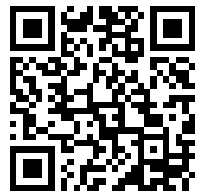

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LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

JULY, 1910



THE LADY THALIA

BY

HENRY C. ROWLAND

Author of "Grimes Takes Command," "Sea Scamps," etc.

PART I.

“THE men look poisonous, but the girl is rather pretty,” said Stephen Dallas.

“‘Poisonous’ is scarcely the word,” answered Sir James—“unless you apply it to the big Jew in the same sense that it might refer to the hind leg of a mule. The girl is Austrian, I fancy, with perhaps a dash of Italian. She would be rather a beauty—when you got used to her.”

“She does not look to me as if you would ever get used to her.”

“So much the better. That is worth far more than beauty.”

The Englishman let his big frame sink back upon one elbow, stretched his long legs on the hot sand, and looked off to sea. Dallas lit a cigarette and glanced curiously toward the trio sitting on the beach at a few yards’ distance.

“The stones on that big Jew’s hands give me a *vertigo*,” said he, “and his accent suggests a toucan with a cold. What beastly language are they talking?”

“I don’t know. It seems to be all spits and sputters, with now and then a bark.”

Sir James stopping spinning his monocle around his finger, to screw it into his eye and survey the trio. Under the fixity of his British stare, all three turned with the same impulse and looked at the two young men. Then with equal unity of action all three scowled: the girl with a sudden intensity that brought a swarthy flush to her

clear skin, the Jew with a diabolical raising of the outer ends of his black, bushy eyebrows; the third member of the party, a thick-set, sulky-looking young man, whose personality suggested an overfed black cat, muttered something which could not have been amiable.

"Better not stare at her, James," said Dallas. "If she were to run over here and bite you, you'd certainly go mad."

"I shall risk it," said Sir James, "to find out if she's pretty." He stared placidly for a moment, then blinked out the monocle and turned to his friend. "You are quite right, old chap; she is."

"I am beginning to change my mind," said Dallas. "I don't think that I like yellow eyes and blue hair. The color scheme should be reversed. Now she's angry and going off to sulk. She gets up like a cat or a puma—all part of the same swing. Gad, she's got a figure! Now, *don't* stare her off the beach until I've looked! My word, but you English have beastly manners!"

The girl had risen and was standing, beautifully poised, looking at the sea over the heads of her companions. She said a few words, then moved off toward the bath-houses.

"She's going to bathe," said Sir James. "Believe I'll have a dip myself. Coming in?"

"No thanks. Too late in the season. I have n't thawed out yet from yesterday's swim, and I've got to run the car this afternoon."

The Englishman rose to his feet and strode off toward the bath-houses. It was late in September, and the little resort was almost deserted. Dallas and his friend had dropped in *en tour* on the motor-car belonging to the former.

In a few moments Sir James came stalking down the beach, an attractive masculine combination of fresh, athletic skin, long clean muscles, and yellow hair, his very blue eyes like lapis lazuli against his brick-red complexion. The two friends were of markedly different type, as Dallas was of medium height, slender, wiry, of a high nervous tension, and with the face of a very handsome and thoroughbred woman. His eyes were a clear gray, with lashes very long and black. No one had ever seen him thrown out of poise.

Sir James stretched his naked limbs luxuriously upon the hot sand and looked with cheerful expectation toward the bath-houses.

"Why don't you loll out your tongue and prick up your ears and wag your tail, James?" snapped Dallas irritably. "Can't you decently cloak your emotions? And I must say you have plenty of cheek to calmly go in swimming with that girl."

"The Channel is free to all, and why is a woman made pretty if not to attract the eyes of men? Ah!"

Dallas looked around and saw the girl coming down the beach. She was enveloped in a white *peignoir* and followed by an exceedingly

pretty and smart-looking maid. Her blue-black hair was tied up in a yellow handkerchief, and her feet were bare and beautifully shaped. As she passed her two companions, the younger man followed her with his eyes. The Jew was writing or making some calculations in a note-book and did not look up. The girl threw a quick glance toward Sir James, which was observed by her friend, who scowled.

"Jealous brute, the cubby-faced beggar," drawled Sir James. "Did you see that look? How he'd like to slide a knife into me for presuming to tub in the same ocean with the beauty! Oh, I say, old chap, look at her! Isn't she stunning!"

"She makes the sea look quite dingy," Dallas admitted.

The maid had taken her *peignoir*, and the girl was standing at the water's edge, her superb figure cut sharp and pure against the vivid background of the sea, ruffled by the strong land breeze to a deep-toned ultramarine which was flecked with wisps of snowy spray. Her arms and legs were bare, and the rich sunlight lent to the flesh tints something of its saffron tone. As if against her will, she glanced back over her shoulder at Sir James, then gave a little involuntary toss of her chin, which caused the two young men to look at each other with a smile.

"Then tuck yourself into the water if you hate so to be admired," muttered Dallas, and perhaps his thought reached the girl, for she waded rapidly down the steep beach and, plunging in, began to swim seaward. Sir James watched her and tugged thoughtfully at his wiry mustache.

"I wonder if she knows about the offshore current," he said.

"Don't worry. She's bound across for Ramsgate."

There were some women and children bathing, and a few people sitting here and there about the beach. Near by, a big fishing-boat was hauled up, and a man was caulking her seams. Dallas observed that he had stopped work and was watching the girl, who was swimming steadily seaward. Higher up on the beach were some other and larger boats, but the place was an open roadstead, with no inlet for miles, and there were no boats in the water.

"She is getting too far out," observed Sir James. "Believe I'll swim out and warn her. But you'd better tell her friends to call her back."

He rose lightly to his feet and waded down the beach. Dallas hailed the two men who had been with the girl.

"Beg pardon," said he, "but I think that you had better warn Madame not to swim so far out. There is a strong offshore current at this tide."

The big Jew swung sharply about and stared first at Dallas, then seaward toward the girl.

The Lady Thalia

"*Sapristi!* I believe you," said he, and hove himself awkwardly to his feet, raised both huge hands to his mouth, and shouted to the girl. She was swimming on her side, and as the hoarse hail reached her she looked back over her shoulder, then held steadily on.

"*Tiens!*" cried the Jew, "but she will not come."

Again he shouted, and this time the girl threw up one hand with a mocking gesture, but held on seaward with her strong, rhythmic stroke. Sir James had entered the water and was swimming after her.

Dallas looked about him in extreme vexation. There was probably not a man in France who was in the habit of taking as frequent and hazardous risks as he when on the road with his big car; and he was also a fearless hunter of big game and an almost reckless cross-country rider. But he was one of those individuals of nervous temperament, who, while willing to take chances themselves, are nevertheless extremely disturbed at the sight of others exposed to danger. Moreover, he was himself an inlander, a poor swimmer, and one to whom deep water represented treachery and danger. He had never found himself on or in the water without a certain instinctive dread.

"Call her again," he said almost sharply. "My friend swam out there yesterday and had hard work getting back."

The younger man glanced at him with an almost insolent expression, but the Jew nodded his big, shaggy head, then looked doubtfully at Dallas, who observed that his eyes were very large, of a muddy brown, and shot with small, hazel-colored spots.

"Unfortunately, Mademoiselle is of a very obstinate disposition," said he. "She does not like to be told what to do. But she is a very strong swimmer."

Dallas frowned, then glanced over to where the fisherman was working at his boat. As he did so, the man laid down his caulking-iron and walked towards the group.

"Madame has swum out farther than is safe," said he, touching his cap. "At this tide the current is very strong. I do not believe that Madame will be able to get back."

"Then we must shove your boat into the water," said Dallas.

The man shrugged. "I do not believe that the boat would float, M'sieu," he answered. "The caulking is all pulled out of her seams, and the water would run in very fast. Besides this, the oars and sail are in my cabin, up on the top of the cliffs."

The big Jew scowled, then looked anxiously seaward. By this time the girl was over three hundred yards from the beach and swimming straight out, quite unconscious of the strong current on which she was borne—for the splash of the water about her had prevented her hearing what had been shouted. One hundred yards in her wake Sir James was ploughing along in an effort to overtake her.

The Jew puffed out his cheeks and stared at Dallas in doubt and perplexity.

"This is very bad," said he. "These silly women! Is your friend a strong swimmer?"

"Yes," answered Dallas; "but for all that, he had his work cut out for him yesterday, and to-day there is an offshore breeze which will blow the water in their faces when they turn."

"Then," said the Jew suddenly, "leak or no leak, we must get that tub in the water. Come, let us go and look at her."

Followed by the American, he strode over to the clumsy fishing-boat, which was shored up on her beam ends. As the fisherman had said, the oakum had been ripped from her gaping seams.

"Is there no other boat fit to take the water?" asked the Jew in his harsh, raucous voice.

"None except these others, M'sieu," answered the fisherman; "but they are very large and heavy, and it would require at least eight men to launch one."

"Then," said the Jew, "go as quickly as you can and get more men. For we must have one of the boats. *Sapristi!* Why will these women insist on being so contrary!"

The fisherman set off, and Dallas and the Jew stood watching the swimmers with deep anxiety. The handkerchief about the head of the girl had become a mere speck of yellow. Sir James had nearly reached her, and as they looked they saw that both swimmers had turned and were facing the shore. Then presently the two heads approached more nearly together.

For five minutes they watched in silence, then the Jew looked at Dallas and shook his head.

"They are losing ground," said he. "Every minute they are being carried farther out."

As he spoke, both saw the yellow handkerchief flutter violently, waving back and forth.

"*Tiens!*" cried the Jew. "They are in trouble! That water is like ice! Perhaps one of them has been seized by a cramp. Come, my friend, we cannot wait for the men. We must get this tub in the water."

"But she will not float!" cried Dallas.

"*Sapristi!* But she will have to float. I will paddle, and you and the Prince can bail."

"The Prince?"

"Yes. My friend is the Prince Emilio of Rascia. The lady is his cousin. I"—he threw out his big chest—"am the Baron Isidor Rosenthal. Come, we have no time to lose. Let us right this tub and run her down the beach."

He gripped the gunnel in his powerful hands, then kicked out the shores, and with a strong thrust rolled the boat onto her keel. As the beach was very steep and composed of a shingle of round, smooth cobbles, the launching of the boat, heavy as she was, did not present much difficulty.

Rosenthal picked up a plank and flung it upon the thwart, then called to his companion.

"Your Highness must help. There is no time to lose."

There was an imperative note in the harsh voice which permitted of no question. The Prince got up, walked over sulkily, and laid hold of the gunnel opposite Dallas.

"Now, all together!" cried the Jew, and put out his herculean strength, which was far greater than that of the other two men combined. Once started, they ran the heavy boat down the steep beach to the water's edge. Here they paused for breath, and Dallas, looking seaward, was startled to find that the heads of the swimmers had almost disappeared.

"We must wade out with her," panted the Jew. "Come!"

Staggering forward, splashing thigh deep in the water, they soon had the boat afloat, and Dallas, looking inside her, saw the water spouting in through the open seams.

"*Ach!*" cried the Jew. "But this thing is like a grating. We must be quick, or she will sink before we reach them." He looked at Dallas and grinned, when his bushy black eyebrows were pushed up at their outer corners and his heavy mustache was lifted, baring his big yellow fangs.

"*Peste!* We shall all be in the water directly—and I cannot swim. Ugh! I have never liked water"—he made a grimace—"except in wine. But it does not matter; there is lumber enough in the tub to float the lot of us until we are picked up." He leaped aboard, and Dallas, rather pale and with lips compressed, followed him and, picking up a bucket, began rapidly to bail.

"Come, lend a hand!" he snapped to the Prince. "There is a pan in the stern."

But the Prince took several backward steps up the beach. "Thank you," said he in a guttural voice, "but I am not such a fool as to go to sea in a boat like that."

"But you must!" cried the Jew. "There is the Lady Thalia."

The Prince shrugged. "It is her own fault," said he; then, turning on his heel, walked away.

"Cowardly little beast!" growled Dallas. "Never mind. Shove off."

Rosenthal picked up the heavy plank, thrust the boat ahead until the water had deepened, then, seating himself in the stern, began to

paddle with long and powerful strokes. Dallas, looking up as he bailed, saw that the Jew was chuckling to himself.

"Ridiculous, my friend, is it not?" growled Rosenthal, without desisting from his tremendous effort. "Ha, ha, ha!" He barked like a hoarse alligator. "Can you swim?"

"Not in my clothes," answered Dallas, who was bailing furiously in an effort to reduce the volume of water before the next open seam should be submerged. "Your Prince Emilio is a filthy little coward, but *you* are the right sort."

"I!" cried the Jew. "But I am a fool, an imbecile! Listen, my friend: if the lady were to drown, I should be the gainer by forty thousand pounds!" He chuckled.

"What?"

"Yes!" cried Rosenthal, paddling with even greater vigor. "*Sapristi*, but this tub is hard to move! Yes, I have sunk forty thousand pounds in silver mines in their accursed country, and now I cannot work them because the Lady Thalia is in the way. It is a long story. If she would marry the Prince, it would be all right, or if she would drown, it would be all right." He increased his efforts until the veins stood out in double cords upon his swarthy forehead.

"If that is true," answered Dallas, bailing rapidly, "I am rather proud to be in the same sinking tub with you."

"*Sapristi!* You flatter me. But I am that kind of a fool. I want to get my money, of course, but one cannot let people drown for the sake of a filthy forty thousand pounds."

They toiled away in silence. Driven by the strong offshore wind and Rosenthal's tireless paddling, the boat moved steadily through the water. Glancing ahead, Dallas saw that the swimmers were nearer. Despite his efforts, the water in the boat was gaining on him, and he wondered how much longer they could keep afloat. He looked shoreward: there was a knot of people gathered on the beach, but he saw no sign of the fisherman returning. Then he glanced at his huge shipmate: the Jew's yellow teeth were bared as they clinched his nether lip; his big nostrils were dilated, and his face congested. Merely to wield the heavy plank which he gripped in his thick, bejewelled fingers would have been a feat of strength for the ordinary man, but Rosenthal was getting a powerful shove on the water with every stroke. Moreover, he was constantly shifting his paddle from one side to the other, giving Dallas a shower-bath each time that he swung it over his head. The young man observed how the huge deltoids bulged the shoulders of the Jew's serge coat, and presently the seams ripped under the strain. But the paddling went on with the unabating rhythm of a machine, nor was there any symptom of fatigue.

As they drew near to the swimmers, Dallas discovered, first to his

relief, then to his irritation, that they were paddling along easily and comfortably, and that Sir James was making an effort at conversation. He looked at Rosenthal, who grinned.

"So!" said the Jew. "They seem to be quite comfortable."

As the boat reached them, the two swimmers laid hold of the gunnel. With a muscular effort of his strong arms, Sir James hove himself aboard, then, turning, took the girl by both wrists and lifted her out of the water and onto one of the thwarts, where she sat like a lovely mermaid, her bare arms flashing and her legs hanging over the side.

"I say," exclaimed the Englishman, "have you no oars?"

"No," snapped Dallas; "and you had better get hold of that basin and throw the water out, or we'll have no boat either."

The girl glanced sharply at his face, then dropped her head and stared into the sea. Rosenthal had laid down his paddle and was opening and shutting his cramped fingers. Then, taking a pen-knife from his pocket, he slashed off a piece of rope from the painter, quickly unlaidd it, and began to force the rope-yarn into an open seam.

"If you will help with the bailing, Mademoiselle," said he, "and you"—he glanced at Dallas—"will help me to caulk, we may be able to keep our ship afloat."

For several minutes the four worked rapidly and in silence, Dallas and Rosenthal plugging the open seams while the girl and Sir James bailed. The Jew's suggestion proved an excellent one, as the seams of the lower strakes had already been caulked and the water was coming in through the higher ones, which were within reach. It soon became apparent that they were gaining rapidly upon the leak. But the boat had by this time drifted over a mile from the shore, the wind was freshening, and there was no sign of any one coming to their rescue. When the level of the water became only ankle-deep, Dallas took the basin from the girl's hand, then slipped off his coat.

"Put this on, Mademoiselle," said he. "The breeze is chilly."

She made a little gesture of dissent.

"Put it on, put it on," said Dallas, with a touch of impatience. "One might as well drown as catch pneumonia."

Again the girl's eyes turned on him with their searching, curious look. Dallas noticed that they were of a deep amber-color and marvellously clear. He also observed that they held in themselves as much expression as one finds in the sum of all the features of most people.

Almost with brusqueness he held out the coat for the girl to put on.

"Come," said he, giving the garment an impatient twitch. Again her eyes flashed up at his, this time with an expression of resentment. But some quality in the cool gray ones of the man caused them to drop

instantly. With a muttered word of acknowledgment, the girl slipped her round white arms into the sleeves. Dallas, his manner that of a kind but rather impatient nurse, buttoned the garment snugly to her soft throat, then gave it a little twitch, drawing the skirt over the bare knees.

"Now you had better bail a little," he said, "not hard, but enough to keep you from getting chilled."

Sir James had stopped his bailing and was working at the open seam. The wind was freshening and carried a certain sharpness which was soon felt by the Englishman, after his long swim in the cold water of the Channel.

"I s's'say," he began, "you m'm'might have b'b'brought our clothes."

Rosenthal pulled off his coat and handed it to him.

"Put this on," said he. "When we came after you, we were thinking less of your comfort than of your safety. Besides, it looked as if we should all be in the water before many minutes, and no doubt we should have been but for the quick work of Mr.—" He looked inquiringly at Dallas.

"I am Stephen Dallas," said the young man. "My friend is Sir James Fenwick."

The big Jew lifted his hat with a flourish.

"Permit me to thank you both," said he, "for the service which you have rendered to the Lady Thalia—of Novibazar," he added as if in afterthought. "I"—he rose awkwardly to his feet, placing four fingers on his bulging chest—"am the Baron Isidor Rosenthal, of Hayti and Buda-Pesth."

"Ch'ch'chawmed," chattered Sir James. Dallas compromised with a brief nod.

"Is Prince Emilio also of Novibazar?" he asked. There was an intonation in his voice which caused the girl again to glance at him sharply. Her clear eyes slightly contracted.

"Yes—unfortunately," she answered in a low, throaty voice.

"I quite agree with you," snapped Dallas. Sir James glanced at his friend in surprise.

"Oh, c'c'come, Stephen," said he. "You are not very p'p'polite."

"I don't mean to be. The Prince declined to come to the assistance of Lady Thalia. We needed him to help bail."

"N'n'no! Really?" Sir James stared.

There was a moment of awkward silence.

"Please pardon my ignorance," said Dallas, "but just where is Novibazar?"

"Ig'ig'ignoramus," shivered Sir James. The girl slightly raised her pretty chin.

"Well, then," snapped Dallas, "where is it, if you know so much about it?"

"It is n'n'near"—Sir James glanced critically at the girl, in a violent effort to guess at her parent stock—"n'n'near Austria."

"Humph," grunted Dallas. "So are Italy and Switzerland and Germany and Russia and the Balkan Peninsula."

"*Sapristi!* But I can tell you where it is," growled Rosenthal. "It is a handful of hills between Serbia and Bosnia, that is owned by Turkey and governed by Austria, and it is full of holes where I have buried forty thousand pounds."

"And where we Albanians," cried the girl fiercely, "have buried forty thousand warriors—and more!"

"Ah," said Sir James. "Then you are Alba'ba'banian."

"Yes." The girl spoke a soft but strongly accented English. "I am Albanian." She drew herself up with as much dignity as was possible for a lady sitting with her bare legs cuddled under her, and buttoned up in a man's serge coat. "I am Albanian, or Shkipetari, as we say. Our blood is the purest in Europe. We are the direct descendants from the ancient Illyrians. We should be to-day an independent State if it were not for cowards like Emilio and"—she tossed her head—"Jew adventurers."

"Permit me to remind you of the fact," said Dallas severely, "that you, personally, would be paddling around the English Channel if it were not for Baron Rosenthal, who, although he cannot swim, embarked to your rescue in a leaky, open boat, with neither oars nor sail."

For an instant the girl stared; then she leaped to her feet and stood with the water swirling about her pretty ankles. A sudden flush had risen under the pallor of her fair skin, and her eyes were sparkling with anger.

"I will not be spoken to in that way!" she cried. "Nor will I be under obligation either to Baron Rosenthal or yourself. I did not ask you to rescue me." She slipped off Dallas's coat and stood for an instant with her superb figure straight and poised as if to plunge over the side and into the sea.

"Sit down, Mademoiselle," said Dallas sharply. "There is no use in making things any more complicated."

"B'b'brute," shivered Sir James. "D'd'don't notice him, Lady Th'Th'Thalia. Or, if you l'l'like, jump in again, and I will g'g'go with you."

The girl turned and glanced at him. More color rushed into her face, and her lips began to twitch. Then she turned toward Rosenthal and smiled.

"Mr. Dallas is right," she said. "I am sorry, Rosenthal."

"It is nothing," said the Baron. "We Jews are accustomed to such remarks. Come, children, let us stop squabbling."

The girl reseated herself on the thwart, and Dallas, a little ashamed of himself, picked up the coat and turned to the girl.

"I am sorry I was rude," said he. "Won't you please put this on again?"

She gave him a forgiving smile and slipped into his coat.

"You must not judge the Lady Thalia from her cousin Emilio," said Rosenthal. "The Prince is of quite different stock. He is a Serb, and connected to Mademoiselle only by marriage. His title is merely one of courtesy, because he is descended from a line of feudal chiefs."

"We have no titles which correspond to yours in England," said the girl, "but many of them are just as old."

"Myself," said Rosenthal, "I am a Papal baron."

"A P'P' Papal baron!" cried Sir James.

"Yes," replied the Jew, "and with good right. *Sapristi!* But with very good right! My title was conferred upon me by the Pope himself because I prevented the massacre of a whole Christian community by a swarm of Moslem fanatics. It cost me a thousand Turkish pounds—and a bullet in the ribs."

"G'g'good for you!" cried Sir James as heartily as his congealed condition would permit.

"Here comes a boat!" cried the Lady Thalia.

All four looked back toward the distant shore, where they saw a brown sail fluttering in the breeze. Directly it bellied out, and a few minutes later a heavy fishing-boat came foaming up and rounded to alongside.

The castaways quickly transhipped, when their own leaky vessel was boarded by two of the fishermen, who stepped the mast, and both vessels started to beat back toward the beach.

That night, as Dallas was smoking a final cigar on the terrace of the little hotel, he was joined by Sir James, who had quite recovered from his immersion.

"I have been walking on the beach with the Lady Thalia," said the Englishman cheerfully.

"So I observed," answered Dallas. "Your philandering was likewise noted by Rosenthal and the Prince. The former laughed, but the latter appeared to be displeased."

"The beastly little rotter! He would have been even less pleased if he had known what the Princess was telling me."

"The result of which is, I presume, that you have decided to elope, and wish me to lend you the car."

"Right-o!" answered Sir James cheerfully. "But that is not all. We look upon you personally to conduct the elopement."

"Well," replied Dallas shortly, "I won't."

"Don't be pig-headed, Stephen. The Lady Thalia is an exceedingly clever and attractive girl. She has honored me by her confidence."

Dallas grunted.

"The whole situation," said Sir James, "is very interesting. It appears that the kingdom of Servia wants to annex this *sanjak*, or district, which is known as Novibazar, and which belongs to Turkey, although by the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 it came under the administrative control of Austria-Hungary, together with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Now, the Prince Emilio, backed by Rosenthal, who is half wolf, half fox, is intriguing with the Servian government, and the Lady Thalia has discovered a plot by which they intend to stir up a frontier war with Servia, which will give that country a good excuse for grabbing Novibazar. There is reason to believe that Austria will not be sorry to see it exchange Turkish ownership for Servian."

"What does the Prince get out of it?"

"He is to receive a lump sum of money and a governorship which will permit him to squeeze the people even tighter than he has already, while Rosenthal is to get certain concessions to work his silver mines."

"And the Lady Thalia?"

"Ah, there's the hitch. The Prince's people are all South Slavonic Serbs and precisely the same breed as the Servians themselves. They can't be made to see the sense of fighting with Servia, which is quite natural, as all of their warfare from time immemorial has been against the Turks and with the Lady Thalia's Shkipetari. So what the Prince and Rosenthal are trying to do is to persuade the girl to incite her people to start a ruction on the Servian frontier."

"And she won't do it?"

"No, she's far too clever. The girl is really patriotic; she hates Servia like poison, and so do her people, who are mostly Mohammedans, while the Prince's crowd, like the Servians, profess Christianity. But the Lady Thalia is intelligent enough to see how much her country has advanced under Austrian rule, and now she strongly favors the annexation of Novibazar by Austria-Hungary. She says that she has positive information that Bulgaria is shortly going to assert her own independence, and that when this happens Austria will grab Bosnia and Herzegovina, and she wants Novibazar to be included in this annexation."

"How does she hope to bring this about?"

"Merely by keeping her people quiet until Bulgaria effects her *coup d'état*. Her Shkipetari are forever flaying Emilio's Serbs, and what Thalia wants to do now is to get out there and persuade the

chieftains of the clans to keep the peace for another six months. You see, failing to persuade her to assist in their plans, Emilio might try to stir up a fight between his faction and hers, and as the fighting would be along the Servian frontier, even that might give Servia a pretext for interference, although it is really Turkey's job."

"You make my head swim," said Dallas. "But if the Princess is so anxious to hold in her hairy mountaineers, what is she doing here in France?"

"Ah, now here we come to another complication. Did you notice that very pretty maid who took the girl's *peignoir* when she went into the water?"

"I did."

Sir James leaned toward his friend and dropped his voice: "She is the Countess Rubitzki!"

"Indeed! It struck me that she was rather classy for a maid. And who is the Countess Rubitzki? Upon my word, I feel very common in this crowd!"

"She is Polish, and all her family are rampant nihilists. They have been mixed up in bloodthirsty plots to slaughter every monarch in Europe—and she herself has been more or less implicated."

"Really? A nice young person to be trailing around with your *inamorata*!"

"The Lady Thalia met her a good many years ago in Pesth, and they have always been bosom friends. Just now her father and brother are in hiding, and there are extradition papers for the whole lot in almost every country in Europe. When the chase got too warm the Countess went to Thalia in Paris, and since then has been living with her, disguised as her maid. The two have been spending the summer in a quiet little place in Normandy, where the Prince and Rosenthal discovered them. Rosenthal immediately recognized the Countess, and is now using this knowledge to coerce the Lady Thalia. The poor girl is at her wits' end. They have tried twice to give Rosenthal the slip, but the big Jew seems to have second-sight. What she wants to do now is to run away and get back to Novibazar."

"I see. And she has persuaded you to take the oath of allegiance and help her carry out her plans."

"Quite so," replied Sir James calmly. "I have taken it for both of us."

"For me too? How kind of you!"

"Don't be disagreeable, Stephen. It will be no end of a lark! And just think of those two lovely girls hounded about from place to place by these two semi-civilized bounders!"

"Are you trying to make me cry?"

"All it means," said Sir James, ignoring the irony of his friend,

"is a night run to Paris. Once there, they will want to keep out of sight for a few days, so I told her that you would no doubt be very glad to put your apartment at their disposal. You can come and stop with me at the studio."

"Infatuated insular ass!" was the polite comment of the American.

"Um—ah!" Sir James spun his monocle about his finger. "If you really must be nasty about it, old chap, I will give them the studio, and go and stop with you."

"Are you sure that you would be comfortable, James?" inquired Dallas solicitously.

"It would be only for a day or two. Then we can take your car and the two girls and make a run for Fiume, via Switzerland, the Simplon, and Venice. At Fiume we would get a steamer for Cettinje, and then overland for—for—what the deuce is the name of that blooming country?"

"Novibazar. Oh, this is so sudden!"

"We will start," said Sir James placidly, "to-night. Rosenthal and the Prince have retired. As soon as you can get your car ready, the *garçon* will bring down the ladies' things. I have arranged everything. All that you have got to do is to drive the car."

"And pay the bills."

"Don't be vulgar, Stephen. You have often complained to me about having had to lie awake nights worrying over what to do with your surplus income. Really, old chap, you astonish me!"

"I beg your pardon. Pray go on."

"It can't be much over two hundred kilometres to Paris, from this place. Fact is, nothing could be jollier than a fast run on a lovely moonlight night like this."

"Unless, perhaps, to feel that we were performing a disinterested and unselfish act," said Dallas, in his driest voice.

"Jus' so!" agreed Sir James, with his usual cheer.

Dallas lit a cigarette and blew the smoke meditatively upward.

"Look here, James," said he, "this all sounds like a lovely lark, I'll admit. The ladies are very pretty, and the Prince a filthy little coward, but I rather like old Rosenthal, and hate to play him a scurvy trick. Besides, the whole affair is distinctively none of our business."

"Ah, but you forget, old chap, that I've already agreed for you. You see, you're pledged—in a manner of speaking. Why, bless my soul, those two girls are packing up their things now!"

Dallas sighed deeply, then turned to his friend with an air of weary resignation.

"Oh, very well; then come on, Don Quixote. I'll run them as far as Paris. But I'll be hanged if I'll give up my apartment. Tell Armand to get the car ready at once: I will go up and pack"

A few minutes later, as the two friends walked across the court to where the big, high-powered car was garaged, they were met by Dallas's *mécanicien*, an alert, intelligent French youth.

"Do not strike a match, Messieurs," said he in a low voice. "Some careless idiot has upset a *bidon* of essence, and the place is flooded."

"I should say it was," growled Dallas, sniffing the reek of petrol. "Who did that?"

"It must have been the chauffeur of the Prince," said the man. "We had better push the car out of the court before starting the motor or lighting the lamps. The *garçon* will lend us a hand."

Very quietly the four men rolled the big car out upon the road. A full moon was blazing down from the zenith, and the sea lay sparkling and flashing in its brilliant light.

"I wonder," whispered Dallas, "what the fellow was doing with essence at this time of night."

Nobody answered, and a moment later two figures, closely veiled and followed by the *garçon* carrying two big valises, emerged from the back door of the inn and approached the car. Dallas, who had seated himself and was examining his levers, merely touched his cap. Sir James stepped forward and helped the ladies into the tonneau, where he proceeded to tuck them up with great care. Glancing over his shoulder, Dallas observed the face of the Countess, and was struck by its singular beauty and the classic purity of feature.

"Nihilist—rubbish!" he thought to himself. "She looks more like a school-girl. Can't be more than twenty at the outside." He leaned forward and addressed his *mécanicien*. "Crank the motor and get in," said he. "We will stop down the road to light the lamps."

The man obeyed. The hotel menials, who saw in the whole performance merely an adventure of gallantry, stepped back and touched their caps. Sir James took the seat at Dallas's side, and the *mécanicien* seated himself upon the floor. Dallas let in the clutch, and they glided out upon the gleaming road.

A kilometre from the hotel he brought the car to a stop.

"Light up," said he to the *mécanicien*, then, twisting about in his seat, looked at the Lady Thalia and smiled.

"Now, just where is it that you wish me to take you?" he asked drily. "What particular part of Novibazar?"

Through her chiffon veil, he caught the answering gleam of the girl's white teeth.

"Dakabar, if you please," she answered without a moment's hesitation. "That is up on a plateau of the North Albanian Alps."

"Precisely. Perhaps we had better stop for a bite in Paris, then *déjeuner* at Munich, and dinner at Buda-Pesth. From there on, it will be a nice moonlight spin across the plains of Hungary to Belgrade."

The two girls laughed, the Lady Thalia in her throaty, low-pitched contralto and her companion in a deliciously clear and contagious higher note. Dallas observed that when she laughed she threw back her head, her very blue eyes—which looked black in the moonlight—almost closed, and her pretty lips curved upward like the mouth of a bacchante.

“I have not yet presented you to my fellow prisoner,” said the Lady Thalia. “Countess Rubitski, Mr. Dallas and Sir James Fenwick.”

The two men bowed.

“For the next three kilometres, until we strike the big Dieppe-Paris route,” said Dallas, “the road is a bit rough. I hope,” he continued, looking at the Countess with mock anxiety, “that Countess Rubitski does not happen to have any—er—bombs among her personal effects.”

The Polish lady elevated her pretty nose, the classic character of which was slightly marred, or improved, according to the taste of the observer, by the suspicion of a tilt. Her rather wide mouth—Anglo-Saxon in its firmness, though Oriental in its softer sensibilities—became a trifle haughty.

“If Monsieur is afraid,” said she, “he had better take me back to the hotel. There are a great many things more dangerous than bombs.”

“I well believe you,” said Dallas. “My word, I don’t see why you should need to bother with explosives! I am sure no sovereign would refuse to abdicate if you were to ask him real prettily to do so. Tell me, are you really blacklisted?”

“So Rosenthal has told us,” said the Lady Thalia.

“Never you mind,” said Sir James comfortingly. “Once out in the Balkans, you can lie doggo for a few months, and the whole thing will blow over. Then you can promise to be good, and we will see what we can do.”

The *mécanicien* had lit the lamps, and the powerful reflectors were rivalling the moonlight in their vivid twin beams.

“Everything is ready, M’sieu,” said the man, wiping his hands.

“Very well,” said Dallas. “Get in.” He started ahead, and the conversation was for the moment interrupted.

Proceeding at as fast a pace as the character of the road would permit, they presently turned into the big Paris-Dieppe highway, where Dallas began to raise his speed until presently the monster bearing them appeared to be rushing through the shimmering night like a planet torn from its orbit. On either side the tall poplar trunks tore past, like the palings of a fence, while the gleaming road before them suggested a broad band of flashing white ribbon which was being flicked into the wheels as a tape snaps into the roll of the tape measure.

Higher mounted the speed, and still higher; the route was perfect, free of traffic and brilliantly lighted, while the damp night air seemed to combine with the fuel to give the highest explosive power in the six smoothly running cylinders.

Neither of the women in the tonneau had ever experienced such speed, which, terrific as it was, became still more intensified by the vague illusiveness of their moonlit surroundings. Breathless and giddy, they clung to the sides of the tonneau as the flying car tore up the short kilometres and flung them astern. Dallas, a brilliant driver and a hopeless "speed-maniac," was beginning to feel the deep, encompassing repose of soul with which such a pace always enveloped his nervous disposition, and Sir James was mentally conjecturing on which particular star he would strike should anything go wrong, when suddenly the tense, vibrant hum of the spinning mechanism began to drop in tone. Deeper and deeper it grew; the fierce buffetings of air diminished in their force. Dallas squirmed in his seat and turned a startled face to his *mécanicien*, who flashed his pocket-lamp upon the oil-cups. Then, as they were breasting a gentle slope, the cylinders began to miss, the motor stopped, the terrific momentum was quickly lost, the car slowed, arrested its wild course with a whine of entreaty when Dallas flung on his brakes and sat in speechless anger, staring at his man.

PART II.

"*Nom de Dieu!*" gasped Dallas. "No essence!"

"Impossible, M'sieu!" cried the *mécanicien*. "I filled the tanks this afternoon."

"Then there must be a leak," snarled Dallas, pale and furious. "It was the escaping essence which we smelled in the garage."

"That cannot be, M'sieu. The tank and piping are new. The essence in the garage came from an overturned *bidon*. I found it myself, still with the essence——"

"Then what the devil is it? I tell you that there is no essence! It cannot be anything else."

He leaped down upon the road; Sir James did likewise, and the *mécanicien* produced a measure. A hasty examination showed that the tank was empty.

"It is just as I said," snarled Dallas, furious more at the sudden and unexpected relaxation from his high nervous exhilaration than at the predicament in which they found themselves. "Get out of the way." He himself examined the drip-cock before the *mécanicien* could touch it. The tap was firmly closed.

"Then it must be a leak," he growled.

"Impossible, M'sieu," protested the unhappy man.

"Then what is it?"

The *mécanicien* pulled off his cap and scratched his head. His bird-like face betrayed a growing suspicion.

"If some one at the hotel could have stolen our essence——" he began, then broke out explosively: "But the garage was locked! No one could have got in but that camel of a chauffeur of the Prince."

"Um! Ah!" observed Sir James pensively. Dallas's face was torn between rage and doubt.

"I have heard of such things," he muttered. "What sort of a pig was he, Armand?"

"I think that he was Hungarian, M'sieu, and a big, ugly brute of a fellow. He was not at all amiable."

"What a beastly low trick," said Sir James calmly, "to leave us stranded for a few francs' worth of petrol!"

Dallas compressed his lips and held his peace. He was far too enraged to express himself appropriately with ladies in the tonneau. The latter had made no comment, but sat awaiting developments in the bewildered silence peculiar to passengers when things go wrong with the motor.

They had stopped on a deserted section of the road, so far as one could discover. Across the bleak, rolling hills a light or two sparkled from some farm-house, but there was no sign of town or village. Although they were on the highway, it was very possible that they might have to wait for some time before another motor-car should pass, as in France automobiling at night is not the popular pastime it is in America, where so many men are engaged in business affairs throughout the day.

In the glare of the lamps Dallas consulted his road map and discovered that there was a village about three kilometres ahead of them. He turned to his *mécanicien*.

"You will have to walk to this place, Saint Croix, Armand," said he. "You will certainly find petrol there. Get a few *bidons* and then secure a carriage and return as quickly as you can. If a car arrives in the meantime, we will try to borrow enough to go after you."

The *mécanicien* hurried off, and Dallas turned to the ladies.

"This is very annoying," said he, "but it ought not to delay us for very long. It looks as if some scoundrel, possibly that animal of the Prince Emilio, has stolen our petrol. It seems to be my unfortunate destiny to try to rescue the Lady Thalia in boats without oars and motor-cars without fuel."

"It is not your fault," replied the girl. "The night is lovely, and we are so happy to have made our escape from Emilio and that dreadful Rosenthal that the delay does not matter. I am only sorry to make you so much trouble."

"The moonlight is delicious," murmured the Polish lady, who had pushed up her lunettes.

"I say," observed Sir James, who, being young and British, turned naturally to physical effort as a means of killing time, "would n't you like to get out and stretch your—um—ah—take a little stroll?"

"Yes," said Dallas, with irony; "you've had no exercise to-day, barring an hour's swim and shifting half the water in the Channel."

"Nevertheless," said the Lady Thalia, "I should love a little walk."

"And I," said the Countess, "a cigarette."

Sir James threw open the door of the tonneau and handed out the Lady Thalia as if she had been a creation of moon-webs and spun glass.

"We will walk down the road a bit, Stephen," said he. "If anything happens, blow your horn."

Dallas grunted, and, pulling out his cigarette-case, offered it to the Countess, then struck a match, and was forced to admire the glow of the flame against the girl's fresh, lovely features. She threw back her head and blew the smoke slowly into the face of the outraged moon.

"Tell me," said she, "do you really mean to take us all the way to Turkey?"

"Turkey!"

"Yes, Novibazar—that is a Turkish *sanjak*, you know, although under Austrian administration."

"I did n't know. Do you want me to take you there?" He leaned both elbows on the rim of the tonneau and looked at her curiously.

"Of course we want you to; but I don't know of any reason why you should."

"Nor I," said Dallas, with an utter absence of undue gallantry. "But I can think of a good many why I should not."

The Countess laughed and glanced at him from under the corners of her long, dark eyelashes.

"All this is Sir James's doing, is it not?" she asked.

"Entirely. I am merely the *deus ex machina*."

"What is that?"

"At present, a helpless god; let us say, Cupid with his wings clipped."

"You hate to stop on the road, do you not?"

"Yes, don't you?"

"N' no."

"Excuse me. But, you see, when I start to do a thing, I like to finish it without a break. Don't you?"

"Yes. But then, you see, I was not doing anything—except being frightened nearly to death."

"At what, pray?"

"The speed. You are a very daring driver, Mr. Dallas. One feels utter confidence, but at the same time the mere pace is terrifying."

"But a nihilist should not be frightened at anything."

"Zut!" The Countess struck the side of the car sharply with her small hand. "But I am not really a nihilist, Mr. Dallas; I am merely the victim of circumstance. Really, I would rather be killed myself than to hurt any living thing."

There was an earnest note in the girl's voice that caused Dallas to glance at her keenly.

"Then why——"

"Because—oh, I could never make you understand."

"Try," said Dallas gently.

"It's difficult. You are American; I am Polish. You grew up in an atmosphere of liberty in thought and speech and action, and I in one of oppression. I was taught that the assassination of despots was fine and noble. All my family lived in a mesh of intrigue, and some"—her breath came quickly—"have paid the penalty. But when I grew older I began to feel that it was all so cruel. I am weak, perhaps, but I cannot plot to kill people!" Her voice grew plaintive. "I do not want suffering, nor to cause it. I want sunshine and flowers and sweetness and——"

"And love," said Dallas quietly.

The Countess looked up at the moon.

"Perhaps. I don't know much about the latter, but it sounds rather nice." She laughed.

Dallas regarded her thoughtfully. "You have about as much right to be a nihilist as I have," said he in his dry voice. "What you really need is a husband, and, in the course of time, a—ahem—family. Then you would not have time to think of blowing anybody up, unless it were the cook, and you could n't do that or she'd leave. Tell me, if you were to get out of this mess, would you cut the whole thing for the future?"

"Yes," whispered the Countess.

"Promise?"

"Oh, yes. But why?"

"Because if you'll promise, I will agree to see you safely to Novibazar."

"Mr. Dallas!"

"Yes. You are much too nice to be mixed up with a bloodthirsty gang of murderers or to be in the clutches of men like the Prince and Rosenthal."

The Countess dropped her hand upon his arm as it rested on the rim of the tonneau. Her eyes looked deep into his, and something in their expression, or perhaps it was the magic of her touch, sent a

thrill through the young man. Dallas could be outwardly as unmoved as an Iroquois when his whole, sensitive inner nature was warm with the impulse of the moment.

"That is very sweet of you," said the girl softly, "but it is asking far too much!"

"You have n't asked it. It was James. We will say that it is for the sake of the Lady Thalia."

"But I don't want to say that it is *all* for Thalia! I want just a little of it to be for *me!*"

"Then it is for you."

"But why?"

"Because—oh, because I am an Altrurian, and a reformer of young ladies with nihilistic tendencies, and feel sorry for the poor kings."

The Countess slightly raised her chin.

"I had hoped that it might be something more—chiv—er—roman—er—interesting. And what is an Altrurian, Mr. Dallas?"

"An Altrurian is a person who does for nothing what most people want to be paid for."

"Oh!" The Countess regarded him thoughtfully. "And you are that sort of person?"

"In moments of folly, and when under the influence of—James."

"Then you consider this a moment of folly?"

"Worse!" Dallas looked deep into her eyes. "It is a moment of madness!"

The Countess dropped her elbows on the rim of the seat, rested her pretty chin on the knuckles of one hand, and regarded the young man fixedly. Her lovely face was filled with the softest of shadows, and her deep blue eyes shone like stars after the moon has set.

"But you don't want any pay," said she.

"Not for myself. Only for you—and the poor devils of kings."

"Why are you so sorry for the wretched kings?"

"I'd be sorry for anybody so unfortunate as to be in your bad graces. Then a person in grave danger is always a fit object for compassion."

"And how about a person in my good graces?" asked the Countess mischievously.

"That," said Dallas, "would be more dangerous still."

"Indeed!"

"I think so. What if you happened to get jealous—with your knowledge of unpleasant explosives!"

"You are chaffing me!"

"Not a bit of it! I should n't dare!"

The Countess tossed her head. "For a man who drives a car as you do, it seems to me that you are singularly lacking in courage!"

"Ah, but, you see, you can't drive a woman."

"Would you be afraid to try?"

"Very! One always goes around in such a small circle that it is impossible to tell who is in the lead."

"Ignorance," observed the Countess to the moon, "is sometimes said to be bliss."

"Very likely—while it lasts."

"Coward!"

"Guilty!"

"But, in spite of your craven fears, here you are, knight-errant!"

"That is James's fault."

"Then it stops at Paris," said the Countess, with decision.

"Just as you wish."

"What is *your* wish?"

"To be of service"—Dallas smiled—"and to reform you from the evil of your ways."

"But—why?"

"I have told you. Call it altruism."

"I'm afraid," said the girl slowly, "that it is pure kindness of heart, and must cease at Paris."

"Very well."

"What?"

"I said, 'Very well.'"

The Countess leaned back in the tonneau and folded her hands in her lap.

"Have a cigarette?" said Dallas, offering his case. She took one, lighted it, then glanced at the moon, that treacherous counsellor and lenient, vise-mouthed chaperon.

"Still," said the Countess presently, in a meditative voice, "I don't suppose I ought to be selfish. There's Thalia—and Sir James."

"Quite so," said Dallas drily.

The girl beat a little tattoo on the back of the seat with her gloved fingers, then looked at Dallas aslant.

"It would be a lark," said she. "Do you really want to take us?"

"Yes. I have already undertaken to see you safely out of your troubles. But remember, it's a bargain. Do you promise to reform?"

"Yes," murmured the Countess; "I promise. Oh, you Americans!" She turned suddenly and flung herself against the rim of the tonneau, her face very near that of the young man. "I beg your pardon," said she softly. "I should have said—you American!"

Dallas took her hand in his strong, nervous grip and gave it a slight squeeze.

"Then it's agreed," said he.

"It's agreed. Oh, look! Here comes a car!"

The young man turned and looked back over the road upon which they had come. Far in the distance he caught the sudden flare of a search-light. At the same moment the cheerful voice of Sir James hailed him from the gloom ahead:

"I say, Stephen, here comes a car."

"I see it," said Dallas. "We will stop them and try to beg a little essence."

With painstaking care, the Englishman placed the Lady Thalia in the tonneau. "We saw that fellow's lights," said he, "and hurried back."

Far down the road there appeared another vivid flash, then two lurid eyes, as the car swung around a slight curve. Apparently it was high-powered, for on striking the foot of the slope upon which Dallas had stopped it came flying up with no change of speed. A moment later Dallas's car fell within the beams of the twin lights, when there came the sound of shifting gears as the new arrival, a big limousine car, glided gently alongside and came to a stop. At the same moment there reached the ears of the runaways a harsh, discordant laugh.

"*Rosenthal!*" cried the Countess.

Sir James flicked away his cigarette. "I say, old chap," he drawled to Dallas, "I believe that we've been had!"

Three dark figures descended from the car, and two of them approached. Rosenthal was in advance, looming dark and Titanesque. At his elbow came the chauffeur, and Dallas's quick eye caught the flash of some metallic object in the man's hand. The Prince remained standing by the door of the limousine.

"Looks like a row," muttered Sir James. "Go slow, Stephen; remember that we are in France."

As the big Jew approached, his raucous laugh burst out again; then, observing the silent and ominous attitudes of the two young men, he stopped.

"Goot efening!" said he, in thick, guttural English. He took off his hat with a flourish. "Excuse me if I laugh, but this is so very, very funny! Vell, vell, boys vill be boys, is it not?"

A deep chuckle rumbled in his chest.

"I must say that I fail to see anything funny about it!" snapped Dallas. "We invite two ladies to take a moonlight ride, and then get stalled on a lonely stretch of road because some thief has stolen all the essence out of our tank."

"No!" cried Rosenthal in a tone of mock surprise.

"You might let us have enough to go on with, you know," suggested Sir James placidly.

The big Jew's laugh gurgled deeper. "Goot!" said he. "Be a

sport, as they say in the States. After all, it would be no more than fair if we were to give you some petrol—because it is yours that we are now burning in our motor! Ha, ha, ha!”

“Ours!” snarled Dallas. “Have you got the cheek to tell me that you stole my essence?” He took a step forward. Sir James lounged easily at his elbow, his hands in the pockets of his ulster.

“Hold on!” The Jew raised one big arm and shook his finger at the two men. “Don’t do anything foolish, my dear boys. Let me state my case. You made a little plot to steal away our ladies. That was all right; I do not blame you. I was once a youngster mineself! But now I have a wife in Buda-Pesth whom I love very much.”

“Oh, rot!” snapped Dallas.

“That is not polite, Mr. Dallas,” remonstrated Rosenthal, “but no matter. When you made this little plan, you did not appreciate two things: first, who those ladies were, and, second, that you was playing the game mit Isidor Rosenthal!” He smote his chest with one big hand.

“The game is not yet played out, my dear baron,” murmured Sir James.

“I beg your pardon, Sir Chames.” Again he shook his finger at the two men. “But do not try anything rash, because I could take one of you boys in each hand and cr’r’rack your heads together!” The harsh voice had become stern and menacing. “More than that, the Prince has a revolver, and would, I am afraid, be fool enough to shoot it at you. Then here is the *mécanicien* mit a spanner! It is no goot! It is not worth while. Besides, there is something more. You do not know about this lady’s maid of the Lady Thalia.”

“Yes,” said Dallas impatiently; “we know all about her. She is the Countess Rubitzki and said to be a nihilist.”

“She is a nihilist,” said Rosenthal.

“Bosh!” said the Englishman.

“It is no bosh, Sir Chames. There are extradition papers out for her in France and Italy and Austria. If she is taken, she goes to Siberia.”

“It makes no difference,” retorted Dallas. “Maid or nihilist or countess, she is our guest, and she is not to be interfered with.”

“By Chingo!” exclaimed the Jew, “but that is goot spirit! Believe me, I am sorry to spoil this little spree, but business is business, and there is that matter of my forty thousand pounds. Come, my friends; we do not want a row. You must see that you are outclassed. *Mein Gott!*” he exclaimed in vexation. “Who are you boys to pit your brains and bodies against Isidor Rosenthal? I have made rebellions in South America and the Balkans, and all the West Indies takes off its hat to me. I have put presidents on their knees, and out-financed

statesmen, and received the tanks of potentates. Come, ve vill not have any troubles! You would not be so foolish!" He turned and said a few sharp words to the chauffeur, whereat the man walked back to the car and put away the spanner. Rosenthal turned again to Dallas and threw out his hands, palms upward. "So you see, my dear boys, I play big games. And I play little ones, too! I knew you would try to steal the Lady Thalia! It had to be—after Sir Chames went valking mit her on the beach. So, not to make a r'row by the hotel, and because ve needed some fuel, I ordered our man to draw the essence from your tank and put it into ours. There vas forty litres, which at thirty-five centimes makes fourteen francs. I vill gif you the money."

He drew his purse from his pocket, counted out some silver, and offered it to Dallas.

"I don't want your filthy money!" growled the American.

"Take it, my friend. Business is business." Rosenthal stepped to the car and put the money on the seat, then, turning, he brushed past Sir James and laid his hand on the latch of the door to the tonneau. "Come, ladies," said he.

But it was just here that Rosenthal, hardened adventurer and keen judge of men that he was, committed a *faux pas*. Accustomed all his life to carrying his wishes through by the sheer weight of his tremendous vitality, he would not admit the possibility of any active resistance to his will. But in all his rough dealings with men, the Jew had never had much contact of a hostile character with thoroughbreds. As he truthfully said, he was physically powerful enough to take the two young men, one in either hand, and knocked their heads together, and this and the fact that they were unarmed and apparently at a loss seemed to him quite enough to insure his carrying off the affair high-handedly.

But the big Jew had quite failed to consider the fact that there is a certain type of man who under given conditions will fight to the last, not through any hope of winning out, but merely because he feels that he owes it to himself.

Both Dallas and Sir James belonged to this class. The Englishman had been standing with his feet apart and his thumbs hooked into the side pockets of his ulster. His cap was pulled down over his eyes, and his face looked calm and unruffled. But as the Jew stepped forward and laid his hand upon the latch, Sir James swung easily about, taking the weight of his athletic body on his forward foot.

"Oh, look here, Baron," said he in a voice of calmest protest. "This won't do at all. We can't have you making free with our guests like that, you know. Suppose you take your hand off that door."

"Sir Chames," said Rosenthal in his harsh voice, "I am very sorry, but these ladies are in our care, and they must come with us."

His great hand fell on the latch, and as it did so Sir James's fist shot out. So quick was the blow, and so true and hard, that it would have been all that was necessary to stretch the ordinary man upon the road. But Rosenthal was very far from being the ordinary man. Although confident that he would meet with no resistance, yet as the veteran of many a swift and deadly *mêlée* where knives and pistols were used as well as fists, he was not caught altogether napping. The indolent shifting of the Englishman's weight had not been lost to his practised eye, so that when Sir James struck out, Rosenthal, although he had no time to evade the blow, slightly turned his head, with the result that what would otherwise have been a solid impact, glanced from the heavy bones under his woollen cap.

Seeing that he had failed, the Englishman sprang in and struck with his other fist, but this blow was knocked aside by Rosenthal's arm and the next instant the two had clinched.

Dallas, who fully understood his friend's nature, was quite prepared. As Sir James grappled with Rosenthal, Dallas sprang upon the Prince, and before that startled royalty could snatch his revolver from his pocket he received a blow between the eyes that sent him over backward and to the ground, his head striking the step as he fell. The *mécanicien*, taking it for granted, from the assurance of Rosenthal and the quiet demeanor of the two young men, that there would be no violence, was also taken unprepared. Before he could secure his spanner, Dallas had sprung upon him and struck him in the face with a force that sent him spinning in his tracks. But the American, although strong and quick, was light of build, while the chauffeur was a thick-set, powerful man. Recovering himself, he sprang at Dallas, and the two went to the ground together in a very active "rough-and-tumble."

The Prince, half-stunned from the rap which he had given his head as he fell, remained quite *hors de combat*, so that the fight was man to man. But Sir James, although a splendid athlete, was no match for the herculean Jew. Rosenthal tore him off as a gorilla might free himself from the clasp of a man, and, getting one great arm clear, smote the Englishman a hammer-like blow on the top of the head, which laid him senseless and quivering in the road. Then, ignoring the struggle going on between Dallas and the chauffeur, he flung open the door of the tonneau and, plucking out the Countess as if she were a child, carried her to the Prince's car and pushed her into the limousine.

"Keep quiet, Paula!" he panted. "Remember, if there is any alarm—Siberia!"

He strode back to Dallas's car. "Come, Thalia," said he. "Do not oblige me to use force. Come!"

Without a word, the girl descended from the car, but, catching sight of Sir James, she paused.

"You brute!" she cried chokingly. "Have you killed him?"

"Nonsense! It is nodding," panted the Jew. "He is just asleep. I took care to hit him on top of the head and not too hard, or his skull would be c'c'ruashed like an egg-shell! I do not like to kill a gentleman; they are too few! *Sapristi*, he *would* fight! Vat could I do? Come!"

He pushed the girl toward the other car, into which she crept without a word, when Rosenthal turned and secured the two valises. The chauffeur had overcome Dallas, who was lying on his back, cursing vigorously, while the man sat upon his chest, pinning both his wrists to the ground. The Prince had struggled to a sitting posture, with his back against the wheel, and was holding both hands to his head and groaning. As Rosenthal's eyes fell upon him, the Jew's face was lit for a moment by his sardonic grin. Leaning down, he raised the Prince bodily by both shoulders and thrust him into the limousine.

"Get in, my dear fellow," said he, and slammed the door. He turned to where Dallas was lying on his back in the road, under the weight of the burly *mécanicien*, and his deep chuckle rumbled out again.

"Vill you be good if you are let up, and not try to fight?" asked Rosenthal.

Dallas's reply was a somewhat torrid blast in the expressive terms of his native city, Chicago.

"*Peste!*" exclaimed the Jew. "All this fuss for some br'r'ight eyes! Such foolish boys! With me it is different; it is a matter of forty t'ousand pounds. Vy can you not be sensible?" His harsh voice carried a note that was almost plaintive. "Here we are fighting with r'r'rage in our hearts, and yesterday ve might have been all drowned together!"

Furious as he was, something in the tone of the big Jew struck Dallas's sense of the ridiculous. In spite of himself, he began to laugh. Rosenthal's harsh cackle joined him.

"That is better—to laugh! Come, get up!" He hauled the chauffeur roughly off Dallas, who rose to his feet, shook himself, eyed his big antagonist for a moment, then shrugged.

"Where is Sir James?" he demanded, looking around.

"Over there. He is hurted a little—not much." He jerked his head toward the Englishman, who was beginning to stir. Rosenthal turned away.

"Good night, Mr. Dallas," said he affably; then in French to the *mécanicien*: "Get in and drive."

Dallas walked stiffly to the side of his prostrate friend. The *mécanicien* climbed to his feet, cranked the motor, and took his seat. Rosenthal glanced at Sir James, then got in beside the chauffeur.

"Good night," called the Jew again.

"Good night," answered Dallas, in spite of himself.

The big car moved forward; as it gathered speed and glided off into the darkness, Dallas heard the Jew's harsh laugh, scarcely distinguishable from the clash of the pinions as the chauffeur went somewhat awkwardly into the speed ahead. With a wry smile, the young man turned to look at his friend. At the same moment Sir James sat upright.

"Ouch!" said he.

"How do you feel, James?" asked Dallas.

"Little groggy. I say——" His wits, scattered by the crushing force of Rosenthal's big fist, rallied quickly. He looked somewhat vacantly about him, then groaned.

"Very bad, James?"

"Oh, I say, Stephen!" Sir James's two hands were raised to clasp his head. "We've been had!"

"Could n't help it," muttered Dallas. "We did our little best."

"How did *you* make out?"

"Nothing to brag of. I did put the Prince out of action; then the chauffeur sat on me."

"The chauffeur! Oh, come! *Not* the chauffeur!"

"Rather it were he than the Prince—or even Rosenthal!" snapped Dallas.

"Oh, my soul! And our ladies?"

"They've got 'em."

"Oh, no! No! Stephen, Stephen, this is too awful!"

"Don't blame *me*," snapped Dallas. "You started the Donnybrook!"

"I know it. But—to get polished off and our ladies taken away from us by an outfit like that! Let me die!" Sir James groaned, then sat up with a feeble grin. "Did you say you had some brandy in the car?"

Dallas produced the stimulant, of which both partook.

"I thought I heard somebody laughing as I was waking up from my nap," observed Sir James.

"Very likely. Rosenthal was laughing, and so was I. Just think it over a bit, and perhaps the humor of the thing may strike *you*."

Sir James cackled feebly. "Downy old bird, Rosenthal," said he. "To think of his having foreseen the whole thing and drained all of the essence out of our tank except just enough to take us into the wilderness. Hope we meet again."

"I have an idea," said Dallas softly, "that we will."

"Where, pray?"

"That I don't know. But this adventure, James, has only just begun."

Sir James's face brightened. "I wish that I could think so," said he.

"Well, it's so. Let me tell you something. About two minutes before Rosenthal arrived on the scene, I had passed my word to Countess Rubitzki to see the two girls safely to Novibazar."

"The deuce you had!"

"Yes. I had agreed to get them safely away from Rosenthal and the Prince, and deposit them in the Lady Thalia's country, wherever that is. What I meant to do, of course, was to make a run to the eastward in the car, and, even while I was talking to her, I had figured it all out. My plan was to stop in Paris for a few hours' sleep and to get some things, and then, before Rosenthal and the Prince could arrive, to get away for Switzerland, go over the Simplon, and then on through Italy and the Dolomites for the Dalmatian coast, eventually escorting them across Montenegro, as we had planned. Now the whole thing has got complicated—but there's my promise just the same."

Sir James scrambled to his feet and seized his friend's hand.

"That's the talk, old fellow!" he exclaimed. "You can count on me. Besides"—he rubbed his head—"we can't decently drop the thing after being mauled about like this. And I say, Dallas, did you ever see such eyes?"

"No," said Dallas; "nor such a mouth and chin. And she is no more a nihilist at heart than I am. She has simply got mixed up in all this trouble through the fault of circumstance. She is the sweetest little person that ever lived! And so game! Upon my word, James, I caught a glimpse of her as that hairy brute was stuffing her into the limousine, and her cigarette was still going—"

"I say!" exclaimed Sir James. "You are talking about the Countess! I was referring to Thalia."

"Thalia!" exclaimed Dallas. "Oh, you can have Thalia."

"Wish I thought so! Anyhow, we'll have a try—eh?" Sir James raised the flask which he held in his hand. "It's a go, then, old boy! Here's confusion to Rosenthal and the Prince; and long live Thalia and the Countess and—and—what is the name of their bally country?"

"Novibazar."

"Long live Novibazar!"

The two friends drank.

"Here comes a wagon," said Dallas, as he set down the flask. He raised his voice. "Armand!"

"*Me voilà, M'sieu!*" came the distant answer.

"The question is," observed Sir James, the following day, as the two were at *déjeuner* in Dallas's luxurious apartment on the Avenue de l'Alma, "how to find 'em again."

"That should not be hard," said Dallas. "Rosenthal is too conspicuous a figure to lose himself in Paris."

"Look here," said Sir James, "tell you what I'll do. I know a South American woman here in Paris who is acquainted with all the unusual people. Her salon is usually full of Oriental nabobs and abdicating presidents and nihilists and shady Balkan royalties and that sort of truck. She is a Señora Gonzales, of Buenos Ayres. Got a card from her the other day. She comes back to town early to see something of the South American and West Indian gang before they go home for the winter. Suppose that I go around there to see if I can learn anything about our friends."

Dallas nodded.

"That is a good plan. Meanwhile, I will attend to a few matters, and we'll meet at the Traveller's for dinner."

"Right," said Sir James. "Then I'm off."

Returning to his studio, he gave orders to his man-servant to get ready to leave at a moment's notice, for a hunting trip in Austria. A few hours later he presented himself at a small private hotel upon the Avenue Henri Martin, where, on entering the salon, he was welcomed by a handsome woman of Andalusian type, who greeted him very cordially.

"It is so nice of you to come, Sir James," said she. "You are just in time. There is such a fascinating girl in the other room! She's Albanian; her father was Constantine Bey, and her home is high up in the north Albanian Alps."

"Not the Lady Thalia!" exclaimed Sir James.

"Yes," cried his hostess in surprise. "Do you know her?"

"Um—ah—we've met. Is the Prince Emilio with her?"

"The Prince is playing bridge."

"Indeed! And, speaking of the Prince, Señora Gonzales, do you happen to know a Baron Rosenthal?"

"Oh, everybody in South America knows Rosenthal. Such a *type!* He has promised to come in later."

"What do you know about him?" asked Sir James.

"Rosenthal is a Czechian Jew who has made an enormous fortune in promoting all kinds of—er—doubtful enterprises, principally revolutions, in all parts of the world. He knows everybody, speaks every language, after a fashion, and is a Papal baron. Fancy, a Jew a *Papal* baron!"

"Does that account for his being received?" asked Sir James. "I thought him an awful brute!"

His hostess threw out her hands. "But nobody could keep Rosenthal out of any place where he wanted to go!" she cried. "He is as insidious as the cholera, with the forward impetus of—of——"

"Of an auto-bus," suggested Sir James reflectively.

Madame Gonzales laughed. "I see that you have met him! But then," she added, "I doubt if anybody would wish to close the door to Rosenthal. He is very interesting, and would do anything for a person whom he liked. Then, he is really very decent and well behaved, and perfectly devoted to his wife."

Sir James was on the point of pursuing his inquiries when some other guests arrived, and the hostess turned from him with a smile.

He crossed the room and passed into a salon adjoining, where, sitting in an alcove and chatting with an immaculate young Frenchman, he discovered the Lady Thalia of Novibazar.

PART III.

THE Lady Thalia looked up, and as her eyes fell upon Sir James they opened to their fullest width and the rich color faded from her cheeks. The next instant it came pouring back again, considerably deeper in tone, while her long lashes fell.

The man to whom she had been talking, and who was looking into her face at the time, observed the flash of emotion, and, swinging in his chair, glanced up curiously at Sir James. The two were slightly acquainted, having previously met at the same house. Sir James crossed the room in his usual calm and cheerful manner, bowed before the girl, then, with a pleasant word, turned to shake hands with the Frenchman.

"And how do you find yourself, Mademoiselle," said he in French, "after our little accident of last evening?" Without waiting for her reply, and in order to give her the cue, he turned to the Frenchman and continued: "While motoring last night with a friend, we had the misfortune to come in collision with the Prince Emilio and Baron Rosenthal."

"Indeed! And was there any damage?"

"None whatever to the cars," replied Sir James placidly. "The Prince, my friend, and myself were thrown about a little and slightly shaken up."

The lips of the Lady Thalia began to twitch, and the Frenchman, suspecting some understanding between the two, murmured his felicitations on their escape from serious injury, and, with a comment on the dangers of motoring, excused himself.

When he had gone the girl leaned back in her fauteuil and looked at Sir James smilingly.

"Awfully jolly, finding you here," said Sir James cheerfully. "Saves such a lot of trouble."

"Are you quite sure?" she answered.

"Positive. We had set ourselves to comb Paris to find you."

"And now that you have found us?" asked the girl.

"We can make our plans," answered Sir James, in his most matter-of-fact tone.

"Indeed!" The hazel eyes opened a little wider. "How is Mr. Dallas?"

"Quite furious. You see, the chauffeur sat on him."

"No!"

"Really! And I'm not quite sure that the brute did not cuff him once or twice. Stephen would not admit it, but I noticed that one ear was a trifle puffed up, and when he brushed his hair he swore."

The Lady Thalia leaned back in her chair and laughed until her eyes were misty. Then her lovely face grew serious.

"And how are *you*?" she asked. "I have been horribly anxious. When we left, you were quite unconscious."

"Merely a little nap," replied Sir James calmly. "The Baron knows his work. When I awoke, quite refreshed, I found Dallas raving with a thirst for revenge and a deep appreciation for the charms of a certain lady."

"And you?"

"Um—ah—my own emotions were not so complicated. I harbor no ill-will against Rosenthal."

The girl's eyes fell. "Paula is very fascinating, is she not?"

"So Stephen tells me. No doubt he is quite right."

The rich color deepened in the cheeks of the Lady Thalia, and her long lashes swept down to hide what was in the amber-colored eyes.

"But about our plans," said Sir James. "We have undertaken to get you out of the hands of the Prince and Rosenthal and land you safely in—ah—"

"Novibazar?"

"Quite so." Sir James adjusted his monocle, and, taking a small gold pencil from his pocket, scribbled something upon his cuff. The girl's lips twitched.

"We must give these chaps the slip," said Sir James. "Then we'll run you two ladies down through Switzerland and across to the Dalmatian coast. Get into your country by the back door, so to speak."

The girl's face became grave, and she shook her head.

"That is very dear and chivalrous of you," said she, "but it is quite impossible. We are leaving in two days for Belgrade, and Rosenthal has threatened to inform the police of Paula's identity if we try to run away in the meantime. It would not be safe."

Sir James knit his brows and spun his monocle around his finger.

"Besides," said the Lady Thalia slowly, "we could not think of letting you put yourself to so much trouble and expense."

"As for the trouble," said Sir James, "that does n't count, because, you see, we've neither of us a blessed thing to do, and as far as expense is concerned, Dallas swears that he would cheerfully put up forty thousand pounds against old Rosenthal's, just to get even. He's shockingly rich. What will happen when you get to Belgrade?"

The Lady Thalia's face clouded. "I have no idea," she answered. "To tell the truth, the thought is a little terrifying. Servia is a very wild country, and Emilio has great influence there."

"You mean that he might do something nasty?"

"N'no. Rosenthal, who is kind-hearted in a way, would see that no actual harm happened us. But I think they are quite capable of keeping us somewhere under guard until they have either carried out their plans or——" The small white teeth came together.

"Or you have consented to marry Emilio?"

She nodded.

"In that case," said Sir James, "we will try to give them the slip at Belgrade. No, don't interrupt, please." The young man's pleasant voice had grown suddenly crisp, and his habitual indolent cheerfulness had disappeared. "You don't quite understand, Lady Thalia. The affair has ceased to be a lark, nor is it a matter of gallantry. Dallas and I have made a promise not only to you and Paula Rubitzki, but to ourselves. We have been knocked down and beaten and made fools of, and we cannot drop the undertaking now with honor. There is also, of course, the desire to be of service to you. Unless you forbid us, which I am sure you will not, we mean to see the thing through."

"It is dangerous work, Sir James. You do not understand what you are undertaking."

"I understand enough, and so does Dallas. Will you accept us as your knights-errant? Surely you will not refuse now, and go off and leave us disgraced."

"But you are not disgraced. Last night you were outnumbered; the odds were too heavy, and there are very few men, Sir James, who would care to attack a giant like Rosenthal. There is nothing for you to feel ashamed of, and, besides"—she slightly raised her chin—"I do not consider mere personal pride to be enough of a motive for what you wish to do."

"It is not the only motive. You see, Dallas and I are mere idlers. I paint bad pictures, and he plays with motors. We have often bewailed our lack of objective. Now, *you* are trying to do a very fine thing, and if you succeed in getting away from these two animals and out to your own country, you are going to try to prevent a border war and to bring your country under the control of a civilized administration. That is fine. It's splendid! If one could do some-

thing like that, one would not feel such an unpardonably useless member of society; so, you see, Stephen and I would like to help, if you don't mind."

The Lady Thalia smiled.

"You men are dears!" she said impulsively, in her soft, accented English. "Paula and I should consider ourselves very lucky to have found two such friends. Come, then, if you wish." She held out her hand.

Sir James took it quickly in his, and, with his brick-red face slightly brickier, leaned over and brushed it with his lips. At the same moment there came from the doorway behind him an explosive "*Sapristi!*" followed by a hoarse, gurgling chuckle. He turned in his chair, and looked up into the sardonically grinning face of Baron Isidor Rosenthal.

"*Mein Gott!*" cried the Jew. "You vas at it again!" He shook his great head, and his craggy, satanic features became suddenly grave. "My friend, this vill not do. The Prince is in the other r'r'room playing bridge; if he finds you here, there vill be a scene!" His brown eyes, shot with their multiple hazel dots, grew sombre. "I should have hitted you harder," he growled.

"Mr. Dallas," observed Sir James pleasantly, "should have hit the Prince harder. By rights, he ought to be in bed with his face in a towel."

"His face is not pretty," said the Jew, with a grin. "His eyes are very bad. We have told the people that ve vas in collision last night. But you must be careful, Sir Chames."

"Suppose you go in and keep him busy for a few minutes. I will not be long."

Rosenthal hesitated for an instant; then his diabolic grin pushed up the corners of his bushy eyebrows and bared his great, yellow fangs.

"Goot!" said he. "I vill do it—because you are a goot sport! I like you, and I t'ink perhaps I owe you somet'ing. But do not be long, Sir Chames. I vant to show some stones to Mademoiselle—a tiamond and ruby necklace I have yust bought for my dear vife in Buda-Pesth!" He turned and left the room.

Sir James and the Lady Thalia looked at each other and laughed.

"We must make our plans quickly," said the young man. "You say that you are going to leave for Belgrade the day after to-morrow?"

"The day after that—Thursday."

"Then Stephen and I will go on ahead of you as quickly as possible. We will take all our shooting things and give it out on our arrival that we are going up-country after moufflon or ibex or chamois or whatever they have out there, and we will travel under the names of

'Mr. James' and 'Mr. Stephen.' On arriving at Belgrade, we will try to secure an intelligent native servant, in whom we will confide as much as seems necessary. For the rest, we shall have to trust to opportunity. It ought not to be difficult—Serbia is such a wild country."

Again their eyes met. At the same moment there came from the other room a burst of laughter and many voices talking together, with the sound of chairs being pushed along the parquet.

"They have stopped playing," said the girl breathlessly. "You must go."

Sir James rose to his feet, then looked down at her with a smile.

"*A bientôt,*" said he softly. "At Belgrade, then."

He turned on his heel and strode out of the room. In the salon he came face to face with Rosenthal.

"You are going?" asked the Jew. "That is goot. The Prince is a hot-head."

"Is he? He did not act that way last night."

Rosenthal's yellow teeth shone between his mustache and his imperial.

"It is different in a salon," he said. "He has no polish, like you and me. He is a Serb—half civilized—*pouf!* Goot-by, Sir Chames."

The Englishman took the huge hand which a few hours earlier had landed closed and with crushing force upon his aristocratic head.

"Good-by, Baron Rosenthal," said he, smiling.

Three days later, in their suite of rooms, from the windows of which one looked out upon the palace where King Alexander and his queen Draga were murdered, Stephen Dallas, Sir James, and Connors, the latter's servant, sat calmly discussing their plans for the abduction of the Lady Thalia and her persecuted friend, Countess Paula Rubitzki.

Scattered in some confusion about the room were the arms and accoutrements of the sportsmen: costumes of canvas and khaki, puttee leggings, heavy, hobnailed hunting-shoes, cartridge-belts, camp gear of aluminum, flasks, high-powered binoculars, and weapons. With the last they had experienced no difficulty from the local authorities. One glance at Sir James's brick-red face, his monocle, and the faultless costumes of both men, had been sufficient passport; the official ones had not even been asked for. Sir James was so obviously the ubiquitous British sportsman, to be found wherever there are animals to kill, and there is no lack of game in the Servian highlands. Moreover, England is about the only one of the Powers held in esteem by the Servians, despite, or because of, the fact that only Great Britain withdrew her minister and kept him withdrawn after the bloodthirsty royal massacre which immediately preceded the accession of King Peter to the throne.

As Dallas and Sir James discussed their plans, the man Connors

was carefully studying a map which was spread on the central table, and as the two friends talked they occasionally glanced toward the Irishman, as if for confirmation of their statements. For Connors, when the truth were known, was far better qualified for the work in hand than either of the two, being a veteran campaigner with a large fund of personal experience where dealing with savage peoples was concerned. For many years he had served as the orderly of Sir James's father, the late Colonel Sir Henry Fenwick, and had been through one campaign in India and another in the Sudan. Connors was a silent man, past middle age, of an iron physique, resourceful, highly courageous, and possessed of a keen sense of Irish humor. In appearance he was of medium height, very broad, with a lean frame and large, heavy bones. He had, of course, been fully informed as to the nature of the enterprise, which, while it jumped entirely with his inclination, he nevertheless felt under obligation outwardly to condemn.

"There will be fightin', sorr," he had said to Dallas, "or I'm no judge. I see be the map that this same Novibazar do be a mountainous country, and 't is my expayrience that where there's mountains there do be paypul who wud rather fight than ate. An' fightin' is bad in these days phwin kings talks pace and their subjec's do be smugglin' long-range rifles into the hills agin the time phwin their naybors have laid down their arrums."

"But fighting is your proper trade, Connors," Dallas had said.

"Troth, sorr, and so it is, an' shud be Sir James's trade as well. But where there's wimmin mixed up wid it, sorr"—he shook his grizzled head—"fightin' is wan thing, sorr, an' wimmin is another, an' phwin the two is mixed 't is no great job a mon will be doin' at ayther—unless maybe 't is wid the wimmin."

Having thus expressed himself, the Irishman had set about to overhaul the weapons with a loving care which was scarcely consistent with his theoretic disapproval of the undertaking.

The proprietor of their inconspicuous hotel had promised to secure them a proper guide who should be familiar with the country and the local dialects of its inhabitants. As they were deep in the discussion of their plans, there came a rap at the door, and the German waiter—for the Serbs dislike menial work of any kind—ushered into their presence a swarthy-looking ruffian in a sheepskin cap, an upper garment of white which was half shirt, half smock, and white trousers, very full about the hips and fitting snugly about the legs, which were swathed in homespun stockings with a broad red band. On his feet he wore rawhide sandals, thonged across the instep and about the ankles. He was not a prepossessing-looking individual, but appeared to be clean, and his face, although sullen, showed an unmistakable intelligence.

Dallas looked up sharply, at which the man pulled off his sheep-skin cap.

"Goo' morning, sar," said he, with a grin.

"H'm," said Sir James. "So you speak English."

"Yes, sar. I American citizen."

"The deuce you are!" said Dallas.

"Yes, sar. I work three years in slaughter-house in New York City. I belong fif' ward. Vote for Tammany. Get two dollars."

"What do you do here?" asked Sir James.

"Raise hogs in beech-woods over by head of Morava River."

"Do you know the country across the border in the *sanjak* of Novibazar?" asked Dallas. "The country in the neighborhood of Rascia?"

The man threw him a quick, cunning glance.

"Yes, sar; know all that country well. My landlord live there. He Prince Emilio. No good."

The two friends exchanged glances.

"What's the matter with him?" asked Dallas.

"He boss grafter. Sometime he make me pay rent twice. All his people very bad. Got bands of Bulgarian Christians. Don't do a thing but cut throats other Christians."

"Are you a Christian?" asked Dallas.

"Me? No. I good man. Been to New York. Out for the dough."

"The Christian community," observed Sir James, "does not appear to stand particularly high. I think this man is what we need. Suppose we tell him. What do you think, Connors?"

The Irishman had been eying the man keenly, and did not appear to be favorably impressed, but he shrugged his shoulders.

"No doubt he knows the counthry, sorr, an' he looks to be a smart divil enough."

"One's as good as another, James," said Dallas in French. "It's only a question of money, and we will pay him well. Besides, he does n't like Emilio."

Sir James nodded. "Suppose you tell him what we want, then," said he.

"What are you doing in Belgrade?" Dallas inquired.

"Jes' come down with bunch of hogs. Now they all shipped for Vienna. Pretty soon I go back."

"Did you ever hear of a place called Dakabar?" asked Dallas.

The man scratched his matted head.

"Yes, sar. That high up in the mountain. People there all Shkipetari. They tough gang. Don't like Serbs." His beady eyes fastened keenly on Dallas. "You goin' there?"

"Yes," said Dallas. "Now listen to me. The Prince Emilio will

be here in Belgrade to-morrow or next day. There are with him two ladies. We want to steal these two ladies and take them to Dakabar. Do you understand?"

The man looked at him keenly. His sullen face showed a quick flash of intelligence, then became dull again.

"That tough job."

"You will be well paid."

"How much you pay?"

"How much do you want?"

The man's eyes narrowed, and a crease appeared across his low forehead.

"This tough job," said he. "Suppose Prince, he get wise?" There was a significant gesture of his finger across his swarthy throat. "This job no cinch!"

"Then you are afraid to tackle it?" asked Dallas.

"No, sar, not afraid. Suppose you pay good price—one hundred dollars"—he looked keenly at Dallas with his cunning, beady eyes—"then I fix it."

"All right. I will pay you one hundred dollars; and when we get safely to Dakabar, if you have done will, I will give you another fifty. Now, what do you think is the best way to go about it?"

The man pondered.

"What's your name?"

"Dimitri, sar. I think best way for two ladies take a drive some night. I give coachman fifty *kroners* keep his mouth shut. Then we get ponies and wait on the big road to Nis. Then I know crossroad through the hills by Rudnik. That very long—four days, five days—but railroad not safe. Then I think ladies better wear boy clothes, so nobody get wise."

Dallas and Sir James exchanged glances.

"All right, Dimitri," said Dallas. "You appear to know your business. Go ahead, then, and buy your horses and the boys' clothes for the ladies, and mind you get clean, new ones. Until we get well away from Belgrade, we will push along pretty fast," he said to Sir James.

"S'pose you write note to ladies, sar," said Dimitri. "Tell 'em go driving one night very soon."

Dallas picked up his portfolio and wrote a few lines, which he enclosed in an envelope and handed to their guide.

"All right," said Dimitri. "This tough job. This no cinch, but I fix it."

High up on a little shelf of the wild Kapaonik Mountains the runaways had made their noonday halt at the cabin of a shaggy

swineherd, whose pigs were rooting in the beech-wood which clothed the flanks of the hill.

Above the cabin the mountain reared precipitously to a height of some six thousand feet. Beneath, the slope fell away more gradually to a narrow, thickly-wooded valley, where the tumbling waters of the Moravitzá foamed and roared and could be seen in places flashing like snow through vistas between the trees, the leaves of which were beginning to show a tint of autumn coloring.

