the House of Representatives.

To Lucy, with her European ideas, he was a puzzle. She had met workers in the slums, leaders of all kinds of movements for uplifting the body politic, and that young English public man who figures in English novels as a hero and whose admiring friends point him out as a future prime minister, but whose career is ruined by an incidental love story and too much *ennui*. He was certainly not of any of these types. She found his talk on every conceivable subject—and he seemed to have ideas on all—of service in keeping the ghosts away. His activity was so incessant that it seemed almost as if he must have ghosts of his own.

In the few turns on deck which they had had together Carniston had listened intently to Frane; but, generally speaking, he had avoided Frane and

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Frane had found him unproductive. It was marvellous and disconcerting to Carniston, this example of a young man engaged heart and soul in a fight that he loved without the call of the dead to hold him down to a sense of duty which society had established for him. The truth was, he envied the American that freedom which had the smart and the joy of salt spray.

“You knew the earl man”—this was Frane’s title for Carniston—“before he came aboard?” he asked Lucy.

Lucy nodded.

“He said that he was not coming to America to shoot,” Frane continued, “so I suppose that he has come hunting—it is always one or the other when they travel in America—hunting a rich wife, I mean. If you go to Washington you will meet the wife-hunters’ brigade in action. It is really a kind of trade union, I believe, with unwritten rules about poaching on one another’s preserves. They will not welcome such a handsome young English lord. He will rob some Continental count of the big game he has carefully stalked.”

“Miss Hodges is very rich, isn’t she?” Lucy asked.

“Yes. She and her mother have about five millions, I think. It is bound up with the Belmore

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fortune." Frane did not miss the lack of connection between Lucy's query and the preceding remark.

"Possibly," Lucy proceeded, "the earl will go outside the market you mention. He is quite attentive to Miss Hodges."

"What! Geraldine? Nonsense. Geraldine is only twenty-two. Why," and he looked back over his shoulder to where the earl was standing by Geraldine's chair—for the day was so fair that even Mrs. Hodges had made such progress that she was saying yes she would and no she wouldn't get up, to the distraction of her maid, who was kept going up and down stairs to report on the state of the weather—"why, I have watched Geraldine grow to womanhood. She and I have been pals since she was about-three. We call each other chums. I remember when I made a run around the ends and got right across the line with the ball—the last time I ever played—how I lifted her up on my shoulder after the game and everybody cheered like mad. She is just developing and looking out on the world and enjoying her privileges as a grown-up girl. She won't think of marrying for three or four years yet."

But the idea that Lucy had put into his mind seemed to dry up Frane's well of conversation, and directly he excused himself. When Carniston left

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Geraldine's side it was John who sat down beside her.

"Have you been delivering many speeches to the little German girl, chums?" she asked lightly.

"You think I'm a sort of gramophone, don't you, Geraldine? Honestly, I'm not always speech-making." It was unusual for him to speak to her in this way, half petulantly, half pleadingly.

"I think you are good old John Frane and the best fellow in the world," she said.

It was not quite the answer he expected or wanted. Good old John Frane! He had heard college friends shout that as they rushed across the street to grasp his hand. Good *old* John Frane! Something put the stress on the second adjective for the first time. He knew that his hair was already streaked with gray. When he went to his cabin he looked at his face in the mirror, and, yes, he had to admit that he was getting—old.

"I believe you are gloomy," Geraldine went on. "I believe you haven't found anybody to disagree with you to-day."

But this was rallying him in a way that he did not like from her at that moment, while she told herself again how fond she was of him.

Ever clear in her mind were the events of that day when, a girl of ten, she had rowed out alone on one of the northern lakes and her boat had been

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capsized in a blow. Coolly she had trod water while John swam to her. Infected by his assurance that it was "all right," she had held fast to the oar on which she rested her chin, while he towed her to the shore. He had forgotten his part in the rescue. He remembered only how she had said when he reached her, "Please don't scold, chums!"

XIII

IF THE PEARLS WERE REAL

OH, those never-care songs! So little in the words and music and so much in the way Lucy sang them—her voice a mezzo whose limitations she understood well enough never to give offence to the trained ear—did their charm lie that it defeats an author's object to reduce them to ink and paper. Some had the joyousness of sunlight finding its way through the clouds and others the sadness of the drum of rain on a roof, and all tempered with the philosophy of that refrain which she shaded with a hundred meanings.

On the afternoon of the fourth day out the group whose fortunes concern us as far as they concern Lucy and John Frane and, yes, Geraldine and the earl, too, had tea with the von Kars. A piano had been placed in the suite through the kindness of the ever-useful Sir Henry Eversham, and when John asked if it was real or for ornament the answer was a never-care refrain. With each song Frane grew more enthusiastic till, his mood changing with hers, she turned from the

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"Very clever."

"Why the pensive never-cares, Lucie?" the doctor asked. "I can see you are making Carniston a little glum, and the rest of us, too, I think."

Lucy realised how dangerously near disclosure of her secret the temptation of watching Arthur's expression had carried her. Fearful lest her father suspected the truth, she now sang the merriest *chansons* in her repertoire.

The doctor first and then the others began singing the refrains with her, while Belmore, smiling, leaned forward, with occasional glances toward Fanny which seemed to be saying that they had made a discovery. It was he who thanked her most heartily when the guests rose to go at the sound of the dinner-bugle.

After dinner Lucy went absently to the piano, and again she sang something pensive. The doctor put his hands over hers to stop their playing.

"You take me back to days in Paris that were sad. Merry songs become you best; merry songs *are* best."

She broke into a rollicking peasants' chorus. His eyes grew brighter and he settled back into a chair, softly humming the music, happy and contemplative.

"Lucie, you were not meant for unhappiness," he said when she stopped. "When you were a little

If the Pearls Were Real

girl I used to say, 'She shall always be light of heart.' This, indeed, has been my real ambition in life. It was reparation for—well, never mind."

Then it occurred to him, in his restored mood of playfulness, that he wanted to see where she kept the necklace. She took him into her room and showed him the jeweller's box in her trunk, which was unlocked. He lifted out the pearl strands and held them gleaming against his fingers.

"I'd turn the key when I was out of the room," he admonished her. "They might be stolen."

"But they are only imitation," she said. "You carry the deception farther than I can. I only believe that they are real when I wear them—although I was looking at them again yesterday, and I must say I am sure no one could tell them from a genuine string."

He had then almost irresistibly the call to tell her that the deceit was with him and not with the necklace. He wanted to see her eyes sparkle when she heard of the wealth he had garnered for her, and that the cost of the necklace and the gowns and the trip abroad represented only the odd figures which he had cast out in his calculation of totals.

But this would be self-gratification, pure and simple. He had an individual precedent which, in your life and mine and every one's, outweighs

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general impressions. He was old, and so he had travelled far on this tangent. Some man might seek her for her fortune, and money had cost him his happiness in youth. It was to him the curse of the modern world. He had won it, as most of us do, as a protection from the curse, and in the winning the thought of what he had once paid for the want of it had made him greedy.

“I shall tell her one of these times, however, when we are in a transport of happiness,” he thought before he went to sleep, “if only to see what my Lucie of infinite variety says and does when she hears the news.”

XIV

FANNY BELMORE BY CHOICE

BELMORE knocked at his wife's door. "Is it proper? May I come in?" he asked.

"In the dressing-gown you picked out yourself," she called back.

It had been a great lark when they had set forth in a hansom to buy in Regent Street and Bond Street certain things for her which were to his fancy.

The heavy silk folds were thrown back from her neck, revealing the charm of lines still fresh from girlhood and grown softer in the first flush of matronhood. Fanny Belmore was beautiful; her worst enemy could not deny her this distinction. Lindley felt the pride and the joy and the glory of her.

In the privacy of their apartment they fell to talking of the trip which was now drawing to a close. It was worth while going abroad once in four or five years, not oftener, they agreed. On

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the whole, for the two steaming summer months the camp in the Adirondacks, with its utter seclusion and abandon, and the children—always the children—was best. She thought that the trip had done him good, and her attitude toward him was that of the gentle guardian of some god.

“You were happiest, it seemed to me, when we were at Burbridge,” she said. “I wondered if you did not envy the leisurely life of an English country-place.”

“Fanny! You thought that of me!”

“Perhaps.” She had sat down beside him and was leaning her head on his shoulder.

“I was brighter because I was seeing that it is better to be in the fight than to be an automaton. At least, I am not so circumscribed that my son must be trained how to lose a fortune rather than how to preserve one. It is not that we cannot get out of the fight, Fanny, but that we love it. The fight is America. Some way, on my return this time, I feel more than ever glad that we do not accept the man of leisure as the prop of State and society.”

“Bravo! Thank heaven, I’m not a countess!” And she could have been one had she chosen. “It’s much nicer to be Fanny Belmore, of Kearn’s Ford. The foliage will be red and gold when we reach there, and the air will be wine. The home town is

Fanny Belmore by Choice

ours and America is ours, though John Frane will not own us as Americans because we are rich."

"John seems to like the newest Americans best—if they are poor—but we like the old best; and if all mothers are like you"—Fanny blushed—"they will not perish from the earth for some time to come."

She made her bow to the compliment and directly turned to a purely woman's topic. Carniston, she was convinced, had come to America fortune-hunting, and already she thought he was making love to Geraldine in his cold, British way.

"Geraldine marry a title! Impossible!" he exclaimed. "Why, she was meant for John. That is clear as daylight." He spoke as if this were a part of his plans.

"John loves Geraldine, I'm sure, in his way. He's been waiting for her, I think. But does she love him?" Fanny asked.

"She would if she found herself," said Lindley.

"Query!" interjected Fanny. "Will she ever find herself with her mother about?"

She set out to impress her husband with the idea that there was no telling what might happen if the earl was persistent in his attentions and Mrs. Hodges became petulant and active. Lindley protested that he could not go to John and say, "Propose or you lose her," or to Geraldine, as a

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guardian, and say, "Find yourself or you are lost."

"Besides, there's no immediate danger," he added. "Geraldine and her mother are going to Kearn's Ford for a month before they go to Washington. If the earl is bent on courting he must come where we will be on watch."

"I shall be, not you," she rejoined. "There's something else, too, that I've found out. There are two other people on this steamer who are in love more unrestrainedly, more preoccupiedly, if not more deeply than we are, Lin—you see we have so much to distract us; but it is quite imaginable to you and me how love might be the only thing to a person, and then it's pretty hard to hide it from a woman's eye."

"And now?" He was all interest, as he ever was when she gave the results of her feminine observation, which was discriminating without being malicious, as he put it.

"The earl is not such an automaton as you think," she declared. "There is fire in him."

"Fuel, you mean, perhaps; and if he gets proper combustion, which I should say was unlikely, he may not die of dry rot."

"Sceptic! Old business-at-the-office-every-morning-at-nine, I tell you he loves Lucy von Kar and Lucy von Kar loves him."

Fanny Belmore by Choice

"She is too clever," said Belmore.

"She is so clever that if she did love she would become the very slave of love. That little girl is all feeling, and it is her feeling and her art which make a thing said by her or done by her fetching, when said or done by another it would be commonplace."

"With what facts do you justify your conclusions?" he asked.

"Booh! With something better than facts—a woman's intuition, item one, which comprehended another woman's glance, item two, and a man's glance, item three. I saw the look in her eyes yesterday afternoon when she called him Arthur and she sang that new never-care song, and I saw the look in his eyes, too. That was the whole story. The mischief and the daring and the art of her—that thing which meant nothing to us and all to him!"

"Yes, the art of it. I almost believe you are right for the sake of the story. Possibly he has proposed and made a fool of himself, and she takes this way of laughing at him. Anyway, Fanny, she is ripping company."

The man, who was used to listening coldly to reports and propositions from others and making decisions all day long, liked movement and vivacity. The finger-pricking incident he intended to

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repeat to his children as an example of consideration for the feelings of others, Mrs. Hodges, of course, appearing in the disguise of "a certain lady." From the moment that John had related it to him Lucy had a place in Lindley's affections which, if rarely given, were unchanging in their loyalty.

In the rehearsal of their plans, which included two months at home, possibly two weeks' hunting in Virginia, before they went to their New York house, and his promise to be absent as little as possible, Lindley mentioned the fact that Dr. von Kar would have to come to Kern's Ford, and whether Lucy was to come with him or not was a thing for Fanny to settle.

"Of course, both of them; and they are to stay as long as they please," she said.

This was precisely what he wanted, and he told her once more that she was the most delightful of wives.

"With Geraldine, it will make a fine little party, and John, too—if it weren't for this State campaign coming on. I don't suppose we shall see much of him."

As they were to learn later, however, Mrs. Hodges, thanks to the infection of nobility, had changed her mind about going to Kern's Ford for the autumn. She had been flattered by receiving morning and afternoon an inquiry from Carniston

Fanny Belmore by Choice

about her health. Her social secretary, with a desire to please, had informed her that his lordship had not only shown great interest in her, but was devoting himself conspicuously to Miss Hodges. The ambitious mother lay in bed and thought boldly and scolded her maid. Mrs. Hodges wondered why she could never keep her maids, although she paid them two prices and had such an elegant set of trunks and such elegant quarters for them. Geraldine had kept her maid for six years, and the only time that Marie had ever given notice was when she had been transferred to Mrs. Hodges for a month.

On this last day the maid had groomed and harnessed her and assisted her on deck. Now she sat beside Carniston in an attitude which, while comfortable for her avoirdupois, was scarcely graceful. When she took this attitude she always reminded Frane of a roast goose stuffed and served on a gold platter, with cloth-of-gold table-spread and napkins, and a band of cash registers playing in the conservatory. She had been talking to Carniston about Geraldine as if Geraldine were a beautiful gown in a shop window.

"We should like to open our house in Washington at once, your lordship," she told him. "If you will be our guest, we can arrange to lunch at the Waldorf to-morrow, and then we can go right

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along to the capital in a private car in the afternoon. You will find that our trains lack privacy and are a little noisy. You see, we have no leisure class. We are all for rush and business in America. And I must say, though I am an American myself, that we are a little loud in our ways." She thought that she was saying something to please him.

The earl listened to her, smiling politely. One of her words kept running through his head—"elegant," in description of a dinner, a house, a horse, an automobile, or of anything "real swell."

"Thank you," he said; "you are very gracious to a stranger. I shall be glad to come on the train with you, but really I have promised to stop with the Ambassador, who is an old friend of Lord Brent's."

XV

A MOMENT WITHOUT THE GHOSTS

THE night was chill. After the concert one turn around the deck or even three or four deep inhalations from the saloon doorway was sufficient for the average passenger who sought a breath of fresh air. Many of the men, their hands deep in their pockets, steered their courses for the harbour lights of the smoking-room.

John Frane, his shoulders swinging with the energy of his stride, paced up and down, sniffing the battle of the morrow. For weeks he had been a spectator in other countries; in twelve hours he was to be an actor again in his own.

"I smell Long Island already!" he cried in his enthusiasm, as he overtook Carniston, who had started from the opposite end of the deck. "You see, I feel to-night as if the starter were telling me to get ready. Have you gone in for politics at all?"

"I thought of it once, but took up with science." The Englishman's indifference was not as deep as it seemed to the American.

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"In your country," said Frane, "I believe that you can be in politics on odd Wednesday and Saturday matinées, if you like. It's not that way with us. You must give yourself up to it, as you do to the love of a woman. And you can do things over there which are all according to precedent, while if one did them in America the public would shout graft and nepotism."

"Americans seem to love their women thoroughly, at all events. I hear that when an American leaves school and is without fortune, position, or anything, he will become engaged to a girl and she will wait for him until he has made a place for her," Carniston pursued, changing the subject.

"Yes, that is an English middle-class characteristic which we preserve. Our pioneers used to go into the wilderness and make a clearing and build a cabin and grow a crop, and then return for the girl."

Lucy, in furs which were most becoming, appeared in the doorway just as they were passing. When she fell in with them John repeated to her his remark about the pioneer.

"We have several examples on board," he continued. "One is pronounced. You notice the lady with three huge gold nuggets arranged for a breast-pin, and her husband with a big nugget in his scarf and another for a watch-charm. To the

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second and third generations, who show the vanity of possession in other ways, these are a little vulgar, of course."

"Yes, they seemed what you call the limit, Mr. Frane," said Lucy, "till I saw how devoted he was to her and how she worshipped him, and then I made her acquaintance and she introduced him to me."

"And you found out how she cooked his grub for him in camp and how at last he won out," said Frane.

"Made his pile, you mean," said Lucy. "That is another new one—new one on me, I mean to say—that I have learned to-day. I think I know the story of every nugget. He is not half so bad as some of our mediæval ancestors who boasted and swore and hired scribes to lie about their deeds. The idea that this couple express is as beautiful and heroic as any of knighthood days. With the knights, only the stories, not their manners, survive."

"Do you realise that—you who fairly exhale Europe?" said Frane. "There is hope for you to become an American yet."

"Oh, I think many Europeans could see the point," said Carniston, quietly and incisively.

"But I foresee," John resumed, "that Mr. and Mrs. Nuggets will soon be unhappy. They have

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left their daughter abroad. She is their only child, and they are making a great sacrifice in being separated from her. But she must have a French education so that she will have nothing in common with them. Soon the mother will be correcting her husband's grammar and manners. Then she will want a taste of what is called society, and their unhappiness will be complete. You see, Carniston, we make in one generation what with you requires three or four generations. It is ambition, it is progress, and sometimes it's pretty hard on both the first and the second generations."

All three were thinking of Mrs. Hodges and Geraldine, but each was careful not to mention either.

"However, the Belmores accomplished it beautifully," John continued. "There, the father was a joy to the son and the son a joy to the father. Lindley is the refined salt of our American earth."

"It seems to me," observed Lucy, "that the want of money on the part of gentle people, so called, produces quite as much misery as the possession of it on the part of the vulgar people, so called. Mrs. Nuggets said that Mr. Nuggets' motto had always been, 'Give me the root.' When I asked her what she meant by that, she laughed at my ignorance. 'Of all evil, of course,' she said; which I took to be another way of saying that you want to make

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your pile, and it strikes me as a very good motto, indeed. What do you think, Arthur?"

"Decidedly, yes," he said shakily, and immediately invented an excuse for going below.

"I like him after all," the irrepressible Frane continued. "You can't help liking Englishmen of his sort, if for no other reason than that, although they are so starched, they always look so clean. I like them, too, for their courage in laughing a minute after everybody else has seen the joke."

"Oh, that American delusion is explained by the Englishman's inborn politeness. It isn't that he doesn't see the joke at once; it is that he rarely does more than smile over the best of stories. He can't, as you say, on account of the starch. When he is with Americans and sees that they are laughing, why, out of duty to the custom of the country, he joins in the guffaw—but a little tardily, of course."

"How does it happen, then, that his face is perfectly blank till he laughs?" John asked.

"Oh, you mean American jokes!" said Lucy. "He has finished his smile and looked away from the story-teller before you begin laughing. I must be going in now. Good-night."

"I surrender!" he called after her. Then he went into the smoking-room, where he managed to be pleasant to all the different groups without tak-

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ing more than one drink. When he fell asleep he was in a happier frame of mind than he had known for weeks; which was true of nearly every other American passenger. To-morrow they would hear what had happened at their offices, and they would poultice the places lame from idleness with the harness of duty. Not every American passenger, to be exact; particularly, not Lindley Belmore. He would have liked another quiet week in which to adore Fanny.

Having laid aside her cloak and sent her maid to bed, Lucy tried to read a novel. But the ghosts came and put films over her eyes so that she could not see the lines. With the morrow throwing her and Arthur apart and Geraldine and him together, her love touched depths that were bitter. She was angry; she was crying out against fate.

"Mr. and Mrs. Nuggets have so much more money than they need," she thought. "If it is going to make them unhappy, why shouldn't I have half of it? Then they would be happy and I should be happy, too. Instead of being the reward of the gift of acquisitiveness, money should go by dispensation to those who know how to use it. Arthur and I do.

"And if I had money—money, money, money!" she cried, beating the arm-chairs with her fists, "then I could tell Arthur that I had it—no, not

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until I had won him back! And what joy it would be to win him back, to make him for love of me give up everything else before I gave him all the money—all, all—and myself. And this Mr. Belmore, this great lord of the American aristocracy, I can see that he has so much money that it keeps him away from the shrine of his lovely wife. It's all unfair and wicked! I feel like an anarchist."

She put on her coat and went on deck again. Was she glad or was she sorry when she found that Carniston also had returned? Was he glad or was he sorry when he saw her coming toward him on the long promenade which was wholly deserted, with the darkness tempered by an occasional deck light?

"It is the excitement of the anticipation of the new land to-morrow, I suppose," she said, as she joined him.

"Yes; I also, after I went below, felt that even if I did go to bed I should only lie awake, and concluded to keep on pacing till I was really sleepy. The Americans have finished taking their exercise in the smoking-room," he added, a little contemptuously. "I suppose they are thinking of the money they are going to make next year. It seems so easy for them to make it." He also felt like an anarchist.

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"But think of the heroism of Mr. Nuggets," she said thoughtfully.

"Yes," he answered bitterly. "Mr. Nuggets had a great advantage in not being born in the peerage."

They walked in silence for several turns, her buoyant step giving life to his own. Was it only the pleasure of hearing her voice or was it the marvel of a fortune which a self-made man had won that excited his imagination and led him to ask her to tell the story as Mrs. Nuggets had told it?

Before she began she took his arm in a way that was unconstrained and natural. Literally but kindly she reproduced Mrs. Nuggets, for her mimicry had that rare quality which amuses without wounding. When she reached the heroic part she dropped the dialect and proceeded in her soft English, with the slightest of German *r*'s and the slightest of French *i*'s. It was she who was living in the cabin through the long winter, and it seemed to him as if it were he who was with her.

"Wasn't it beautiful?" she asked finally, when the fortune had been found.

"Beautiful! Like a story-book—beautiful! You make anything beautiful, Lucy," he answered. "If it weren't that I have only six months," he thought, "if there weren't this estate, if the money on which I am living were only not borrowed on

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the strength of this thing which I am expected to do!" Then he looked down upon her in the sternness of self-denial, while there were such lights in his eyes as sometimes make havoc of resolutions.

"Are we to be thrown together constantly over here?" he asked suddenly, almost as much of himself as of her.

"I don't know, Arthur. How can I tell? I am with father," she responded.

"And if you do see me, are you going to call me Arthur always?" he asked.

"Probably I shall. I told myself that I wouldn't, but I find it natural."

She drew herself closer to him. His hand slipped back till it grasped hers. She did not resist. Under the illusion of the moment his ghosts and hers had been carried away to the Pole. The *Oceanic* was their yacht. The ocean was theirs and the land was theirs—a land without stock exchanges, banks, or remittances, a land dedicated to the joy of living, where you dug a spadeful of money whenever the tree of love needed fresh earth. They did not speak again. On and on they walked, till from sheer fatigue she stopped at the door. At the passageway to her cabin he bent quickly and kissed her on the cheek. He saw her smiling as she struck him with her muff and was gone.

XVI

BACK IN AMERICA

FOR the first time in six days the engines had ceased throbbing; the chains roaringly let the anchor down in the mud off quarantine; and the leviathan which had laid her path straight across the waves swung aimlessly on the harbour tide.

Frane nodded toward the city which lay hidden in the morning haze, and promised Lucy revelations in an hour; he nodded toward the vista of wooden cottages on Staten Island as a scene distinctly American.

“There is also something distinctly American,” said Lindley—“those men coming up the gangway. Thanks to them, we shall know in the afternoon papers the names of the notabilities among our thousand passengers, not to mention what axes some of them have to grind on the back of the public.”