The air was still and sweet, with the odors of moss and fern, for it had rained the night before, and the hot midday sun was now beating down to distil the steaming earth in its own fragrance. The soothing murmur of the river arose in pulsing beats to the ears of the travellers. Overhead the sky was clear and blue, and two eagles were weaving spirals as they mounted toward the zenith, calling to each other in clear and piercing notes.

Immediately around the cabin itself there was a little clearing which had been planted in maize; beyond this, the forest, which grew thickly on three sides, while on the fourth rose the bare, precipitous shoulder of the mountain.

Daintily perched on a block of wood, the Countess Rubitzki, attired in the costume of a Servian peasant boy, blew wreaths of smoke from her cigarette, and listened with a faint flush on her soft cheeks to some argument advanced by Dallas, who, with his back against a log, was basking luxuriously in the sunshine.

At a little distance, Sir James, in tweeds and puttees, was mixing some water with the strong native red wine for the refreshment of the Lady Thalia. She was clad like the Countess, in a long smock of homespun wool, caught about the waist with a belt, and falling in a kilt which reached mid-thigh; full trousers of the same material, and heavy woollen stockings, with rawhide sandals laced across the ankle and half way up the leg. Both girls might easily have passed as young European lads who, for comfort and convenience, had adopted the native costume. Their abundant hair was entirely hidden by their *kalpaks*, or round caps fitting low on the head and supplemented by scarfs twisted turban-like, as though to protect the back of the head against the rays of the sun.

For three and a half days they had pushed on rapidly, journeying through a wild and beautiful country, sparsely populated, and, for the greater part, forest-covered. The abduction had been skilfully managed by Dimitri, and had been unmarred by the slightest hitch. Returning from a banquet at the palace, their well-bribed coachman had driven to a lonely spot on the outskirts of the city, where their two cavaliers were awaiting them. The night being fine, they had put some thirty miles between themselves and Belgrade before the sunrise, when they had

stopped to rest at the lonely farm-house of a plum-grower. Since then they had travelled throughout the day, and stopped for the night wherever a shelter presented itself.

"To-morrow," said Sir James, "we ought to get a glimpse of your hills, Thalia. 'Pon my word, I'll be rather sorry when we do! This has been no end of a lark."

The girl looked at him thoughtfully; then her eyes fittted across to where Dallas was sitting, and a faint shadow crossed her lovely face.

"I shall be sorry, too," she answered in a low voice.

"What will you do when you get there?" asked Sir James.

"I will call together the chiefs and explain to them what Emilio wants to do, and try to show them the necessity of keeping the peace. We Shkipetari are composed of different clans, a good deal like the Scotch Highlanders, Sir James. Although most of my people are Mohammedans, they are quite unlike the Turks, whom they hate. My father was a Bey, and had a great deal of authority; he was once called to Constantinople by the Sultan, who did him a great deal of honor and persuaded him to do what he could to stop the incessant fighting and the attacks that were always being made on the Turkish *caracols*, or outposts. I think that they will listen to me and try to keep their people quiet. My father was killed by a band of Christians of the Bulgarian Church, and ever since there has been a blood feud with the Serbs of Emilio's district."

"I fancy your people are a pretty bloodthirsty crowd," observed Sir James.

"They are savage," Thalia admitted, "but they are straightforward and chivalrous, not treacherous, like the Serbs. A woman could go anywhere alone through our hills with perfect safety, and so could a traveller whom they had nothing against. But there is no such thing as law and order, and"—she smiled—"we settle our disputes in our own way. Nobody ever tries to interfere with the Shkipetari."

Sir James laughed, and, stretching his long limbs luxuriously in the warm sunshine, lit a cigarette. Their luncheon had been a hearty one, as the day before Dallas, a splendid shot, had killed a red deer far across a rocky gorge through which their trail had wound. Dimitri's beady eyes had narrowed at sight of the buck tumbling down the bare hillside, and the expression of the guide's face had not been lost on Connors.

"'T was not the look a mon would wear, sorr, at sight of meat in camp," said the Irishman later to Sir James and Dallas. "He will stand a lot of watchin', this Dimitri. I cud see the workin's o' the scallywag's brain as plain as ye see the innerds of a glass travellin' clock. Thinks he, 'I'll take good care that niver ye get the chance to draw a bead on me!'"

Connors was unpacking a few delicacies when Sir James saw him stop in the act of unbuckling a strap, and, shading his eyes with his hand, stare up at a ledge which almost overhung the cabin.

"What do you see, Connors?" he called.

The Irishman turned.

"There's three chamois, sorr, wan a buck, just passed around that ledge of rock beyant."

Dallas, a keen sportsman, sprang to his feet. "Do you think I could get a shot?" he asked.

"Yis, sorr, but 't is a bit of a climb."

Dallas quickly entered the cabin, to emerge a moment later with his .30-40. "I'm going to have a try for the buck," said he.

"May I go with you?" asked Thalia, rising.

Dallas glanced dubiously at the almost sheer face of the mountain.

"It's a rough climb."

"I'm a hill woman."

"All right; come ahead, then."

Dimitri, hearing their voices, had come to the door of the hut and was looking at Dallas through narrowed lids.

"Better not to go, sar," said he. "We start now pretty quick."

Dallas glanced at him in surprise. "Thought you said we should n't leave for another hour," said he.

"That pass very quick when you chase goats."

"I'll be back," said Dallas shortly, and had turned toward the mountain when Dimitri spoke again.

"Better stay here, sar," said he. "This fella"—he pointed at the goat-herd, who was giving some fodder to the horses—"he tell me we better start right away, to get across those hills before dark. Road very bad; straight up and straight down."

"All right," said Dallas indifferently. "I will be back by the time that you are ready to start."

He turned away, and Dimitri scowled and went back into the hut.

"Come on, Thalia," said Dallas, "if you really want to go, but it's going to be a hard climb."

The girl glanced at him and smiled. Throughout their journey there had been in her manner toward Dallas a hint of mockery which had rather puzzled the young man, who had gradually come to the conclusion that the Albanian lady was inclined to regard him as a somewhat effete production of over-civilization.

They started to climb in silence. For the first hundred feet the ascent presented no especial difficulties, but a little higher up they found themselves confronted by sheer cliff, seamed and eroded, and, although quite surmountable to the experienced mountaineer, yet dangerous from its steepness.

Dallas glanced up in some dismay.

"This job is not so easy as it looks from down below," said he. "You'd better not tackle it, Thalia."

She glanced into his flushed face with her mocking little smile.

"Are you quite sure that you had better tackle it yourself?"

"I am not crazy about it—with this rifle," he admitted.

"Then give the rifle to me."

"What nonsense!"

"Then come ahead. I'll go first and pick out our route." She glanced at him over her shoulder and smiled again. "You see, Mr. Dallas, this is my country. Have you a steady head?"

"Fairly. If I get frightened, you can come back and carry me up."

Something in the dry tone brought a quick flush to the girl's cheek and a little sparkle in her eyes. Without answering, she turned and started to pick her way up the rough side of the cliff. Dallas, pausing to sling the rifle across his back, followed her.

For about a hundred feet they worked their way up from ledge to ledge. Then came a stretch of turf, firm but so steep that a fall would have meant rolling down over the brink and death on the ragged rocks beneath. A hundred feet up this almost precipitous bank, Thalia paused, and, standing beautifully poised, looked back at Dallas, who was working his way gingerly up on all-fours.

"Better not look back," snapped the young man. "And I say, Thalia, *don't* stand up like that. It makes me rather sick to look at you!" He glanced back over his shoulder, then rested, digging his toes into the turf and flattening his body against the almost vertical incline. "My word! This is worse than sheer rock."

Thalia glanced at him sharply, and the smile left her lips.

"Give me the rifle," said she.

"Don't be silly."

"No, I insist. This is only dangerous if one gets giddy, and heights have absolutely no effect on me. Come, slip it off."

"Thalia, don't lean forward like that!" Dallas dug his fingers into the soft mould. "Hang it, it's worse to watch you than it is to climb the bally thing! Come on, let's go up."

She threw him a quick, anxious look, then turned and began to climb rapidly upward. On a narrow ledge of less than a yard in width she stopped and waited for Dallas to join her.

"There are only about fifty feet more," said the girl, "and then it will be easier. But the next fifty feet are rather sheer; will you not give me the rifle?"

"Look here, Thalia," said Dallas, "if you keep on bothering me about this confounded rifle, I'll throw it over the edge of the precipice."

"Better that than to risk a fall."

"I don't intend to fall. But it's some time since I've done any climbing, and my head is n't quite as steady as it might be."

"Then I insist on your giving me the rifle."

"Stop it!" growled Dallas. "Come on, let's get it over with."

Without answering, the girl started to work her way up a narrow fissure on the face of the cliff. A little higher, the seam widened into what is known to Alpinists as a "chimney." Nearly at the top, Thalia, who was in the act of swinging her lithe body over the rim of a broad shelf, heard a gasp, and, poised as she was, glanced back into Dallas's pale, upturned face. While he was reaching up to grip a spur of rock which offered a safe hand-hold, the stock of the rifle had struck the face of the cliff in such a way as to upset his balance, for the moment insecure. As a result, he had pitched sideways, and only saved himself from falling by throwing his outside foot across to the opposite wall of the "chimney," so that he stopped for the moment wedged in something of the position of a circus performer riding two horses, with one foot on the back of either. Beneath him, the "chimney" widened so that if he had slipped down a few inches his purchase would have been lost, and he would have fallen to the ledge, and thence to the jagged rocks a hundred feet or more beneath.

As Thalia glanced down, her practised eye saw the danger, which was for the moment extreme. Swinging herself face downward across the ledge, she gripped the shoulder of Dallas's loose khaki coat. Although unable to hold his weight, she could nevertheless take a good deal of it, and, what was more important, shift it to the side of the foot which was well planted. Dallas, feeling the other foot beginning to slip on the face of the rock, and realizing the danger of his position, knew instinctively that if he fell he would drag the girl after him. He turned his blanched face up to hers.

"Let go!" he gasped. "I'm all right!"

Thalia's own face was like chalk.

"Kick yourself back to the ledge!" she panted. "Quick!"

Dallas's hand as well as his foot was braced against the outer wall; the fingers of his other hand were hooked in a little crevice.

"I'd lose my balance."

"No, you won't! Do as I say." Thalia spoke through her clenched teeth.

"All right, here goes."

Putting out all his strength, Dallas thrust himself violently back against the face of the cliff. As he did so, Thalia swung his body with all her force in the same direction, and for a moment held him barely balanced against the sheer side of the rock. But Dallas felt that he could not keep his position.

"Let go!" he gasped.

"Now reach up and grab that knob of rock with your free hand."

"Don't dare!"

"Do as I say!"

Like a man in a nightmare, he swung his arm upward; for a moment he hung poised, on the verge of falling; then his fingers closed on the projection, and for the moment he was safe.

"Now climb up," said Thalia. "Slowly."

With his heart in his mouth, Dallas slowly raised himself to the rim of the ledge, then over it, and a moment later was lying face downward on the rock.

For a few seconds he neither moved nor spoke. Then he turned his haggard, colorless face toward the girl. Thalia's breath was coming quickly, her cheeks were like chalk, and her eyes dark and luminous.

"That was a close squeak," said Dallas.

She nodded. Dallas raised himself and crawled back from the brink.

"Thalia," said he, "if I had fallen, you'd have come, too."

"I should have wanted to."

Dallas held out his hand, and Thalia dropped hers into it. Their eyes met for a moment; then those of the girl looked away.

"We are all right now," said she. "The rest is easy."

Dallas did not answer, and for a moment the two sat side by side in silence. Then Thalia, who had been looking down upon the cabin far beneath, uttered a little exclamation.

"What is it?" asked Dallas.

"Those people." She pointed downward.

Staring in the direction indicated, Dallas saw a company of men ascending the trail which led to the hut. There appeared to be about a dozen, all of whom were carrying guns. As far as he could see, for the distance was considerable, the men were dressed like the shepherds and swineherds which they had met from time to time.

"What are they?" he asked.

Thalia shook her head.

"I don't like it," muttered Dallas.

"Nor I."

He glanced at her quickly. "Brigands?"

"Look!" cried the girl. "There! Behind the hut! What is Dimitri doing?"

In the rear of the cabin they could see the guide apparently pawing at something under the edge of the wall. As they watched, puzzled and disturbed, the man hauled a gun from underneath the cabin. Laying the weapon aside, he reached in again and hauled out another, then a third and a fourth. And then suddenly Dallas understood.

"It's a trap!" he snarled, turning his pale face to Thalia. "The swine is stealing the rifles! You see? He knocked a hole in the mud wall and shoved the guns through, then went around behind so as not to be seen. It's a put-up job, Thalia! He's been waiting for that gang down below."

As he spoke, the Serb gathered up the four guns and stood for a moment as if listening. Dallas quickly unslung his rifle and flung himself face downward on the edge of the cliff.

"What!" cried Thalia breathlessly. "You are going to—to——"

Her voice failed her. But Dallas was measuring the range with a cold, practised eye.

"Seven hundred—eight hundred—but it's a drop," he muttered, fingering the sight of the beautiful weapon.

Thalia clasped her hands over her mouth. Her light hazel eyes had grown suddenly black.

Down below, the treacherous Serb had turned and was stealing away. In front of the cabin, Sir James and Paula were standing side by side, apparently looking up toward the ledge. Connors was not in sight. The company of men coming up the trail had stopped under the brow of the hill and appeared to be waiting.

Lying face downward, Dallas cuddled the stock of his rifle under his chin. Thalia, her hands still clasped over her mouth, was watching Dimitri, who presently paused again and looked back.

Dallas was as rigid as the rocks beneath him. The long, thin, blue-black rifle-barrel had lost its slight oscillation and was motionless as he.

Then all at once there leaped from the muzzle a pale blue jet; there was a sharp report, which was the next instant rolled out from the sheer side of the mountain in echoing reverberations. Dallas jerked his head quickly to the side, while as if by instinct his hand went to the lever and threw a fresh cartridge into the chamber.

But there was no need. Far below, the small, crouching figure of Dimitri lurched suddenly forward, his arms flew out, and the rifles went scattering in all directions. The body straightened, and a faint yell was wafted up in thin and tremulous tones. Then the guide's figure swayed, tottered, and fell upon the ground, where it lay motionless.

PART IV.

THALIA stifled a little scream, then, "Well shot!" she cried with spirit.

Still lying on his face, with the muzzle of his rifle projecting over the edge of the cliff, Dallas turned to her a white face in which his gray eyes shone like two pieces of jade.

"Thanks. It was n't so bad, considering the range—eh?"

But Thalia was looking down upon the cabin, far beneath.

"Look!" she cried.

At the sound of the rifle-shot, Connors had come quickly out of the hut; then, as Dimitri's death-scream rang out, he and Sir James had rushed into the hut, as Dallas guessed, to secure their weapons. An instant later they emerged, passed around the cabin, and when Thalia spoke they were leaning over the body of the Serb. Presently Connors rolled it on its back in a manner which showed Dallas that the guide was quite dead; then the Irishman looked up toward the mountain-side and waved his hat, as if in acknowledgment of the success of Dallas's long shot.

"You killed!" said Thalia between her teeth.

"That was my object. He deserved it, don't you think?"

The girl threw him a quick, curious look.

"Did you ever kill a man before?"

"No. But it looks as if I might have to kill a few more pretty soon. See there!" He waved his rifle toward the cabin. The wild-looking band of armed men had passed around the edge of the clearing and come in sight of the hut. Sir James had returned to Paula, and Connors, who had gathered up the rifles dropped by the Serb, was standing by the cabin door, apparently loading them. Suddenly Sir James turned and stared at the band, which was distant about a hundred yards, then, preceded by Paula, walked to the hut and entered.

"Ah!" muttered Dallas, "they see them. Wish we were down there. What do you think they are, Thalia? Brigands?" He looked up at the girl, who nodded. They were both rather pale, and Thalia's eyes had darkened.

"Yes," she answered; "brigands for the time being, probably recruited by Dimitri to rob us and perhaps hold us for ransom. It was arranged, no doubt, between him and the herder at the cabin of whom we stopped last night. See"—she pointed downward; "the swineherd is talking to them, and they are looking up here."

"They will be hunting us directly," growled Dallas, "and I've only four rounds left. What rotten luck, to have been up here just when that gang arrived! But if we had been down there, the chances are that Dimitri would have got away with the guns," he added thoughtfully.

"We are much better here than there," said Thalia. "Those other people are trapped; but they are two good fighting men, and have rifles and plenty of ammunition, and there is venison and water and wine and other food in the hut. They can stand three days' siege, and by that time we can rescue them."

"We can!"

"Yes. Don't you see what we have got to do? We are just on the

edge of my country; it is only the other side of those hills." She motioned across the valley. "Two days' journey on foot, and we shall begin to fall in with the Shkipetari. The first Albanian we meet will raise his clan in no time when I tell him who I am, and we will come back here and feed that carrion"—she tossed her head toward the herders—"to the jackals."

Dallas glanced at her quickly. The girl's voice carried a fierce little ring, there was a bright red spot in either cheek, and her eyes were aflame. For the first time the young man realized that the girl beside him was herself pure Albanian, a native of the wild mountain fastnesses which had been the scene of so many sanguinary feuds, and that she herself possessed no very thick veneer of what is generally understood as civilization. But he cast his eyes in the direction of the wild country which intervened and shook his head doubtfully.

"Do you think that we could do it?" he asked.

"We have got to!"

"But first we must get past these people; then we would not dare to take the road, but would have to go 'cross-country, and we have no food, nor shelter—not even a blanket. Where could you sleep?"

"On the ground. We can build a fire. What else is there to do?"

"Give ourselves up," said Dallas, "if it is only the question of a ransom."

Thalia's mouth grew scornful.

"You may if you like," she answered. "I shall try for Dakabar!"

Dallas turned to her a slightly reddened face. "It is for the safety of you girls, of course," he said. "This is my expedition, and I will stand any incidental expenses—such as a few thousand pounds' ransom. I should far rather do that than to expose you to danger and hardship."

Thalia's face softened. She stooped and patted Dallas's shoulder as he lay half sprawled on one hip, his rifle under him.

"You are a dear," said she. "But my plan is not so difficult. We can slip past those men in the beech-woods on the other side of this mountain. And you still have four shots! The others can hold out. Oh, look! Look down there, Dallas!"

The herders were advancing in a body toward the hut. When they were within fifty yards of the door, Sir James stepped out, rifle in hand, and waved them back. They halted, and there appeared to be some sort of discussion going on, the hillmen, from their gestures, apparently asserting their friendly intentions, while the Englishman made from time to time the backward motion with his rifle-barrel.

Then all at once the palaver came to a sudden and startling end.

There was a commotion among the herders; Sir James sprang quickly back into the hut. Sudden jets of blue-white smoke leaped out from the clustered hillmen, and a moment later the crash of a scattering volley came up in multiple reverberations.

"The murderous swine!" snarled Dallas, instinctively shoving out his .30-40. But Thalia, crouching beside him, laid her hand quickly on his arm.

"Save your shots," said she. "We may need them."

"That's so." He lowered the rifle and looked at her over his shoulder. "Hope nobody got hit. That shack is built of stones and mud, and ought to stop bullets. Ah!"

The hillmen had opened their ranks, and were approaching the cabin, when two thin puffs of smoke leaped apparently from the solid wall. A faint yell quavered up from beneath. One of the herders pitched forward on his face, while another reeled backward and fell across a pile of stones. Again came the fatal spurts of smoke from the cabin, and another hillman was down and crawling away on all-fours. The herders scattered swiftly, flying for shelter in all directions, while the air was filled with the rumbling reverberations thrown back from one side of the valley to the other.

Dallas turned a pale but exultant face toward Thalia.

"Fine! Oh, fine!" he cried, and clapped his thigh. "They've knocked loop-holes in all four walls! Gad! There are three of the beggars out of the running, Thalia! How many more were there in the gang? A dozen, perhaps?"

"More than that. But, Dallas, we must go."

"Then you want to try for Dakabar?"

"What else is there to do? Those animals mean murder and loot! And we have no time to spare. They know that we are up here."

He nodded and swung himself to his feet.

"Yes; they will be stalking us presently. The war is on now. We will try to get around into the woods on the other side of the mountain, then work down to the river. Do you think we can get across?"

"We must—even if we have to swim for it."

Dallas did not answer, but led the way along the little shelf, which presently broadened into a sort of grassy terrace, almost a mountain pasture. Crossing this, they came upon a steep, boulder-strewn slope which a quarter of a mile below was met by a heavy growth of beech-woods extending all the way down into the valley. Far below they could hear the roar of the Moravitz.

Down the rocky slope they plunged as fast as safety would permit, then presently the forest closed in about them: splendid beeches and

oaks, with here and there scattering conifers, pines, and firs. There was very little underbrush, and their eyes were kept alert for any sign of the enemy.

Both were beginning to think that they would reach the river unmolested when from close at hand upon their right there came a loud report and a bullet hummed past their heads.

"Jump behind a tree!" cried Dallas.

Five paces to their left a big beech reared its sheltering trunk, and under the cover of this they slipped like Indians. About a hundred yards away a blue cloud of smoke was dissipating in the thick foliage overhead.

"He's behind that oak!" whispered Dallas. "Crouch down, Thalia; I'll shoot over your head if I get sight of him."

For a moment they waited; then Dallas muttered, "Stop here; I'll run him out."

It had crossed his mind that their enemy was probably armed with a muzzle-loader; also that they had little time to lose. Between them and the oak about which the smoke was swirling there were several big trees, and, leaving his shelter, Dallas ran for the cover of the nearest. Just as he reached it he caught a glimpse of a dark figure running back into the woods. Dallas sprang clear of his tree, threw up his rifle, took a quick shot at a range of not more than fifty yards, and saw the man plunge head foremost into a clump of bushes which looked like laurel.

"Got him!" he called to Thalia. "Come on!"

Together they ran on down the wooded slope. A little lower they encountered a thick growth of scrub, into which they slipped like hares, plunging through thorns and brambles, from which they finally emerged upon the bank of the river.

"Listen," said Thalia, as they crouched in the dense willow-growth that fringed the shore.

Not far behind them there had broken out a clamor of savage yells, which were answered faintly from higher up the mountains.

"They are coming!" panted Dallas. "We can't stop here. Let's try to get across."

They had struck the river at one of its still reaches, and as the autumn rains had not yet begun, the stream was low, with pebbly bars and broad standing pools. Close to the opposite bank, however, they could see a narrow channel of swift, dark water, which a little farther down-stream was hidden from sight by what would have been when the river was high a long, narrow island, thickly covered with bushes and a growth of willows. Dallas pointed toward it with his rifle-barrel.

"Let's get over there," he said. "It seems to be a good cover, and

we can cross on the other side without being seen. That is, if we *can* cross."

Pushing their way through the bushes, they came out upon the shingly river-bed, where for a hundred yards they were exposed to great danger of being seen. But their enemies were apparently higher up in the woods, and they reached the island undiscovered and crawled into the scrub, where they sank down for a moment to rest and breathe.

"Looks deep on the other side," said Dallas.

"We can wade it, I think."

"Hope so."

"Can't you swim?"

"I'd rather smoke. Besides, here's the rifle."

"Give that to me."

"Look here, Thalia, you leave that rifle alone. I'm a good deal of a duffer, I know, but I haven't reached the stage where I must have my gun carried up cliffs and across rivers for me by a girl."

"You are a little new to climbing," said Thalia, "and you may not be much of a swimmer; but you can shoot!" She rose to her feet. "Wait here; I want to see how deep it is."

Dallas waited, closely watching the opposite bank. A moment later Thalia returned.

"We can wade it," she said. "The water is not more than waist-deep, and the current is less swift than it looks. What is the matter?" For Dallas's face was very grave.

"I was thinking," said he, "that it's a pretty serious matter to have to lie out in the woods soaking wet. There is frost almost every night up here."

Thalia smiled; then the color poured into her face.

"We can take them off," said she.

"What!" Dallas turned to her so shocked and startled a face that she burst into a laugh.

"Don't look so scandalized, Dallas! You can stop here until you hear me whistle. Then I will go up into the bushes and you can come over. There's no Mrs. Grundy in the Kapoanik Mountains."

Dallas laughed. "My word, Thalia, but you are a good little sport! Go ahead, then, because we have n't any time to lose."

For a moment their eyes met. Thalia's cheeks were very red and her lips like coral. Thorn and brier had left their cruel marks across her flushed, lovely face; the scarf of her *kalpak* was gone, and stray wisps of her bronze-black hair had escaped from under the rim of her cap and were curling about her delicate ears. As Dallas looked at her, his face was lit by a sudden glow of admiration, and at the expression in his habitually cynical eyes Thalia first looked questioning, then turned away with a deeper flush.

"Gad! But you're a wonder!" said Dallas. "You look as if you actually liked it all."

"I should not mind—if it were not for the others."

"It is James that should be here," said Dallas, "instead of me."

She slightly raised her chin. "And you ought to be with Paula."

"Had I? But run along, Thalia; we've got no time to lose."

She turned and slipped into the bushes, and a few moments later Dallas heard the clinking of pebbles behind him, for the little island, although perhaps fifty yards in length, was not more than four or five in width. He was reflecting on the gravity of the situation, and keeping a keen watch upon the opposite bank of the river, when from almost the very spot where he and Thalia had come out, there emerged three of the hillmen.

Dallas's grip on his rifle tightened instinctively. The three men stood for a moment looking up and down the stream, then across in his direction. As they were a little above the head of the island, it suddenly occurred to Dallas that from where they stood it might be possible to see Thalia when she reached the opposite bank. He climbed to his feet, and, crouching low, pushed his way through the dense bushes to the edge of the channel. Half way over, Thalia was wading bosom-deep in the clear, icy water. Her clothes, wrapped into a snug bundle, were held poised upon her head by one round, gleaming arm. Although the current was not swift, the girl was having a hard time to keep her footing, as Dallas could see from the unsteady movements of her head and shoulders and the oscillations of her free arm in the water. She wore a single white undergarment, which was apparently impeding her balance, for she paused occasionally as if to disentangle herself from its folds.

Dallas whistled softly, and she looked back over her shoulder, when he made a sweeping gesture down-stream, then pointed toward the bank which they had left. Thalia threw up her free arm in answer. Dallas turned and crept back to his ambush.

The three hillmen had separated and were walking out across the cobbly river-bottom. Suddenly the one farthest up-stream paused and pointed to the ground. The others joined him, and for a moment all three studied the cobbles attentively. It was evident to Dallas that they had found the trail, for they looked toward the little island and half raised their weapons, then proceeded warily in his direction.

"There is nothing for it," he thought grimly, "but to pot all three."

He raised his rifle and covered the man to the right. But for some reason he found himself unable to pull the trigger.

"I'm a fool," he thought, and, rising to his feet, strode out upon the edge of the bar.

The herders saw him instantly and stopped in their tracks. Dallas motioned them back. The men did not move. Dallas repeated his gesture. Two of the herders fell back a pace; then the man on the left threw his gun quickly to his shoulder and fired. Dallas staggered back with a sense of sharp, violent pain. There was a stabbing through his chest and a burning sensation on the side of his head and through his left forearm.

With a little snarl of rage, he dropped on one knee, threw his rifle to his shoulder, and, sighting on the man who had fired, pulled the trigger. The fellow screamed, flung out his arms, and went over backward. The soft-nosed hunting-bullet had struck him fairly in the chest, mushroomed, and torn its way through, killing him instantly.

One of his companions turned and fled back toward the bank. The other raised his weapon and fired, then wheeled about and followed him. Dallas, pulling himself together with an effort, fired again, but missed. Quite by instinct, he threw his last cartridge into the chamber, and, setting his teeth, for the pain in his arm was intense, got the man's back fairly before the sights and fired again. This time the bullet found its mark, and the man went down, his weapon clattering among the stones.

Sick and giddy, Dallas turned and crept back into the bushes, where he sank to the ground. The blood was streaming down the side of his face, and his left arm felt numb and powerless. There was a burning pain on the right side of his chest. He pulled up his flannel hunting-shirt and discovered a small hole from which the blood was trickling in crimson drops. But a spot on the outer edge of his right shoulder-blade was giving him intense pain, and, placing his left hand over it, he felt a small, hard object just beneath the skin.

"Guess I'm rather badly hit," he thought, "but I must get across before I get any weaker."

Laying down the rifle, now useless for lack of ammunition, he staggered through the bushes and into the icy water. Directly opposite stood Thalia, clad in a long white garment which fell from her shoulders to her knees.

"Are you hit?" she cried tremulously.

"Yes," he answered, and waded out into the stream.

Half way across, the water deepened suddenly; an eddy of the current caught him and swept him off his feet. Down he went, but came up to find a fresh footing. The trees on the opposite bank were blurred and misty, and he seemed to be drifting with the current. All at once the river-bottom dropped from under his feet. Acting by instinct, he struck out feebly. Then there came a roaring in his ears and green, swirling lights before his eyes, but he struggled to

the surface, and as he did so saw Thalia's face close beside his own and felt a strong grasp on his shoulder. The bottom seemed to rise up under his feet again, and he tottered up the bank, to sink down helplessly upon the sun-warmed pebbles.

Thalia was kneeling beside him, her face drawn and white and tense.

"You are badly hurt?" she cried.

"Don't think so," muttered Dallas. "Go and dress." He struggled to sit up, but Thalia flung one arm across his chest and drew him back until his head rested on her knee, where it lay with a little stream of blood trickling down from his forehead.

The girl's swift fingers explored the wound. From the side of the forehead to the temple the scalp was ploughed open. Thalia gave a sigh of relief.

"It glanced off."

"Yes," muttered Dallas; "the brute peppered me with buck-shot."

"Where else are you hit?"

"In the forearm; and there's a slug somewhere in my chest. But I'm feeling better now. Go and dress, Thalia."

But Thalia was examining the forearm. Apparently the bullet was embedded somewhere in the muscles, as there was no wound of exit.

"Where else? In the chest?" She drew up the woollen shirt, and at sight of the small, sinister-looking bullet-hole, gave a little gasp.

"It does n't hurt," said Dallas. "I don't think it went through. Probably hit a rib and went around, because I felt it over here on the side. What nasty brutes!—to sprinkle you with buck-shot!"

"Are you in much pain?"

"No, I'm not in any pain. That cold water made 'em all numb. But you go and dress! Do you hear me? *Go and dress!* You will catch cold!"

Thalia rose slowly to her feet, and stood contemplating him with an utter disregard for the scantiness of her attire, which had in it something primitively heroic. Her expressive face was knit in lines of anxious thought.

"Can you get up the bank and into the bushes?" she asked.

"Yes, of course. I'm not badly hurt. It was only the first shock that knocked me out."

"But that wound in your chest?"

"Don't believe it went in. There would be blood in my mouth if it had. Probably followed the rib around, or it would not be there just under the skin." He clambered to his feet and stood for a minute, as if gauging his strength. Seeing the pallor of his face, Thalia stepped to his side and passed her round, bare arm under his.

"Lean on me," she said.

Steadied by the girl, he walked up the short, pebbly beach and pushed his way into the willows, where he half fell, half sank, to the ground, his head swimming and his vision vague and misty. Thalia, startled at his pallor, leaned over him.

"Lie down," said she. "You're still faint."

Distressed more by his faintness than by the pain of his wounds, Dallas closed his eyes and let his head fall backward. He was dimly conscious that it was being gently supported; then it seemed to him that he heard a sound of tearing cloth. A moment later his head began to clear again, and he opened his eyes and looked up under the brim of a bandage bound snugly across his forehead, and into the face of Thalia, who was bending anxiously over him.

"What's this thing?" He raised his hand to his head.

"A bandage, my dear."

"Where did you get it?"

"At the chemist's around the corner."

Dallas raised himself till he sat upright. He looked at Thalia, who was sitting cross-legged, an anxious smile on her lips and her wet garment hanging limply from her shoulders.

"I thought I told you to go and dress," said Dallas sternly. "Now go! I shall not speak to you again until you get your clothes on."

He turned his back upon the girl, and sat for a few minutes trying hard to fight off his light-headedness. A little time elapsed; then the bushes behind him rustled, and he looked over his shoulder to see Thalia, a Servian peasant boy again. She looked at him inquiringly.

"I feel quite fit now," said he. "But, Thalia, we are in a bad fix."

She nodded, her lovely face very grave.

"There is only one thing for us to do, Dallas. I have found a little path which must lead up to a house not far above us, because I followed it for a few steps and came upon a spring, all stoned in, with foot-prints in the ground about it. We must go up and take our chances."

"You think it's safe?"

"There's no choice. You are wounded and soaking wet, and must have shelter. Besides, hospitality is a very sacred thing all through these mountains—all over the Balkans, in fact. Perhaps I can talk to the people and make them understand that it would be to their profit to treat us well. Can you walk a little distance?"

"Oh, yes; I'm all right now. You are right, Thalia; we've got to have shelter."

Pushing their way through the bushes, they came presently upon a little foot-path which wound up through a pine grove to come out

a short distance beyond upon a small plateau covered with splendid oaks. The spot was charmingly picturesque: one hundred feet below them flowed the Moravitza; on three sides of the plateau the land fell away steeply, and on the fourth rose the precipitous side of the mountain. There was no underbrush, and through the vistas between the big tree-trunks they could see far down the valley and catch glimpses of the distant hills bathed in the brilliant yellow sunlight of the late afternoon.

"There's the cabin," said Thalia, pointing toward the mountain-side.

Snugly built in the shelter of the overhanging cliffs was a clean little dwelling, tidy and picturesque, constructed of stones and clay, with a roof of hand-hewn pine slabs. Behind it, at a little distance, was a shed or stable, and about the door of this some she-goats were browsing quietly, their kids tucked here and there asleep in the sunny patches, fluffy little balls of fur. The door of the cabin was slightly ajar. There was not a sound about the place, nor was there any smoke coming from the chimney.

Thalia and Dallas walked straight up to the cabin, then paused and the girl called aloud. There was no reply, but as they waited a large yellow cat came walking calmly out and with its tail straight in the air approached the girl and rubbed purring against her leg.

The man and the girl looked at each other and smiled.

"A kind welcome, at least," said he.

The wise-faced nanny-goats had been regarding them curiously, but with no sign of alarm. The kids also had raised their baby faces to look, and as Dallas spoke, one of the little creatures hopped upon its stumpy feet and came bounding toward him, first to butt playfully at his knee and then to sniff at his fingers with a soft, expectant little nose. The mother followed more slowly and sedately and with no trace of fear.

"If the people receive us as kindly as their animals," said Dallas, "we shall be in luck."

Thalia, who had been closely scrutinizing the cabin, turned to him a face which showed great relief.

"I think we have come to the right place," said she. "This is the cabin of a holy man, probably a hermit."

"Christian?"

"No; Mohammedan. But he must be really a good man, and no doubt kind, from the way his pets behave. Do you see those little scraps of rags fastened to the window shutters?"

"Yes. What are they?"

"Prayers—or, at least, reminders of prayers. Votive offerings of a sort. Let's look in."

They walked toward the cabin, and the cat followed, purring. As they reached the door, there was a fluttering over their heads, and a large jay came tumbling from the tree-tops, a flash of blue and gray shimmering feathers. The bird fluttered about their heads, then lighted on the window-sill and hopped inside.

Thalia glanced at Dallas and smiled, then, slipping a loop of cord from a peg in the door, pushed it open and entered.

Within was a single large room, quite bare and scrupulously neat and clean. There was a big open fireplace, and in one corner a sort of raised platform, on which were spread some sheepskins and a heavy woollen blanket. In the other corner were some shelves filled with what looked to be manuscripts. In front of the window stood a rough table, on which was an earthen vessel holding a cluster of late roses, beside which were a pair of big, steel-rimmed spectacles, an ink-well, a long plume pen, and a large leather-bound book. The jay-bird had entered through a crevice between the shutters and was pecking at some crumbs of bread on the table. It cocked its head, gave them a bright, inquiring look, then strutted back to the window and flew out with a burst of melody which sounded like bird laughter.

"There can't be much harm in this man," said Dallas. "Suppose we consider ourselves his guests."

He crossed the room and seated himself on the edge of the platform. Thalia, glancing at him, saw that his face was very pale, and that his lips were blue and trembling. She was at his side instantly.

"Lie down," said she. "I will build a fire, and then we must get off those wet clothes and see to your wounds."

Dallas stretched himself out and drew the blanket over him. His teeth were beginning to chatter, and all his strength had suddenly left him. He pulled out his match-box, which was fortunately water-tight, and handed it to the girl. Thalia went out, to return presently with an armful of wood, and in a few moments there was a fire blazing on the hearth.

"Now we must make you comfortable," said she. "Are you in pain?"

"No—just a little stiff and sore." He began to struggle with his coat. Thalia went to his aid.

"I can manage," muttered Dallas.

"Nonsense! You are a wounded man, and I am your nurse."

"But—"

"Don't talk. Keep the blanket over you. Now let us get off this wet shirt. . . . Now let me see your arm. . . . What a wicked-looking little hole! The bullet is in there. Should n't it come out?"

"I don't see how we're going to manage it. Let it stay." Dallas sank back and pulled the blanket over him.

Thalia was tearing some cloth into strips. Hearing the ripping noise, Dallas turned his head and looked at her.

"What are you doing?"

"Don't ask questions."

"But you must n't—"

"Hush! I am going out now to get some pine balsam from one of those trees, to smear over the wound. That is Shkipetari treatment. It stings a little, but it is clean and healing."

"You're a wonder!" muttered Dallas.

The girl went out, to return presently with some of nature's ointment on a piece of bark, when the wounds were quickly bandaged. Dallas, wrapped in the big woollen blanket, with his head on a pile of sheepskins, fell into a doze. When he opened his eyes again, he saw that his clothes were drying in front of the fire, while Thalia stood beside him with a smile on her red lips and a bowl in her hand.

"I have been milking the goats. Come, Dallas, drink this. We were fortunate to find this place. There is corn-meal and cheese and olives and some dried plums, and I have found a little cave outside stored full of beet-roots and turnips and cabbages. Besides, there are some chickens shut up in a coop between the cabin and the cliffs. We shall not starve."

"Any sign of our host?"

"No. Do you know, Dallas, I have an idea that he may have heard the firing and gone across the river to see what it was all about? Perhaps he has persuaded the herders to go away."

"You have n't heard any more firing?"

"Not a shot."

"Then perhaps you are right."

"Oh, I hope so! I hope so!"

"He may have gone on with James and the others."

"But do you think that they would go without us?"

"Very possibly; because, you see, they would be likely to guess at our plan, and they must have heard the firing down there by the river. They could tell the crack of my .30-40, and very likely think that by this time we are miles away."

Thalia nodded thoughtfully, and for a few moments neither spoke. Presently Dallas muttered as if to himself, "Poor old James!"

"Why?" asked Thalia quickly.

"Think how worried he must be about you, Thalia."

"Why not about you?"

"Oh, well, I'm a man; and, you see, he's—in love with you."

"Indeed!"

Dallas looked at her curiously. "Of course he is. Has he never told you so?"

"Never."

"Well, he is."

"What makes you think so?"

"Oh, several things. Among others, his telling *me* so about sixteen time a day."

"And Paula? Are you not horribly worried about her?"

"Naturally. But I don't see what there is to do about it. I say, Thalia, it is James who ought to be here now in my place."

"Wounds and all? How nice of you!"

"I'd forgot all about the wounds."

"But not about Paula," said the girl in a low voice.

"But I'm not in love with Paula, nor she with me. I'm very fond of her, and think she's a little brick and the best little sport in the world, barring one. I say, Thalia, are n't my clothes almost dry?"

Thalia got up and examined the garments, which she had wrung out and hung before the hot blaze.

"Quite. Perhaps you had better put them on."

"I think so. I can manage; just give them to me, and then go out and play with the kids."

The girl obeyed in silence. A little later, when Dallas called her, she came in to find him dressed again and puzzling over the big book on the table by the platform.

"What's this thing?" asked Dallas.

"The Koran. Do you find it interesting?"

"Very. The whole state of affairs is that, but you are the most interesting of all, my dear girl."

She threw him a quick look, then walked to the door of the cabin and seated herself upon the threshold, where she remained in silence, watching the setting sun as it sank in a crimson glow behind the hill-tops far down the valley.

Presently she arose, and, walking to the table, poured some milk into the bowl, and, setting it on the hearthstone, called the yellow cat, which came purring and placidly proceeded to make its evening meal. Dallas looked at the two and smiled.

"Quite cozy and domestic," said he. "But really, I ought to be James."

Thalia turned to him swiftly; a little line had drawn itself between her eyes, which were dark and glowing.

"Can you think of nothing but James?" she demanded, with a little toss of her chin.

"But, Thalia——"

"It is just James, James, James. I must say, I don't think that it is in very good taste, Mr. Dallas."

"Oh, come, Thalia, you know perfectly well——"

"I don't know anything," she replied sharply, "except that you seem to be very much upset because it is you and not James here in this cabin with me. I have *tried* to take good care of you and to be cheerful, and not to show how anxious I have been, and worried, and—and——" She turned away with a little stamp of her sandaled foot.

"But, Thalia, don't you see—don't you think I'm appreciative of your pluck and resource and cheerfulness and all that? I am thinking about *you*."

"Indeed! One would never guess it! It seems as though you were thinking of nobody but James!"

"I am sorry."

"So am I—very! I wish it were—James." She stooped and began to stroke the cat. Dallas, lying on the platform, regarded her with a puzzled face.

"Do you really? Of course! Why should n't you?"

Outside, the late summer sunset had softened to a rich, delicious afterglow. Thalia got up suddenly and walked to the door, where she stood for a moment, breathing deeply the sweet evening air. A kid ran up to her and began to push its hard, downy little head playfully against her knees. The girl leaned down to stroke the small animal, then pushed one finger into the moist little mouth, when, play forgotten, it began to suck lustily and to bite with its baby teeth.

Dallas moved restlessly, when she turned and looked at him, her lovely face filled with shadows, and her eyes large and dark and inscrutable.

"I say, Thalia, you've had no supper."

"Indeed I have. Some corn-bread and milk and cheese. That is a feast for an Albanian. You see, Mr. Dallas, you are of a different race and one accustomed to luxury, whereas I am a Shkipetari hill girl, and able to live royally where you would starve. To-night you can have only warm milk, because you are an invalid and there is danger of fever from your wounds. But to-morrow, if you are doing nicely, you shall have some eggs and other delicacies, and be as carefully fed and cared for as if you were—James. There is not a great deal to do with, but I shall do my best, Mr. Dallas."

"Stop calling me Mr. Dallas."

Thalia did not answer. Presently Dallas said: "Where are you going to sleep?"

"On the floor in front of the fire."

"Indeed, you shall do nothing of the sort. Besides, you have no blanket."

"But where else can I sleep? And I do not need a blanket. You see, I am just a Balkan hill woman, and——"

"Stop it, Thalia! What is the matter with you?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean."

"You shall sleep here. I am going to sleep in front of the fire, myself."

"That is nonsense." Thalia crossed the room and walked to the side of the platform.

"I mean it. Do you think I'm going to pig everything, just because I've got a couple of buck-shot under my pelt? I shall camp in front of the fire." Forgetting his wounded arm, Dallas shoved himself upright, then sat swaying giddily from the pain caused by the effort.

"Dallas! Don't! Can't you be good? Lie down! Oh, please, please, please! If you only knew how worried I am about you!" Thalia's rich voice broke.

The man was too weak to contend further, so it ended in the girl's having her own way in sleeping in front of the fire, while Dallas sank back exhausted onto the platform.

PART V.

DALLAS was awakened by a thin sunbeam which had found its way through a crevice in the shutters and was shining directly into his eyes. He blinked and sat up, dazed and bewildered.

A stab of pain in his arm brought him quickly back to a sense of his surroundings. The wound of his head did not bother him, but his side was very sore. Otherwise, he felt himself quite fit and with no indication of fever.

Resting on one elbow, he looked about him with a smile. Outside, the jay-birds were protesting violently at the late opening hours of their restaurant, and the goats were bleating expectantly. From the brightness of the sunshine, Dallas guessed that the day must be well advanced, but as door and shutters were closed, the light in the cabin was still deeply subdued.

Snuggled up against the young man lay the yellow cat. In front of the fire slept the Lady Thalia, and Dallas, glancing with a smile from one to the other of his companions, found it impossible to determine which appeared to be the more at ease. Thalia's face was turned towards him; her cheek was on one palm, her lips slightly parted, and her wavy hair tumbled about her face, which was a little flushed and dewy with sleep. Her heavy, double-breasted tunic of homespun wool was loosened at the neck, and her soft throat looked very white and delicate against the rough fabric. In spite of her hard bed, she appeared to be sleeping as easily as a child tucked up in its crib.

As Dallas looked at her, his eyes grew tender. "Dear little girl,"

he thought. "No wonder James is crazy about her! Not many women could go through such an ordeal as yesterday and come out of it as fresh and undismayed."

He could not take his eyes from her, and perhaps the girl felt in her sleep the intensity of his gaze, for presently she sighed, yawned, straightened out her limbs like a pussy-cat, and sleepily pushed the hair back from her face with one small hand; then the long, dark lashes slowly lifted, and her tawny eyes looked straight into his. Wider they opened, and wider still, with an expression of such hopeless bewilderment that Dallas laughed outright. Then intelligence came flooding back and her face turned rosy pink.

"Oh!" she gasped, and sat up, gathering her tumbled hair in both hands. Her lips parted with a smile of embarrassment.

"How do you feel?" she asked, a trifle breathlessly.

"Like a fighting-cock. Did you have a good sleep?"

"Delicious! This mountain air! It got rather cold in the night, and I built up the fire. How do the wounds feel?"

"Would n't know that I had 'em! I think that they are going to close without making any trouble. There can't be much infection in this climate, and, besides, I always heal quickly."

Thalia leaned forward and began to lace up her sandals, then she rose and crossed the room.

"What are you up to now?" asked Dallas.

She threw him a saucy look. "I must give the baby his milk. Then I am going down for a dip in the river."

"You'll freeze!"

"I like cold water. Then I must milk the goats, and see if I can find some eggs for your breakfast. You are to lie still."

"It can't hurt me to get up."

"Yes, it can. You are to keep still."

"All right."

She threw him a suspicious glance, then went to the fire and heated some of the goat's milk, which Dallas drank with a wry face. Thalia laughed, then walked to the door of the cabin and threw it wide, letting in a flood of sunlight. On the threshold she paused.

"Now I am going to bathe. Be good!" She blew him a little kiss.

"Stop it," said Dallas.

"Stop what?"

"Throwing me kisses."

Thalia raised her eyebrows mockingly.

"What would James say?" growled Dallas.

"I had n't thought."

"Well, you must think! What if I were to throw a kiss back to you?"

"Dreadful! What would Paula say?"

"Oh, bosh! Run along and take your bath, and be careful."

When she had gone, Dallas got up and went out into the fresh, fragrant morning. Rather to his surprise, he found himself a little unsteady on his feet; also he discovered that moving about gave him considerable pain in his wounded side. When Thalia returned, fresh and glowing, she found him sitting on the threshold, basking in the warm sunlight.

"This is very naughty of you," said the girl. "Go straight back and lie down." And Dallas was forced to obey.

Upon the man's repeated refusals to allow her to sleep another night on the floor, the Lady Thalia collected some loose willow boughs and made for herself a rough, but effectual, screen around the platform corner. She consented to this arrangement only after she had moved the sheepskins over in front of the fire, so that Dallas could rest there in comparative comfort.

The day wore on, and the two remained in undisturbed possession of the little cabin. When the late shadows began to lengthen, Dallas was permitted to get up, and the two sat upon the threshold and watched the crimson afterglow flaming the skies over the dim hills to the westward. From the valley beneath, came the deep, caressing murmur of the river, and a faint breeze brought to them the night smells of the forest, sweet with the odors of balsam and fern. Soon the darkness came, and the ruddy light from the fire began to dance and flicker on the walls of the cabin. Then Dallas was sent to bed again and fed more milk and a vegetable soup, thickened with cornmeal. For a while the two discussed the continued absence of their host, and what it might portend, and why it was that nobody came near the little cabin.

"He is probably a holy man," said Thalia, "and no doubt does miracles, and the herders are afraid to come near. There was once such a *santon* who lived on the top of a mountain not far from my father's castle. He was a very holy man, and very kind, but all the people were afraid of him, because he used to talk with the dead and bring messages to the families of some of the Shkipetari from people who had been killed in feuds or perhaps murdered. Nobody would go near his hut when he was away or in a trance. Perhaps this man is like that."

"Are you afraid of such things, Thalia?"

"A little." She threw an apprehensive glance about the cabin.

"Afraid of the dead?" asked Dallas, amused.

"I like live people better." She moved a little closer. "We Shkipetari are rather superstitious. But I have lived so much in England that I am not like the others."

“How did you come to live so much in England?”

“My father was a very enlightened man and a great student. He sent me to Paris to school, and there I made the acquaintance of an English girl and used to visit at her home in England. Up here in these mountains it is different. But I am not afraid when I am with you.”

So the days went by, but the girl would not hear of their leaving the cabin until all the soreness should have gone from Dallas's wounds. No human being came near to disturb the peace of their little haven of refuge. Their life became a quiet routine of homelike duties; mornings Thalia milked the goats and ground maize, of which there was a plentiful store, and cooked their simple meals, scarcely permitting Dallas to lift a hand in physical work of any kind. Late in the afternoons, the two sat upon the threshold and watched the early autumn sunsets, discussing many things, and watching the coming of darkness.

One evening as they sat at the cabin door, a splendid red-deer buck stalked out of the forest and stood for a moment stamping and snorting, and watching the two with bright, curious eyes. The night following there was a great bleating and scurrying among the goats. Thalia threw open the shutters and flung out a blazing firebrand, when the tumult ceased. In the morning they found the tracks of a wolf in the damp sand about the cabin.

And so a week passed. Then Dallas announced that he was fit for the trail. His wounds had healed, as a surgeon would say, by “first intention.” The encysted buckshot caused him no inconvenience, and there seemed no reason why they should linger on.

The two took counsel sitting on the floor in front of the blazing fire. For some reason, both were sad at the thought of leaving the little home which they had come to regard as their own. Nothing had occurred to mar their perfect comradeship, although twice when discussing the possible fate of their friends Thalia had burst suddenly into a storm of self-reproach, asserting herself to be the cause of whatever tragedy might have happened and finishing in a paroxysm of tears. The second time, Dallas had thrown his arm about her shoulders and talked to her as soothingly as though she had been an overwrought child, a method which proved singularly effective. The frenzy of her grief abated, he had drawn a little apart and reasoned with her quietly until she had recovered her self-control.

From time to time the young man had talked to her of Sir James, describing his many admirable qualities, and dwelling to some length upon the Englishman's oft-asserted devotion to herself and the many excellent results which might accrue to both if they were to marry.

To all of this Thalia had listened with downcast eyes, an occasional sidelong glance, and a rather pale and inscrutable face.

"We can make Dakabar easily in two days, Thalia," said Dallas, as the two sat staring into the flames. "That scoundrel Dimitri told me that the trail crossed the river at a ford a little above here."

Thalia nodded. "You are right," she answered listlessly. "We will go to-morrow. I will put some bread and boiled potatoes and chestnuts in a sack, and we will start. I suppose that the wolf will get the goats, and poor Mimi will have to catch mice, but you are right; we must not stay here any longer."

The odd note in her voice caused Dallas to look at her sharply. Thalia's face was quite pale, and her eyes were dark and misty.

"You speak as if you did not want to go," said he.

"Really?" She gave him a masked look. "Why should I want to stop here any longer?"

"I can't imagine. I should think that you could hardly wait to learn what has happened to Paula and James."

Thalia looked at him with glowing eyes and a bright red spot in either cheek.

"Of course I want to know what has happened to Paula and James," she retorted. "Have I not been nearly mad from anxiety? But I have tried to be patient, and not to show it, and have cooked, and gathered wood, and milked, and slept on planks, because I did not think that you ought to travel until your wounds were healed."

"Thalia!"

"And now you look at me with surprise and say, 'We have wasted time enough.'"

"But I have n't said anything of the kind!"

"You have implied it!" Her voice rose slightly in pitch. "I'm sure I don't know what would have happened to you if we had started sooner!"

"But, my dear little girl, don't you suppose that I appreciate——"

"No!" cried Thalia furiously; "I don't think that you have sense enough to appreciate anything! Unless it is—James!"

"Thalia!"

"Or Paula!"

"Thalia! Stop it!" Dallas stared at her in bewilderment. Thalia looked back defiantly. Her chin was thrust out, and her eyes, sombre and half-veiled by their long lashes, were staring into the fire over the curve of her flushed cheeks. Her black hair, with its lurid tones of sienna, was tumbled about her ears, and her breath was coming quickly.

Dallas reached for her hand, but the girl snatched it angrily away.

"You're overwrought, my dear, and I must say I don't blame you," said Dallas. "The strain has been enough to make any woman——"

"Oh, so you think I am complaining?"

"Not a bit of it; but I do think that you are feeling the strain of it all."

"I am not feeling the strain of anything, unless it is that of being continually criticised and misunderstood."

"But, Thalia, I understand."

"Really?" Thalia's red lip curled.

"Well!" cried Dallas, in desperation. "Then what is the matter?"

"There is nothing the matter."

"Then why are you so angry?"

"I am not angry. What is there to be angry about?"

"But why do you blame me for wanting to go on?"

"I am not blaming you. It is you who are blaming me, and hinting that I am not as anxious as I ought to be about Paula and—James!" She struck her sandaled foot repeatedly against the floor, then leaned over to tighten the thongs about her round ankle. "I know why you are so restless and anxious to be on"—she threw him a sidelong glance. "It is because your tobacco is all gone."

"No," answered Dallas softly; "it's because my—something else is almost gone."

Thalia half turned her head and looked at him under lowered lashes.

"What do you mean?" she asked rather breathlessly.

"I mean," answered Dallas slowly, and without looking at her, "that you are the dearest and sweetest and loveliest woman whom I have ever known; and that sometimes I find it very hard to remember that my dearest friend has told me that he cares for you."

Thalia looked at him fixedly, her amber eyes almost black, and the glare of the fire reflected crimsonly on her lovely face.

"But I don't care for him," she answered in a very low voice.

"You ought to."

"Oh, but I do in one way. He is splendid and chivalrous and straightforward, and of course I appreciate all that he has done for me. But"—her voice fell—"I don't love him."

Dallas looked into her face; his eyes were glowing like embers.

"But you did. At least, you cared a good deal—before we went up the side of that mountain."

"And what if I did? I had never told him so, nor had he ever said that he cared for me!"

"That's because he's too fine and generous, and you were in a way under his care."

"And how about yourself? Did James tell me to let go when I was holding him half balanced on the side of a cliff? Did he tell me to let go for fear I'd be dragged over and killed, too?"

"He would have done so quickly enough if he had been the one!" muttered Dallas.

"I don't doubt it!" Thalia gasped and the words came pouring out pell-mell. "And did James fight for me? And was he wounded for me? And did I swim out and save him when he was struggling in the current? And did I nurse him, and feed him, and——"

"Thalia, Thalia!" Dallas groaned. "Stop it! Oh, my dear, don't you see how hard you are making it for me?"

She turned her lurid eyes to his.

"And don't you suppose that you are making it hard for me, and have been right along with your everlasting talk of James, James, James! Oh, Dallas, Dallas, it is *you* that I love! Just *you, you, you!* I have never loved anybody else! I shall never love any one else! Oh, my dear, my dear!" She began to sob, and her body swayed back and forth and threw dancing shadows on the cabin walls.

Dallas turned to her swiftly, his face very pale and his eyes aflame.

"Thalia! My own darling! I adore you!" His voice choked.

She turned her face to him, the tears sparkling on her cheeks. Dallas raised both arms, but before he could clasp her Thalia's own were about his neck and her face crushed to his. Her sobs broke out afresh.

"Thalia!" cried Dallas, crushing her to him. "My own darling! I love you more than anything in the world." He kissed the tears from the hot, flushed cheeks. "I shall tell James all about it, sweetheart. He is big and generous. He will understand. But until I do, you must help me, dear; or I would despise myself for all the rest of my life."

The minutes flew by, and still he held her close, talking to her soothingly until presently her sobs ceased and she looked up at him with a smile.

"Yes, dearest," she whispered; "I understand. I will help you. And you really love me—and don't love Paula?"

"Darling! I love only you!"

Noon of the following day found them climbing a high pass in the hills, with the river a silvery thread far below. On either side was dense forest, alternating with bare, boulder-strewn hill-sides, and the air was fine and keen and filled with sunshine.

Presently their trail led out across the shoulder of a high hill, whence they were able to look away for leagues to the southward, over a wonderful expanse of hill and valley, the whole of which seemed

to be enclosed by a high, broken wall of mountains blue with distance and filled with marvellous shadows of saffron and amethyst.

"Those are the North Albanian Alps," said Thalia. "They form part of the southern boundary of Novibazar. My people came originally from the other side of that range, but the Turks drove them northward, and now we occupy those slopes which you see down toward the end of the valley. Near the castle where I lived when my father was alive, there are two little streams which rise almost side by side, and one of them flows into the Danube and the other into the Ægean Sea."

"Really? And where does Prince Emilio come from?"

"From a place called Rascia, not far from the town of Novibazar. We are quite near neighbors; not more than a six-hour journey on foot."

"Do you know this road, Thalia?"

"I have never been here before, but I know it a little farther on, where it strikes the valley of the Lim. Higher up it crosses the main road from Cettinjé to Nis. Look, my dear"—she pointed down the steep slope. "Here come some people."

Twice during the morning they had avoided other travellers. The first whom they had met were Mohammedan plum-growers, packing down their dried prunes on a train of meagre mountain ponies. The others were Serb swineherds, a savage, filthy crew.

Climbing up the precipitous bank, they crouched behind a clump of bracken, and waited for the new-comers to pass. These proved to be a troupe of *Chingéni*, or Balkan gypsies. They were a ragged lot of nomads, perhaps twenty in all, with warm, swarthy skins, features of markedly Hindu type, and dark, lustrous eyes. The *hamals*, powerful young fellows, were carrying packs almost as large as those borne by the dozen wretched ponies. Two young women, superbly made, were swinging easily up the steep incline, each with a child carried in a sort of sling. A lame man sitting astride an overloaded pony was playing a violin, and playing marvellously well, it seemed to Dallas. The caravan passed chattering up the trail, when the two refugees came out of their hiding-place.

"They are striking across the mountains for the big road from Belgrade to Constantinople," said Thalia. "They will meet it on the Morava, then pass on up through Trajan's Gate, and probably hold right on for Stamboul, where no doubt they have their winter *mal-hallah*."

Presently the path began to descend, and a little later led through a gorge, marvellously beautiful, with bare, rocky walls and a cataract foaming at the bottom. The two had paused to admire the savage wildness of the place when Thalia exclaimed:

"Some one is coming!"

Dallas listened and heard the clatter of many hoofs on the rocky trail below them. He glanced quickly about for a place where they might get under cover, but there was none to be had. Above them rose sheer, bare crags, and below, the ground, while not very steep, was naked of bush or boulder.

"We shall have to run back up the trail," said he.

"Too late," answered Thalia. "Here they come."

"What are they—soldiers?"

A troop of horsemen had appeared around a curve of the road ahead and was approaching at a rapid walk. The riders looked to be uniformed, and were armed with guns. But the two fugitives gave scarcely a glance at the men, for riding at their head was a colossal figure, khaki-clad, with a *kalpak* of fine astrakhan set over a fierce, deep-lined face, which even at that distance portrayed its characteristic features of black, bushy eyebrows and heavy black mustache and imperial.

"Rosenthal!" cried Dallas.

At the same instant the Jew had recognized the fugitives. With a harsh exclamation, he spurred his horse forward to rein up with a jerk in front of them.

"*Sapristi!*" cried Rosenthal. "What luck! What good fortune! I was afraid you was killed!"

He flung himself from his horse, threw the reins to one of his men, and strode toward Dallas, his diabolic face working with emotion and one big hand thrust in front of him, the palm opening and closing spasmodically.

"Py chingo!" he cried in his harsh voice, "but this is a pleasure to find you alive and unhurt!" He seized Dallas in his great arms and actually embraced him, then turned to Thalia and laughed. "*Sapristi!* But who is this handsome boy?" Before the astonished girl could avoid it, he had embraced her also, and would no doubt have kissed her on both cheeks had she not twisted her head aside. Rosenthal was bubbling over with delight. "Belief me, I could not be more overjoyed if I had sold my silver mines for one hundred t'ousand pounds. Nefer haf I been so worried! I had come to t'ink that you must haf been killed!"

He beamed upon them with a grin which was almost a physical violence in itself. His bushy eyebrows worked up and down, and his yellow teeth were bared like those of a grinning wolf. But the big, deeply-scored, vital face was filled with such a real benevolence as to disarm its savagery of feature. Dallas felt himself ridiculously like a runaway child caught while playing truant by a kind but undesired pedagogue. As for Thalia, the girl was regarding the big Jew

with the peculiar expression of half-repulsion, half-fascination, which quite expressed the emotions with which he inspired her.

"But where haf you been, you naughty children?" cried Rosenthal. "*Sapristi!* If you only knew how I haf worried! And if you knew what a bad time I haf been giving Prince Emilio since I discovered it was all his doing!"

"*His* doing?" echoed Dallas.

"Ah, yes. You did not guess? You see, Dimitri was my man, and he had instructions to see that you came to no harm."

Dallas was staring at the Jew through narrow lids, and eyes as cold and green as jade.

"So it was all a trap arranged by you and Prince Emilio?" he asked.

"Let me egsplain," protested Rosenthal. "We knew, of course, that you were in Belgrade. Such foolish boys! Because, you see, you played right into our hands. I vas afraid that Thalia might haf appealed to the Turkish and Austrian ministers, and then we might haf had to let her go. But I t'ought that you would be there, and when I learned you were I sent my man Dimitri to you. He is my confidential agent."

"He *was*," corrected Dallas grimly.

Rosenthal grinned at him like an indulgent parent.

"You shoted him! I do not plame you. Yes, he vas my confidential agent. I haf t'em eferywhere. If you wished to know what King Leopold had for his dinner last night, or what lady the President Castro went to see, I could tell you to-morrow. So, you see, it all suited my plans and looked like a very easy way to get Lady Thalia safe to Rascia wit'out any fuss and scandal. I had told Dimitri to be sure that no one vas hurted."

"Rather tough on Dimitri that I did n't have the same instructions," said Dallas ironically.

"Ah, my poy, you did r'right. Ven I had gone, Emilio bribes Dimitri to haf you two boys shoted. He has nefer forgiven you for that blow in the face. But then, he is a pig of a Servian. Dimitri was to come and say that you resisted and were shoted, which might have happened."

"How did you find this out?" asked Dallas.

"From the gossip that goes over these hills, and then I made Emilio confess. It appears that there vas a hermit, a holy man, who put a stop to that nonsense and brought Sir Chames and Paula to Dakabar."

Dallas and Thalia exchanged glances of infinite relief.

"And Sir James's servant?" asked the girl.

"He is t'ere, too. Sir Chames got a buck-shot in his neck, but

is not hurted bad. This hermit is now making lots of troubles at Dakabar. He is himself Albanian." He turned to Thalia. "It is Ishmi Bey."

"Ishmi Bey?" echoed the girl. "He was my father's dearest friend," she said to Dallas, "and he has a blood feud with Emilio."

Rosenthal nodded. "Yes," said he. "That was a very bad business. A band of Emilio's burned his house and carried away his wife und daughters. T'en he vent away and nobody knew what had become of him. Now he is back in Dakabar, gathering the Shkipetari from all ofer the hills. There is going to be troubles, and"—he grinned—"myselluf I am not so sorry, because I see a chance to get back my forty t'ousand pounds. But come, children. Ve must go."

"Go where?" demanded Dallas.

Rosenthal lifted his bushy eyebrows.

"To Rascia, of course," said he.

"Why not to Dakabar?"

The Jew shook his big head. "Ah, my boy, you may go if you like; but Thalia must come vith me. I am fery sorry, but business is business. If she vent back to Dakabar, she vould spoil it all, und I vould lose my forty t'ousand pounds."

Dallas bit his lower lip, and his face hardened.

"Look here, Baron," said he suddenly, "we are your prisoners. If you will take us to Dakabar, I will buy your filthy silver mines and pay you forty thousand pounds."

For a moment Rosenthal stared. His big eyes opened very wide, and their hazel-colored spots seemed to grow more accentuated, while the outer corners of his bushy eyebrows were pushed up until they almost met his grizzled hair. Then suddenly he threw back his great head and roared with laughter. Still shouting hoarsely, he clapped Dallas on the shoulder, almost knocking the young man off his feet.

"By chingo, but it is funny! Excuse me if I laugh, Mr. Dallas, but it is so very funny! No! Business is business, but Isidor Rosenthal has not yet turned brigand! No! T'at vould not be business!" And again the raucous laugh burst out, to come reëchoing back in hoarse cachinnations from the rocky wall on the other side of the gorge.

The Jew turned and mounted his big black horse, the back of which sagged under his great bulk. He gave a harsh order in the Serbo-Croatian tongue, at which two of the troopers dismounted.

"Come," said Rosenthal, wiping his eyes with a silk handkerchief heavily scented with musk. "We must go, children. Get up on these horses. No"—he waved his big hand—"it is no use to argue, Mr. Dallas! You shall leave us where the road turns off for Dakabar, just beyond Iverntsk. The Lady Thalia must come vith me to Rascia.

Business is business"—he laughed again—"but Isidor Rosenthal is not yet a brigand!"

Seeing the utter futility of argument, Dallas put Thalia on her pony and mounted, himself, when Rosenthal wheeled, and the little calvalcade moved forward. They descended into the valley of the Lim, then turned southeast. Rosenthal went on ahead, followed by some of his men, in the midst of whom rode Dallas and Thalia side by side, the dismounted troopers being left to find their way back on foot as best they might.

For several miles Dallas rode in silence, pale and furious, and answering Thalia's remarks in curt monosyllables.

"Who are these men?" he asked finally.

"Emilio's servants and guards."

"Soldiers?"

"No. The only actual militia in this country are Turks. You see, it is a Turkish *sanjak*. But Emilio stands very well with the Porte, and he is permitted to maintain a sort of constabulary to protect himself from the Shkipetari, who hate the Turks almost as much as they do the Serbs. You see, the whole state of affairs is horribly confused; and what the Turks want more than anything else is to keep the peace. As a result, they are friendly with both parties, so far as they can be."

"So we've got to part," said Dallas bitterly.

Thalia looked at him with a sad smile. "When you get to Daka-bar," said she, "tell Ishmi Bey not to fight."

It was still early in the afternoon when the little cavalcade arrived at a village situated on the bank of the swift stream.

"Iverntsk," said Thalia. "The people of this *zadruga* were nearly all massacred a few years ago by one of Emilio's bands. The same old story! Emilio's people are mostly Christians of the Bulgarian Church, and his *zadruga* belongs to the orthodox Greek Church. That is their method of converting each other."

The little hamlet appeared deserted as their troop clattered through. Opposite a modest edifice of mud and stone, Rosenthal drew in his horse, tossed the reins to a trooper, and swung his great body to the ground.

"This is a *han*—a tavern," he said to Dallas. "Let us dismount for a cup of coffee and some olives."

He lifted Thalia to the ground as if she had been a child. Dallas also dismounted, and all three were about to enter the door of the inn when one of the troopers called out sharply to a man who appeared to be the captain of the guard.

"What is that?" said Rosenthal. "Does he say that there are horsemen coming?"

He raised his hand for silence, and for a moment they stood listening. The white, dusty road led straight through the village, the small houses built close together and facing it on either side. At the extreme end of the street there was a high mud wall, above which one saw the dull green foliage of an olive orchard, and, beyond, the roof of a rather more elaborate dwelling than the others, apparently the home of the patriarch, or communal head of the *zadruga*. In front of this estate the road turned sharply at a right angle and was hid from view by some low mud cottages.

From this direction there came the distant rumble of many hoofs. The sound rapidly increased in volume, indicating that whatever the party which approached, it was travelling at a rapid pace. Rosenthal's Serbs were glancing from one to the other with knit brows and muttering interrogations, while the face of the big Jew himself wore an expression of extreme disgust.

"*Sapristi!*" he growled. "Who can this be?" He called out sharply to his captain, who shrugged and answered a few guttural words.

"A Turkish *hamdié*," muttered Rosenthal, scowling. "*Peste!* But that will be embarrassing! I have no official permission to be leading a troop of armed men through these hills. The commanding officer will ask awkward questions! He will want to know why I did not refer this matter of looking for the Lady Thalia to him!"

"And I shall tell him!" said Thalia maliciously.

Rosenthal threw her a look of reproach.

"*Peste!*" he growled. "You would not do that! You would not do anything so ungrateful!"

Dallas laughed outright, and the Jew grinned. At the same moment the rumble which had developed into a sharp clatter of many hoofs diminished. A cloud of dust rose suddenly over the low tiled roofs at the end of the street, and the next moment the head of a column of horsemen turned the corner, then quickly halted.

There was a moment of silence, followed instantly by a clamor of voices from Rosenthal's men, and a sharp order from the captain.

The troop was thrown into confusion. With an oath, Rosenthal sprang to mount his horse. With one hand on the animal's neck and one foot in the stirrup, he turned to look at Dallas over his shoulder.

"Get out of the way!" he cried harshly. "Into the *han!* There is going to be a fight!"

But Dallas and the girl had scarcely heard his words. Their eyes were rivetted on the horsemen clustered at the bend of the road, for at their head were Sir James, Connors, and a tall, bearded man in fez and tunic, who, even as they looked, snatched the yataghan from his sash and whirled the blade above his head.

"The Shkipetari!" cried Thalia.

Rosenthal's men, taken completely by surprise, were struggling to unslung their carbines. But the Albanian leader gave them scant time. Swinging in his saddle, he shouted a harsh order and pointed toward Rosenthal's Serbs with the blade of his yataghan. The next instant the Shkipetari were hurled in assault.

Dallas had barely time to drag Thalia up the steps and into the *han* before the Albanians had struck their enemy. The street was narrow, and the powdery dust of the road swept up in such dense swirling clouds that for several moments it was impossible to follow the fortunes of the fight. Horses and men were down, and the combatants were so tightly wedged as to be unable to use rifle or carbine. But the yataghans were busy, and presently, as the dust slightly settled, the two in the doorway of the *han* were able to see what was happening.

Sir James, his face as fierce as any of the savage ones about him, was firing to right and left. Once, at the elbow of the Englishman, they caught sight of Connors, who had emptied his revolver and was fighting with the steel, like those about him. A moment later a gaunt, black-bearded man came hewing his way through with blows of terrific force and quickness, while his fierce face peered constantly this way and that as if in search of some one.

Thalia put her lips close to Dallas's ear. "That is Ishmi Bey," she said.

But the pivotal centre of the fight was Rosenthal. Squarely in the middle of the street, the Jew's big bulk loomed through the swirling dust, while his harsh voice, admonishing friend and foe, rose above the din of the fight. He had been armed only with a carbine, but as the crush was so thick he had seized the weapon by the muzzle and used it as a club.

The uproar was appalling. Above the clash and clatter of steel rose the yells of the Shkipetari and the screams of the wounded men and stricken horses, but over all blared out from time to time the deep-chested roar of the Jew. The Serbs were fighting for their lives, knowing well that no quarter would be given by their savage, kilted enemies, to whom such slaughter was as the very breath of their nostrils. The Shkipetari were considerably fewer in numbers, but no living bone and muscle could withstand the fury of their attack. Backward down the road they forced the Serbs, while the blinding dust rose thicker and thicker. Rosenthal alone appeared to hold his own; planted in the middle of the street, he fought like a huge, raging Mephistopheles, his clothes in ribbons and the blood streaming down his satanic face. Now and then Dallas caught a glimpse of Sir James; the Englishman had torn the carbine from the hands of a Serb and

was fighting like the Jew, his weapon clubbed. Backward the Serbs were forced, struggling over the bodies of men and horses, until presently Rosenthal alone blocked the road. Ishmi Bey had fought his way on past him and was the centre of a swirling vortex, his streaming yataghan flashing up and down like a tongue of red flame.

By this time many of the Albanians were on their feet, leaping here and there, now pausing to thrust at a fallen enemy or springing aside to lash at a mounted one. Then a rift in the swirling dust showed Sir James knee to knee with Rosenthal. Dallas saw the Jew strike a savage blow, which the Englishman parried. With a hoarse shout, Rosenthal raised in his stirrups to strike again, when Connors, who had stuck close to the elbow of his master, sprang forward and cut savagely at the Jew with his yataghan. Rosenthal parried with his gun-barrel, but the blade glanced and found the side of his shaggy head. The Jew swayed in his saddle, then lurched sideways and came crashing to the ground.

Sir James and Connors wheeled to plunge again into the fight, which had surged on down the street. Dallas leaped from the doorway, and, seizing Rosenthal under the arms, dragged his huge bulk across the threshold of the inn. The road was strewn with men and horses, while the fight itself was completely veiled in the swimming clouds of dust, which presently began to dissolve when from the distance came the sound of scampering hoofs. What was left of the Servian troop had broken into flight.

Dallas and Thalia stared at each other with pale faces. At their feet the body of the big Jew heaved convulsively, then struggled to a sitting posture. From head to foot the man was a grimy mass of blood and dust, and his breath was coming in great, labored gasps. For a moment he looked about vacantly; then the expression came back into the big brown eyes with their multiple hazel dots.

"*Mein Gott!*" he panted. "It vas not vort' it! Forty t'ousand pounds! Bah!" He raised both hands to a long, jagged cut on the side of his head, from which the blood was oozing sluggishly.

"So you 're not dead?" said Dallas.

"I don't t'ink so. But I deserf to be! Forty t'ousand pounds! Bah!"

He spat and wiped his mouth with the back of his grimy sleeve, then looked up at Thalia and grinned.

"*Sapristi!* I do not like to fight! It is not goot business, and bad for the health! *Sapristi!* But it is very bad for the health. I might easily haf been killed, and then of what goot would be my forty t'ousand pounds? And t'ink of the grief of my dear vife in Buda-Pesth! But vat could I do?" He spread out his grimy hands

apologetically. "You cannot arbitrate ven a friend is clubbing at you vit' a gun-barrel!"

"Let me tie up your head," said Thalia.

"T'anks. Sir Chames is a goot boy. It would haf broken my heart to haf split his skull. *Mein Gott!* Vat a business!"

PART VI.

DALLAS and Thalia, with the assistance of a few of the frightened villagers, were doing what they could for the wounded when up rode Sir James and Connors, both covered from head to foot with blood and dust, but neither seriously hurt. Some distance behind them strode the tall, bearded man whom Thalia had recognized as the hermit, Ishmi Bey.

Sir James dismounted and came toward them, his grimy face glowing with delight.

"Thank God!" he cried huskily. "We had almost given you up. We were starting out to look for you this morning when we ran head first into this gang of Emilio's. I tried to prevent a row, but there was no holding Ishmi Bey and the Shkipetari."

He took Thalia's hand in both of his and carried it to his lips, then turned to Dallas with glistening eyes.

"Might have known you'd win through, old chap! I say, that was a ripping shot you made on Dimitri! It was all a put-up job of those two scoundrels, Rosenthal and Emilio."

"Rosenthal had nothing to do with the plan to murder us," said Dallas.

"Did n't he? I'm glad of that. It did n't seem to me like the old Baron to play that sort of a filthy game. Too bad. If we had known that, we'd have passed him by just now."

"He's not much hurt," said Dallas.

Sir James's face expressed relief. "Glad of it," said he heartily, then glanced up to see the Baron himself standing in the door of the *han*, his head swathed in bandages.

"Hello, Baron!" called the Englishman heartily. "Glad you were not killed, old chap."

"T'anks. And I am glad you were not hurted, Sir Chames. This fight vas not of my choosing. Now I am finished. My forty t'ousand pounds can go to the devil. I am not afraid to say ven I am beat. Vonce I vas beaten in Macao by a Chinaman, and vonce in Hayti by a nigger named Fouchère. Now I am beat in the Balkans by two boys and two girls." He grinned.

Sir James looked about him and shook his head.

"Nasty work," said he, "but there was no help for it. When

our crowd saw these people of Emilio's they went crazy. We had better get to Dakabar as soon as we can, or there will be a hanged sight worse row than this. The Shkipetari have been pouring in from the mountains, and nothing will do but they must attack Emilio."

"How is Paula?" Dallas asked.

A peculiar expression of embarrassment appeared on the battle-stained face of the Englishman.

"She is very well, but awfully worried about you two."

Ishmi Bey had greeted Thalia, and the two were talking in low tones. The surviving Albanians had come straggling back, a few mounted and some on foot. There was not a man of them who did not carry some wound.

"Let's get out of this," said Sir James, "before we have a Turkish *zaptié* down on our backs. The whole thing is a bit irregular."

"How about the wounded?" asked Dallas.

Sir James shrugged. "The villagers will have to look after them. They will do it, I fancy, for fear of both parties." He turned to Rosenthal. "How did you leave the dear Prince, Baron?"

"I am finished wit' Emilio," he answered harshly. "I do not hold vit' murderers and assassins, Sir Chames. If you do not object, I will go to Dakabar."

Two hours later found them winding up into the hills. At the head of the cavalcade strode the tall, gaunt figure of Ishmi Bey, walking at the stirrup of the Lady Thalia, with whom he was in earnest conversation. A short distance behind them Rosenthal rode alone, sitting his big horse droopingly, a huge and somewhat dejected figure, with his massive head swathed in bandages. Sir James and Dallas came next, followed by Connors and such of the Albanians as were fit to travel.

"There is going to be the very deuce of a row, Stephen," said Sir James. "The most of the inhabitants of this sanjak of Novibazar are South Slavonic Serbs. This whole district is the cradle of the Servian race, and the Prince Emilio is the ranking feudal chief. Thalia, on the other hand, is pure Albanian, only connected to Emilio by marriage, and her people are all Albanian, Græco-Latin stock, and descendants of the ancient Illyrians. They have no fixed religion; they are Christians of both Greek and Bulgarian Churches and Mohammedans of all grades. The Turks first drove them up into these hills, and so they hate the Turks, and the Serbs have always been trying to drive them back again, and so they hate the Serbs. Also, they are forever fighting among themselves, and so they hate one another."

"A cheerful crowd," observed Dallas.

"Are they not? They have always got to be fighting somebody. When Constantine Bey, Thalia's father, was alive, he did a lot to keep the peace, and in reward got assassinated himself. His friend and cousin, Ishmi Bey, laid the murder to Emilio's door, and Emilio discovered it, and one night paid him a visit and burned his castle and carried off his womenkind."

"Nice young man, Emilio."

"Quite so. He appears to have formed the habit. Ishmi Bey was not strong enough to retaliate, and finally appears to have decided that he was cursed of Allah, and hauled off into the woods and built himself the cabin which you and Thalia found, and turned holy man. When he heard the firing he came across the river and persuaded the herders to clear out, and then conducted us to Dakabar. We did not worry about you as much as we might have done, because one of the herders came back and said that you had shot three of the gang and got across the river unhurt. So we hurried along, hoping to overtake you on the trail to Dakabar. It never occurred to us that you might be wounded, as the last that we heard was the crack of your 'thirty-fourty.'"

Dallas nodded. "I should not have been shot if I had n't been a fool," he said.

"When we found nothing of you," continued Sir James, "we hurried on to Dakabar, collected a mounted force, and came back the next day to look for you. This is the third searching expedition that we have made, and this time we took a strong party with the idea of combing the hills all over the place until we got some news of you. Meanwhile, Ishmi Bey has passed the word into the hills that the Prince Emilio has tried to murder the Lady Thalia and her party, and the Shkipetari have been pouring into Dakabar from all sides. There must be five hundred of them there now, all spoiling for a fight, and I do not think that Thalia and Ishmi Bey combined can keep them from attacking Emilio within the next forty-eight hours. They are led by a crazy fanatic, Sheik Izzat, and they mean to make a clean sweep of Emilio and all his tribe."

"I should like to be at the party," said Dallas.

"So should I. We've got a little score with Emilio. Suppose we go along."

"All right. I might even so far forget myself as to take a snapshot at His Highness if opportunity offered. How did Paula stand the ordeal?"

Sir James glanced up quickly and his swarthy color grew slightly darker. Dallas, staring between his pony's ears, failed to observe the confusion of his friend.

"Like a veteran," answered Sir James. "I got a slug through

the muscles of the neck, and she——” He paused awkwardly. Dallas, intent on his own thoughts, did not notice it. For a while the two friends rode in silence; then Sir James remarked in a voice slightly different from his usual tone:

“Odd how sharing mutual danger appears to draw people together.”

Dallas glanced at him sharply. “Why should n’t it?” he asked.

Sir James’s swarthy color deepened, and for a moment he did not answer.

“Look here, Stephen”—he turned abruptly to his friend. “Do you consider that a situation can arise such as—er—the sharing of mutual danger, which could possibly justify—or at least—h’m—ah—extenuate the circumstance of a man’s forgetting his duty to a friend where—h’m—ah—a woman was concerned?”

Dallas turned and stared at him with a rigid face. He could scarcely believe his ears. He had intended at the first opportunity to tell Sir James of all that had passed between Thalia and himself, and to offer such amends as lay within his power. But to be, as he supposed, subjected to an inquisition which was founded on mere suspicion and narrow-minded jealousy aroused his quick and keen resentment.

Sir James met the steely look, and his own face hardened. Then he glanced away, flushing crimsonly, and began to tug at his wiry mustache.

“No,” said Dallas curtly; “I don’t. Do you?”

“Er—er—no,” answered Sir James, then blurted out: “Theoretically.”

Dallas regarded him through narrowed lids.

“Suppose we drop the woman part of it, James,” said he in his coldest voice, “until we get this other business off our hands.”

“Quite so,” said Sir James, and the two fell silent again.

The full hunter’s moon hanging poised above the silvery crest of the Dovo-Dagh looked down upon a wild and savage host as it wound up through the forested defiles of the north Albanian Alps.

For the Shkipetari were afoot and moving swiftly and silently to strike at the throat of their hereditary foe. An odd five hundred mountaineers had rallied at the hot message sent into the hills by Ishmi Bey, holy man and martyr to the cruelty of Prince Emilio. Foul wrong had been done to the Lady Thalia, daughter of their hereditary chief, and even more, and that which brought a savage oath to the lips of every shaggy Arnaut to whom the message reached, the Prince was plotting to sell themselves and their free hills to the hated Servians.

For several days they had come dropping into Dakabar, singly or

in squads. Fierce-visaged fathers had stalked down from their mountain fastnesses, their half-grown sons at their heels. Many were of different sects, blood enemies, victims or victors of sanguinary family feuds, but these, while eying askance the members of rival clans, had laid aside their private wrongs for the common cause.

Arms and costumes differed widely. There were men clad only in sheepskins, with the wool turned in, and tight-fitting caps of white; others were more elaborately dressed in *kalpaks* of black wool, sometimes of astrakhan, with short, full-sleeved tunics, white kilts, woollen stockings, and shoes of red leather, with tufts of black wool upon the toes. Nearly all the men carried guns—long weapons with narrow barrels, often richly ornamented with tracerics and patterns wrought in silver and gold. Every one was armed with the weapon so dear to the native heart, the yataghan.

There were sheiks among them, and priests of both Greek and Bulgarian Churches, who eyed each other askance and with more vindictiveness than they did the devotees of Islam. The entire horde—for it could scarcely be called an army—was under the nominal command of one Sheik Izzat, himself a hermit who had gone half mad as the result of wrong dealt him by the Turks. But once in motion there was no pretense of leadership. The object of the expedition as understood by all was to strike a final and fatal blow at the hated stronghold of the Prince, and every man would fight his own fight in his own way.

So, as they strode along with the swift, springy step of the mountaineer, there was no dissension in the ranks. Mussulman jostled shoulders with Christian; pastoral feuds between herders and maize-growers were forgotten; men from different valleys looked at each other for the first time without the hand going to the hilt of the yataghan. If there were any rivalry, it was only as to who should strike first, hardest, and last.

At the head of the "column," if so it could be called, Sir James rode at the side of Ishmi Bey, with whom he conversed in French. The holy man had done his best to persuade the mountaineers to return peacefully to their homes. But once gathered, it had proven impossible to disband them. In the end they had clamored for Sheik Izzat to lead them against Rascia, when Ishmi Bey had accompanied the horde in the hope of giving such direction as he could to the evolutions of what was little better than a savage mob.

For some distance the road passed through heavy forest. The wind was blowing a clear gale; overhead, the tree-tops swayed and crashed, filling the air with their flying leaves, while the brilliant moonlight filtered through in swirling splashes of silvery light.

They wound up through a defile, skirted the flank of a mountain,

and emerged presently upon a bare, boulder-strewn hillside, against which the moon blazed with startling brilliancy. The path ascended in a series of zigzags, and at the top of the wind-swept ridge Ishmi Bey drew rein. Dallas and Connors slipped from their horses, and the four men turned to look back upon the following Shkipetari.

The effect was curious and startling. Below them the vivid moonlight shone and glittered from the huge fantastic boulders which were composed of a gneiss and mica-schist, and which flashed back the shimmering rays until all the hillside seemed a vast heap of gleaming gems. Blackest shadows lay here and there, alternating patches of glowing moonlight. Slipping invisibly from these areas of gloom to flitter across the patches of bright light came a swarm of leaping figures, now appearing, now disappearing, suggesting trolls issuing from the depths of the earth to pilfer a Titan treasure-trove. Ignoring the zigzag path, they came springing straight up the steep hillside, and as they crossed the open spaces the yataghans and the gun-barrels threw back the brilliant moon-rays in flashes of pale blue flame.

Far beneath, the still valley slumbered under a light veil of mist, through which shone faintly the silvered glint of the river. On all sides tumbled the rough shoulders of the hills, their crests rimmed with white fire, and shadows of wondrous depths upon their breasts. Over the ridge swept the high wind in clear, cold blasts.

The route led along the top of the hill, then down a bare slope to the stony bed of a torrential stream, the water of which was very low and could be seen only in broad, standing pools. The gully worn by the cataract was over one hundred yards in width and choked with masses of loose rock and stone. Beyond it the bank rose steeply to meet the heavy forest, and a little distance down-stream there was a rift between the hills, which marked the course of the trail to Rascia.

As Ishmi Bey was indicating this opening to Sir James, there suddenly emerged from the gloom of the forest a little squad of horsemen, which rode out into the full light of the moon, where it halted as if to reconnoitre.

The hermit reined his pony sharply backwards under the crest of the hill, and Sir James did likewise.

"Who are those men?" whispered Ishmi Bey. "Our own scouts were unmounted. Let us watch for a moment."

The Shkipetari were springing up all about them. Ishmi Bey turned and gave a sharp order in the guttural Gegh dialect spoken by the tribes who live north of the River Shkumbi. The words were passed quickly from mouth to mouth, and the tribesmen sank to earth, then crawled up to peer down into the valley beneath.

The horsemen had disappeared against the shadow of the forest. A few moments later they came into sight again in the river-bottom,

dismounted, and leading their horses among the stones. Presently they passed under the near bank and were lost to view, to reappear immediately at the foot of the slope. Here they paused, as if in consultation, and seemed to scan the ridge above. Perhaps some instinct warned them of the ambush spread along its summit, for they seemed unwilling to proceed. They were still standing there, inky blotches against the brilliant background, when a dark column began to emerge from the forest across the valley.

A guttural whisper arose from the Shkipetari; its sibilant undertone was caught up in the fierce gusts of wind and swept from mouth to mouth. Ishmi Bey, crouching beside Sir James, turned his head, and his white teeth shone through his heavy beard.

"The Prince!" he muttered in French. "He has heard that the Shkipetari were mustering to attack him at Rascia, and has decided to strike first himself at Dakabar!"

Across the river the dark column crawled like a thick, black serpent from the forest, turned to the left, and disappeared again in the sightless shadows which cloaked the rim of the bank. A troop of cavalry had appeared and apparently halted, when a column of infantry followed and likewise disappeared.

"It is but a mouthful for the Shkipetari," whispered Ishmi Bey exultantly. "There are perhaps fifty horsemen and twice that number of foot, while we are over five hundred strong. We will strike when the cavalry is crossing the river-bed."

He hurried off in search of Sheik Izzat, and a moment later the two dark figures could be seen flitting here and there among the mountaineers.

At the foot of the slope the horsemen forming the advance guard had remounted and were riding slowly up the hill. At the same time the forward files of the cavalry came out of a gully in the opposite bank, leading their horses among the boulders and débris, until presently the entire column was in the river-bed. The scouts were advancing slowly and as if in doubt, for those in ambush could see the white moonlight on their faces as they turned them continually upward.

The six doomed men were within fifty yards of the summit when the Sheik Izzat sprang suddenly to his feet and with a savage scream waved his yataghan aloft. His cry was lost in the crash of a volley, the detonation of which was whirled on high and swept away on the gusty winds. Down went horses and riders, a struggling heap. Up rose the Shkipetari, but even more quickly Ishmi Bey had sprung in front of them and was waving them back with frantic words and furious gestures.

For a moment they paused. Ishmi Bey, a mad, whirling figure in the moonlight, poured out a frenzied torrent of speech. A few of

the Shkipetari sprang forward, but the hermit, giant that he was, seized them by the shoulders and flung them back. Then Sheik Izzat, the blade of his yataghan a glittering circle over his head, plunged down the slope, howling furiously. With a roar, the Shkipetari were on and after him.

Ishmi Bey, who had been overthrown by the rush, sprang to his feet and shook his clenched fists with a gesture of passionate despair. He turned toward Sir James and cried out something which Dallas could not hear. But the Englishman had understood. He looked at his friend with a pale and horror-stricken face.

"My God!" he cried. "It is not the Prince at all! *Those are Turkish troops!*"

Silent and dismayed, they watched the furious combat in the valley beneath. Although more than doubly outnumbered, surprised, and taken at a disadvantage, the Turkish *hamdié* was not thrown into confusion. Well drilled, well disciplined, well officered, and well armed, the Shkipetari could not have found in all the country a more difficult mouthful to swallow than the Turkish mounted militia.

At the first wild clamor and volley from the hill-top, there had been a quick, sharp order, and in the two minutes which it took the tribesmen to reach the foot of the hill the troopers had unslung their carbines, released their horses, and were deployed among the rocks. At the same moment the company of infantry, which was marching in column of fours and hidden in the shadow of the woods, was halted, then advanced in line of skirmishers along the farther bank, so that when the Shkipetari reached the water-course, they ran pell-mell into a very nasty trap. Had they possessed any leadership or tactics, they might have halted and deployed on their own bank, when they could have engaged the enemy under fire and effected considerable damage. But, frenzied as they were, when once started, there was no holding them. Down they poured into the water-course, yataghan in hand, only to be met by a volley at point-blank range from Turkish Mausers in the hands of marksmen who needed nothing better than the brilliant moonlight.

But although a number fell, the tribesmen did not waver. Into the rocks they leaped, agile as otter hounds and just as fierce. And here the slaughter began. For the yataghan, although an admirable weapon when opposed to steel, stands little chance against a bullet, and it was steel-jacketed lead at close range with which the troopers fed them. Then after the first few moments of scattering fire, finding nothing at which to aim in the leaping, darting figures, here came the infantry, charging down the bank with fixed bayonets, when the engagement promptly broke into a series of furious hand-to-hand combats.

If the Shkipetari came to recognize their mistake in the identity

of their foe, they did not seek to remedy it. The battle-rage had seized them, and the Turks themselves, though not the folk whom they had come to seek, were their hereditary enemies. Straight into the muzzles of the rifles rushed the Albanians, and in the bright light of the moon the watchers on the hill-top were witnesses to acts of the most desperate fury. Here a screaming mountaineer took a bullet through the body at a range of two yards, only to rush in and beat aside the soldier's rifle and cut him down with the yataghan; near him an Albanian with a bayonet through his vitals was striving to reach with a thrust of his long, sinewy arm the man who held it. Wounded Shkipetari crawled on hands and knees to get within striking distance of a foe, praying only to kill one man before death overtook them.

Yet for all of their frenzied fighting, the injury inflicted by the Shkipetari was but very slight, while that which they suffered was terrific. In less time than it takes to tell, a third of them were down, and then, as though recognizing the hopelessness of the struggle, the tribesmen suddenly lost heart and the place was filled with flying figures, retreating not back in the direction whence they had come, but on down the water-course, toward a spot where the forest grew to the edge of the bank. A moment later they had melted into the sheltering woods, leaving only their dead and dying and a few dark figures crawling away to hide in recesses among the rocks.

Sir James turned to Dallas a face which was drawn and tense.

"How do you feel?"

"Rather sick. And you?"

"What a beastly shame! That infernal fool of a sheik!"

Ishmi Bey, crouching in front of them, rose to his feet.

"What can one do with madmen?" he asked, throwing out his hands. "I had just recognized the uniform of the *hamdié* when Sheik Izzat gave the order to fire. Come, my friends, we must go. If we are found here, we shall be shot."

They crawled back over the ridge, remounted their ponies, and rode in silence back down the trail. At the end of an hour the road led out upon a wind-swept ridge, and they saw below them the village of Dakabar.

"The work of to-night is an example of the guile of Prince Emilio," said Ishmi Bey bitterly, as they rode down the steep hillside. "He heard of the coming of the Shkipetari and sent word of it to the nearest Turkish *caracol*. Now the work has been done for him at no cost, and we may expect to see him here at Dakabar with a band of his Serbs!"

The house of the Lady Thalia was situated on a thickly wooded plateau a little above the village, and was surrounded by a park. As

the four men rode in through the massive gates, they saw at the far end of the straight avenue several horses standing in the bright patch of moonlight in front of the main entrance to the house.

"Halt," said Ishmi Bey, under his breath.

They drew rein and peered down the dark, tunnelled driveways. Overhead the high wind was roaring through the tree-tops, but the foliage was still thick enough to screen the light of the moon.

"Who can that be?" whispered Sir James.

"I do not know," answered the hermit. "Perhaps it is the Prince himself. Let us go forward quietly."

They advanced cautiously. Almost at the end of the drive they again drew rein.

In front of the door were six horses, saddled and bridled, and held by three men. Suddenly one of the animals raised its head and whinnied, when, before he could prevent it, Dallas's mount neighed in answer.

The three unmounted men turned quickly and stared down the drive. Then one of them handed his reins to a comrade, ran up the steps, and rapped sharply on the big oaken door. Immediately it was swung open, showing a lighted interior, and a moment later a short, thick-set figure stepped across the threshold and stood for a moment in the full blaze of the moon.

Dallas heard at his elbow a quick, indrawn breath and turned to see Ishmi Bey, his head thrust forward like a hound in leash.

"The Prince!" growled the hermit, and drew his yataghan.

Dallas leaned toward Sir James. "It is Emilio," he whispered. "He has come for Thalia!"

Sir James's answer was to draw his own blade. He turned to Ishmi Bey.

"There are only six of them!" said he. "Let's make a rush!"

"Hold on!" said Dallas. "This is pistol work, James!"

"Steel for me! Ready, Connors?"

"Nivir more so, sorr!" growled the Irishman, and drew his heavy revolver.

"Then come on!"

The gravel churned under the ponies' hoofs as they sprang forward. Out of the shadow they flew, neck and neck, and dashed across the lighted space. A cry burst from the Prince, and they saw him snatch a pistol from his belt. The horses held by the two troopers, frightened by the crash of hoofs, tugged violently backward, dragging the men after them.

At the first alarm two more men had appeared in the wide open doorway. The Prince raised his weapon and fired. At the foot of the steps Dallas reined in with a jerk and began to shoot from the saddle.

"*Pank! pank! pank!*" barked the deadly automatic arm, and one of the men beside the Prince pitched forward and came head first down into the road. But Dallas's horse, frightened at the reports, was fighting to bolt, and the other shots flew wide. Ishmi Bey was on his feet and leaping for the steps. Connors had killed one guard and wounded the other, but Sir James's pony, struck by a bullet from the Prince's weapon, had reared and fallen backward across his rider, pinning him to the ground.

Dallas swung from the saddle and rushed after the hermit, and Connors, pausing to haul Sir James from under his horse, followed him. At the top of the steps the man beside the Prince thrust his revolver almost against the broad chest of Ishmi Bey and fired, then leaped back across the threshold, dragging the Prince after him, and swung to the heavy door. But Ishmi Bey, who had reeled backward when shot, recovered himself, and, lurching forward, thrust the blade of his yataghan between the door and the jamb, when all four men threw their weights against it. Slowly it gave, to the noise of scuffling feet within; then a blade licked out through the aperture, and Connors dropped with an oath and went rolling down the steps.

"Stand clear!" panted Dallas, and, drawing back, fired two shots through the oak panel. At the same moment the door swung violently open and they burst into the room.

Two thundering reports roared out, and Ishmi Bey staggered back against the wall. A swarthy man sprang at Sir James with a wicked slash of a cavalry sabre, but the Englishman caught the blow on his yataghan, then thrust his antagonist through the body. Dallas, peering under the smoke, saw the Prince and another man standing behind a large table in the middle of the room. He fired quickly into the smoke and saw the man at the Prince's elbow fall. Then the Prince himself fired, and Dallas felt the wind of the bullet on his cheek. At the same moment Ishmi Bey sprang forward, when the Prince turned and ran to a door at the far end of the hall. With his hand on the latch the hermit overtook him, driving his yataghan so violently between the Prince's shoulders that the blade transfixed the panel of the door.

At Dallas's right there rose the clash and clatter of steel, and he turned to see Sir James engaged with a man who had been hiding behind the arras at the other end of the hall. The room was dimly lighted by three lamps, but the farther recesses were buried in shadow, and as Dallas glanced warily about his quick eye was caught by a moving figure in one of these. His deadly weapon flew up, and even as it did so a scream from Sir James's antagonist told that the duel was finished. Simultaneously there boomed out from the lower end of the hall a harsh and raucous voice:

"Don't shoot! It was I—Rosenthal—and the ladies!"

Dallas lowered his weapon, staring in amazement through the heavy, suffocating smoke. Sir James was leaning against the table, looking in the same direction, his breath coming in gasps, and a thin red stream running from the point of his yataghan. At the end of the hall lay the bodies of Ishmi Bey and the Prince Emilio, whose death struggle had snapped the blade which transfixed him. Dallas crouched lower to peer under the blinding smoke.

In the extreme corner of the room the huge bulk of the Jew was dimly defined through the vaporous gloom. He was standing erect, his big arms spread out, his hands braced against the wall on either side. As the two men stared, the Jew, who had been looking cautiously to right and left, let his arms drop to his side and stepped forward, when there appeared to their astonished eyes the dark-clad figures of the Lady Thalia and the Countess Paula Rubitzki.

"You can come out, ladies," said Rosenthal. "It is all over."

"Upon my word!" gasped Sir James. "Have you been there all the time?"

"Yes, Sir James. There was no time to get out of the way; you came so quickly. I was afraid the ladies might get shot, so I pushed them into the corner and stood in front of them. *Mein Gott*, a bullet went into the wall an inch from my head. I can see nothing for the plaster in my eyes."

"Good for you," grunted Dallas.

The two girls came forward shrinkingly, their faces very pale and their eyes wide with horror, for the room was a smoke-filled shambles.

"Where's Connors?" asked Sir James suddenly.

"He got a sword-thrust," said Dallas, "and rolled down the steps as we came in."

Sir James went quickly out. The others, dazed by the violence through which they had just passed, stood for an instant regarding one another in silence. Then Dallas started on a tour of inspection, accompanied by Rosenthal, whose massive head was still swathed in bandages.

Ishmi Bey and the Prince were both quite dead; so was the man at whom Dallas had fired, while the two victims of Sir James's yataghan appeared to be dying, both having been run through the chest.

"*Sapristi!*" said Rosenthal. "How far hate will take a man! Especially when he is a holy man. Here is Ishmi Bey with four bullet-holes in his body, one of them over the heart; and yet he has lived to kill the Prince."

As he spoke, Sir James entered the room. The Englishman's eyes were brimming over, and his face was pale and drawn.

"Dead?" asked Dallas.

Sir James could only nod. Followed by Rosenthal, Dallas hurried out of the house. They found the brave Irishman lying on his back at the foot of the steps, stone dead, his revolver still clenched in his hand.

As they reëntered, Dallas paused on the threshold. Sir James had sunk into a chair, his elbows on the table, his chin on his knuckles, staring into vacancy. Beside him stood Paula, her hand resting on his shoulder. Dallas looked and suddenly understood. His gray eyes opened very wide. He stepped quickly to his friend.

"James, old chap, I am sorry."

Rosenthal's heavy voice broke the silence which followed.

"Where are the Shkipetari? What happened you?"

In a few brief words Dallas told the Jew of what had befallen the Albanians. Rosenthal's face grew very grave.

"*Sapristi!* Ve must get out of here at vonce. The Turks vill hold Thalia responsible. Come, Sir Chames, let us bury your man and get away. Thalia, find your servants and haf them saddle some horses. Ve must lose no time to get across the border into Montenegro!"

A soft breeze from the Adriatic sighed and whispered through the lofty tops of the great pines which rose straight and dark and solemn from the brim of the high plateau. The yellow moon, which two nights before had looked down, cold and bright and merciless, upon the slaughter of the Shkipetari, now shone with a fervor almost caressing in its luscious warmth, tempered by the soft air from the sea.

Far below the rolling hills swelled away to infinity, bathed in luminous disorder, their crests converted into islands of enchantment, rising from the sea of mist which filled the valleys.

Side by side, at the foot of one of the big forest sentinels, Dallas and the Lady Thalia sat upon the carpet of aromatic pine-needles and looked out upon the moonlit wilderness. Not far beneath them on the mountain-side there sparkled a light or two from the little inn where the refugees had halted for the night.

Presently Dallas spoke, his voice subdued to the murmur of the gentle breeze in the tree-tops, high above their heads.

"Dear, to-morrow you will have to say good-by to your savage mountains. Cettinjé is over there"—he pointed toward the vague distance before them.

"Am I never to see my hills again, Stephen?" asked the girl.

"It's hard to tell, sweetheart. Perhaps some day we may come back for a visit. But your home is going to be very far away from them."

"Where, dearest?"

"In my own country, Thalia. I've been too long away. We

Americans are not built for the silly, aimless life that I've been leading; we are meant for strife and action and keen effort."

"You are." She nestled closer.

"I'm afraid," said Dallas, "that I'm not as civilized as I thought I was. Do you know, dear, I have never felt so fit and happy in my life as I have back there in your hills. The hardship and the danger and all seemed to fill some long-felt want. I could never go back to the insipid life in Paris, after this!"

"I'm glad, Stephen. I am not so very tame myself, you know!" She laughed caressingly, and took his hand in both of hers. "We're well mated, aren't we, dear?"

He drew her to him and held her there, his lips resting against her cheek.

"I am afraid that we are two savages, dear. Your fathers were Shkipetari and spent their time in carving the Turks with their yataghans. Mine were Texas Rangers and spent *their* time in carving up Greasers with bowie-knives. There's not much to choose! Then you and I come along, and are sent to school in France and told to be polite. And at the very first chance we trot out and shoot up the country as naturally and joyfully as if we had been taught to do it! But it shows me where I really belong; and of course you belong with me."

Thalia seized his wrists and turned to stare at him with large and startled eyes.

"Do you mean that you are going back to America to fight with—what do you call them—Greasers? And Indians, perhaps? Oh, no, no, Stephen! What if you should be killed?"

Dallas took her in his arms. "No, darling," said he. "Those days are past. We are going to be married and live in a peaceful country enough, but one where a man does a man's work—and makes other men do it, too! I don't know what mine will be; but I have inherited big responsibilities, dear—railroads and factories and great tracts of half-savage country to be developed—and I am going back to develop it—and myself! And you shall help!"

"I shall try, dear." Thalia's voice was tremulous. "Do you think that I can really help? And, oh, Stephen"—a sob rose in her throat—"will you love me always and truly, when you have me all alone in that big, far-away country of yours?" She hid her face in his chest.

Dallas clasped her in his arms, then raised her face, and kissed her warm, trembling lips.

"Thalia, darling! If you only knew!" he whispered. "I keep asking myself what I have ever done to deserve such a woman! Resolute, cheerful, fearless, and tender. Ah, my dear, if you only knew!"

Her arms tightened about his neck, her face crushed to his. But

the night-wind from the valley seemed to whisper to the murmuring pines:

“Truly, and always!”

“As peace advocates who came to this country to help to prevent bloodshed,” said Sir James a few nights later, as he and Dallas watched the lights of Cettinjé dwindling over the taffrail of the steamer, “it strikes me that we have proved pretty gorgeous failures, Stephen. Poor old Connors!” He caught his breath and stared moodily into the sea.

“Don’t take it so much to heart, James. Connors was a soldier, and he died a soldier’s death. He is much happier than he would be if you had been the one to get that thrust through the heart.”

“But I got him into it. It was his loyalty to me. Oh, hang it all, why could n’t it have been I?”

“Because, my son, the high gods have chosen you to marry Paula Rubitzki, and muzzle the hounds of the Secret Service, just as they selected me to marry Thalia—for what merit of mine, I am sure I don’t know!”

“Perhaps Thalia does. And I say, Stephen, it *was* a ripping little fight.”

There was a hoarse chuckle from the door of the smoking-room behind them, and Rosenthal’s huge bulk obscured the bright light from within.

“Bah!” said he. “But you Anglo-Saxons vill never get civilized! You can t’ink of not’ing but fighting. Some day when you are older you vill understand, like me, vat foolish boys you haf been.”

“At least, we did what we set out to do, Baron,” said Sir James.

“Yes, and a great deal more.” Rosenthal’s harsh laugh ripped its way through the peaceful night. “And now you are to be married, and happy like me, and I am fery glad, because it makes me feel as if my forty t’ousand pounds had not been t’rown away.”

Two white-clad figures appeared at the head of the after companion-way, and Dallas, whose eyes had not strayed far from that part of the deck, turned quickly on his heel.

Sir James thrust himself back from the rail. “We are going to watch the moon-rise,” said he to the Baron.

“Yes? Then I vill vish you good-night.”

Rosenthal looked after the two young men, and a deep laugh rumbled in his chest.

“*Sapristi!*” he muttered to himself. “Isidor Rosenthal has played many parts, but he has never learned to be a chaperon. Such foolish boys!” he muttered. “But not so foolish, after all.”

And he turned to the cheerful glare of the smoking-room.

THE MARKETS OF PARIS

By Mrs. John Van Vorst

Author of "Letters to Women in Love," "Babsy's Daughter," etc.

MARKETING has ever been an important question. On certain occasions it has assumed the formidable aspect of the rock upon which young married couples have shipwrecked. At other times it has exercised the subtle influence over man which leads us to affirm that the road to his heart is through his palate.

Marketing is a formidable affair.

Whether well done, ill done; whether done with a wide open purse or with twopence wrapped up in the corner of a pocket-handkerchief; whether done hastily and insufficiently or succulently and gluttonously,—it must be done, and done over, and done again to-morrow, and every kind of done except done with. Marketing is never done with, and it is this everlasting aspect of food-buying which gives it a life that is worth studying. The forest tree survives many generations, but it may be in absolute solitude that it comes to old age, unfrequented by man. The market-place which endures from century to century sees the multitude, the populace, the little village crowd, or the great municipal throng flock to its galleries year after year, with a change in all circumstances that concern them except that all important one of buying food.

And though the actual manner of serving food may vary constantly, it is quite correct to say that man has always dined; sometimes at two o'clock, sometimes at eight; sometimes with fingers, sometimes with forks. The average Englishman of the present times begins his day with a cup of tea, which he drinks before getting up. At nine he breakfasts heartily with bacon and eggs, fish and coffee, muffins and jam. At two he has a substantial luncheon served in courses, with a roast and an entrée; at five he partakes of a copious tea, with cake and bread; at eight or half-past he seriously dines, and if, during the later evening, he has been to the theatre, he regales himself with a frugal bite—whiskey and a sandwich perhaps—if at home. When he is entertaining or being entertained, of course, his midnight supper is likely to be more substantial.

The Frenchman is more abstemious: he eats his tea and toast

(or his *café au lait* or chocolate if he be a *bourgeois*) in the early morning; breakfasts upon eggs, meat, and a vegetable at half-past twelve (in the provinces at eleven and even half-past ten), and at half-past seven or eight o'clock he has a good dinner, with half a dozen courses and one or two good wines.

Napoleon refused to spend more than ten minutes at table, and his repasts were spread out in an enormous variety of cold dishes, from which he partook as he pleased, while only the hot roast was passed.

So every man his tastes; and if certain women have given their names to roses and carnations, many are the dukes and princes who have let some special dish be called for them: *à la Soubise*, *à la Morny*, *à la Parmentier*, etc.

The source from which the dinner, whatever it may be, emanates in Paris is the *Halles*, a covered market-place back of the church Saint Eustache, and not far from the Rue de Rivoli. It dates from the twelfth century, having been built in 1137, and its name has an even older origin, as the covered gallery which surrounded the forum of the Roman town, under which the small shops were sheltered, was called a hall, or *halle*.

The Paris *Halles*, or Central Markets, cover a surface of fifty-nine thousand yards. One hundred million pounds of meat are sold there in a year, forty-four million pounds of chicken, and a number equally appalling of bushels of potatoes and vegetables, of pounds of fish and butter, of dozens of eggs. Aside from the people who come to buy at the *Halles Centrales*, and the vast number of hotels and institutions which provide themselves with food at this source, there are twenty-nine smaller markets held in the different quarters of Paris every day, which have no other supply than the *Halles*. The reason for serving themselves thus through an intermediary instead of applying directly to the suburban trucksters and the coastwise fishermen is that thereby are avoided the complications involved by the laws of hygiene, which are very strict in Paris. Every particle of food admitted to the counters of the *Dames des Halles* must first have been inspected and judged fit for the human palate, by a commission who hold their séances between midnight and three in the morning, performing test experiments upon hungry guinea-pigs! The effects no doubt prove fatal rather often upon these poor "tasters," for there are four hundred and forty thousand pounds of meat seized every year and destroyed with quick-lime, while an equal amount of sea fish is cast to destruction, together with fifteen thousand pounds of fresh water fish, thousands of lobsters, and, last as always in the procession, one hundred and ninety thousand snails!

The men who accomplish the difficult task of unloading the wagons of food as they arrive from the railroad are appointed to their positions

by the *Préfet of Police*. He makes no further tax upon them morally and physically than that they shall be honest, and able to carry from one end to the other of the market a load weighing *two hundred and forty pounds!* For this formidably hard "job" the remuneration is never less than six hundred dollars, and attains to as much as one thousand dollars, a year.

So much for the technical side of the meat and vegetables that nourish Paris. The picturesque side is more alluring. It begins to show itself about midnight. As one drives homeward from the opera, up the Champs Elysées, one meets an intermittent procession of two-wheeled carts drawn by strong, healthy horses walking at a slow pace and without direction, for the driver has fallen asleep on his high-piled load of vegetables—sometimes a mass of snowy onions, sometimes a wall of orange carrots, sometimes a soft bank of green lettuce leaves. These wagons arrive toward two o'clock at the *Halles*, where their contents are unloaded and sold off at auction to the market-women. On the sidewalk from six until eight o'clock there is a retail sale carried on of the "green goods," which on the stroke of eight must all have vanished from sight. This very early market has no especial interest in itself, but the circumstances which because of it necessitate the night life at the *Halles* are, as we shall see, the cause and occasion of all the dramatic and tragic incidents that occur—and they are many—in the market annals of Paris.

Each "poste," or "stand," under the covered hall has its "lady guardian," or *dame gardeuse*. According to the note which has most appealed to her comrades in her personality or occupation, she receives a nickname. She is *Marie au beurre* (Butter Mary) or *Jambes de Bois* (Wooden Legs) or *Alice au lard* (Bacon Alice) or *Lucie aux plantes* or, if she be irresistible, simply "*La Belle de Nuit*" (The Night Beauty).

Our expression, "she looks like a market-woman," is more or less derogatory, compromising for the subject in question. And, to tell the truth, the "*Dame de la Halle*" has not an over-elegant appearance. Yet there is a certain aristocracy among these women, a certain understanding of the advantages which the right of succession and acquired experience imply.

No money can buy these stands, or "*postes*," which are handed down by right of succession from mother to daughter. If the stout—for she is always stout—*Marie au beurre* have the misfortune to grow old without direct female descendants, her *poste*—oh, calamity!—must be given over to some niece or sister.

Perhaps it is this strict observance of the inheritance laws which has made the *Dames des Halles* so proverbially enthusiastic about the royal family of France. They have, these market-women, aristocratic prejudices, inclinations, and privileges. For centuries it was their

right on happy anniversaries—a royal marriage, a victory over the enemy's armies, the birth of a royal prince—to compliment the king and queen. On New Year's Day a chosen delegation was permitted to carry a bouquet to the royal palace at Versailles, or to the Louvre. Once the "*Dames*" had penetrated to the royal presence, they knelt down and made their compliments in a humble attitude. Then a dinner was offered to them, over which one of the highest officers in the king's household presided. At the free representation given several times a year at the Opéra, Opéra Comique, and Comédie Française, the *Dames des Halles* were offered the courtesy of the royal box.

In spite of all these good graces bestowed upon them, their inclination for the royalty proved not as deep an instinct as that of self-preservation at the opening of the Revolution. Every one remembers their impassioned conduct on the fifth and sixth of October. With General Lafayette among them, they marched out over twelve miles of road from Paris to Versailles, and then before the Chateau, in the Marble Court, they clamored like wild women for the *Boulangère*, the *Boulangère*, and the "*Petit Matron*," which was their vulgarly ironical manner of indicating Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, and the little Dauphin.

But when the Revolution was over and an emperor had again taken possession of the French, the *Dames des Halles* reverted to their former tradition; they called upon and were received by Napoleon I. in the Tuileries. And after the *coup d'état* of December 2, Napoleon III., the "self-made emperor," gave them a splendid ball. Now when any of the should-be rejoicing family of Orléanists pass through Paris the *Dames des Halles* are allowed to precipitate themselves, and to kneel and to compliment, and to present the bouquet.

The only soup-house or restaurant in Paris which is permitted to remain open all night is at the *Halles*, and the reason for its existence is the following: A regulation made by law and strictly observed by the police of Paris prevents any café or restaurant remaining open after two o'clock in the morning. Not only at this hour are the lowest of the "*bouges*," or tenth-rate cafés (which correspond to the Anglo-Saxon saloon), obliged to empty their miserable patrons into the street, but these same wretches, be they homeless and without credit in the free night lodging-houses, are not permitted to make themselves a temporary couch on one of the park benches, or upon the seats that are scattered along the Parisian avenues. They are not even granted shelter under the bridges on the banks of the Seine, for here as elsewhere the policeman finds them out and sends them on their way, to wander eastward toward the morning light. At dawn, in winter or in summer, they may again seat themselves where they will. Doubtless such rigorous rules are made with the endeavor to discourage tramp-

dom. To walk the streets until two in the morning on cold winter nights is hardly an experience that allures one to the profession of the homeless. The government, however, no matter how merciless, makes one generous exception to this law: it has been recognized a necessity at the *Halles* to have an all-night café for the "*porteurs*" and unloaders, the out-of-town traffickers who work there during nocturnal hours without interruption. Any one may patronize this late restaurant, and the youths of golden Bohemia who have danced or made "*la Noce*" into the wee small hours, stop at the market for a bowl of *soupe à l'ail* or a cup of coffee toward dawn. Alphonse Daudet, in his "*Trente Ans de Paris*," relates in a most charming manner his first experience, as a very young man, in breakfasting at the *Halles* after having made "a night of it."

The errand boys, or *garçons des Halles*—under twenty years of age, all of them—are a rather rough lot, of the sort who would die for a friend, but who would just as easily kill some one else for him.

Once in the late summer, when the "season" was over and Paris was "deserted" for those who find its charm to lie in its worldly throngs, I came unexpectedly upon an obscure tragedy which had ended in the death of a certain "*garçon des Halles*." Strolling along the river under the shade of the sycamore trees, I found my recollection of a certain angel Gabriel in the tower of Notre Dame to be drawing me irresistibly back to the *Parvis*, prepared to stand and gaze for a time at the beauty which has traversed generations unmodified. But suddenly a more actual and living beauty attracted me—a girl of twenty, without a hat, in a short gingham frock, with a *crêpe de chine* shawl thrown over her shoulders, her dark hair done low on her neck. She walked with the rapid step of one whose dominant emotion makes her oblivious of all else but the intensity of feeling which impels her toward some end. With her were another girl and a very much older woman, dressed in black, with a small bonnet on her head. The young girl held in her arms a bunch of flowers. And these blossoms, merely by the way they were arranged, and the manner in which they were carried, expressed a grief. Flowers are so easily the accompaniment of festivity, the tribute to some occasion of merry-making, some anniversary of joy. But this bouquet was sinister. It bore the rigid, white aspect of the floral pieces which are offered as a token of parting to those who go on the long, long way.

I followed the girl, who walked rapidly and with the poise of a queen, down the broad street which passes back of Notre Dame, and there on the corner I saw her pause with her companions in front of a café where a group had assembled, a group in black, a group which was the bearer also of other bouquets whose aspect was funereal. Following the gaze of these people, who exchanged embraces while their

eyes remained fixed upon a certain spot, I caught sight, with a swift pang, of the small, low building that stood opposite the café: it was the Morgue. There before the threshold stood a small, meagre hearse of the type which cries out poverty. The sides were draped in white—this emblem of a should-be innocence attributed to all those whom death attacks before they reach the age of twenty-one. For whom did it wait, this narrow, dismal carriage of the dead? For whom did they wait, these men and these women who, hatless and dressed as the very poor are clad, had nevertheless brought flowers and wreaths in tribute to one they loved?

I approached the little flight of steps leading to the "*chambre mortuaire*" in this most sinister of spots. Who was it, who was to be buried thus, without family, without rites of any sort, I asked. And the guardian responded:

"He was a young fellow of twenty—*un garçon des Halles*. He worked at night in the big Central Markets as errand boy. One morning they found him dead. Suicide or murder? No one could tell. The law is ready to take up the matter, but no complaint has been addressed. This young man belonged to a band. He had no family, but his band will avenge him." He showed with a gesture the group who stood over by the door of the café. "They need no recourse to the law. When some night dark enough arrives they will know how and where to drive the knife which will put a swift end to the life of him who, for some jealous reason, has thus despatched into another world the poor young boy of the *Halles*."

While the guardian was speaking, the group of mourners had moved over from the café porch to the sidewalk, where the hearse was stationed. They placed their farewell tributes upon the narrow limits which served as resting-place for one whom they had cherished.

And on the wreaths I read repeatedly the salutation, "To our friend." On one wreath alone, larger than all the rest, I spelled out the letters: "To my friend" (*A mon ami*). Thus did this simple unknown *garçon des Halles*, without a family, possess not only acquaintances who mourned his death, but one among his friends there was who deplored that final parting as the great separation which leaves us aghast, with that agony of heart that cries out against the cruelty of irrevocable absence and the haunting doubt as to a future reunion.

Women of the *Halles*, and men of the *Halles*, be they but the simplest pack carriers, are, like the rich and the very rich, and the poor and the very poor,—human, all of them. Circumstances alter the settings of our lives, but no matter what the class to which we belong, no matter what the benefits or miseries with which chance has accompanied our setting, our joy and our suffering, given our relative capacities, are the same all the world over in kind and in degree.

GRANDFATHER BIXBY, NURSE

By Mary Roberts Rinehart

Author of "Seven Days," "The Man in Lower Ten," etc.

“““THE coast is clear,”” read Grandfather Bixby drowsily.
“““Send two trusty scouts to the cave—”””
“Grandpa,” said the little boy on the bed, suddenly,
“what did you have for dinner?”

“““—and roll the casks of provisions beyond reach of the waves.”
A brushwood fire was soon burning, and from it proceeded an appetizing odor of broiling fish. The castaways——””

“Grandpa!” The boy’s tone was more insistent. “What *did* you have for dinner?”

Grandfather Bixby was wide awake now.

“Dinner!” he exclaimed, as if he heard for the first time. He was thinking hard. “Why, nothing much, Dicky. Meat and potatoes—I forget what else.”

“It smelled like chocolate pudding,” said Dicky wistfully. “And when Norah came up to sit with me while you were at dinner, she said it *was* chocolate pudding.”

“Norah’s a fool,” snapped Grandfather Bixby, putting down his glasses irritably. “There may have been pudding, but it was n’t good pudding, I can tell you that.”

“It does n’t have to be very good for me to like it. Grandpa, were you ever sick on the Fourth of July?”

“Never was well,” maintained the old gentleman stoutly. “Seems to me, when I look back, I ’most always had the mumps or the measles or something. I was a regular Fourth of July croaker.”

Dicky eyed his grandfather suspiciously, but the wrinkled face above the gray dressing-gown was entirely serious. Indeed, Grandfather Bixby, embarking on a sea of mendacity, felt to the full the inexpertness which resulted from seventy years of honesty. To cover his confusion, he rearranged with care the huge American flag that had been draped over the foot of the sick-bed, and stepped back to inspect the result.

“I tell you, it’s fine, Dicky,” he said. “What with that string of

fire-crackers across the foot of the bed, and the flag, and a Roman candle at every corner, you look like a regiment going into action."

"Like a battle-ship," the child supplemented gleefully. "Like father's ship. You're the Admiral, and I'm the Captain. Last Fourth of July father took me to the park, and a rocket-stick came down—biff!—and made a hole in his hat and cut his head a little. Do you remember? And how mother was so scared—for him, you know—that she cried? Grandpa, *when* is my father coming back?"

Grandfather Bixby busied himself at the window, without answering. When the child repeated the question, however, he turned around as if he had just heard.

"Your father?" he repeated to gain time. "Why, he'll be back some time, Dicky. You settle down now; your mother won't let me look after you again if you don't keep quiet."

"But Norah says he won't be back," Dicky persisted. "She said I had lost the best father in the world. My feet got all cold, and I said, 'Was he killed in a battle?' and she said, 'No, he was n't dead, and such a fine-looking young man, too.'"

He stopped, out of breath, and, fortunately for the old man's twitching face, his attention was at that moment distracted. Grandfather Bixby had taken a covered jelly-glass from a tin pail of ice on the window-sill, and held it up for the youngster's eyes to feast on.

"Ice-cream!" he exclaimed, looking around over his glasses for a spoon. "A present from the drug-store man at the corner. He said he missed his best customer." He pulled a chair beside the bed and slipped a pillow under Dicky's head. "I reckon your mother and the doctor would n't object to a little ice-cream."

The first spoonful, guided by his shaking old hand, missed the boy's open mouth and slid into the hollow of his neck, to be mopped up by Grandfather Bixby's pipe-scented handkerchief. The next half-dozen reached their proper destination in short order; then Dicky turned away his head.

"I can't chew it," he explained in a thin but polite voice. "When I shut my teeth it is n't there. If father was here, he would make that old doctor give me something to eat. Everybody does what father says—but mother. She's allowed to do what she likes."

The old man scraped down the cream from the sides of the glass, and his corded fingers were tremulous.

"I guess that's it, Dicky boy," he said. "Your mother's always been allowed to do what she likes, and that is n't good for anybody. Not that it has spoiled her," he supplemented, with hasty loyalty.

The white china clock with the blue windmills on it ticked away cheerfully on the mantel; beside it stood a small locomotive, a wooden mule, and a life-like cow, with a space in her back that lifted out and

allowed milk to be poured in, to be milked out later into diminutive pails. And in a silver frame, surmounted by a blue paper rose which Dicky had made at Kindergarten, was the picture of a young man in a uniform.

Grandfather Bixby stirred the ice-cream into a slushy mass, and looked at the picture. He had never had a son, and this tall young navy officer had been very dear to him. And now he was on the high seas and Helen would not speak of him, although she left his picture in the nursery—for Dicky.

The clock ticked on, and Grandfather Bixby's head drooped on his breast. Then—

"They said perhaps I might have toast to-morrow," came Dicky's voice. "It's almost to-morrow now, or it will be in three hours."

"Three hours and fifteen minutes," said Grandfather Bixby, looking at the clock. "What would your mother say, if she came home and found crumbs in the bed, and your temperature up in the end of the thermometer again?"

"Just a little piece!"

"Ice-cream and toast, and you with nothing but beef tea for six weeks!" But he was plainly wavering. The boy pursued his advantage ruthlessly.

"When you were sick," he pleaded, "did n't I bring you the paper every morning? When you were n't allowed to read?"

Grandfather Bixby looked around him helplessly: then he got up and tied the cord of his dressing-gown.

"You know what your mother would say. I would never hear the end of it," he protested. "Where do they keep the bread?"

After he had gone down the stairs, Dicky lay back with a contented sigh. The window was open, and often there darted across the black emptiness of the night outside a weird streak of golden fire—the stem of some vast glittering plant whose flowering blossom of red and green lights was beyond and above the boy's vision. Now and then, however, one of the fiery petals dropped lower than its fellows, and, swaying with the air, fell slowly, slowly, past.

The smaller noises of the day were gone: only an occasional swish and the soft loom of a bursting rocket remained. And up the stairs from the kitchen came the odor of toasting bread. There was a clatter of dishes, too, as if Grandfather Bixby might be hunting the butter. And then—there was an unmistakable smell of something scorching.

It was some time before the old man came slowly up again. He carried triumphantly before him a plate on which lay a slice of toast. His furrowed cheeks were rosy with the heat of the stove, and he glistened with butter in unexpected spots.

"The way of the transgressor is hard, Dicky," he said. "I will

have to see Norah about the kitchen. I'm afraid I have left it upset—very much upset indeed.”

Dicky ate the toast slowly, discriminatingly, taking very small bites and making them last as long as possible. Never had he dreamed of anything so delectable, so ambrosial; even the slight flavor of scorching seemed to add to its richness. And, watching him, some of the anxiety faded from Grandfather Bixby's face.

“If his temperature *should* go up,” he was arguing to himself, “goodness knows there has been enough noise to-day to do it! That mite of toast would n't hurt anybody.”

Nevertheless, he was relieved when, with all Dicky's parsimony, that last bite was gone. With the empty plate in his hand, he wandered around, looking for some out-of-the-way place where it might pass unnoticed until morning.

“Times change, Dicky,” he reflected aloud. “Here am I, who used to punish that mother of yours when she was a little girl—here am I, scared to death for fear she'll come back and scold me.”

“Did she cry when you walloped her?” Dicky asked, with interest. “Where was I, those days?”

“You were in heaven with the angels.” The old man was somewhat out of his depth. “You—you were pluming your little white wings, so when the time came you could fly straight down to earth.”

Dicky sat up, wide-eyed and shaky.

“Then the doctor told me a whopper,” he asserted. “*He* said I grew in a hollow stump, and he carried me here in a satchel.”

Grandfather Bixby was slightly confused: he paused before the window with the plate in his hand. Had he raised his eyes, he would have seen a man, a tall young man in a boyish soft hat, who was standing across the street, looking eagerly over. At sight of Grandfather Bixby's thin old figure and black skull-cap, the stranger's eyes softened wonderfully. He even took a step forward; then he stopped, and drew himself up.

Grandfather Bixby reached out with the plate; it had just occurred to him that no one would see it if he put it on the sill. Just how it slipped he did not know, but it did, and fell with the peculiar silvery crash of the best china to the walk below. Not only that, but it carried down with it the medicine bottle, left there for coolness.

“The way of the transgressor is hard,” repeated Grandfather Bixby, staring ruefully at the empty sill. “I—I don't know what we will do now. There went your medicine.”

Dicky was not interested. The slice of toast had generated many foot-pounds of energy, and he had secured one of the Roman candles from the bed-post. He held it up in his thin arms and squinted along it. There was a fuse—oh, it was complete, all but the match, and there

were even matches on the bedside table. It is a terrible and lonesome thing to pass a Fourth of July without a fire-cracker or a Roman candle.

Shortly after, the watcher across the street saw the light go down in the sick-room, and a stealthy old gentleman in slippers come out the door and hurry toward the corner drug-store. The young man meant to go away, but there was something about the house across—the house which he had vowed never to enter again—there was something that seemed to hold him. And then—there were strange splutterings and muffled explosions from somewhere. If he had n't known that Helen was with the boy, he would have said that some one was putting off fire-crackers up there.

At that moment, from between the rose-pink curtains sailed a vivid yellow ball of fire. It hung for a second over the quiet street and then fell slowly, dying into a gilded spark. It was followed by another, and yet others, bursting softly from their chrysalis beyond the curtains, speeding out to form a short-lived constellation in the night. The last golden sphere went awry, and lodged in the soft draperies: the gold became red, a thin circle of fire that spread and smoked. With a queer sound, an oath that sounded like a sob, the watcher ran across the street and into the house he had vowed never to enter again.

A young woman with a wistful mouth, something like Dicky's, turned the corner and came up the street. A fleck of yellow fire was dying in the gutter, but she did not notice it, and up above the red circle had faded away. Only a futile spark sped starward to die with myriads of its brothers in the summer sky.

Grandfather Bixby came quickly down the street. It had taken some time, but he had hoped Helen was not home yet. He tip-toed in and went very softly up the stairs, to stand dumfounded in the nursery door.

First of all, the white quilt was covered with brown singed places and scraps of red paper, and all that was left of the rose-pink curtains lay smoking on the hearth. In a big chair sat a young man, with Dicky, in a blanket, on his lap, and on her knees beside the two, with her arms as nearly as possible around them both, was Helen! Helen!

In that moment Grandfather Bixby forgot the ice-cream, the toast, the broken plate, and the spilled medicine. The other things, being a wise man, he ignored.

"That's it! That's it!" he snorted with rampant virtue, from the doorway. "After I spend the whole evening trying to keep that youngster quiet, you two young idiots do your best to put him on his back again."

Some time after he had closed the door, Dicky raised a drowsy head

and interrupted the whisperings of the other two members of the little group.

"What's that?" he asked thickly. From below came stealthily the clinking of broken china on a pan and the cautious swish of a broom. His father only drew him closer, and, leaning across, kissed the young woman on the mouth that was like Dicky's.

"For all I care," he said, "it might be Grandfather Bixby sweeping up the best china."



JULY

By Thomas L. Masson

JULY illustrates a great truth—that you can carry a good thing too far. Not content to stay like June, she insists on rubbing it in, so to speak. Perhaps it is too much to say that her attentions are unbearable; but that they make us restless and inattentive to business is only too true.

And the worst of July is that she has a habit of fooling us; that is to say, she makes it imperative that we give up our present settled habits and go somewhere else, and how often it is that somewhere else is disappointing!

And yet, on the other hand, how many splendid opportunities she gives us! Hand in hand with her we may climb mountains, swim in the sea, and scorn the baser coverings of winter.

July is the month of freedom. Who cares for responsibilities now? Who cares for stern duty or the call of conscience? Politicians and saints, the rich and the poor, have all of them more of the same setting than they did have.

Perhaps the most unkind thing one can say of July is that it is the homeless month. It tries, however, to make up to us from its own gift bag what it withholds in the way of genuine nourishment and home comforts; it gives us balmy airs, and still holds up to our gaze the picture that June painted for us, albeit somewhat faded and burned—not so vivid as it was.

July also in her own individual manner begins to tug at our purse-strings. She shoes away our responsibilities and invites us out into the open to have it out with our desires.

No matter what the cost is, July is importunate. She will have her way in spite of everything.

THE TOSS

By A. R. Goring-Thomas

TWO men and one woman, all three unknown to one another, were waiting for Desdemona Deane in Desdemona's small drawing-room. Each one of them had been bidden to come to tea with Desdemona on Thursday; not to be a minute after four, because Desdemona must have a long talk with them or die, and she was dining with the Pote at six. It was Thursday afternoon, and the time was 4:35.

The fat man sitting in an arm-chair by the window observed to the others that Desdemona had already lost thirty-five minutes' soulful conversation with each of them, which, reckoned non-concurrently, meant the loss of one hundred and five minutes' ecstasy. He suggested that she was dead of chagrin. The other two laughed pleasantly.

"She has probably forgotten," said the woman, a handsome person with a presence. "Forgetting is one of Mona's charms," she added.

Then they lapsed into silence and wondered about one another.

The other man, a long, thin fellow with glossy black hair and a poetic eye, broke the silence. "I think I hear her in her room," he said. "She is probably diving desperately into her pretties as we speak, and will burst upon us like a vision in a minute or two."

Desdemona Deane, in a spotless white dress and with her blue eyes alight, her hair a perfect basket of careful curls and blue ribbons, burst into the room as he spoke.

"You dear, delightful people!" cried Desdemona enthusiastically. "How charming it is to see you again! I hope you haven't been waiting long. I've been with Margaret Brains Sullivan." No one knew who Margaret Brains Sullivan was, and Desdemona did not enlighten them. "The poor, dear thing," she continued, "is just demented with her teeth, and as she is frightened out of her senses at the bare idea of seeing a dentist, I had to stay with her and comfort her a bit. She's a most delightful creature, and as witty as the Pote here"—pointing to the long man with the poetic eye—"when he's warmed his wits with a pint of wine. Margaret was groaning with the agony of that tooth when she says, 'The difference,' says she, 'be-

tween going to the dentist and the devil is that it's cheaper and pleasanter to go to the devil.' That's true. And the next time I have any bridge-work done in me mouth—and there's a small fortune there already—I won't go to me Philadelphy gentleman in Harley Street, but I'll consult a civil engineer. Now, *do* say I did n't keep you all waiting, and who'll have tea?"

She poured out the tea without waiting for any reply, and continued talking. "Hilda," she said to the woman with the presence, "I have n't seen you for ages, dear. What are you doing now? Resting?"

"Yes. I was in the cast of 'Scoffing Jenny,' but that devil Mrs. Tim humbugged me over that stupid comedy of Lady May East's, and I gave the part up."

"What a shame! And it is such a success, too!"

"Where you in Lady East's play? I don't remember seeing you," said the Poet.

"Mrs. Tim—you know how charming she can be when she likes—came to me and implored me to take a part in Lady East's play, a part that would exactly suit me, she said, and I told her I was cast for 'Scoffing Jenny' on tour, and she said that though 'Scoffing Jenny' was certainly very vulgar, it was too really funny to be a success in the Provinces, and that, any way, Lady May East had made a bet that she would write and produce a play in a fortnight, and Mrs. Tim must have an answer at once. So I went to the rehearsals."

"A fortnight over *that* play!" said Desdemona. "I could map out a play like that while I was brushing my hair!"

"And do it better, my dear," the actress assured her, "for everything in 'The Stolen Goloshes' was hopelessly wrong. No lines, you know, and everybody wondering where their places were on the stage, and wandering about all over the place. Of course it was a society thing, and Mrs. Tim was wafted about supported by Lords and Countesses. We were rehearsing one afternoon. She was sitting in the stalls surrounded by Society. Suddenly she screamed out my name. 'Miss Hilda Scott,' she screamed, 'you play that part with the finesse of an aged cow.' I stopped and stared at the woman, I was so taken aback. 'Of course you can't help being so plain,' she went on, 'but plain people on the stage ought to have charm. You are quite without charm, Miss Hilda Scott.'"

"Mrs. Tim is a beast to other women. What did you do?"

"I just walked off the stage and out of the stage-door, which is exactly what Mrs. Tim wanted me to do."

"Why?"

"Lady May East wanted the part herself."

"We want a theatrical union," said the Poet. "What with actor-

managers and wealthy amateurs flooding the profession, a real actor is a very rare bird."

"Yes. And call it 'The Slaves' Protection Society'!"

"It's me birthday," said Desdemona, "and the Pote here sent me some verses by the morning post. The loveliest things you ever heard in your life! He says every year is a hill which affords the world a fresh view of me charms and adds a fresh delight to the beauties behind me. Sweet idea, isn't it? So when he looks around me he's bewildered by me many delightful prospects. The fellow is distracted about me, and it's the light of me lovely eye that inflames his genius for him. I can't remember the lines. I'd read them to you only they're reposing next to me heart, and me dress fastens up at the back. Pote, recite your verses!"

"For heaven's sake, spare me, Desdemona!" said the Poet fervently.

"Don't call me Desdemona like that"—she imitated his precise, careful speech—"with your dreadful English accent making bullets of every syllable! It makes me feel like the lady who took a header into the freezing streams of the land of Denmark. Make it Italian. *Dez-day*, then let your tongue go at a mild gallop over the *monah*." She tossed her head brightly. "Pronounced like it goes better with me coiffure and the ribbons!"

At this moment the maid brought in a telegram.

Desdemona screamed at its contents: the scream was perfectly controlled and quite melodious. "It's from George Craig. He says he has been the happiest man on earth since Sunday, and he's coming in to tea. The ridiculous creature! What shall I do with him?"

"Since Sunday?" said the Poet.

"I went out on the river with him last Sunday," said Desdemona.

"Who was with you?" asked the Poet.

The fat man and the actress looked at each other. Each hoped to find in the other an information bureau.

Desdemona laughed gaily, but her blue eyes calmly measured the Poet. "It was the loveliest day I ever had on the river in me whole life," she said. "The sun shone, the birds were singing, and George Craig in his flannels was perfectly lovely. I had to be sweet to him."

"And," said the Poet icily, "was any one with you?"

"No. Another would have spoilt the effect. The day was so lovely; I wanted the creature to be happy. Of course I said things. I always do, you know. I love him, and you, Pote, and eight other men besides. If I could marry the whole ten of you, I'd be the happy and contented woman. But if I married any one of you, I'd just be hankering after the other nine the first week of the honeymoon. It's the literary temperament I've got. I get it from me grandfather,

who was Dean of Cork and the greatest literary character Ireland ever produced."

The fat man and the actress rose together. "Must you both go?" asked Desdemona Deane. "And are you going, too?" she asked the Poet, and the inquiry was clearly a veiled request.

"No," he said positively, and leaned back in his chair.

"George Craig will be here in a minute," she said to her two departing guests. "You leave me like the apple of discord suspended on a string, with two hungry school-boys getting ready to eat me."

As the door closed, the Poet said sternly, "I wish you would occasionally remember that you are engaged to marry me."

"Am I?" said Desdemona critically.

"Do behave with a little common-sense, after five years——"

"There's nothing commonplace about me," protested Desdemona. "I'm Irish."

"Will you be serious?"

"I paid me bills last Monday, and I've no occasion to be serious for a whole month to come! Besides, it's me birthday!"

The Poet put his head in his hands. The door opened and admitted Mr. George Craig. Desdemona seized him by both hands. "I'm delighted to see you!" she cried. "Here's the poor Pote, green as Old Ireland with jealousy, because of you. Tea? Two lumps of sugar and plenty of milk. See how I remember your tastes. Well, you think I'm engaged to you, and the Pote says I'm engaged to him. You'll have to settle it somehow between ye."

Mr. Craig, a fair, fresh, manly-looking fellow, flushed painfully. "But you are engaged to me," he said hurriedly.

"She has been engaged to me for at least five years," observed the Poet.

Mr. George Craig stared angrily at the speaker. "This lady is engaged to me," he said positively. "I don't know who you are," he said to the Poet. His tone made it offensively clear that he did not want to know. "You can't go back on what you said to me last Sunday at Bourne End," he said to Desdemona. "You remember you said——"

"Tut! tut!" cried Desdemona quickly. "Sunday is years ago! You can't expect a lady to remember all she said on a fine Sunday the Thursday after! I love ye both, so you'd better toss up for me."

"Really, Desdemona," said the Poet sharply, "this is past a joke!"

"I don't like your tone, sir," said young Mr. Craig savagely. Desdemona saw him clench his hand, and she knew he was longing to use his fists on the poet. She gave him a quick glance of admiration.

"Come," she cried gaily, "it's the only way out of it. I'm pre-

pared to marry either of ye this very minute and so make both of ye miserable for the rest of your lives—which ye richly deserve! Come! I'll toss, and the Pote shall cry."

"Really, Desdemona——" expostulated the Poet.

"What is it? Do you say 'heads'?"

"No, tails," said the Poet sulkily.

"Tails it is. And that's one to you, Pote. What is it? 'Tails' again?"

"No, heads."

"Then it is n't. And that's one to you, George Craig. For the third and last time, what is it?"

"Heads."

"And so it is, and you win, Pote."

"Then may I hope——" began the Poet severely.

"You may hope nothing," interrupted Desdemona, "for I'm not having you at all."

"I don't understand you," said the Poet helplessly.

"Don't I know that?" said Desdemona. "Is n't that the nut you break your teeth on? Can't you remember I'm an Irish woman? If you'd had a grain of sense, you would have lost that toss!"

"Then," said George Craig, the cloud clearing from his face, "may I——"

"You may kiss my hand," said Desdemona, holding out a beautiful, slim, white hand.

The two looked at her blankly. "Where are we?" asked young Craig.

"Sure, I don't know," said Desdemona, radiantly smiling, "but there's a tube round the corner that will take you anywhere in reason. Any way, I must go and dress, for I'm going to dine to-night with me friend the Juke, for he's the only man of me acquaintance that gives me a reliable brand of champagne with me dinner. Go away, for I've to get into me new pink silk sheath, and it takes me a good half-hour to wriggle into it, and when I'm safely enveloped in that blessed garment I have to deny myself half me lawful dinner for fear of accidents. Go away with you, now!"

"I thought you were dining with me to-night?" said the Poet.

"Then I'm not, for I'm dining with me friend the Juke. 'A jug of wine and thou,' me dear fellow, is not my idea of a birthday feast. Good-by, and come and have tea with me next Thursday to the minute of four o'clock!"

She watched the men down the stairs and out of the street door. "Potes are all very well," she said, "but they need n't be bears. He's the dear little fellow, is George Craig! But I'm old enough to be his—aunt!"

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

By Elsie Singmaster

SUSAN EHRHART stood at the kitchen sink, washing dishes and crying. Her tall, muscular figure shook, the tears ran, unchecked, down her face, and the little house was filled with the sound of her voice. She cried as one who knows no shame, as if she did not care if all Millerstown or all Lehigh County or all the world heard her.

"I am going right aways home to my Mom."

She listened for an instant, as if expecting a response; but none came, unless the regular tap, tap, tap, of a shoemaker's hammer somewhere in the neighborhood could be called an answer. Indeed, as she listened, it seemed to lose for a second its regularity and become animate, telegraphic, intelligible. The taps became shorter, they rose in a crescendo to a single loud stroke, then they went on evenly. It was as if they said:

"I don't care if you do."

Susan finished her dishes, dried her hands, and put on her sun-bonnet and shawl. Then she opened the door and went out.

"I am going right aways home to my Mom," she announced to the quiet night.

The taps went on evenly. Susan walked across the yard to a little shop.

"I am going right aways home to my Mom."

When there was still no verbal answer, she lifted her hand and beat, not upon the door, but upon the wooden wall beside it. She heard the wild clatter of a thousand shoe-nails falling to the floor, as the boxes toppled from the shelf within, then an angry exclamation.

Without going in, she went out the road toward Zion Church. It was not long after sunset, and there was still a faint gray light in the west, against which the roadside trees stood out dimly, and by which Susan, if she had cared, might have picked her way through the mud. The cold March wind blew upon her back. As she plodded along, bowed and bent, she looked like a work-worn peasant. She might have posed for Millet. But in free, Pennsylvania German America, it was not necessary to suffer her wrongs silently. As she went she cried aloud:

"I am going right aways home to Zion Church to my Mom."

A stranger coming to Millerstown and meeting Sarah Ann Mohr or old man Fackenthal, or indeed almost any one of her citizens, would have said that the Pennsylvania Germans were kindly, hospitable folk, a little given to gossip, perhaps, but possessing in the main many more virtues than faults. Any one who met only Samuel Ehrhart, on the other hand, would be likely to say that the Pennsylvania Germans were sordid, parsimonious, and disagreeable. Samuel's character was enough to prejudice the observer against his whole race.

How he had won Susan, no one in Millerstown knew. She was not handsome, she had stooping shoulders and a long thin face, and she was six inches taller than her husband. But surely she must have had at least one better chance! And, lacking that, would it not have been better for her to stay forever in her father's house? Samuel's aunt had looked curiously at her as she stood before the stove in Samuel's kitchen, manufacturing a delicious meal out of the small rations which Samuel allowed.

"Susan," she said, the words bursting from her as if they could no longer be restrained, "Susan, what did you want with Samuel? Did you like him?"

Susan did not answer. Instead, she had looked down at Samuel as he came in from the shop. He might have been a tenderly loved child or a treasured jewel. Then she looked at his aunt as if words were powerless to express her emotion. To Susan, Samuel was then still the most wonderful person in the world.

"Like him!" her eyes seemed to say. "Who could help liking him?"

Samuel had gazed uneasily at his aunt as he came in. She rose at once.

"Never mind, Sammy. I'm not going to stay for dinner. Don't you think it!"

"*Ach*, but won't you stay once?" urged Susan. "That is——"

Samuel's aunt saw the swift frown of disapproval, and the bride's amazement, then her prompt and tender look of obedience. This time her voice was sarcastic.

"Don't be frightened, Sammy. I'm going home."

Millerstown watched the couple for a month with wonder and amusement. Then Elias Bittner reported to old man Fackenthal that they had quarrelled.

"What about?" asked old man Fackenthal.

"About insurance. Susan, she has been paying on insurance eight years already, and Samuel, he won't pay no more because he says it is nothing in the Bible from insurance, and he don't believe in making money off of dead bodies."

Old man Fackenthal laughed.

"Samuel would n't give nothing for the graveyard fence because it don't say nothing in the Bible from graveyard fences. Don't he know he will get the money after Susan is dead?"

"He says he don't trust no insurance company."

"But she will lose all the money she has already paid in."

"Well! It is n't his money."

"What did Susan do?"

"She cried and went home to her Mom. But Ellie Benner says she don't believe she said anything to her Mom, or her Mom would n't 'a' let her come back. Her Mom is spunkier than she. Ellie says Susan must just 'a' told her Mom that she came home to visit once a little."

Three times Susan had gone home. The second time it was because Samuel scolded her for inviting her former "company girl" to stay overnight.

"Do you want to land me in the poor-house, with company all the time?" asked Samuel.

The third quarrel arose when Samuel accused her of having pared the potatoes wastefully.

"I saw your potato-peelings in the bucket," he scolded. "Don't you know how to peel potatoes better than that, say!"

Each time, as Millerstown suspected, Susan had not told her mother the real reason for her coming. She cried loudly when she started; but it was three miles to Zion Church, and one may cry away the worst of griefs in that distance. By the time her journey was over, she always thought better of her rage.

Samuel was not at all disturbed. He never doubted that she would return, and in the meantime she was being fed at her father's table, and his own supplies would last longer. He thought sometimes that Susan ate a great deal, but he consoled himself by remembering that she worked a great deal also. He did not believe that this last quarrel was any worse than the others. It had begun when Susan suggested buying flower-seeds for the garden.

"Flower-seeds!" cried Samuel.

"Why, yes. A few such sweet-peas and sturtians, and a few others to it yet. They only cost five cents a package."

"Five cents! Think of the flour you could buy till you have a few packages!"

Susan reluctantly yielded.

"Well, I guess I can get a few seeds from my Mom—if she kept any this year. She thought once she would buy her altogether new ones."

"I don't like flowers," declared the surly Samuel. "They take up

too much room; they are only a nuisance. And think of all you could do while you are working at flowers!"

"But I must have my flowers, I must have my flowers!" Susan had a way of insisting over and over upon things when she was excited. "I cannot get along without flowers. I must have my flowers."

Samuel looked up at her.

"You are not now any more at home," he reminded her. "You will not have any flowers."

"It won't cost nothing," pleaded Susan.

"Yes, it will. It will cost room and time. I know how it goes with flowers."

Susan burst into tears. There never was a human being who cried more easily than Susan.

"I am going home to my Mom. I am going right aways home to my Mom to Zion Church to stay."

Samuel thought of the supply of pies and cakes.

"You can go," he said.

Susan's mother was just winding the clock as she walked into the kitchen. Every one else in the house had gone to bed. Mrs. Haas was a short, enormously fat woman, who in spite of her breadth looked younger than her daughter.

"Why, Susan!" she cried. "My, but I am glad to see you! But where is your man? And what is the matter that you are crying?"

Susan's woes burst forth at sound of the kind voice.

"I come home to stay always," she wailed. "Please let me stay always. He is mean to me. He will not let me have flowers, he would not let me have any company girl overnight, he will not pay the insurance that Pop paid always for me, he——"

Mrs. Haas sat heavily down in the kitchen rocking-chair.

"*Um Gotteswillen!*" she cried. "Is it true?"

"Yes, it is true," sobbed Susan. "It is all true. When I came home before, it was each time something wrong. I thought I would try it again. But now I cannot try it again."

"No," said her mother firmly; "I guess you will not try it again. I guess I and your Pop can keep you. You can go now to bed, Susan, in your own bed like always, and I will bring you a little garden tea, and to-morrow we will go and fetch your things."

Samuel looked up calmly from his shoemaker's bench the next morning when Susan came in. He had not expected her back so soon.

"Well?" he grinned.

He heard Susan's answering sob, then a sharper voice. Susan's portly mother pushed her away into the shop.

"I thank the Lord I have this chance to tell you how mean you are, Samuel Ehrhart," she said. "We are here to fetch Susan's clothes."

No mean, stingy man need take care of my children, that is all I have to say, and my children need n't work for such a mean, stingy man."

"B-but——"

Mrs. Haas would not let him go on.

"I and Susan are going to get her things. You can come along to see that we don't get anything of your trash."

Samuel got awkwardly to his feet, dropping the shoes from his leather-aproned lap. He forgot that he had carefully arranged a patch, economically cut from a tiny bit of leather, and that it would be difficult to get it into position again.

"B-but——" he began.

Mrs. Haas slammed the door and was gone. His shoe-nails fell clattering to the floor, but he did not hear. He grew suddenly pale. He knew Susan's value. He had never dreamed that it would be possible to live so cheaply as they had since her advent. She did not only her own work, but she was beginning to wash and clean for the neighbors. He had looked forward to the day when she would become as much of a wage-earner as himself. Perhaps it would have been better to let her have a few flowers. He followed Mrs. Haas over to the house.

Susan sat by the kitchen table. He saw with relief that she was still crying. Susan would be easy to manage.

"Susan——" he began.

Susan's mother appeared at the door of the cupboard with a sauce-pan in her hand.

"Oh, you came to watch, did you? Well, this is Susan's. You can't say it is n't, for I gave it to her."

Samuel stood in the doorway, fingering his apron.

"Susan——" he began again.

Mrs. Haas thrust the sauce-pan beneath his nose.

"It is Susan's, or is n't it Susan's?"

"Yes," he faltered; "it is Susan's."

"Well, then," said Mrs. Haas. She added it to a pile of pans and dishes on the table. "You'd better look a little over those things. Perhaps it is some of yours there." Her eyes dared him to claim any of them. "Now I am going upstairs. Come, Susan."

But Susan did not move. She was too spent with grief. Her mother patted her arm.

"Then stay right there, Susan."

Samuel's eyes brightened. He swiftly determined to say a few things to Susan. But they must be said to her alone.

"Susan," he began, "you can have——"

Mrs. Haas's foot was on the step. She heard the whisper and looked back. She saw that the least bit of Susan's cheek was visible.

"You come with me," she commanded Samuel sternly. "I don't want it said that I took any of your things. I guess I know what I gave Susan when she got married, and I don't believe she got much since, but you come once along and see."

Samuel went with a backward glance. He grew each moment more terrified. He thought that he might promise her more than the flowers. She might keep some of the chicken money.

Mrs. Haas opened the door of the closet in Susan's room. She held up a red petticoat.

"I suppose this is Susan's?"

Samuel was too perturbed to smile.

"Perhaps Susan don't want her things taken away," he ventured timidly.

Mrs. Haas refused to see his meaning.

"I don't know why you would want any left here," she said scornfully. "You could n't wear them. You may be saving, Samuel Ehrhart, but you are not that saving. Is this Susan's?"

"Y-yes," stammered Samuel. The article in question was Susan's hat.

"And this?" It was Susan's best dress.

Samuel had edged toward the door.

"I have something to tend downstairs," he explained. "I must put the draught on for dinner."

"All right," answered Mrs. Haas promptly. "I will go along with you. Here, you can take these clothes of Susan's, and I will take the rest. You can put them on the table, with the other things, then we can pack them in the wagon."

"You might—might—st-stay for dinner."

Mrs. Haas's laughter echoed through the house. "To dinner! When you would n't have Susan's company girl overnight. I guess not!"

Samuel reluctantly picked up an armful of clothes, the familiar gray wrappers and blue skirts. They were so long that they trailed behind him down the steps, and his mother-in-law bade him sharply to gather them up.

Susan had apparently not moved. But the fire was burning brightly, and the tea-kettle was bubbling. Samuel's eyes brightened. Susan's mother also saw the steaming kettle.

"Susan, help me to carry these things to the wagon," she commanded sharply.

Susan lifted her long, tear-stained face. She was crying again like a child, without any attempt to wipe away the tears.

"Ach, Mom," she wailed. "I do not think I am going along with you home."

Mrs. Haas paused, confounded. She stood still, her arms round the bundle of clothes, which was as large as herself.

"Not going along with me home!"

"No, I think I will stay here, Mom."

"You 'think you will stay here, Mom'!" In her amazement she repeated her daughter's words.

"Yes," said Susan. It might have been Samuel's evident fright and repentance which moved her, it might have been the touch of the familiar tea-kettle. "I think I will stay here, Mom."

The bundle of clothes slid from Mrs. Haas's arms!

"You said he would n't let you have any flowers!"

"Yes, Mom."

"You said he scolded you for peeling the potatoes too thick!"

"Yes, Mom."

"You said he made you give up the insurance what your Pop paid, always, so you could have a little something when you are old!"

"Yes, Mom."

"Well, then! Are you crazy?"

Samuel came a step nearer. He still held his bundle; the wrappers and petticoats trailed again about his feet.

"You can have the flowers if you want to, Susan. And you can have a quarter—*ach*, I mean a half of the chicken money, Susan, and——"

Mrs. Haas cut him short.

"Do you believe him, Susan? Do you believe him for a minute?"

Susan hesitated. His words sounded sweet in her ears, but she could not say that she believed them.

"Then come home," commanded her mother, stooping to pick up the clothes.

Susan hid her face in her arms.

"I can't go home, Mom. I can't help it. I know he is mean, Mom. But I can't help it! The whole trouble is—I—I—like him!"

And, with a final wail, Susan took off her sunbonnet, and sought her gingham apron, hanging upon its accustomed hook.



TWO CHILDREN

BY CHARLES L. O'DONNELL

NAMES do but mock you while they greet;
 Sweetness and Light you are,—
 The light beyond all saying sweet;
 The sweetness, like a star.

THE TRIUMPH OF JIM'S DAD

By James William Jackson

“**W**HAT'S wrong, Dad? Did Mother forget to put pie in your dinner-pail?”

Michael Burke grunted disconsolately as his son Jimmy caught up with him outside the big gates of the Crown Woollen Mills, homeward bound.

Throng of Crown operatives elbowed the white-bearded engineer and his boy as they threaded their way through the factory yard and a narrow alley, between many-storied, silenced buildings, to the street beyond. A well-dressed girl whose business it was to mend cloth pushed by on one side, a shirt-sleeved and begrimed picker-room hand jostled them on the other, while a couple of coltish lads celebrated their freedom from a long day's restraint by reckless racing. A belated whistle or two out in the maze of mills and chimneys sounded the six o'clock quitting-time.

Michael stalked on grimly. “Flanagan was in the engine-room this afternoon,” he finally vouchsafed, in an aggrieved tone. “He tells me I'm to lose me engine next pay-day.”

A stranger might have felt instant sympathy; but the loss of his place would not be nearly so much of a hardship to Michael Burke as his despondent tones implied. He had been thrifty and a hard worker all his life, and there was enough laid by now to take care of him and of Jimmy's mother. As a matter of fact, the boy had often urged his father to give up work and take life easy. But every suggestion of that nature was regarded by his father as impertinent, and but brought the young man the promise of a “licking.” Such promises had never yet been kept, and at times it seemed that Jimmy set himself perversely to earn the threatened chastisement by taking honest advantage of opportunity.

“You're getting old, Dad; and the firm knows it,” he softly observed, a quizzical smile on his face.

Michael just saved his dinner-pail from being carried off to some distant goal by a pair of rushing youngsters. Then he turned a rebuking face toward his stalwart son. “Shame on ye!” he retorted. “That's what Flanagan said. And me only sixty-nine!”

"Well, any way, Dad," Jimmy persisted, as they swung into the home street, "you won't cut that long beard of yours, you know. The firm's afraid you'll get it caught in the fly-wheel some day. You know how the lint gets on your spectacles."

"I'll lay you across me knee in a minute, Jimmy," Michael threatened wrathfully, as he combed out the cherished appendage with fond fingers.

Jimmy stepped aside so that his father might precede him into the front yard. Then, hurrying ahead, half laughingly, he offered the old man his pretendedly solicitous assistance up the front stoop. He was sufficiently wary, however, to dodge the cuff which Michael aimed at his ear.

Mrs. Burke was apparently more in sympathy. She accorded her husband some of the consolation which Jimmy refused to give. Michael grunted restfully under the influence of her cheering words and the unquenchable optimism that radiated from her beaming face.

Jimmy, meanwhile, used up his traditional rope by inches.

"You'll have lots of time now, Dad," he suggested, "to trade tales down at the grocery—you and old Pete Jones. 'Tween times you can walk up and down the block. I'll buy you a cane."

That was a fine bit of torture, for Michael had never carried a cane, and he resented the implication of approaching decrepitude. But Jimmy persisted:

"I'll fetch your tobacco home when you're not able to go after it; and I'll help you pick out a nice, shady——"

Michael picked up a sugar-bowl and poised it menacingly.

"If you was going to say cimitry lot, Jimmy," he warned, "change yer mind whilst there's time."

"That dish you're handling so recklessly is one of Mother's wedding presents, Dad," Jimmy admonished, his sober tone bringing a little color to the old man's face. "I was talking about a nice, shady place to sit on the porch."

Mrs. Burke now interposed, whereat Jimmy, having finished his coffee, came around behind her chair and punished her with an affectionate bear-hug.

After supper the old man squared about in his arm-chair until he could put his stockinged feet upon the settle. From time to time he snorted out his irritation in fragmentary ejaculations. He seemed to turn the pages of his paper not so much to find news as to find a more satisfactory snorting place.

"It's not because there's any lack of work," he burst out suddenly once, swinging around a little and peering at his wife and son over his gold-rimmed Christmas spectacles—"not with that new mill going up on the other side of the canal, mind ye."