“He means the reporters,” John put in. “Lin does not know how to talk to them. There ought to be a course in that in our colleges. Some of

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our greatest statesmen and financiers have no other stock in trade. Lin always stands guard in such a way that people are taking the good deed he has in his closet for a skeleton."

The newspaper men made straight for the group composed of the Belmores, the von Kars, Frane and Carniston. As if by some prearranged plan they separated into two firing squads, which advanced on the millionaire and the politician. Lucy noted curiously the contrast in the manner of the two men whom they assailed. Belmore fell back awkwardly on his defence. He spoke in monosyllables; he was trying to be courteous and he had nothing to say. Frane shook hands warmly with two of his squad, whom he called by their first names. The rest he immediately took into camp. He did not have to ask them the news. They knew that he must know the situation of the hour before they could put their own questions. In short, electric sentences which were more like a series of signals than an exposition, they told him the inside story—such as they would tell their friends but never print—of all that had transpired in the past week.

So far as Lucy could make out, there had been a sudden set of sentiment in the State toward John as the one candidate for governor whom his party could elect. The newspaper men believed that old

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Boss Kennan would support him rather than let the party be defeated. What did John think? How did he stand on all these late developments which had angered the people? Would he accept?

"Of course I would like to be a candidate for governor," he said. "I will accept if the people want me and if there is no string to the nomination. So Boss Kennan favours me? I am delighted to hear it. I want the support of every man I can get—but no strings."

But no strings! The newspaper men noted the phrase. They were the vehicle that carried his thought to the public whose servant he was; and the energy and earnestness of his words were such as to indicate that the millions who were to read his interview were actually within sound of his voice.

The squad which had been with Belmore had found no copy, and they had left him for the earl, who expected, from the anecdotes he had heard of American reporters, that they would ask him before he landed how he liked Chicago; but they only wanted to know his destination, and when he told them they left, with the exception of one man who was doing a "feature" for a "yellow." He asked Carniston if he knew Lord Dingwall, and Carniston responded drily that he did, slightly. Did Carniston think that Anglo-American mar-

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riages were happy, as a rule? Carniston responded still more drily that he knew of a number of very happy ones. Then the reporter came to the point. His paper had been tipped from London that Lady Dingwall was going to apply for a divorce. Was this true? Who was the correspondent? After these questions, the "feature man" for the "yellow" realised that the British stare was no invention of actors or story-writers.

"Do you go about in this way all your life," Carniston asked, half humourously, half eagerly, "asking questions about people's private affairs and jotting down what you hear on a piece of paper?"

In his own words to the editor afterwards, this retort made the inquisitor "hot."

"I don't need a valet to tell me when to come in out of the rain," he shot back, and then went promptly.

Catching Miss Hodges' eye at this moment, Lucy for the first time thought it possible that the statuesque Geraldine had a sense of humour. As for Mrs. Hodges, she was in one of her states of outraged feeling, which was signalled by the elevated expression of her rather short nose. She expressed her regret that in America there was no privacy. Carniston laughed good-naturedly and said that this specimen had really puzzled him

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very much, and he asked Frane how to avoid such questions.

"You must know," he added, "for I noticed they did not ask you about your own or your friends' private affairs."

"Oh, I was talking with the regular men," he said. "They are trustworthy, efficient, and self-respecting. I am a public man and they expected me to talk about public affairs. You see, this other man took you, from your title, to belong to what we call Society in America, and he expected you to talk on society. Society largely makes its private affairs public. That is its occupation"—and your personal view, John, as Lindley would say.

"I noticed that the reporters were quizzing Mr. Belmore too. Financial affairs are also more or less public, it seems," said the doctor.

"However, publicity is scarcely the occupation of financiers," John responded. "You will soon have a glimpse of the beehive where they work; you will see what a people who send reporters out to quarantine to get our views have produced in the way of a great city."

By the time the *Oceanic* was under way the flight of the ferry-boats with the workers was at its height. The haze had lifted. Like so many forts of industry, their windows loopholes, the skyscrapers lay clear in the morning light.

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"I didn't know before that America was such a crowded country that you had to build into the air," said Lucy.

"A passion of a people in the heyday of their energy," said Dr. von Kar. "The Egyptians, who lived on sandy levels, defied nature with the pyramids. Unable to compete with the Persians in luxury, the Greeks turned the marble of their sterile land into sculpture. The Roman emperors built aqueducts which they named after themselves. Here, we have the monuments which individualism conquering the resources of a new country raises to its pride."

"What with father's lectures and Mr. Frane's speeches we shall surely be well informed," said Lucy, twinkling.

"I've trained Lucy to stop me when I have made a certain number of revolutions," returned the doctor, laughing.

"We are all pleased at being reminded of our youth," John observed. "It is far better to be on the rise, boastful of your to-morrows, than on the decline, passing from action to well-mannered reflection on mighty yesterdays."

Lucy said it must be the to-morrows which inspired the fellow and the girl who waited while he built the cabin and made the clearing. Her eyes lighted with the allusion.

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"There you have the idea still in its working," said Frane, nodding toward the notched skyline as if he loved it and it stood for America—his America. "If you should make a cross-section of one of those sky-scrappers you would have the scenes of a hundred little plays," he continued, "the story of a thousand enterprises which concern some one's ambition and happiness. As you cross the traffic-gorged and traffic-roaring river on a winter's afternoon at dusk, every window sets a light in the wall of darkness and it is more splendid than the stars, for even our imagination cannot tell us what is behind them. Each light here is some watch-fire for some hearth-fire."

"And when the man has the money to get the girl of his choice, what then?" Lucy asked.

"He keeps on working to buy her a better house and more diamonds. Maybe he wants to stop, but he can't; it is the game. In America the game is irresistible."

"And they play to the score?" she asked.

"Always."

The *Oceanic*, now opposite her pier, had become the helpless sailor in the landsman's hands. When those hard-bred gamins, the river-tugs, had nosed her into her slip, her guests left her empty and, her contract filled, she sent their baggage crashing after them. From the bridge the officers looked

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down not upon one but a thousand tempests; upon the secrets of a thousand wardrobes laid bare.

How many friendships formed aboard ship have ended by fate's decree rather than by human wish in that dark pier shed which brings one's thoughts from the freedom of the sea to the limitations of daily routine! Lucy's glance and Carniston's met as he was going away with the Hodges. She waved her hand to him almost but not quite as if she were waving him a farewell kiss, and he sent her a signal in kind in response. He was too far away to see that there were tears in her eyes at this definite parting of their ways.

XVII

THE LOVE OF THE PEOPLE

AN emissary of the boss whom Frane had fought in many conventions and caucuses met him at the pier. The two walked away together, the one affable and impressive, the other singularly disinterested. Lucy did not see John again until two minutes before train time, when he came aboard Belmore's car at Jersey City with all the evening papers and half a dozen magazines under his arm.

"You aren't a spectator now," she observed. "You're in the battle."

"Yes, quite, and for every minute of the weeks to come. I was thirsty for it, I can tell you, after six weeks of rising every morning with nothing to do and going to bed every night with nothing done."

Separated from Carniston forever—so she told herself then—seeking, in a strange land, the passing excitement which should divert her from those ghosts which ought not to come and had no business to come and yet would come, she found her interest

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centered in the game that John was playing. There was something in his energy, his magnetism, his rapidity of thought, his many-sidedness which caught her humour at a time when her one aim was to be objective.

With Madame de Staël she might have said that she would travel far to meet a clever human being when she could not look out of the window at the Bay of Naples. Crossing on the ferry she had been reading what the reporters said about John, while she scarcely heard her father's questions to Belmore asking explanation of the new things they were seeing. Already her quick perception understood John's programme and his situation. He was truly, if war for your fellow-man and for happy and clean living instead of grim selfishness be right, making a good fight. She wanted him to win. She would like to shout and to work for him.

"There you are!" he cried. "'No strings' in every headline! It shows what the people want, doesn't it? I wonder how the boss will receive the news when his minister plenipotentiary tells him that he can find me at Kern's Ford if he wishes to see me." Then he dropped the subject of himself and held out a copy of one of the sheaf of evening editions mischievously to the doctor. "That's our very yellowest, the original colour fount from which

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all the yellows of the world have been drawn. We lead in everything, you see. It has its merits. It stands for more schools and more parks, as well as a headless public hurrah; but, esoterically, it is for more circulation and the substitution of feudalism for democracy and pulp-made, machine-printed thought for individual thinking. By debauching and weakening the public mind it is making the public more easily controllable by wealth. Yet Lin won't look at it. I hope that you have not the same feeling on the subject, doctor."

"I have never read the yellows in England," said the doctor, laughing. "As a student of a foreign land which is new to me, I suppose I ought to neglect nothing."

"Precisely. We have found that it is a custom of foreign commentators to see the good in their country and the bad in ours. However, I find myself doing the same. I have no use for a man who does not think his own country the best. I think that mine is."

The doctor ran his eye over the pages with something of the curiosity of a scholar deciphering the bad Latin of street gamins on the walls of Pompeii.

"Apparently, the idea is that he who runs *must* read," he said as he returned the specimen, with the huge black letters of "Divorce" turned toward Frane.

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"It's the one paper where I didn't get the spread to-day. Carniston's interview beat mine," John said, as he did the revolutionary thing of reading the matter under the headline. "It says that, of course, Lord Carniston would not talk about the impending divorce suit of his friend Lord Dingwall."

"But Lord Dingwall is not his friend," said Lucy, in a sudden burst of loyalty to Carniston. "They are of wholly different types. They scarcely know each other."

"Oh, I am reading what the paper says," said Frane; "'but Lady Dingwall's feelings are well known,' the story continues, 'and it is hinted that Lord Carniston comes as an emissary to her parents to persuade them to bring their influence to bear on their daughter.'"

"Now let us see how Lin came out with his interview. He does not get so much space as the earl and myself, because he is as powerful as fifty of us. There you have it. The reporter says that the magnate *condescended* to say that, although there was a strike, the people would receive their winter's supply of coal at the usual rates. But I know that before he made this statement he had to consider the powers of his own world, which he would have to oppose in order to gain his end. If he had had my collegiate course in the art of talking

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to reporters he would have said the same thing in a way to have won the applause of the land, and then possibly he wouldn't have needed to give the coal, judging from the methods of some millionaires. Lin, you are no politician," he called.

"I know it," said Belmore, smiling. He had not yet glanced at the evening papers.

Fanny then reminded all that luncheon was ready. When they rose from the table they were just being drawn out of the Philadelphia station. Lindley did not return to his work with his secretary. He kept glancing at his watch and mentioning the time yet to elapse before their arrival, and both he and his wife were palpably so preoccupied that finally Fanny explained that they were counting the minutes till they should see the children. As the train came to a standstill in the station, John and Edward and Margaret bolted from their nurses and stormed the steps of the car.

Parents and offspring were in a flurry of embraces and kisses, while the attention of the doctor and Lucy was attracted to a crowd fairly filling the station enclosure. Three banners, one inscribed "With Frane We Win Again," another with "Welcome Home, John," and still another with "Our Next Governor," were shaken over the heads of Frane's fellow-townpeople, who broke into a hurrah as he appeared on the platform,

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while the local band played "See the Conquering Hero Comes," and a committee of citizens stepped forward to receive the hero himself.

"It's something to be loved like that right in your own town where you are known," John whispered to Lucy, who saw that his eyes were moist.

On the edge of the perfervid demonstration the Belmore family formed a quiet scene apart. Dr. von Kar remarked philosophically that this contrast was something worthy of comment in his diary. The brake carrying the adults and the automobile with the children had to take a by-street to avoid the procession of John's admirers, who were leading him to the Ford House, where he was to make a speech from the balcony. Facing their parents, the children were standing on the seats of the car under the restraining hands of the nurse, while they shouted alternate questions and bits of information about the health of the family horses and dogs.

"It's something to be loved like that," said Belmore to Lucy, who saw that the children meant to him all that the love of the people did to Frane.

When they passed through a gate with a lodge beside it and went up the winding drive, it seemed to the visitors that they were on an English estate. At the steps the children did not wait for the door of the car to be opened. They began to climb over

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the back, with the result that Margaret, the youngest, was caught by the skirt in time to be saved from landing face downward in the gravel of the drive. They formed around their father and insisted that he should carry each in turn on his shoulders into the house. This he did with the meekness of a millionaire when he finds himself, as he explained, in the face of a "hold-up" by a "combination."

Until their supper-time Oakwood was a children's empire. To-morrow they knew that the regimen of the nursery and of tutorship would begin again. They made the most of the occasion, introducing the guests to their pets, while Belmore with perfect boyishness lent himself to their frolics.

"As a guest of a millionaire," the doctor wrote in his diary that night, "I have enjoyed an exhibition of ease of travel and of one-man power which would lead one to think that America was an oligarchy, pure and simple. However, on our arrival at the station of the town where Mr. Belmore is literally overlord, only his children and his servants were there to receive him, and a vast crowd of the townspeople had gathered for adulation of our demagogue.

"Yet by the demagogue's own confession, the millionaire of the manor, instead of devoting him-

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self to a life of pleasure, works hard and gives bountifully. The library, the hospital, and the park we passed are all given and maintained by him. Possibly the millionaires of other manors do as much, and these benefits are taken for granted and the very possession of the power of giving is resented. Possibly the millionaires of other manors give nothing at all and our host is an exception. As I have often told you, little book, the world is peopled by individuals and actors understand the claue best. Far be it from me to form any conclusions from the impressions of this wonderful day, which Lucie says is like a journey on a comet in a new universe. Sufficient it is for to-night to be in this charming home where taste, composure and self-restraint reign."

XVIII

TWO STRONG MEN MEET

THE politician had not renewed the gilt letters which the rains of ten years had washed off the swinging sign of attorney-at-law in front of his office. His rooms were the same that he had taken when, his education finished, he sought primaries instead of clients. One of the three he called his shop; the other two were living-rooms, plainly furnished and walled with books. Jim, the negro man-servant, who looked after them, cooked his breakfast, while he ate his dinner and supper at the hotel across the street.

Men who hated Kennan because they had served him without reward, men who despised him on principle, young politicians who had not won his favour, old politicians who were the relics of the régime of the boss whom Kennan had supplanted, were either awaiting Frane's arrival at Kern's Ford or appeared in a day or two. Some of these wanted solely to fight in the name of the good cause; others wanted to enlist under any party leader who would break a lance with Kennan, or

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fancied themselves prophets who had chosen the coming man.

John knew these gentlemen clearly, sympathetically and practically. He believed in them far more than many who scoffed at them. When he gripped their hands in earnest gratitude for their support he carried them to high ground, where it was out of the question to ask him to make promises.

"No strings!" he said.

His phrase had taken popular fancy. Already he was known as the No-Strings candidate. Mine host Binns, who had said in the address of welcome from the hotel veranda, "It's no strings, John, and I've lived across the street from you for ten years, and we know you aren't stringin' us when you say it," was surprised to find himself famous. "I'm no orator. I didn't try to make a speech," he explained. "I just said what I felt."

"Which is the best kind of speech and the only true oratory," John told him.

From the newspapers and from those wireless messages which pass over the current of common thought as well, John heard the call of the people. But he must be nominated before they could vote for him, and Frank Kennan would control the convention.

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On the third day another emissary came from the Boss, a man of different type from the one who had been sent to the pier. The first had been oily, well dressed, and a polished talker according to his own conception. As one of the tools used as a go-between with the "vested interests," Kennan had thought that he was fitted to approach a man of Frane's type. Plainly, Kennan had recognised his mistake, for the second, Bill Dunham, in a derby hat, sack coat, and chewing a half-smoked cigar, was known for his bluntness.

"The old man thinks a good deal of you," he said. "That's the straight goods. He wants to run you all right, and he don't want to tie you up with promises, either. He knows a machine candidate can't win this year. But it's kind of habit with the old man to have the people come to him, and habits is hard to break. Well, he wants to see you, all right, and be on the square with you, and why can't you and him go down to the capital and meet there by accident day after to-morrow?"

"But we would not be meeting by accident," said John, quietly.

"Well, I'm——! Of all the——!" Dunham rose and brought his fist down on the table. "I'll tell you right here that's a hell of a sight more'n he ever did for the present governor. The old man don't often get soft, and he's been a little soft

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about you; but I guess if you meet him now it'll be by accident, all right. Good morning to you."

Frane, instead of striking the attitude of the good young man, gripped Dunham's hand vigorously, and vigorous were his words and as honest as his blue eyes.

"You tell the boss for me," he said, "that I'm glad he sent you this time. I like to deal with a man that has a square jaw and talks and looks straight at you. We can understand each other, you and I, and I am glad to have met you. You tell the boss for me that I am going right on fighting—in the open—fighting to make the party better."

As Dunham went he said to himself:

"He's on the level, all right, if he is a little buggy. I like the kid."

Many visitors had gone down those creaking stairs past the letterless sign with the same thought in mind. Instead of saying "buggy" some had said eccentric, some blunt, some extraordinary.

Frane thrust his hands deep in his pockets and took a turn about the room with ambition mocking his decision. For saying the word to Dunham he might be governor, and have the power to carry out some of those policies which were the outcome in mature experience of his youthful dreams.

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"No," he thought, "I will be square with the boss and the party, as I have been with the people. He must know that I am not his man. And—and, maybe, he will come around, after all." At which the politician whistled delightedly.

Repeating his conversation with Frane word for word to his master, Dunham added no comment of his own, except that if the "old man" and "the kid" ever did meet it would be worth a year of his own life to hear the "spiel between them." Kennan thought for a while, and then announced that he was going to Kearn's Ford. When the phenomenal event of the great boss's entrance into the law office of the No-Strings candidate occurred next morning, Bill Dunham, elate over the coming entertainment, was with him. Kennan gave his hand to the young man offishly. John gripped it warmly.

"You're the man I've wanted to know better for years, Mr. Kennan," John said. "Dunham and I have already hit it off, and I wonder if you and I can."

Kennan was fifty-five, with a close-cropped beard, heavy eyebrows, a fighting nose, and a clear, gray eye. For ten years he had been boss of the city, and for the last five boss of the State. A lock of white hair which hung over the centre of his forehead had become the famous horn of

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the cartoonists. In public prints he was a monster; in actual appearance he was quiet and well-groomed. Although he had risen from the streets, he had a self-restraint which would have carried him anywhere among men. He was shy only of women, as he himself said.

"I came because I liked your nerve," he stated, as he sat down. "Understand, I am asking for no promises. You have always fought me. You can have a man of your own here or Bill can go out, as you please."

"I want Bill to stay and I don't want anybody else," John replied promptly. "I know you are a man of your word, Mr. Kennan."

The boss narrowed his eyebrows in surprise.

"I thought that you thought I was a liar and a thief," he half growled.

"I think you keep your word, and that's why you have succeeded in holding men to you. But I also think that you have made the party serve you in making a fortune."

"I haven't been in politics altogether for pleasure and I'm not a liar," he said. "To come to cases, what are you going to do for the party if you are nominated and elected?"

"I'm going to be loyal to the party as I see its interests, as I have always been. I am going to consult you. You know public life, and public

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life is a service by itself. You know, as an expert judge of men, who can give the cleanest and most efficient service in any office. Will you agree in your recommendations to follow this principle, regardless of profit to yourself or to personal affiliations? If you deceive me I shall use the power of my office to overthrow you."

A new proposition this to the boss, to whom every appointment had been a part of the political game. It was no surprise to Dunham, who was used to these heavy silences which decided the fate of men and measures, that his master waited a minute before making his answer.

"I agree," said Kennan finally. For he knew he could win only with Frane as a candidate. "Now, what about money?" he said, rising. "Will that friend of yours up on the hill, Belmore, put up anything?"

"I wouldn't ask him. We are friends but not associates."

"And I won't ask him myself," said the boss. "Bill here says that if Belmore ever gave anybody a bouquet it was in a block of ice. When I told him last campaign that if he didn't put up something we would block the new East End tunnel, he said that I'd have to promise him that I wouldn't block it or he and his crowd would put up five hundred thousand to beat me; and I had to side-step.

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I guess we won't need much money. It's not a money campaign. The hurrah will carry us through, all right."

"Yes, that's it; that is better than money. I have never used much money, Mr. Kennan. I have told the people what I wanted to do, and I've tried to keep my promises."

"Oh, I've watched you," said the boss, sharply. "You got among the people young, like I did, and worked with them. You're a good deal like my brother, the priest. You're workin' up politics the way he does religion, on a no-profit basis."

"The priesthood of public service I sometimes call it," said John, smiling. "We hope to enlist you, Mr. Kennan. We'll rush you right up to the thirty-third degree, if you'll join."

The boss laughed for the first time during the interview.

"I've made some money, I admit," he said, "and I guess I'm as much entitled to it as some of the millionaires and the coal gang with their holier than thou. I have made them give up, and a good deal that they've given up has gone back to the folks in the tenements. That's how I keep my power. You'll find you can't run anything without leadership and organisation. Nine out of ten men are looking for some one to follow. I found that out at the start down in the ward. I under-

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stand why you like to work for the people. My brother's happier'n I am. I never was so happy as when I began my politics in the ward and got the votes direct, before I got high enough to have other people get them for me."

"The point is where you lead the people," said John. "The thing is to be true to them. When you create a political machine to be sold to millionaires you're going the wrong way about it. But I'll not preach now. You've given me the agreement I wanted."

"Yes, and I keep my word and you spiel," said the boss. "You can't talk to 'em too much. They like to hear you and they believe all you say. The place to hold your ratification meetin' is right here in this town, where every man, woman, and child seems to be for you. They were that way for me once in my ward. Have a big delegation at the convention and let 'em yell so the whole State'll hear 'em."

There was yet one thing to be settled, they recalled, when the boss's hand was on the door-knob. At the hotel across the street the newspaper men were waiting to convey the result of this conference to the six million readers of the State.

"I'll give 'em the hint that the party's for you, I'm on the band-waggon, and you're not bound," said Kennan.

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"No, tell them we have made a deal and just what it is," said John.

"What!" exclaimed Kennan. "A deal!"

"Yes. Take the people quite into our confidence. I am willing that the public should know every word that has passed between us."

The boss smiled and patted John almost affectionately on the shoulder. John was satisfied for the present to let him have his way.

"Leave it to me, Governor," he said. "I'm the one that's made the kowtow."

"Good day, Governor," Dunham added.

Governor! The directing head of a great commonwealth, with no strings! With this elation came the thought which always comes at such times, the thought of the one to whom he wanted first to tell the news. He had barely finished a telegram to Geraldine when further consideration chilled his enthusiasm. This was an act, he told himself, which was only carrying him further in an illusion which might cause her pain and grief as well as himself. The luxury in which she had been reared had become a necessity to her. Already he had eaten into the principal of his own little fortune, and he foresaw the day when it would be finished and he must give up politics or else sacrifice that independence which made his political work valuable. Her mother, he knew, would

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never consent to their marriage. The world would say that money was his object. Geraldine's constraint of late had prepared him for her vexation and surprise should he ever suggest himself as other than a chum. If he would keep her friendship he must keep his secret.

"Besides," he thought, "this news would mean no more in Geraldine's world than the announcement of fresh discoveries in the excavation of ancient Babylon."

As the bits of the message fell into the wastebasket it seemed that all the personal happiness which the nomination meant to him fluttered away with them. Then he dropped a line to Belmore.

"The boss is for me without my having to forfeit my independence. So I'll be nominated. Tell Fanny and the little German girl, too, for this Alice has been most interested in the wonderland of our politics."

XIX

A DINNER AT BENDER'S

ONE may boast neither in love nor in diplomacy, and when the two are mixed one must keep even his smiles to himself. The services to his country of His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the United States were not limited to official routine. Lord Bromley's manner was so grave that only those who knew him intimately appreciated the versatility of his mind and his quiet sense of humour. On the score that you may judge performance only by the difficulty of the task performed, he would have been the last to assume any credit as a commercial agent for his country.

"In England," he once said, in a burst of confidence, "we have thousands of fine young fellows who are attractive companions in every way, and many of whom might be of service to the State, only they have the misfortune to have no money. American men are too busy to entertain their women, or even to be entertained; but, rather, they worship their women by a kind of absent

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treatment, buying them fine plumage and exhibiting them as the spoil of financial war, and then escaping to business. The daughter wants a diamond necklace; father buys one. The daughter wants a nobleman; father buys one."

Without ever alluding to it in that way, he was so sure that a rich marriage was the real object of Carniston's visit that he laid out a campaign accordingly, opening the right avenues and informing him, in intelligent asides, of the status of each girl whom he met. Mrs. Hodges, he remarked, was a trial, although Miss Hodges was so beautiful and charming that you overlooked the incubus. "Besides, it's my opinion, not generally shared, I own, that the young lady is deeper than she seems; a little perplexing and difficult, I should say"—which was the acme of a hint to one who would not waste time on a golden quest.

Among the invitations to dinner that Carniston received was one from Bender. When the earl mentioned this to his social mentor, the ambassador's eyes twinkled, without any change, however, in his frock-coat manner or his rather heavy countenance. Bromley was a product of merit who had only recently come into his peerage, and it was his Anglo-Saxon directness of method and his real liking for the country, despite what he would call his clear conception of its foibles—

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the eternal reservations of one whose mind is a looking-glass of many capitals—which had made him the most popular British diplomatist ever sent to America. His experience of the world had taught him that a man who is a little pagan in his loyalty to his own breed is the best man. His private contempt for Bender was enormous.

"I think you'll find it worth while for once," he said. "I shall be interested to learn your impressions. You will meet only foreigners there—of course, I don't regard Americans as foreigners."

As a careful student of manners, Bender had achieved a position in Washington which was a commanding one of its kind. The eldest of his three daughters was married to a baronet in the diplomatic service—but the son of a peer, as Bender always told you; the second, to a German baron; and the third, to a French count. His only son flitted from place to place abroad. Reginald was delightfully free from responsibility, the family fortune being in real estate which his grandfather, the hatter, had bought before Washington had become a great residential city. In parentheses he was always mentioning the fact that his three sisters were titled; and he was convinced that America was no place for a gentleman to live.

"The poor boy," said a witty American cabinet officer, "is most unfortunate in his sex. It keeps

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him always in the corridor explaining that he knows the people in the boxes."

The dinner which Carniston attended was given in honour of Prince Galitzini's engagement to Miss Warwark, whose father had accumulated a fortune in little more than the stipulated minute which was the time advertised to cook the breakfast food he manufactured out of bran. Warwark had shown his future son-in-law over the plant to the last detail in proof of his financial stability and position, while Galitzini had carried away only one definite impression.

"The little girls who filled the packets were not like our healthy Italians, who live on simple food. They were so pale. For lunch they ate candy and oranges, and on four dollars a week they dress so *chic*. Wonderful, wonderful!"

Mrs. and Miss Warwark had long ago deserted the little Western town where the father had made his fortune; and Warwark, giving back nothing to the land in bequests or in personal attention, took no more sentimental interest in his home town than if it were the interior of a coal mine. Returning on the train, the prince had outlined happily once more the plans for the reparation of his own estate in his dear Italy.

Besides the earl and the prince, the others at Bender's dinner were Geoffrey Calkins, a British

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officer, who was also living at the embassy; Count von Vorburg, of Prussia; Prince Morloff, of Russia; and four young Continental attachés. Before he was through with the entrée Carniston felt as bored as if he were shopping for ribbons. Before he reached the coffee he was positively undergoing punishment. He had that insularity which is not without virtue in our cousins. To be a Briton, he thought, was to have an advantage over a foreigner in that he was a Briton in quite the same way that John Frane, another man who was true to the breed and the land, thought of himself first as an American.

Some of the attachés had been watching their opportunities for a year and more without finding acceptance in a quarter where the finances were in keeping with their ambitions or the personal sacrifice to surroundings was not too great. The weather-beaten Calkins was in striking racial contrast to them. Carniston found himself cynically computing how long it would take Calkins to throw the lot of them out of the window, and imagining how, in any crisis where men returned to primitive conditions, Calkins, from sheer male superiority, would take instant command of the others.

After the dinner he and Calkins walked back to the embassy together. Calkins had won the Victoria

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Cross about the same time that the girl he loved married a man who was not poor and his brother, the head of the family, died leaving a bankrupt estate and heavy responsibilities to the younger son, whose whole life had been spent in India.

"I saw the beggars there and rode through them; and when I saw Phipps left behind, I had to go back after him, and he called me a bally ass for my trouble," he said when anybody tried to make a hero of him. "I think he'd rather have stayed. What was the use of living to him with his polo arm gone? I've apologised to him since, and told him I had to save him because it was in the game."

He was so mortally cold and matter-of-fact about the object that had brought him to Washington, and the scar on his cheek made him look so savage when he smiled, that His Excellency was a little worried lest he should fail altogether.

"It's a rotten business, this," said the soldier, with British candour. "If it wasn't for the family I'd chuck it and find some billet in India. But what can I do? I—I can't make money."

Yet the way for Calkins seemed clearer than the way for himself, Carniston thought; for the girl that Calkins loved was dead. Lucy was living—living in that world to which he had become a stranger. His four weeks in Washington had

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shown him the inside of the life of those people who come to the capital to get into society, and from whose ranks are recruited many "hearts that fly abroad." The sycophancy shown to his title—that title whose existence was gall to him—and the feeble efforts to prove an ancestry as a mark for his approval, when ancestry meant to him the inheritance of a grim duty, were more depressing than amusing.

There was a real America, he knew, which lay beyond. He had glimpses of it in Washington, and he had felt its abstraction with its own great affairs, its indifference to foreign forms, and its self-respect—the America which His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador heartily admired.

Belmore belonged to it, and Frane; and they and the others whom he liked were equally alien to the ground of the wife-hunters' brigade. He associated Geraldine with the Belmores, and she, too, had these qualities. He was not averse, after the dinners he had suffered, to dining the next night *en famille* with Mrs. Hodges and Geraldine. It was not intentional, let alone malicious, on his part that Mrs. Hodges drank a deal of champagne.

His attentiveness was probably responsible for her forgetting herself; and in such moments of oblivion, when formality no longer pressed on her being as her corsets pressed on her avoirdupois,

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she was again the woman who had once cooked for her energetic young husband and gloried in his achievements—as she continued to do until snubs from the heights and overfeeding and his inadaptability to social usages led her to envelop him in an atmosphere of complaint. He had loved Hattie in his way, and the more money he had made for her, the less she had been the Hattie that he had married. If he could have heard the praise she now bestowed on this giant—from whom Geraldine had inherited her physique and a natural dignity which education had refined—he might have found some of the happiness in his success which it had failed to bring. She told of their rise, step by step, as the earl drew her out, till finally she struck the table and exclaimed in her enthusiasm:

“Jim Hodges was a great man!”

Then suddenly she could feel the streams of perspiration down her bodice and her face seemed to be held to a furnace door. She wanted to sink under the floor.

Throughout her recital Geraldine had smiled, and her smile was ever the same. Not once, by glance or word, had she endeavoured to suppress the maternal digression.

“Masterful and creative,” said the earl, “and your choice of him and his choice of you were a

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splendid tribute to you. I do not wonder that you speak of him with pride. He recalls the founder of our house, and more particularly another of my ancestors whom we call the hunter. Yes, I think they were very like."

It is a strange world, Hattie Hodges! Here you have been for twenty years trying to impress your gentility upon others by being untrue to yourself, and here you are true to yourself and you delight the "scion of a noble family," as the novels which you began reading in the first stage of prosperity would have called Carniston.

While the mother was tongue-tied, Geraldine deftly took up the conversation and carried it easily away to other topics with the help of her smile. If she had frowned or had exclaimed "Mother!" in a pet, to stop the flow of the narrative, Carniston would have had a different estimate of the daughter. Now he found himself liking her. With her beauty there was a self-restraint and an absence of pretence that charmed him.

XX

CASTLES AND A GOTHIC GIRL

THEY were speaking of Geraldine when Lucy happened to look out of the window at the pile on a neighbouring hill in which Jim Hodges had apparently aimed to combine all the architectural types. Fanny suddenly made a grimace and put her hands over Lucy's eyes.

"Don't blame Geraldine for that!" she said.

"Why should I? Geraldine has to bear it. I'm sorry for her."

"And you a stranger!" exclaimed Fanny, marvelling. "I've flattered myself that I was the only one who understood Geraldine. Now I begin to think that you understand her a little."

"I believe I do," Lucy rejoined; for, to tell the truth, she had made Geraldine a study. She had a presentiment that her fate was in some way bound up with Geraldine's, and her attitude toward the girl whom she already considered in one sense a rival was one of mixed curiosity and sympathy.

Lucy had never been more lovable or more thoughtful than during the last ten days. She

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romped with the children; she quizzed them in French; she told them stories new to childish annals, for invention was more preoccupying than the narration of the old-timers. They helped her to keep among the stars, away from the earth where the ghosts were. With her hostess she had formed one of those deep, sweet friendships which may spring up in a week when natures are rhythmic. Lindley called her cousin, and in his gratitude for her presence his discussion of plans with Dr. von Kar reduced itself to prompt consent to all the doctor's suggestions for the new factory.

Every time they had a word in private her husband teased Fanny about woman's infallible intuitions as demonstrated by her conclusion that there was an attachment between Lucy and the earl. What he overlooked and what Fanny, almost convinced of her error, overlooked was the essential truth that such sparks as she saw when Lucy sang the never-care song aboard the steamer could come only when the two lovers were together.

Fanny was forever leading Lucy to talk of Carniston, and even such a clever woman as she was could be deceived by such a supremely clever girl as Lucy von Kar. In the moments of play-acting, when he was the subject of conversation, she who wept over him at night would express her

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conviction that Carniston and Geraldine would make a most delightful match.

"It so seldom happens that way!" she said. "I know so many tall men who are married to short women, so many stupid men who are married to clever women, and stupid women who are married to clever men, not to mention handsome women married to plain men. That is wrong. Like should wed like. Arthur and Geraldine are a match fit for the gods, who, sailing in a stately ship, should find life a summer sea. I can see them riding in Hyde Park and hear cynical people asking, 'How did that happen?' and all the nursemaids, who are true idealists, declaring that here is a pair who look like a real earl and countess."

Geraldine would appear so thoroughly at home under the heads of the beasts at the Steadley table, and she seemed so easy to marry as a matter of duty, that Solicitor Wormley, Lucy thought, must be in control of the fate that sent her across Carniston's path.

"I think you are horrid!" Fanny cried; "you and your earl, too—so horrid I've a mind to pinch you. Geraldine is not going to marry him. She is going to marry John."

"The politician! What would she do—be bored by his speeches, while he was woful because they did not interest her?"

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"I recant. I don't believe you understand her a bit. Tall and stately fiddlesticks! What about the hearts in the tall and stately bodies? She will look at him sympathetically and bring him inspiration and steadiness. They were born for each other. She will marry him; you will see."

"She is Gothic herself and likes cathedrals and castles. She will marry the earl; you will see," persisted Lucy.

"And you will see," said Fanny, crossly.

She thought that she was speaking with reason, as she had a note from Geraldine asking: "Isn't chums a little too honest to deal with the Kennan monster? Won't he fool our good old John and lead him on to ruin? Of course I don't know, and you mustn't tell chums that I said so. He will think me such a stupid—and I know I am."

The Belmores had followed the course of John's campaign with rare heart interest, thinking of him as their hero whose preoccupation was making him a stranger to them. He had been at the house twice to a hurried luncheon, and then he had talked more to Lucy than to Lin and Fanny. Lucy had read the newspapers diligently, and her sympathy had a certain intelligent quickness of appreciation which theirs seemed to lack. Through her they even received news from the warrior of how the battle was going; for he had dashed off a

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note to "the little German girl" explaining some things which he feared that she would not understand.

It was three or four mornings after John's nomination that Fanny received a most disturbing letter. Mrs. Hodges rarely wrote to Fanny, and when she did it was usually through her social secretary. This time the handwriting was her own, which explained the grammar. There were five pages with a paltry excuse as an introduction to the subject of her boasting, "dear Lord Carniston," as she called him, and his attentions to Geraldine, which were already so pronounced as to amount to an avowal. As Lucy was in Philadelphia with her father, Fanny could not share the news with her, and she had to restrain her vexation until Lindley came home from a trip to Pittsburgh.

"We've done a good deal of thinking on John's and Geraldine's account," he said, after she had read him the letter, "and it's time we found out whether we are wasting our pains on two people who may have quite different ideas from ours about their affairs."

"But how find out?" she asked, wonderingly.

"I am going down to see John," he rejoined, "and warn him that if he wants to be in the running it's time he moved."

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"That's very rash," said his wife, "but it might do—with him. Yes, go—do go! I want to hear what he will say."

She walked down the drive with Lindley and begged him for the tenth time, as he turned into the road, to come straight back with the news.

In the first half hour he could call his own since seven in the morning, John was trying to outline the points of the speech for the ratification rally the next evening at the Ford Opera House, when Lindley knocked at the door. After a siege of conferences, interviews, and vexations, the sight of his schoolmate carried him back to days when dreaming was as good as doing and he helped Lindley on the classics and Lindley helped him on mathematics.

"On the ground that one should always speak when he thinks that candour will be of service to a friend, I have come to see you about Geraldine, John. This earl man, as you call him, is making love to her. Fanny has a letter from Mrs. Hodges, who is promoting the affair, and Fanny and I agree that it looks serious."

With an effort at a smile Frane observed that Carniston must consider himself a lucky fellow, and that the world would wish happiness to such a handsome couple.

"But, John," Lindley pursued, "Fanny and I

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think more of you than of any one else in the world, unless it is Geraldine, and——”

“Thanks”—John laid his hand on Lindley’s arm, and Lindley could feel the hand tremble—“I don’t know that you ever said it in so many words before. It means a deal to me now to have it in that way from the two beings who are nearest to me.”

“And I feel,” Lindley continued, “that I can’t go back and report to Fanny till I tell you that it has always been our expectation and our plan, I might say, that one day you and Geraldine should be married. Though we don’t know that you have ever thought of her in that light, we can’t stand by and see this outsider paying court without saying our word.”

“It was my dream, too.” In response, John spoke without reserve. “I have waited for her as a prince waits to come into his crown; and now that she has reached womanhood I often find myself wishing that she were a little girl again. She has changed—and probably I have changed, too.

“Oh, Lin, I thrashed that all out in five minutes of hard thinking the other day, and the castles came down with a crash. You see, it had been a fancy that I should like to take her as a bride to the governor’s house. But what is life in a State

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capital to a girl like Geraldine and the world she has chosen? Although I was happy in the knowledge of her nearness to me, would she, as she is now, be happy with the people she met there? If I had been climbing the ladder of wealth instead of politics, why, then, perhaps it would be different. She has changed, I tell you, Lin, more even than you realise. She is finding her place and her tastes. Imagine the rage of her mother that a governor of a State, who mixes with assemblymen and county chairmen, should propose for the hand for which an earl had made an offer."

"Mrs. Hodges is an aristocrat, I know," Lindley put in, quietly, "but Geraldine, perhaps, would consider an American governor as important as a British earl."

"Her mother would say that I wanted Geraldine's money," John continued. "Doesn't it look as if I did? I am thirty-five and a poor devil of a politician; she is young and rich, and the surroundings of wealth have become the necessities of life to her. Would you give her the pain of having to refuse an old friend toward whom I hope she still feels kindly?"

"But if she loved you and would marry you regardless of money and everything?"

"Then!" John sat bolt upright and drew a deep breath. "How calmly, how finely she could

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do it if she would! Oh, I haven't forgotten how she looked that day she was capsized on the lake. But heaven is in the clouds, Lin," he added with a wry smile, "and they say that no American politician goes there—not even when he dies and thus becomes a statesman."

"You have the chance of giving her the opportunity. There is something I am going to tell you now which will surprise you a little. You know that Jim Hodges was a man of primitive passions and ideas, and you know his attitude toward you."

Jim Hodges had never spoken to John after their interview when John, home from the university on a vacation, with his own peculiar impetuosity and a student's cock-sureness, had outlined his conception of one's duty to his fellow-man. Hodges' eyebrows sank gradually to the puffs under his eyes, and finally, after paying his respects to the cuspidor, he said:

"I've not much use for anarchists, and I guess I've not much use for you, Mr. Frane."

"No," John answered, smiling, and with a junior's rudeness. "Our population is not yet crowded, and we must not forget that when our forefathers guaranteed personal liberty," and he glanced at the cuspidor, "they also guaranteed intellectual freedom."

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Hodges never forgot this remark, which John regretted, but which his pride would not let him recall. When John first ran for the legislature Hodges spent twenty-five thousand dollars to beat him; and yet more voters in that district cast their ballots for the love of a man than for the love of money, and John won; with the result that, in view of human perversity and the waywardness of the times, Hodges concluded to give nothing more to charity.

“Well, John, you know that he never forgave you,” Lindley continued, “and while his first will left all his property to his wife under my direction as trustee, a second will provides that Geraldine shall be cut off with a small allowance if she should marry you.”

John's face was alight instantly; for to him money was made to feed and clothe you, and after that it was nothing, and affection and sentiment and the mind-free labours of chivalry everything.

“Then I can go to her and ease my heart, if I will,” he said, “and offer her myself, wanting and expecting nothing except herself.” With the pencil which he had been rolling between his fingers he began covering the blotter on his desk with inchoate marks. “Two years governor and no

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man's man! Let that be the end of that game! Then I would play another entirely for her. It is a thing which most of us politicians do in the end—make money—which we have to do when gray hairs remind us of our poverty.” The pencil grew more active. He was sketching the clearing and the cabin. “Yes, I would take up my profession. I would work for her, instead of the people. That is the greatest tribute that I can pay to any woman.”

“Possibly she would not want you to give up politics,” said Lindley. “Possibly she would like to work with you. Are you so sure that you know her? Fanny thinks the constraint which she shows toward you is most auspicious. You, not she, must ask the question which will decide. She is in the hands of the Philistines now, and if you have anything to say to her you would better not wait.”

Frane, in his way, was as much a man of action as Belmore, only his acts proceeded from what his friends called right impulses, rather than from calculation.

“Beginning to-morrow night,” he said, “I must speak every day and every night for three weeks. If I am going to tell her this, now is my only opportunity. I shall take the 12:30, catch the night express at Philadelphia, see Geraldine to-morrow

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morning, and be back here in time for the meeting to-morrow night."

Lindley said everything to harden John's resolution, and remained with him till he went aboard the train. When her husband burst in upon Fanny triumphantly and told her of Frane's love for Geraldine, she beamed; but when he told her of the journey to Washington and proceeded with his story, she grew serious.

"You goose!" she said. "Do I pretend to understand *your* affairs—and what do you know about affairs like this? I only sent you for information. I, if you please, intended to plan the action as soon as I knew that John was ready to play his part. Now I think you've quite spoiled everything."

"But I thought that was rather smart for me, inventing the story that Geraldine would be cut off without a penny if she married John," Lindley pleaded. "It rang the bell, anyway, and it seemed to me that money was the stumbling-block."

"You don't suppose, do you, that Geraldine wants to go to him when she brings him nothing!" Fanny cried. "She wants to help him. Oh, if you understood her, you'd understand! I suppose he went in a sack suit with baggy knees and threw a collar into a bag."

Lindley had a faint recollection of seeing Jim

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put something into a suit-case, and so remarked drily.

"How long will he have in Washington?" Fanny demanded in vexation.

"He arrives at seven and has to leave at ten, I think, in order to make connections."

"I suppose he'll set the suit-case in the hall, and while he waits for her in the drawing-room he can take a sandwich out of his pocket and eat his breakfast! It's too bad that when she comes down he can't present his proposal typewritten—and oh, John could propose so beautifully if all the circumstances were right! I can see him. He would be irresistible in his magnetism, his sincerity, his absorption. Do you think I'd have married you if you had approached me in that way, Lindley Belmore?"

"Well, I was in tennis flannels, and we were sitting on the beach under a parasol."

"It wasn't at eight o'clock in the morning and you had been looking at me for days in a way that led up to it—and why did I take that favorite Viennese parasol, do you suppose?"

"I can send a telegram to John saying that he has mistaken the route and to await further instructions from Fanny," Lindley suggested.

"Silly! When he has gone all the way to Washington to propose! Why, you ought to know that

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one must pretend never to interfere with such things. It is a case of leading with invisible strings. I can't explain, for you don't understand such things, or Geraldine, either. He'll bring the thing to her mind, and now you must leave all the rest to me. To pay for your bungling you must drop everything and go to Wentwood as soon as the election is over and John is free. He must come, and Geraldine and Lucy and Carniston, too, and you're not to tell any one of them that the others are invited. You are simply to leave everything to me. Four hearts, not four railroads, are concerned."

He assented humbly, and made his plans to go to Virginia accordingly.

XXI

A SOLDIER FROM THE FIELD

THE rough and true soldiers whose life John shared fought with ballots instead of steel. No romance of war clung to their leader, dusty, dishevelled, and fresh from the hard-fought field. After two or three hours' sleep snatched in an upper berth, he was finding that the impetuous decision reached by candlelight had taken the shape of a fantasy in the morning. The ill-assorted luxury of the room into which he was shown made him unpleasantly conscious that his coat was wrinkled, his hair carelessly combed, and his tan shoes unpolished.

On arising, Geraldine had received his overnight telegram with its perplexing request that she would see him at nine, without the slightest suspicion of its true object entering her mind. The sunlight of the clear October morning filtered temptingly through the network of the curtains, and she concluded that if he were going to stay only an hour she would have the exercise for which her mood, the air, and the day called. When she

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appeared in the doorway before Frane in her riding-habit, buoyant and fresh, the meaning of her little start of surprise which was due to his pallor he mistook as directed at the carelessness of his attire.

"I hurried on here, Geraldine—well"—where was the rush of words which were at his tongue's end the night before? His thoughts had become so crowded that none was left with a definite form of expression—"well, I've come for the purpose," he smiled weakly, "of asking a stay in hypothetical proceedings which are based possibly more on apprehension than information."

"That sounds most dreadful, chums," she said.

She was still trying to comprehend how one who looked so ruddy as he did when he left the steamer could have so changed in three weeks. It was characteristic of her thoughtfulness, however, that she did not mention her impression for fear that it might hurt him.

"Have you had breakfast?" she asked.

He admitted that he had not. It seemed that there were four instead of two figures in the Bouguereau on the wall. He had not eaten since six the night before, and he was train faint and hunger faint.

"Then, let us talk about the hypothesis in the dining-room, chums," she said.

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"You see, I was thinking of the half-hour with you, Geraldine," John explained, "and then if I had time afterwards I could get a cup of coffee and a sandwich at the station—and I was sure of luncheon on the dining-car, anyway."

When they were seated she asked him if he was in the habit of swallowing coffee and sandwiches as he ran. He laughed apologetically and said that he was on occasion. She shuddered at the idea and scolded him in a sisterly way.

The food revived him. He ate with nervous rapidity, glancing at his watch at intervals. She kept thinking how tired he looked.

"And what is the hypothesis?" she asked.

Could Lindley have overheard John's lame beginning and his lamer progress he would have had all-convincing proof of his wife's superior wisdom. In broken sentences he explained how the letter Fanny had received from Mrs. Hodges was responsible for his journey.