Jimmy chuckled softly; but, of course, that might have been due to something richly humorous in the book he was reading.

Not until bedtime did the old man again refer to the matter so near his heart.

"See here, Jimmy," he begged then, and his tone was the wheedling one of a man with an axe to grind. "Will you speak a word for me at the office? You're a good engineer, and the firm likes ye. They'd listen to ye respectful, at least."

Jimmy shook his head. He put the book away on the shelf beside the clock, and indulged in an aggravating yawn.

Michael looked him fairly in the eye as he came forward. The old man had a lighted lamp in his hand, and one suspender loop was already dangling at his side.

"Won't ye do as I ask, Jimmy?" he pleaded, lifting the light a little higher. "Won't ye help me to keep me engine?"

The reiterated shake of Jimmy's head was very definite. Michael accepted it as final. "Well, then," he declared in solemn tones, as he turned dejectedly toward the stairs, "me and your mother'll move where I can get another engine. We've never been separated yet, boy; and I was countin' on a new bay-window in the parlor when you brought Mary Boyle——"

Jimmy put his arms around the old man's shoulders from behind, caught up the soft white beard in his two hands, and with it gently, laughingly, smothered the sentence.

Michael did not respond to Jimmy's affectionate good-night; nor, the next morning, did he acknowledge his son's breakfast greeting. A dozen little attentions failed to trap the old man into his wonted kindness.

Mrs. Burke dubiously watched her husband start off for the mills; then she turned a beseeching glance upon her son. But Jimmy was something of a wizard. With an arm around his mother's waist, he made a half-score words bring back the cheer into her face before he kissed her good-by.

Michael would have nothing to say as Jimmy hurried up with the dinner-pails, both of which he always insisted upon carrying down each morning. Not a single one of the young man's humorous efforts brought so much as a twitch to his father's lips.

They separated at the gates; for Jimmy's engine was in the upper part of the north mill, while Michael's course lay along the south drive. To Jimmy's pleasant good-morning Michael made no response.

The two often saw each other during the day; but the old man always turned his back stoically. Jimmy hesitated. He was half-mindful, apparently, to capitulate for the sake of his father's smile.

In his own engine-room Michael went about his duties with the

precision of forty years' training. Superintendent Flanagan came in for a moment after the big wheel started and the machinery settled down for the day's work.

"What was you thinking of doing when you get through with the old machine, Mike?" he asked pleasantly.

"Never you mind," Michael retorted shortly. "If you're expecting to be discharged at the same time, you need n't think I'll recommend you where I'm going."

Michael and Flanagan were good old friends, though the superintendent's bantering bade fair to earn him the treatment already meted out to Jimmy.

The old engineer watched his big belt jealously, putting his cheek near to it from time to time, studiously. At half past ten he telephoned the office, and under instructions stopped the engine. There had been high water in the river for a few days, and the bottom of the wheel-pit was six feet below the present water level. The seeping flood had already reached the belt. Michael caught the first warning drop flung off by the fast flying band. Many a younger and more careless man would have gone on until his snapped belt had wrought consternation and havoc on the floor above.

After the pumps were working Michael decided to go up the alley and find out how Jimmy's pit was faring. Of course he would n't ask Jimmy; the firemen across the alley would know.

A dozen feet from his son's engine-room the old man passed the manager. Michael bowed as gracefully as his feelings would permit; but he could not forget that this was the official who accounted a man too old because of a white beard.

The manager returned the greeting genially, quite as if he had no recollection of planning any shameful deed.

Michael avoided even a look into Jimmy's room. With his face toward the fires across the way, he could hear the rhythmic throb of his son's big fly-wheel. He nodded proudly: Jimmy was a good engineer.

A half-dozen men, stripped to the waist and black-enamelled with coal-dust, were shovelling fuel into the dozen fires, one after the other. Nodding to the nearest, Michael was about to ask a question when suddenly he felt a heavy, trembling jar. There was a terrific explosion, and the ground beneath him seemed to lift cleanly and drop. The boiler house swayed back and forth, and there was a furious, insistent hissing.

With a yell of terror, the firemen scurried wildly for the river door. But Michael turned like a flash and faced a white, advancing wall of steam, a pallid balloon filled with the sound of serpents. His face, still quivering from the shock, went as white as the steam.

"My boy!" he ejaculated.

Somewhere within that engine-room—a caldron now—was Jimmy. If the lad had not been struck by the flying head of a burst cylinder, or by the fragments of an exploding steam main, he must have been instantly enveloped in the deadly vapor.

Michael heard a medley of frightened yells and then sounds of running around and above him. Terrified operatives were in panic retreat; and a wild screeching of belts and pulleys indicated that costly machines had been recklessly left to wreak upon themselves the damage of flattened cams and jammed mechanism.

The old engineer dashed across the alley. He knew better than to face the steam upright. On his hands and knees he crawled swiftly through the hot cloud into Jimmy's engine-room, which was as familiar to him as his own.

He was in an agony of anxiety concerning his boy. But the engine was still running and must be stopped. The continuous screaming of the machines was costly music. Chokingly and half-blindly, Michael groped his way over the floor. Finally he stood erect, seized control of the giant engine, and turned off the power.

It had taken him only a moment to wriggle into the engine-room and another moment to shut off the steam. He was searching for Jimmy even before the machinery came to a stop. He crawled around the floor with the mad eagerness of a dog on the scent. His eyes smarted, his long beard dragged before him, and the high-temperated bath sapped his physical strength as rapidly as his despair mounted.

"Jimmy, my boy!" he moaned. "The Lord forgive me I did n't speak to ye!"

Soon the certainty was borne in upon him that Jimmy had been hurled up through the belt shaft by the force of the explosion.

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" he called, half sobbingly.

"Here I am, Dad!" came a voice from the doorway, and the next instant Jimmy himself, on hands and knees, bumped heads with his father.

Out of the enervating vapor bath, out in the alley where there was air to breathe, Jimmy found a seat for his father on the noon hour log. Then he mopped the moisture from the old man's face. A few persons were coming forward now cautiously, but Michael seized the moment of privacy still left to them to whisper:

"Forgive me, Jimmy."

The boy squeezed his father's hand comfortingly. "You took it all too seriously, Dad," he explained. "It was Flanagan's joke—he made me promise to help. Mr. Porter is talking about giving me the new engine beyond the canal. You are to have mine. It's better than yours, any way."

Mr. Porter, the manager, was one of those who came forward. He commended Michael warmly for stopping the machinery so quickly, and accounted for Jimmy's absence by the explanation that he had sent him out to inspect some shafting just before the explosion.

"You're all there yet, Mike," he admitted admiringly. "I was thinking of giving your boy the machine across the canal, but you deserve that promotion, and you shall have it."

A little later Michael and Jimmy had a moment to themselves.

"See here, Dad," Jimmy begged, with a sly grin, "will you speak a word at the office to help me get the new engine they partly promised me? You're a good engineer, and the firm likes you. They'd listen to ye respectful, at least."

For the first time in nearly twenty-four hours the old man laughed.

"Jimmy boy," he warned, "if ye don't mind yer own business and be content, I'll take ye across me knee!"



FOLKS

By Ellis O. Jones

WE are all striving to rise above the condition of mere folks. That's what we are doing when we spend hours with tailors and dressmakers, when we lucubrate for diplomas, when we scramble for titles, offices, culture, wealth, honor, fame, and, finally, for an extra long line of carriages leading up to a mammoth tombstone.

But it can't be done. Pigs is pigs. Monkeys is monkeys. Folks is folks. We look upon the picture of some proud leader of fashion of the past, and we laugh—laugh at them all. We may head a parade down Fifth Avenue, only to go home and be scolded by our wife for not having mailed a letter. We may have made our pen fit the complicated lock of literature, only to be insulted by a bill-collector for being asked to call again. We may think we have reached the pinnacle where we can annex the appellation "superman," only to be compelled to give references to the elusive cook at the employment agency.

Folks is folks. Novels may be written about noblemen. Utopias may be devised by idealists. Some great name may be invested with all the beatific qualities of a deity, but when we get up close, take the Honorable Soandso's by the hand, and look them in the eye, we find they are all folks, just folks.

THE CLEVERNESS OF MRS. BLAND

By Catharine Houghton

MRS. BLAND put a cake into the oven and shut the door with a bang. "I don't care if it does fall," she sputtered. She knew it would n't—her cakes never did.

Peggy, who stood on a chair by the kitchen table, scraping the cake batter from a large yellow bowl, opened her eyes in wonder. She knew something had gone wrong.

In silence she watched her mother as she made and rolled the pie-crust, fitting it carefully into the plate, and giving it now and then a vicious little poke. When she sat down to peel and slice the apples, Peggy was still watching. She usually had a few pieces, but, clearly, Mrs. Bland was not herself to-day, for all the apple went into the pie.

"Now, Peggy, don't you touch that," she said, as she placed the unfinished pie on the table; and her trim figure in its neat print dress bent for a moment to look into the oven.

"Oh, Ma," sighed the little girl wistfully, "it smells awful good! What kind's it going to be?"

"Don't bother me, Peggy; I'm in a hurry," answered Mrs. Bland impatiently. "You know I want to get through so we can go down-town."

Peggy looked puzzled. But the cake batter was very good, and she soon forgot to wonder what troubled her usually good-natured mother. Again Mrs. Bland's quick fingers rolled the pastry, and, placing it deftly over the apples, she cut the edges, tucked them in, and the pie was ready to be baked.

Peggy scraped the cake-bowl until it was clean. Then she sat down on a chair in the corner of the kitchen and busied herself with some paper dolls; for, child as she was, she knew that the farther out of the way she kept, the less trouble she was likely to encounter.

Mrs. Bland was the most energetic woman in the neighborhood. She baked and cleaned and sewed—early and late—and her house and her children were fitting examples of her industry. Friends and

neighbors came to her for advice. If Mrs. Jones wanted a pattern for the baby's dress, she was sure to find it at Mrs. Bland's. When Jimmy Potter came down with the measles, his mother consulted Mrs. Bland before she called the doctor. No matter whether they came to get a recipe for gingerbread or to borrow a hod of coal, she was always glad to accommodate them.

And only once had she been imposed upon. One day Mrs. Parks had come to borrow money to pay for a set of books which had "come unexpectedly." Mrs. Bland was pleased to let her have it, and it was only after weeks of neglecting to return it that the good woman became angry. It was but four dollars and a half, to be sure; however, there were many ways in which she could use it, and just now, when she wanted to buy a new hat, it was especially needed.

At first, Mrs. Parks always spoke of the money whenever she saw Mrs. Bland, and always had some good excuse for not giving it to her. Once, she did not have her purse; again, she had just paid a bill—always something plausible. Mrs. Bland, in her friendly way, turned the matter off, as of no consequence.

"Oh, that is all right, Mrs. Parks. I'm in no hurry at all. I won't be spending it if you have it."

Weeks went by. Mrs. Parks seemed to avoid meeting her. They rarely met, and when they did there was no mention of the borrowed money. At the end of six months it was still unpaid, so now Mrs. Bland was righteously indignant.

"Here I am, working like a dog to save a little, and that woman not to pay me what she owes me! Putting on such airs, too, with her fine clothes!"

For it was a glimpse of this same Mrs. Parks in a new suit and hat which had roused Mrs. Bland's anger and upset her so completely.

The angrier she became, the faster she worked; and little Peggy, from her corner, watched the flushed face of her mother, and wisely kept her own counsel.

Directly after dinner Mrs. Bland dressed herself and Peggy for their trip down-town. She put on her last year's hat with a sniff of disgust, for, woman-like, she wanted to look as well as her friends.

She felt more conscious than ever of its shabbiness when on entering the trolley-car she saw Mrs. Parks, in all the glory of her fine clothes. It did not ease matters to have her nod with an air of aloofness, which hinted that she was in no mood for conversation.

The conductor came through the car, collecting fares. When he reached Mrs. Parks, she opened her purse, and, finding no change, offered him a five-dollar bill. He, in turn, searched his pockets. Not being able to change it, he glanced stupidly about, as if he expected some one to help him out.

Quick as a flash, Mrs. Bland said, "I'll change it for you, Conductor," and the man placed the bill in her hand.

His look of amazement was equalled only by the start of surprise on the part of Mrs. Parks, when Mrs. Bland calmly handed him fifty cents.

"That's all right, Conductor—the lady understands," said the smiling diplomatist, as she nodded in a friendly way to Mrs. Parks.

It was all right. The man returned forty-five cents to his passenger, and she put it in her purse with as much composure as was possible.

The passengers looked from one woman to the other with curious eyes, and at last Mrs. Parks, unable to bear their scrutiny, signalled to the conductor and left the car.

Mrs. Bland slipped a nickel into Peggy's hand, and she, looking into her mother's eyes, knew that the storm was over.



THE FLAG

BY KATHARINE LEE BATES

IT is not fair to see, our starry banner?
 You, as an artist, who have pledged allegiance
 Only to Beauty, find it crude in color,
 Stiff in design, void of romantic symbol,
 Unvenerable? England's golden lions,
 Japan's chrysanthemum, imperial flower
 Blooming in red as on a field of battle,
 The holy cross of Switzerland, out-value
 To all impartial, pure, æsthetic judgment
 The flag our patriot folly terms Old Glory?

I cannot tell. Perchance I never saw it.
 When on the seas or in some foreign city,
 Nay, here at home above a country school-house,
 I find it floating on the wind, it beckons
 My heart into my eyes. It is not bunting,
 Mere red and white and blue,—that starry cluster,
 Those gleaming folds; it is the faith of childhood,
 The unison of strong, rejoicing millions,
 The splendor of a vision men have died for,
 The passion of a people vowed to freedom.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

WHAT IS AN AMERICAN?

BY foreigners, the American is sometimes taken for an Englishman—especially by those insouciant of shoe-leather. The historian Freeman went so far as to say that the United States did not seem to him a foreign country: “It was simply England with a difference.”

The appreciation of baseball has something to do with this being an American, I think. Walt Whitman would seemingly make the test dwelling in

Inseparable cities, with their arms about each other's necks.

And here is a German to whom the Yankee is a gaunt, sallow dyspeptic—“generally engaged in selling some very odd article: a button-hook and cigarette-holder combined, or a pair of socks which change into an umbrella when you touch a hidden spring.” Part of the difficulty in discovering just what an American is, is due to the mixing process the poor fellow had been put through. It would be a simpler matter to decide, what is *n't* an American?

In realizing our present day cosmopolitanism, we forget how near this cosmopolitanism comes to being our tradition. Too often we think only of the British Colonies when our Colonial period is spoken of. Last summer's Champlain celebration escaped futility in reminding us how mixed our stock has been from the beginning—how nearly fortuitous the English supremacy. Why be bullied into exaggerating our debt to the Island Home? It was Captain Basil Hall who told our

grandfathers that "England taught the Americans all they have of speech or thought, hitherto. What thoughts they have not learned from England are foolish thoughts; what words they have not learned from England, unseemly words." It is good to be reminded,—either by an international fête or by re-reading Crèvecoeur's "Letters from the American Farmer,"—how much we do *not* owe to old England. And it is reassuring, as we contemplate the vast experiment that goes on to-day, to know how well our primitive experiments in race-mixings succeeded. I like to be reminded what good citizens of Philadelphia were Benezet and Stephen Girard; and how justly New York honors her Dutch heritage. "*Ubi panis, ibi patria*," quotes good St. John de Crèvecoeur, who had married a Yonkers girl named Mehitable Tippet, and tilled a farm in Orange County, near the Jersey line. This Franco-American paints so idyllic a picture that we positively envy the settler his hardships. "The rich and the poor," he says, "are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe;" cultivators boasted in those days "a pleasing uniformity of decent habitations." The Farmer wrote before the age of Tenement Commissions.

Yet in describing the American's complex materials, Crèvecoeur was modern enough; as modern as his style. "I could point out to you," he writes, "a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. *He* is an American who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being . . . melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigor, and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle. . . . There is room for everybody in America."

We cannot improve upon Crèvecoeur to-day. If he generalizes pretty boldly, so do we. We're worried, when we stop to think; but, on the whole, we're proud. Aldrich, to be sure, sang of "Unguarded Gates,"—and the motley throng that passes them:

Men from the Volga and the Tartar steppes,
Featureless figures of the Hoang-Ho,
Malayan, Scythian, Teuton, Kelt, or Slav,
Flying the Old World's poverty and scorn,—

but we still like to think we can digest the lump. And no one has phrased better than Crèvecoeur the idealism of the true American—however you define him. They say that Crèvecoeur's book sent five hundred Norman families to Ohio—only to perish there. At least,

the American Farmer never represented his adopted country as that "French *Pays de Cocagne*," where, by Franklin's account, the streets are paved with half-baked loaves, the houses tiled with pancakes, and fowls fly ready-roasted, crying, "Come, eat me!" Whatever the American may be, his is the chosen land of labor; the land where hard work ennobles the hardest characters: the land of the Almighty Dollar, tempered by the Almighty Ideal.

WARREN BARTON BLAKE

WANTED: A MERCHANT MARINE!

WHILE President Taft was on the Pacific Coast, as the pleasantest sop he could proffer, he assured his hearers that during the present session of Congress there should be passed a ship-subsidy bill which would inaugurate the rebuilding of an American merchant marine. Of course he simply meant that he would use his best efforts to that end and fancied he foresaw success. Let us hope that he foresaw wisely and not too well; but we cannot forget that Roosevelt, through two sessions of Congress, did his best, even bringing the weight of the big stick to bear, without securing the passage of the bill. Somewhere in the country—mostly in the Middle West—there is a vast opposition to the policy.

The whole nation believes in protection—protecting infant industries—and while our merchant marine, with its American made and manned clipper ships sailing every sea, was once the envy of the world, it has faded before the subsidies paid by other nations to encourage opposition, and so nearly expired under the drastic and oppressive laws which Congress has enacted to protect American sailors—American sailors are mostly the rakings and scrapings of other nations, who come here and take out papers to receive the benefit of those laws—that our marine is to-day the most infantile infant imaginable. When Secretary Root made his famous South American trip he reported that out of upward of two thousand merchant ships he saw, but one flew the American flag.

It is an industry which needs protection if ever an industry needed it, and which will show a much greater profit in return than any of the industries at present so expensively protected. Out of South America's sea trade, for example, amounting to five hundred million dollars a year, America receives but eighty million dollars. Our trade with Australia and across the Pacific is diminishing every year. We do not even carry our own mails—not even to Europe—much less our own products. We pay other nations to perform the service for us.

How much do we pay? Well, in the last fifteen years the actual

balance of trade has amounted to over six billion dollars in our favor, while the world has really paid us only three hundred millions—and even that includes several large sums like the Pennsylvania Railroad's fifty million dollar French loan, and is not all for value received. The vast difference, obliterating our balance of trade, is largely what we have paid to other nations for ocean transportation.

We do not hesitate to pass a subsidy bill—which could not, for years to come, amount to an annual expense of five million dollars—through any motive of economy. Certainly not, when, without a ship but battle-ships, we are digging a five hundred million dollar ditch at Panama, which no possible amount of patronage can ever make self-supporting, much less profitable, and when the only conceivable result will be to help other nations to rob us of what little remains of our Pacific trade.

The canal is an expensive luxury for a nation without a merchantman to benefit by it, but, after all, it is nothing compared with the folly of a hundred and forty million dollar a year navy without a collier to carry fuel for it. If we were to go to war, where the international laws of neutrality prevented our hiring foreign merchantmen, our beautiful navy would be helpless. It could not move beyond reach of a mainland coaling station. A navy without an auxiliary merchant marine is the ideal of painted ships upon a paint-ocean. In a recent address, Justice Brewer is quoted as saying of the voyage of the American battle-ships, that it was money well wasted. It might be if it roused us by the fact that we had to hire more foreign ships, all told, than we sent battle-ships, to make the voyage possible; if it roused us to the truth that only by having a merchant marine of our own can we ever use the navy which costs us a hundred and forty million dollars a year, or ever profit by the canal, which will cost us more to maintain than it can yield in revenue, or ever realize the benefit of the balance of trade which in the last fifteen years amounted to more than six billion dollars.

Almost any sum would be well wasted which resulted in the creation of a merchant marine.

WILLARD FRENCH

THE FESTIVAL OF INJURY

THE phrase-maker ought to have a good time on the Glorious Fourth. Only once a year is he permitted to trot out such resonant alliteratives as "a holocaust of horror," and such shuddery epithets as "an orgy of mutilation." The elect will smile in superior tolerance of the yellow newspapers as they read their lurid headlines—that is, the elect will smile if they have lost no houses by fire,

bound up no bloody little thumbless hands, amputated no shattered child limbs, feared no impending horror of lockjaw, bandaged no sightless baby eyes, and never knelt in agony beside the sudden couch of death! It is to be hoped—but perhaps not to be expected—that the same gray-whiskered gentlemen who annually agitate themselves into warlike demands for World Peace, and the same dear old lady-saints who weep over the Erring, of various brands, will all turn in and help suppress the barbarities of an explosive, combustive, destructive, mutilative Fourth. “Boys will be boys,” urges one complacently—and thus encourages an insane festival of injury that annually prevents thousands of else happy youngsters from ever again being normal children. If men and women won't pity and protect the children, what shall we say of such men and women?

J. B. E.

THE SUPREMACY OF THE AMERICAN FARMER

THE American farmer holds the centre of the commercial stage. Those of us who have talked with him, and have heard his hearty laugh at tales of panic, realized this long ago, but Secretary Wilson, in the report of the Department of Agriculture, puts the statement into concrete figures. His report for 1909 says:

The value of farm products is so large that it has become merely a row of figures. For this year it is \$8,760,000,000, or a gain of \$869,000,000 over 1908. The value of the products has nearly doubled in ten years.

Both the number of farmers, and the number of acres under cultivation, have increased somewhat over last year; and Secretary Wilson's report shows that in the farmers' possession is a sum of money so vast that one can hardly grasp its meaning. Many of them have bought automobiles, taken expensive vacations, improved their buildings, and bought new machinery, besides spending goodly sums for other conveniences and luxuries, yet even then they have something to invest. They could not possibly spend it all foolishly, even were they so inclined. With the setting of every sun, the farmers' money-bag bulges with the weight of twenty-four new millions.

Place your finger on the pulse of your wrist and count your heartbeats—one, two, three, four. With every four of those quick throbs, day and night, one thousand dollars clatter into the gold-bin of the American farmer.

How incomprehensible it would seem to Pericles, who saw Greece in her Golden Age, if he were told that the yearly revenue of his country in those days was now no more than a day's pay for the men who till

the soil of this infant republic! How it would amaze a resurrected Christopher Columbus to know that the combined revenues of Spain and Portugal were not nearly so much as the earnings of the farmers' hens!

Agricultural exports—mere crumbs that fall from the farmer's table—have brought in enough foreign money since 1892 to enable the American farmer to buy every foot of railroad in the United States.

Many are the jokes that are perpetrated at the expense of the farmer, and many persons still share in the opinion that he is behind his city cousin in knowledge and attainments, and that anything is good enough for him. Yet this is effectually disproved by his success.

The farmer is a commercialist, a man of the twentieth century. He works as hard as the old-time farmer did, but in a higher way. He makes use of the four R's—readin', 'ritin', 'rithmetic, and rural telephony. Telephone service has made good with the farmer. He wants more of it, and a better quality than he was satisfied with a few years ago, and the best part of it is, he has money to buy all he wants.

Good for the farmers! May they continue to enjoy the prosperity that ought to be theirs.

WILLIAM D. LINDSAY

A MUNICIPAL PROBLEM

THE growth of corns and bunions upon the asphalt streets in American cities seems to be increasing with untold rapidity. City officials are just beginning to realize their presence, and it is probable that within the next ten or twenty years stringent remedies will be taken to abolish them.

As every chauffeur or cab-driver knows, they are most prominent and protuberant between the street-car tracks. These immense street corns are really unnecessary and confer no benefit upon humanity, yet they exist without molestation. While it would not be a bad idea to organize an Anti-Street Bunion Society to suppress this advancing evil, still by the adoption of this simple little method all trouble can be averted.

Let the street commissioner or contractor who has charge of a corn-covered public highway try to cut them off with a sharp spade. If he fails, instruct him to apply at the nearest drug-store, where he can purchase the most effective corn remover guaranteed to perform the operation in one night. No time should be lost, as this awful pest is growing hourly.

JOHN H. MCNEELY

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THE MYSTERY OF MARY

BY

GRACE LIVINGSTON HILL LUTZ

Author of "Phabe Deane," "Marcia Schuyler," etc.

I.

HE paused on the platform and glanced at his watch. The train on which he had just arrived was late. It hurried away from the station, and was swallowed up in the blackness of the tunnel, as if it knew its own shortcomings and wished to make up for them.

It was five minutes of six, and as the young man looked back at the long flight of steps that led to the bridge across the tracks, a delicate pencilling of electric light flashed into outline against the city's deepening dusk, emphasizing the lateness of the hour. He had a dinner engagement at seven, and it was yet some distance to his home, where a rapid toilet must be made if he were to arrive on time.

The stairway was long, and there were many people thronging it. A shorter cut led down along the tracks under the bridge, and up the grassy embankment. It would bring him a whole block nearer home, and a line of cabs was standing over at the corner just above the bridge. It was against the rules to walk beside the tracks—there was a large sign to that effect in front of him—but it would save five minutes. He scanned the platform hastily to see if any officials were in sight, then bolted down the darkening tracks.

Under the centre of the bridge a slight noise behind him, as of soft, hurrying footsteps, caught his attention, and a woman's voice broke upon his startled senses.

"Please don't stop, nor look around," it said, and the owner caught up with him now in the shadow. "But will you kindly let me walk beside you for a moment, till you can show me how to get out of this dreadful place? I am very much frightened, and I'm afraid I shall be followed. Will you tell me where I can go to hide?"

After an instant's astonished pause, he obeyed her and kept on, making room for her to walk beside him, while he took the place next to the tracks. He was aware, too, of the low rumble of a train, coming from the mouth of the tunnel.

His companion had gasped for breath, but began again in a tone of apology:

"I saw you were a gentleman, and I did n't know what to do. I thought you would help me to get somewhere quickly."

Just then the fiery eye of the oncoming train burst from the tunnel ahead. Instinctively, the young man caught his companion's arm and drew her forward to the embankment beyond the bridge, holding her, startled and trembling, as the screaming train tore past them.

The pent black smoke from the tunnel rolled in a thick cloud about them, stifling them. The girl, dazed with the roar and blinded by the smoke, could only cling to her protector. For an instant they felt as if they were about to be drawn into the awful power of the rushing monster. Then it had passed, and a roar of silence followed, as if they were suddenly plunged into a vacuum. Gradually the noises of the world began again: the rumble of a trolley-car on the bridge; the "honk-honk" of an automobile; the cry of a newsboy. Slowly their breath and their senses came back.

The man's first thought was to get out of the cut before another train should come. He grasped his companion's arm and started up the steep embankment, realizing as he did so that the wrist he held was slender, and that the sleeve which covered it was of the finest cloth.

They struggled up, scarcely pausing for breath. The steps at the side of the bridge, made for the convenience of railroad hands, were out of the question, for they were at a dizzy height, and hung unevenly over the yawning pit where trains shot constantly back and forth.

As they emerged from the dark, the man saw that his companion was a young and beautiful woman, and that she wore a light cloth gown, with neither hat nor gloves.

At the top of the embankment they paused, and the girl, with her hand at her throat, looked backward with a shudder. She seemed like a young bird that could scarcely tell which way to fly.

Without an instant's hesitation, the young man raised his hand and hailed a four-wheeler across the street.

"Come this way, quick!" he urged, helping her in. He gave the

driver his home address and stepped in after her. Then, turning, he faced his companion, and was suddenly keenly aware of the strange situation in which he had placed himself.

"Can you tell me what is the matter," he asked, "and where you would like to go?"

The girl had scarcely recovered breath from the long climb and the fright, and she answered him in broken phrases.

"No, I cannot tell you what is the matter"—she paused and looked at him, with a sudden comprehension of what he might be thinking about her—"but—there is nothing—that is—I have done nothing wrong——" She paused again and looked up with eyes whose clear depths, he felt, could hide no guile.

"Of course," he murmured with decision, and then wondered why he felt so sure about it.

"Thank you," she said. Then, with frightened perplexity: "I don't know where to go. I never was in this city before. If you will kindly tell me how to get somewhere—I suppose to a railroad station—and yet—no, I have no money—and"—then with a sudden little movement of dismay—"and I have no hat! Oh!"

The young man felt a strong desire to shield this girl so unexpectedly thrown on his mercy. Yet vague fears hovered about the margin of his judgment. 'Perhaps she was a thief or an adventuress. It might be that he ought to let her get out of the odd situation she appeared to be in, as best she might. Yet even as the thought flashed through his mind he seemed to hear an echo of her words, "I saw you were a gentleman," and he felt incapable of betraying her trust in him.

The girl was speaking again: "But I must not trouble you any more. You have been very kind to get me out of that dreadful place. If you will just stop the carriage and let me out, I am sure I can take care of myself."

"I could not think of letting you get out here alone. If you are in danger, I will help you." The warmth of his own words startled him. He knew he ought to be more cautious with a stranger, but impetuously he threw caution to the winds. "If you would just tell me a little bit about it, so that I should know what I ought to do for you——"

"Oh, I must not tell you! I could n't!" said the girl, her hand fluttering up to her heart, as if to hold its wild beating from stifling her. "I am so sorry to have involved you for a moment in this. Please let me out here. I am not frightened, now that I have got away from that terrible tunnel. I was afraid I might have to go in there alone, for I did n't see any way to get up the bank, and I could n't go back."

"I am glad I happened to be there," breathed the young man

fervently. "It would have been dangerous for you to enter that tunnel. It runs an entire block. You would probably have been killed."

The girl shut her eyes and pressed her fingers to them. In the light of the street lamps, he saw that she was very white, and also that there were jewels flashing from the rings on her fingers. It was apparent that she was a lady of wealth and refinement. What could have brought her to this pass?

The carriage came to a sudden stop, and, looking out, he saw they had reached his home. A new alarm seized him as the girl moved as if to get out. His dignified mother and his fastidious sister were probably not in, but if by any chance they should not have left the house, what would they think if they saw a strange, hatless young woman descend from the carriage with him? Moreover, what would the butler think?

"Excuse me," he said, "but, really, there are reasons why I should n't like you to get out of the carriage just here. Suppose you sit still until I come out. I have a dinner engagement and must make a few changes in my dress, but it will take me only a few minutes. You are in no danger, and I will take you to some place of safety. I will try to think what to do while I am gone. On no account get out of the carriage. It would make the driver suspicious, you know. If you are really followed, he will let no one disturb you in the carriage, of course. Don't distress yourself. I'll hurry. Can you give me the address of any friend to whom I might phone or telegraph?"

She shook her head and there was a glitter of tears in her eyes as she replied:

"No, I know of no one in the city who could help me."

"I will help you, then," he said with sudden resolve, and in a tone that would be a comfort to any woman in distress.

His tone and the look of respectful kindness he gave her kept the girl in the carriage until his return, although in her fear and sudden distrust of all the world, she thought more than once of attempting to slip away. Yet without money, and in a costume which could but lay her open to suspicion, what was she to do? Where was she to go?

As the young man let himself into his home with his latch-key, he heard the butler's well trained voice answering the telephone.

"Yes, ma'am; this is Mrs. Dunham's residence. . . . No, ma'am, she is not at home. . . . No, ma'am, Miss Dunham is out also. . . . Mr. Dunham? Just wait a moment, please. I think Mr. Dunham has just come in. Who shall I say wishes to speak to him? . . . Mrs. Parker Bowman? . . . Yes, ma'am; just wait a minute, please. I'll call Mr. Dunham."

The young man frowned. Another interruption! And Mrs. Bowman! It was at her house that he was to dine. What could the

woman want? Surely it was not so late that she was looking him up. But perhaps something had happened, and she was calling off her dinner. What luck if she was! Then he would be free to attend to the problem of the young woman whom fate, or Providence, had suddenly thrust upon his care.

He took the receiver, resolved to get out of going to the dinner if it were possible.

"Good evening, Mrs. Bowman."

"Oh, is that you, Mr. Dunham? How relieved I am! I am in a bit of difficulty about my dinner, and called up to see if your sister could n't help me out. Miss Mayo has failed me. Her sister has had an accident, and she cannot leave her. She has just phoned me, and I don't know what to do. Is n't Cornelia at home? Could n't you persuade her to come and help me out? She would have been invited in Miss Mayo's place if she had not told me that she expected to go to Boston this week. But she changed her plans, did n't she? Is n't she where you could reach her by phone and beg her to come and help me out? You see, it's a very particular dinner, and I've made all my arrangements."

"Well, now, that's too bad, Mrs. Bowman," began the young man, thinking he saw a way out of both their difficulties. "I'm sorry Cornelia is n't here. I'm sure she would do anything in her power to help you. But she and mother were to dine in Chestnut Hill to-night, and they must have left the house half an hour ago. I'm afraid she's out of the question. Suppose you leave me out? You won't have any trouble then except to take two plates off the table"—he laughed pleasantly—"and you would have even couples. You see," he hastened to add, as he heard Mrs. Parker Bowman's preliminary dissent—"you see, Mrs. Bowman, I'm in somewhat of a predicament myself. My train was late, and as I left the station I happened to meet a young woman—a—a friend." (He reflected rapidly on the old proverb, "A friend in need is a friend indeed." In that sense she was a friend.) "She is temporarily separated from her friends, and is a stranger in the city. In fact, I'm the only acquaintance or friend she has, and I feel rather under obligation to see her to her hotel and look up trains for her. She leaves the city to-night."

"Now, look here, Tryon Dunham, you're not going to leave me in the lurch for any young woman. I don't care how old an acquaintance she is! You simply bring her along. She'll make up my number and relieve me wonderfully. No, don't you say a word. Just tell her that she need n't stand on ceremony. Your mother and I are too old friends for that. Any friend of yours is a friend of mine, and my house is open to her. She won't mind. These girls who have travelled a great deal learn to step over the little formalities of calls and intro-

ductions. Tell her I'll call on her afterwards, if she'll only remain in town long enough, or I'll come and take dinner with her when I happen to be in her city. I suppose she's just returned from abroad—they all have—or else she's just going—and if she has n't learned to accept things as she finds them, she probably will soon. Tell her what a plight I'm in, and that it will be a real blessing to me if she'll come. Besides—I did n't mean to tell you—I meant it for a surprise, but I may as well tell you now—Judge Blackwell is to be here, with his wife, and I especially want you to meet him. I've been trying to get you two together for a long time."

"Ah!" breathed the young man, with interest. "Judge Blackwell! I have wanted to meet him."

"Well, he has heard about you, too, and I think he wants to meet you. Did you know he was thinking of taking a partner into his office? He has always refused—but that's another story, and I have n't time to talk. You ought to be on your way here now. Tell your friend I will bless her forever for helping me out, and I won't take no for an answer. You said she'd just returned from abroad, did n't you? Of course she's musical. You must make her give us some music. She will, won't she? I was depending on Miss Mayo for that this evening."

"Well, you might be able to persuade her," murmured the distracted young man at the phone, as he struggled with one hand to untie his necktie and unfasten his collar, and mentally calculated how long it would take him to get into his dress suit.

"Yes, of course. You'd better not speak of it—it might make her decline. And don't let her stop to make any changes in her dress. Everybody will understand when I tell them she's just arrived—did n't you say?—from the other side, and we caught her on the wing. There's some one coming now. Do, for pity's sake, hurry, Tryon, for my cook is terribly cross when I hold up a dinner too long. Good-by. Oh, by the way, what did you say was her name?"

"Oh—ah!" He had almost succeeded in releasing his collar, and was about to hang up the receiver, when this new difficulty confronted him.

"Oh, yes, of course; her name—I had almost forgotten," he went on wildly, to make time, and searched about in his mind for a name—any name—that might help him. The telephone book lay open at the r's. He pounced upon it and took the first name his eye caught.

"Yes—why—Remington, Miss Remington."

"Remington!" came in a delighted scream over the phone. "Not Carolyn Remington? That would be too good luck!"

"No," he murmured distractedly; "no, not Carolyn. Why, I—ah—I think—Mary—Mary Remington."

"Oh, I'm afraid I have n't met her, but never mind. Do hurry up, Tryon. It is five minutes of seven. Where did you say she lives?" But the receiver was hung up with a click, and the young man tore up the steps to his room three at a bound. Dunham's mind was by no means at rest. He felt that he had done a tremendously daring thing, though, when he came to think of it, he had not suggested it himself; and he did not quite see how he could get out of it, either, for how was he to have time to help the girl if he did not take her with him?

Various plans floated through his head. He might bring her into the house, and make some sort of an explanation to the servants, but what would the explanation be? He could not tell them the truth about her, and how would he explain the matter to his mother and sister? For they might return before he did, and would be sure to ask innumerable questions.

And the girl—would she go with him? If not, what should he do with her? And about her dress? Was it such as his "friend" could wear to one of Mrs. Parker Bowman's exclusive dinners? To his memory, it seemed quiet and refined. Perhaps that was all that was required for a woman who was travelling. There it was again! But he had not said she was travelling, nor that she had just returned from abroad, nor that she was a musician. How could he answer such questions about an utter stranger, and yet how could he not answer them, under the circumstances?

And she wore no hat, nor cloak. That would be a strange way to arrive at a dinner. How could she accept? He was settling his coat into place when a queer little bulge attracted his attention to an inside pocket. Impatiently he pulled out a pair of long white gloves. They were his sister's, and he now remembered she had given them to him to carry the night before, on the way home from a reception, she having removed them because it was raining. He looked at them with a sudden inspiration. Of course! Why had he not thought of that? He hurried into his sister's room to make a selection of a few necessities for the emergency—only to have his assurance desert him at the very threshold. The room was immaculate, with no feminine finery lying about. Cornelia Dunham's maid was well trained. The only article that seemed out of place was a bandbox on a chair near the door. It bore the name of a fashionable milliner, and across the lid was pencilled in Cornelia's large, angular hand, "To be returned to Madame Dollard's." He caught up the box and strode over to the closet. There was no time to lose, and this box doubtless contained a hat of some kind. If it was to be returned, Cornelia would think it had been called for, and no further inquiry would be made about the matter. He could call at Madame's and settle the bill without his sister's knowledge.

He poked back into the closet and discovered several wraps and evening cloaks of more or less elaborate style, but the thought came to him that perhaps one of these would be recognized as Cornelia's. He closed the door hurriedly and went down to a large closet under the stairs, from which he presently emerged with his mother's new black rain-coat. He patted his coat-pocket to be sure he had the gloves, seized his hat, and hurried back to the carriage, the hat-box in one hand and his mother's rain-coat dragging behind him. His only anxiety was to get out before the butler saw him.

As he closed the door, there flashed over him the sudden possibility that the girl had gone. Well, perhaps that would be the best thing that could happen and would save him a lot of trouble; yet to his amazement he found that the thought filled him with a sense of disappointment. He did not want her to be gone. He peered anxiously into the carriage, and was relieved to find her still there, huddled into the shadow, her eyes looking large and frightened. She was seized with a fit of trembling, and it required all her strength to keep him from noticing it. She was half afraid of the man, now that she had waited for him. Perhaps he was not a gentleman, after all.

II.

"I AM afraid I have been a long time," he said apologetically, as he closed the door of the carriage, after giving Mrs. Parker Bowman's address to the driver. In the uncertain light of the distant arc-lamp, the girl looked small and appealing. He felt a strong desire to lift her burdens and carry them on his own broad shoulders.

"I've brought some things that I thought might help," he said. "Would you like to put on this coat? It may not be just what you would have selected, but it was the best I could find that would not be recognized. The air is growing chilly."

He shook out the coat and threw it around her.

"Oh, thank you," she murmured gratefully, slipping her arms into the sleeves.

"And this box has some kind of a hat, I hope," he went on. "I ought to have looked, but there really was n't time." He unknotted the strings and produced a large picture hat with long black plumes. He was relieved to find it black. While he untied the strings, there had been a growing uneasiness lest the hat be one of those wild, queer combinations of colors that Cornelia frequently purchased and called "artistic."

The girl received the hat with a grateful relief that was entirely satisfactory to the young man.

"And now," said he, as he pulled out the gloves and laid them gravely in her lap, "we're invited out to dinner."

"Invited out to dinner!" gasped the girl.

"Yes. It's rather a providential thing to have happened, I think. The telephone was ringing as I opened the door, and Mrs. Parker Bowman, to whose house I was invited, was asking for my sister to fill the place of an absent guest. My sister is away, and I tried to beg off. I told her I had accidentally met—I hope you will pardon me—I called you a friend."

"Oh!" she said. "That was kind of you."

"I said you were a stranger in town, and as I was your only acquaintance, I felt that I should show you the courtesy of taking you to a hotel, and assisting to get you off on the night train; and I asked her to excuse me, as that would give her an even number. But it seems she had invited some one especially to meet me, and was greatly distressed not to have her full quota of guests, so she sent you a most cordial invitation to come to her at once, promising to take dinner with you some time if you would help her out now. Somehow, she gathered from my talk that you were travelling, had just returned from abroad, and were temporarily separated from your friends. She is also sure that you are musical, and means to ask you to help her out in that way this evening. I told her I was not sure whether you could be persuaded or not, and she mercifully refrained from asking whether you sang or played. I tell you all this so that you will be prepared for anything. Of course I did n't tell her all these things. I merely kept still when she inferred them. Your name, by the way, is Miss Remington—Mary Remington. She was greatly elated for a moment when she thought you might be Carolyn Remington—whoever she may be. I suppose she will speak of it. The name was the first one that my eye lit upon in the telephone-book. If you object to bearing it for the evening, it is easy to see how a name could be misunderstood over the phone. But perhaps you would better give me a few pointers, for I've never tried acting a part, and can't be sure how well I shall do it."

The girl had been silent from astonishment while the man talked.

"But I cannot possibly go there to dinner," she gasped, her hand going to her throat again, as if to pluck away the delicate lace about it and give more room for breathing. "I must get away somewhere at once. I cannot trouble you in this way. I have already imposed upon your kindness. With this hat and coat and gloves, I shall be able to manage quite well, and I thank you so much! I will return them to you as soon as possible."

The cab began to go slowly, and Tryon Dunham noticed that another carriage, just ahead of theirs, was stopping before Mrs. Bowman's house. There was no time for halting decision.

"My friend," he said earnestly, "I cannot leave you alone, and I

do not see a better way than for you to go in here with me for a little while, till I am free to go with you. No one can follow you here, or suspect that you had gone out to dinner at a stranger's house. Believe me, it is the very safest thing you could do. This is the house. Will you go in with me? If not, I must tell the driver to take us somewhere else."

"But what will she think of me," she said in trepidation, "and how can I do such a thing as to steal into a woman's house to a dinner in this way! Besides, I am not dressed for a formal occasion."

The carriage had stopped before the door now, and the driver was getting down from his seat.

"Indeed, she will think nothing about it," Dunham assured her, "except to be glad that she has the right number of guests. Her dinners are delightful affairs usually, and you have nothing to do but talk about impersonal matters for a little while, and be entertaining. She was most insistent that you take no thought about the matter of dress. She said it would be perfectly understood that you were travelling, and that the invitation was unexpected. You can say that your trunk has not come, or has gone on ahead. Will you come?"

Then the driver opened the carriage door.

In an instant the girl assumed the self-contained manner she had worn when she had first spoken to him. She stepped quietly from the carriage, and only answered in a low voice, "I suppose I'd better, if you wish it."

Dunham paused for a moment to give the driver a direction about carrying the great pasteboard box to his club. This idea had come as a sudden inspiration. He had not thought of the necessity of getting rid of that box before.

"If it becomes necessary, where shall I say you are going this evening?" he asked in a low tone, as they turned to go up the steps. She summoned a faint, flickering smile.

"When people have been travelling abroad and are stopping over in this city, they often go on to Washington, do they not?" she asked half shyly.

He smiled in response, and noted with pleasure that the black hat was intensely becoming. She was not ill-dressed for the part she had to play, for the black silk rain-coat gave the touch of the traveller to her costume.

The door swung open before they could say another word, and the young man remembered that he must introduce his new friend. As there was no further opportunity to ask her about her name, he must trust to luck.

The girl obeyed the motion of the servant and slipped up to the dressing-room as if she were a frequent guest in the house, but it

was in some trepidation that Tryon Dunham removed his overcoat and arranged his necktie. He had caught a passing glimpse of the assembled company, and knew that Mr. Bowman was growing impatient for his dinner. His heart almost failed him now that the girl was out of sight. What if she should not prove to be accustomed to society, after all, and should show it? How embarrassing that would be! He had seen her only in a half-light as yet. How had he dared?

But it was too late now, for she was coming down from the dressing-room, and Mrs. Bowman was approaching them with outstretched hands, and a welcome in her face.

"My dear Miss Remington, it is so good of you to help me out! I can see by the first glance that it is going to be a privilege to know you. I can't thank you enough for waiving formalities."

"It was very lovely of you to ask me," said the girl, with perfect composure, "a stranger——"

"Don't speak of it, my dear. Mr. Dunham's friends are not strangers, I assure you. Tryon, did n't you tell her how long we have known each other? I shall feel quite hurt if you have never mentioned me to her. Now, come, for my cook is in the last stages of despair over the dinner. Miss Remington, how do you manage to look so fresh and lovely after a long sea voyage? You must tell me your secret."

The young man looked down at the girl and saw that her dress was in perfect taste for the occasion, and also that she was very young and beautiful. He was watching her with a kind of proprietary pride as she moved forward to be introduced to the other guests, when he saw her sweep one quick glance about the room, and for just an instant hesitate and draw back. Her face grew white; then, with a supreme effort, she controlled her feelings, and went through her part with perfect ease.

When Judge Blackwell was introduced to the girl, he looked at her with what seemed to Dunham to be more than a passing interest; but the keen eyes were almost immediately transferred to his own face, and the young man had no further time to watch his protégée, as dinner was immediately announced.

Miss Remington was seated next to Dunham at the table, with the Judge on her other side. The young man was pleased with the arrangement, and sat furtively studying the delicate tinting of her face, the dainty line of cheek and chin and ear, the sweep of her dark lashes, and the ripple of her brown hair, as he tried to converse easily with her, as an old friend might.

At length the Judge turned to the girl and said:

"Miss Remington, you remind me strongly of a young woman who was in my office this afternoon."

The delicate color flickered out of the girl's face entirely, leaving even her lips white, but she lifted her dark eyes bravely to the kindly blue ones, and with sweet dignity baffled the questioned recognition in his look.

"Yes, you are so much like her that I would think you were—her sister perhaps, if it were not for the name," Judge Blackwell went on. "She was a most interesting and beautiful young lady." The old gentleman bestowed upon the girl a look that was like a benediction. "Excuse me for speaking of it, but her dress was something soft and beautiful, like yours, and seemed to suit her face. I was deeply interested in her, although until this afternoon she was a stranger. She came to me for a small matter of business, and after it was attended to, and before she received the papers, she disappeared! She had removed her hat and gloves, as she was obliged to wait some time for certain matters to be looked up, and these she left behind her. The hat is covered with long, handsome plumes of the color of rich cream in coffee."

Young Dunham glanced down at the cloth of the girl's gown, and was startled to find the same rich creamy-coffee tint in its silky folds; yet she did not show by so much as a flicker of an eyelash that she was passing under the keenest inspection. She toyed with the salted almonds beside her plate, and held the heavy silver fork as firmly as if she were talking about the discovery of the north pole. Her voice was steady and natural as she asked, "How could she disappear?"

"Well, that is more than I can understand. There were three doors in the room where she sat, one opening into the inner office where I was at work, and two opening into a hall, one on the side and the other on the end opposite the freight elevator. We searched the entire building without finding a clew, and I am deeply troubled."

"Why should she want to disappear?" The question was asked coolly and with as much interest as a stranger would be likely to show.

"I cannot imagine," said the old man speculatively. "She apparently had health and happiness, if one may judge from her appearance, and she came to me of her own free will on a matter of business. Immediately after her disappearance, two well-dressed men entered my office and inquired for her. One had an intellectual head, but looked hard and cruel; the other was very handsome—and disagreeable. When he could not find the young lady, he laid claim to her hat, but I had it locked away. How could I know that man was her friend or her relative? I intend to keep that hat until the young woman herself claims it. I have not had anything happen that has so upset me in years."

"You don't think any harm has come to her?" questioned the girl.

"I cannot think what harm could, and yet—it is very strange. She was about the age of my dear daughter when she died, and I cannot get her out of my mind. When you first appeared in the doorway you gave me quite a start. I thought you were she. If I can find any trace of her, I mean to investigate this matter. I have a feeling that that girl needs a friend."

"I am sure she would be very happy to have a friend like you," said the girl, and there was something in the eyes that were raised to his that made the Judge's heart glow with admiration.

"Thank you," said he warmly. "That is most kind of you. But perhaps she has found a better friend by this time. I hope so."

"Or one as kind," she suggested in a low voice.

The conversation then became general, and the girl did not look up for several seconds; but the young man on her right, who had not missed a word of the previous tête-à-tête, could not give attention to the story Mrs. Blackwell was telling, for pondering what he had heard.

The ladies now left the table, and though this was the time that Dunham had counted upon for an acquaintance with the great judge who might hold a future career in his power, he could not but wish that he might follow them to the other room. He felt entire confidence in his new friend's ability to play her part to the end, but he wanted to watch her, to study her and understand her, if perchance he might solve the mystery that was ever growing more intense about her.

As she left the room, his eyes followed her. His hostess, in passing behind his chair, had whispered:

"I don't wonder you feel so about her. She is lovely. But please don't begrudge her to us for a few minutes. I promise you that you shall have your innings afterwards."

Then, without any warning and utterly against his will, this young man of much experience and self-control blushed furiously, and was glad enough when the door closed behind Mrs. Bowman.

Miss Remington walked into the drawing-room with a steady step, but with a rapidly beating heart. Her real ordeal had now come. She cast about in her mind for subjects of conversation which should forestall unsafe topics, and intuitively sought the protection of the Judge's wife. But immediately she saw her hostess making straight for the little Chippendale chair beside her.

"My dear, it is too lovely," she began. "So opportune! Do tell me how long you have known Tryon?"

The girl caught her breath and gathered her wits together. She looked up shyly into the pleasantly curious eyes of Mrs. Bowman, and a faint gleam of mischief came into her face.

"Why——" Her hesitation seemed only natural, and Mrs. Bow-

man decided that there must be something very special between these two. "Why, not so very long, Mrs. Bowman—not as long as you have known him." She finished with a smile which Mrs. Bowman decided was charming.

"Oh, you sly child!" she exclaimed, playfully tapping the round cheek with her fan. "Did you meet him when he was abroad this summer?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" said the girl, laughing now in spite of herself. "Oh, no; it was after his return."

"Then it must have been in the Adirondacks," went on the determined interlocutor. "Were you at——" But the girl interrupted her. She could not afford to discuss the Adirondacks, and the sight of the grand piano across the room had given her an idea.

"Mr. Dunham told me that you would like me to play something for you, as your musician friend has failed you. I shall be very glad to, if it will help you any. What do you care for? Something serious or something gay? Are you fond of Chopin, or Beethoven, or something more modern?"

Scenting a possible musical prodigy, and desiring most earnestly to give her guests a treat, Mrs. Bowman exclaimed in enthusiasm:

"Oh, how lovely of you! I hardly dared to ask, as Tryon was uncertain whether you would be willing. Suppose you give us something serious now, and later, when the men come in, we'll have the gay music. Make your own choice, though I'm very fond of Chopin, of course."

Without another word, the girl moved quietly over to the piano and took her seat. For just a moment her fingers wandered caressingly over the keys, as if they were old friends and she were having an understanding with them, then she began a Chopin Nocturne. Her touch was firm and velvety, and she brought out a bell-like tone from the instrument that made the little company of women realize that the player was mistress of her art. Her graceful figure and lovely head, with its simple ripples and waves of hair, were more noticeable than ever as she sat there, controlling the exquisite harmonies. Even Mrs. Blackwell stopped fanning and looked interested. Then she whispered to Mrs. Bowman: "A very sweet young girl. That's a pretty piece she's playing." Mrs. Blackwell was sweet and commonplace and old-fashioned.

Mrs. Parker Bowman sat up with a pink glow in her cheeks and a light in her eyes. She began to plan how she might keep this acquisition and exploit her among her friends. It was her delight to bring out new features in her entertainments.

"We shall simply keep you playing until you drop from weariness," she announced ecstatically, when the last wailing, sobbing, soothing

chord had died away; and the other ladies murmured, "How delightful!" and whispered their approval.

The girl smiled and rippled into a Chopin Valse, under cover of which those who cared to could talk in low tones. Afterwards the musician dashed into the brilliant movement of a Beethoven Sonata.

It was just as she was beginning Rubinstein's exquisite tone portrait, Kamennoi-Ostrow, that the gentlemen came in.

Tryon Dunham had had his much desired talk with the famous judge, but it had not been about law.

They had been drawn together by mutual consent, each discovering that the other was watching the young stranger as she left the dining-room.

"She is charming," said the old man, smiling into the face of the younger. "Is she an intimate friend?"

"I—I hope so," stammered Dunham. "That is, I should like to have her consider me so."

"Ah!" said the old man, looking deep into the other's eyes with a kindly smile, as if he were recalling pleasant experiences of his own. "You are a fortunate fellow. I hope you may succeed in making her think so. Do you know, she interests me more than most young women, and in some way I cannot disconnect her with an occurrence which happened in my office this afternoon."

The young man showed a deep interest in the matter, and the Judge told the story again, this time more in detail.

They drew a little apart from the rest of the men. The host, who had been warned by his wife to give young Dunham an opportunity to talk with the Judge, saw that her plans were succeeding admirably.

When the music began in the other room the Judge paused a moment to listen, and then went on with his story.

"There is a freight elevator just opposite that left door of my office, and somehow I cannot but think it had something to do with the girl's disappearance, although the door was closed and the elevator was down on the cellar floor all the time, as nearly as I can find out."

The young man asked eager questions, feeling in his heart that the story might in some way explain the mystery of the young woman in the other room.

"Suppose you stop in the office to-morrow," said the Judge. "Perhaps you'll get a glimpse of her, and then bear me out in the statement that she's like your friend. By the way, who is making such exquisite music? Suppose we go and investigate. Mr. Bowman, will you excuse us if we follow the ladies? We are anxious to hear the music at closer range."

The other men rose and followed.

The girl did not pause or look up as they came in, but played on,

while the company listened with the most rapt and wondering look. She was playing with an *empressement* which could not fail to command attention.

Tryon Dunham, standing just behind the Judge, was transfixed with amazement. That this delicate girl could bring forth such an entrancing volume of sound from the instrument was a great surprise. That she was so exquisite an artist filled him with a kind of intoxicating elation—it was as though she belonged to him.

At last she played Liszt's brilliant Hungarian Rhapsody, her slender hands taking the tremendous chords and octave runs with a precision and rapidity that seemed inspired. The final crash came in a shower of liquid jewels of sound, and then she turned to look at him, her one friend in that company of strangers.

He could see that she had been playing under a heavy strain. Her face looked weary and flushed, and her eyes were brilliant with feverish excitement. Those eyes seemed to be pleading with him now to set her free from the kindly scrutiny of these good-hearted, curious strangers. They gathered about her in delight, pouring their questions and praises upon her.

"Where did you study? With some great master, I am sure. Tell us all about yourself. We are dying to know, and will sit at your feet with great delight while you discourse."

Tryon Dunham interrupted these disquieting questions by drawing his watch from his pocket with apparent hasty remembrance, and giving a well feigned exclamation of dismay.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Bowman; it is too bad to interrupt this delightful evening," he apologized; "but I'm afraid if Miss Remington feels that she must take the next train, we shall have to make all possible speed. Miss Remington, can you get your wraps on in three minutes? Our carriage is probably at the door now."

With a look of relief, yet keeping up her part of dismay over the lateness of the hour, the girl sprang to her feet, and hurried away to get her wraps, in spite of her protesting hostess. Mrs. Bowman was held at bay with sweet expressions of gratitude for the pleasant entertainment. The great black picture hat was settled becomingly on the small head, the black cloak thrown over her gown, and the gloves fitted on hurriedly to hide the fact that they were too large.

"And whom did you say you studied with?" asked the keen hostess, determined to be able to tell how great a guest she had harbored for the evening.

"Oh, is Mr. Dunham calling me, Mrs. Bowman? You will excuse me for hurrying off, won't you? And it has been so lovely of you to ask me—perfectly delightful to find friends this way when I was a stranger."

She hurried toward the stairway and down the broad steps, and the hostess had no choice but to follow her.

The other guests crowded out into the hall to bid them good-by and to tell the girl how much they had enjoyed the music. Mrs. Blackwell insisted upon kissing the smooth cheek of the young musician, and whispered in her ear: "You play very nicely, my dear. I should like to hear you again some time." The kindness in her tone almost brought a rush of tears to the eyes of the weary, anxious girl.

III.

DUNHAM hurried her off amid the good-byes of the company, and in a moment more they were shut into the semi-darkness of the four-wheeler and whirled from the too hospitable door.

As soon as the door was shut, the girl began to tremble.

"Oh, we ought not to have done that!" she exclaimed with a shiver of recollection. "They were so very kind. It was dreadful to impose upon them. But—you were not to blame. It was my fault. It was very kind of you."

"We did not impose upon them!" he exclaimed peremptorily. "You are my friend, and that was all that we claimed. For the rest, you have certainly made good. Your wonderful music! How I wish I might hear more of it some time!"

The carriage paused to let a trolley pass, and a strong arc-light beat in upon the two. A passing stranger peered curiously at them, and the girl shrank back in fear. It was momentary, but the minds of the two were brought back to the immediate necessities of the occasion.

"Now, what may I do for you?" asked Dunham in a quiet, business-like tone, as if it were his privilege and right to do all that was to be done. "Have you thought where you would like to go?"

"I have not been able to do much thinking. It required all my wits to act with the present. But I know that I must not be any further trouble to you. You have done more already than any one could expect. If you can have the carriage stop in some quiet, out-of-the-way street where I shall not be noticed, I will get out and relieve you. If I had n't been so frightened at first, I should have had more sense than to burden you this way. I hope some day I shall be able to repay your kindness, though I fear it is too great ever to repay."

"Please don't talk in that way," said he protestingly. "It has been a pleasure to do the little that I have done, and you have more than repaid it by the delight you have given me and my friends. I could not think of leaving you until you are out of your trouble, and if you will only give me a little hint of how to help, I will do my utmost for you. Are you quite sure you were followed? Don't you

think you could trust me enough to tell me a little more about the matter?"

She shuddered visibly.

"Forgive me," he murmured. "I see it distresses you. Of course it is unpleasant to confide in an utter stranger. I will not ask you to tell me. I will try to think for you. Suppose we go to the station and get you a ticket to somewhere. Have you any preference? You can trust me not to tell any one where you have gone, can you not?" There was a kind rebuke in his tone, and her eyes, as she lifted them to his face, were full of tears.

"Oh, I do trust you!" she cried, distressed. "You must not think that, but—you do not understand."

"Forgive me," he said again, holding out his hand in appeal. She laid her little gloved hand in his for an instant.

"You are so kind!" she murmured, as if it were the only thing she could think of. Then she added suddenly:

"But I cannot buy a ticket. I have no money with me, and I——"

"Don't think of that for an instant. I will gladly supply your need. A little loan should not distress you."

"But I do not know when I shall be able to repay it," she faltered, "unless"—she hastily drew off her glove and slipped a glittering ring from her finger—"unless you will let this pay for it. I do not like to trouble you so, but the stone is worth a good deal."

"Indeed," he protested, "I could n't think of taking your ring. Let me do this. It is such a small thing. I shall never miss it. Let it rest until you are out of your trouble, at least."

"Please!" she insisted, holding out the ring. "I shall get right out of this carriage unless you do."

"But perhaps some one gave you the ring, and you are attached to it."

"My father," she answered briefly, "and he would want me to use it this way." She pressed the ring into his hand almost impatiently.

His fingers closed over the jewel impulsively. Somehow, it thrilled him to hold the little thing, yet warm from her fingers. He had forgotten that she was a stranger. His mind was filled with the thought of how best to help her.

"I will keep it until you want it again," he said kindly.

"You need not do that, for I shall not claim it," she declared. "You are at liberty to sell it. I know it is worth a good deal."

"I shall certainly keep it until I am sure you do not want it yourself," he repeated. "Now let us talk about this journey of yours. We are almost at the station. Have you any preference as to where you go? Have you friends to whom you could go?"

She shook her head.

"There are trains to New York every hour almost."

"Oh, no!" she gasped in a frightened tone.

"And to Washington often."

"I should rather not go to Washington," she breathed again.

"Pittsburg, Chicago?" he hazarded.

"Chicago will do," she asserted with relief. Then the carriage stopped before the great station, ablaze with light and throbbing with life. Policemen strolled about, and trolley-cars twinkled in every direction. The girl shrank back into the shadows of the carriage for an instant, as if she feared to come out from the sheltering darkness. Her escort half defined her hesitation.

"Don't feel nervous," he said in a low tone. "I will see that no one harms you. Just walk into the station as if you were my friend. You are, you know, a friend of long standing, for we have been to a dinner together. I might be escorting you home from a concert. No one will notice us. Besides, that hat and coat are disguise enough."

He hurried her through the station and up to the ladies' waiting-room, where he found a quiet corner and a large rocking-chair, in which he placed her so that she might look out of the great window upon the panorama of the evening street, and yet be thoroughly screened from all intruding glances by the big leather and brass screen of the "ladies' bootblack."

He was gone fifteen minutes, during which the girl sat quietly in her chair, yet alert, every nerve strained. At any moment the mass of faces she was watching might reveal one whom she dreaded to see, or a detective might place his hand upon her shoulder with a quiet "Come with me."

When Dunham came back, the nervous start she gave showed him how tense and anxious had been her mind. He studied her lovely face under the great hat, and noted the dark shadows beneath her eyes. He felt that he must do something to relieve her. It was unbearable to him that this young girl should be adrift, friendless, and apparently a victim to some terrible fear.

Drawing up a chair beside her, he began talking about her ticket.

"You must remember I was utterly at your mercy," she smiled sadly. "I simply had to let you help me."

"I should be glad to pay double for the pleasure you have given me in allowing me to help you," he said.

Just at that moment a boy in a blue uniform planted a sole-leather suit-case at his feet, and exclaimed: "Here you are, Mr. Dunham. Had a fierce time findin' you. Thought you said you would be by the elevator door."

"So I did," confessed the young man. "I did n't think you'd had time to get down yet. Well, you found me anyhow, Harkness."

The boy took the silver given him, touched his hat, and sauntered off.

"You see," explained Dunham, "it was n't exactly the thing for you to be travelling without a bit of baggage. I thought it might help them to trace you if you really were being followed. So I took the liberty of phoning over to the club-house and telling the boy to bring down the suit-case that I left there yesterday. I don't exactly know what's in it. I had the man pack it and send it down to me, thinking I might stay all night at the club. Then I went home, after all, and forgot to take it along. It probably has n't anything very appropriate for a lady's costume, but there may be a hair-brush and some soap and handkerchiefs. And, anyhow, if you'll accept it, it'll be something for you to hitch onto. One feels a little lost even for one night without a rag one can call one's own except a Pullman towel. I thought it might give you the appearance of a regular traveller, you know, and not a runaway."

He tried to make her laugh about it, but her face was deeply serious as she looked up at him.

"I think this is the kindest and most thoughtful thing you have done yet," she said. "I don't see how I can ever, ever thank you!"

"Don't try," he returned gaily. "There's your train being called. We'd better go right out and make you comfortable. You are beginning to be very tired."

She did not deny it, but rose to follow him, scanning the waiting-room with one quick, frightened look. An obsequious porter at the gate seized the suit-case and led them in state to the Pullman.

The girl found herself established in the little drawing-room compartment, and her eyes gave him thanks again. She knew the seclusion and the opportunity to lock the compartment door would give her relief from the constant fear that an unwelcome face might at any moment appear beside her.

"The conductor on this train is an old acquaintance of mine," he explained as that official came through the car. "I have taken this trip with him a number of times. Just sit down a minute. I am going to ask him to look out for you and see that no one annoys you."

The burly official looked grimly over his glasses at the sweet face under the big black hat, while Tryon Dunham explained, "She's a friend of mine. I hope you'll be good to her." In answer, he nodded grim assent with a smileless alacrity which was nevertheless satisfactory and comforting. Then the young man walked through the train to interview the porter and the newsboy, and in every way to arrange for a pleasant journey for one who three hours before had been unknown to him. As he went, he reflected that he would rather enjoy being conductor himself just for that night. He felt a strange reluctance

toward giving up the oversight of the young woman whose destiny for a few brief hours had been thrust upon him, and who was about to pass out of his world again.

When he returned to her he found the shades closely drawn and the girl sitting in the sheltered corner of the section, where she could not be seen from the aisle, but where she could watch in the mirror the approach of any one. She welcomed him with a smile, but instantly urged him to leave the train, lest he be carried away.

He laughed at her fears, and told her there was plenty of time. Even after the train had given its preliminary shudder, he lingered to tell her that she must be sure to let him know by telegraph if she needed any further help; and at last swung himself to the platform after the train was in full motion.

Immediately he remembered that he had not given her any money. How could he have forgotten? And there was the North Side Station yet to be passed before she would be out of danger. Why had he not remained on the train until she was past that stop, and then returned on the next train from the little flag-station a few miles above, where he could have gotten the conductor to slow up for him? The swiftly moving cars asked the question as the long train flew by him. The last car was almost past when he made a daring dash and flung himself headlong upon the platform, to the horror of several trainmen who stood on the adjoining tracks.

"Gee!" said one, shaking his head. "What does that dude think he is made of, any way? Like to got his head busted that time, fer sure."

The brakeman, coming out of the car door with his lantern, dragged him to his feet, brushed him off, and scolded him vigorously. The young man hurried through the car, oblivious of the eloquent harangue, happy only to feel the floor jolting beneath his feet, and to know that he was safe on board.

He found the girl sitting where he had left her, only she had flung up the shade of the window next her, and was gazing with wide, frightened eyes into the fast flying darkness. He touched her gently on the shoulder, and she turned with a cry.

"Oh, I thought you had fallen under the train!" she said in an awed voice. "It was going so fast! But you did not get off, after all, did you? Now, what can you do? It is too bad, and all on my account."

"Yes, I got off," he said doggedly, sitting down opposite her and pulling his tie straight. "I got off, but it was n't altogether satisfactory, and so I got on again. There was n't much time for getting on gracefully, but you'll have to excuse it. The fact is, I could n't bear to leave you alone just yet. I could n't rest until I knew you had

passed the North Side Station. Besides, I had forgotten to give you any money."

"Oh, but you mustn't!" she protested, her eyes eloquent with feeling.

"Please don't say that," he went on eagerly. "I can get off later and take the down train, you know. Really, the fact is, I could n't let you go right out of existence this way without knowing more about you."

"Oh!" she gasped, turning a little white about the lips, and drawing closer into her corner.

"Don't feel that way," he said. "I'm not going to bother you. You could n't think that of me, surely. But is n't it only fair that you should show me a little consideration? Just give me an address, or something, where I could let you know if I heard of anything that concerned you. Of course it is n't likely I shall, but it seems to me you might at least let me know you are safe."

"I will promise you that," she said earnestly. "You know I'm going to send you back these things." She touched the cloak and the hat. "You might need them to keep you from having to explain their absence," she reminded him.

The moments fairly flew. They passed the North Side Station, and were nearing the flag station. After that there would be no more stops until past midnight. The young man knew he must get off.

"I have almost a mind to go on to Chicago and see that you are safely located," he said with sudden daring. "It seems too terrible to set you adrift in the world this way."

"Indeed, you must not," said the young woman, with a gentle dignity. "Have you stopped to think what people—what your mother, for instance—would think of me if she were ever to know I had permitted such a thing? You know you must not. Please don't speak of it again."

"I cannot help feeling that I ought to take care of you," he said, but half convinced.

"But I cannot permit it," she said firmly, lifting her trustful eyes to smile at him.

"Will you promise to let me know if you need anything?"

"No, I'm afraid I cannot promise even that," she answered, "because, while you have been a true friend to me, the immediate and awful necessity is, I hope, past."

"You will at least take this," he said, drawing from his pocket an inconspicuous purse of beautiful leather, and putting into it all the money his pockets contained. "I saw you had no pocketbook," he went on, "and I ventured to get this one in the drug-store below the station. Will you accept it from me? I have your ring, you know,

and when you take the ring back you may, if you wish, return the purse. I wish it were a better one, but it was the most decent one they had. You will need it to carry your ticket. And I have put in the change. It would not do for you to be entirely without money. I'm sorry it is n't more. There are only nine dollars and seventy-five cents left. Do you think that will see you through? If there had been any place down-town here where I could cash a check at this time of night, I should have made it more."

He looked at her anxiously as he handed over the pocketbook. It seemed a ridiculously small sum with which to begin a journey alone, especially for a young woman of her apparent refinement. On the other hand, his friends would probably say he was a fool for having hazarded so much as he had upon an unknown woman, who was perhaps an adventuress. However, he had thrown discretion to the winds, and was undeniably interested in his new acquaintance.

"How thoughtful you are!" said the girl. "It would have been most embarrassing not to have a place to put my ticket, nor any money. This seems a fortune after being penniless"—she smiled ruefully. "Are you sure you have not reduced yourself to that condition? Have you saved enough to carry you home?"

"Oh, I have my mileage book with me," he said happily. It pleased him absurdly that she had not declined the pocketbook.

"Thank you so much. I shall return the price of the ticket and this money as soon as possible," said the girl earnestly.

"You must not think of that," he protested. "You know I have your ring. That is far more valuable than anything I have given you."

"Oh, but you said you were going to keep the ring, so that will not pay for this. I want to be sure that you lose nothing."

He suddenly became aware that the train was whistling and that the conductor was motioning him to go.

"But you have not told me your name," he cried in dismay.

"You have named me," she answered, smiling. "I am Mary Remington."

"But that is not your real name."

"You may call me Mary if you like," she said. "Now go, please, quick! I'm afraid you'll get hurt."

"You will remember that I am your friend?"

"Yes, thank you. Hurry, please!"

The train paused long enough for him to step in front of her window and wave his hat in salute. Then she passed on into the night, and only two twinkling lights, like diminishing red berries, marked the progress of the train until it disappeared in the cut. Nothing was left but the hollow echoes of its going, which the hills gave back.

IV.

DUNHAM listened as long as his ear could catch the sound, then a strange desolation settled down upon him. How was it that a few short hours ago he had known nothing, cared nothing, about this stranger? And now her going had left things blank enough! It was foolish, of course—just highly wrought nerves over this most extraordinary occurrence. Life had heretofore run in such smooth, conventional grooves as to have been almost prosaic; and now to be suddenly plunged into romance and mystery unbalanced him for the time. To-morrow, probably, he would again be able to look sane living in the face, and perhaps call himself a fool for his most unusual interest in this chance acquaintance; but just at this moment when he had parted from her; when the memory of her lovely face and pure eyes lingered with him; when her bravery and fear were both so fresh in his mind, and the very sound of her music was still in his brain, he simply could not without a pang turn back again to life which contained no solution of her mystery, no hope of another vision of her face.

The little station behind him was closed, though a light over the desk shone brightly through its front window and the telegraph sounder was clicking busily. The operator had gone over the hill with an important telegram, leaving the station door locked. The platform was windy and cheerless, with a view of a murky swamp, and the sound of deep-throated inhabitants croaking out a late fall concert. A rusty-throated cricket in a crack of the platform wailed a plaintive note now and then, and off beyond the swamp, in the edge of the wood, a screech-owl hooted.

Turning impatiently from the darkness, Dunham sought the bright window, in front of which lay a newspaper. He could read the large headlines of a column—no more, for the paper was upside down, and a bunch of bill-heads lay partly across it. It read

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF YOUNG AND PRETTY WOMAN

His heart stood still, and then went thudding on in dull, horrid blows. Vainly he tried to read further. He followed every visible word of that paper to discover its date and origin, but those miserable bill-heads frustrated his effort. He felt like dashing his hand through the glass, but reflected that the act might result in his being locked up in some miserable country jail. He tried the window and gave the door another vicious shake, but all to no purpose. Finally he turned on his heel and walked up and down for an hour, tramping the length of the shaky platform, back and forth, till the train rumbled up. As he took his seat in the car he saw the belated agent come running up the

platform with a lighted lantern on his arm, and a package of letters, which he handed to the brakeman, but there was not time to beg the newspaper from him. Dunham's indignant mind continued to dwell upon the headlines, to the annoying accompaniment of screech-owl and frog and cricket. He resented the adjective "pretty." Why should any reporter dare to apply that word to a sweet and lovely woman? It seemed so superficial, so belittling, and—but then, of course, this headline did not apply to his new friend. It was some other poor creature, some one to whom perhaps the word "pretty" really applied; some one who was not really beautiful, only pretty.

At the first stop a man in front got out, leaving a newspaper in the seat. With eager hands, Dunham leaned forward and grasped it, searching its columns in vain for the tantalizing headlines. But there were others equally arrestive. This paper announced the mysterious disappearance of a young actress who was suspected of poisoning her husband. When seen last, she was boarding a train en route to Washington. She had not arrived there, however, so far as could be discovered. It was supposed that she was lingering in the vicinity of Philadelphia or Baltimore. There were added a few incriminating details concerning her relationship with her dead husband, and a brief sketch of her sensational life. The paragraph closed with the statement that she was an accomplished musician.

The young man frowned and, opening his window, flung the scandalous sheet to the breeze. He determined to forget what he had read, yet the lines kept coming before his eyes.

When he reached the city he went to the news-stand in the station, where was an agent who knew him, and procured a copy of every paper on sale. Then, instead of hurrying home, he found a seat in a secluded corner and proceeded to examine his purchases.

In large letters on the front page of a New York paper blazed:

HOUSE ROBBED OF JEWELS WORTH TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS
BY BEAUTIFUL YOUNG ADVENTURESS MASQUER-
ADING AS A PARLOR MAID

He ran his eye down the column and gathered that she was still at large, though the entire police force of New York was on her track. He shivered at the thought, and began to feel sympathy for all wrongdoers and truants from the law. It was horrible to have detectives out everywhere watching for beautiful young women, just when this one in whom his interest centred was trying to escape from something.

He turned to another paper, only to be met by the words:

ESCAPE OF FAIR LUNATIC

and underneath:

Prison walls could not confine Miss Nancy Lee, who last week threw a lighted lamp at her mother, setting fire to the house, and then attempted suicide. The young woman seems to have recovered her senses, and professes to know nothing of what happened, but the physicians say she is liable to another attack of insanity, and deem it safe to keep her confined. She escaped during the night, leaving no clew to her whereabouts. How she managed to get open the window through which she left the asylum is still a mystery.

In disgust he flung the paper from him and took up another.

FOUL PLAY SUSPECTED! BEAUTIFUL YOUNG HEIRESS
MISSING!

His soul turned sick within him. He looked up and saw a little procession of late revellers rushing out to the last suburban train, the girls leaving a trail of orris perfume and a vision of dainty opera cloaks. One of the men was a city friend of his. Dunham half envied him his unperturbed mind. To be sure, he would not get back to the city till three in the morning, but he would have no visions of robberies and fair lunatics and hard pressed maidens unjustly pursued, to mar his rest.

Dunham buttoned his coat and turned up his collar as he started out into the street, for the night had turned cold, and his nerves made him chilly. As he walked, the blood began to race more healthily in his veins, and the horrors of the evening papers were dispelled. In their place came pleasant memories of the evening at Mrs. Bowman's, of the music, and of their ride and talk together. In his heart a hope began to rise that her dark days would pass, and that he might find her again and know her better.

His brief night's sleep was cut short by a sharp knock at his door the next morning. He awoke with a confused idea of being on a sleeping-car, and wondered if he had plenty of time to dress, but his sister's voice quickly dispelled the illusion.

"Tryon, aren't you almost ready to come down to breakfast? Do hurry, please. I've something awfully important to consult you about."

His sister's tone told him there was need for haste if he would keep in her good graces, so he made a hurried toilet and went down, to find his household in a state of subdued excitement.

"I'm just as worried as I can be," declared his mother. "I want to consult you, Tryon. I have put such implicit confidence in Norah, and I cannot bear to accuse her unjustly, but I have missed a number of little things lately. There was my gold link bag——"

"Mother, you know you said you were sure you left that at the Century Club."

"Don't interrupt, Cornelia. Of course it is possible I left it at the club rooms, but I begin to think now I did n't have it with me at all. Then there is my opal ring. To be sure, it is n't worth a great deal, but one who will take little things will take large ones."

"What's the matter, Mother? Norah been appropriating property not her own?"

"I'm very much afraid she has, Tryon. What would you do about it? It is so unpleasant to charge a person with stealing. It is such a vulgar thing to steal. Somehow I thought Norah was more refined."

"Why, I suppose there's nothing to do but just charge her with it, is there? Are you quite sure it is gone? What is it, any way? A ring, did you say?"

"No, it's a hat," said Cornelia shortly. "A sixty-dollar hat. I wish I'd kept it now, and then she would n't have dared. It had two beautiful willow ostrich plumes on it, but mother did n't think it was becoming. She wanted some color about it instead of all black. I left it in my room, and charged Norah to see that the man got it when he called, and now the man comes and says he wants the hat, and it is *gone!* Norah insists that when she last saw it, it was in my room. But of course that's absurd, for there was nobody else to take it but Thompson, and he's been in the family for so long."

"Nonsense!" said her brother sharply, dropping his fruit knife in his plate with a rattle that made the young woman jump. "Cornelia, I'm ashamed of you, thinking that poor, innocent girl has stolen your hat. Why, she would n't steal a pin, I am sure. You can tell she's honest by looking into her eyes. Girls with blue eyes like that don't lie and steal."

"Really!" Cornelia remarked haughtily. "You seem to know a great deal about her eyes. You may feel differently when I find the hat in her possession."

"Cornelia," interrupted Tryon, quite beside himself, "don't think of such a thing as speaking to that poor girl about that hat. I know she has n't stolen it. The hat will probably be found, and then how will you feel?"

"But I tell you the hat cannot be found!" said the exasperated sister. "And I shall just have to pay for a hat that I can never wear."

"Mother, I appeal to you," said the son earnestly. "Don't allow Cornelia to speak of the hat to the girl. I would n't have such an injustice done in our house. The hat will turn up soon if you just go about the matter calmly. You'll find it quite naturally and unexpectedly, perhaps. Any way, if you don't, I'll pay for the hat, rather than have the girl suspected."

"But, Tryon," protested his mother, "if she is n't honest, you know we would n't want her about."

"Honest, Mother? She's as honest as the day is long. I am certain of that."

The mother rose reluctantly.

"Well, we might let it go another day," she consented. Then, looking up at the sky, she added, "I wonder if it is going to rain. I have a Reciprocity meeting on for to-day, and I'm a delegate to some little unheard-of place. It usually does rain when one goes into the country, I've noticed."

She went into the hall, and presently returned with a distressed look upon her face.

"Tryon, I'm afraid you're wrong," she said. "Now my rain-coat is missing. My new rain-coat! I hung it up in the hall-closet with my own hands, after it came from the store. I really think something ought to be done!"

"There! I hope you see!" said Cornelia severely. "I think it's high time something was done. I shall phone for a detective at once!"