"I don't think she quite meant that," for Geraldine always protected her mother.

Then he repeated Lindley's information about the will.

"So I came to tell you what I have had on my mind for years—to tell you that I love you."

The light from the window was on her face, a face that was always fine but never mobile. He

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saw her brown eyes open wide as they used to when she was a small girl and he told her a wonder tale. Beyond this there was no agitation; she remained the serene Geraldine. Her friends said that she was so good to look at that she need not talk. Surely she had never been gifted in words.

"You've always thought this?" she asked, "and you never told me?"

He had put a bogey into her fairyland of wealth and ease, he concluded. His aspect and position in her mind, as she looked at him out of the windows of her house golden, became comprehensible in a flash of what seemed to him naked truth.

"Yes, always, Geraldine."

He saw her eyes growing moist, and he felt that he was hurting her.

"What a drag I would be on you if I hadn't a penny," she said.

She, who knew that he was eloquent, wondering, saw that she struck no fire with this remark. If Fanny could have been present unseen and have whispered to John unheard she would have said: "Now, now is your time! Seize her hand and plead, plead with all the ardour and sincerity of your big heart!" But the famous talker was silent, thinking of twenty-two giving up its patrimony for the privilege of sharing the burdens of thirty-

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five, which was the sum of his request as it must appeal to her.

"You are to have a great meeting to-night," she went on, tentatively.

"Yes," he answered, and he was calculating the time necessary to reach his train.

"Do you think that you will be elected?" she asked.

"I say I shall. That is the thing to do. I don't know. I don't think about it that way. It is the campaign, the game! That is wine to me every moment." He seemed to be straining at the leash, and glanced at his watch hurriedly. "I must be going." When he turned to look at her again at the door, he saw a tear on the face that was still serene. "How I have hurt her!" he thought, "letting her know that I ever thought of her in that way!" And he said "Forgive me and forget my nonsense," half inaudibly, and rushed down the steps.

Geraldine went slowly up the stairs to her room. It was the only room furnished to her taste in that house which the cynics said, in comparing it with the house at Kearn's Ford, represented the second stage. She picked up the half-dozen papers that lay on the bed—all from John's State—and with her own hand cut out certain columns under glaring headlines. When her maid came to say that

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Lord Carniston was waiting below, she answered "Directly;" and "directly" seem to mean after she had read every notice and scanned some of those that she had filed away in her desk the day before.

"I do believe I understand a little!" she thought. "How I would like to see him to-night, giving the audience his whole heart and soul! What a heart and soul they are to give and only an audience will ever receive them."

After she had locked her desk she started leisurely downstairs, riding-crop in hand. At the first landing was a gaudy Satsuma vase which she had borne quietly, as she had everything else. This morning it assaulted her eyes with an uncontrollable repugnance. Her mother sometimes said that "Geraldine has outbreaks, and because she is herself in five minutes afterwards no one thinks that she has a temper." Her girl friends at school had remarked that there was more in her than one thought.

Now she brought the horn handle of the crop down upon the vase with all the strength of her arm—and how such a character as Lucy or John would have loved her for that blow which sent the fragments scattering! Mrs. Hodges, who was with the earl, had fairly leaped out of her seat when she heard the crash; and when her daugh-

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ter appeared, she asked if something had been broken.

"Yes, mother," was the serene response. "Probably you know already," Geraldine added languidly, turning to Carniston, "how long it takes a woman to dress when she is in the mood."

As they went out to the horses Carniston distinctly heard her humming under her breath one of Lucy's never-care songs.

XXII

THE COURAGE OF LEADERSHIP

THANKS to their interest in John's campaign the von Kars had become ardent newspaper readers. In the afternoon editions which they took aboard the train at Philadelphia, they caught the full effect of the first speech of the eminent banker Oliphant, who had been nominated by the opposition.

"Behind Frane is Kennan and behind Kennan is Belmore," he said. "Elect this young man and you will find that none of the Belmore interests will be opposed."

Who was Frane's college chum and his most intimate friend? Why, this same magnate who had condescended to say that in the event of a strike the poor would still get their coal at the old price. Did Kennan make his famous journey to Kearn's Ford for pleasure? Let the No-Strings reformer deny that he had made a deal with the old boss! Let him explain at the Kearn's Ford meeting to-night why the wells of his independence

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had dried on the day that Kennan came out in his favour!

The doctor and Lucy both were immersed in this wonderland of printer's ink when Frane himself, who had come on the same train, interrupted them. Lucy looked him up and down questioningly.

"I was seeking the string," she said, laughing; "and I was going to say that you were a stranger, but, of course, you're not. You are at the Belmores' morning, noon, and night, always running the great man's errands."

This bit of satire gave him his first real laugh of that long, hard day. He had felt the veering of independent sentiment, and he had begun to realise the handicap of carrying a boss on his back. The name of Kennan was tainted, and no name associated with it could escape infection.

"I hope you have some ammunition in your locker and can give them as good as they send," said the doctor, rather formally; for he still refused to believe in Frane. He conceived of the election as being a rough-and-tumble battle of demagogues, and with such his temperament had little in common.

"Yes," Lucy put in, "you can do that without half trying. I know he's a humbug by his picture and the way he talks."

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Frane beamed over her interest and partisanship. When a man who believes that he is right is attacked and the battle is fierce, he wants comprehension as well as sympathy, and he found both in her.

"I want to hear you say something that will make him look as small as he really is," she persisted. "You must," she added, "you will, in your speech to-night, won't you?"

When she begged that he would find her and her father a place where they could hear him, his delight took the form of offering them a box and his escort to and from the meeting. Then he made his excuses and went to join Kennan, who was in the stateroom of the next car.

Kennan's decision to go to the meeting, as one of John's friends said, indicated his intention to cling as close to the candidate as matrimony. He and John had not met since Oliphant had made the charges. The old boss was chewing an unlighted cigar, and as they shook hands his eyes sought John's piercingly.

"Well, are you going to throw me over in that speech of yours to-night?" he asked abruptly.

"No," John answered, smiling.

The boss regarded him narrowly.

"What line are you going to take?" he pursued.

"You've tried your old kind of politics; now

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I am going to try mine—the new kind. It goes without saying that I am in command of the field-work.”

“That ‘No’ was all I wanted to hear. Go ahead,” the boss concluded. “You’ve read Oliphant’s speech,” he went on, giving the name a slur as he spoke. “He’s a holy man, he is.” It was plain that this speech had stirred him to the depths. He drew a letter from his pocket as he spoke. “Smug—that’s it. If there’s any kind of man I hate, it’s the smug man.”

“So do I,” said Frane, heartily.

“You, Frane, could stand up and say that I had done certain things, and call me whatever you pleased on that account, and I’d take it and keep my mouth shut, because I know you wouldn’t do those things yourself. Well, read that!”

He passed to Frane the note which Oliphant, in a moment when he was off-guard, had written only three years before. It was addressed to Kennan, and began, “In regard to our conversation of yesterday,” and it told enough to show that Oliphant as a business man was willing to bribe that same city whose corrupt rule he had made his battle-cry as a candidate.

“Oliphant, of course, was only the eminent citizen acting for others,” Kennan continued. “If we’d granted what they wanted, it would have put

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the party out for twenty years." He went into details as to the scandalous thing that Oliphant had proposed, the huge price he had offered to pay; and when the list of names of the financiers behind him was given it was a pleasure to Frane to find that Belmore's was not among them.

"They've been driving me to the wall," said the boss, "and I've concluded it's about time I talked back. You can make these charges against Oliphant to-night if you like, and if he denies them, I'll substantiate." Thus the boss had proffered a sensation which would turn the tide of suspicion from John's direction to that of his opponent.

John had grasped the opportunity the instant he had read the note and had already considered it. The new school of politics treated Kennan to another surprise when he said quietly that he was not going to mention Oliphant's name that evening.

"But thanks! You've helped me more than you can guess."

So he had. Weary as John was, the heart taken out of him by the fiasco of his journey, his thoughts all the way from Washington had harked back to Geraldine instead of forward to the other crisis—that of his career. For the first time he faced life with Geraldine wholly out of the reckoning. Outlines for his speech had come and gone in his mind, but with none was there any fire, any moving con-

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ception. The letter had centered his thoughts again. It had recalled him to the field of the good fight. He was facing a candidate for governor who regarded his fair name as a commercial quantity which might be used to cloak a franchise steal or to elect him to office. Such was the temper of the times. This America was a land, not to love, but to exploit for personal ends. How were the people to know whom to trust when their faith was a commodity for barter by those who held it? But John was not to say this; the idea for the speech which had come to him involved no platitudes. When the train drew into Kearn's Ford he was in the full fever of the people's work again.

"I'm going to tell them about our deal to-night," he told the boss, expecting an explosion; but none came.

Well the old warrior knew that victory depended upon John's personality. According to the rule of the political seesaw it was the turn of his party to be out. Could the new kind of politics and the new leader keep it in? If Frane's indiscretion lost, then Frane was dead, and the party would come forward with some other leader and go on in its old way. Kennan had made equally strange political bedfellows before, but always coldly—the speech-making he left to others—as one makes any business transaction. The situation

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was new, in that he had taken a liking to Frane; and when Frane rose on the stage of the opera house that evening the boss was more nervous than the speaker himself. The deafening cheers that greeted the candidate were to be expected. This was his home town; it was a partisan ratification meeting. But John himself had detected a weakening of enthusiasm in the attitude of his supporters, who he knew had followed him as an enemy of Kennan in every fight that he had made—and now he and Kennan were on the same platform.

Before John had said half a dozen words after the applause had died away, a voice sang out:

“What about your deal with Kennan? Let’s have that first!”

The speaker had sounded the key-note for Frane, who made himself heard above the hisses of his too-ardent admirers, and politely asked the shouter to stand up and state his question in full; and the shouter was not bashful.

“How can you be a No-Strings candidate and be hitched up with Boss Kennan?” he called, bluntly.

“I wanted you to ask that question,” Frane replied. “I wanted you to ask it, because you have a right to know, as every citizen has a right to know. He cannot vote intelligently until he does

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know. Yes, there is a deal, and I will tell you just what it is."

He took a step nearer the audience. If Geraldine could have seen him then, instead of in his suit of awkwardness and timidity that morning! The audience leaned forward to meet him. This word "deal" typified all the trickery of the politics of the time. Here was the man whom the people set above all such contamination admitting that he had made a bargain with the most reprehensible of bosses. When Frane began speaking it was as if to one of his townsmen in the street. His style, in the language of Binns, keeper of the Ford House, was "looking you in the eye and telling you straight." Word for word he related the interview between himself and Kennan. He did not palliate the boss or shirk association with him.

"He brings me his support. I accept it. What I told him I would do I shall do, and so I tell you. Now that you know all, it is for you to decide." There he stopped. He had made no conventional appeal for a cheer, but he had spoken with such force, such earnestness and directness, that the table on which at times he rested his hand seemed to shake with his emotion. The second of silence which followed the close of the speech was broken by the man who had asked the question.

"I guess it's more a case of your being the driver



“I wanted you to ask that question,” Frane replied

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than being hitched," he said; "and you're good enough to drive for me."

This spark brought an explosion of applause, followed by thunder and tumult as the people rose to their feet. When the cheers had died down a United States senator who was to speak after Frane arose. But the audience had only been recovering its breath. The second outbreak was more prolonged than the first; for the more that his hearers thought of this example of straightforwardness the more it thrilled them.

Kennan had been so affected that he forgot to consider whether the speech was good politics or not.

"You told it just as it was," he whispered; "and they believed you. I could feel that they did."

Glancing toward the box which the doctor and Lucy occupied, John saw her greet him with a pantomime of approval; and then a man from the wings brought him a note.

"That was splendid courage," she had scribbled impulsively on a calling-card. "It doesn't matter whether you are elected or not. It's enough to be able to do such a thing."

Of all the compliments which he heard when the crowd swarmed onto the platform after the meeting was over this rang truest to him. The doctor and Lucy remained watching the scene until

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Frane made it possible to excuse himself and to walk home with them.

"All great men of action have been gamblers in a sense," the doctor observed. "They have not hesitated to put all to the hazard in a crisis."

"Oh, it did not occur to you that way, I am sure," said Lucy, looking questioningly at John, as if fearing that she was to have an ideal shattered. "It was right to tell them and you did. Therein lies your triumph."

"You understand," he said to Lucy, in the fervour of fellowship. He was in the afterglow of his effort, radiant, cheery, boyish. In his outburst of confidence he told her more of his aims than he had vouchsafed to any one for many years. Rapidly he talked and eloquently—more eloquently than on the platform—all the way up the hill, while she, listening, realised the intimate charm of his personality. When they reached the gate he stopped suddenly, as if he had been caught in an indiscretion.

There was a touch of exhaustion or sadness in his good-night and in hers. He was wishing that Geraldine could have been in her place. He would not have expected Geraldine to understand his remarks in just the same way that Lucy could. To have her at his side would be enough. Lucy was thinking if it had only been Carniston who had been

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speaking with such a set purpose, so free of the trammels of yesterdays and so concerned with the to-morrows— if Carniston would only stake all on the hazard. She would not want or expect him to be as brilliant as this man was.

“I have witnessed to-night the theatrics of an American political meeting,” Dr. von Kar wrote in his diary. “You have been the confidant of my many inconsistencies, little book. You have seen friendships grow and harden or melt away, and you have smiled at me, thinking that the day’s exasperation which directed my pen would soon be forgotten. I have to confess to-night that I was wrong about Frane. He is a demagogue, but with the difference that he is a good demagogue. He is honest. He is free of heart, and not the least of his virtues is that he has a contempt for money.”

Yet before he fell asleep, the doctor ran happily over the figures of his own fortune.

XXIII

NOT A MATTER OF IMPULSE

CARNISTON had done that thing; and gallantly, some schools of chivalry may hold. No parental frowns of disapproval dammed the words of the bashful suitor as he spoke the lesson which he had rehearsed. Mrs. Hodges' sighs over the prospective loss of her daughter were perceptibly softened by her outbreathings of delight. Over further details we shall draw the veil of privacy, after remarking that she had not been altogether frank in explaining the extent to which the estate was in the hands of Lindley Belmore.

He had done that thing, and yet he felt none of the relief of a duty performed, a road definitely chosen. As he walked back to the embassy he found himself looking forward to the proposal he was to make to Geraldine—he and not her mother was to speak to her first—only in the anticipation that she might refuse. And if she did, he thought—if all the girls to whom he offered his hand should refuse in the same way that they had refused little Count de Malmenberg, who

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had literally circularised the eligible girls of the capital! Then he would have done his duty with noble persistence, and he could say "go hang" to Wormley and the creditors.

It seemed to him while he was talking with Mrs. Hodges that Lucy had been overhearing and overlooking them. He could see her smile and hear her banter him in mimicry. Was it she who was suggesting to him that he might propose to Geraldine in such a way that acceptance would be out of the question? And why not? he asked himself as he entered the embassy door.

But two letters that awaited him overthrew his realm of fancy. A long one from Wormley in unconscious satire alternately reminded him of his duty and wished him happiness in its performance. This unctuous gentleman said that proud as the native millionaire was to have a titled daughter, his inherent fondness for driving a hard bargain should warn any intending suitor who was inexperienced in business to be on his mettle. By involution, and yet clearly enough, he advocated a careful examination of the field before making a choice, aiming high and thinking of no arrangement for less than thirty thousand pounds a year.

A note from Fanny Belmore recalled Carniston's promise to visit Wentwood, whither she and Lucy, she said, were going in two days. If he

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had any engagement in town he could run in and back again in the automobile. The significance of this to him was that Lucy was coming into his horizon again. If she were not at Wentwood she would be in Washington. After all the dumb show, the pantomime of wife-hunting, he was hungrier for her than he had ever been before. Bender and Mrs. Hodges and the others of their unreal world had made him homesick for his England and the English girl that he loved. He was weak and amiable and a fool, or he would find some way out of the situation, he told himself for the hundredth time. After dinner he and Calkins sat together far into the night. Theirs was the growing comradeship of misery.

"Any station in India is better than this, and perhaps a war by-and-by," said Calkins. "And if not, no matter. This game of the white man's civilisation is too fast for me. A little breeze in the evening in the hill country is worth it all."

When he awoke in the morning Carniston felt like a man of conscience who has turned bribe-giver and bribe-taker. There was no putting back now; he would have to see it through. He was going for a walk with Geraldine at eleven, and it was his plan to announce his suit before they left the house. While he sat waiting for her to come downstairs and rehearsing his little speech,

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Lucy appeared again in one of her never-care moods.

"We all see you," she seemed to say; "go ahead. It's not long since you were proposing in another drawing-room on the other side of the Atlantic. That girl, the silly! met you at the door."

Because Lucy put him out, Mrs. Hodges, who was in her own room ready to be called to embrace two dear children and give them her blessing, realised that something was wrong when from her window she saw them going down the steps only a minute after Geraldine had entered the drawing-room.

Had she known how to proceed she would have prepared Geraldine for the proposal. "Nobody knows her like me," she had often sighed, "and she is so uncertain and headstrong." Ever bullying her daughter, yet the mother really feared her. "Geraldine must; they were made for each other," she thought desperately as she watched them walking away.

Passers-by cast sidelong glances at the handsome pair—some in admiration, some not, perhaps, without envy of their atmosphere of luxury, good health, position, and wealth. Geraldine was beautiful. Carniston might not walk with her on a clear November day and resist a certain pleasure in the thought of having a creature so superb for

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his companion. He must own that he liked her quality.

"I have something important to say to you," he began.

It would have seemed extraordinary to him to offer his hand in marriage while they were walking in the street if anything had seemed extraordinary in his new career. But it is repugnant, too, when you love another girl, to propose for duty's sake in a drawing-room where the seclusion requires that the occasion be eloquent—he could hear Lucy telling him so with a wise shake of her head. The bargain, if bargain there was to be, could be concluded here without a scene, and yet quite in keeping with good taste when the two concerned had such excellent control of their emotions.

"I came to ask you to go back to Burbridge with me," he concluded.

She had flushed a little at his first words, foreseeing the trend of his speech; for she had had enough proposals on horseback, on foot, in motors, as well as in the proverbial conservatory, to recognise the signs, however unusual. There was nothing in her expression to indicate any sense of humour or the nature of her final answer.

"By that you mean that you ask me to marry you," she observed.

"Yes."

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"Of course we shall need a lot of money to pay off debts and fix up the estate," she pursued, without the slightest touch of irony in her voice.

"Yes," he stammered, honestly.

"Such an offer is always entitled to respectful consideration," she said, "and if I make inquiry it is—as a lawyer would say, I suppose—with a view to the satisfaction of a full understanding now, instead of the pain of later disillusionment. The future relations that you have suggested being personal makes it allowable, perhaps, that I should be a little personal before I give my decision. So I shall ask you if you are not in love with Miss von Kar, as I have guessed."

Geraldine, wondering at her facility in the use of long words, as she put the question, looked him full in the face, and she was smiling in the same impersonal way that she had smiled when her mother made the recital at the dinner table and when, indeed, she had broken the Satsuma vase.

"Yes," he admitted drily, while he heard the voice of Lucy calling him a cad.

"And you were engaged?" she pursued quietly. "Or wasn't it like that?" Her manner being that of right took the edge of impertinence off the question.

"Yes, we were. It was quite like that,"

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he said, proudly. "She sent me away," he added.

"It is fine of you to say so," and she gave him an approving look. "Let it be so. But there suddenly came into your life a condition which forced you to marry for money, and you swallowed your pill manfully, and, after looking over the field, I am your choice."

"Yes, oh, yes!" he said, pathetically and in confusion; and it was some satisfaction to hear Lucy's voice calling: "Hurrah for the world of truth and light and faith!"

"'For the love that kings in courting lost,'" Geraldine repeated softly and hummed the measure through; while he recalled the afternoon on board the steamer when Lucy had sung. "Miss von Kar is extremely clever," Geraldine finally observed.

"Scarcely more clever than one other woman I know," he said.

"I mean that if she has a thought she can put it into words or music in a way that rings a bell all round and makes you wish that you had the same key to unlock the door in your forehead. Her thoughts are in her eyes and on her lips, and what she is you know. Mr. Frane has that quality. He says no and yes, and I will and I will not, and I think this and I think that; but then you feel that you see all there is in his mind

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and heart. It is quite different from having your face always a mask.

“Did you ever look at the diamonds in a shop window and feel the repulsion of so much brilliance and as if you didn’t care for diamonds any more than for the glass on a chandelier? And then did you ever have a diamond that you loved for its shape or some thought associated with it? You see, there are clever people in this world who can give you a thought or a smile that means more than a show window full of brilliance—Miss von Kar can. Though she is not beautiful to look at at first, when you have known her a day or two then she is good to look at forever, and it is dear to be near her. Isn’t that it?”

“Yes,” he faltered, when he wanted fairly to shout that it was.

They were across Lafayette Square now, and she signalled to a newsboy and bought the first edition of an evening paper for the latest returns.

For John Frane had been elected governor the day before by a majority that had made the startled country see in him a great national figure. Geraldine’s heart had been tingling all the morning with his triumph. Yet she had not mentioned her happiness to any one.

“One hundred and eighty thousand now—more and more,” she said, half to herself.

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Then her eye caught another headline, announcing her engagement to Carniston on the best of authority, and two burning spots came into her cheeks. It was in her usual voice, however, with its slight lisp and monotone, that she observed that they might as well turn away from the line of the street cars.

When they were back in the square she showed Carniston the paper, with her finger on the announcement.

"I see that it is to be the social event of the season," she said before he could speak, "and probably the most brilliant wedding ever celebrated in Washington."

He found some stumbling words to express his deep regret at such an awkward error and his willingness to do anything in his power to amend it.

"You saw my mother before you spoke to me on this subject?" she asked. And when he nodded she went on: "Naturally you would. It was not right to go to the girl till you knew that conditions permitted you to propose."

"Yes, I couldn't quite follow the American custom, you see."

"Which possibly you did in Miss von Kar's case, and that, too, naturally."

"Yes, and afterwards she went to my father." He was trying to laugh as the whole history came

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back to him mortally and bitterly. "But I protest, we are not talking about her," he half pleaded, hoping to change the subject, but finding his wit too dumb to do so for himself.

"Of course. You have asked me a question and in courtesy I ought to answer, even if *The Evening Star* has already settled the matter. When you have money will you go into politics and try to make a career?"

"That's rather difficult for me. One ought to be in the Commons to accomplish anything. I'm a peer, you see. I've been interested in science mostly." He recalled Brent's remarks, and it occurred to him that this girl who had divined his love for Lucy was now revealing to him the monotony of his future.

"It's a great honour you have done me, I am sure," she said. "It will be quite easy for us to consider it seriously, for we are both so rational. Therefore, I'll not act impulsively."

He wondered if she were laughing at him behind her smile or if she left open the chance to accept him in the same matter-of-fact way, some morning when they were walking or driving, that he had proposed to her; and with her quite the mistress of the situation, and with him nonplussed, she led the conversation into other channels.

Her mother had been watching from the win-

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dow for her return. Madame could conceal her curiosity no longer. All excitement, she met her daughter at the head of the stairs.

“Gerry, did he—did he——?”

“Have you read *The Evening Star*, mother?” the daughter asked. When Mrs. Hodges saw the headlines her face blanched. She quavered that she had only told her social secretary—nobody else.

“I will call up *The Evening Star*,” and Geraldine reached for the receiver.

“But—Gerry—you break my heart—I——”

“Main 2440,” Geraldine was saying. “Yes, Mrs. Hodges wishes to speak to you about an item in this evening’s paper.” She held her hand over the mouthpiece. “Now, mother,” she added; and the weaker vessel gave way.

When Mrs. Hodges had sputtered an absolute denial Geraldine, without further comment, took the paper from her mother’s hand and went to her room, where she read every word of the returns that concerned John Frane.

XXIV

THROUGH ANOTHER'S EYES

NOT quite up to Dingwall's record but extraordinarily prompt, and congratulations just the same," ran the telegram which Carniston received from Lucy the next morning. She had been the first at the Belmores' to see the despatch, with a Washington date line, in the Kearn's Ford evening paper which was lying unopened in the hall as they came down to dinner.

"I was sure our Gothic girl could not resist becoming a countess," she observed to Fanny, who cried that it was all wrong and shameful as she looked appealingly at Lindley.

"I don't think she is a Gothic girl," he said finally, breaking his silence for the first time since he had read the news. He was not touching his soup.

"The question is, I believe, is Miss Hodges a Gothic girl?" said the doctor, who saw that there was a gap in the conversation. "Gothic! Miss Hodges is stately. Perhaps she is Renaissance."

"Make it Greek with a tailor-made suit," chimed

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in Lucy, laughing—how could she laugh when that news was surging in her heart?—"for we all admit—they are so far away—that the Greeks had all the beauty and the form and the wit, mythologically, classically, and gloriously; but they lacked motors and modern improvements. Add the tailor-made suit and you have perfection."

"Flippant!" exclaimed Fanny, crossly.

"A beautiful woman is the most beautiful thing in the world, and Miss Hodges is truly beautiful." The doctor found the fish excellent and the engagement of another one of the millions on millions of couples on this planet an abstract and not a concrete subject. "They tell me that your American women have come to like titles. Some of us had hoped vainly that America would let quality be its own insignia and forego the label which may descend to bad goods."

"Perhaps that is true with some of us," said Belmore drily.

"And decidedly not of Geraldine," Fanny fairly snapped. She was not out of temper with those at the table, but with the world. "It's all owing to her mother, I'm sure," she added. "I foresaw it on the steamer. But an engagement is not a wedding. Lin, I shall see Geraldine day after tomorrow, when I shall tell her precisely what I think. We're going to Wentwood immediately."

Through Another's Eyes

This was the last meal that the four were to eat together at Kearn's Ford, and it was most disconcerting to the doctor, to whom dinner was a genial function, to find the orchestra out of tune. He proceeded, however, along the path of disquisition, enjoying his own remarks. On the next day he was going to New York. He had presented one of Brent's letters and that had led to a chain of invitations which he could not well refuse.

The honours extended by different schools and societies flattered him a little, and were really very acceptable at a time when the factory was in the hands of the builders and he had no responsibility except to write in his diary. He had come to America, it is true, thinking of a holiday in Lucy's company, and Lucy, deceiving herself, had come thinking only of a holiday with him; and now the inspiration which was to carry them away together on a journey of exploration, as they had planned, failed to develop. He was leaving the one who was the soul of his existence at a time when, if he had been near her, he might have learned her secret—which spells the word money again.

So father and daughter separated at Philadelphia, Lucy and Fanny proceeding to the Belmores' Virginia place, where Lindley was to join them in two or three days. John Frane they left behind buried in telegrams of congratulation.

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Among them was a "Splendid, splendid, splendid, chums," which he took to mean a charitable and friendly thought and nothing more.

Fanny, after a day's thought and a night's sleep, was still determined to avoid all effort at diplomacy and to scold Geraldine with one breath and plead with her in the next. At the station in Washington the headlines informed her of the positive denial of the engagement by Mrs. Hodges herself. The papers had made so much and in such a way of the matter that Mrs. Hodges was wholly discouraged, Geraldine ashamed, and the earl confounded.

"Now you see she is no Gothic girl who loves titles!" Fanny cried.

"Oh, yes, she is," said Lucy, whose heart was bounding.

"If she were really a Gothic girl who loved titles do you think she would refuse such a handsome earl?" Fanny continued. "The earl first spoke to mamma, and mamma, quite running away with the bait, told the social secretary, who hinted it to the society reporter, and the society reporter, who had heard of the walks and rides together, made what they call a good story, which was put in print so all the world might see. Then Geraldine saw it, and pr-r-r!—for she is a devil when she is roused."

"She is?" Lucy asked.

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"Yes; she is so repressed that when her feelings do break out they come with a rush."

Lucy knitted her brows in wonder.

"Nevertheless, she will marry Arthur," she repeated.

When Fanny reached the Hodges' she said nothing of the engagement; that could rest for the present. She refused to take off her wraps unless Geraldine agreed to come to Wentwood that very night; and Geraldine was glad to escape from her mother, who took rather hearty meals in bed and was always crying when her daughter appeared.

It chanced that night that, Fanny retiring early, the two girls had a chat in Lucy's room. Lucy's talk was alive with all the detail, interpreted according to her own genius, of what had occurred at Kern's Ford since the group of steamer friends had parted on the pier. Through the eyes of another Geraldine saw the scene in the opera house when John spoke. From the lips of another she heard every word that John said as he walked up the hill at the side of this foreign girl on the night that he crossed his Rubicon.

"Lin and Fanny were not there?" Geraldine asked.

"The terrible monopolists! I know they wanted to go, but they remained away because they knew

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that their presence would be construed against him. Wasn't that splendid?"

"And that night, after he had done the finest, greatest thing in all his career, did he speak of his old friends?"

Geraldine meant, did he speak of her, and she might have betrayed her meaning had it not been for her naturally controlled manner.

"Why, he wasn't thinking of them any more than he was thinking of himself. He was thinking only of the hundreds of thousands who would read his speech to-morrow—would they understand him?" replied Lucy.

This was a surprise to Geraldine, who had always thought of John and his power as being personal. What woman thinks otherwise of the man who interests her deeply? Evidently he had not spoken or thought of her. He could know no real love except love of his work, and marriage to him would mean only intellectual affinity.

Geraldine, whose manner was so impersonal, was at heart altogether personal. Half charmed, half rebellious, she listened as Lucy, all unconscious of the truth that lay hidden under the exterior of this sphinx of a girl, went on from the night of the speech to the night when the returns came in.

"We went to that, too, daddy and I," she said.

Through Another's Eyes

“Wasn't it fine of him to invite two foreigners? We hadn't even seen anything of the kind at home, and your ways are different to ours. I became so interested in the campaign and I came to know so many of the people connected with it, that I feel like a politician myself. Mr. Frane returned the night before election, after his last speech in Philadelphia. Election day was his first free, quiet day. He said he felt like a young lawyer when the jury went out on his first case. He sent up to know if I wouldn't go riding with him. It was good to see him so rested and care-free. He said that the one delightful thing about politics was that you were in it thick until the very minute you stopped and you stopped the night before the election without any ends dragging.

“I waited outside on my horse while he went in to vote; for I wanted to see that, too. The photographers were at his heels, and I judge that if any of them got a good one of him it would be published. His attitude is very different to Mr. Belmore's, who tries to dodge them. That's the reason, Mr. Frane says, that his pictures in the papers are so good and Mr. Belmore's so poor.

“And, well—I like that American word which enables you to jump from one thing to another—who were the others in the little office the night we received the returns? The boss and his wife—

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bless her good heart, so simple and unchanging and so Irish; for truly, the longer I live the more I believe they were all born to the purple—and the proprietor of the Ford House and his wife, and I believe that was all that had seats.

“Back of us the whole town, it seemed to me, had crowded in, according to order of arrival. Father, who never fails to discourse, said that we should now see what the millions were going to do to the demagogue, as he always calls Mr. Frane. The hotel proprietor said it was a show-down and coming to cases, and apologised to me for using slang. But father likes the demagogue. He has taken to calling Mr. Frane ‘John,’ and so have I. It seems so natural; every one in Kearn’s Ford calls him John.

“Father and the negro valet were nearest the telegraph instrument. Wasn’t that odd—the man from Africa and a scientist from London with their heads close together, bent on the same idea! You see how we’re being Americanised. We’ll be taking out our papers next. The negro was the most important of us all except the telegrapher, who was to tell us whether John was elected or not. John told me afterwards that he was immensely pleased at the telegrapher’s support, because nobody is a hero to a telegrapher.

“‘I’ll give it to you straight, John,’ he said,

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'but if it's against you I'll give it with a breaking heart. If you don't win this time you'll win next; you'll win as soon as the people know you.'

"John, of course, was the coolest of all. He was smiling at us and all of his friends who were crowding in at the door. You see, he hadn't thought of himself; he had thought only of the cause. He had put the truth as he saw it very clearly to those who were to judge, and if they were against him there was no rankling in his heart; for you were sure that he would rather live with his friends in Kearn's Ford than go to the governor's house. You see, he isn't like the American he describes who is working always for his own cabin and his own girl; he wants good cabins for all the others, and his fortune is theirs."

It seemed to Geraldine that this stranger had given a true translation of John's nature—so kind that he had come all the way to Washington to propose to a girl who his friends said was the girl for him; while not herself, but a stranger, had shared his thoughts in the crisis of his life.

"The first news we had was from a ward in Philadelphia. The boss exclaimed, 'I expected that!' and the telegrapher exclaimed, 'Humph! they're against everything that John stands for, anyway.' He was as nervous in his movements as the instrument, and fearfully angry. He really

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didn't say 'Humph'; he used a noun which kindly theologians say represents only a metaphorical idea. John was still smiling as he looked over at father and me and hummed a never-care tune; for, you see, we didn't know but this first district was an indication of the way all the others would go. It is that way sometimes, they said. Then for a minute we didn't get a word except that Texas had gone Democratic. The boss growled, 'What we want is news!' No doubt the telegraph is a grand institution. But in the old stage-coach days people weren't tortured so in ten minutes that they seemed like ten hours. It was odd sitting there with everybody silent, waiting for that little mechanical devil to tell us whether John was elected or not.

"Then the reports came in very fast, and they were all one way, and everybody talked; and finally the party manager sent word that it was at least a hundred thousand. You wondered what the candidate would do on such an occasion. Quite the natural thing for him. He put his hand on the big black paw of the man from Africa and said, 'Jim, we win!' And the negro said, 'By Gawd, we do, t'ank Gawd!'

"'No strings! no strings! I told you so!' said the hotel man Binns. He had been making speeches all over the State, and has become quite an orator, John says, by pretending not to be one.

Through Another's Eyes

Then everybody nominated John for President with a cheer; but he explained to us afterwards that all governors are nominated for President the night of their election. The old boss looked over at him from beneath his shaggy eyebrows and said: 'If you think of starting a primary school for politicians you'll find me on the front seat learning how to spell.'

"And, well, we won! we won! I felt as happy as if I had been elected governor myself, and so did father. The hotel man announced that there were no strings on his house that night, and he opened the doors for the crowd. He had provided a supper for Mr. and Mrs. Kennan and himself and wife and John and for the two foreigners, and I think he put the climax to what we all felt when he said to John: 'Nobody could help voting for you if they knew you; and don't you lose your faults now that you've got to be governor. We know them, too, and we like them.' John laughed and said that if it was his faults that made him popular he would try to work his virtues overtime while he was in office.

"He had something to say to every one in the crowd, and he said it in a way that meant, 'You helped; you did it just as much as I did.' When we left him he seemed to understand that we were two foreigners in wonderland—'And you

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found it worth while to stay through it all!' he said. 'It was very good of you.' Then father quoted some Latin to him, and he surprised me by responding in Latin in the midst of all that turmoil. Whatever it was, it quite rang the bell with father. Therein lies his demagogue's gift, only father always adds now that he is a *good* demagogue with a real backbone.

"Well—and this is quite the last well—I've been keeping you up fearfully late; but I thought you'd be interested, as you know John so well. When we reached the hill we found the Belmores up. Of course they'd heard the news over the telephone, but they wanted all the details; and Lindley, so quiet and so real, said, 'Good old John Frane!' and that is what we all felt."

Lucy slept like a brick because she did not love John Frane and the earl's engagement to Geraldine had been denied; but Geraldine lay awake all night, rehearsing the scene which Lucy had described as a part of some world whose doors were locked for her.

XXV

BREAKING THE CIRCUIT

L YING in the same pocket of Carniston's portfolio was Wormley's latest call to duty and a call to the fresh air and open country. It was after he had read Mrs. Hodges' public denial, with its disagreeable associations for all concerned, that he answered Fanny's note, excusing his acceptance of her invitation to himself on the ground that he deserved a holiday before he began the next lesson.

Joining Lindley as his host passed through Washington, they went on together to Wentwood. He was not surprised when he was told that Lucy was there before him. He had expected as much, and in his heart, so rebellious was his mood, he had hoped as much. Sometimes the Belmores hunted at Wentwood, an old plantation which had descended to Fanny from her mother's side, and again they went there simply to rest. This year they would not have gone at all if a young married woman had not had her own idea of the proper dénouement for this tale of four. Therefore, she did not want a rabble at the house;

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an objective four plus a subjective two were six and just enough.

The key-stone of her plan was the promise of John Frane to follow them in a few days. But this was to be a secret from Geraldine—a vital, commanding secret—as the plotter kept reiterating to Lindley. Nor had she mentioned to John that Geraldine would be at Wentwood. She feared that one or the other might retreat and she wanted to bring them together quite unexpectedly and under her own eye.

When Lindley and Carniston arrived it was nearly dinner time, and they found Fanny somewhat worried about Geraldine.

“She has been erratic to-day, even for her,” Fanny explained. “It is almost rude the way she has deserted us. She came to my room about seven this morning and said she was going for a ride. She seemed unusually preoccupied and quiet, and just a trifle moody. We haven’t heard a word from her since. I have sent Hudson on to Smileys’—she might go there, as she knows Mrs. Smiley—to find out if they have seen her.”

They were talking of a general search if no news came soon, when Mather, the stableman from Smileys’, whom Hudson, going by a different path, had passed on the way, brought a note from the missing one.

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"You and Miss von Kar must have thought me *distracte*, indeed, to have bolted the way I did this morning. I needed oxygen, I think. I had a fearfully long ride and am quite done up; so I'm going to remain the night here. Why can't you come over for me in the morning? Mather will bring your answer."

Lucy, the one who might have guessed the cause of Geraldine's astonishing excursion at such an early hour after having sat up so late the night before, was entirely innocent of any thought that her narrative had disturbed Geraldine's peace of mind; and, besides, she was preoccupied with her own emotions.

As Carniston looked into her eyes again and she looked into his, either was asking the question, "How has it been with you since we parted?" while either saw, or thought he saw, that the other had grown older, or at least grown weary. Lucy was thinner and paler and more *spirituelle*, and the lines about Carniston's mouth had hardened with his first real contact with that side of the world where the furnaces are stoked and the money is made. She called him Arthur as of old, and he answered her with Lucy. Thus easily again they went through the pantomime of two friends with common interests of fellowship and reminiscence.

No chance for them to speak alone offered itself

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that night. It came the next morning without seeking, when the four started to meet Geraldine, and the Belmores, leading the way, allowed the other pair to fall behind.

Their horses, with the freshness taken out of them, were at an easy walk when Lucy broke the silence of an uncanny quarter of an hour, in which she was smiling all the time and Carniston, abashed and conscience-stricken, could not look her in the face, while both knew that they would not part till they had spoken of their secret.

"Come," she rallied him, "come, Arthur, it was denied."

This sounds brutal in print. But there was so little of banter and so much of sympathy in her manner that she seemed a fellow-conspirator. And her smile! He had watched it flickering as it did with a never-care song. Here was all her old charm calling him after the drudgery of the first lesson and away from the drudgery of lessons to come.

"Lucy, if you are going to talk that way," he said, in genuine appeal, "I'll take that fence and gallop away to the devil. After Bender, I am sure he would be real, honest company. I could at least fight him with my fists, and they and a title are about all I have for the battle."

"But tell me, was it so hard?" Lucy asked.

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"No, it wasn't, I am sure, with such a handsome girl as Geraldine."

She spoke impersonally, and he caught for the first time a suggestion of a change of attitude of which she was soon to make him fully aware.

"Hard! I did my duty! Geraldine was very kind. She is fine. She helped to make me ashamed of myself."

Here was one from the home land, to whom he might speak unrestrictedly, to whom he might explain the routine of his miserable weeks; and while she listened with a sympathy that drew him on, he told, not without some sense of humour, of Bender's, of the sly hints of the old ambassador, of some American mothers who offered their daughters on golden platters, and of other American mothers who smiled at him indifferently as if he were a drummer come to an overstocked market. Continuing his comedy, which was all tragedy to him, he even related the story of his proposal in Lafayette Square which made him and not the girl ridiculous. But he left out the little incident about Geraldine buying the paper and devouring the returns of Frane's election, which might have given Lucy an inkling that Fanny and not herself was right, after all.

"Her compliment about me was delightful," Lucy said, "although I don't deserve it. I can't

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express myself. Nobody really can. I fear the world would be one babble if we could. Only, Geraldine can smile and win everybody and I must say something or they will overlook me. But the main point for you is her answer to your question. Will you tell me her exact phrase again?"

"It seemed," he said, after he had repeated it, "as if, graciously, from her benign heights, she was intimating that I need not be altogether discouraged for she might pick me up again, although she presently laid me aside; and I, a grandson of the hunter, felt small and mean and futile."

"She did not say 'no,' " Lucy rejoined. "She is a Gothic girl and she will be a countess yet. Yes, she is a Gothic girl, even if she does have a sense of humour. Think of the gargoyles; don't they ever talk to you, Arthur? They were meant to ward off the devils, but they don't keep the earls away."

"Oh, Lucy!" he expostulated, suddenly stricken with the idea, "since I went into bondage I seem to have lost all sense of propriety. What an enormity that I should have told you this!"

"Not an enormity to tell it to a friend and counsellor," and she spoke slowly and softly, "a friend and counsellor, you see, with special privileges; such a friend as may come only once to a man—for when the back seats were empty and we weren't

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thinking of the cost of petrol, we"—a long pause—"you know."

Was it irresistible for her to test again those strands by which she could tell whether or not absence had made the heart fonder, or had she no such author's or actor's thought?

"Lucy, if you talk that way I shall take wings and fly with you to the end of the world, and laugh at Wormley, and pawn the heads of the beasts that the hunter killed!"

Little did he, amiably removed by two generations from the hunter, think that this was precisely what that dare-devil would have done.

"It's nice to contemplate flying," she said. "It's done on the stage with wires; and if you don't see the wires, and Columbine is *petite*, it seems quite real. But Columbine comes down to earth again, and I'm sure she wouldn't be a Columbine for long if she couldn't pay for her meals and lodging. She flies for pay; only the rich can afford to fly for pleasure. I fear, Arthur, before we had gone far we would find that the tissue of our wings was paper money; and when the breeze of bills had carried them away we would look at the framework of sorry sentiment and find that it would not make cover for our heads, and as kindlings the only fire it would make would be heart fires, which don't keep the grate from being cold on a winter's

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day. Then we would look at each other and ask, 'Who proposed it first?' just to shift personal responsibility."

She put back her sadness with play-actress buoyancy as she smiled at him, while he cast his eyes down in confusion and beat his boot with his crop.

"But if I have truly loved you, I am truly your friend," she proceeded. "I am trying to get out of self and live for others. Mr. Frane has taught me that. The fact that you feel so mean for having to propose to one girl so soon after you agreed to marry another shows that you are really good and noble. Let's bring my never-care philosophy to bear. It embraces science, which you understand. Can you not see that this illusion which is called love is produced by a certain mood of the mind which, being exposed opportunely to a certain masculine or feminine charm, seems to complete the circuit? You are afraid to break the current. But once you do break it another circuit is soon made."

"Not so soon," said Carniston, grimly.

"Oh, it doesn't come gradually," she said, and it was not altogether a smile that made her lips quiver. "It didn't with us. It is like a flash. Besides, you can't get the new inspiration till you put the old aside. Does the average young man say

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'I love that girl'? Do we believe in the Roman oracles or in the divine inspiration of Joan of Arc? If not, how can we believe that this man and that woman were specially mated?

"Suppose I had been reared in Paris and had never known London at all. Would we both have gone through life inconsolable because we never met? No. To-day their friends say Tom and Mary will make a good match; conditions of wealth, likes, and temper are in their favor. Doesn't the law say that marriage is a contract? Does it contemplate marriage as an illusion during a mood? It's plain that you can't make your estate, your position, and your whole life subject to this whim of fate with which story-writers play as jugglers play with balls. Have you never tried to reason that way? I have. You see I am a philosopher."

"Yes, I have reasoned that way through many nights," he answered.

Every argument that she had advanced he had rehearsed again and again; and at the moment when he felt that conviction was complete he always heard another voice which was not contentious, but made a statement as simple as that the grass grows or the sun shines.

"But you love Lucy!" it would shout through the door at the most inopportune moment. If

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it gained a hearing it was not prolix, for it depended on the "current" rather than on processes of thought. "Astrology belonged to the ancients and stocks and shares belong to the moderns," it said. "I am the sacred fire of chivalry which you cannot quench. I gave strength to the first man who fought for the mate of his choice."

"But you love Lucy!" the voice was saying to him now.

"You see, it is hard for me to break the circuit, and so I can't get a fresh start," he said.

"I am sorry," said Lucy. But was she really sorry? She gleaned in that instant a little happiness out of much bitterness. It was good to be loved, though it was folly. "You must think of me as grown very worldly and wise of late," she added. "You mustn't think you've broken my heart or done anything wrong."

Something told him that the change was complete; that for her the current was indeed broken. But for him who has been so matter-of-fact when he showed her his father's letter time had only increased the value of the treasure that he had lost, and he was ready then, in the intoxication of her nearness, to make the flight without thinking of the kindling wood.

"So I'm going to help now. I'm not going to be rude and banter you any more. It's all over.

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"We're old friends; we understand each other," she concluded.

"Yes, it's all over," he repeated, without looking up.

Then they came in sight of Lindley and Fanny entering the Smileys' gate, and their horses, being near to a habitation, began to trot. Carniston, poor at acting, looked blue when they arrived. But Lucy was chatting gaily. Geraldine observing her concluded that she was, indeed, a play-actress and began to dislike her.

"We weren't so much behindhand," Lucy explained. "I was telling Arthur about some letters I had received from mutual friends at home, and we saw a fence and wondered if we could take it, and we did."

XXVI

FOR SOMETHING REAL

THEY remained at the Smileys' only a few minutes, and on the ride back Lindley and Fanny again took the lead. But Lucy soon caught up with them, purposely leaving Carniston and Geraldine together.

The day was fair, the road hard, and the atmosphere of that November dryness and clearness which John Frane said had made Americans out of Anglo-Saxons, Teutons, and Latins. Geraldine was one of the finished products of America and the air, and she was never so superb as when on horseback. Carniston seemed a companion even more in keeping with her than when they had walked out toward Lafayette Square on the famous morning that the final returns came in one hundred and eighty thousand strong.

"Do you ride much at home?" she asked.

"Some, in the season. Father used to go in for it a great deal. He was M. F. H. for a long time. I thought he dropped it because he was getting offish with the world. The real reason, which I

For Something Real

never knew until he died, was that he was too poor; and while he was making economies in every direction in order that I might have a handsome income, I had been living in a way which I know now was not living at all. He had been very sweet-tempered and careless when he was young, and when he was old he made this sacrifice for me, because his was such a character that he could never forget what it meant to be young. The sacrifice was all the more touching because he loved to sit in the sunlight and be agreeable to everybody."

He spoke with a boyish frankness which had its charm—a charm of something the same sort that his father must have had in youth. Her mention of Burbridge had come to him just after his glimpse of the Smileys had made him think of home and family associations. The Smileys were Virginians of the old school, living modestly, simply—and narrowly, perhaps—and thinking more of Fanny's Southern family than of Lindley's wealth. Carniston felt that he could understand the Smileys better than many Americans he had met.