"Cornelia, you'll do nothing of the kind," her brother protested, now thoroughly aroused. "I'll agree to pay for the hat and the rain-coat if they are not forthcoming before a fortnight passes, but you simply shall not ruin that poor girl's reputation. I insist, Mother, that you put a stop to such rash proceedings. I'll make myself personally responsible for that girl's honesty."

"Well, of course, Tryon, if you wish it——" said his mother, with anxious hesitation.

"I certainly do wish it, Mother. I shall take it as personal if anything is done in this matter without consulting me. Remember, Cornelia, I will not have any trifling. A girl's reputation is certainly worth more than several hats and rain-coats, and I *know* she has not taken them."

He walked from the dining-room and from the house in angry dignity, to the astonishment of his mother and sister, to whom he was usually courtesy itself. Consulting him about household matters was as a rule merely a form, for he almost never interfered. The two women looked at each other in startled bewilderment.

"Mother," said Cornelia, "you don't suppose he can have fallen in love with Norah, do you? Why, she's Irish and freckled! And Tryon has always been so fastidious!"

"Cornelia! How dare you suggest such a thing? Tryon is a *Dunham*. Whatever else a *Dunham* may or may not do, he never does anything low or unrefined."

The small, prim, stylish mother looked quite regal in her aristocratic rage.

"But, Mother, one reads such dreadful things in the papers now. Of course Tryon would never *marry* any one like that, but——"

“Cornelia!”—her mother’s voice had almost reached a patrician scream—“I forbid you to mention the subject again. I cannot think where you learned to voice such thoughts.”

“Well, my goodness, Mother, I don’t mean anything, only I do wish I had my hat. I always did like all black. I can’t imagine what ails Try, if it is n’t that.”

Tryon Dunham took his way to his office much perturbed in mind. Perplexities seemed to be thickening about him. With the dawn of the morning had come that sterner common-sense which told him he was a fool for having taken up with a strange young woman on the street, who was so evidently flying from justice. He had deceived not only his intimate friends by palming her off as a fit companion for them, but his mother and sister. He had practically stolen their garments, and had squandered more than fifty dollars of his own money. And what had he to show for all this? The memory of a sweet face, the lingering beauty of the name “Mary” when she bade him good-by, and a diamond ring. The cool morning light presented the view that the ring was probably valueless, and that he was a fool.

Ah, the ring! A sudden warm thrill shot through him, and his hand searched his vest pocket, where he had hastily put the jewel before leaving his room. That was something tangible. He could at least know what it was worth, and so make sure once for all whether he had been deceived. No, that would not be fair either, for her father might have made her think it was valuable, or he might even have been taken in himself, if he were not a judge of jewels.

Dunham examined it as he walked down the street, too perplexed with his own tumultuous thoughts to remember his usual trolley. He slipped the ring on his finger and let it catch the morning sunlight, now shining broad and clear in spite of the hovering rain-clouds in the distance. And gloriously did the sun illumine the diamond, burrowing into the great depths of its clear white heart, and causing it to break into a million fires of glory, flashing and glancing until it fairly dazzled him. The stone seemed to be of unusual beauty and purity, but he would step into the diamond shop as he passed and make sure. He had a friend there who could tell him all about it. His step quickened, and he covered the distance in a short time.

After the morning greeting, he handed over his ring.

“This belongs to a friend of mine,” he said, trying to look unconcerned. “I should like to know if the stone is genuine, and about what it is worth.”

His friend took the ring and retired behind a curious little instrument for the eye, presently emerging with a respectful look upon his face.

“Your friend is fortunate to have such a beautiful stone. It is

unusually clear and white, and exquisitely cut. I should say it was worth at least"—he paused and then named a sum which startled Dunham, even accustomed as he was to counting values in high figures. He took the jewel back with a kind of awe. Where had his mysterious lady acquired this wondrous bauble which she had tossed to him for a trifle? In a tumult of feeling, he went on to his office more perplexed than ever. Suspicions of all sorts crowded thickly into his mind, but for every thought that shadowed the fair reputation of the lady, there came into his mind her clear eyes and cast out all doubts. Finally, after a bad hour of trying to work, he slipped the ring on his little finger, determined to wear it and thus prove to himself his belief in her, at least until he had absolute proof against her. Then he took up his hat and went out, deciding to accept Judge Blackwell's invitation to visit his office. He found a cordial reception, and the Judge talked business in a most satisfactory manner. His proposals bade fair to bring about some of the dearest wishes of the young man's heart, and yet as he left the building he was thinking more about the mysterious stranger who had disappeared from the Judge's office the day before than about the wonderful good luck that had come to him in a business way.

They had not talked much about her. The Judge had brought out her hat—a beautiful velvet one, with exquisite plumes—her gloves, a costly leather purse, and a fine hemstitched handkerchief, and as he put them sadly away on a closet shelf, he said no trace of her had as yet been found.

On his way toward his own office, Tryon Dunham pondered the remarkable coincidence which had made him the possessor of two parts of the same mystery—for he had no doubt that the hat belonged to the young women who had claimed his help the evening before.

Meantime, the girl who was speeding along toward Chicago had not forgotten him. She could not if she would, for all about her were reminders of him. The conductor took charge of her ticket, telling her in his gruff, kind way what time they would arrive in the city. The porter was solicitous about her comfort, the newsboy brought the latest magazines and a box of chocolates and laid them at her shrine with a smile of admiration and the words, "Th' g'n'lmun sent 'em!" The suit-case lay on the seat opposite, the reflection of her face in the window-glass, as she gazed into the inky darkness outside, was crowned by the hat he had provided, and when she moved the silken rustle of the rain-coat reminded her of his kindness and forethought. She put her head back and closed her eyes, and for just an instant let her weary, overwrought mind think what it would mean if the man from whom she was fleeing had been such as this one seemed to be.

By and by, she opened the suit-case, half doubtfully, feeling that she was almost intruding upon another's possessions.

There were a dress-suit and a change of fine linen, handkerchiefs, neckties, a pair of gloves, a soft, black felt negligée hat folded, a large black silk muffler, a bath-robe, and the usual silver-mounted brushes, combs, and other toilet articles. She looked them over in a business-like way, trying to see how she could make use of them. Removing her hat, she covered it with the silk muffler, to protect it from dust. Then she took off her dress and wrapped herself in the soft bath-robe, wondering as she did so at her willingness to put on a stranger's garments. Somehow, in her brief acquaintance with this man, he had impressed her with his own pleasant fastidiousness, so that there was a kind of pleasure in using his things, as if they had been those of a valued friend.

She touched the electric button that controlled the lights in the little apartment, and lay down in the darkness to think out her problem of the new life that lay before her.

V.

BEGINNING with the awful moment when she first realized her danger and the necessity for immediate flight, she lived over every perilous instant, her nerves straining, her breath bated as if she were experiencing it all once more. The horror of it! Her own hopeless, helpless condition! But finally, because her trouble was new and her body and mind, though worn with excitement, were healthy and young, she sank into a deep sleep, without having decided at all what she should do.

At last she woke from a terrible dream, in which the hand of her pursuer was upon her, and her preserver was in the dark distance. With that strange insistence which torments the victim of such dreams, she was obliged to lie still and imagine it out, again and again, until the face and voice of the young man grew very real in the darkness, and she longed inexpressibly for the comfort of his presence once more.

At length she shook off these pursuing thoughts and deliberately roused herself to plan her future.

The first necessity, she decided, was to change her appearance so far as possible, so that if news of her escape, with full description, had been telegraphed, she might evade notice. To that end, she arose in the early dawning of a gray and misty morning, and arranged her hair as she had never worn it before, in two braids and wound closely about her head. It was neat, and appropriate to the vocation which she had decided upon, and it made more difference in her appearance than any other thing she could have done. All the soft, fluffy fullness of rippling hair that had framed her face was drawn close to her head,

and the smooth bands gave her the simplicity and severity of a saint in some old picture. She pinned up her gown until it did not show below the long black coat, and folded a white linen handkerchief about her throat over the delicate lace and garniture of the modish waist. Then she looked dubiously at the hat.

With a girl's instinct, her first thought was for her borrowed plumage. A fine mist was slanting down and had fretted the window-pane until there was nothing visible but dull gray shadows of a world that flew monotonously by. With sudden remembrance, she opened the suit-case and took out the folded black hat, shook it into shape, and put it on. It was mannish, of course, but girls often wore such hats.

As she surveyed herself in the long mirror of her door, the slow color stole into her cheeks. Yet the costume was not unbecoming, nor unusual. She looked like a simple school-girl, or a young business woman going to her day's work.

But she looked at the fashionable proportions of the other hat with something like alarm. How could she protect it? She did not for a moment think of abandoning it, for it was her earnest desire to return it at once, unharmed, to its kind purloiner.

She summoned the newsboy and purchased three thick newspapers. From these, with the aid of a few pins, she made a large package of the hat. To be sure, it did not look like a hat when it was done, but that was all the better. The feathers were upheld and packed softly about with bits of paper crushed together to make a springy cushion, and the whole built out and then covered over with paper. She reflected that girls who wore their hair wound about their heads and covered by plain felt hats would not be unlikely to carry large newspaper-wrapped packages through the city streets.

She decided to go barehanded, and put the white kid gloves in the suit-case, but she took off her beautiful rings, and hid them safely inside her dress.

When the porter came to announce that her breakfast was waiting in the dining-car, he looked at her almost with a start, but she answered his look with a pleasant, "Good morning, You see I'm fixed for a damp day."

"Yes, miss," said the man deferentially. "It's a nasty day outside. I 'spect Chicago'll be mighty wet. De wind's off de lake, and de rain's comin' from all ways 'twoncet."

She sacrificed one of her precious quarters to get rid of the attentive porter, and started off with a brisk step down the long platform to the station. It was part of her plan to get out of the neighborhood as quickly as possible, so she followed the stream of people who instead of going into the waiting-room veered off to the street door and out into the great, wet, noisy world. With the same reasoning, she followed

a group of people into a car, which presently brought her into the neighborhood of the large stores, as she had hoped it would. It was with relief that she recognized the name on one of the stores as being of world-wide reputation.

Well for her that she was an experienced shopper. She went straight to the millinery department and arranged to have the hat boxed and sent to the address Dunham had given her. Her gentle voice and handsome rain-coat proclaimed her a lady and commanded deference and respectful attention. As she walked away, she had an odd feeling of having communicated with her one friend and preserver.

It had cost less to express the hat than she had feared, yet her stock of money was woefully small. Some kind of a dress she must have, and a wrap, that she might be disguised, but what could she buy and yet have something left for food? There was no telling how long it would be before she could replenish her purse. Life must be reduced to its lowest terms. True, she had jewelry which might be sold, but that would scarcely be safe, for if she were watched, she might easily be identified by it. What did the very poor do, who were yet respectable?

The ready-made coats and skirts were entirely beyond her means, even those that had been marked down. With a hopeless feeling, she walked aimlessly down between the tables of goods. The suit-case weighed like lead, and she put it on the floor to rest her aching arms. Lifting her eyes, she saw a sign over a table—"Linene Skirts, 75 cts. and \$1.00."

Here was a ray of hope. She turned eagerly to examine them. Piles of sombre skirts, blue and black and tan. They were stout and coarse and scant, and not of the latest cut, but what mattered it? She decided on a seventy-five cent black one. It seemed pitiful to have to economize in a matter of twenty-five cents, when she had been used to counting her money by dollars, yet there was a feeling of exultation at having gotten for that price any skirt at all that would do. A dim memory of what she had read about ten-cent lodging-houses, where human beings were herded like cattle, hovered over her.

Growing wise with experience, she discovered that she could get a black sateen shirt-waist for fifty cents. Rubbers and a cotton umbrella took another dollar and a half. She must save at least a dollar to send back the suit-case by express.

A bargain table of odds and ends of woollen jackets, golf vests, and old fashioned blouse sweaters, selling off at a dollar apiece, solved the problem of a wrap. She selected a dark blouse, of an ugly, purply blue, but thick and warm. Then with her precious packages she asked a pleasant-faced saleswoman if there were any place near where she could slip on a walking skirt she had just bought to save her other

skirt from the muddy streets. She was ushered into a little fitting-room near by. It was only about four feet square, with one chair and a tiny table, but it looked like a palace to the girl in her need, and as she fastened the door and looked at the bare painted walls that reached but a foot or so above her head and had no ceiling, she wished with all her heart that such a refuge as this might be her own somewhere in the great, wide, fearful world.

Rapidly she slipped off her fine, silk-lined cloth garments, and put on the stiff sateen waist and the coarse black skirt. Then she surveyed herself, and was not ill pleased. There was a striking lack of collar and belt. She sought out a black necktie and pinned it about her waist, and then, with a protesting frown, she deliberately tore a strip from the edge of one of the fine hem-stitched handkerchiefs, and folded it in about her neck in a turn-over collar. The result was quite startling and unfamiliar. The gown, the hair, the hat, and the neat collar gave her the look of a young nurse-girl or upper servant. On the whole, the disguise could not have been better. She added the blue woollen blouse, and felt certain that even her most intimate friends would not recognize her. She folded the rain-coat, and placed it smoothly in the suit-case, then with dismay remembered that she had nothing in which to put her own cloth dress, save the few inadequate paper wrappings that had come about her simple purchases. Vainly she tried to reduce the dress to a bundle that would be covered by the papers. It was of no use. She looked down at the suit-case. There was room for the dress in there, but she wanted to send Mr. Dunham's property back at once. She might leave the dress in the store, but some detective with an accurate description of that dress might be watching, find it, and trace her. Besides, she shrank from leaving her garments about in public places. If there had been any bridge near at hand where she might unobserved throw the dress into a dark river, or a consuming fire where she might dispose of it, she would have done it. But whatever she was to do with it must be done at once. Her destiny must be settled before the darkness came down. She folded the dress smoothly and laid it in the suit-case, under the rain-coat.

She sat down at a writing-desk, in the waiting-room, and wrote: "I am safe, and I thank you." Then she paused an instant, and with nervous haste wrote "Mary" underneath. She opened the suit-case and pinned the paper to the lapel of the evening coat. Just three dollars and sixty-seven cents she had left in her pocket-book after paying the expressage on the suit-case.

She felt doubtful whether she might not have done wrong about thus sending her dress back, but what else could she have done? If she had bought a box in which to put it, she would have had to carry it with her, and perhaps the dress might have been found during her

absence from her room, and she suspected because of it. At any rate, it was too late now, and she felt sure the young man would understand. She hoped it would not inconvenience him especially to get rid of it. Surely he could give it to some charitable organization without much trouble.

At her first waking, in the early gray hours of the morning, she had looked her predicament calmly in the face. It was entirely likely that it would continue indefinitely; it might be, throughout her whole life. She could now see no way of help for herself. Time might, perhaps, give her a friend who would assist her, or a way might open back into her old life in some unthought-of manner, but for a time there must be hiding and a way found to earn her living.

She had gone carefully over her own accomplishments. Her musical attainments, which would naturally have been the first thought, were out of the question. Her skill as a musician was so great, and so well known by her enemy, that she would probably be traced by it at once. As she looked back at the hour spent at Mrs. Bowman's piano, she shuddered at the realization that it might have been her undoing, had it chanced that her enemy passed the house, with a suspicion that she was inside. She would never dare to seek a position as accompanist, and she knew how futile it would be for her to attempt to teach music in an unknown city, among strangers. She might starve to death before a single pupil appeared. Besides, that too would put her in a position where she would be more easily found. The same arguments were true if she were to attempt to take a position as teacher or governess, although she was thoroughly competent to do so. Rapidly rejecting all the natural resources which under ordinary circumstances she would have used to maintain herself, she determined to change her station entirely, at least for the present. She would have chosen to do something in a little, quiet hired room somewhere, sewing or decorating or something of the sort, but that too would be hopelessly out of her reach, without friends to aid her. A servant's place in some one's home was the only thing possible that presented itself to her mind. She could not cook, nor do general housework, but she thought she could fill the place of waitress.

With a brave face, but a shrinking heart, she stepped into a drug-store and looked up in the directory the addresses of several employment agencies.

VI.

It was half past eleven when she stepped into the first agency on her list, and business was in full tide.

While she stood shrinking by the door the eyes of a dozen women fastened upon her, each with keen scrutiny. The sensitive color stole

into her delicate cheeks. As the proprietress of the office began to question her, she felt her courage failing.

"You wish a position?" The woman had a nose like a hawk, and eyes that held no sympathy. "What do you want? General housework?"

"I should like a position as waitress." Her voice was low and sounded frightened to herself.

The hawk nose went up contemptuously.

"Better take general housework. There are too many waitresses already."

"I understand the work of a waitress, but I never have done general housework," she answered with the voice of a gentlewoman, which somehow angered the hawk, who had trained herself to get the advantage over people and keep it or else know the reason why.

"Very well, do as you please, of course, but you bite your own nose off. Let me see your references."

The girl was ready for this.

"I am sorry, but I cannot give you any. I have lived only in one home, where I had entire charge of the table and dining-room, and that home was broken up when the people went abroad three years ago. I could show you letters written by the mistress of that home if I had my trunk here, but it is in another city, and I do not know when I shall be able to send for it."

"No references!" screamed the hawk, then raising her voice, although it was utterly unnecessary: "Ladies, here is a girl who has no references. Do any of you want to venture?" The contemptuous laugh that followed had the effect of a warning to every woman in the room. "And this girl scorns general housework, and presumes to dictate for a place as waitress," went on the hawk.

"I want a waitress badly," said a troubled woman in a subdued whisper, "but I really would n't dare take a girl without references. She might be a thief, you know, and then—really, she does n't look as if she was used to houses like mine. I must have a neat, stylish-looking girl. No self-respecting waitress nowadays would go out in the street dressed like that."

All the eyes in the room seemed boring through the poor girl as she stood trembling, humiliated, her cheeks burning, while horrified tears demanded to be let up into her eyes. She held her dainty head proudly, and turned away with dignity.

"However, if you care to try," called out the hawk, "you can register at the desk and leave two dollars, and if in the mean time you can think of anybody who'll give us a reference, we'll look it up. But we never guarantee girls without references."

The tears were too near the surface now for her even to acknowledge

this information flung at her in an unpleasant voice. She went out of the office, and immediately,—surreptitiously,—two women hurried after her.

One was flabby, large, and overdressed, with a pasty complexion and eyes like a fish, in which was a lack of all moral sense. She hurried after the girl and took her by the shoulder just as she reached the top of the stairs that led down into the street.

The other was a small, timid woman, with anxiety and indecision written all over her, and a last year's street suit with the sleeves remodelled. When she saw who had stopped the girl, she lingered behind in the hall and pretended there was something wrong with the braid on her skirt. While she lingered she listened.

"Wait a minute, Miss," said the flashy woman. "You need n't feel bad about having references. Everybody is n't so particular. You come with me, and I'll put you in the way of earning more than you can ever get as a waitress. You were n't cut out for work, any way, with that face and voice. I've been watching you. You were meant for a lady. You need to be dressed up, and you'll be a real pretty girl——"

As she talked, she had come nearer, and now she leaned over and whispered so that the timid woman, who was beginning dimly to perceive what manner of creature this other woman was, could not hear.

But the girl stepped back with sudden energy and flashing eyes, shaking off the beringed hand that had grasped her shoulder.

"Don't you dare to speak to me!" she said in a loud, clear voice. "Don't you dare to touch me! You are a wicked woman! If you touch me again, I will go in there and tell all those women how you have insulted me!"

"Oh, well, if you're a saint, starve!" hissed the woman.

"I should rather starve ten thousand times than take help from you," said the girl, and her clear, horrified eyes seemed to burn into the woman's evil face. She turned and slid away, like the wily old serpent that she was.

Down the stairs like lightning sped the girl, her head up in pride and horror, her eyes still flashing. And down the stairs after her sped the little, anxious woman, panting and breathless, determined to keep her in sight till she could decide whether it was safe to take a girl without a character—yet who had just shown a bit of her character unaware.

Two blocks from the employment office the girl paused, to realize that she was walking blindly, without any destination. She was trembling so with terror that she was not sure whether she had the courage to enter another office, and a long vista of undreamed-of fears arose in her imagination.

The little woman paused, too, eying the girl cautiously, then began in an eager voice:

"I've been following you."

The girl started nervously, a cold chill of fear coming over her. Was this a woman detective?

"I heard what that awful woman said to you, and I saw how you acted. You must be a good girl, or you would n't have talked to her that way. I suppose I'm doing a dangerous thing, but I can't help it. I believe you're all right, and I'm going to try you, if you'll take general housework. I need somebody right away, for I'm going to have a dinner party to-morrow night, and my girl left me this morning."

The kind tone in the midst of her troubles brought tears to the girl's eyes.

"Oh, thank you!" she said as she brushed the tears away. "I'm a stranger here, and I have never before been among strangers this way. I'd like to come and work for you, but I could n't do general housework, I'm sure. I never did it, and I would n't know how."

"Can't you cook a little? I could teach you my ways."

"I don't know the least thing about cooking. I never cooked a thing in my life."

"What a pity! What was your mother thinking about? Every girl ought to be brought up to know a little about cooking, even if she does have some other employment."

"My mother has been dead a good many years." The tears brimmed over now, but the girl tried to smile. "I could help you with your dinner party," she went on. "That is, I know all about setting the tables and arranging the flowers and favors. I could paint the place-cards, too—I've done it many a time. And I could wait on the table. But I could n't cook even an oyster."

"Oh, place-cards!" said the little woman, her eyes brightening. She caught at the word as though she had descried a new star in the firmament. "I wish I could have them. They cost so much to buy. I might have my washerwoman come and help with the cooking. She cooks pretty well, and I could help her beforehand, but she could n't wait on table, to save her life. I wonder if you know much about menus. Could you help me fix out the courses and say what you think I ought to have, or don't you know about that? You see, I have this very particular company coming, and I want to have things nice. I don't know them very well. My husband has business relations with them and wants them invited, and of all times for Betty to leave this was the worst!" She had unconsciously fallen into a tone of equality with the strange girl.

"I should like to help you," said the girl, "but I must find some-

where to stay before night, and if I find a place I must take it. I just came to the city this morning, and have nowhere to stay overnight."

The troubled look flitted across the woman's face for a moment, but her desire got the better of her.

"I suppose my husband would think I was crazy to do it," she said aloud, "but I just can't help trusting you. Suppose you come and stay with me to-day and to-morrow, and help me out with this dinner party, and you can stay overnight at my house and sleep in the cook's room. If I like your work, I'll give you a recommendation as waitress. You can't get a good place anywhere without it, not from the offices, I'm sure. A recommendation ought to be worth a couple of days' work to you. I'd pay you something besides, but I really can't afford it, for the washerwoman charges a dollar and a half a day when she goes out to cook; but if you get your board and lodging and a reference, that ought to pay you."

"You are very kind," said the girl. "I shall be glad to do that."

"When will you come? Can you go with me now, or have you got to go after your things?"

"I have n't any things but these," she said simply, "and perhaps you will not think I am fine enough for your dinner party. I have a little money. I could buy a white apron. My trunk is a good many miles away, and I was in desperate straits and had to leave it."

"H'm! A stepmother, probably," thought the kindly little woman. "Poor child! She does n't look as if she was used to roughing it. If I could only hold on to her and train her, she might be a treasure, but there's no telling what John will say. I won't tell him anything about her, if I can help it, till the dinner is over."

Aloud she said: "Oh, that won't be necessary. I've got a white apron I'll lend you—perhaps I'll give it to you if you do your work well. Then we can fix up some kind of a waitress's cap out of a lace-edged handkerchief, and you'll look fine. I'd rather do that and have you come right along home with me, for everything is at sixes and sevens. Betty went off without washing the breakfast dishes. You can wash dishes, any way."

"Why, I can try," laughed the girl, the ridiculousness of her present situation suddenly getting the better of other emotions.

And so they got into a car and were whirled away into a pretty suburb. The woman, whose name was Mrs. Hart, lived in a common little house filled with imitation oriental rugs and cheap furniture.

The two went to work at once, bringing order out of the confusion that reigned in the tiny kitchen. In the afternoon the would-be waitress sat down with a box of water-colors to paint dinner-cards, and as her skilful brush brought into being dainty landscapes, lovely flowers, and little brown birds, she pondered the strangeness of her lot.

The table the next night was laid with exquisite care, the scant supply of flowers having been used to best advantage, and everything showing the touch of a skilled hand. The long hours that Mrs. Hart had spent puckering her brow over the household department of fashion magazines helped her to recognize the fact that in her new maid she had what she was pleased to call "the real thing."

She sighed regretfully when her guest of honor, Mrs. Rhinehart, spoke of the deftness and pleasant appearance of her hostess's waitress.

"Yes," Mrs. Hart said, swelling with pride, "she is a treasure. I only wish I could keep her."

"She's going to get married, I suppose. They all do when they're good," sympathized the guest.

"No, but she simply won't do cooking, and I really have n't work enough for two servants in this little house."

The guest sat up and took notice.

"You don't mean to tell me that you are letting a girl like that slip through your fingers? I wish I had known about her. I have spent three days in intelligence offices. Is there any chance for me, do you think?"

Then did the little woman prove that she should have had an *e* in her name, for she burst into a most voluble account of the virtues of her new maid, until the other woman was ready to hire her on the spot. The result of it all was that "Mary" was summoned to an interview with Mrs. Rhinehart in the dining-room, and engaged at four dollars a week, with every other Sunday afternoon and every other Thursday out, and her uniforms furnished.

The next morning Mr. Hart gave her a dollar-bill and told her that he appreciated the help she had given them, and wanted to pay her something for it.

She thanked him graciously and took the money with a kind of awe. Her first earnings! It seemed so strange to think that she had really earned some money, she who had always had all she wanted without lifting a finger.

She went to a store and bought a hair-brush and a few little things that she felt were necessities, with a fifty-cent straw telescope in which to put them. Thus, with her modest baggage, she entered the home of Mrs. Rhinehart, and ascended to a tiny room on the fourth floor, in which were a cot and a washstand, a cracked mirror, one chair, and one window. Mrs. Rhinehart had planned that the waitress should room with the cook, but the girl had insisted that she must have a room alone, no matter how small, and they had compromised on this unused, ill-furnished spot.

As she took off the felt hat, she wondered what its owner would think if he could see her now, and she brushed a fleck of dust gently

from the felt, as if in apology for its humble surroundings. Then she smoothed her hair, put on the apron Mrs. Hart had given her, and descended to her new duties as maid in a fashionable home.

VII.

THREE days later Tryon Dunham entered the office of Judge Blackwell by appointment. After the business was completed the Judge said with a smile: "Well, our mystery is solved. The little girl is all safe. She telephoned me just after you had left the other day, and sent her maid after her hat. It seems that while she stood by the window, looking down into the street, she saw an automobile containing some of her friends. It stopped at the next building. Being desirous of speaking with a girl friend who was seated in the auto, she hurried out to the elevator, hoping to catch them. The elevator boy who took her down-stairs went off duty immediately, which accounts for our not finding any trace of her, and he was kept at home by illness the next morning. The young woman caught her friends, and they insisted that she should get in and ride to the station with one of them who was leaving the city at once. They loaned her a veil and a wrap, and promised to bring her right back for her papers and other possessions, but the train was late, and when they returned the building was closed. The two men who called for her were her brother and a friend of his, it seems. I must say they were not so attractive as she is. However, the mystery is solved, and I got well laughed at by my wife for my fears."

But the young man was puzzling how this all could be if the hat belonged to the girl he knew—to "Mary." When he left the Judge's office, he went to his club, determined to have a little quiet for thinking it over.

Matters at home had not been going pleasantly. There had been an ominous cloud over the breakfast table. The bill for the hat had arrived from Madame Dollard's, and Cornelia had laid it impressively by his plate. Even his mother had looked at him with a glance that spoke volumes as she remarked that it would be necessary for her to have a new rain-coat before another storm came.

There had been a distinct coolness between Tryon Dunham and his mother and sister ever since the morning when the loss of the hat and rain-coat was announced. Or did it date from the evening of that day when both mother and sister had noticed the beautiful ring which he wore? They had exclaimed over the flash of the diamond, and its peculiar pureness and brilliancy, and Cornelia had been quite disagreeable when he refused to take it off for her to examine. He had replied to his mother's question by saying that the ring belonged to a friend of his. He knew his mother was hurt by the answer, but what more

could he do at present? True, he might have taken the ring off and prevented further comment, but it had come to him to mean loyalty to and belief in the girl whom he had so strangely been permitted to help. It was therefore in deep perplexity that he betook himself to his club and sat down in a far corner to meditate. He was annoyed when the office-boy appeared to tell him there were some packages awaiting him in the office.

"Bring them to me here, Henry."

The boy hustled away, and soon came back, bearing two hat-boxes—one of them in a crate—and the heavy leather suit-case.

With a start of surprise, Dunham sat up in his comfortable chair.

"Say, Henry, those things ought not to come in here." He glanced anxiously about, and was relieved to find that there was only one old gentleman in the room, and that he was asleep. "Suppose we go up to a private room with them. Take them out to the elevator, and I'll come in a moment."

"All right, sah."

"And say, Henry, suppose you remove that crate from the box. Then it won't be so heavy to carry."

"All right, sah. I'll be thah in jest a minute."

The young man hurried out to the elevator, and he and Henry made a quick ascent to a private room. He gave the boy a round fee, and was left in quiet to examine his property.

As he fumbled with the strings of the first box his heart beat wildly, and he felt the blood mounting to his face. Was he about to solve the mystery which had surrounded the girl in whom his interest had now grown so deep that he could scarcely get her out of his mind for a few minutes at a time?

But the box was empty, save for some crumpled white tissue-paper. He took up the cover in perplexity and saw his own name written by himself. Then he remembered. This was the box he had sent down to the club by the cabman, to get it out of his way. He felt disappointed, and turned quickly to the other box and cut the cord. This time he was rewarded by seeing the great black hat, beautiful and unhurt in spite of its journey to Chicago. The day was saved, and also the reputation of his mother's maid. But was there no word from the beautiful stranger? He searched hurriedly through the wrappings, pulled out the hat quite unceremoniously, and turned the box upside down, but nothing else could he find. Then he went at the suit-case. Yes, there was the rain-coat. He took it out triumphantly, for now his mother could say nothing, and, moreover, was not his trust in the fair stranger justified? He had done well to believe in her. He began to take out the other garments, curious to see what had been there for her use.

A long, golden brown hair nestling on the collar of the bathrobe

gleamed in a chance ray of sunlight. He looked at it reverently, and laid the garment down carefully, that it might not be disturbed. As he lifted the coat, he saw the little note pinned to the lapel, and seized it eagerly. Surely this would tell him something!

But no, there was only the message that she had arrived safely, and her thanks. Stay, she had signed her name "Mary." She had told him he might call her that. Could it be that it was her real name, and that she had meant to trust him with so much of her true story?

He pondered the delicate writing of the note, thinking how like her it seemed, then he put the note in an inner pocket and thoughtfully lifted out the evening clothes. It was then that he touched the silken lined cloth of her dress, and he drew back almost as if he had ventured roughly upon something sacred. Startled, awed, he looked upon it, and then with gentle fingers lifted it and laid it upon his knee. Her dress! The one she had worn to the dinner with him! What did it all mean? Why was it here, and where was she?

He spread it out across his lap and looked at it almost as if it hid her presence. He touched with curious, wistful fingers the lace and delicate garniture about the waist, as if he would appeal to it to tell the story of her who had worn it.

What did its presence here mean? Did it bear some message? He searched carefully, but found nothing further. Had she reached a place of safety where she did not need the dress? No, for in that case, why should she have sent it to him? Had she been desperate perhaps, and—— But no, he would not think such things of her.

Gradually, as he looked, the gown told its own story, as she had thought it would: how she had been obliged to put on a disguise, and this was the only way to hide her own dress. Gradually he came to feel a great pleasure in the fact that she had trusted him with it. She had known he would understand, and perhaps had not had time to make further explanation. But if she had need of a disguise, she was still in danger! Oh, why had she not given him some clue? He dropped his head upon his hand in troubled perplexity.

A faint perfume of violets stole upon his senses from the dress lying across his knees. He touched it tenderly, and then half shamefacedly laid his cheek against it, breathing in the perfume. But he put it down quickly, looking quite foolish, and reminded himself that the girl was still a stranger, and that she might belong to another.

Then he thought again of the story the Judge had told him, and of his own first conviction that the two young women were identical. Could that be? Why could he not discover who the other girl was, and get some one to introduce him? He resolved to interview the Judge about it at their next meeting. In the meantime, he must wait and hope for further word from Mary. Surely she would write him again,

and claim her ring perhaps, and, as she had been so thoughtful about returning the hat and coat at once, she would probably return the money he had loaned her. At least, he would hear from her in that way. There was nothing to do but be patient.

Yes, there was the immediate problem of how he should restore his sister's hat and his mother's coat to their places, unsuspected.

With a sigh, he carefully folded up the cloth gown, wrapped it in folds of tissue paper from the empty hat-box, and placed it in his suit-case. Then he transferred the hat to its original box, rang the bell, and ordered the boy to care for the box and suit-case until he called for them.

During the afternoon he took occasion to run into the Judge's office about some unimportant detail of the business they were transacting, and as he was leaving he said:

"By the way, Judge, who was your young woman who gave you such a fright by her sudden disappearance? You never told me her name. Is she one of my acquaintances, I wonder?"

"Oh, her name is Mary Weston," said the Judge, smiling. "I don't believe you know her, for she was from California, and was visiting here only for a few days. She sailed for Europe the next day."

That closed the incident, and, so far as the mystery was concerned, only added perplexity to it.

Dunham purposely remained down-town, merely having a clerk telephone home for him that he had gone out of the city and would not be home until late, so they need not wait up. He did this because he did not wish to have his mother or his sister ask him any more questions about the missing hat and coat. Then he took a twenty-mile trolley ride into the suburbs and back, to make good his word that he had gone out of town; and all the way he kept turning over and over the mystery of the beautiful young woman, until it began to seem to him that he had been crazy to let her drift out into the world alone and practically penniless. The dress had told its tale. He saw, of course, that if she were afraid of detection, she must have found it necessary to buy other clothing, and how could she have bought it with only nine dollars and seventy-five cents? He now felt convinced that he should have found some way to cash a check and thus supply her with what she needed. It was terrible. True, she had those other beautiful rings, which were probably valuable, but would she dare to sell them? Perhaps, though, she had found some one else as ready as he had been to help her. But, to his surprise, that thought was distasteful to him. During his long, cold ride in solitude he discovered that the thing he wanted most in life was to find that girl again and take care of her.

Of course he reasoned with himself most earnestly from one end of the trolley line to the other, and called himself all kinds of a fool,

but it did not the slightest particle of good. Underneath all the reasoning, he knew he was glad that he had found her once, and he determined to find her again, and to unravel the mystery. Then he sat looking long and earnestly into the depths of the beautiful white stone she had given to him, as if he might there read the way to find her.

A little after midnight he arrived at the club-house, secured his suit-case and the hat-box, and took a cab to his home. He left the vehicle at the corner, lest the sound of it waken his mother or sister.

He let himself silently into the house with his latch-key, and tiptoed up to his room. The light was burning low. He put the hat-box in the farthest corner of his closet, then he took out the rain-coat, and, slipping off his shoes, went softly down to the hall closet.

In utter darkness he felt around and finally hung the coat on a hook under another long cloak, then gently released the hanging loop and let the garment slip softly down in an inconspicuous heap on the floor. He stole upstairs as guiltily as if he had been a naughty boy stealing sugar. When he reached his room, he turned up his light, and, pulling out the hat-box, surveyed it thoughtfully. This was a problem which he had not yet been able to solve. How should he dispose of the hat so that it would be discovered in such a way as to cast no further suspicion upon the maid? How would it do to place the hat in the hall-closet, back among the coats? No, it might excite suspicion to find them together. Could he put it in his own closet and profess to have found it there? No, for that might lead to unpleasant questioning, and perhaps involve the servants again. If he could only put it back where he had found it! But Cornelia, of course, would know it had not been there in her room all this week. It would be better to wait until the coast was clear and hide it in Cornelia's closet, where it might have been put by mistake and forgotten. It was going to be hard to explain, but that was the best plan he could evolve.

He took the hat out and held it on his hand, looking at it from different angles and trying to remember just how the girl had looked out at him from under its drooping plumes. Then with a sigh he laid it carefully in its box again and went to bed.

The morning brought clearer thought, and when the summons to breakfast pealed through the hall he took the box boldly in his hand and descended to the dining-room, where he presented the hat to his astonished sister.

"I am afraid I am the criminal, Cornelia," he said in his pleasantest manner. "I'm sorry I can't explain just how this thing got on my closet-shelf. I must have put it there myself through some unaccountable mix-up. It's too bad I could n't have found it before and so saved you a lot of worry. But you are one hat the richer for it, for I paid the bill yesterday. Please accept it with my compliments."

Cornelia exclaimed with delight over the recovered hat.

"But how in the world could it have got into your closet, Tryon? It was impossible. I left it in my room, I know I did, for I spoke to Norah about it before I left. How do you account for it?"

"Oh, I don't attempt to account for it," he said, with a gay wave of his hand. "I've been so taken up with other things this past week, I may have done almost anything. By the way, Mother, I'm sure you'll be glad to hear that Judge Blackwell has made me a most generous offer of business relations, and that I have decided to accept it."

Amid the exclamations of delight over this bit of news, the hat was forgotten for a time, and when the mother and sister finally reverted to it and began to discuss how it could have gotten on the closet shelf, he broke in upon their questions with a suggestion.

"I should advise, Mother, that you make a thorough search for your rain-coat. I am sure now that you must have overlooked it. Such things often happen. We were so excited the morning Cornelia missed the hat that I suppose no one looked thoroughly."

"But that is impossible, Tryon," said his mother, with dignity. "I had that closet searched most carefully."

"Nevertheless, Mother, please me by looking again. That closet is dark, and I would suggest a light."

"Of course, if you wish it," said his mother stiffly. "You might look, yourself."

"I'm afraid I shall not have time this morning," professed the coward. "But suppose you look in your own closets, too, Mother. I'm sure you'll find it somewhere. It could n't get out of the house of itself, and Norah is no thief. The idea is preposterous. Please have it attended to carefully to-day. Good-by. I shall have to hurry downtown, and I can't tell just what time I shall get back this evening. Phone me if you find the coat anywhere. If you don't find it, I'll buy you another this afternoon."

"I shall *not* find the rain-coat," said his mother sternly, "but of course I will look to satisfy you. I *know* it is not in this house."

He beat a hasty retreat, for he did not care to be present at the finding of the rain-coat.

"There is something strange about this," said Mrs. Dunham, as with ruffled dignity she emerged from the hall closet, holding her lost rain-coat at arm's length. "You don't suppose your brother could be playing some kind of a joke on us, do you, Cornie? I never did understand jokes."

"Of course not," said practical Cornelia, with a sniff. "It's my opinion that Norah knows all about the matter, and Tryon has been helping her out with a few suggestions."

"Now, Cornelia, what do you mean by that? You surely don't suppose your brother would try to deceive us—his mother and sister?"

"I did n't say that, Mother," answered Cornelia, with her head in the air. "You've got your rain-coat back, but you'd better watch the rest of your wardrobe. I don't intend to let Norah have free range in my room any more."

VIII.

MEANTIME, the girl in Chicago was walking in a new and hard way. She brought to her task a disciplined mind, a fine artistic taste, a delicate but healthy body, and a pair of willing, if unskilled, hands. To her surprise, she discovered that the work for which she had so often lightly given orders was beyond her strength. Try as she would, she could not accomplish the task of washing and ironing table napkins and delicate embroidered linen pieces in the way she knew they should be done. Will power can accomplish a good deal, but it cannot always make up for ignorance, and the girl who had mastered difficult subjects in college, and astonished music masters in the old world with her talent, found that she could not wash a window even to her own satisfaction, much less to that of her new mistress. That these tasks were expected of her was a surprise. Yet with her ready adaptability and her strong good sense, she saw that if she was to be a success in this new field she had chosen, she must be ready for any emergency. Nevertheless, as the weary days succeeded each other into weeks, she found that while her skill in table-setting and waiting was much prized, it was more than offset by her discrepancies in other lines, and so it came about that with mutual consent she and Mrs. Rhinehart parted company.

This time, with her reference, she did not find it so hard to get another place, and, after trying several, she learned to demand certain things, which put her finally into a home where her ability was appreciated, and where she was not required to do things in which she was unskilled.

She was growing more secure in her new life now, and less afraid to venture into the streets lest some one should be on the watch for her. But night after night, as she climbed to her cheerless room and crept to her scantily-covered, uncomfortable couch, she shrank from all that life could now hold out to her. Imprisoned she was, to a narrow round of toil, with no escape, and no one to know or care. And who knew but that any day an enemy might trace her?

Then the son of the house came home from college in disgrace, and began to make violent love to her, until her case seemed almost desperate. She dreaded inexpressibly to make another change, for in some ways her work was not so hard as it had been in other places, and her

wages were better; but from day to day she felt she could scarcely bear the hourly annoyances. The other servants, too, were not only utterly uncompanionable, but deeply jealous of her, resenting her gentle breeding, her careful speech, her dainty personal ways, her room to herself, her loyalty to her mistress.

Sometimes in the cold and darkness of the night-vigils she would remember the man who had helped her, who had promised to be her friend, and had begged her to let him know if she ever needed help. Her hungry heart cried out for sympathy and counsel. In her dreams she saw him coming to her across interminable plains, hastening with his kindly sympathy, but she always awoke before he reached her.

IX.

It was about this time that the firm of Blackwell, Hanover & Dunham had a difficult case to work out which involved the gathering of evidence from Chicago and thereabouts, and it was with pleasure that Judge Blackwell accepted the eager proposal from the junior member of the firm that he should go out and attend to it.

As Tryon Dunham entered the sleeper, and placed his suit-case beside him on the seat, he was reminded of the night when he had taken this train with the girl who had come to occupy a great part of his thoughts in these days. He had begun to feel that if he could ever hope to shake off his anxiety and get back to his normal state of mind, he must find her and unravel the mystery about her. If she were safe and had friends, so that he was not needed, perhaps he would be able to put her out of his thoughts, but if she were not safe— He did not quite finish the sentence even in his thoughts, but his heart beat quicker always, and he knew that if she needed him he was ready to help her, even at the sacrifice of his life.

All during the journey he planned a campaign for finding her, until he came to know in his heart that this was the real mission for which he had come to Chicago, although he intended to perform the other business thoroughly and conscientiously.

Upon his arrival in Chicago, he inserted a number of advertisements in the daily papers, having laid various plans by which she might safely communicate with him without running the risk of detection by her enemy.

If M.R. is in Chicago, will she kindly communicate with T. Dunham, General Delivery? Important.

Mrs. Bowman's friend has something of importance to say to the lady who dined with her October 8th. Kindly send address to T. D., Box 7 *Inter-Ocean* office.

"Mary," let me know where and when I can speak with you about a matter of importance. Tryon D., *Record-Herald* L.

These and others appeared in the different papers, but when he began to get communications from all sorts of poor creatures, every one demanding money, and when he found himself running wild-goose chases after different Marys and M. R.'s, he abandoned all hope of the personal columns in the newspapers. Then he began a systematic search for music teachers and musicians, for it seemed to him that this would be her natural way of earning her living, if she were so hard pressed that this was necessary.

In the course of his experiments he came upon many objects of pity, and his heart was stirred with the sorrow and the misery of the human race as it had never been stirred in all his happy, well-groomed life. Many a poor soul was helped and strengthened and put into the way of doing better because of this brief contact with him. But always as he saw new miseries he was troubled over what might have become of her—"Mary." It came to pass that whenever he looked upon the face of a young woman, no matter how pinched and worn with poverty, he dreaded lest *she* might have come to this pass, and be in actual need. As these thoughts went on day by day, he came to feel that she was his by a God-given right, his to find, his to care for. If she was in peril, he must save her. If she had done wrong—but this he could never believe. Her face was too pure and lovely for that. So the burden of her weighed upon his heart all the days while he went about the difficult business of gathering evidence link by link in the important law case that had brought him to Chicago.

Dunham had set apart working hours, and he seemed to labor with double vigor then because of the other task he had set himself. When at last he finished the legal business he had come for, and might go home, he lingered yet a day, and then another, devoting himself with almost feverish activity to the search for his unknown friend.

It was the evening of the third day after his law work was finished that with a sad heart he went toward the hotel where he had been stopping. He was obliged at last to face the fact that his search had been in vain.

He had almost reached the hotel when he met a business acquaintance, who welcomed him warmly, for far and wide among legal men the firm of which Judge Blackwell was the senior member commanded respect.

"Well, well!" said the older man. "Is this you, Dunham? I thought you were booked for home two days ago. Suppose you come home to dinner with me. I've a matter I'd like to talk over with you before you leave. I shall count this a most fortunate meeting if you will."

Just because he caught at any straw to keep him longer in Chicago, Dunham accepted the invitation. Just as the cab door was flung open in

front of the handsome house where he was to be a guest, two men passed slowly by, like shadows out of place, and there floated to his ears one sentence voiced in broadest Irish: "She goes by th' name of Mary, ye says? All roight, sorr. I'll kape a sharp lookout."

Tryon Dunham turned and caught a glimpse of silver changing hands. One man was slight and fashionably dressed, and the light that was cast from the neighboring window showed his face to be dark and handsome. The other was short and stout, and clad in a faded Prince Albert coat that bagged at shoulders and elbows. He wore rubbers over his shoes, and his footsteps sounded like those of a heavy dog. The two passed around the corner, and Dunham and his host entered the house.

They were presently seated at a well appointed table, where an elaborate dinner was served. The talk was of pleasant things that go to make up the world of refinement; but the mind of the guest was troubled, and constantly he kept hearing that sentence, "She goes by the name of Mary."

Then, suddenly, he looked up and met her eyes!

She was standing just back of her mistress's chair, with quiet, watchful attitude, but her eyes had been unconsciously upon the guest, until he looked up and caught her glance.

She turned away, but the color rose in her cheeks, and she knew that he was watching her.

Her look had startled him. He had never thought of looking for her in a menial position, and at first he had noticed only the likeness to her for whom he was searching. But he watched her furtively, until he became more and more startled with the resemblance.

She did not look at him again, but he noticed that her cheeks were scarlet, and that the long lashes drooped as if she were trying to hide her eyes. She went now and again from the room on her silent, deft errands, bringing and taking dishes, filling the glasses with ice water, seeming to know at a glance just what was needed. Whenever she went from the room he tried to persuade himself that it was not she, and then became feverishly impatient for her return that he might anew convince himself that it *was*. He felt a helpless rage at the son of the house for the familiar way in which he said: "Mary, fill my glass," and could not keep from frowning. Then he was startled at the similarity of names. Mary! The men on the street had used the name, too! Could it be that her enemy had tracked her? Perhaps he, Dunham, had appeared just in time to help her! His busy brain scarcely heard the questions with which his host was plying him, and his replies were distraught and monosyllabic. At last he broke in upon the conversation:

"Excuse me, but I wonder if I may interrupt you for a moment. I

have thought of something that I ought to attend to at once. I wonder if the waitress would be kind enough to send a phone message for me. I am afraid it will be too late if I wait."

"Why, certainly," said the host, all anxiety. "Would you like to go to the phone yourself, or can I attend to it for you? Just feel perfectly at home."

Already the young man was hastily writing a line or two on a card he had taken from his pocket, and he handed it to the waitress, who at his question had moved silently behind his chair to do his bidding.

"Just call up that number, please, and give the message below. They will understand, and then will you write down their answer?"

He handed her the pencil and turned again to his dessert, saying with a relieved air:

"Thank you. I am sorry for the interruption. Now will you finish that story?" Apparently his entire attention was devoted to his host and his ice, but in reality he was listening to the click of the telephone and the low, gentle voice in an adjoining room. It came after only a moment's pause, and he wondered at the calmness with which the usual formula of the telephone was carried on. He could not hear what she said, but his ears were alert to the pause, just long enough for a few words to be written, and then to her footsteps coming quietly back.

His heart was beating wildly. It seemed to him that his host must see the strained look in his face, but he tried to fasten his interest upon the conversation and keep calm.

He had applied the test. There was no number upon the card, and he knew that if the girl were not the one of whom he was in search, she would return for an explanation.

If you are "Mary Remington," tell me where and when I can talk with you. Immediately important to us both!

This was what he had written on the card. His fingers trembled as he took it from the silver tray which she presented to him demurely. He picked it up and eagerly read the delicate writing—hers—the same that had expressed her thanks and told of her safe arrival in Chicago. He could scarcely refrain from leaping from his chair and shouting aloud in his gladness.

The message she had written was simple. No stranger reading it would have thought twice about it. If the guest had read it aloud, it would have aroused no suspicion.

Y.W.C.A. Building, small parlor, three to-morrow.

He knew the massive building, for he had passed it many times, but never had he supposed it could have any interest for him. Now suddenly his heart warmed to the great organization of Christian women

who had established these havens for homeless ones in the heart of the great cities.

He looked up at the girl as she was passing the coffee on the other side of the table, but not a flicker of an eyelash showed she recognized him. She went through her duties and withdrew from the room, but though they lingered long over the coffee, she did not return. When they went into the other room, his interest in the family grew less and less. The daughter of the house sat down at the piano, after leading him up to ask her to sing, and chirped through several sentimental songs, tinkling out a shallow accompaniment with her plump, manicured fingers. His soul revolted at the thought that she should be here entertaining the company, while that other one whose music would have thrilled them all stayed humbly in the kitchen, doing some menial task.

He took his leave early in the evening and hurried back to his hotel. As he crossed the street to hail a cab, he thought he saw a short, baggy figure shambling along in the shadow on the other side, looking up at the house.

He had professed to have business to attend to, but when he reached his room he could do nothing but sit down and think. That he had found her for whom he had so long sought filled him with a deeper joy than any he had ever known before. That he had found her in such a position deepened the mystery and filled him with a nameless dread. Then out of the shadow of his thoughts shambled the baggy man in the rubbers, and he could not rest, but took his hat and walked out again into the great rumbling whirl of the city night, walking on and on, until he again reached the house where he had dined.

He passed in front of the building, and found lights still burning everywhere. Down the side street, he saw the windows were brightly lighted in the servants' quarters, and loud laughter was sounding. Was she in there enduring such company? No, for there high in the fourth story gleamed a little light, and a shadow moved about across the curtain. Something told him that it was her room. He paced back and forth until the light went out, and then reverently, with lifted hat, turned and found his way back to the main avenue and a car line. As he passed the area gate a bright light shot out from the back door, there was a peal of laughter, an Irish good-night, and a short man in baggy coat and rubbers shambled out and scuttled noiselessly down to the back street.

X.

DUNHAM slept very little that night. His soul was hovering between joy and anxiety. Almost he was inclined to find some way to send her word about the man he had seen lingering about the place,

and yet perhaps it was foolish. He had doubtless been to call on the cook, and there might be no connection whatever between what Dunham had heard and seen and the lonely girl.

Next day, with careful hands, the girl made herself neat and trim with the few materials she had at hand. Her own fine garments that had lain carefully wrapped and hidden ever since she had gone into service were brought forth, and the coarse ones with which she had provided herself against suspicion were laid aside. If any one came into her room while she was gone, he would find no fine French embroidery to tell tales. Also, she wished to feel as much like herself as possible, and she never could feel quite that in her cheap outfit. True, she had no finer outer garments than a cheap black flannel skirt and coat which she had bought with the first money she could spare, but they were warm, and answered for what she had needed. She had not bought a hat, and had nothing now to wear upon her head but the black felt that belonged to the man she was going to meet. She looked at herself pityingly in the tiny mirror, and wondered if the young man would understand and forgive? It was all she had, any way, and there would be no time to go to the store and buy another before the appointed hour, for the family had brought unexpected company to a late lunch and kept her far beyond her hour for going out.

She looked down dubiously at her shabby shoes, their delicate kid now cracked and worn. Her hands were covered by a pair of cheap black silk gloves. It was the first time that she had noticed these things so keenly, but now it seemed to her most embarrassing to go thus to meet the man who had helped her.

She gathered her little hoard of money to take with her, and cast one look back over the cheerless room, with a great longing to bid it farewell forever, and go back to the world where she belonged; yet she realized that it was a quiet refuge for her from the world that she must hereafter face. Then she closed her door, went down the stairs and out into the street, like any other servant on her afternoon out, walking away to meet whatever crisis might arise. She had not dared to speculate much about the subject of the coming interview. It was likely he wanted to inquire about her comfort, and perhaps offer material aid. She would not accept it, of course, but it would be a comfort to know that some one cared. She longed inexpressibly for this interview, just because he had been kind, and because he belonged to that world from which she had come. He would keep her secret. He had true eyes. She did not notice soft, padded feet that came wobbling down the street after her, and she only drew a little further out toward the curbing when a bleary-eyed, red face peered into hers as she stood waiting for the car. She did not notice the shabby man who boarded the car after she was seated.

Tryon Dunham stood in the great stone doorway, watching keenly the passing throng. He saw the girl at once as she got out of the car, but he did not notice the man in the baggy coat, who lumbered after her and watched with wondering scrutiny as Dunham came forward, lifted his hat, and took her hand respectfully. Here was an element he did not understand. He stood staring, puzzled, as they disappeared into the great building; then planted himself in a convenient place to watch until his charge should come out again. This was perhaps a gentleman who had come to engage her to work for him. She might be thinking of changing her place. He must be on the alert.

Dunham placed two chairs in the far corner of the inner parlor, where they were practically alone, save for an occasional passer through the hall. He put the girl into the most comfortable one, and then went to draw down the shade, to shut a sharp ray of afternoon sunlight from her eyes. She sat there and looked down upon her shabby shoes, her cheap gloves, her coarse garments, and honored him for the honor he was giving her in this attire. She had learned by sharp experience that such respect to one in her station was not common. As he came back, he stood a moment looking down upon her. She saw his eye rest with recognition upon the hat she wore, and her pale cheeks turned pink.

"I don't know what you will think of my keeping this," she said shyly, putting her hand to the hat, "but it seemed really necessary at the time, and I have n't dared spend the money for a new one yet. I thought perhaps you would forgive me, and let me pay you for it some time later."

"Don't speak of it," he broke in, in a low tone. "I am so glad you could use it at all. It would have been a comfort to me if I had known where it was. I had not even missed it, because at this time of year I have very little use for it. It is my travelling hat."

He looked at her again as though the sight of her was good to him, and his gaze made her quite forget the words she had planned to say.

"I am so glad I have found you!" he went on. "You have not been out of my thoughts since I left you that night on the train. I have blamed myself over and over again for having gone then. I should have found some way to stand by you. I have not had one easy moment since I saw you last."

His tone was so intense that she could not interrupt him; she could only sit and listen in wonder, half trembling, to the low-spoken torrent of feeling that he expressed. She tried to protest, but the look in his face stopped her. He went on with an earnestness that would not be turned aside from its purpose.

"I came to Chicago that I might search for you. I could not stand the suspense any longer. I have been looking for you in every

way I could think of, without openly searching, for that I dared not do lest I might jeopardize your safety. I was almost in despair when I went to dine with Mr. Phillips last evening. I felt I could not go home without knowing at least that you were safe, and now that I have found you, I cannot leave you until I know at least that you have no further need for help."

She summoned her courage now, and spoke in a voice full of feeling:

"Oh, you must not feel that way. You helped me just when I did not know what to do, and put me in the way of helping myself. I shall never cease to thank you for your kindness to an utter stranger. And now I am doing very well." She tried to smile, but the tears came unbidden instead.

"You poor child!" His tone was full of something deeper than compassion, and his eyes spoke volumes. "Do you suppose I think you are doing well when I see you wearing the garb of a menial and working for people to whom you are far superior—people who by all the rights of education and refinement ought to be in the kitchen serving you?"

"It was the safest thing I could do, and really the only thing I could get to do at once," she tried to explain. "I'm doing it better every day."

"I have no doubt. You can be an artist at serving as well as anything else, if you try. But now that is all over. I am going to take care of you. There is no use in protesting. If I may not do it in one way, I will in another. There is one question I must ask first, and I hope you will trust me enough to answer it. Is there any other—any other man who has the right to care for you, and is unable or unwilling to do it?"

She looked up at him, her large eyes still shining with tears, and shuddered slightly,

"Oh, no!" she said. "Oh, no, I thank God there is not! My dear uncle has been dead for four years, and there has never been any one else who cared since Father died."

He looked at her, a great light beginning to come into his face; but she did not understand and turned her head to hide the tears.

"Then I am going to tell you something," he said, his tone growing lower, yet clear enough for her to hear every word distinctly.

A tall, oldish girl with a discontented upper lip stalked through the hall, glanced in at the door, and sniffed significantly, but they did not see her. A short, baggy-coated man outside hovered anxiously around the building and passed the very window of that room, but the shade opposite them was down, and they did not know. The low, pleasant voice went on:

"I have come to care a great deal for you since I first saw you, and

I want you to give me the right to care for you always and protect you against the whole world."

She looked up, wondering.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I love you, and I want to make you my wife. Then I can defy the whole world if need be, and put you where you ought to be."

"Oh!" she breathed softly.

"Wait, please," he pleaded, laying his hand gently on her little, trembling one. "Don't say anything until I have finished. I know of course that this will be startling to you. You have been brought up to feel that such things must be more carefully and deliberately done. I do not want you to feel that this is the only way I can help you, either. If you are not willing to be my wife, I will find some other plan. But this is the best way, if it is n't too hard on you, for I love you as I never dreamed that I could love a woman. The only question is, whether you can put up with me until I can teach you to love me a little."

She lifted eloquent eyes to his face.

"Oh, it is not that," she stammered, a rosy light flooding cheek and brow. "It is not that at all. But you know nothing about me. If you knew, you would very likely think as others do, and——"

"Then do not tell me anything about yourself, if it will trouble you. I do not care what others think. If you have poisoned a husband, I should know that he needed poisoning, and any way I should love you and stand by you."

"I have not done anything wrong," she said gravely.

"Then if you have done nothing wrong, we will prove it to the world, or, if we cannot prove it, we will fly to some desert island and live there in peace and love. That is the way I feel about you. I know that you are good and true and lovely! Any one might as well try to prove to me that you were crazy as that you had done wrong in any way."

Her face grew strangely white.

"Well, suppose I was crazy?"

"Then I would take you and cherish you and try to cure you, and if that could not be done, I should help you to bear it."

"Oh, you are wonderful!" she breathed, the light of a great love growing in her eyes.

The bare, prosaic walls stood stolidly about them, indifferent to romance or tragedy that was being wrought out within its walls. The whirl and hum of the city without, the grime and soil of the city within, were alike forgotten by these two as their hearts throbbed in the harmony of a great passion.

"Do you think you could learn to love me?" said the man's voice, with the sweetness of the love song of the ages in its tone.

"I love you now," said the girl's low voice. "I think I have loved you from the beginning, though I never dared to think of it in that way. But it would not be right for me to become your wife when you know practically nothing about me."

"Have you forgotten that you know nothing of me?"

"Oh, I do know something about you," she said shyly. "Remember that I have dined with your friends. I could not help seeing that they were good people, especially that delightful old man, the Judge. He looked startlingly like my dear father. I saw how they all honored and loved you. And then what you have done for me, and the way that you treated an utterly defenseless stranger, were equal to years of mere acquaintance. I feel that I know a great deal about you."

He smiled. "Thank you," he said, "but I have not forgotten that something more is due you than that slight knowledge of me, and before I came out here I went to the pastor of the church of which my mother is a member, and which I have always attended, and asked him to write me a letter. He is so widely known that I felt it would be an introduction for me."

He laid an open letter in her lap, and, glancing down, she saw that it was signed by the name of one of the best known pulpit orators in the land, and that it spoke in highest terms of the young man whom it named as "my well-loved friend."

"It is also your right to know that I have always tried to live a pure and honorable life. I have never told any woman but you that I loved her—except an elderly cousin with whom I thought I was in love when I was nineteen. She cured me of it by laughing at me, and I have been heart-whole ever since."

She raised her eyes from reading the letter.

"You have all these, and I have nothing." She spread out her hands helplessly. "It must seem strange to you that I am in this situation. It does to me. It is awful."

She put her hands over her eyes and shuddered.

"It is to save you from it all that I have come." He leaned over and spoke tenderly. "Darling!"

"Oh, wait!" She caught her breath as if it hurt her, and put out her hand to stop him. "Wait! You must not say any more until I have told you all about it. Perhaps when I have told you, you will think about me as others do, and I shall have to run from you."

"Can you not trust me?" he reproached her.

"Oh, yes, I can trust you, but you may no longer trust me, and that I cannot bear."

"I promise you solemnly that I will believe every word you say."

"Ah, but you will think I do not know, and that it is your duty to give me into the hands of my enemies."

"That I most solemnly vow I will never do," he said earnestly. "You need not fear to tell me anything. But listen, tell me this one thing: in the eyes of God, is there any reason, physical, mental, or spiritual, why you should not become my wife?"

She looked him clearly in the eyes.

"None at all."

"Then I am satisfied to take you without hearing your story until afterwards."

"But I am not satisfied. If I am to see distrust come into your eyes, it must be now, not afterwards."

"Then tell it quickly."

He put out his hand and took hers firmly into his own, as if to help her in her story.

XI.

"MY father died when I was only a young girl. We had not much money, and my mother's older brother took us to his home to live. My mother was his youngest sister, and he loved her more than any one else living. There was another sister, a half-sister, much older than my mother, and she had one son. He was a sulky, handsome boy, with a selfish, cruel nature. He seemed to be happy only when he was tormenting some one. He used to come to Uncle's to visit when I was there, and he delighted in annoying me. He stretched barbed wire where he knew I was going to pass in the dark, to throw me down and tear my clothes. He threw a quantity of burrs in my hair, and once he led me into a hornet's nest. After we went to live at my uncle's, Richard was not there so much. He had displeased my uncle, and he sent him away to school; but at vacation times he came again, and kept the house in discomfort. He seemed always to have a special spite against me. Once he broke a rare Dresden vase that Uncle prized, and told him I had done it.

"Mother did not live long after Father died, and after she was gone, I had no one to stand between me and Richard. Sometimes I had to tell my uncle, but oftener I tried to bear it, because I knew Richard was already a great distress to him.

"At last Richard was expelled from college, and Uncle was so angry with him that he told him he would do nothing more for him. He must go to work. Richard's father and mother had not much money, and there were other children to support. Richard threatened me with all sorts of awful things if I did not coax Uncle to take him back into his good graces again. I told him I would not say a word to Uncle. He was very angry and swore at me. When I tried to leave the room he

locked the door and would not let me go until I screamed for help. Then he almost choked me, but when he heard Uncle coming he jumped out of the window. The next day he forged a check in my uncle's name, and tried to throw suspicion on me, but he was discovered, and my uncle disinherited him. Uncle had intended to educate Richard and start him well in life, but now he would have nothing further to do with him. It seemed to work upon my uncle's health, all the disgrace to the family name, although no one ever thought of my uncle in connection with blame. As he paid Richard's debts, it was not known what the boy had done, except by the banker, who was a personal friend.

"We went abroad then, and everywhere Uncle amused himself by putting me under the best music masters, and giving me all possible advantages in languages, literature, and art. Three years ago he died at Carlsbad, and after his death I went back to my music studies, following his wishes in the matter, and staying with a dear old lady in Vienna, who had been kind to us when we were there before.

"As soon as my uncle's death was known at home, Richard wrote the most pathetic letter to me, professing deep contrition, and saying he could never forgive himself for having quarrelled with his dear uncle. He had a sad tale of how the business that he had started had failed and left him with debts. If he had only a few hundred dollars, he could go on with it and pay off everything. He said I had inherited all that would have been his if he had done right, and he recognized the justice of it, but begged that I would lend him a small sum until he could get on his feet, when he would repay me.

"I had little faith in his reformation, but felt as if I could not refuse him when I was enjoying what might have been his, so I sent him all the money I had at hand. As I was not yet of age, I could not control all the property, but my allowance was liberal. Richard continued to send me voluminous letters, telling of his changed life, and finally he asked me to marry him. I declined emphatically, but he continued to write for money, always ending with a statement of his undying affection. In disgust, I at last offered to send him a certain sum of money regularly if he would stop writing to me on this subject, and finally succeeded in reducing our correspondence to a check account. This has been going on for three years, except that he has been constantly asking for larger sums, and whenever I would say that I could not spare more just then he would begin telling me how much he cared for me, and how hard it was for him to be separated from me. I began to feel desperate about him, and made up my mind that when I received the inheritance I should ask the lawyers to make some arrangement with him by which I should no longer be annoyed.

"It was necessary for me to return to America when I came of

age, in order to sign certain papers and take full charge of the property. Richard knew this. He seems to have had some way of finding out everything my uncle did.

“He wrote telling me of a dear friend of his mother, who was soon to pass through Vienna, and who by some misfortune had been deprived of a position as companion and chaperon to a young girl who was travelling. He said it had occurred to him that perhaps he could serve us both by suggesting to me that she be my travelling companion on the voyage. He knew I would not want to travel alone, and he sent her address and all sorts of credentials, with a message from his mother that she would feel perfectly safe about me if I went in this woman’s guardianship.

“I really did need a travelling companion, of course, having failed to get my dear old lady to undertake the voyage, so I thought it could do no harm. I went to see her, and found her pretty and frail and sad. She made a piteous appeal to me, and though I was not greatly taken with her, I decided she would do as well as any one for a companion.

“She did not bother me during the voyage, but fluttered about and was quite popular on board, especially with a tall, disagreeable man with a cruel jaw and small eyes, who always made me feel as if he would gloat over any one in his power. I found out that he was a physician, a specialist in mental diseases, so Mrs. Chambray told me, and she talked a great deal about his skill and insight into such maladies.

“At New York my cousin Richard met us and literally took possession of us. Without my knowledge, the cruel-looking doctor was included in the party. I did not discover it until we were on the train, bound, as I supposed, for my old home just beyond Buffalo. It was some time since I had been in New York, and I naturally did not notice much which way we were going. The fact was, every plan was anticipated, and I was told that all arrangements had been made. Mrs. Chambray began to treat me like a little child and say: ‘You see we are going to take good care of you, dear, so don’t worry about a thing.’

“I had taken the drawing-room compartment, not so much because I had a headache, as I told them, as because I wanted to get away from their society. My cousin’s marked devotion became painful to me. Then, too, the attentions and constant watchfulness of the disagreeable doctor became most distasteful.

“We had been sitting on the observation platform, and it was late in the afternoon, when I said I was going to lie down, and the two men got up to go into the smoker. In spite of my protests, Mrs. Chambray insisted upon following me in, to see that I was perfectly comfortable. She fussed around me, covering me up and offering smelling salts and eau de cologne for my head. I let her fuss, thinking that was

the quickest way to get rid of her. I closed my eyes, and she said she would go out to the observation platform. I lay still for awhile, thinking about her and how much I wanted to get rid of her. She acted as if she had been engaged to stay with me forever, and it suddenly became very plain to me that I ought to have a talk with her and tell her that I should need her services no longer after this journey was over. It might make a difference to her if she knew it at once, and perhaps now would be as good a time to talk as any, for she was probably alone out on the platform. I got up and made a few little changes in my dress, for it would soon be time to go into the dining-car. Then I went out to the observation platform, but she was not there. The chairs were all empty, so I chose the one next to the railing, away from the car door, and sat down to wait for her, thinking she would soon be back.

"We were going very fast, through a pretty bit of country. It was dusky and restful out there, so I leaned back and closed my eyes. Presently I heard voices approaching, above the rumble of the train, and, peeping around the doorway, I saw Mrs. Chambray, Richard, and the doctor coming from the other car. I kept quiet, hoping they would not come out, and they did not. They settled down near the door, and ordered the porter to put up a table for them to play cards.

"The train began to slow down, and finally came to a halt for a long time on a side-track, waiting for another train to pass. I heard Richard ask where I was. Mrs. Chambray said laughingly that I was safely asleep. Then, before I realized it, they began to talk about me. It happened there were no other passengers in the car. Richard asked Mrs. Chambray if she thought I had any suspicion that I was not on the right train, and she said, 'Not the slightest,' and then by degrees there floated to me through the open door the most diabolical plot I had ever heard of. I gathered from it that we were on the way to Philadelphia, would reach there in a little while, and would then proceed to a place near Washington, where the doctor had a private insane asylum, and where I was to be shut up. They were going to administer some drug that would make me unconscious when I was taken off the train. If they could not get me to take it for the headache I had talked about, Mrs. Chambray was to manage to get it into my food or give it to me when asleep. Mrs. Chambray, it seems, had not known the entire plot before leaving Europe, and this was their first chance of telling her. They thought I was safely in my compartment, asleep, and she had gone into the other car to give the signal as soon as she thought she had me where I would not get up again for a while.

"They had arranged every detail. Richard had been using as models the letters I had written him for the last three years, and had constructed a set of love letters from me to him, in perfect imitation of

my handwriting. They compared the letters and read snatches of the sentences aloud. The letters referred constantly to our being married as soon as I should return from abroad, and some of them spoke of the money as belonging to us both, and that now it would come to its own without any further trouble.

“They even exhibited a marriage certificate, which, from what they said, must have been made out with our names, and Mrs. Chambray and the doctor signed their names as witnesses. As nearly as I could make out, they were going to use this as evidence that Richard was my husband, and that he had the right to administer my estate during the time that I was incapable. They had even arranged that a young woman who was hopelessly insane should take my place when the executors of the estate came to see me, if they took the trouble to do that. As it was some years since either of them had seen me, they could easily have been deceived. And for their help Mrs. Chambray and the doctor were to receive a handsome sum.

“I could scarcely believe my ears at first. It seemed to me that I must be mistaken, that they could not be talking about me. But my name was mentioned again and again, and as each link in the horrible plot was made plain to me, my terror grew so great that I was on the verge of rushing into the car and calling for the conductor and porter to help me. But something held me still, and I heard Richard say that he had just informed the trainmen that I was insane, and that they need not be surprised if I had to be restrained. He had told them that I was comparatively harmless, but he had no doubt that the conductor had whispered it to our fellow-passengers in the car, which explained their prolonged absence in the smoker. Then they all laughed, and it seemed to me that the cover to the bottomless pit was open and that I was falling in.

“I sat still, hardly daring to breathe. Then I began to go over the story bit by bit, and to put together little things that had happened since we landed, and even before I had left Vienna; and I saw that I was caught in a trap. It would be no use to appeal to any one, for no one would believe me. I looked wildly out at the ground and had desperate thoughts of climbing over the rail and jumping from the train. Death would be better than what I should soon have to face. My persecutors had even told how they had deceived my friends at home by sending telegrams of my mental condition, and of the necessity for putting me into an asylum. There would be no hope of appealing to them for help. The only witnesses to my sanity were far away in Vienna, and how could I reach them if I were in Richard's power?

“I watched the names of the stations as they flew by, but it gradually grew dark, and I could hardly make them out. I thought one

looked like the name of a Philadelphia suburb, but I could not be sure.

"I was freezing with horror and with cold, but did not dare to move, lest I attract their attention.

"We began to rush past rows of houses, and I knew we were approaching a city. Then, suddenly, the train slowed down and stopped, with very little warning, as if it intended to halt only a second and then hurry on.

"There was a platform on one side of the train, but we were out beyond the car-shed, for our train was long. I could not climb over the rail to the platform, for I was sitting on the side away from the station, and would have had to pass the car door in order to do so. I should be sure to be seen.

"On the other side were a great many tracks separated by strong picket fences as high as the car platform and close to the trains, and they reached as far as I could see in either direction. I had no time to think, and there was nothing I could do but climb over the rail and get across those tracks and fences somehow.

"My hands were so cold and trembling that I could scarcely hold onto the rail as I jumped over.

"I cannot remember how I got across. Twice I had to cling to a fence while an express train rushed by, and the shock and noise almost stunned me. It was a miracle that I was not killed, but I did not think of that until afterwards. I was conscious only of the train I had left standing by the station. I glanced back once, and thought I saw Richard come to the door of the car. Then I stumbled on blindly. I don't remember any more until I found myself hurrying along that dark passage under the bridge and saw you just ahead. I was afraid to speak to you, but I did not know what else to do, and you were so good to me——!" Her voice broke in a little sob.

All the time she had been talking, he had held her hand firmly. She had forgotten that any one might be watching; he did not care.

The tall girl with the discontented upper lip went to the matron and told her that she thought the man and the woman in the parlor ought to be made to go. She believed the man was trying to coax the girl to do something she did not want to do. The matron started on a voyage of discovery up the hall and down again, with penetrating glances into the room, but the two did not see her.

"Oh, my poor dear little girl!" breathed the man. "And you have passed through all this awful experience alone! Why did you not tell me about it? I could have helped you. I am a lawyer."

"I thought you would be on your guard at once and watch for evidences of my insanity. I thought perhaps you would believe it true, and would feel it necessary to return me to my friends. I think I

should have been tempted to do that, perhaps, if any one had come to me with such a story."

"One could not do that after seeing and talking with you. I never could have believed it. Surely no reputable physician would lend his influence to put you in an asylum, yet I know such things have been done. Your cousin must be a desperate character. I shall not feel safe until you belong to me. I saw two men hanging about Mr. Phillips's house last evening as I went in. They were looking up at the windows and talking about keeping a close watch on some one named Mary. One of the men was tall and slight and handsome, with dark hair and eyes; the other was Irish, and wore a coat too large for him, and rubbers. I went back later in the evening, and the Irishman was hovering about the house."

The girl looked up with frightened eyes and grasped the arms of her chair excitedly.

"Will you go with me now to a church not far away, where a friend of mine is the pastor, and be married? Then we can defy all the cousins in creation. Can't you trust me?" he pleaded.

"Oh, yes, but——"

"Is it that you do not love me?"

"No," she said, and her eyes drooped shyly. "It seems strange that I dare to say it to you when I have known you so little." She lifted her eyes, full of a wonderful love light, and she was glorified to him, all meanly dressed though she was. The smooth Madonna braids around the shapely head, covered by the soft felt hat, seemed more beautiful to him than all the elaborate head-dresses of modern times.

"Where is the 'but' then, dear? Shall we go now?"

"How can I go in this dress?" She looked down at her shabby shoes, rough black gown, and cheap gloves in dismay, and a soft pink stole into her face.

"You need not. Your own gown is out in the office in my suitcase. I brought it with me, thinking you might need it—*hoping* you might, I mean;" and he smiled. "I have kept it always near me; partly because I wanted the comfort of it, partly because I was afraid some one else might find it, and desecrate our secret with their commonplace wondering."

It was at this moment that the matron of the building stepped up to the absorbed couple, resolved to do her duty. Her lips were pursed to their thinnest, and displeasure was in her face.

The young man arose and asked in a grave tone:

"Excuse me, but can you tell me whether this lady can get a room here to rest for a short time, while I go out and attend to a matter of business?"

The matron noticed his refined face and true eyes, and she accepted with a good grace the ten-dollar bill he handed to her.

"We charge only fifty cents a night for a room," she said, glancing at the humble garments of the man's companion. She thought the girl must be a poor dependent or a country relative.

"That's all right," said the young man. "Just let the change help the good work along."

That made a distinct change in the atmosphere. The matron smiled, and retired to snub the girl with the discontented upper lip. Then she sent the elevator boy to carry the girl's suit-case. As the matron came back to the office, a baggy man with cushioned tires hustled out of the open door into the street, having first cast back a keen, furtive glance that searched every corner of the place.

"Now," said Dunham reassuringly, as the matron disappeared, "you can go up to your room and get ready, and I will look after a few little matters. I called on my friend, the minister, this morning, and I have looked up the legal part of this affair. I can see that everything is all right in a few minutes. Is there anything you would like me to do for you?"

"No," she answered, looking up half frightened; "but I am afraid I ought not to let you do this. You scarcely know me."

"Now, dear, no more of that. We have no time to lose. How long will it take you to get dressed? Will half an hour do? It is getting late."

"Oh, it will not take long." She caught her breath with gladness. Her companion's voice was so strong and comforting, his face so filled with a wonderful love, that she felt dazed with the sudden joy of it all.

The elevator boy appeared in the doorway with the familiar suit-case.

"Don't be afraid, dear heart," whispered the young man, as he attended her to the elevator. "I'll soon be back again, and then, *then*, we shall be together!"

It was a large front room to which the boy took her. The ten-dollar bill had proven effective. It was not a "fifty-cents-a-night" room. Some one—some guest or kindly patron—had put a small illuminated text upon the wall in a neat frame. It met her eye as she entered—"Rejoice and be glad." Just a common little picture card, it was, with a phrase that has become trite to many, yet it seemed a message to her, and her heart leaped to obey. She went to the window to catch a glimpse of the man who would soon be her husband, but he was not there, and the hurrying people reminded her that she must hasten. Across the street a slouching figure in a baggy coat looked fixedly up and caught her glance. She trembled and drew back out

of the sunshine, remembering what Dunham had told her about the Irishman of the night before. With a quick instinct, she drew down the shade, and locked her door.

XII.

THE rubbered feet across the way hurried their owner into the cigar-store in front of which he had been standing, and where he had a good view of the Y.W.C.A. Building. He flung down some change and demanded the use of the telephone. Then, with one eye on the opposite doorway, he called up a number and delivered his message.

"Oi've treed me bird. She's in a room all roight at the Y.W.C.A. place, fer I seed her at the winder. She come with a foiner gintlemin, but he's gahn now, an' she's like to stay a spell. You'd best come at once. . . . All roight. Hurry up!" He hung up the telephone-receiver and hurried back to his post in front of the big entrance. Meanwhile the bride-elect upstairs, with happy heart and trembling fingers, was putting on her own beautiful garments once more, and arranging the waves of lovely hair in their old accustomed way.

Tryon Dunham's plans were well laid. He first called up his friend the minister and told him to be ready; then a florist not far from the church; then a large department store where he had spent some time that morning. "Is that Mr. Hunter, head of the fur department? Mr. Hunter, this is Mr. Dunham. You remember our conversation this morning? Kindly send the coat and hat I selected to the Y.W.C.A. building at once. Yes, just send them to the office. You remember it was to be C.O.D., and I showed you my certified check this morning. It's all right, is it? How long will it take you to get it there? . . . All right. Have the boy wait if I'm not there. Good-by."

His next move was to order a carriage, and have it stop at the florist's on the way. That done, he consulted his watch. Seventeen minutes of his precious half-hour were gone. With nervous haste he went into a telephone booth and called up his own home on the long-distance.

To his relief, his mother answered.

"Is that you, Mother? This is Tryon. Are you all well? That's good. Yes, I'm in Chicago, but will soon be home. Mother, I've something to tell you that may startle you, though there is nothing to make you sad. You have known that there was something on my mind for some time." He paused for the murmur of assent.

He knew how his mother was looking, even though he could not see her—that set look of being ready for anything. He wanted to spare her as much as possible, so he hastened on:

"You remember speaking to me about the ring I wore?"

"Tryon! Are you engaged?" There was a sharp anxiety in the tone as it came through the hundreds of miles of space.

"One better, Mother. I'm just about to be married!"

"My son! What have you done? Don't forget the honorable name you bear!"

"No, Mother, I don't forget. She's fine and beautiful and sweet. You will love her, and our world will fall at her feet!"

"But who is she? You must remember that love is very blind. Tryon, you must come home at once. I shall die if you disgrace us all. Don't do anything to spoil our lives. I know it is something dreadful, or you would not do it in such haste."

"Nothing of the kind, Mother. Can't you trust me? Let me explain. She is alone, and legal circumstances which it would take too long for me to explain over the phone have made it desirable for her to have my immediate protection. We are going at once to Edwin Twinell's church, and he will marry us. It is all arranged, but I felt that you ought to be told beforehand. We shall probably take the night express for home. Tell Cornelia that I shall expect congratulations telegraphed to the hotel here inside of two hours."

"But, Tryon, what will our friends think? It is most extraordinary! How can you manage about announcements?"

"Bother the red tape, Mother! What difference does that make? Put it in the society column if you want to."

"But, Tryon, we do not want to be conspicuous!"

"Well, Mother, I'm not going to put off my wedding at the last minute for a matter of some bits of pasteboard. I'll do any reasonable thing to please you, but not that."

"Could n't you get a chaperon for her, and bring her on to me? Then we could plan the wedding at our leisure."

"Impossible, Mother! In the first place, she never would consent. Really, I cannot talk any more about it. I must go at once, or I shall be late. Tell me you will love her for my sake, until you love her for her own."

"Tryon, you always were unreasonable. Suppose you have the cards engraved at once, and I will telegraph our list to the engraver if you will give me his address. If you prefer, you can get them engraved and sent out from there. That will keep tongues still."

"All right, I'll do it. I'll have the engraver telegraph his address to you within two hours. Have your list ready. And, Mother, don't worry. She's all right. You could n't have chosen better yourself. Say you will love her, Mother dear."

"Oh, I suppose I'll try," sighed the wires disconsolately; "but I never thought you would be married in such a way. Why, you have n't even told me who she is."

"She's all right, Mother—good family and all. I really must hurry——"

"But what is her name, Tryon?"

"Say, Mother, I really must go. Ask Mrs. Parker Bowman what she thinks of her. Good-by! Cheer up, it'll be all right."

"But, Tryon, her name——"

The receiver was hung up with a click, and Dunham looked at his watch nervously. In two minutes his half-hour would be up, yet he must let Judge Blackwell know. Perhaps he could still catch him at the office. He sometimes stayed down-town late. Dunham rang up the office. The Judge was still there, and in a moment his cheery voice was heard ringing out, "Hello!"

"Hello, Judge! Is that you? . . . This is Dunham. . . . Chicago. Yes, the business is all done, and I'm ready to come home, but I want to give you a bit of news. Do you remember the young woman who dined with us at Mrs. Bowman's and played the piano so well? . . . Yes, the night I met you. . . . Well, you half guessed that night how it was with us, I think. And now she is here, and we are to be married at once, before I return. I am just about to go to the church, but I wanted your blessing first."

"Blessings and congratulations on you both!" came in a hearty voice over the phone. "Tell her she shall be at once taken into the firm as chief consultant on condition that she plays for me whenever I ask her."

A great gladness entered the young man's heart as he again hung up the receiver, at this glimpse into the bright vista of future possibilities. He hurried into the street, forgetful of engravers. The half-hour was up and one minute over.

In the meantime, the girl had slipped into her own garments once more with a relief and joy she could scarcely believe were her own. Had it all been an ugly dream, this life she had been living for the past few months, and was she going back now to rest and peace and real life? Nay, not going back, but going forward. The sweet color came into her beautiful face at thought of the one who, though not knowing her, yet had loved her enough to take her as she was, and lift her out of her trouble. It was like the most romantic of fairy tales, this unexpected lover and the joy that had come to her. How had it happened to her quiet, conventional life? Ah, it was good and dear, whatever it was! She pressed her happy eyes with her fluttering, nervous fingers, to keep the glad tears back, and laughed out to herself a joyful ripple such as she had not uttered since her uncle's death.

A knock at the door brought her back to realities again. Her heart throbbed wildly. Had he come back to her already? Or had her enemy found her out at last?

Tryon Dunham hurried up the steps of the Y.W.C.A. Building, nearly knocking over a baggy individual in rubbers, who was lurking in the entrance. The young man had seen a boy in uniform, laden with two enormous boxes, run up the steps as he turned the last corner. Hastily writing a few lines on one of his cards and slipping it into the largest box, he sent them both up to the girl's room. Then he sauntered to the door to see if the carriage had come. It was there. He glanced inside to see if his orders about flowers had been fulfilled, and spoke a few words of direction to the driver. Turning back to the door, he found the small, red eyes of the baggy Irishman fixed upon him. Something in the slouch of the figure reminded Dunham strongly now of the man he had noticed the night before, and as he went back into the building he looked the man over well and determined to watch him. As he sat in the office waiting, twice he saw the bleary eyes of the baggy man applied to the glass panes in the front door and as suddenly withdrawn. It irritated him, and finally he strode to the door and asked the man if he were looking for some one.

"Just waitin' fer me sweetheart," whined the man, with a cringing attitude. "She has a room in here, an' I saw her go in a while back."

"Well, you'd better move on. They don't care to have people hanging around here."

The man slunk away with a vindictive glance, and Tryon Dunham went back to the office, more perturbed at the little incident than he could understand.

Upstairs the girl had dared to open her door and had been relieved to find the elevator boy there with the two boxes.

"The gentleman's below, an' he says he'll wait, an' he sent these up," said the boy, depositing his burden and hurrying away.

She locked her door once more, for somehow a great fear had stolen over her now that she was again dressed in her own garments and could easily be recognized.

She opened the large box and read the card lying on the top:

These are my wedding gifts to you, dear. Put them on and come
as soon as possible to the one who loves you better than anything
else in life. TRYON

Her eyes shone brightly and her cheeks grew rosy red as she lifted out from its tissue-paper wrappings a long, rich coat of Alaska seal, with exquisite brocade lining. She put it on and stood a moment looking at herself in the glass. She felt like one who had for a long time lost her identity, and has suddenly had it restored. Such garments had been ordinary comforts of her former life. She had not been warm enough in the coarse black coat.

The other box contained a beautiful hat of fur to match the coat.

It was simply trimmed with one long, beautiful black plume, and in shape and general appearance was like the hat he had borrowed for her use in the fall. She smiled happily as she set it upon her head, and then laughed outright as she remembered her shabby silk gloves. Never mind. She could take them off when she reached the church.

She packed the little black dress into the suit-case, folded the felt hat on the top with a tender pat, and, putting on her gloves, hurried down to the one who waited for her.

The matron had gone upstairs to the linen closet and left the girl with the discontented upper lip in charge in the office. The latter watched the elegant lady in the rich furs come down the hall from the elevator, and wondered who she was and why she had been upstairs. Probably to visit some poor protégée, she thought. The girl caught the love-light in the eyes of Tryon Dunham as he rose to meet his bride, and she recognized him as the same man who had been in close converse with the cheaply dressed girl in the parlor an hour before, and sneered as she wondered what the fine lady in furs would think if she knew about the other girl. Then they went out to the carriage, past the baggy, rubbered man, who shrank back suddenly behind a stone column and watched them.

As Dunham shut the door, he looked back just in time to see a slight man, with dark eyes and hair, hurry up and touch the baggy man on the shoulder. The latter pointed toward their carriage.

"See!" said Dunham. "I believe those are the men who were hovering around the house last night."

The girl leaned forward to look, and then drew back with an exclamation of horror as the carriage started.

"Oh, that man is my cousin Richard," she cried.

"Are you sure?" he asked, and a look of determination settled into his face.

"Perfectly," she answered, looking out again. "Do you suppose he has seen me?"

"I suppose he has, but we'll soon turn the tables." He leaned out and spoke a word to the driver, who drew up around the next corner in front of a telephone pay-station.

"Come with me for just a minute, dear. I'll telephone to a detective bureau where they know me and have that man watched. He is unsafe to have at large." He helped her out and drew her arm firmly within his own. "Don't be afraid any more. I will take care of you."

He telephoned a careful description of the two men and their whereabouts, and before he had hung up the receiver a man had started post-haste for the Y.W.C.A. building.

Then Tryon Dunham put the girl tenderly into the carriage, and to divert her attention he opened the box of flowers and put a great

sheaf of white roses and lilies-of-the-valley into the little gloved hands. Then, taking her in his arms for the first time, he kissed her. He noticed the shabby gloves, and, putting his hand in his breast pocket, drew out the white gloves she had worn before, saying, "See! I have carried them there ever since you sent them back! My sister never asked for them. I kept them for your sake."

The color had come back into her cheeks when they reached the church, and he thought her a beautiful bride as he led her into the dim aisle. Some one up in the choir loft was playing the wedding march, and the minister's wife and young daughter sat waiting to witness the ceremony.

The minister met them at the door with a welcoming smile and hand-shake, and led them forward. As the music hushed for the words of the ceremony, he leaned forward to the young man and whispered:

"I neglected to ask you her name, Tryon."

"Oh, yes." The young man paused in his dilemma and looked for an instant at the sweet face of the girl beside him. But he could not let his friend see that he did not know the name of his wife-to-be, and with quick thought he answered, "Mary!"

The ceremony proceeded, and the minister's voice sounded out solemnly in the empty church: "Do you, Tryon, take this woman whom you hold by the hand to be your lawful wedded wife?"

The young man's fingers held the timid hand of the woman firmly as he answered, "I do."

"Do you, Mary, take this man?" came the next question, and the girl looked up with her clear eyes and said, "I do."

Then the minister's wife, who knew and prized Tryon Dunham's friendship, said to herself: "It's all right. She loves him."

When the solemn words were spoken that bound them together through life, and they had thanked their kind friends and were once more out in the carriage, Tryon said:

"Do you know you have n't told me your real name yet?"

She laughed happily as the carriage started on its way, and answered, "Why, it is Mary!"

As the carriage rounded the first corner beyond the church, two breathless individuals hurried up from the other direction. One was short and baggy, and the sole of one rubber flopped dismally as he struggled to keep up with the alert strides of the other man, who was slim and angry. They had been detained by an altercation with the matron of the Y.W.C.A. Building, and puzzled by the story of the plainly dressed girl who had taken the room, and the fine lady who had left the building in company with a gentleman, until it was settled by the elevator boy, who declared the two women to be one and the same.

A moment later a man in citizen's clothing, who had keen eyes, and

who was riding a motor-cycle, rounded the corner and puffed placidly along near the two. He appeared to be looking at the numbers on the other side of the street, but he heard every word that they said as they caught sight of the disappearing carriage and hurried after it. He had been standing in the entrance of the Y.W.C.A. building, an apparently careless observer, while the elevator boy gave his evidence.

The motor-cycle shot ahead a few rods, passed the carriage, and discovered by a keen glance who were the occupants. Then it rounded the block and came almost up to the two pursuers again.

When the carriage stopped at the side entrance of a hotel the man on the motor-cycle was ahead of the pursuers and discovered it first, long enough to see the two get out and go up the marble steps. The carriage was driving away when the thin man came in sight, with the baggy man struggling along half a block behind, his padded feet coming down in heavy, dragging thuds, like a St. Bernard dog in bedroom slippers.

One glimpse the pursuers had of their prey as the elevator shot upward. They managed to evade the hotel authorities and get up the wide staircase without observation. By keeping on the alert, they discovered that the elevator had stopped at the second floor, so the people they were tracking must have apartments there. Lurking in the shadowy parts of the hall, they watched, and soon were rewarded by seeing Dunham come out of a room and hurry to the elevator. He had remembered his promise to his mother about the engravers. As soon as he was gone, they presented themselves boldly at the door.

Filled with the joy that had come to her, and feeling entirely safe now in the protection of her husband, Mary Dunham opened the door. She supposed, of course, it was the bell-boy with the pitcher of ice-water, for which she had just rung.

"Ah, here you are at last, my pretty cousin!" It was the voice of Richard that menaced her, with all the stored-up wrath of his long-baffled search.

At that moment the man from the motor-cycle stepped softly up the top stair and slid unseen into the shadows of the hall.

For an instant it seemed to Mary Dunham that she was going to faint, and in one swift flash of thought she saw herself overpowered and carried into hiding before her husband should return. But with a supreme effort, she controlled herself, and faced her tormentor with unflinching gaze. Though her strength had deserted her at first, every faculty was now keen and collected. As if nothing unusual were happening, she put out her cold, trembling fingers, and laid them firmly over the electric button on the wall. Then with new strength coming from the certainty that some one would soon come to her aid, she opened her lips to speak.

"What are you doing here, Richard?"

"I've come after you, my lady. A nice chase you've led me, but you shall pay for it now."

The cruelty in his face eclipsed any lines of beauty which might have been there. The girl's heart froze within her as she looked once more into those eyes, which had always seemed to her like sword-points.

"I shall never go anywhere with you," she answered steadily.

He seized her delicate wrist roughly, twisting it with the old wrench with which he had tormented her in their childhood days. None of them saw the stranger who was quietly walking down the hall toward them.

"Will you go peaceably, or shall I have to gag and bind you?" said Richard. "Choose quickly. I'm in no mood to trifle with you any longer."

Although he hurt her wrist cruelly, she threw herself back from him and with her other hand pressed still harder against the electric button. The bell was ringing furiously down in the office, but the walls were thick and the halls lofty. It could not be heard above.

"Catch that other hand, Mike," commanded Richard, "and stuff this in her mouth, while I tie her hands behind her back."

It was then that Mary screamed. The man in the shadow stepped up behind and said in a low voice:

"What does all this mean?"

The two men, startled, dropped the girl's hands for the instant. Then Richard, white with anger at this interference, answered insolently: "It means that this girl's an escaped lunatic, and we're sent to take her back. She's dangerous, so you'd better keep out of the way."

Then Mary Dunham's voice, clear and penetrating, rang through the halls:

"Tryon, Tryon! Come quick! Help! Help!"

As if in answer to her call, the elevator shot up to the second floor, and Tryon Dunham stepped out in time to see the two men snatch Mary's hands again and attempt to bind them behind her back.

In an instant he had seized Richard by the collar and landed him on the hall carpet, while a well directed blow sent the flabby Irishman sprawling at the feet of the detective, who promptly sat on him and pinioned his arms behind him.

"How dare you lay a finger upon this lady?" said Tryon Dunham, as he stepped to the side of his wife and put a strong arm about her, where she stood white and frightened in the doorway.

No one had noticed that the bell-boy had come to the head of the stairs and received a quiet order from the detective.

In sudden fear, the discomfited Richard arose and attempted to bluff the stranger who had so unwarrantedly interfered just as his fingers were about to close over the golden treasure of his cousin's fortune.

"Indeed, sir, you wholly misunderstand the situation," he said to Dunham, with an air of injured innocence, "though perhaps you can scarcely be blamed. This girl is an escaped lunatic. We have been searching for her for days, and have but just traced her. It is our business to take her back at once. Her friends are in great distress about her. Moreover, she is dangerous and a menace to every guest in this house. She has several times attempted murder——"

"Stop!" roared Dunham, in a thunderous voice of righteous anger. "She is my wife. And you are her cousin. I know all about your plot to shut her up in an insane asylum and steal her fortune. I have found you sooner than I expected, and I intend to see that the law takes its full course with you."

Two policemen now arrived on the scene, with a number of eager bell-boys and porters in their wake, ready to take part in the excitement.

Richard had turned deadly white at the words, "She is my wife!" It was the death-knell of his hopes of securing the fortune for which he had not hesitated to sacrifice every particle of moral principle. When he turned and saw impending retribution in the shape of the two stalwart representatives of the law, a look of cunning came into his face, and with one swift motion he turned to flee up the staircase close at hand.

"Not much you don't," said an enterprising bell-boy, flinging himself in the way and tripping up the scoundrel in his flight.

The policemen were upon him and had him handcuffed in an instant. The Irishman now began to protest that he was but an innocent tool, hired to help discover the whereabouts of an escaped lunatic, as he supposed. He was walked off to the patrol wagon without further ceremony.

It was all over in a few minutes. The elevator carried off the detective, the policemen, and their two prisoners. The door closed behind Dunham and his bride, and the curious guests who had peered out, alarmed by the uproar, saw nothing but a few bell-boys standing in the hall, describing to one another the scene as they had witnessed it.

"He stood here and I stood right there," said one, "and the policeman, he come——"

The guests could not find out just what had happened, but supposed there had been an attempted robbery, and retired behind locked doors to see that their jewels were safely hidden.

Dunham drew the trembling girl into his arms and tried to soothe

her. The tears rained down the white cheeks as her head lay upon his breast, and he kissed them away.

"Oh!" she sobbed, shuddering. "If you had not come! It was terrible, *terrible!* I believe he would have killed me rather than have let me go again."

Gradually his tender ministrations calmed her, but she turned troubled eyes to his face.

"You do not know yet that I am all I say. You have nothing to prove it. Of course, by and by, when I can get to my guardians, and with your help perhaps make them understand, you will know, but I don't see how you can trust me till then."

For answer he brought his hand up in front of her face and turned the flashing diamond—her diamond—so that its glory caught the single ray of setting sun that filtered into the hotel window.

"See, darling," he said. "It is your ring. I have worn it ever since as an outward sign that I trusted you."

"You are taking me on trust, though, in spite of all you say, and it is beautiful."

He laid his lips against hers. "Yes," he said; "it is beautiful, and it is best."

It was very still in the room for a moment while she nestled close to him and his eyes drank in the sweetness of her face.

"See," said he, taking a tiny velvet case from his pocket and touching the spring that opened it. "I have amused myself finding a mate to your stone. I thought perhaps you would let me wear your ring always, while you wear mine."

He lifted the jewel from its white velvet bed and showed her the inscription inside: "Mary, from Tryon." Then he slipped it on her finger to guard the wedding ring he had given her at the church. His arm that encircled her clasped her left wrist, and the two diamonds flashed side by side. The last gleam of the setting sun, ere it vanished behind the tall buildings on the west, glanced in and blazed the gems into tangled beams of glory, darting out in many colored prisms to light the vision of the future of the man and the woman. He bent and kissed her again, and their eyes met like other jewels, in which gleamed the glory of their love and trust.



THE MOTTO ON THE SUN-DIAL

ON the front of one of the houses facing the Thames, in Chelsea, is a sun-dial bearing this unusual but appropriate motto: "Lead Kindly Light."

Henry Taylor Gray

THE MONSTER IN THE CAR

*A Study of the Twentieth-Century Woman's Passion for the Motor
Speed-Mania and Its Attendant Evils and Vagaries*

By Kate Masterson

WOMAN—the Twentieth-Century production—has sold her birthright of emancipation. She is slave to the Motor-Car—the great, luridly painted, furious, rankly odorous machine that now whizzes through the streets of every great city in the world.

From the first she has worshipped more ardently at the shrine than any man. Something about this showy, sputtering immensity, or else all of it—its size, its noise, its display—appealed mysteriously to the sex that loves gems that shine and silks that rustle.

Not only the athletic, sport-loving feminines, but the physically delicate, have learned to glory in the dangers of the automobile and to laugh at narrow escapes from smash-ups, as if the game were as simple as croquet.

They have seen the old and infirm knocked down in the street, and pet puppies and kittens left crushed and bleeding beneath the wheels of their car, without anything more than a little giggle of dismay.

They have made guys of themselves, donning dresses of leather, hideous goggles, shapeless veils and hoods, and so attired they have displayed themselves on hotel piazzas at dinner-time, like dishevelled Bacchantes, talking the lingo of the motor and eating and drinking voraciously, their companions often professional chauffeurs.

Were some musical genius to compose a modern "Faust," he would have to substitute a gorgeous limousine for the string of simple pearls that won Marguerite. It would stand just visible without the wall, and the strains of the jewel song would be replaced with the fierce grunts and snarls of the monster at the gate; hoarse toots punctuating the measure with eloquent discords—a theme for a musical Doré; or perhaps a Strauss would be equal to it.

Students in woman-psychology who have long puzzled over the paradoxes of femininity have a larger problem to deal with than ever before.

Mouse-fear and its contradiction of wonderful physical bravery and endurance are as nothing compared to this new phenomenon. Woman, the lighter-brained, the creature of smiles, tears, and moods, now hugs her chains of cogs, bolts, levers, cranks, all of which she knows better than her prayers.

Diamonds and dresses, flattery and caresses—these were the old-time lures; but the motor is the devil's most effectual temptation to-day. Gowns have become a secondary item; jewels are shut in safety vaults; and thousands of women are offering to give up dress allowances, summer vacations, trips to Europe—everything—for a motor-car!

And these are gentlewomen who have joined the great skirted pack that runs in the wake of the modern juggernaut. In other circles—to the women of the half world—the motor is as necessary as a make-up box or vanity-case on a gold chain. It stamps status, rating—clientele!



And the police-records show what to some would seem the most terrible evidence of all: hundreds of girls, some of them not out of their school pinafores, others working in shops and factories, led to their downfall by the chauffeurs who take the machines of their employers out on so-called "joy rides" and invite these children of the tenements to join them for a good time.

Follow every phase of the evil that is worked by the motor, and you find women in the story. There are dozens of women of intellect and attainment in professions and vocations who confess for the first time a discontent with the decent conditions in which they find themselves. Teachers, nurses, stenographers, all successful in their work, have become convinced that there is nothing worth while in the efforts that lead them to no better reward than to be spattered with the mire of the street or crowded against post and pillar while their sisters who toil nor spin not laugh at their consternation from the cushioned seat of a big touring-car.

They too have found the god in the machine, although many of them took up their various worthy careers urged on by the finest of ambitions—to attain independence or to help provide for those weaker of their families. They have worked proudly and successfully at desk and counter, in hospital and school, and never before have felt the sting of any possible inferiority of station in life. If you ask any one of them to analyze what she feels, she cannot tell you—except that the motors and their insolence of speed and flying mud are like an insult to all honest women who must walk.

All women who live in cities learn very early to understand the

class of perfumed, silk-stockinged she-persons that delight to flaunt their skirts in restaurants and public places, as though their shame were a diadem. Yet even the girls that served them over counters, the maids that hooked their dresses, always cherished a certain well-concealed contempt for them.

But the coming of the motor-car, with its show-windows of plate-glass, its fresh flowers and perfumed cushions, was the exclamation-point that accented this particular phase of life and drove it home as an argument. And it reached the souls of good women, even as the wonderful lingerie and negligées, the real lace on the "things you can't see," never had done before. It puts bells and a hunting horn and flying banners on the actual facts of life—the quotations in the market-place!

The motor-car has become the motive—the cause! It makes the quiet joys of home and hearth seem only amusements for the peasant. It has brutalized every fine feeling—with its tremendous rush of power and speed and consequence!

Of course it is magnificently, if horribly, typical of the age. And this we know is the Woman Age! The half a century of progress seems to have reached that danger-point where retrogression begins. Yet women of intelligence and fine fibre always denied the accusation that they were amenable to the fascination of masterful brutality. To-day those very women are admitting, some bitterly and some fearfully, that the Frankenstein in the automobile has reached the weak heel of their sophistries.



A pale, anæmic, scraggy little old maid that wrote complexion hints for an evening paper once moved grandly into a new hotel in the Forties near Broadway. There was onyx in the hall, and wax palms, and bell boys, and it was all very terrible and splendid, till you got up under the roof, twelve flights back, a mile from a fire escape or a bath, to one little cubby-hole looking directly into a broom closet, where she burned electrics all day and washed her stockings in the tooth-brush mug.

After a while she moved out. There were deep lines of irritation and discontent all over the little woman's face, and her voice had grown raspy. "I could n't stand it," she said crossly. "Why, every woman in the block, not to say the hotel, has a motor!"

"And what has that to do with your pure life mission?" asked one who already knew the answer.

"I could n't stand it!" she hissed. "I just sat in that room all day and hated myself and everybody else! The very toot of the things seemed to mock me! I could n't write!"

And there you are! And another side of the matter came up in a recent bankruptcy case, the man who failed admitting that he had given a valuable machine to an actress whom he described as his fiancée.

"What was the consideration, the understanding?" asked the prosecuting attorney of the fair near-bride on the witness-stand.

"Why—er—the understanding was that I would marry him," answered the lady. "Although of course I highly esteem and respect——"

"I think we understand, madam," grimly interrupted the lawyer—for lawyers and doctors and priests know more of the motor devil than most of us. And they know, too, its almost incomprehensible power over women—turning them into maniacs, shrieking for another turn of the lever that makes the air sing like Mauser bullets by their ears.



Professors may call it the speed madness, but surely, since the French Revolution, women have never looked so unmoved on the torture of wounded and bruised flesh—horses, cows, watch-dogs, flung dying to the side of the road, while the motor-man with a howl of laughter put on more power to escape infuriated pedestrians and onlookers at such wholesale murder of dumb animals.

So horrifying have been these instances in this respect that along country roads, not only in France and Italy but in America, the farmers have ambushed and armed themselves with scythes and shot-guns to deal out vengeance to the slaughterers.

And as the whizzing machine has flashed by, women were laughing behind their veils, with no more thought of their own danger or the ruin they had wrought to hearts where these farm animals and household pets are part of the home life, than if they had nursed at the breasts of wolves.

Women have been known to faint at the sight of blood; to tremble and grow pale as gymnasts perform their lofty feats in theatres, and it has always been attributed to some sex fibre in their brains that has made them more attractive to men. Their fondness for birds, dogs, and pets of all kinds is proverbial in history. Mercy and kindness have been feminine traits allowed to even the least of them; but all of these lovable womanisms have been lost in the new delirium, the mysterious intoxication of the devil wagon.

Other things we could understand, if but dimly. The way in which the snows of purity have melted beneath the fire of beautiful jewels, for instance. Few of us but have felt that awful instinct—temptation—what is it?—to take perfect, glittering jewels in our

hands; to sift them through our fingers and feel them burn against our flesh. Perfumes hold their trances—evil ones, for many. There are strains of music that steal upon our senses like hasheeah. Some flower scents are like drugs.

These things all have their meanings, some of them deep, old, and terrible; but why this spitting, death-dealing engine, gory-tired, with its foul smoke and dust making even the most beautiful country noxious, should own and hold a woman formed by Nature for tenderness and the soft-pedalled music of life is the great question, more unanswerable by far than that old problem of Beauty and the Beast.

Women as a sex are accused of being mercenary at heart, but this argument also fails, for it costs more to keep a steam-yacht than a whole barnful of autos, and the yachswoman enthusiast is exceptionable. At the last international yacht races society women sat eating sandwiches and yawning while their own country's gallant boat, with swelling sails, swept proudly over the line—a sight to stir red blood to a frenzy. And these are the same motor-mad creatures that now match their pulses with those of men, and hoot with amusement as some unaccustomed horse with quivering nostrils and trembling limbs rears and plunges into the ditch as they pass.



Tennis, golf, skating, swimming, and the glorious sport of horse-back riding and hunting, still have their feminine followers. The bicycle and the roller-skate have had their violent seasons with those who could not afford the more costly pastimes. These healthful diversions offered association of the sexes, adventure, comparatively bereft of danger; jaunty costumes, music, the exhilaration of actual bodily exercise.

But none of these ever became an overwhelming passion—an obsession—a brain lesion, so strange that it has blurred social life, out-distanced flirtation and dancing, even among the younger set of girls, and weakened the crowning woman vanity that has held the sex in leash since Eve constructed the first costume of leaves.

The lack of love counts as nothing to the woman who can run her own car. In widow's weeds of gun-metal gray, brightened with flying streamers of crêpe, she dashes over the grave of all her hopes. In fact, there are only two kinds of women now: those who glory in possession, and those who rankle bitterly because they cannot sell their souls in exchange for one of these flaming chariots.

One of the pathetic evidences of the effect of this special clot on the brain is the sight, constantly, in all seasons, of women who have never even boarded a taxicab, yet who garb themselves for every

occasion in touring garb. These veils, coats, hats, abound on morning ferries carrying girls to work in the shops. You see the garments at funerals, at church, even upon the poor waifs of the street!

You hear the patter of the motor over the counters in the department stores as the saleswomen tell of their trips accomplished and to come,—many of them, of course, entirely imaginary—the shop-girl's dream of heaven.

Arrest, the very idea of which might be supposed an excuse for hysterics, no longer holds any terrors for the motor fiend. It is considered rather smart to be hauled up in a station-house and fined for overspeeding. The experience finishes one of these whirls, just as a row with a farmer over a poor crushed dog or hen lends elation to a trip.

The up-to-date girl, even the middle-class girl with a beau, now expects the motor as an accompaniment of a pleasuring trip. Gone are the buggy rides in the country, the sleighing over the hill. Time was when a couple of theatre seats and a bite of supper after the play was quite a decent entertainment for a young man to offer. A cab was considered necessary only for some function that required elaborate evening dress, or when the weather was bad. Not now!



Everything that tends to feminine enjoyment must have the scent of gasoline in it. The young man who once managed to make ten dollars do for an outing now has to spend twice that in a ridiculous attempt to compete with his employers for one glorious purple night. The box of violets used to convey a tender sentiment, but now it takes a machine hired at a price for which he perjures his business destiny—for the automobile habit ranks worse than the race-track as a handicap on the small-salaried clerk. Still, he must have it if he wishes to please the girl. It is the Only Way!

And every extravagant vice has followed in the wake of the car. The inns and restaurants dedicated to motorists charge prices out of all ordinary limits. The very fashionable ones print no prices at all upon their *menus*, but arrange their charges to suit the appearance and condition of the party they serve.

And the person who dares approach one of these places on foot will be received by guests, waiters, and proprietors alike with derisive smiles, as one who has no right to enter such a paradise. Hungry chorus girls, devouring lobsters and champagne for breakfast, look pityingly upon him, while their escorts in coats and caps that make them look like animals pass jokes at the pedestrian's expense. The notion that one might prefer to walk is too absurd for consideration.

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The motorists gulp down their food and drink, enjoying the exaltation that possesses them. The appetite engendered by the sport, among women as well as men, is one of the appalling things to contemplate; for it is abnormal and comes not from the zest of the ride. It is rather for the reason that every properly caparisoned car nowadays has its own bar, its patent bottles for keeping fluids hot and cold, its mixers, shakers—all the implements of the bar-keeper; not that they are used—for it is the fashion to have individual flasks of pure liquor hidden in muffs within easy reach while the tour is on.

This was best demonstrated at the last fashionable cup race, when thousands of enthusiasts travelled all night and gathered at raw winter's dawn by the course chosen. The very cream of society was represented in that group of women. There were some who queen it at Newport, at country homes, and in London during the seasons; great beauties, haireesses, women of birth and breeding.

Shivering newspaper men endeavoring to get names and photographs of the throng brought back convincing proofs of an amazing spectacle. Quart bottles of whiskey were passed from hand to hand and drunk greedily from by these women, many of them from among the season's débutantes, who figure in the social columns day after day.

It was a disgusting spectacle, and one that could never have been duplicated among women who still cherished an atom of pride, or a knowledge of what the inspiration of their sex means to generations to come. Had some of the German philosophers who are always attacking American women in print ever obtained those pictures and the accompanying names, it would have been text for a world sermon—with our motor-mad women as the terrible examples.

Degeneracy of the car is the new disease that will soon call for the diagnosis of a Lombroso or some specialist in female brain fissures. It is to be hoped he may discover what special lobe it is that blazes into such consuming fury at the sight and sound of the automobile monster? Perhaps it may be cut out like a malignant growth, and nipped in the bud before the mania becomes a prenatal influence.

It would be sad to regard the present raging craze as a permanent development of the Eternal Girl, for we of the Here and Now are only Twentieth-Century Shadows of the glories that should be yet to come.

No doubt we shall pass on to our reward unenlightened as to what our emotional palpitations on the subject of the motor-car may be symbolic of—what sex-rush may follow in the future carrying the generations over some awful brink into Chaos. At present we can put our hands on our hearts and affirm that nothing will please us better, when that darker drink is offered, to find his Majesty, the Devil, waiting for us on the other side, with a flame-colored racing machine, that will

carry us at a ripping pace to our griddles; for such passions as these are of the spirit as much as the body, or more.

Possibly there, in the ladies' grill-room, as we adjust our fifteen-yard veils and puff our gold-tipped cigarettes before going down to meet the men, we shall learn the secret of the Force Fiend that has kept us its slaves—either as worshippers or as victims?

Then we shall know and understand maybe, for surely none but the Devil himself can tell us!



SWIMMIN'

By Edwin L. Sabin

THE man who never, exposed all to the air and the sun, has "dove" from bank or raft or boat into the friendly waiting tide; the man who never thus has taken a "header," even though he skinned his face upon the bottom, and got water up his nose and into his ears; the man who never has willingly abandoned his bared body to the embracing limpidity of stream, pond, lake, or sea; the man who never has known, on this perfect equality with nature, the buoyant companionship of the waves and the current, of mermen and of scampering fauns: that man has missed much.

Swimming is a great sweetener of the temper: bathers are a merry folk; water, somehow, dissolves away the humors in the disposition.

"Swimmin'" and "bathing" are not synonymous. Swimmin' is essentially democratic. Bathing is a test, in a measure—but bathing is susceptible of gradations and modifications. Bathing has its naiads; swimmin' has its fauns and satyrs. Bathing may be strictly a society event; swimmin' is only social.

Before the gods, it takes fortitude in man or boy, bent upon swimmin', to discard all pretense and stand out shorn of artificialities, for what he actually is—even to the pallor of his long-smothered skin, and to the funny mole like a wart on the small of his back! The spindling bond-clerk who handles millions and wears pink socks wanes to insignificance beside the compact coal-heaver, and Little Lord Fauntleroy, stripped of his velvets, is the inferior of Micky-the-Kid, stripped of his rags.

Under the uncompromising gaze of one's peers, one's much cultivated dignity shrivels and departs. Ah, what carefully concealed skinniness is at last confessed! What physical shortcomings! Something of a judgment day upon earth is this. For in swimmin', plain, unbedecked swimmin', there can be no partiality.

THE WALL OF SILENCE

By Elizabeth Maury Coombs

“ I WONDER what they expect their children to be, Sis’ Susan.” Miss Nancy Betts, her spectacles on the top of her head, gave an indignant jab with her two-pronged gardening fork at the blue violets which were peeping through the fence between her place and her sister’s.

By reason of their white paling front fences, the houses of the little hamlet seemed to join hands all along the grass-grown street, like little old women, and the porches covered with white clematis were their fleecy lace jabots. They sat in a rounding row, as at sewing society meetings, and exchanged gentle thoughts, most likely of crocheted mats.

Their very gardens were lifetime friends each of the other. Their pink hollyhocks were sisters coming all from one parent plant; their sweet May pinks were cousins; and their blue violets slipped through the palings at the call of the Spring and married the white ones on the other side, causing Miss Nancy’s displeasure.

Mrs. Judkins—Sis’ Susan—on the way to the sod-house to put the butter away after the early supper, paused round-eyed at the fence. “ Why, Sis’ Nancy, what a thing for a single lady to say ! ”—with a damask-rose flush at such an impropriety. “ But if you want to know my married opinion,” she smiled, “ I reckon as your vi’lets were white, and mine, at whose door you of course lay the courtin’, were dark blue—I—s’pose their children will be baby blues.”

“ Mixtrys don’t always mix,” retorted Sis’ Nancy, with gentle grimness. “ Look at you and John Judkins. You was always light complected, body and mind, and he was sorter dark; and Azalea come a reg’lar black-eyed French gypsy. Maybe it come o’ namin’ her after a town. I always said she’d oughter been named Susannah Maria, after you and mother both—them two names would ha’ tamed a wild-cat.”

“ Here’s your paper, Aunt Nancy,” called a shrill voice from the gate. “ Your specs is on top of your head. I know you’ll be lookin’ in between the leaves of the Bible fer ’em in a minute ! ”

“ Yes, I’ll need ’em sure enough to find anything new that’s happened since last night in Azalea Village,” remarked Miss Nancy, as she took the paper from the boy.

"Father," called Mrs. Judkins, to her husband on the porch, "here 's Mr. Jimmy's little boy with the *Bugle*. Give him a pocketful of those June apples on the hall table."

Mr. Jimmy's little boy made the usual pause for contributions of this sort, while the old man limped down the worn old brick walk.

"Any news in the *Bulletin*, Sonny?" he said, asking his usual afternoon question, and calling the little paper by the name it had gone by thirty years before Mr. Jimmy made a much needed and more resented change in its name and policy.

"Yes, sirree," answered the youngest scion of the house of Jimmy. "Job Carpenter could n't hardly wait ter git his cane, walkin' up ter the orifice. He said fer *every-day* jest give him 'Azalea Additions,' as father calls the birth column, and 'Azalea Subtractions,' as old Hi Simpkins calls the marriage and death notices; but a Sunday er Saturday evenin' paper ought by rights to be runnin' over with tales of love and murder;" and, taking a horse-like bite from his apple, Mr. Jimmy's boy ran on.

Mrs. Judkins went and sat on her front steps, fanning herself with a corner of her blue-checked apron. In Azalea we still wear blue-checked aprons, and sometimes we cross every other check with white or red knitting cotton. This last is considered a giddy flight of fancy.

"Well, Father, what 's the news?" she asked.

He turned the paper before answering. "Nothin' much, Honey-bee, exceptin' they 've found out that young woman *did* murder her husband down towards Bentonville—stabbed him; he was so brutal cruel to her, in every way a bad man kin be."

The old man stopped his reading and looked off to where the mountains thrust their jagged tops into the sky, like the irregular blue scallops of a child's first embroidery.

Old John Judkins's eyes had all the latent fire of a half-tamed eagle's. He stayed at the village of Azalea, and had stayed a long, quiet sixty years, but he had stayed partly because the chains of tradition clanked round his ankles, partly from early formed habit, and more than all because of the loose tether of his wife's love, and trust in his love. But when he thought you were not looking, his eyes seemed to haunt the gray rocks of the distant mountains, and thence to wander away beyond his own will along the highway of the world, so deep became the black shadows of reflection. Sometimes by a glint of light you saw that his wandering fancy had paused at wayside taverns, and his voice when you roused him suddenly had haunting wild notes of the song of the road in its unstudied tones. Well might Miss Nancy say at such times that "Brother John was sorter dark; that the mixtry did n't mix, and Azalea had come sorter darker."

"I used ter think more of the *Bugle*," said the old wife, "when

't was jest about village folks, and it used ter tell about the new coat of paint bein' put on Grandma Slocum's front fence, and of folks from neighborin' towns havin' been seen in our midst to-day, than I do now, with great big head-lines about murders in places we-all don't know nothin' about."

"Ole 'oman, you're sorter like that man in the funny tale 'Zalea used to laugh at, about some feller sayin' the killin' of one friend in the paper give him twict as much pleasure as the massacre of a million Chinese," rejoined the old man quizzically.

He paused and laughed reminiscently, then resumed: "This poor critter what did the murder was jest our 'Zalea's age, it said in the paper—jest twenty-three. It said she was pretty, too, but I lay she was n't half as pretty as 'Zalea was, fer I never see nothin' to compar' with her, lessen 't was the 'zaleas themselves, fire red like that sky in snow-time; and 'Zalea's cheeks were like 'em when she'd run and play till her black curls twisted round her head like the feelers of wild-grape vines."

A worried look passed over the placid face of Mrs. Judkins. "It seems like a month of Sundays sence we heard from 'Zalea," she said complainingly.

"'Zalea takes after her pa in that, like everything else," ruminated old John. "We Judkineses never was no hands fer letter writin'. I mind when Br'er Sid went to Californy, he writ back onct to say as how he had done got thar and was well and doin' well and hopin' we's the same; and then he never writ no more fer five year, till Ma had done gin him up fer dead and scalped by the Indians. Don't you worry 'bout 'Zalea, Honey. She'll come dancin' in here some day before long peart as a cricket and take you-all by s'prise."

With this remark, Mr. Judkins returned to his paper, slouched down in the deep hollow of the split-bottom chair almost on the back of his neck; while his wife went over to resume with her sister the conversation which had been interrupted by the arrival of the *Bugle*.

Miss Nancy Betts was sitting in *her* rocker on *her* front porch, also absorbed in *her* copy of the *Bugle*. The paths of age had all concentrated around her tiny drooping mouth. So many fine lines leading towards the lips gave the effect of a casing having been made around it, and its having been drawn up for life tightly with its gathering-string. One who observed her closely might have noticed that the gathering string was just now even more tightly drawn than usual.

"Whatever did you mean, Sis' Nancy, by callin' Parson away when he had n't much more'n got to we-all's house this evenin'? I never knew anybody to act so."

So deep was Miss Nancy's absorption in the *Bugle* that she made her elder sister no reply whatever, so Sis' Susan kept on in her monologue.

"I was s'prised at his comin' jest now. I'd have thought he'd have only got to the H's, bein' as we've had so much weather since Christmas." In Azalea our parsons visit alphabetically.

"I think maybe he saw I thought as much; fer the parlor lambrekin was settin' six ways fer Sunday, and nothin' to hand him but June apples. He acted strange, too; he was kinder flustered and said he'd heard at Pace's store as he come by that Pa and I was havin' trouble. Then you came along and took him away. Reckon he must have meant that dead frog Father had such a pester over gettin' out'er the well week before last."

"Susan! Oh, Susan!" called the old man, from the other porch. "Did you forget to set that old blue hen, after makin' me fix up that flour-barrel like a fair palace?"

When she was gone her sister Nancy almost sighed at the relief to her overburdened feelings. She went into her little dark parlor and first from habit pushed her silver-bowed spectacles up on her head, fixed her eyes on a picture of a dark-haired, strange-eyed child, framed village fashion, first in an elaborate red velvet mat and then in a tortured gilt frame, while down the onlooker's furrowed cheeks rolled unheeded the scanty, bitter tear-drops of old age.

"Oh, Azalea, you were always strange and wild, but how could you have killed him? My poor little child! Your head was so easy to upset, and he driv' you to it. Red-lipped women's love is close to crazy, and your lips were as red as the maple blooms at corn-plantin' time. Lord, I thank Thee for Thy kind deeds this day!" she said, resting her head on the Bible that lay on the marble-top table. "I thank Thee for Mr. Jimmy and that boy of Johnnie Baxter's—as triflin' a limb of Satan as ever lived—changin' the names in the paper so as she and Brother would n't never know! I thank Thee, Lord, for letting me stop that good old blunderbuss of a parson before he could bust loose and tell all he knew. He's mighty good when he understands, which is once in a coon's age, and he says, 'We'll surround them with a wall of silence, Miss Nancy, if I have to ride till midnight to warn our friends never to let the true tale of this horror pass their lips.' So I thank Thee, Lord, for our parson, who said the Lord would absolve his people from any lie told to save breakin' the heart of my poor old innocent sister and her husband John, who never agreed with me on a single point in his life, and whose Dominecker hen has scratched up more English peas in my garden in the last week than she'll ever be able to account for."

Then Miss Nancy, having relieved her mind of its burden of gratitude, went out again and sat on her porch. She heard the setting hen squawking wrathful protests against the flour-barrel palace, heard her brother-in-law's "Well, Sis' Susan," in laughing imitation of her own

prim tones, "ef you think ole Sukey Blueskin has resumed her settin', I spects we mought as well go to bed and leave her;" heard him lock the front door with care, leaving everything else wide open, as is the custom in Azalea, where burglars are expected to enter politely at the front, if at all; and watched the moon peep over the gray shoulders of the mountains and blink at the little town, until long after the peaceful snores of the quiet old couple under the log-cabin quilt had begun to disturb the neighboring stillness.

"It's jest me—Mr. Jimmy's Tommy, Aunt Nancy," said a muffled voice at the gate. "Pa said I was to bring this telegram up to you-all. It's fer Mr. Judkins, but he said not to 'sturb them to-night; that you was a light sleeper. But you ain't never gone to bed—you 're settin' up late to-night."

Miss Nancy arose, took the message, and stood trembling with it in her hands while the footsteps of the boy resounded loudly as he hurried away down the plank sidewalk. Finally she crept into the house, lighted her bedroom candle, looked long at the address on the hated yellow envelope, and then opened it shudderingly.

MR. JOHN JUDKINS [she read slowly and aloud, as she had been taught out of the blue-back speller], Azalea Post Office, Greens County. Azalea Morehead committed suicide in her cell to-day. Wire disposition of body.

JOHN WALLACE,
Keeper of County Jail, Bentonville.

"May God have mercy on her soul! He driv' her to it—he *driv'* her to it!" She took the yellow slip in her fingers, lighted one end at the candle, and, laying it and its envelope on the white-clayed hearth, wrote with laboring, knotty fingers a merciful message to Susan:

DEAR SISTER SUSAN:

God help you to bear it, but our little Azalea died suddenly, and I will go and bring back her body, knowing Brother John's lameness and you could n't go by yourself. We don't know where her husband is.

"But," said Miss Nancy to herself, with a flash of indignant eyes, as she signed herself "Your true sister, Nancy Betta," "we hope he is where he belongs!"

The train from Bentonville came late, but the solemn neighbors in their ill-fitting black clothes were there to meet it—the girls of the village choir with wreaths of syringa and lilac, and the little over-awed school-children. The parson preceded the little cluster of kindly folk surrounding the cloth-covered coffin down the little street towards the setting sun, and amidst tears they sang their hymns of devotion and stopped every cranny in the wall of silence that in mercy they builded around the wards of Love.

IN THE DOG DAYS

By Carl H. Grabo

THE Junior Partner removed his feet from the desk with a bang, and tossed a roll of specifications to the Senior Partner, remarking, "The lunch is on you! Beddoes has made an error."

"No!" exclaimed his companion incredulously. "Well, I think the better of him. Now we know he is human, fallible, and trustworthy. Better raise his pay."

"What he needs," said the Junior Partner, "is a vacation."

"We might try him out on that Oregon contract in September," suggested the Senior Partner. "That would give him a change."

"We'll bear it in mind," said the J. P.

"By the way, what was Beddoes's mistake?" asked the Senior Partner.

"Forgot to take into account the weight of the snow on the superstructure."

"Why, man, they don't have snow in southern Texas."

"Government report," said the Junior Partner, "states two instances of a precipitation of three-tenths of an inch. It melted almost as it fell, to be sure."

"Astonishing aberration for Beddoes," murmured the Senior Partner. "Must be due to the heat."

Indeed, something was the matter with the "Errorless Wonder," as his envious fellows had dubbed him. What the matter was, he himself did not know, and, not being introspective, he was unlikely ever to find out. When the good-looking draughtsman who smoked the bulldog pipe drifted over to his desk and remarked, "Too cussed hot to-day to work, ain't it, Beddy?" an explanation seemed to be suggested. Yet heat had never before seduced him from his errorless way.

Returning the specifications, the Junior Partner remarked casually, "Better calculate the weight of the snow, too, Beddoes. There is a record of a light fall." Beddoes was too much surprised at his own oversight to feel any mortification.

In the late afternoon Beddoes, seemingly cool and fresh, clung to a strap in a packed and perspiring trolley-car. Still unaffected, he ate moderately of the hot and heavy supper—ham, fried potatoes, coffee, and pie—prepared by his landlady, Mrs. Shorts.

"It ain't a day as makes you hungry, is it?" said Mrs. Shorts, as Beddoes refused a second quarter of pie. "This noon I felt that languid I could n't eat nothin' but a piece of cold steak an' a cup of tea."

Later, as Beddoes sat on the front steps in his shirt-sleeves, Mrs. Shorts appeared in the doorway for a breath of air. "This is the kind of a night a young girl wants her young man to take her to the park an' row her on the lagoon an' treat her to ice-cream. Don't you know any girls, Mr. Beddoes?"

"Come to think of it, I don't believe I do," Beddoes replied. "But the park may be cooler than this." He went into the house for his coat, put Schmidt on "Structural Strains" into its place on the book-shelf, and turned down his student-lamp. Then, with an unwonted sense of freedom, he strolled towards the park and his favorite bench in a retired corner.

The only occupant was not unfamiliar. As usual, she sat well to the extreme of her end of the bench, and Beddoes seated himself at the other. His companion glanced at him almost with recognition in her eyes, and Beddoes quite automatically remarked, "It's very hot this evening, is n't it?"

"Very," assented the girl. "But the park is so much better than a stuffy flat."

Conversation languished, as Beddoes tried vainly to take up the chain of fancy where he had dropped it on other evenings: If one were to construct a viaduct over the boulevard and the lagoon beyond, a distance of two thousand feet, and this were made eighty feet wide and calculated to accommodate a solid stream of automobiles moving at the rate of twenty miles an hour—but it was no use. He was in no mood for dreaming.

"Do you live near-by?" he inquired suddenly.

"Three or four blocks from the entrance," the girl answered, with a touch of surprise in her voice.

"I live about the same," said Beddoes, in a burst of frankness, and added, "I like to come to the park on hot evenings."

"Yes," said the girl, in a tone inviting further conversation. But Beddoes felt suddenly that he had been very bold, and he relapsed into silence.

The girl watched with secret amusement the preliminary symptoms of his next conversational move. It took him ten minutes to make it, but its daring astonished her.

"My landlady remarked this evening," ventured Beddoes, in a rather strained tone, "that on a hot evening like this young ladies liked young men to treat them to ice-cream. Is that true, do you suppose?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied the girl.

"There's an ice-cream parlor right beside the park entrance," said Beddoes hopefully.

"I know there is;" and she laughed, very pleasantly.

"Will you—you come with me and—a—have a dish?" asked he very stiffly—as he felt.

She hesitated, became serious, and then, after a glance at him, said graciously, "Thank you, I shall be glad to."

In the glitter of the "Refreshment Palace"—so designated by an electric sign—Beddoes first saw his companion to advantage. She had dark eyes that pleased him, and dark hair about a square face, and a chin pointed and resolute. Beddoes did n't know whether she was pretty or not, for he had no standards of comparison.

She, on her part, seemed quickly to overcome some constraint of manner, and treated Beddoes straightforwardly.

"I have, of course, often noticed you on our bench in the park," she said, "and I wondered who you were. Is n't a city strange? You know people by sight sometimes for years and never speak. I don't like it. I can't get used to the unfriendliness of it. You see, I lived in the country until I was sixteen."

"I suppose it is unfriendly," responded Beddoes, "only I never thought of it before. I've never had many friends, and I think of my own work mostly, so I don't feel the need of them. I'm an engineer," he continued, in answer to what he took to be a questioning look—"bridge-building."

"And I am a stenographer," said the girl.

They lingered at their table in the corner, saying little, but with a pleasurable sense of companionship.

"It is nearly ten o'clock," declared the girl, at last. "I must be going home."

She rose to go, and Beddoes, as of right, went with her. At the corner of her street, she stopped in dismissal. "Thank you," she said. "I have enjoyed the evening very much."

"But you have n't told me your name," said Beddoes, acting on a resolution he had been slowly evolving.

"My name is Ruth Holmes," she told him, without hesitation.

"And mine is Harry Beddoes," he returned. "Good-night."

"Good-night."

On the next evening, somewhat earlier than usual, Beddoes was in his place on the park bench. He did not recognize her at first as she came near, for she was dressed in white, and he had always before seen her in dark gowns. The change struck even his blunted perceptions.

"I like you in that white dress," he remarked, but at this she became embarrassed, and conversation languished for the remainder of the evening. She would have no ice-cream that night. She felt too

tired. However, she let him go with her to her corner, and she said good-night very pleasantly.

It became habitual, the evening meeting. Nothing was ever said by way of promise, yet each evening he looked for her, and each evening she came, talked, ate a chocolate "sundæ" at the Greek "Refreshment Palace," and permitted him to take her to the corner of her street. She did not ask him to call, and the thought of it never entered his head.

The days were of unbroken heat, uniform, persistent. For three weeks the city gasped and prayed for a pitying rain or a reviving breeze. The nights were glorious, deep as blue velvet, with stars like sequins; and with the coming of a new queen moon the world after sunset became an enchanted place.

Beddoes bore the day's heat cheerfully, and looked so cool and fresh that his presence irritated the entire office. When he blossomed into a red necktie, a delegation waited on him and demanded an explanation. And Beddoes, move to an unusual lightness of spirit, told them that the tie was not new, but was an old white one which was suffering from sunburn.

But such was the pertinacity and prying curiosity of the office force that Beddoes's romance (he did not think of it as that) could not long remain undetected. His first intimation that he was found out came when he discovered on his desk a poster such as those used for advertising in the street-cars. It was bordered with pink cupids, and its chief feature was the portrait of a bird unknown to ornithology. Beneath in large letters ran the legend—

GREENBAUM FEATHERS THE NEST. FOUR-ROOM FLAT
FURNISHED COMPLETE FOR \$84.49. LONG
TIME. EASY PAYMENTS.

He felt the eyes of the office upon him as he carefully read the poster, held it at arm's length to get the full beauties of its impressionistic art, and placed it in a conspicuous position on his desk. He evinced no embarrassment, much to the disappointment of the observers.

The handsome draughtsman drifted over to his desk. "Good ice-cream joint near the park entrance, is n't it?" he remarked.

"Very," answered Beddoes. "I don't remember seeing you there, though."

"You were much too busy to notice me," said the draughtsman. Then, confidentially and in a stage-whisper audible to the entire office: "She's a peach. Congratulations."

"You need n't be in a hurry," said Beddoes calmly.

Nevertheless, it was with a new expectation that he awaited her arrival that night. But she did not come. He remained in his accustomed place until ten o'clock, and then went home, feeling strangely

desolate. In the office the next day the red-haired stenographer observed that Mr. Beddoes had evidently been "thrown down," for he was "as glum as a boiled owl."

When *she* had not arrived at half past eight of the same evening, Beddoes resolutely walked to her street. He did not know the number, so he walked slowly, scanning the front of each apartment building. He saw her at last, seated on a doorstep in the shadow, and went up boldly.

"I'm glad you've come," she said.

"I missed you last night and to-night," he replied.

"The heat and my work have been too much for me. I've stayed home from the office two days."

She spoke listlessly, and Beddoes could see that her face showed signs of weariness.

"I'd have gone to the park had I felt able," she continued. "But I thought maybe you'd come."

"I waited in the park last night," he said simply. "To-night I knew something unusual must have happened."

They sat quietly for a time. Then she went on half to herself: "I wish sometimes I'd never left the country. If I could have got more education—enough to teach school—I'd have stayed. In summer I long to go back. But there is nothing to do, and I have few friends there, and none to whom I can go for help. But there are many worse off than I, I suppose. The poor girls that work in stores—they have a much harder time, and so little to live on. I can live decently, at least. But there is no future. I just go on and on, and there is nothing to look forward to. Is it like that with everybody, do you suppose? Does everybody feel that way?"

"I did n't use to feel so," said Beddoes, "but lately I've been getting restless, and I've been making up my mind to go West. I've half a mind to go to the Pacific Coast and start in to work for myself. There are many enterprises out there—water-power and irrigation projects—and I'm a good enough engineer to fit in, I think. I've been well trained. I'm tired of staying here, working in an office."

"When are you going?" she asked at length.

"I have n't decided, but I've been thinking of it for several weeks. Why don't you go West, too?" he added. "You have nothing to keep you and perhaps you'd like the new country better than the city."

"It's different for a woman," she answered. "A woman is n't so independent. I think I'll go in now. Thank you for coming."

"You will come to the park to-morrow evening?" he asked.

She hesitated. "If I'm not too tired."

"Please do," he urged. "I went to talk with you about my plans."

"I'll see," she replied. "Maybe."

"I'll count on you," he said eagerly. "Please come early."

She was not as early as he wished, and he walked up and down impatiently until he saw her coming slowly towards him.

"It is going to rain at last, I think," she said, looking not at him, but at the clouds. "Have you decided when you'll go away?"

He got up and stood before her. His voice was a bit tremulous. "I've decided to go to-night if you'll go with me."

"Go with you!" she faltered incredulously.

"Yes," he said. "I bought two tickets, and I have the marriage license, and there's a minister lives near here. I have the addresses of three, in fact." He took the license from his pocket and dropped it in her lap. She twisted it with trembling fingers and looked up at him, her face scared and white.

"And I have the ring, too," he added, pulling a box from his pocket.

"Oh, I can't, I can't," she said—"not this way."

"I know this is abrupt," he went on. "And I have no reason to believe you care enough for me to do it. If you don't, I can't bear to stay. I'll have to go alone. If you do, why should we wait?"

"I care for you a great deal," she said softly. "But don't you see?—we can't be—be—married this way, so suddenly. It is n't right. And my place, too. And I have n't any clothes, and my things are n't packed, and— Oh, we can't!"

"Look," he said. "To-night it's going to rain. The weather will change. Let's go now and keep the memory of these meetings here unchanged. We've been—I've been, at least—very happy meeting you here, and I'd like to go away before things are different."

"I've been happy, too," she said, and took his hand in both of hers. They were trembling, and her voice trembled, too. "Dear, don't you think we'd better wait? I'll marry you, truly I will. Give me a few days—give me until to-morrow."

"I have the tickets in my pocket," he said resolutely. "And I have here all the money I possess—six hundred dollars. I have sent my valise to the station. It is only eight o'clock, and the train does n't leave until midnight. We can be married, and you can pack enough things to take with you. The rest you can have sent along afterwards. Come, dear, there is plenty of time. Won't you do it?"

She began to cry. "You are so—so persistent," she sobbed.

He knew he had won as he lifted her from the bench and kissed her. The park policeman politely looked the other way when they went by him. She was dabbing her eyes with a handkerchief, but Beddoes had his arm around her.

The Junior Partner slowly read the last page of the letter before him, and then as slowly began at the beginning and reread the entire

communication. Conflicting emotions were written on his face. Finally he leaned back in his chair, and faced the Senior Partner. "Well, Walter," he said, "the mysterious disappearance of Beddoes, or the wonderful error of the Errorless Wonder, is explained."

"Was n't sick or hurt, I hope?" said the Senior Partner.

"Beddoes," explained the J. P., "is married and has gone West to grow up with the country."

"Whom did he marry?"

"He does n't say, but from rumors which have come to me, but which I have not until now repeated, I fancy that she was a dark-eyed stenographer whom he used to meet in the park."

"The Errorless Wonder!" said the Senior Partner. "The man devoid of sentiment! The mathematical machine! Who'd have thought it! What's he going to do for a living?"

"Says he's going to start in for himself on the Coast. He is decent enough to add that he'll be glad to continue on those estimates for the Pecos ironwork, if by so doing he can be of any service to us. Furthermore, he does not ask for the month's pay due him."

"I think," remarked the Senior Partner, "that Beddoes is a man of possibilities. He has shown himself to be distinctly human. If you'll toss me the telegraph pad, I'll wire him to go to Portland and look over the ground for us on the Stevens project. Agreed?"

"Sort of a wedding present," assented the J. P. "Give him best wishes from me and the office."



A GENTLEMAN OF THE ROAD

BY WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT

MY clothes—ah, they were not made for me!
 They are wide to the winds on high,
 And other men's falls and their gallantry—
 These garments have known—as have I.

The twigs in my fire—they are friends to me,
 Though my fire be wide to the sky;
 And mine is the Star-ceiled Hostelry,
 Where a stranger is welcome to lie.

My babes I have lost, and my nesting-tree,
 And wide to the Earth am I,
 But my life has won me a Memory
 And a bit of a faith to die.

A BLOTTED PAGE

By Elizabeth Dejeans

Author of "The Heart of Desire," "The Winning Chance," etc.

HELEN, the parlor maid, leaned a little further over the banisters to see the front door, for the grating of a latch-key had sounded clearly through the silent house, and she had been waiting alone for a long time. The door did not open immediately, and she strained her eyes to see better, the light in the lower hall was so dim. Then she was conscious of a glimpse of stone steps and a strip of snow-covered pavement, white in the cold moonlight, and a tall dark figure outlined against it; then again the dim hall, with the dark figure that moved, coming slowly up the stairs.

She drew back a little, for her white cap and apron made her conspicuous against the black oak of the stairway, but from where she stood she could still see the stairs as far down as the electric globe above her cast its light, and she watched the figure emerge from the gloom below. The man ascended slowly, his face raised to the light, and Helen had an instantaneous impression of the deeply graven lines, and the white immobility of expression that in a few hours had wiped away its youth. He had not removed his overcoat, and his hat was pushed far back on his head at a dissipated angle which with a wandering eye would have told its own story, but the eyes with their widely dilated pupils were vividly, consciously alive.

He came on up until he gained the upper hall, and stood only a few feet from her, but apparently unconscious of her presence. His eyes were fixed on a door a little to his right, and he moved towards it, opened it, and went in, switching on the light as he stood just within the threshold. It was a woman's room, dainty in pink and white, and his eyes travelled quickly from the undisturbed bed to the dressing-table, denuded of its silver and cut glass, resting last on a trunk-strap that stretched its length snake-like across the rose and white of the carpet. He drew back then into the hall, closing the door behind him, and, turning, came face to face with the maid. His expression did not change, and he showed no surprise at seeing her at that late hour.

"My wife is not here?" he asked. He spoke as if through stiff lips that deadened the usually clear quality of his voice.

"No, sir," she answered.

"Did she leave a message?" He spoke more distinctly.

"She went to see her father, sir."

He stood for a moment, his eyes on her face, his thoughts apparently elsewhere, and then crossed the hall to his own room. "Very well," he said.

The girl took a step forward. "Can I get anything for you, sir?" she asked, with a touch of eagerness. "If you would like something to eat, or a cup of tea, I could get it in a minute. You have been walking, and it is so cold."

He turned and stood in his open door, his face the only white thing in the frame of darkness behind him. "No," he said absently, and then as if considering: "The other servants—where are they?"

"Ah Sing and Sarah left this afternoon, sir."

"Is there no one here but you?" he asked, with a faint note of surprise in his voice.

"No, sir."

He moved back and was about to close his door, but paused as if struck by a thought. "Helen"—he spoke her name as if uncertain whether it belonged to her—"where is your room?"

She hesitated, her smooth brow puckering in a troubled frown, but she answered his question finally. "Up-stairs, sir—on the other side."

"The back room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well—close the doors on the upper landing. The wind is coming up, and it'll blow hard before morning. Good night." He stepped back and shut himself in.

She stood some time where he had left her, her eyes fixed on his closed door, the frown deepening on her brow, and then she turned toward the wide stairway that led to the third story. She mounted several steps uncertainly, and then stopped, turned, and looked again toward his door, her face distressed, her hands clasping each other tightly under her apron. She was thinking deeply, her dark eyes wide and troubled, her lips parted. A clock somewhere below struck a single clear note, and as she drew in her breath and listened, she could hear distinctly its continued, monotonous ticking. A rush of wind swept along the back of the house, driving the sharp particles of snow against the big window at the head of the stairs, and a colder breath crept across her feet. She had not taken her eyes from the closed door, but her lips came together tightly, and her brow smoothed, for she had decided. She went quickly down the three or four steps, and, crossing to it and laying her hand on the jamb for support, pressed her ear closely to the crack, listening intently.

The man on the other side was walking up and down, evidently the whole length of the room, and he passed and repassed at regular intervals the door against which the girl leaned. Once he paused, as if listening on his part, and she drew back hastily; but he did not come out, and after a few moments went on with his walk. . . . The clock below struck the half-hour sharply. The wind had risen now to a gale, as he had predicted, and strange whispering sounds arose in the vast silence below. Somewhere in the house a door shut with a bang, and the movements in the room within ceased. The girl straightened and pressed her ear closer to the crack, but there was no further sound, aside from the faint click of an electric switch. She lifted her head quickly, paused a moment, then softly turned the handle of the door and pushed it open.

The large room she entered was in darkness, save for a band of light that fell through an open door beyond, and the girl went quickly toward it, pausing only when she reached its threshold. It was a small room, warmly tinted in its oriental colors of hangings and rugs, and the rich wood of desk and bookshelves. The man was standing beside the desk, his back toward her, his shoulders thrown back, his head held high, and as she stepped into the bright flare of electric light his slowly lifted arm cast a moving shadow across her white face. . . . She sprang at him with a low cry, her hands clasping his lifted arm and dragging it down. There was a vivid flash, a loud report, and a marble figure suddenly swayed on its pedestal in the corner and fell crashing to the floor. The man wheeled and looked down into her quivering, upraised face, his own features set like a mask of the dead, save only for the flaming eyes, and they gazed a long minute into each other's face.

A quiver crossed the man's chin then, and his brows twitched suddenly, his eyelids slowly reddening; he had travelled a long journey back into life in that still, palpitating moment. The girl watched the wild light fade in his eyes, and her hand slipped then gently down his arm and drew the ugly, shining object from between his trembling fingers, for he was beginning to shake now as with a chill. Something that was boyish, that was young and hurt and suffering, smoothed away the lines that had aged his face by a sum of years, and his broad shoulders drooped.

In reality, they were the same age, but she looked ten years his senior as she stood beside him. The terror had gone out of her face, and it had softened into an expression at once pitying, and protective, and tender. She thrust the thing in her hand into the open drawer of the desk, turning the key on it, and touched him gently.

"Please sit down," she begged, pushing a chair toward him, and he obeyed her limply, dropping his clasped hands between his knees,

his head sunk forward. She looked down on his bent head, and the color came back to her cheeks and she moved quickly. She put a match to the ready laid fire in the grate, turned off all but one of the glaring lights, and closed the door into the larger room. The blizzard raged and whistled without, and bellowed up the chimney, hurriedly sucking up the slender spirals of smoke from the newly lighted fire. The big house was about them, dreary and cold, and the biting storm roared without, but the woman's few deft movements had made a warm corner for the crouching figure in the chair. She sat down then, waiting till he should speak, and presently he moved back from the heat of the fire, lifting himself until he looked directly at her. His nervous trembling was gone now, but he looked utterly spent.

"What a piece of folly!" he said dully, and then a slow surprise dawned in his face as his scattered faculties focused themselves upon the woman in cap and apron before him. He recognized her and sought to connect her with things past that might explain the present. In the last two months of torment he had had but a dim consciousness of the affairs or personnel of his household. The part of himself that mechanically rose up and sat down to meals, that walked in and out of his house, had unconsciously received an impression of her features, but that was all. It took an immense effort of his tired brain to connect that dim impression with the quivering, vivid compassion that a few moments ago had looked from her dark eyes into the despair of his naked soul; for the time being, his dazed thoughts were busied with her to the exclusion of his own problem. . . . He remembered meeting her outside his door, and that he had walked his floor waiting until she should be well shut away in her own room, and the sound of the rising wind should cover the report of his pistol. A few moments did n't matter, and he hated to startle a woman, alone in that great house; so he remembered he had waited, but there was no connection between him and that white-aproned figure that he had passed in his comings and goings, that should warrant this intrusion into his privacy, this thrusting of herself into the last act of his wretched drama. . . . She had dragged him back from the abyss, and he was too dead tired to go through that stress of feeling again—or to face the morrow either. A sudden anger at her presumption, the presumption of a servant, rose in him; it lifted his shoulders and deepened the fold in his brow.

"What are you doing here at this time of night?" he asked roughly. "You would better go back to your room." He half rose as he spoke, but the girl did not stir. She only looked at him a little more steadily, neither awed nor embarrassed. There was nothing of the awkwardness or submission of the servant in her attitude.

"I should be glad to go," she answered finally and with some hesitation, "but—I am afraid you would do something like that again."

"You take a lot of interest in my welfare," he exclaimed with extreme irritation—"a good deal more than some others I know. What did you come in here for?"

"I have been afraid for the last month that you would do something like this. After I saw this evening's paper—and—and your wife went away, I was still more anxious. Then, when you came up the stairs and I saw your face, I felt certain of it." She spoke quite simply, leaning a little towards him, her look grave and earnest. "I listened at your door, and when you came in here I had to follow you—I could n't risk it—and, you see, I was right. A moment later, and just think of it——" She drew her breath sharply.

An expression of puzzled surprise grew in his face and mingled with his sullen anger. "But why in the name of conscience should you care—or interfere? Why did n't you clear out, like the rest?"

"I could n't do it," she said. "I thought of you coming back here alone, and the house deserted. I could n't do it."

He stared at her in wonder and with a quickening interest that made him forget for the moment both his irritation and the depression that hung over him. His usual quick appreciation of charm in a woman had received a sudden impression, and he studied the girl with aroused curiosity. His thoughts veered from the tragic to the normal and natural in him. He noted the blue black of her abundant hair, the warm pallor of her clear skin, the soft curve of her cheek, and the red of her lips. The full, rounded lines of her figure showed that she was no girl, but a woman in years, and the quiet light in her dark eyes, darker for the faint violet shadows beneath them, bespoke experience. There was a soft attractiveness about her that was very alluring, though it in no way detracted from her air of refinement. As he looked, he felt a faint stirring of amusement mingling with his curiosity—it was a queer moment for an adventure. She was no servant, despite her cap and apron.

"Will you tell me who you are," he asked, "and why you troubled about me?" His manner was as different from that of a moment before as was his expression: it held no small degree of masculine self-consciousness. Her eyes dropped a little from his, and he was quick to see it.

"My name is Helen Bessimer, and I am parlor maid here," she replied, quietly enough.

"You are not a servant, really," he objected. "What are you masquerading as one for?"

She straightened a little and her lips parted as if for a short

answer, but, meeting his animated look, she changed her mind, her lips closing and lifting a little at the corners. She was silent.

"Perhaps you will tell me, then, why you could n't let me come back to a deserted house alone?" He was leaning forward now, his manner almost eager, his look challenging, but she met his eyes fairly.

"Because I was so very, *very* sorry for you." Her voice was well modulated and low, but there was a note of such absolute sincerity in the words, an expression of feeling so open in its simple honesty, that the man flushed scarlet, rebuked. His mind flashed back over the last few weeks of sickening anxiety, domestic misery, and financial ruin, the collapse of his universe, and he wondered vaguely why it was that at the recollection the overhanging cloud did not descend upon him to the exclusion of everything else. The reason occurred to him with a certain surprise: in all those weeks had a single soul expressed the sympathy for him that had vibrated in her low voice? It was wholly outside of his experience. Who in his world had even patience with a failure? He had had none whatever with himself, and he had sought the quickest way out of it all. . . . In the place of his cynicism was born a craving for just a little human kindness; it had sprung into being on the instant, at her simply spoken words.

"Thank you," he said awkwardly. "You meant to be kind, but would n't it have been better if you had left me to myself? The rest have all thought so," he added bitterly.

Her quick eyes read the change in him, and her face lighted suddenly. "Oh, the rest!" she said quickly. "They failed you, of course; but the thing that matters is that you intended to fail yourself."

"Exactly!" he retorted, the bitterness of those last weeks rising in him and finding utterance. "I've failed—that's just it. I'm stripped as bare as that leafless tree out there—I don't own what I stand up in. I've made a laughing-stock of myself to men with good business sense—even my wife—I've failed all along the line, and, by the Lord, the only logical thing left for me to do now is to 'fail myself,' as you put it!" He laughed harshly. "Do you propose to argue the matter with me?" he asked.

The color rose warmly to her cheeks, and her eyes shone as she leaned towards him. "No, no," she said. "I am too ignorant to argue, and least of all with you. I can think and feel things, but I never find the right words for them. I want you to take a different view—to have faith in yourself—in spite of everything." She clasped and unclasped her hands nervously, frowning like a child in her earnestness, her lips beginning to tremble. "I have been through it, myself—the very same thing—and I know——"

"You mean that nightmare—that you——?" He stopped with a

sudden sense of pain at the thought. His own attitude of the hour before had begun to lack reality, but the same stress of feeling as experienced by her appeared terrible. He had a partial understanding of the shadow that lay in her eyes, and he was conscious of a strong desire to know more. She had touched the sensitive and romantic in him, the qualities that had made him a poor financier. He began to fear that she might rise up and leave him as abruptly as she had appeared, and he would never know the truth about her.

She had not replied to him at once, for she seemed to be striving for composure. "It's not the nightmare that's the hardest," she said finally. "It's the taking life up again after you are awake."

"I know what you mean," he said, with a touch of chill at the thought of the coming day; but he thrust it from him. His interest was in the present; he would have it so. "I've been dazed," he continued, "and I haven't my bearings yet, but I realize enough to thank you honestly for what you have done—for saving me in spite of myself, and, above all, for caring a little."

Her face lighted with pleasure. "I am so glad," she said. "And you will not lose heart to-morrow?"

"Not if you will stand by me," he replied. His eyes had kindled with a look half command, half entreaty. "I was rude a short time ago when I asked you who you were, and I ask your pardon. I had n't come back to my right mind yet, I think. Would you tell me now?"

"But there is no mystery about me," she said gravely. "I am not masquerading. I am a servant working to earn my living. I should rather do this than office work, and I have tried both."

He shook his head. "That's only a part of the truth," he said. "Won't you trust me with it all? If there are reasons why you don't wish to tell me, I'll say nothing more; but if you can——"

"There is no reason," she said quietly. "The things that have happened to me, happen every day—that's the saddest part of it—that it is so usual and ordinary. If you would really care to hear about me, and it would take your thoughts away from yourself, I shall be glad to tell you."

"Thank you," he said simply. "Whatever you think, I know you have n't come from common people, or had an ordinary history."

She shook her head, her eyes dropping to the bed of glowing coals in the grate. "No, my parents were very plain people," she said, "and my girlhood was as dull as possible. I grew up in a small town, and never had much in my life either of trouble or pleasure. I lost my mother and father when I was too little to remember them, and my aunt did the best she could for me when she sent me to high school, and taught me how to keep a house. She was a gentle, refined woman, and I learned a great deal from her, but I wanted

to fit myself to earn my own living, for I was dependent on her for everything, and she had very little.

"I persuaded her to send me here to the city to a nurse's training-school, but I was there only a few months, for I married, and it was then that my life really began. I was fond of my husband, and he was very much in love with me, and those first two years were happy ones. He had a position of trust in one of the banks here, and he was very ambitious and eager to make money. He could n't enjoy what he had, for he was always longing for more. He had been careful and saved something, and I was quite willing to live simply, so that we could go on saving. I did n't mind as long as I could have some books and a place I could call home. I had always felt so dependent and without a place in the world, that it was lovely to have a home of my own, and I was very grateful to my husband for giving it to me. Then my husband did a terribly unfortunate thing: he invested every cent he had saved in a mining company. He was always studying investments, and he felt very sure about this thing, but it was disastrous. It was not a 'fake' company exactly, but it was managed so that a few should profit by it, and the smaller shareholders be frozen out. You will understand it better than I; I only know that we lost everything." She sighed.

"My husband still had his position, and I did everything I could think of to keep him from dwelling on his mistake, but he never got over it. He grew irritable and silent, and often I knew he was not well, and I tried to be patient, but it was not a happy life—so I thought then—I had a great deal to learn yet about unhappiness. Then a change came over my husband, and for a short time he was gay and excited—unnaturally so—but I was so glad for a change from depression and fault-finding, that I was not critical. Then suddenly all that was gone; he came in and went out quietly, he never complained, his manner and expression were lifeless—all but his eyes—they were burning, the look you have worn for weeks. I recognized it the moment I saw you. There is something I don't understand in all this torment over money, but I do know what it is to see that look in a man's face, and long and long to comfort, and be utterly helpless!" She paused, pushing the heavy hair back from her forehead with a gesture of weariness.

"It was hopeless," she said, "just hopeless, and it came at a time when a little joy means everything in the world to a woman. Robert came home one night, and I watched him come up the stairs as I watched you to-night, but I did n't know then the meaning of his expression, for I had never seen it before." She had grown very white. "He came to our room as usual—and he—and he kissed me—and made me go to bed, for I was not well. He said he would

come soon. I think I must have slept some hours, but when I waked and put out my hand for him, his place was cold. It was bright moonlight, like to-night, and the wind was blowing, and I got up and searched for him. I looked everywhere for him, and it was bitterly cold. His hat and coat were still on the chair in our bedroom. I was all alone, and the neighbors were strangers, but I went for help—if some one could only reach him before it was too late, for I knew then what the look in his eyes meant. They sent for the police, they searched all night through the storm—until late the next afternoon—and I sat and waited. Then they found him and brought him home. He had walked far out of the city into the country, and had lain for hours in the snow—with his face— He had shot himself as you were going to—” She shivered, pressing her hands to her eyes, and the man interrupted her huskily.

“Don’t go on,” he said. “I had no right to ask it. You have done enough for me to-night, without suffering all that over again;” but she shook her head.

“Speaking of it is no harder than thinking of it,” she said, “and I want to finish. You didn’t understand me at first—you thought I had acted strangely,—and I want you to know everything about me—you will see my reason then. There are things that are so very much harder to bear than just losing money. Robert had speculated with some of the bank’s money when his was gone, and, though it was not a large sum, there was no possibility of his paying it back, and he knew they would discover it in a day or two. It left me with almost nothing, and my baby was coming soon. It was enough to carry me through that time, and I lived through it—I had to—there was the child—and when I was well enough I looked for work. We had lived so quietly that we had made very few friends, but there was a man connected with the bank, a very wealthy man whom my husband knew, and whom I had met once, and at last I went to him to ask for office work. He gave it to me, in his office, and I found a cheap room in a poor flat building, and paid an honest German woman who lived in the same building to care for the child when I was away.

“I think I am one of those women who if they can only have some one to love and care for, can forget much and be happy. I was dreadfully afraid of the future, and anxious for my child, but in spite of everything I was not really unhappy—not while I had her—but that was not for very long. She was ill for two days, and she never left my arms, but neither the German woman nor the doctor nor I could save her—my little girl—” The lines of pain marred the soft curve of cheek and lips, and her hands shook. “I don’t know how it was that I managed to go on for a time, but I

did. I think it was just habit that took me to the office, and led my feet back again to my desolate room, and all the time my despair was just collecting until I should be a little less benumbed. Then something happened at the office—I had been too wretched to notice—but I could not work there any more and keep my self-respect. He had made it impossible.

“My anger gave me the strength to decide, and as I walked to my room that evening I made up my mind. If there had been a single human creature who cared particularly, I could not have thought of it, but as I walked on I felt just as you, I think, did to-night, that every one had failed me. . . . I had kept his pistol, and I put it beside me on the bed, and waited until the house should be quiet and people sleeping. . . . I lay still a long time, and then it began in the next room, a whining, wretched cry, inarticulate at first, and it went on so long that I sat up and listened. It was like a sick animal, but I made out at last what it was trying to say: it was ‘Mamma, mamma,’ over and over and over, and I lay down and put my fingers in my ears to keep the sound away, but it went on and on in my brain. I began to think about the next room, and wonder what was in there. I had seen a shabby-looking woman come out of the room, but I had not seen a child. Had the woman a baby, and had she left it in the cold and forgotten it? I took my fingers from my ears and the whining was more distinct. I could n’t stand it. I crept out into the hall and knocked on the door, but no answer came, and I went in. . . . There was no light, but I made out a bed, and the crying came from it. Then I lighted the gas, and in one look I forgot myself and my trouble; it became a little thing and far away.

“The room was small and wretched and dirty, a stove and a miserable cot were all the furniture it contained, and it was very cold and ill-smelling. A young woman lay flat on her back on the cot, and the moment the gas-light flared up I knew what the blue white of her face meant. There was something that moved and whined under the ragged blanket that covered her breast, and I laid the cover back to find it. It was a little child, thin and pinched, and almost too weak to cry. . . . The others came and looked after the mother—an overdose of opium, they said—but I took the baby with me—and I have had something to love ever since.” The lines of pain had slowly faded from her face, and a little pleading smile crept round her lips and lighted her eyes. “I think,” she said softly, reaching out and touching one of the firm, white hands of the man who had listened with rapt attention—“I think, as long as you have these to work with, and I have these”—and she touched her own hand—“that there is no need of our failing ourselves!”

He threw back his head with a passionate gesture. "No!" he said in his deep voice. "You are right there. You have learned a truth or two." He rose abruptly and stood looking down at her. "Helen, what was the mining company that swamped your husband?"