"And your father gave it up because of money, and you may lose the estate just because of money?" she asked. "*Just money?*"

"*Just money!*" he repeated cynically.

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But it was *just* money to her. Her meaning was the same as if an ocean pilot had said, "*just* air."

"And you in England," she went on, "you who have all the other things are led directly into touch with a class of people here who haven't the other things but have more wealth than they know what to do with."

"Yes, it does sometimes seem a waste of energy the way it is used." The phrase was one of Frane's, but Carniston did not give credit, as the exchange editors say, because the plagiarism was unconscious.

"That accounts for the bargain," Geraldine observed.

She was a little surprised at herself again to find how easy it was for her to talk to Carniston. They settled down into a long conversation, and when they arrived a half-hour after the others, Geraldine did not make the excuse that they had been taking a fence.

At the luncheon table she said quietly to Belmore that there was some business about which her mother had asked her to speak to him. She went later to the upstairs room where he had been at work with his secretary answering letters and telegrams. He looked up, kindly and curious.

"You saw that notice in the paper about my

For Something Real

engagement to Carniston," Geraldine began. Her eyelids were far apart, almost with the effect of staring, as if she were wondering at herself for what she was going to say.

"Yes, and happily saw it denied," Belmore responded.

"It was announced a little prematurely; that is all," she pursued, rigidly. "You have been the guardian of our property and the earl's estate is poor. I should like to know if there is a million available to pay off his debts."

"Geraldine! You!" This much escaped him. It stung her, but she gave no sign of embarrassment.

"I have thought hard, very hard," she answered.

"And you wish an accounting," he resumed; for her manner seemed to leave him no other avenue of approach.

There were many things that this man of blood and iron and silence might have said. The chronicles of his family carried him back to the day when Jim Hodges confessed himself bankrupt. It was Lindley's father who had broken him in taking up the gauntlet which Jim had thrown down, and Sam Belmore, who could be bitter and harsh, was disinclined to give quarter. But associated with them was a Scotchman from Pittsburg, with his sentiment ever under canny control, who believed in

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patting the world on the back and making it run your errands. He said that Jim knew things that were better left untold and he might turn insurgent; "and, man, he's clever, and he'll make more money for us if we give him another start. He's humble and willing now, too." So the Hodges' fortune was saved and the friendship of the two partners resumed, with the result that only a year afterwards, when a panic was on the land and the doctors told Jim Hodges that he had not long to live, he left the management of his estate, literally then worth nothing, such was the depression of the market, to Sam Belmore, who had furnished the cash to carry it over the crisis, and to his son after him, with a prayer for Geraldine.

Lindley was thinking what the expenditure of that fortune would mean in good roads, in bridges, in parks, in schools. It would build and endow twenty hospitals. To him, the man of gold, money meant what soldiers mean to a general, and he foresaw the loss of a corps which he had nursed and trained and "made out of clay." It was power for good taken out of the land whose overflowing resources, answering to modern genius, were soon to be exhausted; and it was going because of one mother who had brought up an only daughter to be unhappy. Such were the actual thoughts of this so-called public enemy, who was said to have

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a "marble heart" because he did not know how to give the "glad hand"; that "glad hand" which sometimes has an itching palm.

Although it has taken many lines to throw light on the character of this type of the second generation, the summary of them all flashed through Lindley's mind in that moment of evident concentration on a subject which, his business associates said, gave his judgments when they came an air of finality.

"Why," he asked, "Geraldine, why are you going to do this?" That was as good as saying that he knew she could not really love the earl. With him, love was the controlling factor in that social convention called the marriage contract; for he loved Fanny.

"If I tell you, Lin," and she leaned toward him earnestly, "it's not because it's polite for you to ask that question, but because you really have a right to know. But you must promise not to argue. I'm keyed up to the tenacity of the winning stroke when vantage has varied out and in for five minutes. It was so fortunate that Fanny invited me down here where the quiet has made me logical."

"I'll not argue. I'll listen. You know that I like to listen best, and always to you, Geraldine; for you are very dear to Fanny and me."

"Please don't hurt me!" Then, as if brushing

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aside her exclamation, she proceeded. "Maybe I'm not like what I seem, even to you and Fanny. I can lie awake for hours thinking about some little remark that I seemed scarcely to notice when I heard it. People only expect me to look beautiful and smile. I am a kind of hothouse plant; that is why they named me Geraldine. If only I might have been Mollie or Kate or something simple! One thing you mustn't do—you mustn't think that I don't understand things a little, even if it is so hard for me to say what I mean. I did love father. You know, I feel as if I could have done his cooking and washing, as mother did once, and feel happier than I do to-day. He was so real—and we used to make him so uncomfortable at times. If I had him now—I'm older, I'm a woman quite, am I not?—I'd parade him proudly, as much as to say, I am his daughter—I, I!—the daughter of this great, strong man, and he says I help him to do something real—I like that word real best of all, don't you?"

"But father went so long ago that I couldn't even give him a good-bye smile which would make him understand that all I wanted was to be a good girl and make him happy. I do remember he did say once, when I was holding his thumb in my little hand—and what fine, big, strong hands father had!—'Be patient with your mother.

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When she scolds me because my manners are bad it's because she's so miserable. If you could only have known her when I knew her first and she helped me—before the boy died and before you had come at all! I can never forget that, and you please try to remember for me.'

"Well, Lin, I've remembered and I've been patient, though I did break out sometimes. Then I was a little ashamed of myself. But I wouldn't let the world know that I was—no, not for anything. I suppose that's my father's pride. Anyway, you can see what a lot I've thought about things, haven't I?"

He nodded sadly, listening and thinking. He was wondering if her refusal of John did not hark back to her father's dislike of him; if the true nature of her depths were not as yet unsounded even by Fanny.

"But it has not been real since father died. It has all been like a play when we were with others; and when we weren't, it has been like a play when you go behind the scenes after the last act. I like something real. You and Fanny and John and that little German girl—you are so real. Carniston is real. When I see you I always feel that there is something missing, something that I want. You understand. I've noticed it when I saw Fanny and mother together—although you are so

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kind—as if—as if we weren't exactly in your world."

"No, Geraldine! Not that! Never, never!" Lindley said. "We never thought of it. I suppose it's your imagination or our preoccupation with our own affairs. You are in Washington; we are in New York. Your mother likes society and we do not."

"You are the soul of kindness, and it's my fault if you don't understand. I see so much and don't know how to describe it. Remember, you promised not to argue. I came to you to say that I have something to exchange for something that will make mother happy, for something that will make me patient, which is the thing father wanted. Over there it is real, at least. Over there the path lies plain, with no false efforts, and you live as you please, because that is the privilege of position assured. If half of the fortune is mine I want it, and to leave half to mother, as I'm sure that father would want me to."

It was at his tongue's end to make an appeal for John, explaining the part he had played the night he sent John on his quixotic journey to Washington. But he recalled his promise to Fanny not to meddle.

"There's enough and more," he said. "It is between five and six millions. I'll be glad to turn

For Something Real

over everything to you and Carniston at any time. As you have a man in the family now, that would be better, I should say."

"Very well." She was the old Geraldine again, undisturbed.

"And, Geraldine," he added suddenly, in view of Fanny's plans and John's unannounced arrival on the morrow, "the engagement is not to be given out to-night at the table or anything like that. I mean, it's just dressing-time, and it would come as a shock all round and be somewhat awkward."

"No, we'll not announce it till it's convenient for you to go to mother with me. That's understood with the earl. We'll do it all quite regularly this time. There'll be no denial."

She was serene as she went out of the door.

Instantly she was gone he hastened to Fanny, at first giving her a brief of the situation as he would have given to a man of affairs. But she demanded, as he would have done in a serious matter where he was an expert, a detailed statement.

"We must plan! We must plan!" she said. "We must clear out and leave the house to them—and if John only talks! I have it! Geraldine must meet him at the station."

"Hardly practicable," he said. "It's the eight A. M. at Wayne Junction. Would you ask her to go alone to meet him at that hour?"

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“Oh, she wouldn’t know he was coming. She must meet him by surprise.”

“How?” he asked, helplessly.

“I don’t know. I am thinking. Why do you suppose I am holding my fingers to my temples in this way, you goose?”

“It seems to me,” he said determinedly, “that the thing is for you to go and plead with her as only you can, Fanny. It was all I could do to keep from telling her that it was all a hoax about the disinheritance and—and shaking her back to reason.”

“Thank heaven you didn’t! Argue with Geraldine now! It would only stiffen her. All I ask of you, Lin, is to keep still, to agree to any plan I suggest. It all depends on them, now. Oh, I can’t express it, but you ought to know! If John talks—if she really does love him! I’m not so sure she does. But I do know that to-morrow is the last chance.”

XXVII

A FREE DAY IN THE COUNTRY

I TOLD you that I had invited Amy Standish on from Pittsburg, didn't I?" Fanny had dropped into Geraldine's room for a minute at bedtime. "No? Well, no matter. I have just had a telegram from her saying that she will arrive at eight o'clock in the morning at Wayne Junction. I wonder if you would mind having coffee and toast at half-past seven and going in the car with Lin and me to meet her, and all breakfasting together when we return. Naturally, Lucy—devoted little thing!—is going to sit up late writing a long letter to her father and so she will want to sleep late."

Of course Geraldine agreed. Fanny had given herself no fears on this feature of her plan which, generally speaking, as an old general would have told her, was dangerously complex for actual field conditions. To complete the assurance that Lucy would not awake early, she went to Lucy's room and there chatted till midnight, and then told her that if she would leave her letter outside of her

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door one of the servants who had to go early to the Junction would post it for her.

When Geraldine came downstairs the next morning Fanny's maid brought word that her mistress had a headache, and wouldn't Geraldine and Lin please go on without her?

"Mr. Belmore was down half an hour ago," Hudson, who brought the coffee, explained. "He didn't sleep very well and he's out walking in the grounds."

Geraldine wondered if her affairs had kept him awake. Meanwhile, she kept glancing at the clock. When she asked Hudson to tell Mr. Belmore that it was time to start, he went out by way of the hall and returned directly through the kitchen in the manner of a servant making an apology.

"I'm so sorry, Miss, I made a mistake. It was the cook who told me, and what the cook meant to say was that Mr. Belmore had ordered coffee for seven-twenty, and he's overslept and I'm just going to wake him."

"Don't," she said; "there won't be time. He needs rest. That is why he comes to the country. Let him sleep, please, and tell him when he wakes that I have gone alone."

Hudson was unctuously prompt in acceding to her wishes. She was hurrying into her wraps when it occurred to her that Lucy might be up, and if

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so she would have just time for coffee and to slip into a jacket; but Hudson was unmistakably ready in his answer to this suggestion.

"She particularly said she was to be waked on no account before eight-thirty."

Having broken away from the academic commandment, Fanny had invented with a freedom that made her offence brilliant. As for the headache, she was quite free from it for the first time in twelve hours when she had the proof that the servants had each played his part without arousing suspicion, and she and Lindley from her bedroom window saw Geraldine departing in the car.

"Fanny, you're a genius! You're a wonder!" said Lindley. "I felt sure that some of them would blunder."

"Now if John only talks!" she said.

"And he must," he rejoined, "for Geraldine can't."

On the way to the station Geraldine concluded that she would be dutiful enough in marrying Carniston without further gratifying her mother's ambition by having her trousseau made into Sunday supplements. Yes, it must be a quiet wedding.

As the train drew in she was looking for Amy Standish, of Pittsburg, when she saw the unmistakable, energetic person of John Frane among the half-dozen people who alighted. His nostrils

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were sniffing not battle this time, but the first breath of the morning air of a free day in the country; his mind was not distracted with affairs five hundred miles away but concentrated on play with all the zest it ever gave to work. The girl on the platform was as fresh as the November morning. When his eyes met hers they sent a message of delighted surprise as deep and honest as his heart, while his face glowed with happiness which was infectious, irresistible. She was glad to see him; her heart sang to her that she was.

"John, you're looking splendid! You seem to thrive on it, this politics," she said.

"We won, Geraldine! I suppose one does feel a little better than when he loses," he answered happily.

"Isn't Amy Standish on the train?" she asked.

"Amy Standish? Oh, yes, I remember I met her once with Fanny." He never forgot a face and rarely a name. "No, I didn't see her. I'm sure she isn't."

She was not, for the good reason that she had never been invited to Wentwood.

"We thought that she was coming, too." Geraldine did not wonder why she put in that "too" or why she did not tell him that she did not know he was expected. "Fanny has a headache and Lin overslept, or they would be here," she explained.

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"But you were up and you came. You are always a good soldier and a prompt one," he said as he helped her into the car. When they were seated he turned to her smiling, his enthusiasm and magnetism in full play. "We've had a great time, Geraldine, a great time since I saw you. It was a good fight, and there's nothing in the world like that."

"It's all in all to you," she thought.

"I'd like to tell you about it, but I don't know just where to begin. Have you read anything?"

She was cut cruelly by his question, which was to her only another way of intimating that she could not understand his work; but she did not remonstrate.

"The Philadelphia papers and the Pittsburg papers and the Kearn's Ford paper—every one for you and against you that I could get," she answered, as literally as if she were on the witness stand.

"You did this for me!"—and while he had thought that she was only riding and dressing and dining and thinking of any one but him. He had gone through the campaign without the sympathy he most needed, when it was overflowing in silence.

"You did all this for me!" he repeated.

"Yes," she answered, still literally.

"I don't understand—I—" The presence of

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the chauffeur made him change his sentence. "Oh, I wish you could have been there the night of the speech! I believe you'd have found that worth while, and the night the returns came in, too. Who do you think were truly the happiest of all Kearn's Ford because I had won? Why, Jim and our good old Boniface Binns across the street.

"You remember Dr. von Kar and Lucy?" he went on incoherently, unable to say the thing he wanted to say. "They became positively factious for our side. I like that little girl. I like her and I think that something is breaking her heart." But he stopped himself in time from associating Lucy with Carniston; for he had no right to connect her with conjectures and, he added to Geraldine, it would never do to repeat his vagaries. "The old doctor quoted Latin to me the night of the victory. Illustrations from the ancient urban republic are so applicable to modern continental America!"

"What was your first thought when you won?" she asked tentatively, wondering if it were not a woman's silly question.

"That we had won—our side. Then, how I must keep myself in hand, and how, after all, we had only had the shout and cheer of sending the army forth; or at best we had only taken the outer works, and before us lay the long siege, with

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steady firing and little theatricalism, and by-and-by, probably, unpopularity. Then I thought——”

But there was the chauffeur. On other occasions and to other pairs who had been in the back seats, the leather cap of this monster had seemed like a gigantic hobgoblin ear set with a row of eyes.

“Then I thought—I was selfish then—I thought what it meant to me personally—I——”

But here they were, looking at the back of a leather coat when he had only one free day, and going straight on to Wentwood where they would be with other people till he had to return. Wherein lay Fanny’s cunning? Did she not know that the chauffeur could see and hear? The pair in the back seats had no idea that he had his eyes on a certain tree, nor had they any reason to think that he had a map in his pocket; for, as everybody knows, modern strategy requires security of information and an immensity of detail which takes all the romance out of the work.

“And what did you think for yourself—for you alone are the first premise with all your friends?” Geraldine asked.

“Oh, I’m not the first premise! I’m the instrument, Geraldine, so far as the politics go, but”——the car stopped beside the tree and the monster in leather shook his head savagely. When he had

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crawled under the machine they heard him speak a word which was in keeping with the language of monsters and which is supposed to be the permanent abiding-place of some of them.

"That lobster Jones, he's changed on me! Broke square in two! Well! of all the—" It was marvellous that a chauffeur who was so literal in following instructions on a map should have the imagination to act so well. But Fanny had had perfect confidence in this particular subordinate from the first. When he touched his finger to that hobgoblin ear the pair in the back seats saw that it was only a leather cap, after all.

"Busted!" he observed, cynically.

"How far is it to the house?" John asked.

"Two miles."

They had often walked two miles before in their lives, John remarked to Geraldine, and they started out together over that road where, the day before, Lucy had tried to hasten the inevitable and to do right, regardless of her ghosts, and Geraldine and Carniston had, with the indirection that suited the occasion, made the bargain for what Bender would have called "the flight of another heart abroad."

"Geraldine, you asked me a question which I couldn't answer on account of a third person being present," said John, when they were out of hear-

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ing of the chauffeur. "I have much to say to you, and to begin at the beginning, there was a night when I lifted a load off my shoulders by making a speech which was the turning-point of my career. They say to-day that it was good politics. They say that always when you go straight for the mark and it happens that the bull's-eye rings the gong of popularity. The load I would lift now is off my heart, so that the way for my affections will be as free and clear as my future career of usefulness.

"After the election, when I had time to think of myself, it came overwhelmingly to me—this selfish part. Once I tried to speak to you, but the way I spoke was false and wavering. I was making a deal between my heart and my pride then, not between principles and a boss. This time I will tell you everything. I will tell you that of all the congratulations I received I looked forward most keenly to the one from you. You said 'Splendid, splendid, splendid, chums.' That sounded like a dinner-table compliment. The 'chums' was graceful; the 'splendid' meant the nature of the victory. But there was nothing from you—you—the *you* revealed to me this morning."

Yes, Fanny, he was talking now, and talking in the way of a soldier who lays his heart bare and

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in his power and resource backs the campaign on one line.

"This telegram seemed a title for the picture you made that morning at breakfast. The 'splendid' was the impression you made on the world; the 'chums,' a reminiscence. It did not seem to me that this could be really you, but the picture and the evidence said so. Still, it made no difference. I was speaking to you that night that I confessed to a deal with the boss. You inspired me to come out straight with the truth. I had a flash of you as you looked that day when you were capsized. I saw you, not doubting, not fearing, and ready for the worst, smiling. I thought that I, too, ought not to be afraid of the worst. I was winning for you in the same way the night the returns came in.

"I remember that after the speech, when I walked home with the little German girl, full of my own ideas to the exclusion of other people's, as I frequently am, and expecting everybody to listen to me, I was talking to you; and when we reached the lamp at the Belmores' gate I saw her surprise at the sudden change of my expression. And the night we won—then, again, I wanted to talk to you, for no other reason than that you are *you*. That is the whole thing and the great thing. I haven't any money, and I would take yours away;

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and I tell you what is in my heart, for I can't help telling you."

She turned to him as both stopped; her lips were quivering and her lashes were wet.

"John, I—I"—and she swayed a little, though her strong will was still in control—"John, is it all true? I mean, is it true to you?—for that is enough for me. I am so stupid—it does not seem that I could mean so much to anybody. Do I—do I?"

There was a mighty demand for truth in her eyes.

"I swear!" He clasped both her hands in his. "No, you are not stupid. You are fine, which is better than being clever. You have the art of action and comprehension and not the art of chat, which is sometimes the art of little feeling and little doing. The thing that is in you and your heart would pass to me in a glance of your eyes if we were in the same room among a thousand people. You can go through to the end of the path you choose without hesitation at the cross-roads. My hope has always been that ours should be the same path. I swear! But I am so poor and you are so splendid, and you ought to have the luxuries to which you were bred."

She was all quiet happiness now, smiling through her tears.

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"*Just* money," she said. "I don't know as I could do the washing, but I could iron. Yes, John, I can iron beautifully. *Just* money! What is it? Who cares? The world is full of people who are trying to use it as balm for broken hearts and only irritating their wounds. Foreigners care when they have vast ancestral estates; we aren't troubled that way, are we, John? Besides, my friends tell me I look better in simple gowns. I don't think I should ever look badly, should I?"

There was here a womanly touch of pride in bringing him something of whose value her mirror had often told her.

"Anything to help you and be near you always," she said, giving herself to him.

After that first moment when they fully understood each other she confessed about Carniston; Then the monster in leather came bringing the car up cautiously over the hill to see if the coast were clear. John beckoned him so mirthfully that he approached at good speed.

"I've fixed it all right," he explained.

"I am glad," said John, "because I am going to borrow it, if you will join me, Geraldine. It's our holiday, and we can get a second breakfast at that little hotel at Boone."

She agreed instantly. Then she wrote a note to Fanny, explaining the unimportance of an

A Free Day in the Country

automobile compared with a free day in the country to two of its owner's friends. She did not write to Carniston, for she had forgotten him immediately it was decided not to return to the house, and the awkward situation of their meeting was out of the way.

When he was convinced that Geraldine knew how to run the machine—John usually rode on street cars—the proud workman turned it over to them, with many admonitions, and, bearing the note, started along the road, only to turn after he had gone a few yards and say triumphantly:

“It wasn't busted, after all.”

“We're so glad you thought it was, and so glad, too, that you found you had made a mistake,” John answered, laughing.

At that the monster in leather muttered to himself that he guessed they had made their repairs all right, too.

They turned the automobile about, and with the back seats empty they sought the hotel at Boone, as Lucy and Carniston in a motor car had once sought an inn when they had had a free day in the country on the way to Burbridge. The map of Virginia and Maryland was their plaything till they rode into Washington at dusk, where they dined together. She made him take the nine o'clock train to Pittsburg to keep the engage-

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ment he had made; for she must never be allowed to interfere with his work. She promised that she would come to Kern's Ford as soon as Fanny returned, and in the home town—their town—they would be married "soon—very soon." At the station he alighted just outside the glare of the lamps. He kissed her good-night, and she went back to her own house feeling very patient with her mother, and conscience-free so far as the breaking of a certain nobleman's heart was concerned.

"If you are only good to the world it is so good to you," John murmured before he fell asleep. "The joy of living! the joy of living!"

Geraldine, though she gave her thought no words, was thinking the same that night.

XXVIII

A GOVERNOR-ELECT

JOHN talked this time," Fanny said, as she passed the note that the chauffeur had brought across the table to Lindley at breakfast. Lucy was present, but Carniston was outside pacing the porch as he smoked a cigarette.

"You were right; you always are," Lindley answered; while Lucy could not help observing from their manner that the news was vital to both.

"I simply can't sit this breakfast through without shouting!" Fanny exclaimed, as the few lines became more comprehensible. "You're already as good as in the family, Lucy. I'm sure you would like to know that at this moment two people are dwelling in the clouds of the greatest happiness of the world, all glorious and new-found to them."

The note was passed to Lucy, who read it, filling in with imagination the lapses between Fanny's series of explanatory exclamations.

"Isn't it like John!" Fanny said. "There always was that irrepressible mischief and dash in him. Think of it, you prosy old married man,

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Lin! Oh, think of it, everybody in this bill-paying, debt-collecting, dressmaking, convention-riveted world—here are John and Geraldine in an automobile with the back seats empty!”

“The back seats empty!” Lucy gasped, abstractedly. She knew what that meant. Unconquerable memories arose, but she stifled them by joining in Fanny’s happiness. “With the back seats empty,” she continued, “and—and oh, there are enough roads even if the petrol does run out—and it doesn’t when you are rich.”

“Yes, and I didn’t tell you all. I didn’t tell you that as they fly they think that she has lost her fortune.”

“Her fortune! Miss Hodges—how?” Lucy asked.

“That’s the glorious part of it,” Fanny added, after she had explained the deceit that Lindley had practised on John. “Think of the gameness of Geraldine, reared in luxury and so used to it in every way. Because you and I couldn’t have done that ourselves, Lin, we admire it the more in others.”

“They took each other and they didn’t care! They said they’d bend the old world’s wrinkles into smiles! Both—both did that?” Lucy looked from Fanny to Lindley and back again a little wildly. “I love them both!” she added.

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Geraldine with her wealth and beauty, whom fate seemed to have sent across Carniston's path, was now out of the way. The next girl whom he courted might not make duty so attractive. Was Lucy glad on this account? Was she glad at all, except to find that the felicity which was denied to her might be enjoyed by others?