"The Estrado;" she looked up at him gravely.

"I thought so," he said. "It was my father that floated that company, and engineered the money into his pockets—he and one or two others. It was one of the last things he did before he died."

She nodded. "I know."

"And, by George, then, that's the money I've gambled with and lost—your money! But I haven't swamped any one but myself—there is that much consolation in it." He continued to look down at her, frowning heavily. "You see, I have n't even brought trouble on Mattie—she does n't care anything about me; she only wants a good time. It hurt pretty badly at first, but I had gotten used to it. . . . Still, if I had found her here with a kind word for me to-night, I—I should n't have tried to do that foolish thing. . . . Her father has plenty, and can give her all she wants—and she will plead 'non-support,' as she told me she would. It's a blotted page, all that. I have to turn it over and begin anew." He spoke grimly.

"I think it will not have hurt you," she said in her sweet voice, and she rose.

"Hurt me—no!" he said, with peculiar emphasis. "I will know the difference between a woman and a doll from this day on!" Her eyes dropped under the light that had flashed into his, and she turned to the closed door, then stopped, hesitating.

"To-morrow will be hard for you," she said, "and many other days——"

"I have been a fool," he said quickly, "but I am not as weak as that. But you, Helen—what are you going to do? That's the thing I care most about now."

"Oh!" she said, with her quick smile. "I can get plenty to do—I am a good parlor maid." Then, as he flushed hotly, she added gravely: "I have saved a little, and the child is in a good home. I shall try to go on with my nurse's training."

His flush deepened. "And I haven't a penny of that money that belongs to you, to help make it easy for you! I'll never rest till I make it, Helen. I swear I'll make my way, and then you'll let me help——"

She stood in the door, looking back at him, and the color flooded her tired face. "You can help the child," she said. "I will let you do that, and that will be helping me."

"Very well," he replied. "But—must you go now, Helen?" He had come to her side.

"Yes, it is almost daylight," she said, smiling.

"You will shake hands with me before you go, and you'll not forget to be my friend?" She gave him her hand, still smiling up at him, and he took it and held it tightly for a moment. "Will you say it again?" he asked.

"It?—what?" she answered, puzzled.

"I was so very, *very* sorry for you'—I liked the way you said it." He spoke lightly, but his expression belied his manner.

"Oh!" she said softly, moving to close the door, "but I am not—now. I think I am just a little proud of you."



CANNED LITERATURE

By *Ellis O. Jones*

SPECULATIONS for the future of our present literature present a pleasant prospect. For any one who has observed the evolutionary tendencies in other directions, it goes without saying that letters cannot go on as they are.

They are too compendious and bulky for our busy times. There is, consequently, a crying need for a process by which they may be evaporated, so that they may be exported, not only to foreign climes, but taken conveniently on camping trips. It will be great step in advance when a camper, before he departs for his day's fishing, can set a little literature to soak and find it ready for consumption when he returns tired and hungry.

There must also be discovered a preservative or a cold storage process by which the crop of summer literature may be distributed more evenly over the four seasons. Literature spoils very readily. This is well known, but chemists still disagree as to whether this is caused by the presence of too many words or too few ideas.

When we get to the point where we can open a can of literature, dilute with words, and serve, we shall have reached a literary Utopia.

Is it too much to expect?

THE LITTLE BOY VISITS GRANDMA

BY S. MARIA TALBOT

DEAR God, I'm goin' fer a trip.
Please 'scuse me from my prayer,
'Cause me an' pa an' mamma, too,
Is fixin' to go where
There ain't no sign "Keep off the grass"—
Down to my Gran'ma Howe's;
An' where they don't have wagon milk,
But milk it from the cows.

I'll have such lots an' lots ter do
A-wadin' in the brook
An' rollin' down the haystacks—*when*
My mamma does n't look—
An' ridin' horses with the men
When they go down ter drink;
I'll be so busy with it all
'At I can't hardly think.

There's Jimmy Brown, he *never* prays,
An' he ain't good a bit.
He goes a-swimmin' Sundays, God,
An' he ain't drowneded yit;
But I have said my "lay me" when
I was so dead with sleep
I mixed "the power an' glory" in
Along with "soul to keep."

'Sides, Gran'pa Howe is awful good
The mornin' prayers ter say,
While Gran'ma tiptoes 'roun' so soft
Ter shoo the hens away,
An' see 'at breakfus' does n't burn,
While Gran'pa 'splains ter you
About them "sparks 'at up'ards fly"
An' tells you what ter do.

Dear God, please let the fambly pray'r
Be all I have ter pray,—
There ain't no danger ner no harm
The place where we all stay;
But when Jack Fros' comes nippin' toes,
An' we go back ter town,
I'll need you then the wussest way
An' say my "lay me down."

THE DEAR OLD FARM

By Thomas L. Masson

Author of "The Von Blumers," "A Corner in Women," etc.

"At last!"

It was plainly a difficult matter for Whittler to restrain his enthusiasm, as he came in and looked at his wife with that beatific expression which envelops one's features only during the most exalted moments.

"It's all over," he said at last. "The dream of years has come true."

"Tell me quick," said Mrs. Whittler, who disliked to be kept waiting, especially on such doubtful matters as her husband's projects. "What *have* you done now?"

In reply, Whittler brought from his pocket and flourished in the air a formidable-looking paper, on which a red seal was plainly discernible.

"Think of it!" he exclaimed. "A farm—one of the finest and best farms in the world. Everything on it and in it that the eye could wish or the mind desire. Grassy dells—woodland stretches—kine in the meadows, and sheep dotting the landscape. An old-fashioned hay-loft—think of jumping up and down in the delicious hay! A splendid well, with a rare old moss-covered bucket in it. Nothing omitted. Everything first class. Acres and acres—and all for only three thousand dollars. Shall we have the time of our lives? Shall we renew our youth? Will health and strength come back to us? Will our cheeks grow rosy red and the bubbling spirit of bucolic joy be ours forever?"

"I am quite well enough as it is," sighed Mrs. Whittler, with a despairing look. "But I knew it was coming. I knew you would do it. When do we start?"

They started at once. Whittler would have no peace until they had given up all their engagements and were on the train. At the end of five hours' hard travelling they arrived in the vicinity of their farm. A man with a "rig" was waiting to take them to it. They had also brought along their two servants.

"Is n't this grand!" exclaimed Whittler, sweeping the surround-

ing country with his arm. "Purely pastoral, as you see. Think of having fresh milk from our own cow every morning. And the beauty of it is, my dear, that it does n't cost anything."

"How do you make that out?" asked Mrs. Whittler. That lady had been brought up in the city.

"Why, the farm pays for itself, of course. All we do is to sit back, renew our youth, and watch things grow. All our vegetables for nothing. Think of the prices you pay in town. All saved. Easy Street is no name for it. Why, in another year I expect to send enough eggs and produce to market to pay for all our extras. Then think of the things we can do. There's violets."

He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a circular wherein were set forth the profits that any intelligent and sufficiently lazy man could make out of violets.

"Do you realize," he continued, "the money there is in violets? Of course you don't. Thousands a year in it. And as for mushrooms—well, that's so easy that it seems absurd. All you have to do is to drop a postal to Washington and get the directions, and you can raise enough mushrooms in a couple of months to pay for an automobile. That's right. Facts all here." He pointed to another pocket.

They arrived at the farm. It proved to be the usual kind—a house, a barn in the rear, outlying buildings all in fairly good repair, and a stretch of country.

Whittler led the way. And as his wife, preceded by the two servants, entered, he bowed profoundly.

"Utopia at last!" he exclaimed.

The next morning, with a lack-lustre look on her face, Mrs. Whittler came to him, finding him out in the rear of the barn, nailing up a fence.

"I've been hunting for you everywhere," she said. "That's one of the bad features of this farm. It's so large that you can't locate people. Now, in town all I had to do was to step to the stair."

"What is it?" exclaimed Whittler, pounding on the fence with an old ax—no hammer having been found. "What's the matter now?"

"Only this—that the cook's going back. She says that she would n't sleep another night here for worlds. And, also, the waitress is going with her. I begged them to stay. They said they would do almost anything for me, but they simply could n't. Too lonesome. What are we to do!"

"Well," cried Whittler, "if that is n't just like such creatures! Don't know when they are well off. Have not the slightest appreci-

ation of any of the beauties of nature. Let 'em go!" he went on defiantly. "Who cares!"

"I care!" exclaimed Mrs. Whittler, with tears in her eyes. "They are going to take the four o'clock train, so you can have the hired man hitch up and take them back. In the mean time, what are we to do?"

At three o'clock Whittler, sneaking down the back stairs of the rag-carpeted farm-house, suddenly came face to face with his wife. Both stared at each other in the utmost surprise.

"What are you so dressed up for?" said Whittler.

"Because I have had enough of it. I am going back with the girls. I thought I would n't say anything to you about it, because you had set your heart on this farm, and I knew it would n't make any difference to you whether I was here or not. But what are *you* so dressed up for?"

Whittler leaned over and looked his wife full in the face, upon which there was the look of a great awakening.

"I'm dressed up," he whispered, "because I am going back with you. The thing began to dawn on me this morning when I got up and found that I had to walk nearly a quarter of a mile before I could get enough water to wash my face in. It began to grow plainer to me at breakfast when I realized there was n't a morning paper within four miles. It began to set in on me after breakfast when, as I looked out at the next farm, I had a blue blanket of lonesomeness steal over my soul. But I struggled against it until you came out and told me the girls were going back, and when I thought of the square meal that we had n't had since we got here, of the nice fresh-vegetable market in the next block, of the song of the subway, of the hum of people, I almost went crazy. And so, my dear, here's back to Broadway, three thousand dollars behind, but with a hundred thousand dollars' worth of accumulated wisdom; and when I say the word 'farm' again, you can go right off and order a Russian sable coat without even mentioning it to me."



MY QUEST

BY ETHEL SYFORD

NOT gems nor the gorgeousness of life,
 But the hymn of the woods and the rhythmic sea;
 Not smiles nor the praise of broidered words,
 But thy full-souled sympathy!

ELECTA, THE DAUGHTER OF SAMIMA

A PENNSYLVANIA-GERMAN STORY

By Wirt W. Barnitz

FOR the first time since the previous fall, the parlor shutters of the Hullinger home had been thrown wide open and the sunlight allowed to enter that almost sacred room. The bright rag-carpet, which had lain for fifty years upon the floor, looked as new and unworn as the day it had been put there. The chairs, made many years before, were equally as untarnished and free from all signs of wear. Even the great Bible in its place on a stand at the end of the room had been handled so carefully, and so seldom, that, though it had been in the house since its building, a century before, when the Hullingers' grandsire had taken possession of the farm, it was as perfect as any new book.

"Electa! Electa! What you doin' vith that there? Ain't you got no better sense than to go foolin' vith such a holy thing?" burst out Mrs. Hullinger, as she appeared in the doorway. "I tell you the good Lord von't make house-cleaning easier fer us if you go lookin' into His sayings vithout havin' your Sunday clothes on!"

The girl closed the Bible slowly, and turned to her mother. "Look here, mam, I'm jus' twenty-three year old, and I ain't lettin' you boss me 'round no longer! And, mam, you ought to have better sense 'an to put into them pages vhat you did! How'd you know I'm ever gettin' married?"

Mrs. Hullinger let her broom drop to the floor. For the first time in ten years, she blushed. "Vell—vell, I don't jus' know you 're gettin' married, but I hope you'll be huntin' fer a man soon vonce."

"Vell, as sure as my name is Electa Eleanora Hullinger, I'm not goin' to bother vith no man fer a vwhile yet. I don't see vhat business you had to set me down fer a veddin' so soon. You could 'a' left that name of mine off the marriage list in the Bible till I did get one vhat suited to me."

"Now, there, Electa, that's chust it. If you don't have no one to help you, you'll never git married. Both me ner your pop ain't

goin' to set 'round and see you go to vaste, so I've decided on a vay to get you married right."

For some time the girl stood gazing at her mother. This disclosure seemed so strange that for the moment she doubted whether she had rightly understood what had been said to her. Heretofore, marriage had scarcely entered her thoughts, and now to be told that she was to have a husband affected her as nothing ever had before. In her own eyes, she was still a girl too young to think of men.

"Git your broom, child, and help to make some of this here dust out. Ve've got to clean out all the rooms on this floor to-day yet, so git your broom now quick."

As the mother finished reminding Electa of her part in the work, the mailman drove up to the garden gate and waved a letter at Mrs. Hullinger, who stood looking out of the parlor door. "Come fetch this letter fer your mother, Electa," he called. "It must be sompin' important, fer it comes vay down from New York."

"From New York," echoed the woman at the door. "My plans must be vorkin' so soon already." And she tore open the letter while the last words were still on her lips.

Electa stood by with open mouth, awaiting an explanation. It was an unusual thing for a letter to find its way to the Hullinger farm, but when one did come it was read many times, and then carefully tucked away under the feather-bed in the spare room. So, after reading it for the seventh time, Mrs. Hullinger replaced the letter in the envelope, and, without allowing Electa to see its contents, carried it to the guest room for safe keeping.

"See here, Electa," called the mother, as she came downstairs, "you get out to the yard and whitevash the front fence chust so fast as you know how. I'll take care of these here rooms. Ve've got to get things cleaned up till to-morrow evening, fer a high-go-flutin' man from New York comes then fer to stay the summer out."

"*What!*" ejaculated Electa. "Is that vhy the letter comes still?"

"Yes; and I vant you to be thinkin' 'bout them clothes of your'n, and such like, while you vork. When this here man is here, you're got to be lookin' at your best. Now 'en remember you this!"

Mrs. Hullinger began with a will to sweep the parlor. So intent was she upon raising what little dust there was in the room, that she did not realize the dinner-hour had passed. Time and again her husband out in the fields had stopped behind his plow to listen for the ringing of the dinner-bell. Finally he had come to the conclusion that something must be wrong in the kitchen; so throwing down the lines, he had hurried toward the house. Now he was turning into the vegetable garden at the rear. Without warning, a great rag rug, in wild career from a window above, grazed the top of his bald head.

"Gosh! Of all the devils, Samima, ain't you satisfied vith starvin' me? Must you go so far as to try to kill all at vonce!"

Just as the tall, weather-beaten farmer was about to hurl additional exclamations at the window whence the rug had come, his wife, who at that instant thought of dinner, called out to him: "Godfrey, fer Heaven's sakes, I vish chust vonce you'd had to clean up a house from bottom to roof. If you had to *chus' vonce*, you'd never again maybe go on like you done! Now 'en go 'long back to the fields, fer ve ain't goin' to have no dinner to-day."

The man turned slowly about and passed out of the garden. He returned to his plowing, murmuring something to himself about house-cleaning and religion.

During the rest of that day and until late into the afternoon of the next, the mother and daughter kept up the renovation. In fact, they cleaned until they had but a half-hour left in which to dress and decorate themselves for the arrival of the summer boarder.

"Now 'en, Electa, you put that there dress on that your grandmother used to vear on holidays," instructed Mrs. Hullinger, "and then I'll show you how to carry on vhen that New York man comes. I think I had jus' be right out so vith my plans, child, 'en you'd un'er-stand vhat I'm tryin' to do vith you. This here man I vant you to make up to and try to catch fer a husband——"

"Vhy, mam, I von't never do that!"

"Ach, yes, you vill."

"No, mam, no!"

"Ach, now, you spoil all my plans vhen you talk like that. You'll never have a better chance to get a man again. Listen vonce to me vhen I tell you some advices. Now 'en dress up so like I tell you, and be lookin' nice vhen he first sees you."

Mrs. Hullinger hurriedly put on her best black dress, the garment which she wore alike to funerals, to sales, to weddings, and to church. Then she vent to her daughter's room to help her put on the finishing touches. But Electa had by this time completed her toilet, and in the few remaining minutes her mother proceeded to suggest certain points of etiquette.

"There is some things you must be about doin' vhenever you set vith the New York man. First, you must cross your hands so in your lap; second, you must look as intell'gent as you feel like in your head; third, you must answer him 'Yes, sir,' and 'No, sir,' according to vhat he says."

Electa, who had been gazing out of the window, suddenly turned to her mother. "See there, mam, see that dust come up from back of the hill? That's pop's horse makin' the dust. He's bringin' that there man home."

"Fer land's sakes, child,-so is it! Come right along vith me."

The two went downstairs, the mother leading the way to the porch. Over the hill in front of the house came the spring wagon, high on the seat of which sat the man from New York. Electa's small eyes opened wider than they had ever opened before when she spied the tall, pale-faced stranger beside her father. She had never before seen a city-bred gentleman, and this man was a revelation to her.

"Vhat fer person is he, mam? He don't dress like ve country folks here in York County."

"Hush, girl, or he 'll hear you. Now set up and look so nice as you know how!"

The wagon stopped at the gate, and the guest jumped to the ground. Mrs. Hullinger arose from her chair and extended her hand in hearty welcome.

"This is Mr. Crane, ain't it? Howd'y'do!"

"Yes, madam, and I'm glad to be here at last. I had the time of my life getting to the village over yonder, where your husband met me." The man glanced about, and then continued: "This is certainly an ideal spot—a spot of exactly the kind that I have been looking for ever since I began to think for myself. Here I can surely find all the inspiration and quiet which I have craved for years. I feel now that I have the environment that a painter of rural scenes must have."

"Uh-huh," grunted Mrs. Hullinger in response, and turned to her husband. "Now, Godfrey, take the trunk up to his room still."

Electa sat quietly by, awaiting developments. Finally her mother motioned her to come forward, and she obeyed. Mr. Crane eyed the girl studiously.

"This is my daughter, Electa Eleanora, Mr. Crane, and me an' her pop thinks a hull lot of her," explained the mother.

Mr. Crane shook the girl's hand warmly. Surely he little suspected that this coy country lass had been prompted by her parents to try to win his affection. He looked upon her as a representative type of a queer people, peculiarly well adapted to his needs as an artist searching for a characteristic figure for his rural studies.

"You will pose for me out here in the garden some time, won't you?" Mr. Crane inquired. "I should like to have you wear those very same clothes and sit for me when I paint to-morrow."

"Yes, sir," blushed Electa.

"Thank you." Turning to Mrs. Hullinger, the artist continued: "I'll take you some time, too, to help fill out one of my pictures. We dabblers in color like to make our pictures as realistic as possible. And now, Mrs. Hullinger, if you 'll show me my room, I'll wash up a bit and put on another suit before supper."

"Come 'long vith me, and I'll take you to it."

The big woman led the way through the parlor to the staircase, and thence to the floor above. "Here's your room with what you need in it. When you hear the bell ring, you know it's supper-time. Jus' come the stairs down, and ve'll be eatin' in the kitchen."

Mrs. Hullinger went to the floor below, where she met her husband coming in the door. "Vell, what do you think of him, Godfrey? Ain't he fine-lookin', huh?"

"Yes, but he's pecul'ar, and uses vords the like of which I've never heard. Now hurry with the supper."

At exactly half-past four, the evening meal was on the table. Food was served in such abundance that dishes had to be piled one upon the other in order that everything might be gotten on the board. Mr. Crane partook of whatever was passed him; and when the meal had come to an end, he seated himself on the porch to enjoy an after-supper smoke.

"Here's Electa, Mr. Crane," announced Mrs. Hullinger. "She'll help entertain you."

Electa stiffly sank into a chair, and sat looking at her folded hands. She neither changed position nor spoke a word until the artist turned to her with the exclamation, "Oh, what a delightful cloud that is over there in the west!"

"Yes, sir," mumbled Electa, without the least enthusiasm.

"And, oh, that gold of the sunset is exquisite!" went on the painter.

To this Electa made no reply at all, and her mother, who was angered by the indifference displayed by the girl, made a wrathful gesture toward her.

Electa understood, and she made an attempt to say something: "Ain't it—ain't it so nice yet, an'—"

Mr. Crane at once grasped the situation. "Yes, indeed it is, and I wish I could paint it," he pursued. "Have you ever tried to do anything in oils?"

Electa's face was a blank. As a matter of fact, she had not the merest idea what the artist meant; yet she ventured a reply: "Yes, I have put oil in the lamps, and such like."

"Yes, certainly—of course you have. Have you always lived right here on the farm?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you never been to a town or city?"

"Yes, I've been to Abbottstown, and to Berlin, and to Hanover."

"Well, then, you have been around a bit."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, it's nice to get here and there and see something of the world. I've been about quite a bit myself."

Mr. Crane fell to smoking again, and Electa's eyes wandered to

her hands. For some time there was silence. Only the croaking of the frogs in a little pond below the house suggested that there was life in the neighborhood of the farm. The sun had set, and with the darkness the girl seemed to gain courage. "How old are you?" she asked, without hesitation.

"I?" responded the man, with a start.

"Yes, sir," returned Electa.

"Just thirty-one, but I feel older."

"Oh! Then you ain't too old to be my man, are you?"

Mr. Crane, who had been sitting with his chair tilted against the porch railing, lost his balance and slipped to the floor. "I think I have hurt my arm. Excuse me." Without further explanation, he went into the house and up to his room.

Day after day passed. The Hullingers saw very little of the artist. He met them only at meal-time; all the rest of the day he was off in the fields painting. In spite of all Electa's efforts to carry out her mother's urgings to be in the company of the artist as much as possible, she never could quite manage to be where he was. He evaded her at all times.

One evening several weeks after his arrival, Mr. Crane was slowly walking down the hill back of the barn, where he had been studying the sunset. As he passed the wagon-shed, Mrs. Hullinger stepped out from the shadows within. "Look you here," she burst out. "Why don't you talk to my daughter no more, and why you run away from her when she tries to get with you still? Ain't she good 'nough fer you?"

The artist stood speechless for a moment. He was not used to being thus accosted. "Well, Mrs. Hullinger," he replied calmly, "for some time I have noticed that you and your daughter have been trying hard to carry out a little scheme of your own. That little scheme never appealed to me; and I am now on my way to the house to pack my trunk. I shall leave in the morning." He did not go further into detail, but hastened to his room.

Mrs. Hullinger turned into the barn, where her husband was busy bedding the horses for the night. "See here, Godfrey," she said as she went toward him, "our plan of gettin' Electa married is gone to pot. Mr. Crane is leaving in the morning. He says he seen through what ve vere tryin' to do, and did n't like it; so he's goin' to-morrow."

"Now 'en, Samima, I told you you had best go a mite slower 'an you did. These here city fellers ain't so dumb as us back here in the country. They think twict while ve think once. Now 'en remember this as I told you in the beginnin': it ain't much use tryin' to mate up our children the same like ve do our horses. The good Lord put human bein's here to mate up fer 'emselves."

THE VERY TALL GENTLEMAN

By B. MacArthur

NOW, the Admiral had lately attained his fifth birthday. Therefore he began to discover that he possessed many things befitting this advanced age. What pleased him most was the realization that these things were all within himself. Several times he had surprised himself by perfectly understanding some subject which heretofore he had failed utterly to comprehend. This delighted him—he felt a multitude of undreamed of things stirring within him; new powers of observation and achievement which opened the door of a wondrous world, and which possessed endless possibilities. You see, the Admiral had discovered his imagination. With this miraculous possession also came a still, small voice enabling him to observe for himself the hitherto illusive line between right and wrong. Great was his sense of competence upon this discovery, and he buckled his manhood about him securely and behaved with a dignity befitting the situation.

One day he sat upon the wall of the water-front, enjoying to the full his new possessions. "Mumzy," the Admiral's Mamma, was walking slowly up and down, keeping a watchful eye upon the small figure which contained so much of all that made life worth living to "Mumzy." In her heart, she was counting the days until the Admiral's Father, Lieutenant Richard Randolph, should return to see for himself the small, straight back, the sturdy shoulders, and the general impression of fitness produced by their boy.

The Admiral knew that Mumzy counted days. He knew, too, that she would give much if he could remember his Father. But this the Admiral, who was truthful, could not do. One cruise after another had taken him away ever since the small son was two years old, and, search as he would in the dark pages of his memory, the Admiral could *not* remember. Although he had tried to avoid it, his mental picture of his Father remained no other than the large photograph in the silver frame on Mumzy's bureau, and as this contained merely head and shoulders, the Admiral cannot be blamed if he felt dissatisfied. He liked that head, however. He liked the alert, fearless eyes, the straight mouth,

and the way the strong neck rose from the body. It was not until the lower part of the chest disappeared in misty clouds that the Admiral felt saddened. Really, you know, it is a bit hard for a fellow to have to think of his Father as a person without legs. He felt so apologetic about it that he never even mentioned it to Mumzy.

But since the discovery of his imagination the Admiral had by chance conceived the brilliant and fascinating idea of *building* legs and body to the mind-picture, and he did so in his own generous, whole-souled fashion. Little by little, to suit his pleasure, he added height to it, until when in his mind he was quite satisfied that his Father stood easily taller than any man the Admiral had ever seen. With this made-to-order and thoroughly satisfactory person, he proceeded to spend his days. With him he went forth upon all his expeditions, which were generally those of Piracy; by him he was inspired to bravery in the hour of peril, and comforted in the hour of woe, and it was he alone who became, secretly, Mumzy's only rival. Therefore, when Mumzy had announced with a thrill of relief in her voice that his Father was coming home with the big Fleet which had sailed around the world, the Admiral was filled with alternate joy and fear—infinite hope that his dreams should be realized, infinite dread that they were to be shattered. And as he sat upon the stone wall, looking out across the Roads, and told himself that the Fleet was coming there—right there—in two more days, he braced himself for the disappointment which might follow. The tall, all-comprehending comrade had grown so dear that the thought of parting from him seemed almost more than he could bear, and to comfort himself he arranged matters in his own way.

“If he's tall—like I've been thinking he is—I'll know it's all going to be right; and if he's little—then, of course, I'll love him, but it won't be quite the same,” said the Admiral aloud.

The next two days passed somehow, and the morning of the Fleet's arrival dawned darkly. Towards nine o'clock a fine, soft rain began to fall, and the mist hid the Roads.

The Admiral had arisen and dressed with care. Mumzy's excitement was scarcely more intense than his own. They stood by the window watching the eddying crowd which had gathered to await the appearance of the Big Ships. The Admiral's heart was bursting with hope and anxiety, and Mumzy's with many things.

“If he's tall like I've been thinking,” he repeated beneath his breath; but even as he yearned that it might be so, he recalled how *very* tall was the comrade of his dreams, and his hope dwindled accordingly.

It was now about eleven o'clock. He stood with his elbows resting on the sill against the window-frame. Presently he felt a strange pulsing at his elbow-ends—“throb, throb”—pause—and then “throb, throb,” again continuously. Something began to excite him strangely;

his throat tightened, his ears tingled, he strained every muscle to understand that *something*—something which seemed to be *near*, but which he could not see. Then he told Mumzy about the throbbing, and she dropped down beside him instantly, and placed her elbows against the window-frame as his were. Everything was silent in the small room. Outside, the crowd hummed droningly. Mumzy was absolutely still.

“Throb, throb”—pause—“throb, throb,” went the pulsing at the Admiral’s elbows, and Mumzy looked very strange, indeed.

“Son,” she whispered, like one who hears music, “it’s the guns. They’re there, down the bay, saluting the President.”

It seemed a long time until the ships were in sight. Mumzy and the Admiral put on their coats and sallied forth, taking station high upon the ramparts where they run well out towards the Channel.

The Admiral rushed up and down shouting, so Mumzy was the first to discover the *Connecticut* majestically sweeping towards them, with a stately line of shadowy shapes following her through the mist. When the Flagship was opposite them, the clouds lifted and a curiously clear light spread over everything. The excitement was intense, though there was no cheering. Men rushed hither and thither, beating each other jovially upon the back; women scrambled for a better view; children shouted shrilly; handkerchiefs were waving, bands playing, and many Mumzies were dim-eyed.

“What’s Father doing?” demanded the Admiral.

“I don’t know,” replied Mumzy, never taking her eyes from the ships; “but he might be on the bridge. Do you see that high place in front on the ship just opposite—there are some people standing there—do you see?”

“One of them has a long black thing up to his eye,” announced the Admiral. Mumzy was much delighted at his perception.

“That *might* be Father,” she said, and waved her muff.

“I’ll wave, too,” said the Admiral, now away up in Mumzy’s arms.

“I wrote him where we’d be,” she murmured. “Does n’t he answer?”

“Not yet,” comforted the small figure, still waving; “but maybe he will.”

The Admiral found “just waiting” one of the hardest things he had ever had to do. He was very sleepy, besides, and the running boat had brought Mumzy a note saying that his Father would have to stay aboard till eight o’clock that night.

Now the Admiral was utterly worn out with excitement and suspense. *Would* the real Daddy be tall? If so, childlike, he felt convinced that all the rest would follow; but if he should be *little*—if the fine head and shoulders of the photograph should end ignomin-

iously in a pair of stumpy legs! It had all grown to mean ridiculously much to the Admiral, and the suspense was wearing on him. So it happened that he fell asleep long before eight o'clock, which was not at all the way he had planned for his Father to see him first. He slept very soundly and dreamed strange things—about tiny battleships with monster men bestriding them, and enormous little boys shaking hands with diminutive male-parents; and then about a room with the stars shining through the window. Presently he heard Mumzy's voice:

"It won't wake him to turn up the light, dear, and you must see him while he's asleep—he's so adorable." The Admiral felt something sand-papery against his cheek. He moved sleepily.

"Ssssh," said Mumzy; and she and the sand-papery thing moved away. Then the Admiral realized that he was awake, and that the person with Mumzy was his Father. He scarcely breathed for the pounding of his heart. Now that the moment had come, he hardly dared to meet it. He opened one eye cautiously, then he flashed open the other. Oh! the wonder of that instant! Across the room stood the tallest gentleman the Admiral had ever seen; and Mumzy was in his arms. Everything went reeling around with the marvel of it. The dear comrade of his dreams was there—really there! The Admiral's relief was so acute that it almost unmanned him, and he cried out in the fulness of his heart. It was then that they gathered the rumpled little figure to them, murmuring unintelligible things and making him feel very much of a baby, after all. But of a sudden he felt very undignified and a little frightened, and he climbed down out of the tall gentleman's strong arms, and, taking Mumzy by the hand, stood looking up at her. His face twisted a little, and his lips trembled, though he tried to control them. Somehow, he felt like an outsider for a moment, and he had a mad desire to be claimed, to be assured of the tall gentleman's recognition. His voice struggled up through a sob.

"D'does he know that I, too, am a Randolph?" quavered the Admiral; and, being assured of the blessed fact, he flung himself into those strong arms again, sobbing desperately with weariness and joy and relief.

After all, the Admiral was just a very little boy, but in his heart there was such glorification as is seldom given other than little boys to know.



SLEEPLESSNESS

By David H. Dodge

“GOD bless the man,” murmured Sancho Panza on an occasion that has been quoted so often that it is getting tiresome, “who invented sleep.”

Don Quixote's henchman was a good-hearted sort of chap, and was not in the habit of cursing, but he left a possible parallel malediction on the inventor of sleeplessness. Whoever it may have been that was responsible for this inconvenience, he thought out an ingenious and exquisite form of torture. Something ought to be coming to him.

Various methods of courting sleep when sleep is coy have been recommended by the confident persons who always have cures for colds, but the fallacy which has exploded with the loudest report is that which conveys the advice to count up to a hundred, or a thousand, or a million. The man who can't sleep is irritated any way because he can't sleep, and by the time he has arrived at 766, and has suddenly forgotten whether it was 766 or 666 or 676 or 767, he is so enraged that that alone keeps him awake another half-hour.

It is the same with the attempt to count sheep jumping over a fence. The very stupidity of the proceeding is annoying, and starts the brain on a wave of activity that delays sleep still further. In fact, it is doubtful whether any mathematical stunts soothe the brain when it is nervous, and even if they do, there are almost as many different kinds of brains as there are numbers, up to infinity, so what is the use of a general prescription?

A man who occasionally suffers from sleeplessness has this to say: “I always know when I am dropping off to a natural sleep. The moment comes when the ordinary things of every-day life assume weird or preposterous groupings. For instance, if I seem to think of a cow looking out of the corner of her eye with an arch glance, or a caterpillar directing an orchestra, I know that sleep hovers near. There has been no connection between my previous thoughts and a cow or a caterpillar, yet that fact is a surety of repose in itself. I know I'll be asleep in a few seconds. At the same time, I must n't be too sure about it. If I rouse myself to the extent of feeling a distinct assurance that I'll soon be asleep, I wake myself up again thereby, and ruin my chances of a good sleep.”

It was suggested to this individual that a deliberate invention of such impossible situations might be a cure for sleeplessness in his case, but he retorted that the effect of imagining a tin horn dancing in the centre of a circle of mucilage bottles, or the hands of a clock making derisive gestures at the moon, immediately started the brain-waves rolling tumultuously and defeated the object in view. He sighed as he said this, and one felt that his case was indescribably sad.

Another sufferer, a lady, told of a scheme she had tried. After some nights of wakefulness, she arose and commenced to read the article on "Sleep" in an encyclopædia. It put her to sleep right away the first time, but on the second attempt it made her more wakeful than before, and she spent the rest of the night reading up on Sleighs, the Sliding Scale, Henry Warner Slocum, and the Sloth. She thinks she may be able to use the information acquired at some later date, but it has n't benefited her yet.

One of the most painful things about being obliged to remain awake is the fact that when you speak of it to other people and wait for their sympathy, they immediately counter with instances of *their* being obliged to remain awake on some foolish occasion. Their experiences are exceedingly uninteresting. They drank coffee for dinner, or they smoked too much, or they ate a broiled lobster, and they could n't sleep! Could anything be more cut-and-dried? But the way *you* felt about *your* insomnia, and the agonies *you* endured, and the thoughts *you* thought—ah, how thrilling and momentous they are, if those folks would only have enough sense of proportion to see it! Yet they seldom rise to the occasion, somehow. Some people are very exasperating.

Coffee and the one cigar too many have been blamed for many an attack of insomnia, but frequently without justification. Sleeplessness is a mysterious thing that attacks us when we least expect it, and perhaps the best way is to put up with it for the time being, do some work, and trust to the exertion and loss of sleep insuring a full quota of it the following night. At all events, a sleep that you have to grab and throttle as you drag it toward you is not going to do its best for you. It naturally resents such treatment.



AT BAY

BY MAHLON LEONARD FISHER

I SAW him smile: stricken, alone,
 He met the jeering horde, the moan
 Of hate, the sullen curse; yet while
 They looked for tears, I saw him smile!



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

A WORLD PAPER DOLLAR

CLOSELY allied to the greatest question before the world to-day—international peace—is that of international paper currency. When one thinks of it reasonably, one wonders how it is possible that we still cling to these relics of barbarism, with both so easily attainable. When men distrusted everything, they demanded payment in gold, even between neighbors, as the only medium of accepted intrinsic value. The moment we have confidence in paper, we prefer it to metal. There is no danger of a gold famine. The world's product in 1908 was \$434,000,000. In 1909 it was \$450,000,000. This is a natural increase which has been sustained for years, and doubtless will be for some time to come, as China and Central and South America present favorable prospects of production. But of what earthly value is it except to appease distrust and lack of confidence?

The international credit of the world to-day rests upon four billion dollars' worth of gold, in the banks and treasuries of Europe and America. The reported gold holdings of our banks is largely paper certificates. The actual metal is only used, to any appreciable extent, in international transactions. Last year, for instance, we imported a hundred and forty-eight millions, and exported seventy-two millions. In the last ten years over a thousand million dollars' worth of gold has crossed the ocean to and from the United States, in weighty packages, carried back and forth, the contents of which are rarely seen by any one, and might as well be lead as gold. When they come in faster than

they go out, we say the bank reserve is increasing, and we are happy and prosperous. When it goes the other way, we grow panicky. Now, all this expense, energy, transportation, danger of loss, and general foolishness could be stopped if the nations would agree upon some common deposit vault and the issue of international certificates to every depositor, to the exact value of his deposit. These bills would be a perfect international currency, of one unalterable value, the wide world over. And just as in America we prefer the paper dollar to the gold supposed to be somewhere, behind it, the world would prefer the international dollar. By no possibility could there be any further use for the gold in commercial transactions, and the best conception of the common vault would be a bottomless pit, where it could disappear forever, beyond the reach of thieves or the bother of guarding it; proving what every one knows, if he stops to think, that, except for the small portion used in the fine arts, gold is the most unnecessary and useless metal in the world, and that all the anxiety and expense and trouble it causes is the result of the lingering relic of barbaric distrust, when no one could conceive of such a thing as confidence in anything.

There is no doubt about keeping the peace among our forty-six States, with a Supreme Court, a mutual Congress, and a constitutional agreement to arbitrate. Neither would there be any difficulty in keeping peace among the forty-five nations, with a Supreme Court and Congress at La Hague and a universal arbitration treaty. It is precisely the same about currency. The national paper dollar does away with any thought of gold, and an international dollar, guaranteed by an international treasury, would literally obliterate gold as a commercial medium.

When one stops to consider what a fabulous and far-reaching blessing and saving this would be, he wonders, as he does about international peace, how it is possible that we are still clinging to gold and gunpowder for international intercourse. When we think of it long enough and seriously enough, we shall decide to do away with both—and then they will be done away with forthwith.

WILLARD FRENCH

WHEN THE COW JUMPS OVER THE MOON

EVERY evil has its corresponding good; else would the world lose its balance and tumble into chaos. Grain famines in Ireland compelled the eating of potatoes, which theretofore had been regarded as fit only for swine. History, rightly studied, is an inspiration to optimism and to confidence in God. It testifies to the eternal law of compensation and bears in its scriptures the fond assur-

ance that all partial evil is universal good. "Ill blows the wind that profits nobody," is a homely and inadequate expression of this cosmic truth. The world, as a whole, has yet experienced no ill wind; for all that happens, happens for ultimate good. In stress and calamity lie the solutions of life's problems. And not because necessity provokes invention, but because each seeming ill is but a means, a spur, an invocation to lay hold of better things and surer peace and comfort. Boiled potato, the present delight of every palate from Topeka to Hongkong, saved the Irish from starvation and made a blessing of their famine; a blessing world-wide and everlasting. And why, therefore, should we be tearful because in this our day we are threatened with a famine in tenderloin and bacon? Providence did not exhaust its resources on the Irish. If hogs and beef have soared beyond our reach, must we who thrive on meat descend to beans and hominy and count our happiness as forever lost? Oh, we of little faith and little knowledge! For untold centuries a mammoth animal, composed of sweetest fat and tenderest steaks, has been wallowing in the bogs of Africa, awaiting the day when, like the potato, it should be called from its obscurity to give to humanity a new and better lease of life. And this animal, homely as a steam-roller, but the embodiment of salvation, is none other than our old geography acquaintance, the hippopotamus.

The cultivation of the hippopotamus for civilized food is no mere poet's fancy. 'T is a practical possibility, and, with the continued scarcity of beef, is destined to become a substantial reality. Dr. W. N. Irwin has this to say upon the subject, and he speaks with the authority of a Government food specialist:

We have in this country several large areas well adapted to certain kinds of animal life, but not now producing, for the reason that the animals are not there. In our Gulf States there are 6,400,000 acres of water and marshy surface, which, if properly planted with water hyacinths and other aquatic plants, could produce one million tons of meat a year. This could be accomplished by stocking the region with hippopotami, whose flesh in native Africa is highly esteemed, and when salted and cured is known as "Lake Cow Bacon." The fat underlying the skin is one of the purest animal fats known, and is in great demand among the Cape colonists.

Here, then, is already the solution of an impending calamity, and our prophecies of disaster, together with our noisy execrations of the cattle baron, become as empty as sounding brass. Let the cow jump over the moon; it can no longer frighten us with its elusive antics. We have the hippopotamus up our sleeve, and, like the bowwow in the nursery rhyme, we can now sit by and laugh ourselves sick to see such sport. And if the hippopotamus does not contain within itself

the spice of life, there are the giraffe and the white rhinoceros, created for the special purpose of variety. Dr. Irwin says, "We have plenty of room in the Southern States for the giraffe and white rhinoceros. The giraffe is gentle and easily domesticated, and the white rhinoceros is mild and produces an enormous quantity of excellent meat from the coarsest and most unpromising provender."

Truly, our most exacting needs are anticipated. A new and inexhaustible supply of meat but waits the hour of demand. The ill of to-day is already resolving itself into the abounding good of to-morrow. Peace, plenty, and contentment lie before us; and a new life, with new experiences, new opportunities, new vigor, new romance, lies folded in that golden future when the meadows and the bayous of our Southern lands shall swarm with herds of hippopotami and rhinoceroses and giraffes, and only the circus shall remember the pig and the ox.

CLIFFORD HOWARD

GOING TOO FAR

IT is stated by a scientific journal of standing that an apparatus has at last been devised by means of which people conversing by telephone can see each other. To certain classes of persons this may be all right. Certainly a young man in Philadelphia, who is engaged to be married to a young woman in Boston, and who daily communicates with his Heart's Desire over the long-distance wire, will get a lot of comfort out of an invention of this sort; but, after all, it will be something of an aggravation too unless some other ingenious individual comes along who will invent a machine whereby the Philadelphia youth can simultaneously squeeze the young woman's hand. The tortures of Tantalus are a familiar figure of speech, but they will seem as nothing alongside of that youngster's feelings when he perceives the radiant vision of chosen loveliness before his eyes, and hears that beloved voice, and then—oh, well, why expatiate upon the horror of that situation? There is n't a pair of lovers in the world who will deny the advantages to be derived from the wireless handshake, if such a thing can ever be brought into being.

But there are times when we do not wish the person at the other end of the line to see us. We ourselves have seen a man of high character, surrounded by a lot of boon companions and with a pretty good bridge hand in his fist, telephoning home that he is unexpectedly detained down-town on business. Then, again, we ourselves have been haled out of bed along about midnight more than once by recent arrivals in town, and held conversations of the most formal sort over the wire, but clad in a suit of mauve pajamas which we would n't have

exposed to public gaze for all the abandoned farms in New England. Time and time again, arrayed in our red, white, and blue flannel bath-robe, have we conversed by 'phone with persons of social distinction, who, if they once saw us thus decked out, would erase our names from their list in a jiffy; and as for the ladies of the average household, with a Spectrograph attachment on the 'phone, it is hardly worth saying, so obvious is it, that they could never be dragged to the telephone to answer a call unless they were dressed for it. All this is entirely apart from the disadvantage of having the person spoken to gazing into your eyes as you speak. One of the chief delights of the telephone as it exists at present is the ease with which a man face to face with the necessity therefor can prevaricate without having his expression give him away, and we greatly fear that in this respect alone the use of such an invention will destroy, rather than enhance, for thousands of people, the efficiency of a useful household convenience.

About the only real value of the new device will be as a relief to individual chaperons, for with such an instrument available it will become a comparatively easy matter to establish a central Chaperon Station, whereby one capable duenna may keep her eye on any number of courting couples within the range of her switch-board. Thus mothers and maiden aunts need no longer stay up until the wee sma' hours of the night because Strephon and Phylis must be attended by a guardian capable of throwing Strephon out of the window if the occasion demands, but can retire at a reasonable hour, to be notified by a C. Q. D. ring from Central when the District Chaperon has reason to believe the circumstances demand the signal. In respect to these, perhaps, the scheme is a good one. Otherwise it seems to possess disadvantages which more than offset its benefits.

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS



THE FARING FORTH

BY J. B. E.

I DREAMED last night You came and stood beside my bed,
 And on my furrowing brow laid fingers aspen light;
 Lo, then the troop of wide-eyed Cares all swiftly fled,
 And Rest soft kissed my lips—Rest, in your garments dight.

I dreamed again, when Sleep had spent her easeful balm,
 That You and I were faring forth to ope Life's gate—
 Till now on hard reluctant hinges hung. Ah, calm
 Your eyes and brave your lips to challenge future fate!

LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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THE MISCHIEF OF TIME

BY

DOROTHEA DEAKIN

Author of "Color of Rose," "Georgie," etc.

I.

A GIRL with smooth brown hair and a face like a rose came hurrying down the lane towards the old square red house on the river-bank, and it was easy to see from her sunshiny face and dancing step that the world was going well with her. Some people thought Jane Rose had too much color in her round cheeks, and perhaps if that radiant hue had ever been the same for five minutes together, they might have been right. But it never was the same. It came and went with distracting changes, from snow-white to rose-red, and sometimes it was more like pink and white apple-blossoms than anything else you could think of. The Rectory children—the young Lavernayes—had called her Princess Rosered when she was fourteen and their mother had borrowed her from her aunt to "mind" the twins. But, then, the Rectory children had been born quite without class prejudice, and they insisted upon fitting their fairy tales onto everybody and everything. They had fallen in love with Jane Rose at first sight, when she was quite a little girl. Pink cheeks were not generally admired in Whiteroses village. It was even the fashion with the village girls to drink vinegar and eat oatmeal to make them elegantly pale; but Jane was not one of these, and now that she was grown up and eighteen, though still rather small and slight, she was ridiculously rosy-cheeked.

She was a young lady in the post-office, and just engaged to be

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married, and this engagement seemed the crowning glory of a successful career to the delighted girl. None of the Rectory fairy tales were more wonderful than her love-story.

"Talk about kitchen-maids turning into princesses!" said Jane contemptuously. "They aren't in it with me." And, indeed, at the moment it did look like it.

At the River House she stopped to peep over the garden wall and look for a friend, who was not there. If she had gone round to the old square, paved yard she would have caught a glimpse of this friend through the half-open door of the harness-room, where he was anxiously inspecting a doubtful strap. A gleam of gold through the stable door would have shown her the chestnut darling, Jolie Bergère, in her stall, and over in the long pasture beyond the yard a slim black lady, Jane's own adored Esclairmonde, was curvetting and caracoling like a circus star, intoxicated by the April airs and the spring sunshine.

Armand brought the strap outside and regarded it carefully in the sunshine. Then he crossed the yard and went by the side gate into the garden, to sit on a bench among green things while he mended it. His tweed clothes sat jauntily on his spare little figure, for they were of a decidedly English and sporting cut. His face was brown and weather-beaten, his eyes dark and very gentle, and he sang cheerily to himself as he worked:

*" Au clair de la lune,
Mon ami Pierrot,
Prêtes-moi ta plume
Pour écrire un mot.
Ma chandelle est morte,
Je n'ai plus de feu;
Ouvris-moi ta porte
Pour l'amour de Dieu.*

*" Au clair de la lune,
Pierrot répondit:
' Je n'ai pas de plume.
Je suis dans mon lit.
Vas chez la voisine,
Je crois qu'elle y est
Car dans la cuisine
Ou bat le briquet.' "*

Here he heard a low whistle, and, looking quickly up, saw a round pink face smiling at him over the high brick wall. Jane was not really eight feet high. She was standing on the horse-block.

" *Ouvris-moi ta porte!*" said she.

Armand laughed and came forward.

" But certainly, Mademoiselle. You are going to ride with me?" He had a charming voice, and his English was wonderfully good.

The slightly rakish air which he affected would not have alarmed a nun.

Jane sighed.

"Not to-day," she said regretfully. "I wish I could, but—well, I'm afraid I've promised not to. I want to talk to you, if you don't mind. I haven't promised not to talk to you. May I come in?"

Armand hesitated for a moment, assumed a worried air, then laughed shortly and rather recklessly, and unlocked the green painted wooden door.

"Madame is gathering beans for dinner," he said with a smile, as he let her in.

"Well, it is n't exactly a secret that I want to talk about," said Jane quickly. "I can talk in a low voice when I don't want Mrs. Brothers to hear. I could n't wait any longer until I told you. You've been so good to me all this time, and I feel as if I had been sort of deceiving you. You've helped me so much, without knowing why I wanted help, and now that it's all settled and safe, I can't bear it any longer. I hate mysteries. I *must* tell you."

"I have been waiting for you to tell me, Mademoiselle Jeanne," said he, with rather a sad smile.

"You guessed there was something, then?" she asked. "I never thought of your guessing it. How dark you've kept your suspicions! Rodney always says you're a dark horse. Look here—you remember that first day when you came into the post-office and stayed leaning on the counter, talking to me all that time?"

"Yes." His face was almost expressionless, and she hesitated awkwardly, for she did n't feel quite sure yet how he would take the news.

"Well, I never saw any one I wanted to trust so much, and even if I had n't, I felt that bothered I did n't know where to turn. That bothered I was."

"'So worried' sounds better, does n't it, Mademoiselle?"

"So worried, I mean. Worried to rags, I was. I really did n't know where to turn."

"And when you saw me——?" He spoke very gravely, with his eyes turned away.

"Oh, I knew directly I saw you. It's your eyes, I think, and the way you smile. I never saw such a trustable smile. And then, I'd heard about the horses, you see. It was that as well. I knew you'd taken the River House just to keep your horses and live a country sort of life. I'd heard that you hated Paris, and that you liked things plain and simple and English. I've often heard them say at the Rectory that you were no—no——" She stuck at a word.

"No *boulevardier*?"

"Something like that. So I wanted awfully to learn to ride, and I meant to pay you for lessons if I'd enough money, and then you were so good. You said you'd teach me for nothing."

"For love, Mademoiselle." He spoke lightly, and Jane laughed quite comfortably, for she knew it was just his polite foreign way. *She* did n't mind.

"It was all because of Rodney Sagra-net," she went on candidly.

"But that was what I supposed," Armand answered, still without looking at her.

Jane seemed startled at his quiet acceptance of her amazing luck, and a tide of color swept her face. If she had ever deserved her nickname of Princess Rosered, she deserved it then, but it was quite lost on Monsieur Lanselle, for he went on staring at the gooseberry bushes.

"I was so dreadfully gone on him," she whispered. "Yet when he began saying things like—oh, you know! It was then that I could n't help seeing that I was n't good enough——"

He supposed she meant that it was by birth and accent and manners that she was not good enough, and said nothing, for this was obviously true. To people like the Sagra-nets, such things were sure to matter intensely.

But Jane did n't mean these things. She was quite unconscious of them. Staring across the garden at the broad, stooping back of Mrs. Brothers, Lanselle's housekeeper, she went steadily on. Her clear, direct gaze grew hard, her lips firm, as she spoke.

"I've never been beaten yet," said she slowly. "When I've set out to do things, I've always done them in the end. It's been like that from the beginning. They told me that I would n't get the prize at school, and I just made up my mind and sat up at nights studyin', and I *did* get it. They said I should n't get into the post-office, but I worked like mad, and I *did* get in. They said I was n't good enough for Rodney—Aunt did—and old Mr. Pogram and the Rector—and I just made up my mind to prove as I was."

"*That* I was," corrected Lanselle gently. There was nothing which could have offended in his way of pointing out her mistakes.

"That I was." She accepted his correction, but still she did n't see how the very fact that such a thing was so often necessary proved her unfitness. "I knew I could n't do the things *he* did—I could n't ride."

"You can ride now," Armand assured her. "You sit my Esclair-monde like a bird, Mademoiselle Jeanne."

"And drive?" she asked anxiously. "I could n't drive anything but a milk-cart before, but I can now, can't I?"

"You can drive anything," he agreed. "But certainly."

"And motors—I can manage a motor?"

He smiled again at her open anxiety.

"It seems so. I am not a judge, but the man from Dalesford said——"

"Yes." Jane knew by heart all the flattering things which the Dalesford chauffeur had said. "It was sweet of you to hire it so as I could learn. And bridge—I can play bridge?"

"So *that* you could learn."

"So *that*," she repeated hastily. "Can't I play bridge?"

Armand agreed with a sigh about the bridge, and biting memories rushed upon him of those long winter evenings at the school-house, with the schoolmaster and his wife for their opponents; but it was acuter memories of the rose face and starry eyes of his little, anxious vis-à-vis that made him turn and gaze at her wistfully just then.

"They were dull, those cards?" he asked.

"Not dull exactly," said Jane truthfully; "but I won't say that I would n't rather have been over at the Dalesford rink, neither——"

"Either?" suggested Lanselle.

"Either," Jane hurried on. "But that's all done with now. I feel quite fit for going into any society now, and it's all owing to you. Rodney's not going to keep the secret any longer. He says he wants to be married soon. He says we've waited long enough, and he told his mother yesterday. I've been wanting him to tell her for a long time. I hate secrets."

"Ah!"—he glanced at her with keen inquiry in his dark eyes. "And Madame—what does *she* say?"

"I don't know what she *said*," Jane confessed reluctantly. "Rodney would n't tell me quite everything she said, but you can't expect him to, can you? I dare say she was a bit knocked of a heap."

"Surprised," he amended.

"Well—thunderstruck." Jane preferred her own phrase, but was willing to make a compromise. "But she has written to me quite kind."

"Kindly," said he.

"Kindly," repeated Jane. "I got the letter this afternoon. That's what I've come to see you about. I wanted to tell you. She's asked me to come and see her to-morrow afternoon at Whiteroses. Just think of that. Is n't it a good thing I bought me a new hat? Would you like to see the letter?"

"If I may be permitted——" He took it from her, rather reluctantly, and glanced down the page. At the large scrawled "Mildred Sagramet" he stopped and stared reflectively, for he considered himself a judge of handwritings, and he was beginning to feel afraid for Jane. Then his eyes travelled to the top of the page, and he read it again. It was not a long letter, but it was a very non-committal one.

WHITEROSSES.

MY DEAR MISS ROSE:

Rodney has just told me his very astonishing news. I am not very strong, as you no doubt know, and therefore cannot come to see you, as I could wish. Will you, instead, come here about four to-morrow afternoon? I will take care that my son is away when you come, so that we may have our interview undisturbed. Believe me

Yours very sincerely,

MILDRED SAGRANET.

"A nice, warm, affectionate, welcoming letter," said Armand smoothly, as he gave it back. He did not want the girl to see what he really thought of Mrs. Saganet's attitude, but he could not quite restrain himself. He was afraid this poor child was in for a bad half-hour in that coming interview, but it would not do to tell her so, and sap her courage before she started. She would need it all, he thought.

"How shall I do my hair?" Jane asked eagerly. "The turban is the latest—just a smooth sweep round, you know, over a frame or a chignon, but the Directoire curls make me look a real treat."

Lanselle moved a little and half turned, to gaze critically at her brown hair. It was parted in the middle now, and very simply twisted round at the back, so that it showed the charming shape of her head and her little pink ears.

"Do it exactly as it is done now," said he, without hesitation. Jane laughed scornfully.

"I think I see myself," cried she, "walking through the hall at Whiteroses, with all those stylish people, and my hair bundled up anyhow! Why, I only gave it a twist and a promise. I did n't trouble to do it up properly just to come here."

"Thank you, Mademoiselle." His tone startled her. It was so suddenly, unexpectedly sad.

"I mean," she explained hastily, "that I had n't the time to give it. It takes over half an hour to do it properly, you see. Really, I did n't mean——"

"To offend?" he suggested, giving her hand a light, reassuring touch with his. "Why, I know that. I am always glad that you don't stand on ceremony with me. I like your pretty brown hair best when it is just what you call anyhow. But I am serious, Mademoiselle. Go to Whiteroses with your hair just anyhow—in that frock——"

"What!" Jane nearly screamed at the awful suggestion. "In my old blue print, with the yoke all torn? I think so! Why, I've got a lovely dress——"

"No, no," said Armand, in a voice of urgent entreaty. "Do not, I entreat you, wear this Sunday robe of black and rose-color."

Jane stared at him indignantly. "I'm not. I've got a new helio.

It's got pin-tucks all over, and kilted pleats from the knee, and fancy trimming that cost three and five a yard. That's what I got that mauve hat to go with." She pronounced it "morve."

He corrected her.

"Mauve, Mademoiselle. I have not seen this dress. Your heart is, then, set on wearing it?"

Jane turned and stared at him fiercely.

"Why should you wish me to make a horrid sight of myself? I thought you were my friend. I suppose you think—even now—that I'm not good enough for Rodney!"

Lanselle laughed softly, but did not reply.

Jane flounced up in a rage.

"Good enough!" she said. "I *am* good enough. I'll make myself good enough. Is there anything more to learn? If there is, you can just tell me. I won't be looked down on. I won't be beaten. I've never been beaten yet. I'm not old or ugly or bad, am I? I'm not rich, but *he* does n't want any more money than he's got. He's got more than his share already. I can dance and ride and drive and motor and play bridge. I know what to do at dinner parties. I shan't use the wrong forks and things. And if I do, I shan't do it twice. Oh, you're cruel—you're cruel! You pretend to be my friend, and then you throw cold water on everything!"

"What have I done?" Armand asked sadly. "Oh, Mademoiselle, I was quite silent. I said nothing."

"But that was just it!" cried Jane. "I hate a person to be silent. I asked you if I was good enough for Rodney, and——"

"You're *too* good for him"—he laughed a little at her blazing cheeks. "I was silent because I thought it best to say nothing. Don't you see that if I had said anything, I might have said too much. Good enough? This young Sagra-net!"

"Don't you dare to say a word against him!" cried Jane, wildly dabbing at her eyes. The Frenchman sighed.

"I know nothing against him, Mademoiselle Jeanne."

"Lucky for you!" She hurried off a few steps, then turned and came slowly back, holding out her hand with an ashamed air.

"I'm sorry I was so cross. There's one thing I *have* got to learn still, and that's how to keep my temper. I'm sorry. You've been such a good friend to me. Good-by. See you later!"

"Good-by." Armand looked at her for a minute, then stooped and kissed her hand. Jane did n't mind. It was just his silly French way, and she was used to it.

"To-morrow," he said slowly, "after this interview with Madame, you will come and tell me?"

She looked puzzled. "Tell you what? Do you mean about the

house? Do you mean whether she's nice to me? I will if she is. I can't talk about Rodney's mother if she is n't nice, can I?"

"You must do what you think best." He opened the door for her. "But, whatever happens—come."

"Oh, I'll come," said Jane lightly. "I always come."

II.

WHITEROSES itself was in a good deal of commotion about Rodney's amazing choice, for his mother was painfully excited and agitated, and so were those of her guests who knew anything at all about it. Lady Malincourt and her slim school-girl, Nina, were the only women who did n't know, which was perhaps a pity.

Mrs. Sagrauet swept her white draperies up and down the long, cool drawing-room with more agitation than she generally showed. That extravagant girl widow, young Mrs. Despard, was leaning back in her low chair, smiling rather superciliously at what she heard. She thought Mrs. Sagrauet was making too much fuss about a trifle. She felt that if she had had the ill-luck to have a grown-up son; if Rodney had been *her* boy—she would have found a short way out of the difficulty. There were always ways of dealing with these emergencies.

"I don't want Rodney to hate me," Mrs. Sagrauet said, stopping distractedly in front of her. "He's really in love with the girl, you see—for the moment. He's desperately in earnest about it. He always takes these things so seriously."

"But if the affair is only one of many," Marjory Despard suggested coolly, "is n't it likely—that's to say, if *you* don't strengthen him by opposition—is n't it only too likely that his fancy will die a natural death? Why, he was in love with me, once. He soon got over that."

"He had to when you were married, Marjory."

"It does n't always follow," the girl drawled.

Rodney's mother laughed rather angrily.

"I believe he's afraid of it himself. I believe he's afraid of getting over it. I believe that's why he means to marry her at once. He does n't mean to give himself the opportunity of forgetting."

"Oh! Married at once? That's it, is it? I don't wonder you're worried. That makes it really dangerous."

"Marjory, what *can* I do?"

Mrs. Sagrauet gazed appealingly at the girl. She felt rather humiliated to think that Marjory knew her son better than she did. It was very trying to have to ask *her* advice.

"You know all the things I want for that boy. He really has a fine political brain. Think of the cruel waste and hindrance this dreadful marriage would entail. Think——"

"Offer her money," suggested Mrs. Despard lazily. Mrs. Sagra-net moved impatiently away.

"My good child! How much money should I have to give her to make up for Rodney's income and position, even if she was n't fond of him?"

"It would be worth a good deal, certainly," Mrs. Despard admitted. She pulled herself up from her low chair, and moved to the window, for the mention of money always made her feel uncomfortable.

"Besides, she's a nice, affectionate little thing," Rodney's mother went on. "They think a good deal of her at the Rectory. The Lavernaye children adore her. Mrs. Lavernaye has always spoilt her shamefully. I don't believe in confusing the classes. You see the kind of thing that comes of it. Yet she's got a good face. She looks honest. I don't believe she'd give Rodney up now for any amount of money. I believe she's fond of him."

Marjory laughed lightly.

"Oh, everybody's fond of Rodney. I was fond of him myself in bread and butter days. But I'd try her with a good round sum of money if I were you, before I gave up hope. Don't make the mistake of making your offer too small. I should n't be surprised if she took it. You never know. They say every man has his price."

"I don't like to hear you say such things, Marjory." Mrs. Sagra-net spoke rather coldly and uncomfortably.

"I'm sure I've got mine." There was a bitter undertone in the girl's voice. Her back was turned, but her voice was very harsh, and it alarmed Mrs. Sagra-net, who had a sort of affection for her.

"Marjory!"

Marjory turned on her with an exasperated little sob.

"Oh, it's easy to preach when you're rich! Can't you see? Oh, yes, I'm in debt again—horribly in debt, of course, and goodness knows where the money is to come from to get me out. I'm sure I don't know, unless——" She shivered and stopped suddenly. If there was a way out, it was certainly not a tempting one.

Mrs. Sagra-net's eyes hardened, and her mouth took an unsympathetic line. This weak extravagance in a young widow was a thing she found as difficult to condone as it was impossible to understand.

"If you gave up bridge——" she suggested in a hard voice.

Marjory turned on her hotly.

"How can I give it up? One must play if one lives in the world. Unless I go into a convent, or hide myself on the Continent, I must dress decently and do as other people do. It's not my fault that I always have such wretched luck. I should think *you* could see *that*, Mildred."

"You don't play for high stakes *here*, Marjory, I'm sure."

Marjory shrugged her shoulders. If it pleased Mrs. Sagranet to think this, why, then, let her go on thinking it. It would n't mend matters much if she did undeceive her.

"Could you lend me some money, Mildred?" Her voice was low and almost imploring. "I know I've never paid back that other, but——"

Mrs. Sagranet was silent, but her eyes grew hard.

"I'll be very careful after this," the girl pleaded. "I'll pay you something back every quarter."

"I can't lend you any more money to lose at bridge, Marjory."

The girl shot a swift, apprehensive look at her, then pressed her lips together. What appeal could she make? What was there that she could say that was likely to influence Mildred Sagranet, when her mouth took that hard line? She had been a fool to say anything. If she had n't been driven—— She shivered again. Rodney's mother sat down and thought deeply for some seconds, then she said in a kinder voice:

"I'm sorry you're so worried. I should like to feel justified in helping you, Marjory. You have a good deal of influence with Rodney, have n't you? You seem such good friends."

"Oh, Rodney's always quite a dear," Marjory murmured indifferently.

"Well, suppose you see what you can do with him now? If you can get him to break with this girl, I'll see that you are n't worried about money matters. I might at least be able to tide you over this difficulty."

Marjory turned swiftly and came up to her with a pale face and blazing eyes.

"Mildred! What do you mean?"

"Talk to him like a friend," said Mrs. Sagranet smoothly. "Oh, my dear child, don't tell me that a boy is n't more likely to listen to a young and pretty woman friend than to his own mother. He's deaf to his own mother. I only want fair means. I've said all that I mean to say to him, myself. I only make him more determined by any opposition of mine. It is n't that he is n't fond of me, but it's always been like that. We're too much alike. Yet he's a dear boy, and I don't want to see him wasted. If you take him in hand—well, you've got a way with you, Marjory. I must try to do what I can with the girl herself. I'm sorry for the poor child, because I'm sure she's fond of Rodney, and I like the look of her. Of course I shall be quite kind, yet——"

Marjory was still standing staring at her in perplexed silence, but presently she broke into a fierce little laugh.

"Well, I don't want to see him wasted either," said she. "Oh,

I'll try to have a quiet talk with him, if you like. I'd much rather not meddle—but I've got my price, as I said. I'm going pretty cheap just now."

Her voice was very bitter, and it broke before she finished and hurried out of the room. She did n't want to give way before Mildred Saganet if she could help it, but she was horribly worried and unnerved. She did n't suppose that she had the slightest influence with Rodney, yet there *was* a chance, and somehow she must get some money. How cruel Mildred was! How easy it would have been for her to fill in another check without that humiliating condition! Marjory told herself firmly that if she could get clear now, she would never again lay herself open to such humiliation. She would go abroad and economize for a time. By hook or by crook, she would get straight. It was only in London that money vanished so. Yet she was very proud, and it hurt her to think of doing such a thing. She did not wish to think of herself as a wheedling creature. Her pride had been humbled considerably in the last year, but it had not been humbled in this way—not yet. She shivered, for there was only one alternative, and it was not a pretty one.

She put on a cloudy white frock which suited her, and went in to dinner with Rodney that night, and afterwards, thinking disgustedly of what lay before her, she made him take her into the garden. Young Mrs. Despard's eyes and hair beneath a white lace mantilla ought to have been sufficiently alluring, but Rodney was deaf and blind to such things just now in any one but his Jane.

She was very nice to him, and her charming voice soothed him more than he knew. His nerves were in rather an overstrained condition just then, poor boy, for his last two interviews with his mother had been anything but soothing. Leaning on the stone balustrade at the edge of the terrace, Marjory tried to arrange her thoughts and manufacture some plan of campaign. It was a difficult subject to open, but the young man soon spared her any trouble of that kind. Standing before her, erect and rather defiant, with his close-cropped brown head held well in the air, she realized as she looked at him that her task was not a very hopeful one.

"I suppose you've been told, Marjory."

Marjory smiled affectionately up at him.

"Yes, I've been told."

"Are n't you going to congratulate me?"

She looked away.

"Well—can I? I wish I could."

"Oh!"—he laughed defiantly. "I suppose *you're* full of all this nonsense and class prejudice, too. She's splendid! She's a girl like a rose. You should see her complexion. The Rectory children call

her Princess Rosered. She's as fresh as a daisy and as good as gold. She's as true as steel and as straight as a die. There never was an honest thing than Jane."

Marjory with the stinging memory of a shattered girlhood always before her, was seized with a sudden passionate envy of this girl who could inspire such enthusiasm, such a championship, and she felt a deep disinclination to meddle with these two children who had found the golden key to the enchanted garden and were still wandering in it. Disillusionment was bound to come, but it would be cruel to hasten it. She seated herself on the low balustrade, with her back half turned to him, and he looked down at her reproachfully.

"I thought *you* would wish me happiness, Marjory. We've always been good pals."

Marjory began impulsively to speak, then, catching brutally at the memory of the money she owed and must pay, and goaded to desperate measures by the horrors of the only alternative before her, she stopped and turned her warm speech into a half-scornful one.

"My dear boy, of course I wish you happiness. That's why I want you to give up this little Cinderella of yours before it's too late. Cinderella may be a dear, but she is n't much good without her glass coach. Prince Charming would have been helpless enough without the fairy godmother, would n't he? And in this case there is no fairy godmother."

Rodney squared his shoulders and set his teeth, and then he laughed. "We are n't living in fairy tales," said he. "We can do our own work without magic wands. I am a man, Jane is a woman, and we love each other. My mother does n't know her. She thinks Jane will hinder me. Why, she's just what I need. She's what I need to keep me at it. You don't know Jane. If she wants a thing, she goes straight for it. She gets everything that she sets her heart upon!"

"She seems to get a good deal," Marjory murmured with a little sigh and a fleeting, sidelong glance at his flushed face.

"She simply wills a thing, and sooner or later it comes. She's strongest in the very ways that I'm weakest. She's strong where I most need strength. She could make me anything! Anything! Mother says she is n't a lady. A lady! Why, Jane is clever enough to pick up in a fortnight the few trivial things my mother means. She'd even go to school for me, I believe, if I'd let her. I won't let her. It is n't necessary. I should be proud of her anywhere. You don't know Jane."

"I should like to know Jane."

"Oh, Marjory"—he sat down beside her and took her hand affectionately in his—"do help us, that's a dear. You were always such a

good chap. Do what you can with mother, won't you—to please me? You've got such a way with you, Marjory."

Marjory met his earnest, coaxing gaze with dark, inscrutable eyes. Perhaps *Rodney* would help her; perhaps, since she had already fallen so low—why should n't she sell herself to the opposition? Should she tell Rodney that she *would* help him if he would pay her for it as handsomely as his mother had offered to pay her? A sudden revulsion of feeling made her rise and shake off his hand. No; if she helped this boy, it should be for affection and friendship, and she could n't afford to do that. She could n't afford any luxuries now. After all, Mildred SAGRANET was probably right. It would be the truest kindness to do what his mother asked. She laughed up into his serious face.

"Oh, Rodney," she said, "you don't suppose this sort of thing lasts? You're under a kind of spell now, and everything looks rose-colored. You're incapable of seeing anything because of the foolish golden mist which shuts you in. If you're mad enough to marry while the enchantment holds, you'll wake up too late, and find your whole life ruined. I am sure this girl is a dear little thing, and as good as gold, and all the other pretty things that you say about her, but she can't *possibly* be fit to be your wife. You want to marry a girl who is used to society; a girl who is well educated and interested in politics; a girl who is able to talk and influence people. You want a girl who can entertain, and speak half a dozen languages. You want a girl——"

"I want Jane."

The dogged determination of his tone stopped her for an instant, but she soon went on again in her pretty, coaxing voice.

"Rodney, you ought to think of your mother a little more. She has devoted herself to you so utterly. She only wants you to be happy. She would n't say a word if she thought there was a chance of finding any real happiness in such a marriage. But you won't even find that. Rodney, I don't believe love marriages are often happy. You see, when you get over the first enchantment and find that there's nothing else to fall back upon, where are you?"

"With Jane."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, you foolish boy! The fairy princess is what you mean *now*, when you say 'Jane' in that rapt voice. Why, *she* would be the first thing to go with the enchantment, for it's all a part of the magic spell. I'm a woman of the world, and I know."

"You're just a girl of my own age, and you *don't* know."

"I know what love is."

"You don't know what Jane is."

"Well, wait a little longer. You owe it to your mother to wait a

little longer. You're so young. Wait and see if the enchantment does n't pass away as I tell you. If it holds—well—marry your Jane if you like——”

“I'm going to.”

“But give it a chance first. If you're so sure of each other, you can afford to wait. Oh, Rodney, my dear boy, don't you know that this is the best of all, this hoping, fearing, waiting time you're going through now? It's the wonderful, magical, rose-colored time that's the paradise of life. I don't suppose you'll ever find it again—or not quite the same. If you only knew, you'd be glad to keep it unspoilt just a little longer.”

“You're talking tommyrot,” said Rodney, with open contempt. Marjory, brought to a sudden stop by this scornful comment on her eloquence, laughed outright. She had been quite pleased with her poetic outburst. She had spoken feelingly enough to touch any one, she had thought.

“I'm not a poet,” said the young man shortly.

“You surprise me,” she murmured lightly.

“You can't work on my feelings with that kind of cheap rubbish,” he went on, disregarding her remark. “I know what love is.”

“I dare say you do,” Marjory murmured, quite nonplussed.

“And I know the difference between fancy and the real thing. Mother's been getting at you. Oh, I can see that! The only thing I *can't* see is why you've taken the trouble to do it. You generally vote for the unpopular side. That's what I've always liked about you. I've not forgotten the old days, Contrary Mary.”

At the sound of the childish nickname, Marjory's heart gave a quick leap, and she felt a sudden sickening contempt for the part she had undertaken.

“Why have you joined the strongest side?” he asked, half sadly, half wearily.

She moved slowly away from him.

“For money,” she said in a low, clear voice. “Because I am to be paid for it. At least, if I had succeeded, I should have been paid.”

Rodney started and followed her, but his face flushed and he spoke hesitatingly:

“Marjory! I'm beastly sorry. Is it as bad as that? I did n't know. You're not so awfully up against it as all that? I say, do let me help you? I mean, I've got heaps and—we *were* playfellows, were n't we? I'd let *you* help me in a minute, if I *wanted* help.”

“And don't you?” She turned sharply and laughed as she asked this question.

He smiled uncomfortably.

“Not in that way—now—but——”

"I *will* help you, Rodney. You're a dear good boy, and I will help you. No, I'll not take your money. I could n't do it. I shall be all right. I shan't starve. I can live by my wits, like heaps of other people; but——" She stopped and looked him full in the eyes. "You really love this girl—this Jane?"

"Yes."

"Well enough to be true whatever happens? Well enough to wait for her if—— You would n't forget her, supposing——?" She stopped and waited for his answer.

He looked very puzzled.

"No, of course not, only—why, what do you mean, Marjory?"

"Mean?" She looked at him strangely. "Oh, I only mean that I've got to go now and tell your mother that I've failed. You're a hard nut to crack, my dear. You're too proof against my powers of persuasion. I could shake you, Rodney. You're very pigheaded, are n't you?"

"About Jane," said he grimly, "I am."

III.

"HER arms across her breast she laid;
She was more fair than words can say;
Barefooted came the beggar-maid——"

"Have n't you finished them dinner pots yet, Jane?"

"No, Aunt; not nearly."

Jane went on with her song:

"Barefooted came the beggar-maid
Before the king Cophet-u-a."

She had won the "World's Reciter" for a prize at school, and this was her favorite of all the poems. Armand Lanselle had set it to music to please her, and although the tune was simple, and reminiscent of many others, it was good enough to please Jane.

"In robe and crown the King stopt down,
To meet and greet her on her way.
'It's no wonder,' said the lords;
'She is more beautiful than day.'

"I'm going up to Whiteroses, to see Mrs. Sagramet, Aunt. She's sent for me. I told you yesterday that she'd written me a letter, did n't I?"

"Pleased at the notion, is she?" The stout aunt who had brought Jane up sat in the rocking-chair by the hearth in the kitchen of the tiny cottage, and roused herself from her fitful slumber to make this

sarcastic remark. She had no faith in the young man's promises, and laughed at the idea of an engagement. She believed it to be what her neighbors called it—carrying on.

Jane understood without resentment the spirit in which the remark was offered, and cheerfully pursued her song, glancing for encouragement now and then at the blooming reflection of herself in the square of looking-glass over the slopstone.

“As shines the moon in clouded skies,
She in her poor attire was seen:
One praised her ankles, one her eyes,
One her dark hair and lovesome mien.

“So sweet a face, such angel grace,
In all that land had never been.
Cophetua swore——”

“You'd better leave them pots till you come back, and get upstairs and wash you, Jane.”

“Not me,” said Jane blithely. “I've just about done. I'll put the kettle on for your tea before I go, and put a bit more coal on. There's quite a fresh wind to-day.

“Cophetua swore a royal oath:
'This beggar-maid shall be my queen.
This beggar-maid shall be my queen.'”

She hurried up to her tiny room under the sloping roof, slipped off her untidy print blouse and old serge skirt, and shook down her shining masses of hair till they covered her like an enchanted cloak of dark gold. Then she began, slowly and painstakingly, to make herself hideous, rolling one strand after another on her fingers and covering her little head with stiff, prim, fantastic curls. She put on an elaborate and overtrimmed dress of heliotrope alpaca, with spangly trimming and a full, short skirt, which gave her a soubrette appearance and showed too plainly her cheap, patent-leather strapped shoes.

On this fantastic tower of bright hair, she perched an enormous green hat full of crude violets with glaring yellow hearts. She had made herself a vulgar little travesty of a still deeper vulgarity, yet as she stood there with her pink cheeks and clear eyes, smiling and nodding at herself in the old yellow glass, you still felt, if you were an observant person, that the real Jane was unspoilt in spite of all these horrible efforts; the real Jane was still safe inside that abominable frame.

Her parasol was of turquoise blue, with a lace frill, and poor little Jane was as pleased as Punch with herself, and as full of vanity and

pleasure as a little pigeon. She ran dancing into the kitchen, and bobbed a curtsy to her aunt.

"You look an amazin' sight," said that lady reflectively. "Strikin', I'm bound to say, but not a bit like his people looks neither."

"Either," corrected Jane. She always practised Lanselle's tactful amendments of her speech upon her still more illiterate aunt. "That's only because you don't follow the fashions carefully enough, Aunt," said she cheerfully. "I'm quite up-to-date, and don't you forget it. It's because you're behind the times."

"Ho! it is, is it?" said her aunt scornfully, and dropped off to sleep again.

It was a long and dusty mile to Whiteroses, and Jane walked carefully on the grassy edge of the ditch, to keep her shining shoes clean. When she came to the big iron and copper gates, and found herself going through the little side one by the lodge where she had so often been taken to tea with her aunt, who was the gatekeeper's best friend, the first qualm of nervousness overtook her. She walked slowly up the winding drive and very timidly climbed the stone steps to the great door. It was a most unusual thing for Jane to feel timid. A footman met her at the door, and, as she asked for Mrs. Sagra-net, she saw that the hall behind him was full of laughing, chattering, shifting groups of young people. She saw that pretty Miss Frieda Lavernaye, from the Rectory, was among them, and Miss Penelope, too, and they smiled kindly across at her, but most of the others were complete strangers. That tall, flaxen-haired girl leaning over a chair and talking to a young man was Miss Malincourt. She had heard Rodney speak of *her*.

She gazed round with scared eyes, hoping to see Rodney. It would be all right if Rodney was there. Why did n't Mrs. Sagra-net come forward to meet her? She looked round very forlornly and uncertainly.

"What name shall I give?" the man asked. The surprised question in his tone dismayed her.

"Miss Rose. Mrs. Sagra-net expects me, does n't she?" she faltered. The man's manner changed a little.

"Mrs. Sagra-net will see you in the blue drawing-room, miss."

Jane followed him carefully over the slippery hall, bitterly conscious of the shortness of her skirt and of all the amused and surprised glances which followed her. One slim, dark girl in a cloudy frock was standing at the foot of the stairs, and she murmured something insulting about Jane, after she had passed, to the man at her side. Jane did n't hear the remark, but she felt sure that it was insulting. The lady was the handsome Mrs. Despard—the Honorable Mrs.

Despard, who had been left a widow at twenty, and was head over ears in debt for bridge and things, they said. How dared she laugh in that sneering way at an honest girl who didn't owe a penny in the world?

Jane followed the footman up the wide, shallow stairs, feeling very angry and humiliated. She was not used to feeling humble, and she did n't like it.

"I wish I'd had my helio made with a long skirt. I could have trailed across the hall then like a duchess, instead of feeling as if I was all over shoes."

The man threw open a long white door and announced her. Jane found herself inside a big, beautifully polished and panelled room, with the door closing softly behind her and all retreat cut off.

Mrs. Sagrauet was alone. Well, that was something to be thankful for. She stood by the window, in a white lace frock, with a big hat full of roses. She was marvellously young-looking to be Rodney's mother.

"Ridiculous!" Jane told herself. "She must be as old as Aunt. She said she was n't able to come and see me. Old image! It's a perfect scandal."

Mrs. Sagrauet did not fold her in her arms and kiss her, as Jane more than half expected. She shook hands limply and motioned to a chair. Jane took it too hastily. It was unexpectedly low and very soft, and Jane found herself sitting most uncomfortably, with her knees up under her chin, and her parasol propped against her knees and sliding away. It fell with a clatter on the shining floor, and the bright afternoon sun fell full upon her face and made her wink and blink. She began to wish that she had never come.

Mrs. Sagrauet dropped easily into a seat by an oak gate table, and leaned her elbows upon it to turn and gaze reflectively at Jane.

"Yes," she said at last in a kind voice; "you really are a very pretty girl, and you've got honest eyes."

The honest eyes stared uncomfortably and blinked nervously in the light.