"Now you admit that she is not a Gothic girl," Fanny said, triumphantly, "our Geraldine!"

"No. She's Spartan or early Roman, with the charm of modernity, and I am glad—glad. It's so beautiful; it's so good that some one had the courage and would not turn back."

At this point Carniston entered, and, looking from one to the other, he was conscious that his coming was coincident with the close of a conversation in which he was not expected to share.

"Another fine day. I begin to believe in your climate," he said, as he seated himself rather helplessly. As he looked across at Lucy his colour heightened and her eyes sought her plate. He had been telling himself, too, that the wedding should be quiet; and once he was settled in Burbridge his laboratory and the responsibilities of his position would dull his feelings on a score where, if he were a rational man, he would have none at all or at least be able to control them.

Lucy's tongue was stricken; Carniston spoke

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about the weather again, and in the depression which came with his presence Fanny realised for the first time that strategy is tiring both to mind and nerves. She and Lindley had been up most of the night. He had made the map and coached the chauffeur, while she coached the servants.

"Miss Hodges not down yet?" asked Carniston, trying again.

"She had to go into Washington on a sudden call," Fanny explained. "We're expecting her this evening"; and she was curious as to Geraldine's method of breaking the news and its effect on him.

When they rode to Smileys' and back again to pass away as best they could that day which went on wings of joy for John and Geraldine, she tried in vain to throw Lucy and Carniston together. Lucy was unusually gay and Carniston correspondingly quiet. A telephone message after dinner from Geraldine informed them, with excuses, that a borrowed automobile was in the Hodges' garage.

"Yes, we lost a machine and you found yourself," Fanny answered. "Who is going to tell the earl?"

"I'll write him a note to-morrow. I'm too happy to write to anybody to-night, unless it is John"; and there Geraldine hung up the receiver.

As she sat opposite Carniston at the card-table that night, Fanny was reminded of games on the

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stage where one of the actors is out of the secret that the others know. They retired early, to be awakened about midnight by the steady ringing of the telephone bell with the electric mercilessness of a fire-gong. Only something of pressing importance could account for such persistency at that hour. Lindley himself went to the instrument, fear-stricken lest the children had been taken ill.

"It's life and death and Mr. Frane asked it, sir," were the words he heard as he put the receiver to his ear. Then Fanny, listening, heard him say: "You can't tell how bad? I'm coming as fast as forced draught can bring me; tell him that and tell him quick." Then he began, in his quiet voice, to give orders, bringing out of their beds men who would have arisen only at his command.

"If Benson will take me over his line from Bainville to Hopper Junction it will save an hour." Benson was one of Belmore's worst enemies. "Ask him to do it; tell him it is a family matter. Every limited must be sidetracked to give us right of way. You must have a locomotive and car at Wayne Junction in three-quarters of an hour—no?—you must! Stop a freight and take a locomotive off—then stop a passenger! I'll be at the Junction in three-quarters of an hour and I'll count every minute after that to somebody's discredit," he concluded as he hung up the receiver.

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"Fanny," he said at her door, "there's been a wreck and John is in it. He has sent for me. I'm going to take a special at the Junction."

"John—in a wreck to-night—to-night! Oh, it's awful!" she said. "I'm going, too—I can get ready as quick as you."

"But, Fanny—impossible! You can't leave Lucy and Carniston here."

A nearby door opened and an English voice spoke:

"I couldn't help overhearing and I'd like to go, too. The fact is, I'm not sleepy at all, and he's such a thoroughbred. I'd like to go, really. You look after Mrs. Belmore and I'll wake the stable—I can help a little." Barefooted, Carniston bolted along the hall, with Lindley calling after him what horses to take. For the first time since he had come to America Arthur felt that he was doing something real.

When another door opened, it was Lucy who asked to join in this journey through the night to John Frane. The two women came down the stairs with their hair in braids, for a woman can be quick when a man is sick, instead of waiting below.

Lindley, who drove, minded neither the ruts nor the horses' lives nor wheels spinning in the air. Though the others talked he spoke never a word

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till, rounding the hill near the station, they saw a locomotive pulling in.

"Good work! We have lost no time," he said.

It was not a finely appointed private car that he offered to his guests on this occasion. The peanut shucks left by the day passengers were still on the floor. No one had thought to sweep them up in the preoccupation of that order, growing stronger and stronger as it descended the lines. It made every suddenly awakened employé think only of the one word "speed" as he worked under the eye of the commander of a disciplined industrial army. The station-master started to express his regrets about something; but Belmore said, "Thanks; well done," before the words were out of the employé's mouth.

"Do walk those horses around a little and put some blankets over them afterwards!" Carniston called to the station-master. He was trying to be useful, and at least he knew horses; while he was as unaccustomed as Lucy to the American recklessness of breaking one thing in the haste to repair another.

The young engineer, with his head thrust well out of the cab, was watching Lindley, and the car started instantly the commander's foot was on the steps.

"It's Belmore himself back there and it's a fam-

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ily affair," he said, as he turned to his fireman. "Get the kinks out of your backbone."

Lindley walked up and down the aisle, oblivious of the others, his head bent forward, his hands in his pockets. The attitude was a favourite one of his father's, which he fell into whenever he faced a critical situation. It was heredity breaking through the repression of the second generation.

"By God! I can't stay here thinking that maybe John"—it was the first time his wife had ever heard him swear, and she liked him for it. "I'm going forward."

When the fireman saw him climbing over the coal, that grim soldier did not hesitate to take the shovelful fairly out from under the feet of the man whose power was almost feudal. He went on with his work, and Lindley noted the fact and that was why the fireman received such rapid promotion afterwards.

"Pretty old, isn't she?" Lindley said to the engineer, as he looked over the engine. "What can you get out of her?"

"Fifty or I'll bust her. I judge that was your idea, sir, from the way the order came in;" which explains why the engineer also received promotion.

Lindley nodded and looked out into the night.

Back in the day-car the brakeman arranged the

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seats to make beds for his passengers, who thanked him without availing themselves of his thoughtfulness. Fanny, gazing absently out of the window at passing lights and shadows, was thinking of Geraldine, who had been kept out of John's life through misunderstanding, and now was kept from him in this terrible hour. Lucy and Carniston sat a little apart from her. The brakeman wanted to express his sympathy and finally began by offering a piece of pie to Carniston and a piece of cake to Lucy out of the luncheon which his wife had put up for him.

"Oh, I've got heaps. Mother's always afraid I'm going to starve. She must have thought I was off to the North Pole to-night the way she threw the whole pantry into the basket when I was jumping into my pants after the operator called me. No? Well, I'll keep it for you. You'll be hungry before light. It"—and there he brought his curiosity to expression—"it must be something pretty bad to bring Mr. Belmore out in a rush like this. Family sick?"

When they told him that Frane had been injured his interest was instant and personal.

"And Mr. Belmore's going to him?" he asked incredulously. He could not quite understand this. Belmore was the commander of his livelihood and John Frane of his political opinions and sentiment.

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It was difficult for him to associate the two; and here was another note for Dr. von Kar's diary.

"They were friends at school," Lucy interjected.

"Well, that's different. That's nothing to do with politics and business. I'd vote for John Frane for anything from coroner to President. Think of it!—just when he's been elected to get into a cussed railroad wreck!"

He went out on the platform gloomily, leaving Carniston and Lucy as good as alone. Lucy mechanically closed her eyes, although she did not expect to sleep. She had thought of Arthur so much that it seemed that there was nothing to say to him now. Beside the haunting sense of the nature of their errand was her knowledge of Geraldine's secret, of which he was still ignorant. Although she had paved the way for him to propose to Geraldine on the ride back from Smileys', the fact that he did so stung her deeply. If he had only waited two or three days, she told herself.

This unpeopled habitation on wheels, with its two flickering lights, seemed an unbridled monster carrying her and the man she loved on to eternity. She compared it to that fate which had borne her helplessly in its train for the last two dragging months. The same thought was in Carniston's mind. Ahead of him in the wreck, dying perhaps, was a man who had lived his every hour in the joy

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of labour, and on the locomotive was another who had the power to bring the special out of the darkness and give it right of way by a few words spoken into a rubber disc in a country-house at midnight.

"My bent is futility," he thought, recalling his father's words. "I am the passenger, while others stoke and direct. I am the seventh generation and I was born with the shell of the seventh and the impulses—some of them, at least—of the first."

"Where is Frane going?" he asked, to break the trend of his thoughts and the noise of their flight.

"He was coming from Washington." She did not think of telling him more.

"Does he leave nothing but his popularity—no relatives?"

"None," she rejoined; "he was from the stars, too, and it's a mistake to have even a summer cottage there while the problem of aerial navigation remains unsolved."

"It's odd that one with so much affection should never have married," he pursued.

"Not so odd. He could love only once, you see, and he loved Geraldine and she loved him—but—just *money!*" This much she might tell without breaking her promise to Fanny about the secret, while she wondered as soon as she spoke why she had told even that. Her lids were droop-

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ing, and she did not see Arthur's look of surprise. Now she closed them altogether. "Come, we must get a little sleep," she said.

Carniston went out on the platform, where the brakeman talked to him about Frane. The careening train crashed through tunnels, echoed through valleys, hummed across open places. They passed the faint lights in station-windows, the lamps outlining the streets of towns, the shadowy houses of sleeping villages, occasional brakemen's lanterns, the upturned faces of Italians in the flare of torches stepping aside from their work on the tracks, day-cars with their cramped, reclining passengers, with the dark sleepers behind them on the switches. Lindley Belmore saw these things only as mile-posts. The click of every rail under him was another step nearer his friend—that man whose character had remained through life as clear as it was at school, uninfluenced by comradeship or surroundings.

At dawn, as the car slowed down suddenly, they saw at the other end of the curve which they were rounding the piled cars of the wreck still smouldering. The neighbouring fields glistened with the first frost of the year. About a nearby farmhouse were many figures, scattered and in groups, relieved by white specks of blankets and linen. Fanny and Lucy and Carniston looked at one an-

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other significantly, and rose without speaking as the car came to a jolting halt. Lindley had forgotten their existence. As he sprang down the steps among the spectators and those of the passengers who had escaped unhurt and were narrating their experiences to the first arrivals from the evening papers, he was thinking only that John lay there among the injured and the dying.

His monosyllabic question was answered from a dozen throats. Every one knew where John Frane was. The politician's triumph and the sayings from his speeches were still fresh in men's minds. He was near to the people in the very way he shared his faults with them. The passengers had this morning seen the man proved in the deed. They had seen him, when half-stunned and bleeding internally, labouring with his own hands while he tried, as the born leader would, to direct the work of relief. They had heard his insistence that he was all right when he returned to consciousness after he had fainted. The exact words of Surgeon Holden, who happened to be aboard the train, were passed from lip to lip. Holden himself was also famous in his calling. He knew John Frane's face at sight, as the others did. His was also the true professional pride which counts the truth of a man's work above all things else, and

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he had recognised in his hasty reading of his morning paper that Frane was a kindred fighter in another field.

When John insisted that the other injured ones should be taken inside the house—"There is so much more room outside; I prefer it," he said—Holden whispered not to irritate him and "the more fresh air the better." So they placed him against the trunk of a leafless tree, with a root for a pillow, while the light and shadow from the flames of the wreck played on his pale face. When he asked Holden a direct question the surgeon gave him the same candid answer that he himself, a strong man, too, would have wanted in the same situation. Then John sent for two men, both of whom had put all their personal power behind specials. Kennan was bending over John when Belmore approached.

"He's a weak brother, that lieutenant-governor," John was saying. "He reflects the colour of the branch he's on. The only advantage is that it is easy for a spineless man to be an agent for good or for bad. Well, when the lieutenant-governor-elect becomes the governor-elect, what then?"

Kennan was as outspoken as the surgeon. He wasted no time on bedside cheer. He understood how superfluous that would seem to John in this

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emergency. His jaw came up sharp with every word, for he was thinking as he talked, and he meant to make good every word he said.

"No, the lieutenant-governor hasn't the backbone of a charlotte russe," he said. "He's looking for one, and I'll be there first and supply it. I'm going to try, my boy, to be just as human and honest as you are. I didn't go to college, you see, and you've been my education. I'm going to try to do just what I think you would do."

"Thanks, Frank," and he called Kennan by his first name. "You can do it better than I could. I have been to school to you, too. You know the game and the tricks they play to beat a man even when he is trying to do right. But I think I can give you a valuable hint on reformers. They're like the others—some are good and some are bad. You'll have to watch out for the gentlemen who make beautiful speeches about saving the republic and who try to bribe the policeman on the way home. The only way to judge reformers, I've found, is by the amount of work they're ready to do after they have addressed the meeting. This is a democratic government, and we conduct our public schools with a view to having the people understand what is straight and what is not. If you are going to make a deal, make it before their faces and not under cover."

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"Yes, I'm going back to 'em every time, as you did. If they don't like it, it's down and out. This new kind of politics is a good deal simpler than I thought it was. You trust me, my boy."

"I do. You have been fine to me; everybody here has. It was kind of Mr. Holden to tell me the truth so that I might send for you. You know, Frank, though I have been a politician I've found it a good world, after all."

When he saw Lindley, John smiled faintly and tried to offer his hand.

"We didn't plan it just this way when we were in school, did we, Lin? I hope I didn't hurt you by the way I left you alone last election. I wonder if you understand how much I have loved you. I believe in you, too. It has always been easy to know just where to find the Belmore magnate. He knew that giving something with his name in gilt across it was not the best way, whether it was a library or a hospital. In the world in which fate placed you, old fellow, you have been a power of light. That is the great thing. You have felt the love of the land and the duty of keeping close to it, and you have felt that you owed this hill and that river and the people of the town something for what they had done for you. Another thing, Lin, you old king, smile a little when you give; then you'll reach the hearts of men and you can

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do them more good. Here I am making a speech to my betters again!

“And, Lin”—it seemed that he had kept the sweetest thing for the last—“I didn’t want to wake Geraldine. I didn’t want her to see me *hors de combat* like this. It is pleasant to think that her last glimpse of me was when I was well and myself. I suppose all this suffering comes to her because she can bear it bravely and go on smiling. Tell her that the game and the governorship were nothing to me beside her. Tell her—no, tell her nothing that will make her burden heavier.”

It was fitting that this man of action and impulse—and of vagaries, perhaps—should pass away suddenly while his mind was still clear and he was still in harness.

XXIX

FOR A SINGLE DAY

GERALDINE had slept soundly and late; and, half awake, she wondered if she had been dreaming the scene by the roadside when John Frane had laid his great love at her feet; dreaming the ride in the automobile with the back seats empty; dreaming the plans of the life that a governor and his wife should lead, and dreaming the kiss.

"It's too good," she breathed to herself, in the full dawn of consciousness, "this thing that has come to me simply and unexpectedly and as gently as blessings mixed with the dew of heaven."

She divided life into two parts, as girls have done out of time: The part that ended with yesterday and the part that began with to-day. In the glow of her happiness she slept again. When she awoke the second time a delicious inspiration enthralled her: She would write to John now, before she dressed, and when he returned to Kearn's Ford awaiting him on his desk would be the story of her thoughts of him and of their future on that dear

For a Single Day

first morning after their engagement. It was a long letter, this; a very long letter for her, which she sealed in wonder at the ease with which the words had come. Did love make speech easy, then? she asked. Would it bring her that gift whose absence she had missed so often?

Outside her door lay the morning paper with its leaded stop-press notice of the wreck, and mention of the vital fact that Governor-elect Frane was among the injured. In past mornings she would have seized it with avidity as soon as she awoke. Now the election was over, and she had heard the story of how it was won from the winner and the story, too, of all his plans.

Fanny felt that it was her duty to be the first to tell the news to Geraldine in order to soften its shock. When Geraldine heard her friend's voice over the long-distance wire she thought that she was to be bantered again about the theft of an automobile. After she understood what had happened she remained conscious long enough to hang up the receiver.

When she awoke, with her head lying on the desk, she knew that the new life had lasted only one day and the old life had begun again. Her eyes fell on the letter to John. She kissed it and put it in the drawer.

"I said it was too good." For several minutes

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she was as motionless as a woman of stone. "And I couldn't even be with him in that last moment." Then she threw herself on the bed, where she lay a long time quietly sobbing.

"I must go on with life just the same," she said when she arose, "playing the game as he would if he were in my place."

Her mother, who had never liked Frane, would not go to the funeral. Geraldine made the journey alone, and thankfully alone, to Kearn's Ford. The young pastor had the felicity to avoid a eulogy of his own composition. He said that John Frane meant to all present what he had meant to himself and words could not express that; so he would only read a little speech about the love of the land that John had once made to the school children of the town.

With thousands of others, Geraldine and the von Kars and the Belmores and Carniston had their last glimpse of the face which lay among the flowers. To Geraldine he seemed to be smiling with the joy of work and the joy of living. Lucy saw the strength in the chin and the firm lines around the mouth, and wished that the man whom she loved might possess them, too. Lindley felt as if he had become an old man in two days, and to Fanny it was as if she and Lin were left alone forever in Kearn's Ford.

For a Single Day

Geraldine offered no excuse to Fanny for not remaining over night. Through the car window she had an instant's glimpse of the first house that her mother had built, outlined against the after-glow of the setting sun. She hoped that she might never see Kear's Ford again. The thought of returning to Washington was equally hateful. She wished that the train which carried her might run on till it brought her to some new, strange land.

She had not come in mourning, as Fanny had half expected, nor had she mentioned that secret which she knew would be faithfully kept by those who shared it.

"This great thing is mine," she told herself, "to keep forever. It is sweeter to me because the world knows nothing of it."

XXX

THE LADY OF THE PORTRAIT

WE ourselves can't abide this house for months to come," Fanny said the next morning to the von Kars, who had set their departure for that afternoon. "You'll come to New York, won't you, Lucy, and you, doctor? I am sure that it will be a mine for your diary."

"Yes," he answered. "I find I wrote so much about that leader of men"—as he called Frane now—"that I had to buy a new book. You know, I'm going to send a letter to *The Times* explaining to our English friends why it is that only America could produce him. I am sure that they do not understand him at all. Thank you, we shall be delighted to come to New York, and we will reserve the privilege of calling on you there later, if we may. You see, I have promised to go to a dinner in Washington, and I thought I should like to have a glimpse of that side of America."

They went to the capital expecting to remain only a few days, but, thanks to Lucy, they were to be there for many long weeks. Her languor,

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her moodiness and her growing paleness had finally made its impression on the doctor. At first when he rallied her she met him half-way, but with an exuberance that grew more and more affected, until he noted that her never-care songs were rarely merry by her own choice. Here, then, was an effect, quoth the scientist. When, out of his abstractions, he had deduced a cause his heart was heavy.

“Why did I ever leave London?” he asked himself. He began to refuse all invitations which might not be a diversion for her who was now the sole object of his solicitude. “I have always said that if she did love it would be with her whole heart. I knew she had the blood of chivalry in her veins and the quality of utterly submerging self in a grand enthusiasm. I cannot resent what she has inherited from me. It was inevitable when two such souls came in contact that they should love. But time will cure her as it cured me. As she is going out more and more here, we will remain in Washington as long as she chooses. When I was young, I know, it was best to let me have my way and run my course; so she shall have her way. Back in the old house in London, now, she would have nothing to do but think of him.”

Lucy did not see Carniston again until the ball

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at the British embassy. He realised that while he was still engaged to Geraldine the man whom she actually loved, as Lucy had revealed on the train, was dead. The situation was already difficult enough when he returned to Washington the day after the funeral, without the word he received from the worthy himself that Wormley was coming to America. When he called on Geraldine she seemed if anything more quiet than usual. The handsome couple again walked along Connecticut Avenue, while again some passers-by envied and all admired them. He spoke of an invitation that he had to go shooting in the West. His grandfather had been a great hunter, he explained, and he thought that he himself would like to have a try at new game. She advised him to go, without making any reference to their engagement. Till Wormley came, then, he would fortify himself with the joy of the open air and the primitive simplicity of hunting-camps.

The ambassador would not listen to Carniston's departure until he had promised to return in time for the ball. Next to Calkins the old diplomat was fonder of Arthur than of any of the titled immigrants who had come for many years. Calkins he simply adored.

"Miss Hodges will be quite the queen of the occasion," he wrote to Carniston, later. "Besides,

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we shall have a Miss von Kar, whom you know. That little German girl, as Washington calls her, has won all of our hearts. Lady Bromley and I had her with us for dinner last night *en famille*, when she sang some of her never-care songs. Peculiar bits they are, and the way she does them certainly rings the bell, as our American friends say. She has the art of listening, too. The older I grow and possibly, therefore, because I have the more to say, the less I am given to talking, and it is quite extraordinary how Miss von Kar led me to tell her most of the interesting things of my career. . . . So never mind the mountain lions, her ladyship bids me tell you; return and be the lion of our ball."

The date of the ball was the same as that on which John Frane would have been inaugurated governor. This may explain why Geraldine declined Their Excellencies' invitation. She held as steadfastly to her decision in the face of parental fussing as on that day when she called her mother to the telephone to make a denial of a certain published report. Mrs. Hodges herself went, of course. It was the first time that she had been invited to the embassy, which showed already the value of her acquaintance with Carniston; and her social ambitions lay in the direction of Connecticut Avenue rather than in that of the old colonial

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house across Lafayette Square which Geraldine and many of his countrymen had hoped might one day be the residence of John Frane. While her mother was enjoying the company of the great, Geraldine was reading again in the evening papers the inaugural address of the weak brother, which was as strong, although it lacked the personal character, as Frane's own address might have been. The thoughts were Boss Kennan's and the language that of the newspaper man who was his new secretary.

Lucy went to the ball for the same reason that she had thrown herself heart and soul into sympathy with John's campaign. The ghosts were so persistent now that they took hold of her fingers as she pressed them to the keys of the piano. She wore the famous gown and the imitation pearl necklace, and the effect was as Monsieur Celestin had prophesied. The men exclaimed, "What a girl!" and the women immediately wondered who had "designed it."

But who was the fine old man with Lucy! The doctor did not often suffer himself to be vain, yet he had brought to America the bush to the wine before it was sampled. Across his breast lay two rows of medals; and there are medals and medals, as surely as there are wars and kings who honour scientific achievements that lessen the burdens of

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overcrowded populations. You may have all the fourth- and all the fifth-class ones and your march of triumph will be only that of the sergeant-major who goes ahead of the general. The legation people know which ones are significant and which are not and the advantages of the old-world custom which officially enables you to put a man in his proper pigeon-hole immediately without the trouble of an investigation. It was the Austrian ambassador first, pretending to see through his eye-glass, whose naked eye noted one of the doctor's medals which spoke volumes to him. When he said the "Ah!" of understanding to the doctor, the answer was "Maximilian," as if it were a password; and so it was with the Austrian ambassador.

However, it is not the Austrian ambassador who concerns us in this story, but the Russian ambassadress.

"Lord Bromley told me about your wonderful never-care songs," she said to Lucy, and as she spoke the ostrich feathers of her fan trembled with emotion.

"Yes," Lucy said sweetly, but with a peculiarly English manner; for she did not like to be introduced to people as a minstrel.

As the countess led the way to seats outside the crush, Lucy studied her face wonderingly.

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"We have met before, haven't we? Where?" she asked, in a reaction of good humour after that cutting little "yes."

"Where?" the countess repeated rather vacantly, and she looked down at her fan. That melodramatic scene which she had wished to avoid the girl had unwittingly precipitated at once.

Lucy was trying to look behind the years that had lined the countess's face as one tries to make out features through a veil.

"I know now," she said at length, and marvelled how she could speak so coolly. "Your face has been over my father's desk ever since I can remember. You were younger then, but not different or more charming, I fancy." Playing with those last words as she would with the words of a song, she made them significant.

"My child!" The countess made a Continental gesture. But the hand which she started to seize in her own was engaged at this critical instant in drawing the hem of Monsieur Celestin's creation closer about its wearer's feet, lest some passer-by should step on it.

"Really!" said Lucy.

"You—you who are so electric, so mercurial, so brilliantly changeable in mood that everybody in Washington wants you to dinner!" the countess gasped, in admiration of that quality of sangfroid

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which she herself had made a matter of lifetime cultivation.

An observer would have said that the surprise was entirely on her part, not on Lucy's. She had known for the last ten days that the Dr. von Kar who was in Washington was the one of her story. Once, unrecognisable behind her veil, she had passed him in the street. She had looked forward to the inevitable meeting with him, and as a childless old woman had even built her castles of air.

"Dear girl," she said, with a simulation of nonchalance, "I was not altogether to blame. May I tell a romance in a word? There was a war between France and Germany in seventy and seventy-one, when a proud people were overrun by the strongest of all people—except the horrid English, as the count says—and I was one of the proud people. Oh, I'll not go into details. It sounds too much like a novel as it is; but it's nothing beside the story of the Portuguese minister and his wife. The girl was caught in a country-house and a *franc-tireur* appeared, all fire for the French and 'all there,' as the Americans say, courageous as a devil and handsome, too. He was in the mid-thirties then, your father, half student, half soldier, with the charm of youth and the force of maturity united. He had fought in Mexico and Algeria and Italy.

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"I thought that his fighting would end forever when Paris fell. But it seems it was not to be so. I was to wait at home, and he was to go to war and travel when he pleased. After the Commune, after peace came, after France out of her vineyards and her thrift had paid her debt and we were ourselves again, I had my fortune and my position back and your father's fortune, too. I rode again in the Élysée and the Bois. I was of the world—that has killed me. Your father, growing restless, was ready for adventure once more. He always had a wonderful mind; I fancy he was learning three languages while he was still at milk. Now what do you think he did in seventy-three? He started out in search of the broken link between the Christianity of the Abyssinians and the Christianity of the North—or something like that!"

"Truly—why not?" Lucy asked in a monotone which would have done credit to Geraldine. "I think that it would have been most interesting, and how father would have enjoyed reading the results of his investigation before learned societies!"

"You do!" The countess blinked and beat her knee with her fan. "At all events," she pursued, trying to keep down her agitation, "he kept on with his wanderings till he turned up in the Russo-Turkish war. Then when he came back he was like an apparition, for it was more than a year

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after he had been reported dead. I was married to the count and you were two years old. You see the embarrassing situation," and she tried to smile, "for me and the count, too. I had fallen into the way of gambling a little and I was of the world, as I tell you, and I liked life and I spent freely. My dear, I was stone broke, as they say. But I was good-looking. You can see that by the old picture, can't you? The count was young and handsome, a man of great wealth, and a first secretary of embassy, and—well, what would you when my soldier of fortune was dead?

"Your father never called on me but once after he returned. He sent me a note which was like him in those days—I don't know what he is like now—saying, 'So glad for your sake that you heard the report. So sorry for my sake that it was not true. It is delightful that you have all the money you want.' He called once, as I say, and then he went up to the nursery and took you in his arms. Marmy and I were spectators on the stairs. He only said to us, 'She is mine, if you please.' Ah, he was magnificent that day, making you feel that if you stepped across his path you would go under the wheels! He was like he was when I fell in love with him—the splendid audacity of him!

"So he took you out and put you in the cab and that was the last I saw of you. Should we have

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taken the matter to the police? Should we have advertised? Ours was a public position, and Marmy was not very sorry to have you gone. Then we expected—but now, you see, you are my only child. I have grown old and”—still no helping word from the listener—“and it’s quite odd, isn’t it, quite like a novel?”

Lucy looked up for the first time during the narrative and opened her eyes questioningly.

“Why shouldn’t my father have taken me away?” she asked.

“You are glad that he took you away?” the countess exclaimed.

“Why, yes, of course.” Lucy seemed surprised at a question whose answer was so obvious.

“Have you never felt the need of a mother?”

“Were you thinking how much I needed one when you let father take me downstairs? Wasn’t that a test of maternal affection?”

The countess could make no answer. As a woman of the world, however, the manner of the rebuff made her appreciate the value of the thing she had lost when the soldier of fortune made his descent upon the nursery.

“You are marvellous,” she said, “quite as marvellous as they say. I might have known that you would be.”

The countess told herself that she must go

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slowly with this little girl if she would achieve the end she had in view. She ventured to hope that Lucy might come to luncheon with her, and Lucy declined with a shade of surprise that seemed to say, "My dear lady, if you will so transgress the proprieties you must expect to be refused without the invention of a polite excuse." Still the countess was not abashed. She determined to go on trying to find some ground of approach until Lucy should rise and leave her. To judge from her face Lucy was remaining because she was faintly amused. The countess wondered if the girl had a heart of stone. It did not occur to her that the current of Lucy's agony was so deep that its surface was unruffled.

"Those are very beautiful pearls," she finally ventured.

Lucy's flush when she thought of the lie they represented flooded the neck which the false string circled.

"They are imitation," she hastened to say. "But they are more valuable to me than if they were real," she went on, defiantly. "My father gave them to me. You see, he is only a poor working chemist—but with a great, good soldier's heart—who likes to think that his daughter has things as fine as other girls have. I wear them to please him."

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As the countess bent over and took the chain in her fingers the more closely to examine it, her touch, which was like wet ashes to Lucy, found life and youth in contact with the young flesh.

"You can't fool me on pearls, my dear," said the countess. "I know that the average person can't tell a hundred thousand dollar string from a five hundred dollar string, but once you do know, you know forever."

"They are imitation," Lucy repeated; "my father said they were. Whatever he may have had when you knew him, Madame, he has no money now with which to buy real pearls." She drew away tremblingly from the countess's fingers, which still held the strands. "Please—I don't understand you, and I don't want to be rude even to you."

Lucy would have risen then even if Carniston had not come to claim her for a waltz. The countess noted the glance that passed between her daughter and the handsome youth who had the American distinction that night of wearing no medals. These two must know each other well, else she would not have called him Arthur and he called her Lucy. She watched them through the waltz, her dark eyes sharp with curiosity.



Lucy would have risen then even if Carniston had not come to claim her for a waltz

XXXI

THE CABIN AND THE GIRL

CALKINS had expressed the feelings of two guests of the embassy exactly before they went downstairs on the evening of the ball.

"I'd rather have half an hour's polo," he said, "or see the whites of the Afridis' eyes when we get close, than own the whole show, unless I could turn it into money. If I could do that I wouldn't be staying in Washington long, I assure you."

"The decorations aren't half as good," Carniston replied, "as that blue sky out in Colorado. The ices will be rather insipid beside the grub that you get off the chuck waggon out there."

"You know I heard one of these American words the other day," Calkins resumed vacantly, "which precisely explains my situation and I rather fancy yours, too. You and I are misfits."

"Yes, and I suppose it's our fault. One shouldn't quarrel with his tailor about the styles."

"No—not mine!" Calkins responded sharply. "No, I wasn't trained for this pidgin. I was a younger son and they sent me out to India. It's

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not fair to be switched into a different branch of the service when you are forty. My word, I've looked the field over and I must say that that little Miss von Kar—she's all English, if they do call her German—is worth all the other entries put together. I wonder why it is that English girls are always poor, or spoken for, or in trade. I couldn't marry into trade—not at home—positively, no.”

To Carniston, the American girls were interesting in the same way as the boxes at the horse show. The ensemble was pleasing to look upon, but he did not know where to begin with any particular one, while their twang made his ears tingle. If the lion was blushing slightly and was slightly bashful, why, those who took their cue from Bender only found him the more attractive. The simple truth was that the lion was waiting and watching for Lucy, who came rather late. The temptation was strong to shut out the face of Wormley and the grim pages of the ledger for one night, without thinking of the cost to the partner of his folly.

When he saw Lucy in that gown which made a Frenchwoman who caught sight of it exclaim, “Oh, the little one! Who is she? and where is she from? and why?” Carniston, revelling in the sight of her, drinking to the full of her, told himself that she must and should be his wife. For he was

The Cabin and the Girl

fresh from the West, where torsos are broad and frames are lean and eyes are blue and institutions are as distant as the legend of the Buddha. Here was the girl he loved, and what was simpler than that he should forget all others but her? His trip after mountain lions had given him some of the strength and directness of the hunter earl.

Lucy would not allow him all the dances he asked, and out of those that she did not occupy he gave most to Lady Bromley and the wife of a Cabinet officer, reserving one for "hope," as he expressed it. Lucy wrote "hope" on her list too. She offered herself an explanation for her conduct no more than he offered himself an explanation for his. The "hope" number was after the waltz which followed her interview with the countess. He who knew the embassy building so well led her to a retreat where they would be quite alone.

"Lucy, I have had a wonderful time in the West," he said, and his manner was that of the youth who had returned from Norway. "You know that I found life out there just as John Frane told me it would be, quite as the hunter wrote in his diary that it was, quite as I once heard Lord Baringbury describe it to my father. I begin to believe that Baringbury was such a great Prime Minister because he roughed it in Australia, and there learned a philosophy and attained a big-

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ness of range that never left him. Out West a man is simply a man. Isn't it strange that one should have to travel so far to find this? You know, I begin to understand the hunter and Calkins and fellows I've met from India and other places who used to seem rather monstrosities to me. It's strange and delightful to find yourself in a place where you are not enmeshed in such a skein of conventionality that if you move you are smothered and warned of your folly in trying to escape. In the West men fight nature and one another. Nature is such a straight, clean foe beside conventionality. And, Lucy, you remember what Frane said about the cabin and the girl when we were on the steamer?"

"Yes." That idea had always fascinated her.

"I saw the cabins out there!" he cried boyishly. "I met men who had girls waiting back East. Amazing, isn't it! It set me thinking. I found myself feeling as if I were something more than an institution. I asked myself, haven't I just as much right as anybody to wage my battle against nature and make my clearing and build my cabin? I did fairly well at Oxford, and I know a good deal about science; why shouldn't I apply it to earning a livelihood as your father has? I went to the doctor as soon as I arrived to-day and told him the truth. I told him that my estate was bank-

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rupt, and I asked him if I couldn't get a place in the new factory."

"You didn't tell him that——"

"No. I haven't forgotten my promise. It was purely what Americans call a business proposition."

"But he didn't suspect? You are sure? It would make him worry and make him miserable."

"No, not in the least, I assure you."

"And what did he say?" she asked.

"He smiled at me in the same way that father and Lord Brent did. '*Quel garçon!*' he exclaimed. 'It's like going to a play. It's like a fairy story, and I must say it is quite refreshing to find that such romantic thoughts are still entertained. But they'll never, never do, Carniston, in the age of steam and practical politics.' That was what he said. That is what they would say in London or New York or Paris. But what would the fellows around the chuck waggon say? Why, I can hear them: 'Hustle and get a job and marry the girl you want to. What's to hinder? Ain't this the United States? Ain't this a free country? The trusts haven't got it all yet, though they're fencin' it in with barb wire pretty fast.'"

"And father—did you tell him that?"

"No, I couldn't tell him that without telling him I was in love. I only said that I wanted to

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earn my own living. And he said '*Quel garçon!*' again and warned me of my duty to my estate. I was an institution; I must make a rich marriage. He suggested Miss Hodges."

"Father is a wise, kind man, with a deep experience of the world," Lucy said slowly to herself.

"Lucy!" Carniston had seized her hands in his. "Lucy, I do own myself and I'll do as I please. I'll throw it all up. I'll laugh in the face of Wormley to-morrow. If I find the cabin, will you be the girl? Will you—will you?"

His words were sweeter even than the glorious first words in the house in London. She was seeing him in all his attractiveness, so kindly, so clean in his thoughts, so surely a companion for a good woman. His was something more than the Carniston charm of manner. Could you have traced, by examining his blood, the strain from the dollish mother who in childhood imagined how she would like to be the countess of a fairy tale, and finding herself one was altogether so naïve and lovely in the part that the "amiable Carny," in the midst of his spendthrift career, was sometimes amazed and again delighted? More than once he had said to her, "What a girl!"

"Lucy, will you—will you?" Arthur repeated.

Her head was bowed. It was not her wish to win him for a moment, but to hold him forever.

The Cabin and the Girl

“Arthur, I am in Monsieur Celestin’s gown which cost father a good part of a piece of luck and, Arthur, we are at a ball, when it seems as if some invisible hand had made all the flowers and the decorations and the plumage of the guests and they were not the result of hard work and money, money, money, before the curtain went up. When you stop to think that the curtain must come down in the morning it is a warning not to live your part too deeply over night.”

She wanted to say yes; to fall into his arms and make him stronger with her strength. If he had been like Frane or the hunter earl and had put his word to such a plan—but she loved him none the less on this account; the more, probably.

“You know what we said once about holding hands, Arthur, and being grave and brave and reasonable,” she began, drawing away from him. “I couldn’t bear it if—if I—and if afterwards—Arthur, you will think to-night and you will think in the morning, and then if you will come to me at tea-time and say the same thing—why, then, to-morrow afternoon will be the beginning of the great good joy; and you and I will go together to father and tell him that you are after the cabin and I am the girl.

“Arthur,” she put out her hand, “let us go where the air is fresher. You won’t mind if I

Lucy of the Stars

rest myself on your arm for just a minute? You are so strong; you have been out West." Thus they started to descend the stairs. "Now the little dizziness is over; I am quite right again. It's late, isn't it? Won't you find father and tell him that I am ready to go? No, no—I have my hand on the balusters. I can get a drink in the cloak-room. Good night. To-morrow afternoon the girl will be waiting—not in the cabin, but in a hotel apartment."

Lucy noted to her father, with an effort at cheerfulness, how the carriage door swings open softly when you arrive and bangs when you go away. As soon as they were clear of the lights her head dropped on his shoulder.

"I met my mother to-night," she said, slowly.

The long silence which followed was fraught with fear and perplexity for the doctor. Lucy had found him in a falsehood. Did it mean that he would lose her? Had she taken her mother's part? The words of his own conversation with the countess that evening ran through his mind. It was the first that he had known of her presence in Washington. Ever since they had parted she had been as a dead woman to him. He was not even aware that the name of the Russian ambassador to America was Marmoff.

The Cabin and the Girl

She had not seen him until after her talk with Lucy and she had recovered herself, when she had audaciously greeted him as "Emil" with her first sentence. She had told him of her hope that the past might be so well buried that his daughter could become the protégée of an ambassadress in order that her own mother might be near her. He had said stiffly that Lucy was no one's protégée. She had asked him if the portrait he had hung over his desk was the same that she had drawn of herself, as she looked in a mirror, on the back of an envelope one memorable day during the siege of Paris? It was, he admitted. And why had he hung it there? "When I saw that Lucy did not have your features," he had answered, "but those of my mother, I kept the portrait for the same reason that I kept the hat and the carbine. They wrote finis to the two motives of my old career. If I became restless and felt that I might wander away again from the path I had set myself for my daughter's sake, I always had before my eyes the insignia of folly and the end of folly. Madame, I was a *franc-tireur*, which was not playing fair. Madame, I loved you, which was simply lunacy." She had made a grimace and remarked, "How characteristic!" He must have become rich again to afford such a fine gown and such a superb string of pearls for "our Lucy," as the countess persisted

Lucy of the Stars

in calling his daughter. "Madame, I must be impolite," he had said, with simple assurance; "possibly your eyes are growing old." Then she had told him that she knew from what she had seen that night that Lucy loved the earl. "Madame," he had answered, "she does nothing of the kind. Good night."

For if he was sure of any one thing as the result of his deductions it was that Lucy loved John Frane, and his greatest fear was that Frane's death would break his daughter's heart. But he had given no hint of his knowledge to her. He respected her secret as she had once respected his.

The rubber tires spun softly along, the horses' hoofs clicked on the asphalt of Connecticut Avenue, while Lucy, her declaration made, remained silent and the doctor could find no words. He felt as if the fair head on his shoulder were a tribunal deciding his fate.

"Daddy, you told me a falsehood," she said at last, "for she is alive—so terribly alive! But you told it for the same reason that you have done everything—for my good. I am glad you did. She taught me so much about you. She showed me what a splendid fellow you were when you were young—as I always knew you must have been—and this was quite the contrary effect from what she wanted. She made my heart bigger. Now

The Cabin and the Girl

there will be more room in it for love of you. Tell me, father, is it wicked—is it a sin which should make me pray every night if she is hateful to me?”

“No,” he answered. “She is dead. Let us still think that. Shall we, mädchen?”

“Yes, and never speak of her, and take down the portrait; shall we?”

“Yes,” he answered. “And why should we stay in Washington any longer? Why shouldn’t we travel more? Why shouldn’t we go quite around the world?”

“Have we the money?” she asked. “Two such dreamers as you and I are likely to forget that, father.”

“Yes. But I have saved a little and I get something from royalties on one of my inventions, and it will not be so expensive.”

He made up his mind that she should soon know how much that little was; but not to-night—not when they were within a block of the hotel. It must be at such a luncheon as they had had in Paris when he gave her the pearls. First he would tell her that the pearls were real; then he would lay a list of his securities before her and explain how he had gained them in behalf of a little bundle of humanity which he had once carried down the stairs of a Parisian house. After that he might

Lucy of the Stars

spend as much as he pleased in order to make her forget her love for Frane.

"Yes," she said, "I'll be ready to go any time after to-morrow," as she knew she would if Arthur did not come.

We need not follow the doctor's inscrutable mental processes further than his happiness at finding that she was still all his as she kissed him good night and called him the king of fathers.

Once in her room, she looked again at the gown in the mirror, for she was feminine and she loved the gown and thanked it for the part it had played in bringing Arthur near her for a few sweet moments. Then she thought of the one to whom credit was due and flew to her writing-table.

"Enfin, Monsieur Celestin,
J'ai porté votre robe, enfin,
Et on a dit ce que vous avez dit, enfin,
Enfin, Monsieur Celestin,"

she began. This girl who had pricked her finger in order that Mrs. Hodges' feelings should not suffer could imagine the little man pirouetting as he read the note, which would bring more joy to his artistic soul than any number of checks. Meanwhile, the ghosts were creeping, creeping, creeping up till they gripped the very piano keys on which she played her never-care songs.

XXXII

WORMLEY CALLS

WORMLEY was a member of Parliament now, and he expected to be at least a baronet before he died. The broker's part that he had played for the family of Steadley stood for more than one rung in the ladder of an ambitious man. He was already in Washington when Carniston returned from the West barely in time for the ball; and failing to see him that afternoon he went early to the embassy the next morning, where he waited patiently until he was shown up to the earl's room. After some formality in introducing the subject, he explained that the death of one of the creditors had complicated affairs. The executors, it seemed, were disinclined to see any advantage in delay rather than immediate settlement. Therefore, the estate could count on no longer grace than the six months originally accorded to the late earl.

"Only a month remains," Wormley explained. "We had heard of your engagement to Miss

Lucy of the Stars

Hodges, who was certainly a most excellent choice—combining health and beauty with wealth—only to hear it positively denied. Then you go away on a six weeks' hunting trip, which I fear, my lord, was a departure from the spirit of the arrangement by which we advanced the money."

Carniston had sunk deep in his chair, and he was watching the smoke roll upward from his cigarette while Wormley spoke.

"I've been out where you eat grub off the chuck waggon," he said. "It costs little to live and be free out there. Even if I can't get a place in the factory, I can go West."

"Factory!"

"Yes, I have about made up my mind, with all thanks for your trouble on my behalf, to marry a poor girl that I love. There's still room in the world to do such a thing. Odd, isn't it?"

As Wormley told his wife over his best port the night after his return, his father had drilled it into him as a boy that London was a biggish town and never to lose his head.

"Lord Carniston, let us reason." He complimented himself to Mrs. Wormley on the self-control, the respect, and the firmness of this introduction. Then, as he explained to her, he appealed to sentiment and affection, "because," as he concluded, "both must be prominent qualities in a

Wormley Calls

young man who wanted to marry for love and give up Burbridge for a chuck waggon."

Wormley made Carniston see the ever-fresh green of an English lawn; he made him feel the soft thickness of English turf under his feet; he took him through the rooms of Burbridge, ending with the dining-room, where hung the heads of the beasts which the hunter had killed. He recalled the six earls who had gone before and his father's sacrifice, the honour and responsibility of an English title, and the villagers whose welfare was his trust. Could the heir throw up the estate when he was their debtor? Would he turn away the loyal old servants?

Carniston sank deeper in his chair, seeing only the smoke from his cigarette.

"Besides," said Wormley, "being a man of action, if I may so allude to myself, and being familiar in detail with the affairs of a family which I am bold to say I have served faithfully and, I hope, wisely, I undertook yesterday to go in person to Mrs. Hodges, whom I found to be an excellent business woman. Although at the time she was uncertain of the state of her daughter's mind, it seemed, later I received a telephone message from her in the light of which this announcement of yours—when I anticipated that I had only to ask you to hasten the performance of the

Lucy of the Stars

ceremony already arranged—comes—comes, I must say, as a bolt out of the blue. Is it possible that your reference to the girl's poverty is a— a joke? For I assure you, my lord, Mrs. Hodges told me over the 'phone that her daughter had said that she was engaged to you."

So Geraldine had. When she surprised the maternal heart with the announcement she avoided embraces; and she made a reservation.

"You'll be happy here in Washington," she said; "popular with the Benders as the mother of an English countess. Father wanted you to be happy. But I think, too, that he wanted me to suffer as little as possible. So I go with the understanding that you will not visit us for more than a month a year. The wedding is to be quiet and in England. No!—not here where Lin and Fanny would come."

Mrs. Hodges was in the mood to make concessions of detail in order to gain the main point.

"Father said that you always won, mother," Geraldine added. "You win this time."

She needed John Frane to bring out the best in her character. She could no longer soothe her heart with thought of him. Washington had become unbearable to her. A girl must marry some time; and a girl may like peace. If this does

Wormley Calls

not explain her action, then one can only say that she was Geraldine.

Lucy had put on the Celestin afternoon gown and the piano was open if it were needed to play some of the new and merry never-cares which had flitted through her mind. But Arthur did not come. She and her father had tea alone; and after his second cup, which she poured holding the pot with all her strength lest he should see her tremble, he asked her for just one song. She sang him the only thing that was in her heart, a verse from de Musset which she had set to music:

“ ‘Quand j’ai traversé la vallée,
Un oiseau chantait sur son nid.
Ses petits, sa chère couvée,
Venaient de mourir dans la nuit.
Cependant il chantait l’aurore:
O ma Muse! ne pleurez-pas.
A qui perd tout Dieu reste encore,
Dieu la-haut, l’espoir ici-bas.’ ”

Yet she who could draw on her futures to play the game for the moment paid her farewell calls that very afternoon; and the next day the von Kars left Washington to take a steamer for the Mediterranean. . . . The luncheon hour came in the France her father loved so well when he yielded a miser’s secret; and she, praying then to

Lucy of the Stars

be an actress for his sake, sang with delight and kissed his forehead. . . . In England there is a countess, beautiful and serene, and an earl, known not as the "amiable"—no, not quite—but as the "kindly" Carniston. This pair never travel in their motor car with the back seats empty. They knew in the essential of its ending the story of a one-time soldier of fortune, seeking with the change of season the fair places of the East and West for his daughter's health, who when he was one day left alone in the world asked himself the question, "What is the good of all my money now?"

THE END

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