"Rodney can't possibly marry you," Mrs. Sagrauet went on softly. "You see that?"

Jane's cheeks blazed. Her heart beat madly. All the blood in her body seemed to be surging into her head.

"I don't see anything of the sort," cried she.

Mrs. Sagrauet smiled and leaned her chin on her hands, still studying every inch of the unfortunate child opposite. Jane felt as if she were a wild animal put into a cage to be stared at. It was with difficulty that she conquered a strong temptation to get up and rush out of the room.

"I suppose it's because I'm not of noble blood!" cried she hotly.

Mrs. SAGRANET shook her head.

"I'm not old-fashioned enough to mind about birth, and nonsense of that kind," said she. "But——"

"Then it must be because I'm poor."

"Rodney's quite rich enough to marry a poor girl. No—no——"
She hesitated.

"There is no other reason!" Jane cried. "How can there be?"

Mrs. SAGRANET gazed at her reflectively. "Well—I'm afraid I'm ambitious for Rodney," she said slowly. "I want him to make a name in the world. I want him to get into Parliament. I want him to make the most of his life."

Jane stared with puzzled eyes.

"Rodney must marry a girl who can help him. He must marry a girl who has been well educated. He must marry a girl who is accustomed to good society."

"Well—if you think I don't know about things——" cried the indignant child.

Mrs. SAGRANET smiled.

"My dear little girl," she said, "that's just what I do think. It's just what I know. You don't know any of these things. You have no education, no manners, not one of the—well—essentials. I suppose you think you are fond of Rodney. Well, if you *are*, you must sacrifice your feelings for his sake. Women are always being called upon to make sacrifices for the men they love. It's a woman's fate. I honestly believe that there is a great future in store for Rodney. Would n't it be a pity, now, when the whole world lies before him, for him to entangle and bind himself in a moment of madness and illusion to a girl who——" She refrained and hurried on: "What will you feel when the bonds irk him and he wants to break them? They always do, you know. And won't it be better, later on, to know that you sacrificed yourself nobly for him, and lost him before the magic spell was broken, rather than to see him straining at his chains more desperately every day and longing to be free? Would n't it be better for you to be a beautiful memory to him, than a lifelong hindrance? However good and kind you are, he would be sure to long to be free before very long. I assure you that unselfishness is the only virtue a man ever really admires in a woman."

"I wish you would n't talk like a book," said Jane in bitter contempt.

Mrs. SAGRANET's flow of eloquence came abruptly to an end. The scorn on the girl's face surprised her. Perhaps she had expected only tears and sulks. She did not know that Jane was the sort of person who does not show deference before an enemy.

"I'm not a fool," said Jane. "We love each other, Rodney and me——"

"Rodney and I?" suggested Rodney's mother mildly.

"Rodney and I. We understand each other. Of course I knew I was different—at first. I could n't do the things he did, but I knew I could learn them, and I *did* learn them. I can learn anything if I set my mind on it. I can ride and drive and motor and dance and play bridge. What else do they do in society? I've learned the book of etiquette off by heart. What more do I want?"

Mrs. SAGRANET did not smile now. The moment had come for perfect candor.

"Rodney's wife must be a lady," she said gravely.

Jane grew scarlet, but as Rodney's mother watched her the vivid color slowly ebbed from her cheeks and faded away to a distressed white; but, Rosered or Snowwhite, she was certainly a lovely child with her Gainsborough face and pathetic courage.

"Do you mean that I'm not a lady?" she asked in an agitated voice.

Mrs. SAGRANET saw that she must be quite frank.

"Yes—oh, by instinct you are one, I am sure; but, in the sense I mean, you are not, and never can be—a lady."

"I—thought—— What more must I learn, then?"

"You can never learn. It's too late now. Besides, you surely don't think that Rodney would be faithful all the years that you were trying to learn? You must know Rodney well enough to understand that his affections are constantly changing. You are at least the seventh person he has been madly in love with since he grew up. If you went away to school, Rodney would forget you. And even if he did n't—well, you see, these things can hardly be taught at school. It is like——"

"Like trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear?" suggested Jane fiercely.

Mrs. SAGRANET laughed.

"You are a good, hard-working child, earning an honest living," said she. "How could you give the time and the money to such a wild-geese scheme?"

"I've never been beaten yet," said Jane doggedly, but her heart was sinking in spite of her defiant words. For the first time in her life she had lost confidence in herself, and she stood up, holding her turquoise blue parasol as if it had been a bludgeon.

"You are such a pretty child," Mrs. SAGRANET went on kindly, "it's a shame that you can't wear pretty frocks——"

Jane glanced across to the glass, and suddenly hated the new helio with a bitter, rancorous hatred.

"And if you can ride, you ought to have a pony. You've got the old stable behind the cottage."

"Aunt keeps hens in that."

"Well—that would n't matter. If you'll go away at once, and write and break off with Rodney—without explaining, of course—if you will promise not to see him again, I'll sit down and write you out a check for a thousand pounds. You can open an account in the County Bank at Dalesford, and you'll be quite a little heiress then. You'll have a much happier time than if you were married to Rodney, making him miserable after the first glamour has gone off; making yourself miserable by panting and gasping to get back to your old life, like a fish out of water. I'll make the check out now, if you'll promise."

"I'll fling it in your face if you do!" cried Jane wildly.

Mrs. SAGRANET laughed.

"No, no; I'm not insulting you. It's only fair. Besides, I like you tremendously. You're a most honest and refreshing child. I only wish you had been——"

"Born to the purple?" cried Jane, in biting scorn.

"Well—hardly." Rodney's mother was very much amused. What a story to tell Marjory Despard and one or two of the other women! How Marjory would laugh!

"Why, there could n't be *more* difference between you," she finished. "You must see."

"Yes, there could," said Jane doggedly. "If he was a king and I was a beggar, there'd be much more difference."

"Ah—you've been reading fairy-tales with the Rectory girls." Mrs. SAGRANET shrugged her shoulders and stood up beside Jane. The poor bewildered girl looked across at the long mirror and all too plainly saw the difference. It was not only the slim, erect figure and charming, clinging, white gown, contrasted with her own jaunty, tasteless costume; it was something else which she saw, and yet could not understand. She stood staring, wildly trying to think; saying to herself in a low voice:

"I've never been beaten yet! I've never been beaten yet!" Then she changed her attitude. From a drooping, rose-cheeked, crushed dairymaid there emerged before Mrs. SAGRANET'S amazed eyes a defiant, determined little warrior, with clear, plucky eyes and an undeniably gallant bearing.

"If I promise *that*," cried she in clear, ringing tones, "how long must I go for?"

"You need n't go away. *We* 'll go away. I only ask you to promise not to see him."

"I should have to go away. Rodney won't take me at my word."

He would n't leave me alone. I know, because I tried once before, when I was n't sure I loved him."

"I see." Mrs. SAGRANET thought she was probably right, and was only too glad to concede the point.

"How long does it generally take him to forget these things?" Jane demanded bitterly.

"My dear, you——" Mrs. SAGRANET was really very sorry for the poor child, and her voice was quite kind.

"How long?"

"Well—two or three years——"

"If I stay away, and don't see him or write to him for three years, you'll give me the check for a thousand pounds?"

"Yes."

"To use as I like?"

Mrs. SAGRANET saw that she was weakening, and her face changed a little. Marjory had been quite right. All these people had their price.

"Exactly as you like."

"Do you want me to put it down on paper?"

Mrs. SAGRANET hesitated, but something in Jane's face decided her.

"Your word is quite enough," said she rather scornfully. She would not have believed that Jane was the kind of girl to sell her lover so easily.

"I promise," said Jane slowly. "And now give me the money."

IV.

As soon as Jane got home, she tore off the new helio dress and threw it viciously into the old yellow tin trunk in the corner of the room. She flung her hat onto the bed, and began, with feverish haste, to unpin and unroll her masses of shining hair. Then she savagely brushed it out, parted it in the middle, and twisted it tightly at the back of her head. Mrs. Despard had worn her hair that way. Mrs. Despard, in a most lovely summer frock, had done her hair anyhow. Lanselle had been right. Jane had n't seen any elaborate coiffures at Whiteroses. Mrs. SAGRANET had just brushed hers up in a simple pompadour. Miss Malincourt's pale locks were still in a school-girl plait. Jane hurried into a clean print frock of faded pink, and put on her old sun hat with the flowered scarf round it. She tipped it well over her eyes, and luckily it was big and floppy enough to hide her face, which was burning one moment and the next almost white. Her eyes kept filling with hot, smarting tears, and over and over again Jane brushed them away, and braced herself up to the terrible task that lay before her. She deliberately put Rodney out of her mind. She could n't be strong if she allowed herself to *think* of Rodney, and

she was going to be strong; very strong indeed. She knew that she would need all her boasted strength for this battle.

"I've never been beaten yet," said Jane, setting her teeth.

She hurried through the village without speaking to any one. So many people had been anxiously awaiting the result of her visit to Whiteroses, and it was a shocking place for gossip. Private affairs soon became public property there. The common idea was that Rodney Sagranet would be packed off abroad directly his mother heard about his goings on with Jane Rose.

"They little know," said Jane sadly—"they little know that it's me that's got to go away—not him."

Armand was leaning over the gate, waiting for her. When he saw her, he came out quickly and shut the gate behind him.

"We will have a little walk together, Mademoiselle. Madame has sharp ears in the garden."

"I don't care where we go!" cried poor Jane. "I don't care who hears me. It's all one to me now."

He turned and examined her white face narrowly.

"Yes," said she, with a sob; "you were quite right. I look horrid in my helio. I'd better have gone in my old print. I look a sight with my hair done fashionable."

"Fashionably," Lanselle murmured, but his voice was wonderfully compassionate. "Madame was not kind, then?"

"She was hateful!" Jane cried. "She says I'm not a lady!"

Lanselle was silent, and the poor child glared at him suspiciously.

"You think so, too. Oh—you might have told me. You might have shown me how. You might have helped me."

He could not meet her angry eyes. "I am not English," he said wistfully. "I have told you all the things I know. I have never let a mistake pass me—not in your *speech*. But there are other things which you can only learn with practice, Mademoiselle. Unless you live with the right people, you can never learn them. I only see you perhaps for an hour of the day, and out of doors like this. How can I teach you? I have taught you all I know."

They reached the little plantation at the end of the lane past the farm, and there Jane sat down on a fallen tree and gazed piteously up at him, with such swimming blue eyes and trembling lips that for five minutes Lanselle wished furiously that he dared sit down beside her and put his arm round her and comfort her, and kiss away her tears in that simple fashion, but it was of course impossible. Their friendship was too precious a thing to be destroyed by the sudden affectionate impulse to comfort an unhappy child. That would be her lover's privilege later on. Jane gazed at him for some seconds with this pitiful, agonized entreaty, and then she leaned her elbows on her

knees, and her chin on her hands, and spoke slowly and bitterly, her voice half broken by despairing sobs.

"You don't know what an awful thing I've done. You don't know how vile I am. I've taken money from her. I've taken a thousand pounds from her. I've promised not to see him or speak to him again for three years, and I've been paid for my promise. I've sold Rodney for a thousand pounds."

"Mademoiselle!" He started and began to say something, but stopped as suddenly as he had begun.

Jane laughed harshly.

"It's quite true. Oh, yes, I know what you're thinking of me now. You're despising me for selling him. But there was no other way. I had to do it."

Lanselle sat down beside her now, but he did n't touch her. He was drawing patterns in the earth with his cane, and he kept his eyes on the ground.

"Tell me all about it," he said gently. He was not deceived by her confession. *He* knew Jane much too well to think that she had really done any such thing. He knew there was more to come. She had not finished yet.

Jane gulped down a sob.

"It was this way. She said I was n't a lady. She said I was n't fit for him. She said I would ruin his life if I married him, because I have had no proper education; because I am so ignorant. She said there were a thousand little things I did n't know. Are there?"

"I am afraid so, Mademoiselle," said he honestly.

"She said there were a hundred things I could never learn. Are there?"

"One never knows—with you." Armand looked up and smiled encouragingly. "With a person who has never been known to fail in anything——"

"No!" Jane interrupted him and threw back her shoulders. Her clear eyes shone through her tears. "There are n't. I *will* learn. I will be fit for him. I won't give him up, and I won't spoil his life. I've never been beaten yet. I shall use that money to make me fit to help him, instead of hindering him. That's why I took it. You see now. I could n't have done it without money. I shall go away for three years, and I shall learn all these things that I don't know."

Armand smiled appreciatively, for her self-confidence was always amazing to him. Diffident as he was himself, this was one of the things he most approved of in her.

"I believe you will," he said admiringly. "But where will you go? Who is to teach you?"

She regarded him wistfully for a few seconds.

"I thought of *you* first, but——"

He shook his head and moved uncomfortably, looking away from her.

"No, no. Impossible, Mademoiselle! I can teach you nothing more," he said hastily.

"I suppose it would n't do," she admitted reluctantly. "And, anyhow, I've got to go away. I must go right away for three whole years. I shall have to find some one to leave with Aunt. *She* won't miss me. She only wants to sleep. Polly Slater will come and look after *her*. Aunt's got quite enough to live on without me, with those two cottages of hers."

"Where shall you go?" Armand asked rather sadly.

Jane sighed. "I don't know yet. I've made no plans. How can I? Perhaps to school first. I must try to find out. It will be hateful, won't it, with thousands of superior girls sniffing at me? Perhaps the Rector will——"

"No," said he quickly; "don't tell the Reverend. He would n't think it fair to use the money for such a—— He would n't think you ought to come home in three years. He would n't grasp your point of view. He is n't very bright, your Reverend. He might consider it a breach of faith. I am sure the Rector would say it was unfair."

Jane opened her eyes wide and reddened uncomfortably.

"But it *is* fair?" she demanded. "Mrs. SAGRANET said that *that* was the only reason she minded me. She said that she did n't care a bit about birth or——or money. She said it was just want of education and manners. She said I should spoil his life. If I learn to help him instead of hindering him, and if I only use *her* money for it, it will be quite fair, won't it? It *is* quite honest? Tell me, please. If *you* say it is n't honest, I will give it up!"

"But it *is* honest," Lanselle replied at once. "Quite honest. Yet I don't think the Reverend will see it as we do. He won't believe in you as I do, Mademoiselle. He does n't know that——" Here he stopped and smiled. "He does n't know that you have never been beaten yet."

"I see," said Jane rather doubtfully, and after that they were both silent for a long time. Armand broke in at last in a low, rather uncertain voice:

"Mademoiselle, this young Rodney—are you to see him again? Are you to say good-by and explain?"

Jane shivered.

"I can't. Besides, I promised. I can't anyhow, for I should break down and give in if I saw him. I'm afraid of myself. I must write. You see, it—well, it is n't easy to be strong when you—when you love a person——" She gave up suddenly all attempt at self-control and

began to cry quietly. Armand, much distressed, and feeling horribly helpless, leaned forward and took her hand in his with a warm, comforting grasp.

"Ah, Mademoiselle, but I shall miss you! And the horses? Who is to ride Esclairmonde now? Yet even *we* shall not miss you as your lover will. You must be quite fair to him, as well as to his mother. If you go away like this, you must tell him the truth. You must tell him that if you keep away for three years, it will be for his sake. Do you hear me, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes," her answer came in stifled tones; "I hear you, but——"

"He is so young, Mademoiselle. He loves you now, but when one is young one soon forgets. If one has no hope and nothing to look forward to, why, then, one forgets, and mercifully too. One could n't live if one were not allowed to forget. Tell him that it is only for three years. Time is not an old man with a scythe. He is a magician with a magic wand, and sometimes he uses that wand in strange ways. Very often he is kind to us. Sometimes he is cruel—mischievous. Tell him that you will be true——"

"As if I need!" cried she indignantly.

He smiled impatiently.

"Sometimes one goes away and says nothing of one's return, and—well—one returns too late. Believe me, Mademoiselle, life is very difficult when one is young and does not know."

"It is indeed!" cried Jane, with another sob. "I've found *that* out."

"Write a long letter, but don't speak of his mother. Put all the love of your heart into that last letter, and tell him that you *will*—you *must*—succeed in your plan, because——" He laughed.

"Because I've never been beaten yet!" Jane was drying her eyes, and making a firm effort to pull herself together. "I wish I could! If only I had n't promised! Oh, I'm glad I'm so young! I shall only be twenty-one when I come back. I shall not grow ugly in three years, shall I?" she demanded anxiously.

"I think not." He smiled reassuringly.

"You've always thought me pretty?"

Her innocent vanity touched him deeply.

"Always, Mademoiselle, always. I shall miss you terribly, you know."

"I *am* glad. Then I may write to you sometimes?" she asked tearfully. "You've been so good to me."

"I hope you will write very often, Mademoiselle." Armand was staring at the ground, and his voice was not quite steady.

"I shan't come to see you again. I shall have such lots to do. I want to get away. I *must* get away. Everything seems haunted with

him now. I don't want to run the risk of meeting him. I'd better say good-by. I shall go to my aunt in Dalesford, and look out for a school from there. She may know. She knows a lot about London. I'd better say good-by now."

"Good-by, my dear."

She looked up so innocently and affectionately when he said this that he obeyed an impulse and stooped and kissed the smooth young cheek which was still wet with the tears she was shedding for Rodney Sagrauet.

"Good-by, my dear!" he said again, smiling very sadly into her upturned face. "Adieu."

"Three years will soon go." She was gathering courage from his sympathy and affection. "Won't they? Three years is nothing——"

"Are nothing," said Lanselle, still smiling.

"Are nothing," said Jane.

V.

Poor Jane felt full of courage and plucky resolutions when she first left Lanselle, but when she came to think things over calmly, she realized that she had n't the slightest idea of what to do. This vague plan of going over to her aunt at Dalesford, and "looking out," sounded very well theoretically, but when she came to put it into practice? Jane was no fool. She knew well enough that no governess in the ordinary sense of the word could teach her the things she would have to know. She went home quite sad at the thought of parting with Lanselle, heart-broken about Rodney, wretchedly worried about her next step. Her aunt was out to tea at a neighbor's, and Jane was quite alone in the cottage, and free to dissolve into hopeless tears.

By nine o'clock it was growing dark, and she had let the fire out. She was still sitting crouched up in a chair by the window, and softly weeping, when a light tapping on the frame of the open window made her hastily look up. Oh, if it should be Rodney! She crushed down that hope, for it would only have made everything even more painfully difficult than it was already, and when she had dried her wet eyes, and cleared them enough to see who was there, she found that it was a woman—a girl—some one huddled up in a white cloak, with a dark, uncovered head.

In amazement she opened the door and looked out. Somebody slim, scented deliciously with faint unknown perfume, and rustling silkily, stepped from the window at the sound of the door and whispered:

"Are you alone?"

"Yes," said Jane, still half choked with her sobs. "Aunt's at the Slaters'."

"May I come in and speak to you?"

"Who are you?" Jane asked bluntly, for she was very curious and rather alarmed.

Marjory smiled disarmingly. "I'm Mrs. Despard. I'm staying at Whiteroses." Then hastily, at the sight of a change in Jane's face, "No, I'm *not* sent by Mrs. Sagra-net. Certainly not. I've come entirely off my own bat."

This modern slang was Greek to Jane, but she was very much overwhelmed by surprise to receive such a visit. The beautiful Mrs. Despard, who was so much in debt and who had been widowed at twenty! The village thought she had probably worried her husband into his early grave. What on earth did *she* want with poor Jane? Always honest and straightforward, Jane said at once:

"What *have* you come for, then?"

Marjory laughed, then murmured in a very soft and winning little voice:

"What an honest child you are! Rodney said there never was an honest thing than his Jane, and I can well believe it. My dear, I have come because I like your Rodney, and because I want to help him."

Fired with a sudden quick jealousy at the thought that any one so young and charming should dare to take an interest in the happiness of that already bespoken young man, Jane said at once that she and Rodney could manage their own affairs, thank you very much, and that she would n't trouble Mrs. Despard on any account. Marjory put a cool, slim hand on Jane's hot pink wrist.

"Let me come in for a minute or two," she pleaded. "I really have something sensible to say. Well—to be honest—I did n't come entirely on Rodney's account, you foolish girl. I came on yours. I came because I liked you."

"You don't know me," Jane cried fiercely and quite unappeased. "How can you like me?"

Marjory blushed at the direct challenge. "I saw you this afternoon. I could n't help liking you. I saw you come, and I saw you go. You looked a miserable little thing as you went away. It went to my heart to see you creeping away, trying to look as if you did n't care. You're a plucky child, but I knew what you were suffering. I knew——"

"Oh, did you?" Jane interrupted furiously. "You mean, you *think* you did! You are quite mistaken. Mrs. Sagra-net and I understand each other perfectly. We came to a very sensible understanding, I'd have you know!"

"Yes, she told me." Marjory's voice was full of sympathy. "I've heard all about that understanding."

"Oh!" Jane grew scarlet. "Did she go talking me over with all those ladies, after I'd gone?"

Marjory realized that she had made a mistake here. "No, no; of course not. It was only to me, and I'm an old friend, and she said all sorts of kind things about you, too; but she wanted me to try to influence Rodney for his good."

"You! How could you? What for?"

"Because I'm hi—her friend. Because *she* does n't want to quarrel with him."

"Do you mean that she asked you to talk him into giving me up?" Jane cried with wide, indignant eyes. This was too much.

Marjory smiled again, and sank into the rocking-chair.

"Oh!" Jane said in low, fierce tones. "That's it, is it? And what do you think you're going to do with *me*? What have you come here for?"

"As I said before—I want to help Rodney, and I want to help you."

Jane leaned against the round table and regarded her visitor steadily in the dim light. Her lips were set rigidly, her eyes were clear and hard; every line expressed suspicion and disbelief, and Marjory, reflectively returning her gaze for a few seconds of unbroken silence, wondered what was the best thing to do next. Beginning to understand the surprising child at last, she leaned forward with her hands clasped loosely on the knee of her white dress, and said in quite a business-like tone:

"Partly for Rodney—partly for you—partly for myself. Yes, I can see you've guessed it. It's best to be honest. I confess it: I did come chiefly on my own account."

"Ah! Now you're talking," said Jane scornfully. "I thought as much."

"You've promised Mrs. Saganet to go away for three years. In return for that promise, she has given you a check for a thousand pounds. She told me all that passed between you, and from that, and the look in your eyes when you went away, I am quite, quite sure that you only accepted that money for a definite purpose. I am an intelligent young person, you see. I can put two and two together. You took it only because there was no other way out of the difficulty. I saw that you could n't bear to lose Rodney. You loved him too much to risk spoiling his life, and you had no money yourself to do what you wanted, yet you would much rather have flung the check in her face, would n't you?" She laughed as she asked the question.

"Yes," said Jane, with feeling; "I would. I nearly did, too."

Marjory laughed.

"And now for the truth," said she ruefully. "I am horribly in

debt. I must have some money at once to get clear. The only possible way is too horrible. I don't know where on earth to turn to, to get it, unless—— I begged Mrs. Sagrauet to lend me enough to save me, but she refused. Or, rather, she promised that she *would* do it if I could persuade Rodney to give you up."

"No!" cried Jane in horror. "How mean!" She had not suspected such black depths of perfidy in Rodney's mother.

"Yes," said Marjory quite frankly. "And I was mean, too, for I tried to do it. I will be quite honest with you. I really tried. For a time I did my very best. I talk to Rodney about you. I began in a very wise and grandmotherly way and pointed out as clearly as I could the utter disastrous folly of the path he was bent on taking; but when I saw what he really felt—when he told me about you—I—well, I changed over. My common sense deserted me. I said I *would* help him. I said I would help you both. When I saw that I could help myself at the same time, I decided to run down at once and put the matter to you in a clear and business-like manner."

"It's best," said Jane shortly.

Marjory looked at the girl's rigid little figure very thoughtfully.

"I believe Rodney's right," said she slowly. "I believe you're the very wife for him. I came down here to-night to tell you that on certain conditions I will help him and help you. I will help you to make yourself fit to be his wife."

"Go on," said Jane.

"It's all the silly little things——" Marjory hesitated. "Well—I'm a woman of the world, my dear—a woman of Rodney's world—and I know all the things that you don't know. It's just been my luck to be born into them, you see—goodness knows there's no merit in it, for I never took any pains about them. In fact, I don't think I ever considered them before. I certainly never realized that they had a market value."

"What do you want me to do?" Jane asked in the same direct and rigid way.

Marjory saw that she must come straight to the point. There must be no beating about the bush with a young woman like Jane.

"I want you to give me that money at once."

"Oh! do you?" Jane's voice was full of sarcasm, but Marjory expected that, and went steadily on with her explanations.

"And then I will take you away with me. We'll go to all sorts of beautiful places, but first you shall have a year in Paris for your French——"

With a triumphant laugh, Jane made a rapid little speech of mock gratitude in that charming language.

"Goodness!" Marjory stared. "Why, your French is better than

mine. And such a pretty accent, too! How on earth did you——” She stopped.

“It’s the one thing I *do* know,” said honest Jane, much cheered by this small triumph.

“I see.” Marjory smiled, still puzzled. “It’s a great thing, though, for a diplomat’s wife. And German?”

“Not a word,” said Jane. “Need I? It always sounds like sneezing.”

“Certainly you need. But we’ll go to Vienna and Heidelberg and all the lovely towns, and then to Rome and Venice——”

“Me paying for it all?” Jane inquired unpleasantly; but her tone had changed, for all that. These magical names, up to that moment only names in a fairy-tale—fairy towns in a fairy land to this poor child—were beginning to work upon her indignation to some purpose. Perhaps Princess Rosered was coming to her own at last. “Me paying for it?” said Jane.

Marjory smiled at this.

“Not all of it,” she said. “I have my own modest income, my dear, and if I once get straight and away from London for a few years, I shall be able to save on it. I knew I should have to live abroad and economize—when once I got straight. If you will help me to get straight, and come right away with me, it will be a simple and charming way out of the difficulty for both of us. Oh, yes, I’m honest, too—in my way. I won’t cheat you. You shall have your money’s worth. You shall also have an exceedingly good time. I really don’t think you’ll find a better way of getting what you want. There will be people—a few people—of the right kind, wherever we go. You will learn everything you can possibly want to know. You shall have pretty frocks and pocket money—but no bridge.”

Jane sat down suddenly in a cane-bottomed chair and tried to think. It was in truth a delightful prospect, as far as anything *could* be delightful away from Rodney. Instead of a dull school, with priggish, contemptuous girls or a preaching, tiresome governess, there was this kind, easy-going Mrs. Despard, with her pretty, coaxing ways, and three years of beautiful holiday life with her. Yet the very thought that those three years might be such pleasant ones brought for the first time a feeling of guilty remorse. If she was going to be happy in her sacrifice, the money that she had taken would seem like blood-money. The bribe would forge a fiery chain about her. If it was not to be a time of tears and fasting, that money would become the wages of dishonor, or so it seemed to poor Jane. Mrs. Despard perhaps guessed at this tumult in her mind.

“What were you doing when I came in?” she asked gently.

“Crying,” said Jane bluntly.

"But why?"

"Because I did n't know what to do."

"What were you thinking about?"

"I was thinking of silly fairy tales," said Jane, blushing a fiery red. "Up at the Rectory they're always reading fairy-tales to me. And I was thinking of Cinderella sitting here alone in the ashes, wanting to make herself fit——"

"To dance with Prince Charming?" Marjory smiled rather sadly. "Yes—he is a Prince Charming. He's a dear boy. You were waiting for the fairy godmother, were n't you?"

"In real life," said Jane doggedly, "there are no fairy godmothers."

"No?" Marjory rose and came up to her. She lifted the girl's face in her little white hands and kissed her red lips and said:

"My dear, if you will let me be your fairy godmother, you shall be mine. We both want one rather badly. I'm not thinking altogether of myself, although I can't expect you to believe in me. Why, what sweet eyes you've got!"

"It was n't the fairy godmother who said that!" Jane fiercely cried, as she looked her full in the face. "It was the wolf." But she was growing disarmed for all that.

"I'm not a wolf," Marjory murmured, with a quick glance. "You know it's true about your eyes. Poor Rodney told me they were like hyacinths. They are out in the rain now, poor things. We must let Rodney know that he is n't to despair. We must tell him that in three years——"

Jane realized then that Mrs. Despard was saying just the same strange things that Lanselle had said. They thought Rodney could n't be relied upon to be faithful without knowing everything. How little they knew him! Jane's spirits sank, but she set her teeth.

"No," she said quietly. "I promised his mother that I would n't either see him or explain for three years."

"But"—Marjory looked anxious and annoyed—"I can——"

"No." Jane set her lips. "It's the same thing, really. It will be all right. He will know that it's all right. I'm to write and say that I'm going away for three years, and that I must say good-by. He'll guess."

"But—does n't it seem rather mad," Marjory murmured, "to ask so much of any man? Time's a mischievous old thing, you know. You see—I mean—men are so different—you see—but perhaps you know——" she finished lamely.

"Of course I know," said Jane, with her head in the air.

Marjory rose.

"Well," she said, "I will take you away to-morrow, if you like. The sooner, the better. It's a good thing Rodney did n't come to look

for you to-night. Can you arrange to be ready by twelve o'clock to-morrow?"

"Yes," said Jane at once. "I was going to-morrow to stay with my other aunt at Dalesford. Polly Slater is coming here to be with Aunt. She's only glad of the excuse, and so is Aunt. Polly is n't always finding fault with her grammar, she says. Aunt does n't see the use of grammar."

"Well," Marjory said with relief, "I've got *my* excuses still to make, but I'm glad to go. I don't want to stay at Whiteroses any longer. I'm angry still with Mrs. SAGRANET. She's so rich. She might have helped me without—— It would have meant so little to her. Her conditions were too insulting. Have you got a warm coat—for crossing, I mean? I always go the Dieppe way, because I like the sail."

"Yes," said Jane. "Then——"

"Then we'll get your other things in Paris. There's a little flat in the Rue Notre Dame des Champs. It's not the fashionable side, but it's cheap and the rooms are large. I can have it at once. It belongs to an artist woman whom I'm rather fond of—an American—and she's gone to Madrid to study the Velasquez' there. I don't suppose you know anything about pictures?"

"No," said poor Jane.

"Or music?"

"I like it in church," said Jane simply. "I'm in the choir."

"Or books?"

"I've read all of Scott and Dickens and Thackeray and Shakespeare."

Marjory smiled kindly. "Well, that's a good foundation anyhow. My dear, you've got the whole world before you. It's opening to you now like a great rose to a little greedy bee. What a time we'll have—the two of us!"

Jane's eyes filled with hot tears, and she collapsed into a chair suddenly, quite crushed by the thought of what she was losing. It was the second time that she had realized that it was her lover she was leaving in this light-hearted way. Light-hearted? Was it light-hearted?

Marjory watched her from the dor, then, seeing perhaps that the kindest thing she could do was to let her have her cry out undisturbed, she said in a low voice, "I'll call for you at twelve with the motor." But after a moment's thought: "No—better not. Go to Dalesford as you arranged it. I'll pick you up there at the station. We don't want the whole village to know what we're doing. I don't want Mrs. SAGRANET to know. In fact, she must n't know anything about it. Let her think you've gone to your aunt, and then when

you're once safely across the Channel, write and tell them that you've got a place in Paris. You need n't say what kind of a place. Just tell them that you're comfortable; tell them enough to make *them* comfortable."

Jane only sobbed helplessly, for all her courage seemed once more to have deserted her. But Marjory was a pretty good judge of character. She was not afraid of any weakness at the last moment in Jane, and she slipped out and ran up the dark lane, round to the side gate in the park, and into the Whiteroses drawing-room, rather breathless, but quite ready for anything. She told Mrs. Sagranet that she had to leave the next day. Unfortunately, she had to go to London on business. Mrs. Sagranet thought she knew what that business was, and began to feel a little repentant of her hard-heartedness. Marjory was so young. She grew quite kind and affectionate in her manner as the evening drew on, but Marjory, rather sad and very bitter with everybody, went early to her room. She sat late into the night writing letters, and making a hundred and one arrangements.

It was not till the next day but one that Rodney got Jane's letter. It was a very sad little note, this last one of hers, and she had grimly kept to the letter of her bargain.

MY DARLING RODNEY:

I am going away for three years. Please don't try to see me or write to me because it's best for both of us. Best for me and best for you. I shall come back just the same as I am now—and yet quite different.

Hoping to find you the same, I remain,

Your most loving and nearly heartbroken

JANE.

VI.

IN a strange city, where every inch of paint is a totally different blue or drab or gray from anything you have seen before; where every scent and sound is a new and perplexing one; where you have to run for dear life every time you cross the road; where every stout *cocher* in his drab coat and tall hat and prominent tail buttons is an enemy, where every motorist pursues you with the smiling vindictiveness of a fiend; where almost every face you meet is a cheerful one; where every lovely lady looks alarmingly wicked; where you take most of your meals in surprising restaurants, and dine or lunch off familiar foods with strange names;—in such a new and amazing and, on the whole, delightful world, you can't (if you are eighteen, with a singularly happy disposition) be acutely unhappy for long. If you spend your days in one wild whirl of sight-seeing in the fresh air, you *must* fall asleep at night directly your head touches the pillow.

At least, that is how it was with Jane. Their big, sunny sitting-

room, with the shining polished floor which she found so difficult at first to walk safely on; their two pretty bedrooms; the gay little *salle* where they had their meals when they *did* happen to have them at home; the tiny kitchen full of terra cotta earthenware pots and pans; even the box where Diane slept—they were all delightfully interesting to Jane, who knew only Whiteroses and dull Dalesford. Diane was Mrs. Despard's maid, and she and the old Italian woman who came for the day did everything that *was* to be done, for Mrs. Despard was economizing. When Jane, tired of doing nothing, wanted to help—to do at least a little dusting—the withered Innocenza taught her to make omelet and *beignetes* and beautiful ragouts in the terra cotta pots on the gas-stove in the doll's kitchen. Marjory had come to Paris to be quiet, she said, but in truth there was very little tranquillity in their lives. Even over there on the wrong side of the river, she found friends. She found all kinds of friends: slim, charmingly pathetic, and blue-blooded Poles who were studying art; newspaper men who were correspondents for London newspapers; nice, clever, hard-working, middle-aged American women; and gay young art students of both sexes from every country in the world. There were not many society people among them, yet although Marjory could n't altogether ignore such London acquaintances as she did happen to meet, she discriminated wisely. She herself had once studied art in Paris, before she was married, and it was then that she lived in this flat with the Miss Valentine who had gone to Madried for the sake of the Velasquez'. Marjory had first met her husband at an American artists' ball. He was an attaché at the embassy then. She loved Paris, and very soon Jane loved it, too. It was all so white and bright and happy and gay. How could you help going about with a light heart in such a ravishing place? How could you help being happy there?

Yet in the first few months, naturally enough, there were many black hours for the poor child. The gray cloud of gloom was at first generally waiting somewhere near-by in the offing, to drift silently and wickedly up to envelop her at the first opening in a choking fog of grief and depressed fear. Little by little, however, the sunshine of Paris in May and June lightened her heart; and when it grew too hot for Paris, later on, Marjory took her pupil to Switzerland, and the sight of the misty purple mountains and sapphire blue lakes distracted her again.

Marjory Despard, I repeat, had a way with her. She had a power of charming which, I am bound to admit, she did not always choose to exert wisely, but she brought it out at once for Jane's benefit, and kept it in constant use. In a fortnight all Jane's distrust and suspicions were laid to sleep forever, and she adored the girl widow as deeply as she had disapproved of her before she knew her. At first Marjory

thought that it would be kinder to Jane to keep her entirely to herself, until she had taught her to speak correctly, yet they were always somehow falling right into the arms of people she knew. She did n't know how to avoid this, and for a time she was quite uneasy about it. She did n't want the poor child to feel uncomfortable, but I may say that that was before she really knew Jane. When she heard that young woman talking frankly to a slim and elegant diplomat about the time when she was in the post-office; when she heard Jane comparing the French postal arrangements with the English ones, in frank disparagement of foreign habits, she laughed and determined to leave her alone.

"On the whole," said she to herself, "perhaps it will be better to let things rip." So she did. She contented herself with buying the girl a simple wardrobe of pale pretty zephyrs, fresh muslins, and large, flowery hats, and with conscientiously correcting Jane's speech every time she made a mistake. That honest child openly gloried in her new clothes, and as usual suffered all corrections with cheerfulness. One can imagine that with her shining hair, clear eyes, and radiant color, in a crisp muslin sprinkled with little blue flowers and an enormous white hat full of blue anemones, Jane was a sight for the students' quarter. Whether it was the hyacinth-blue eyes or the anemone-blue flowers, I cannot say, but Marjory soon discovered that every soul she knew in Paris was engaging itself to help her in the pleasant task of improving Jane. Lord Cromer's son Billy (he was studying then at the Sorbonne) used to take them out to lunch at expensive restaurants, expressly, he explained, for the purpose of making Jane behave properly; but Marjory, in the seclusion of home, had already worked wonders with Jane's table manners. And every one who *was* in the secret (and it soon seemed as if all Paris had that happy privilege) corrected Jane's grammar.

Her French was very good. She had had lessons for years at the technical school in Dalesford, but it was Armand Lanselle she had to thank most, for the trouble he had taken with her accent and conversation in the last two years. He had made her talk French to him whenever they were alone, and although her accent had been atrocious at first, she had been training to be a teacher in the board school before she went in for the post-office and had taken great pains with her grammar. She was getting constant practice now, so Marjory thought it best to let her begin German at once, and get over all the worst drudgery of it before they went to Vienna.

Another thing she learned was dancing in both the English and American fashions, and Marjory and her American friends got up friendly little fancy dress parties in the old Atelier Bernois. Jane, in a pink Early Victorian dress, flounced to the waist, with ringlets

and a wreath of roses, made many conquests, and from every man who fell in love with her, and every girl who was nice to her (artist girls in Paris can be *very* nice), from everybody with whom she came in contact, she learned something useful. As I said before, Jane was quick to learn.

The young Pole, Count Michel de Liskovsky, and the oldish American lady, Miss Penelope Drewe, took her to the Louvre and the Luxembourg and taught her about pictures. They taught her where to look for beauty, and how to find it. They taught her how to talk about art without making a fool of herself. They even inspired her with a burning desire to learn to draw, but here Marjory put her foot down.

"There shall be no entanglements of *that* kind in your promising young career, my friend," said she, and Jane reluctantly gave in. Marjory made her read, and Jane took to *that* as a duck takes to water. When Paris grew cold in November, they went on to the French Riviera, and afterwards to the Italian lakes.

Jane got on quite nicely with her German, and began Italian. Everywhere she went she had lessons. After an April in Paris again, they went to the Austrian Tyrol and Vienna, and Jane practised her German assiduously. Marjory found friends in all these places, but she kept away from her own set as much as she could, and especially from the people who were intimate with the SAGRANETS. Of course they were sure to hear that she was careering about the Continent with some girl, but they would never for an instant think of poor Jane.

Quite early in their pleasant progress Marjory made the valuable discovery that Jane had a sweet little voice. It was certainly an asset, and she thought it over carefully and decided not to have it trained. That would be almost sure to spoil it, she thought, and, lazy as she was, she braced herself up to the task and taught Jane herself. She thoroughly understood how to produce a little voice sweetly enough to charm a drawing-room, for she herself had been admirably taught to do the same thing, and Jane learned to make the most of hers without tricks. Marjory made her learn dozens of little French songs, and all the old Scotch and Irish ballads, which never fail to please.

"No fireworks," said Marjory firmly. "No frills. Modest charm is your line, my friend, and don't you forget it."

So Jane sang in her own fresh little way, without either fireworks or frills, and all who listened to her felt that same modest charm tightening round their fresh or battered hearts, and one and all became more and more eager to lend her a hand at her education. One is not surprised that in less than two years Marjory saw that it would be impossible to improve Jane any more. If you went too far with the refining process, you might possibly refine the real honest Jane away altogether, and that would never do. So she abandoned

any further attempt at education, and gave herself up to the enjoyment of life with a light heart. She acknowledged with some surprise that it was almost impossible to help enjoying your life while you were tearing about from one enchanted place to another with Jane. The girl's frank joy of life, her enthusiasm, her keen delight in everything, her courage and patience and industry—all these things acted upon the lazy, spoilt, rather bored young woman of fashion like an elixir of life. She began to think rather uncomfortably about the time which was coming nearer and nearer, when she should lose Jane altogether. She had saved money in these years, for she had economized in dress and living, and there had been little, if any, bridge. Jane never thought about the money now. She felt that Marjory was giving her more than its full value in clothes and keep and travelling expenses. With her natural self-confidence, and her constant sureness of success, Jane grew prettier and prettier. The apple-blossom cheeks and hyacinth-blue eyes had caused many a heartache, I know, in that cheerful progress of hers, but her transparent honesty generally helped to mend the hearts which her pretty looks and charming ways had wounded, and her lovers always remained her friends.

If Jane had a fault, it was that extreme honesty of hers. It may hasten the cure, but it is hardly consoling to be told the truth in the uncompromising manner Jane generally adopted.

"You ought to marry a nice, sensible lady of your own age," she said to the gentleman of forty from Chicago.

"You ought to pass all your exams and get an appointment before you think of proposing to anybody," she said to Lord Cranmer's second son. And every month she wrote to Armand Lanselle, and told him everything. He read of her successes rather sadly, for he was afraid he would never see his honest little Jeanne again. All this flattery and attention and experience of the world would be sure to spoil and change the child, and after much careful consideration he took a flying trip across to see for himself, and Jane was extraordinarily glad to see him.

Looking back upon her strange friendship with him, Jane thought, as time went on, that the whole spirit of Paris was embodied in Armand Lanselle. The gaiety and kindness and charm, and, all the time, that undercurrent of tragedy and sadness which is quite indefinable and indescribable—one found it all in him.

VII.

ALL that afternoon at Whiteroses, Mrs. SAGRANET was hovering uneasily between the terrace and the garden. Tea was still standing on the terrace, but most of the people had drifted away in twos and threes. The Rectory girls, Frieda and Penelope Lavernaye, had taken

the boat and gone up the river with Harry Malincourt. There was just time to row up to Arning Lock and back again before dinner, they said, and Mrs. Sagrauet let them go. She was always glad for the Rectory girls to have a good time while she was at Whiteroses. Life in the village must be dull enough the rest of the year, she thought, and she liked to make young people happy. Her son Rodney, with Nina Malincourt, had vanished vaguely in the direction of the croquet lawn, but no one supposed for a moment that they meant to *play*. Mrs. Sagrauet watched them out of sight with a smile of pleasant meaning, and Lady Malincourt, as stout and handsome as ever, met her eye rather consciously and returned the smile. They were both very pleased about the way things were drifting. Rodney was evidently only waiting for an opportunity, and, most likely, the whole thing would be settled this afternoon. Both the mothers hoped so. They had never openly discussed the question yet, but now, after that smile, it was absurd for Mrs. Sagrauet to ignore the subject any longer. It was all too obvious.

"Rodney is certainly head over heels in love," said she cheerfully. "She's a charming creature. I would n't wish for a prettier or more lovable daughter. She's just a sweet, fresh English girl. I should like to think that Rodney was permanently engaged to a dear girl like Nina."

Lady Malincourt raised her handsome eyebrows.

"Permanently?" she asked in some surprise.

Mrs. Sagrauet hastily explained. "I mean that he's had his fancies like all boys. He's so attractive, is n't he? I always think Rodney must be most attractive to young girls. He has such engaging ways. He has never had *real* love affairs, of course, and his feeling for Nina is a much deeper, truer thing than any of the passing fancies he has had before, yet—well, I shall be glad to see him safely engaged to a nice girl."

Lady Malincourt laughed comfortably.

"My dear, I know. At his age they're always so inflammable."

Mrs. Sagrauet moved restlessly along the terrace and sat down at last on the balustrade. She was still as thin and graceful as a girl. Nina's mother would have made three of her.

"Curiously enough," she said, "one of Rodney's first loves is coming to-day. One of the *very* first; a bread-and-butter love of his school-days. He got over it quite comfortably when she married. I mean Marjory Despard. You remember her? You must have met her here."

"Pretty, dark woman? Mad about bridge?"

"Yes, but so young. She was married at eighteen and widowed before she was twenty. South African war."

"Played rather high, though, did n't she? A pity, that. I keep

Nina as much in check as I can, but these girls seem to lose their heads over cards. I remember Mrs. Despard. She was a good deal talked about. Was n't there a Jew man——"

"Yes." Mrs. Sagrauet looked away. "At least, he was a Greek—or a Levantine—miraculously rich, and she did a very plucky thing. He wanted to marry her, but she refused him. She frankly said that she did n't intend to sell herself, and just went abroad and lived very quietly. She has simply kept out of everything expensive for three years. I can't help respecting her for it. There's nothing like it, you know. She says that if you stay at home, you've got to do as the others do. Now she has practically lost the taste for bridge. She says she's hardly played at all while she's been away. She says she never really was a card woman. It was simply a feverish craze. I shall be very glad to see her. She's bringing some girl who's living with her. A Miss Ross. They ought to be here soon. I hope she is n't pretty."

"Why?" Lady Malincourt looked surprised. "I thought her quite handsome."

"No, the girl." Mrs. Sagrauet caught an amazed inquiry in her friend's eyes, and hastily went on: "Not that it matters now. Things have gone so far as that. Oh, I *hope* Rodney will speak this afternoon! Does n't Nina seem to be rather holding him off? I do detest this kind of unnecessary suspense."

Lady Malincourt smiled, for she had more faith in her daughter's powers than Rodney's distrustful mother. Why on earth should they be afraid of an odd girl coming in at this juncture? Mildred was getting ludicrously nervous and silly. As if Nina could n't hold her own against any odd girl.

The odd girl, whirling at that moment, by Marjory's side, up the long, curved drive to the big open door of the low white house, in the motor which had been sent to the station to meet them, was experiencing a thousand strange, disconcerting, alarming sensations. She had been sure that she would feel so different this time; so different from that last terrible visit; yet *was* she feeling different? Was n't it the same sickening, nervous apprehension? Was n't it the same racking suspense and swiftly beating, silly heart? *Then* she had had a letter of invitation from Rodney's mother, and a hope of an affectionate welcome. She had had the warm memory of Rodney's love and courage to keep her spirits up. Now—what had she now? Rodney's love was a long, long way off; a small, lonely, cold little thing. It was there, of course, but somehow it had lost all its reality and its warmth. She was coming as an unwelcome surprise to everybody. There could be no doubt of that. When the car stopped she tried to twitch the silky veil together to hide her pink face, but as Mrs.

Sagranet appeared in the doorway she desperately pulled herself together. She tried to take courage from the kindness with which Marjory was welcomed and enfolded in affectionate arms; she tried to feel sure that it was, as Marjory assured her so often, "all right"; and yet—

Oh, no—it was not all right. It was all wrong. She ought not to have come here on false pretenses like this. She ought to have written to Rodney and asked him to come and see *her*. She ought to have invited Mrs. Sagranet to come and inspect her, the finished article produced by her money. She ought to have asked her if she now considered her fit for her position as Rodney Sagranet's wife. She ought—

Mrs. Sagranet turned at last to her second visitor.

"You know Miss Rose?" Marjory Despard asked in her clear voice.

Mrs. Sagranet stared, flushed, dropped the cold little hand she had mechanically taken, and looked at Marjory with surprised, hard eyes for explanation.

But Marjory was rather maliciously enjoying the situation, and if she had not been too sorry for Jane, would certainly have prolonged the agony.

"Jane lives with me," she said smoothly. "She's my dear little friend. She's been my salvation, Mildred. You know that I *did* find a salvation, of course? Did you know I found it in Jane? You'll be glad to hear how completely she's been my salvation. In fact, it was Jane who found me on the verge of ruin and saved me, when *you*'d left me alone to—well—disaster, to say the least. I asked if I might bring her with me, because I've formed such a habit of Jane that I can't possibly do without her."

"She has been with you," Mrs. Sagranet asked in a cold voice, "all this time?"

"Three years," said Jane, speaking for the first time.

Both women looked at her. Her cheeks were red, her eyes intensely blue and clear, but her head was high, and there were no tears in those blue eyes. Was it the joy of the battle which was so openly inspiring Jane?

"Jane," said Marjory lightly and very untruthfully, "has shone in every palace in Europe. She is fitted to shine in any court in the world."

Mrs. Sagranet pulled herself together and remembered her duties.

"How you must both want some tea!" she murmured in a sudden smooth society voice which frightened Jane. "It's such a detestably long and dusty drive from the station, is n't it? Come up to the terrace. We'll go up from the outside, shall we? Leave your dust-coats here in the hall, won't you? Harolds!"

Jane slipped out of her tussore coat and followed Mrs. Despard, with cheeks still blazing and a weak feeling about the knees. She looked very sweet and fresh in her holland frock and the big bow of the tulle motor veil tied under her dimpled chin, yet she wished she could catch a glimpse of her face in the mirror, to be sure that her hair was n't wispy and her face dusty.

Lady Malincourt stared indifferently as Mrs. Sagrauet introduced the girl to her, but she watched Jane with interest as she dropped prettily into a low chair and held out a little white hand to take her tea. In spite of her agitation, I am happy to say that Jane ate a most excellent tea, and at six Marjory swept her upstairs. Her room had a door opening into Jane's, and she slipped into the loose, cool gown Diane was holding for her, and sent the maid away.

"I said I wanted to rest," said she with a smile from the open door; "but really I wanted to get you out of the way before Rodney appeared. I did n't want him to see a dusty little thing with its head tied up in a bag. I wanted him to see you first of all in an evening frock; in the little golden frock, Jane. You look like a fairy princess in that frock. You want only a star-tipped wand. You shall wear my crown of stars in your hair, if you like. No, perhaps you'd better not. You're too young. You shall have a gold fillet, chastely simple, and my topazes round your pretty neck."

"I should like to think," said Jane slowly and tentatively, as she unfastened her frock, "that he'll be so pleased to see me, that he won't even notice what I'm wearing. I should like to think that even if it was sackcloth and ashes, he'd only be able to see that it was *me*."

"I," said Marjory. A confusion between *I* and *me* was now Jane's only grammatical weakness.

"I," said Jane meekly. "It sounds more pretentious, does n't it? There's something humble about 'me.'"

"There is," said Marjory, with a laugh. "Will you kindly hurry yourself, Madam Humility? I'll send Diane in to you in ten minutes."

So into the drawing-room at a quarter to eight, behind Marjory in her sheath-like black and silver, there sailed and trailed a little golden star from another firmament. A golden princess from an enchanted country at the other end of nowhere; or at least that was what the Rectory girls cried out as they ran up and frankly hugged her.

"Why, Jane! You're more Rosered than ever!" Frieda Laver-naye cried. "We've missed you most horribly, and we've wondered over and over again why you never came home. We thought the Snow Queen had picked you up in her sledge and carried you off. We thought you were hidden away by the seven little dwarfs. Look at her, Nina! Did you ever see such a divine color as she's got in her

cheeks? It's all her own too. She does n't keep it in a box and put it on with a hare's foot. That's why we call her Princess Rosered. We always did. She always was. We never saw her like Princess Snowwhite—only once—and that was——”

“That was on the day I came and said good-by,” said Jane in a low voice, as Nina turned away rather indifferently to watch the door. Jane did not know then that when Rodney was not by her side Nina's eyes were always on the door.

Mrs. Sagranet brought Harry Malincourt hastily forward to take Jane in. She thought it wise to dispose of the girl without loss of time. She would have liked to pack her off by the next train, but she felt that she owed something to Marjory. Rodney was late. He hurried up to Marjory at once and shook hands warmly. He *was* glad to see her again, he said, and indeed he looked delighted. What ages it was! How long? Why, it must be quite two years since he had seen her.

“Three years,” corrected Jane in a voice as clear as a bell.

The young man started. Marjory looked at him curiously, moved a little, and there, hidden away behind her, shone the little golden star which had once been his Jane.

“Yes,” said Jane at once; “it's me.”

“I,” whispered Marjory reprovingly.

“I,” amended Jane, turning her eyes full upon his handsome boyish face. It was n't quite so boyish now, she thought, but that was the mischief of time. Three years were sure to change him a little. There was a firmer line about his mouth, and his shoulders looked broader. He seemed strangely different somehow, but perhaps that was only because he was staring at her with such utterly incomprehensible eyes. Jane had forgotten what Rodney's eyes had looked like before they were transfigured with love for her. She knew now. How her silly heart was beating! Why did n't he speak? What would he say when he did? Well, she must be ready for it, whatever it was. Courage, Jane!

“How do you do, Miss Rose?”

Rodney forced himself to speak; to touch her hand and drop it quickly. Nina was almost at his shoulder now. Perhaps it was because the memory of that afternoon was still so warmly and clamorously between them that he found it difficult to assume his usual air of *savoir faire*.

Jane was carried off by Harry Malincourt then, for it was Mrs. Sagranet who saved the situation, but that dinner was a memorable one to more than one person. Jane's courage was suddenly aroused by excitement and a lovely, comfortable self-confidence born of a last look in her mirror. She told Marjory afterwards that she had just

let herself go. Harry Malincourt was the kind of young man you cannot help liking; the kind of young man who makes it delightfully easy for you to shine in conversation. With his encouragement and masterful playing up in her game, Jane showed herself witty, charming, sparkling; a decided success. Harry Malincourt was delighted with her, and there really could be no doubt that the little thing was adorably pretty. The round, rather childishly shaped face, the exquisitely pink cheeks, the large, clear, surprised-looking eyes shadowed by such thick golden-brown lashes, the thick, shining, parted hair which Diane had so beautifully dressed, the infectious, happy laugh;—all these things made young Malincourt feel quite glad that he had allowed his mother to persuade him to come to Whiteroses this week.

"It won't be so bad," Jane told herself, as she followed meekly in the wake of the other shining trains up to the drawing-room, "if I can keep away from *her* till everything's settled. I *must* have it out with Rodney first. I'm beginning to feel that I shan't altogether enjoy it. I suppose he did n't understand. I suppose he feels injured."

One Rectory girl caught her arm, a second caught the other and squeezed it.

"We never loved any one as much as you, Jane. Do you still sing the song about the lady who was sold for an old man's gold—a bird in a gilded cage?"

Jane laughed, but did not reply.

"Do you still sing 'Only a Rose in the Garden of Love'?"

Jane laughed again, quite ashamed to have her dreadful repertory of the past raked up like this.

"Do you still sing the song about the beggar-maid?" Penelope Lavernaye asked.

"Yes," said Jane at once, for she was not ashamed of that.

"Come and sing it now! Come and sing it now!"

"Of course not."

"Yes, you shall, you must. The piano's over in the little drawing-room. They'll all stay by the fire, because it's a cold night. No one'll hear you but us, and you owe it to *us*, because we've always loved you, even when you found the magic carpet and never asked us to go with you. You owe it to us, Jane."

"Perhaps I do," said Jane thoughtfully, and she did as she was asked. That was how it was that when Harry Malincourt came up, later on, he found his mother and sister and Mrs. Saganet and Marjory Despard clustered round the fire, and far away by the window the little golden star singing to the playing of one Rectory girl and a soft pedal, with another Rectory girl sitting on the floor, her head on the star's golden knee.

That was how it was that when Rodney slipped out to the terrace

with Nina Malincourt, and they softly passed the open window of the little drawing-room, he heard the clear, pathetic little voice which had haunted his dreams so painfully three years ago, singing these words:

“ Her arms across her breast she laid.
She was more fair than words can say.
Barefooted came the beggar-maid
Before——”

“ Oh, let’s turn,” Rodney said abruptly, and they did turn.
Presently, however, lost in talk, they drifted under the same window again.

“ ‘ It’s no wonder,’ said the lords;
‘ She is more beautiful than day.’ ”

“ Rot!” said Rodney uncomfortably.

“ As shines the moon in clouded skies,
She in her poor attire was seen——”

“ I hate those silly popular songs,” Nina murmured contemptuously.
Rodney turned again, impatiently. “ Oh, *that’s* not popular,” he said. “ It’s Tennyson. Silly ass.”

“ Who is that girl?” Nina asked in a low voice.

“ A Miss Rose, I believe. I met her years ago. I say, let’s go down into the garden, away from that infernal row. I beg your pardon, but it is, is n’t it?”

“ Yes,” said Nina, and they ran down the terrace steps. Yet the words pursued them still.

“ Cophetua swore a royal oath:
‘ This beggar-maid shall be my queen.’ ”

VII.

AT eleven o’clock the next morning Armand Lanselle was in the stables, looking doubtfully at the knees of the chestnut, Jolie Bergère. She had been down for the first time the day before, and it was his fault. He had been riding on rough land carelessly, with a slack rein, and she had caught her foot in a rabbit-hole. In his shabby, greenish-gray tweed suit and cap, the little man looked very English, Jane thought comfortably. She had felt quite glad of that, because she had been away from England so long that it was her own country now which seemed to her the enchanted place.

“ Why, Mademoiselle!”

His thin face brightened, and Jane was very glad to see the old

look of quiet friendship and affection which came into his eyes at the sight of her. She *was* glad to see him again, more glad than she would have believed possible, and as he held her hand and studied her face, she met his gaze with open pleasure.

"You are very beautiful, Mademoiselle," he said in a low voice. "This holiday has been good for you. Oh, I am glad that you have come home!"

Jane looked round the stable.

"Oh, Jolie Bergère! She has n't hurt her knees? And l'Alouette too—how pretty she looks! What did you do with the colt? But where's Esclairmonde? Is she in the field?"

Armand stooped and laid his hand lightly on Jolie Bergère's knee again.

"I have sold Esclairmonde, Mademoiselle."

"Sold her?" She looked very much surprised and rather hurt, for Esclairmonde had been her favorite. "But she was such a darling! Oh, how *could* you sell her?"

Armand did not answer, and Jane flushed and led the way round to the garden with an uncomfortable feeling that she had asked an indiscreet question. Perhaps it *had* been impertinent of her, but she had naturally wanted to know. He must see that she felt a personal interest in Esclairmonde.

"I'm sorry I seem so inquisitive," she said, lifting ashamed blue eyes full of apology. "But I naturally took an interest. She was the one I used to ride, you see, and I loved her. I've been thinking of her tremendously. I've never had a mount to touch her since I went away. Oh, why did you do it?"

Armand smiled rather sadly.

"I am afraid I can't tell you why I sold her," said he, "although it was a stupid reason enough. Did you ride, then, while you were away?"

"In the Bois," Jane cried, brightening at the delightful memory. "Often. Oh, I love Paris!"

"And I hate it, Mademoiselle!"

She looked puzzled and rather snubbed at this, so he went on quickly:

"We've seen different sides of this wonderful city, you and I. *You* lived on the beautiful surface; you did n't try to see below it; but I—well, I have seen it all, and I cannot breathe there. I think always of the under-Paris. I remember too much of all the things one would wish to forget."

"How queer!" said Jane. "You mean beggars, don't you, and things like that? Yes, they *do* make one sad, but there are such thousands of nice things always happening, too. People are so kind. Don't you think that people are awfully kind?"

Lanselle smiled affectionately at the girl's eager question. "I can well believe that people are always kind to you, Mademoiselle."

Jane laughed.

"But they're nice. People *are* nice."

"Some people."

She sat down on the old seat at the edge of the kitchen garden, but at a glimpse of the stooping back of Mrs. Brothers picking her currants, Jane jumped up directly, and shook hands with her and asked her all about her sciatica.

It was five minutes before she came back to her seat, but Lanselle waited patiently till she had quite finished, and watched the light little figure in its charming summer frock and hat, the pretty round arm, in its elbow sleeve, swinging an airy parasol as Jane expressed her warm sympathy with his housekeeper's troubles.

"She's just like Aunt," Jane said when she came back and sat down beside him. "She suffers from the same things. She only wants to tell me. She does n't want me to tell *her* anything. And yet I've been all over Europe, and she's never left Whiteroses. Isn't it funny?"

"You've been beyond her narrow horizon, Mademoiselle. She has no power or imagination to follow you there." He glanced inquiringly at the girl, and waited for her to begin. He knew that there was much that she meant to tell him that morning, and if he was afraid of what he was going to hear, he did not show it.

Jane began with a rush.

"The plan has been a great success—oh, quite a success. Marjory says so, and *she* ought to know. She's been a perfect darling to me, and it makes me feel rather guilty to remember how deeply I've enjoyed myself all these three years, while poor Rodney——"

Lanselle started and looked at her narrowly, but Jane met his gaze with innocent, unconscious eyes.

"I can see that it's been awful for Rodney," she said in a low voice. "Because he has n't exactly understood. Oh, I can see *that* now. I am afraid he's nursing a bitter resentment against me for the sudden way I broke off and left him. I suppose I did leave a good deal to his imagination."

"Yes. It is not always a good thing to depend upon the imagination of others." Armand was staring at the gooseberry bushes opposite him.

"No; I see that. You mean that they may run riot, and take a wrong turn?" the girl suggested. "But his mother promised to explain, and I'm sure she's quite a person of her word. Yet it's possible that Rodney may have misconstrued her, isn't it? If his mother told him that I'd gone away because I was n't good enough,

he would naturally not understand, would he, when *he* was so sure that I was quite perfect? I know he thought so. He was always telling me how perfect I was."

Lanselle turned a little to look at her, with his arm hanging loosely over the back of the seat, and she found a good deal of comfort in the winning, engaging quality of his friendly, sympathetic smile.

"I suppose not," said he in comforting tones. "But now that you *are* here again, and now that you *can* explain everything, he will soon forget all these suspicions, won't he?"

Jane was silent. Her childish face was troubled, and he felt that there was more to come.

"Did n't the explanation put everything right, Mademoiselle?"

"There has n't been an explanation."

"No?" He looked away again, for it seemed kinder. "How was that?"

"You see," Jane explained hurriedly, "we've had no opportunity of threshing things out yet. Last night—well, there were so many people about, and that Lady Malincourt seemed to be always there, and I could n't suggest slipping away for a quiet talk with Rodney, could I?"

"But *he* could."

"No," Jane hastened to explain. "*He* could n't either, because, you see, he could n't know that I wanted it. Could he? If he thinks I went away because I did n't *care*, he is n't likely to thrust himself upon me now I've come back, is he? Not without encouragement. And I——"

"Well?"

"I can't bring myself to encourage him, somehow," Jane replied awkwardly. "We've lost something—I mean, we *seem* to have lost something——" She stopped, and a large crystal tear welled up and rolled down her cheek, but Lanselle's eyes were still with the goose-berry bushes.

"I suppose you still love him, Mademoiselle?" he asked quietly.

Jane stared.

"Why, of course! I've never even thought of any one else. Why—why should I have been learning all these things and taking all this trouble, if it was n't for that?"

"Why, indeed?" he repeated sadly.

"You see," Jane pursued her subject ardently, "I can understand *now* that he's been thinking me cruel and heartless and ungrateful all these years, and really, when one thinks it over calmly, one can't wonder that he should. I don't suppose his mother told him any more than she was in honor bound to do, and so how *was* he to know that I was doing it all for him?"

"But——" Lanselle suddenly turned again and began to speak, then stopped, saying something sharply under his breath in French, and, well as Jane understood his native tongue, this remark was Greek to her.

She went on.

"The more I think of his mother, the more I feel sure that she was n't in the least likely to explain to Rodney that I was doing it all for him. I suppose a man would n't be likely to guess that a girl would keep away from him for three whole years, so that she could make herself fit to be his wife—would he?"

"Possibly not." Lanselle's eyes looked worried, but Jane was too busy with her own thoughts to notice that.

"It all seems to have been left so dreadfully vague," she finished plaintively. He leaned forward and laid his thin brown hand on her dimpled wrist.

"Dear Mademoiselle, don't look so unhappy. If I were you, I would n't try to hurry things. Just wait, and everything will come right. It is sure to come right because——" He stopped and withdrew his hand.

"Because of what?"

"Oh, many things. You are staying with Mrs. SAGRANET. You see him every day? Let things take their own course. It will all come right. I beg of you not to force a—not to——"

"Have it out with him?" Jane demanded sharply. "Oh, but I must! I feel such a brute. I shall never have a proper night's rest till I've explained and confessed and put things on a proper footing again. It's all so tiresome and uncomfortable, for Rodney and me to be avoiding each other as if we were both poisonous."

"You avoid each other?" Lanselle's voice suddenly changed. "But——"

"Oh, I told you." Jane rose, looking worried. "We're out of touch, somehow. Nothing seems the same. That's why I want to have it out, and see just where we are." She held out her hand, but Armand did n't take it. He was not looking at her, and Jane was faintly surprised that he should be so absent-minded. It was n't like him. She felt hurt.

"Mademoiselle, if anything should fall out differently—I mean if you should—if through the malice of time anything should happen to distress you—you will remember, won't you, how glad I should be to do anything to help you? You will let me know——"

"Oh, yes, I'll come down," said Jane easily, but Lanselle still looked troubled.

"No, don't come here. It is better that you should not come here. You are no longer a little girl, Mademoiselle. Let me come to see you.

Madame, your aunt, is my good friend. We have seen much of each other since you went away."

"But I'm staying at Whiteroses. Polly Slater lives with Aunt now." Lanselle bowed over her hand at the door.

"To-morrow afternoon, perhaps, you will have something to tell me. Will you come then to the seat in the lane where we used to have your French lessons?"

Jane said she would. At three. It occurred to her as she hurried along the path across the fields and up the long, winding drive to Whiteroses, that Monsieur Lanselle was getting very particular, and she felt that she didn't quite understand why. She felt sure that there was some reason for his prudence which she could not fathom.

It was quite pleasant at Whiteroses, and Jane already felt happy and at home there. Mrs. Sagranet saw that her son openly shunned the little adventuress, and she grew almost kind to the slighted child. Lady Malincourt liked Jane, because she laughed at her jokes, and ran her errands, and listened with a pretty deference to her constant talk. Harry liked her, too, for obvious reasons, and the Rectory girls, who seemed to spend every day of that summer at Whiteroses, openly adored her. Jane, it seemed, played tennis excellently. Jane could scull admirably—she had studied *that* branch of her education at Zurich. Jane could sit White Rosebud like a bird. Jane could do anything. Like the princess in the fairy tale, she was quite invincible.

And Rodney, for whose sake she had learned all these things—Rodney had never addressed one single remark to her since she came. He pretended to be engrossed with that tall Miss Malincourt, but Jane thought she could see through that. He was merely punishing her for the way she had deserted him. He was trying to make her suffer from jealousy, was he? She had seen young men try *that* on before. He should not succeed. Jane had never been jealous of anybody or anything in her life, perhaps because she was always so successful. She had always been able to make people like her quite as much as she had wanted to be liked. She was too honest to care about playing at love; too honest to be a flirt. Once having given her heart to Rodney Sagranet, she had never even thought of any other man as a lover. It had never occurred to her to suspect that Rodney might think of any other girl. There was no reason that *she* could see why he should not have kept his love for her as green as she had kept hers for him. If he *was* dancing attendance upon Miss Malincourt, it was certainly to touch Jane's heart, and to make her suffer from remorse.

"Rodney's on the verge of disaster," a Rectory girl said to her over the tennis net, casting a meaning glance after the disappearing pair. "I've never seen him so much in love before—at least, not since——" She blushed and looked inquiringly at Jane.

"That is n't love," said Jane placidly. "You don't understand. He's only playing a game."

Frieda Lavernaye shrugged her shoulders, and shouted "Love thirty!" and they went on with *their* game. *She* was n't going to be the one to lacerate their fairy-tale princess, and she told her sister so afterwards when Penelope remonstrated with her for allowing Jane to run her head into a sack.

By dinner-time, the sight of Rodney's indifferent face and hard mouth, and a glimpse of his disappearing back, drove Jane to desperation. She felt that she could n't bear it much longer. Something must be settled soon, or she must go away.

"I've never been beaten yet," said Jane. She set her teeth and watched for her opportunity, and after dinner, sure enough, it came. Rodney and Nina slipped out to the terrace, as usual, but the night was chilly, and Nina presently ran in for a coat, leaving Rodney leaning over the balustrade, waiting. Jane crept quietly out and stood beside him, looking anxiously for some seconds at his clear, handsome profile. Then she lightly touched his arm. He did n't turn round.

"Look at the silver bars behind those black trees, Nina," he said in a low voice. "Does n't it look wicked—lurid—over there with the gray and green and silver?"

"Yes," said a timid little voice. "But it is n't Nina. Oh, Rodney, it's me, and I *must* speak to you."

The young man turned sharply round.

IX.

LIKE a little silver flower, Jane stood before him in the moonlight. Her white frock was shining with silver embroideries. There was a silver fillet in her hair, and her face was pale. If the Rectory girls had been there, they would certainly have found their Princess Snow-white again. But Rodney's heart was hard. He saw nothing but the girl who had thrown him over and made him miserable. He saw no enchanted princess in poor Jane. He merely regarded her as a danger which had once crossed his path, and which he had had the good luck to escape. Besides, she had made him suffer, and in a young man who had never had a real worry or care in his life, that suffering had made a deep impression, and seemed impossible still to forget or forgive. Jane noted the rigid line of his clean-shaven lips, and the contemptuous glitter of his narrow eyes, and her heart sank. He kept a stony silence, too, which made it all the more difficult for her.

"I can see," Jane began rather miserably, "that you have been misunderstanding me all the time."

Rodney smiled.

"My good child," he remarked in superior tones, "it's a fatal

mistake to rake up the past. Let sleeping dogs lie. Of course I was a young fool three years ago. You were very wise to act upon that assumption. I am only too thankful to know that I have got over the folly."

Startled, terrified, with a queer thumping at her heart, Jane stared at him for some seconds in shaken silence; then she asked in a tremulous voice:

"What did you think I went away for?"

Rodney laughed impatiently.

"Oh, you were tired of me, I suppose. I can't blame you. I'm sure I was an egotistical young bore. No doubt you wanted a change. You certainly were n't a young woman with mercenary motives, or— You always had a mania for honesty, I remember."

"I am glad you remember that," said Jane simply; "because if you do, you'll believe me now. I went away because I was n't fit to be your wife."

He laughed again almost contemptuously.

"I suppose I was the best judge of that," said he shortly.

"No," said Jane sadly. "You were the worst. You were in a dream. You were bewitched. I was told so by several people of experience. You were not in a fit state of mind to know what you were doing. You were going to spoil your life by marrying a girl who could n't help you. You were going to let yourself be dragged down by a little creature who *could* only hinder you, however much she was longing to help you. You were too noble and unselfish and kind and—too bewitched to understand all *that* at the time, but afterwards you would have known. You would have been sure to understand what you had done when it was too late. Do you see?"

"You are talking sheer sentimental blither!" said the young man abruptly. He turned away and leaned over the balustrade, and his mother came to the drawing-room window, stared at them uneasily, and went away again. Marjory was holding Nina back at the other end of the room. This interview was very disquieting to the lookers-on.

"You really think, Rodney, that I went away because I—wanted a change?"

Rodney shrugged his shoulders. "My dear child, even if you *did* do it for my sake, you did it in a very cruel and selfish way. You had no business to make me suffer because you were carried away by a melodramatic passion for renunciation. You ought to have told me what you intended to do. You ought to have given me an opportunity of proving how wrong you were."

The feeble inconsistency of this made Jane laugh in spite of her agitation.

"Oh, Rodney dear," she said under her breath, "I loved you.

Did n't you know? Did n't you think of that? It hurt me more than it hurt you. I was n't fit to be your wife. I went away and worked hard to make myself fit for you. Even if we were unhappy at first"—her voice broke—"it's all over, and, oh, my dear, is n't it worth it—now?"

Rodney turned and looked at her with a strange laugh. This little glittering creature standing in the moonlight, talking sentiment at him, struck him as being a pathetic object. Was she so ignorant of life that she really believed they could take up the threads again just where they had broken them off? Did she really think that three years made no difference? He must tell her about Nina at once. It was n't fair to let her go on thinking—— But it would not be easy to tell her now. He would wait for a better opportunity. She would probably give him an opportunity soon. He looked at her reflectively. Her eyes were misty, her lips trembling.

"You've grown very pretty, Jane," he said in kinder tones.

Jane smiled; her eyes cleared. "Fine feathers," said she with a sigh. "Fine feathers. There's the same old me inside them."

Rodney was relenting fast. He felt that he had been behaving like a peevish little boy. He really might have been kinder to the little thing. If she *had* done all this for him; if she *had* been so true (and Jane was always honest and brave), well, then, she would need a little kindness, when he explained about Nina. He must n't delay that explanation very long.

"Let's go into the garden," he said, standing upright and then stooping again to lift her scarf from the ground. "It's quieter there, and we can have it all out. I'm not sure that it's quite *wise*, but I suppose it must come sooner or later. The round lawn looks like a silver pool, does n't? You seem to belong to the night, Jane, in your silver armor. A queen of the moonlight and the stars. Have you been living in Silver Pool all these three years? The Rectory girls always said you'd been turned into something by an enchanter. I believe you're a water-lady—a little dripping naiad!" He touched the silver panel of her frock. "Let me see if it's dew or merely drops of water, from the Pool," he said.

Jane laughed and ran down the steps. She was cheering up considerably under his lighter tone, yet deep down in her heart she was still restless and uncomfortable. Something in her own feelings puzzled her. She wished—she wanted—ah, but *that* was it. She did n't *know* what she wished or wanted. She led the way to the little corner by the croquet lawn, where she knew there was a seat, but Rodney headed her off from that, without explaining that the spot was now sacred to Nina.

"We'll go right round to the rose-garden," said he hastily, "and

sit there. It's not cold, but will you be warm enough without a cloak?"

"I'm burning," said Jane, and indeed her cheeks *were* red-hot. Rodney sat down beside her, but at a discreet distance, and then he leaned forward and covered her knee with a corner of the rug. He wound the scarf carefully round her bare neck, and once he touched her, but he did not look at her. Jane sat very still, wrestling with her inexplicable emotions. Rodney waited, leaning forward with his eyes on the lawn before them. He too was beginning to realize a strange complexity of feelings and desires.

"You see"—Jane suddenly rushed into conversation—"I knew there was nothing I could do *but* go away. Your mother was so anxious that you should have the kind of wife who could help you, and who was quite suitable; and she loved you so much, and understood you so much better than I could possibly have done, that I felt it was really my duty to——" She stopped.

"To give me up?" he asked with a laugh.

"No! No!" Jane cried indignantly. "To do my best to make myself suitable without wasting any more time; to work and wait and learn to do everything that your wife ought to be able to do. Don't you see? Can't you understand?"

"Did my mother know that you were doing this?" he asked thoughtfully.

Jane shook her head. "No—how could she? She thought I had just gone away."

"She thought you had given me up?" he said sharply.

Jane's eyes flashed. "I said I would go away for three years—that's all I promised. I said I would n't spoil your life. I've kept my promise."

"Hardly." He laughed rather harshly. "You spoilt it for a good while, my pretty Jane."

"Did I?" Jane leaned forward and looked at him anxiously. "Oh, did I? But you got over it—soon——"

"I got over it," Rodney said grimly; "but I should n't quite describe it as very soon."

Jane thought it over. "Well—I should n't have liked you to get happy again *too* soon. I was miserable for months; but it was so jolly going to all those lovely places with Marjory, and everybody was so kind and——"

"I'm glad everybody was kind," Rodney said, and Jane, looking at him intently, saw that his eyes were hard. How difficult, how horribly difficult, things were! It had all seemed so beautifully simple, and now——

Now she was alone with her lover in a moonlit silver garden, with

a scent of roses in the air—and the whole width of a garden-seat between them.

“But, Rodney,” she faltered, not daring to meet his eyes, “surely it’s all right now?”

“Is it?” said Rodney, and his voice frightened her.

“Why, yes. Because, you see, I am fit to go anywhere or marry anybody.” Her anxious assurance of this would have amused him if he had n’t been so angry.

“I should n’t aim at anything lower than royal blood if I were you,” the young man said, with sudden brutality. “I should n’t waste my powder and shot on less worthy game than—Cophetua.”

Jane flushed at this unkind allusion to her favorite song.

“I was thinking of you all the time,” she said sadly. “I can do everything now—I mean everything that Marjory thought mattered. I can speak French and German and Italian quite well—I’m supposed to be rather quick at languages. I know about pictures and music and books and other things people talk about in society. Oh, Rodney, Marjory *says* I shall do, indeed she does.”

Her anxious voice made him move uncomfortably. “Does she? It’s good of Marjory. I wonder what on earth put her up to this?”

Jane was silent. Rodney, thinking hard, remembered an interview with Mrs. Despard on the terrace three years ago, when Marjory had said she would help him. Who in Heaven’s name would have supposed that she meant to do it in this way? He looked at Jane, and then he looked away again. He was beginning to feel that perhaps it was better that he should not look at Jane too much—not on a night like this, anyhow.

“I thought,” the girl faltered, “that you would guess why I had done it. We were so near and dear to each other that I thought we *must* feel the same about an important thing like this. When we were together we always thought alike, did n’t we? When your arm was around me I seemed to know what you were feeling and thinking. Don’t you remember that morning in the wood, when we both looked up at the same moment and said——”

“Don’t!” said Rodney harshly.

Jane sighed. She felt all at once very tired and weary of everything. There was nothing that she could say now. Rodney did n’t understand her. He no longer felt as she did about things. They were a thousand worlds apart from each other now. She had no power to move him, to bring him back. He was slipping farther and farther away every minute. It was bitterly hard after all these years of living and working for him. Why, every book she had ever read, everything she had learned, had been influenced by the thought of him; of what he would say about it, of what it might mean to him.

There had not been an hour in the last three years that she had not thought of him—or hardly. How she had hoped that Rodney would be proud of her little successes! If Marjory, her friend, was so proud, she had often thought how proud Rodney, her lover, would be.

Suddenly there seemed to loom before her a dreary, horrible, gray eternity of empty life. She was losing her anchor, her harbor of light, her guiding-star. Who would there be to improve herself for now?

“You said——” she broke out as a sudden memory stabbed her. “Don’t you remember saying——”

“Don’t!” said Rodney quickly. “For God’s sake, be quiet!”

Crushed, snubbed, she sat huddled there, staring wretchedly before her. A slow tear welled out of her blue eyes and rolled down her cheek, and then another and another. By some evil chance, Rodney looked up and saw them. He was only human. This was too much for him. Jane was too young and lovely. He met her eyes, lost himself there, and surrendered.

He moved to her side and took her in his arms, drying her tears remorsefully, kissing her sweet lips again and again, pressing her to his heart, and telling her that she was his dear little lost sweetheart, and that he had always, always loved her and never meant to let her go again. Jane, torn by the tumultuous feelings which clashed in her heart and were at this moment more than ever impossible to analyze, quietly wept in his arms for a little while, worn out by this sudden reaction.

“My little love—my little lost sweetheart—oh, I’ve never seen such blue eyes! There are no eyes like yours anywhere else in the world. Eyes like hyacinths! I always told you they were hyacinths, those eyes of yours, didn’t I? Darling, you’ve not kissed me for three years.”

He lifted her face, and his own was excited and flushed, his eyes were shining. At last Jane saw his face through her tears, and suddenly, like lightning, the conviction flashed upon her that she should never of her own free will kiss Rodney again. Oh, what did it all mean? What was this sickening, terrible feeling that was sweeping over her heart? She was living the dream she had been dreaming for three years, and yet—— She knew all at once that a great deep chasm had opened out between them, and that it was somehow inevitable. She shrank away from him and covered her face with her hands, unable to speak. Rodney took her again, but she pushed him away.

“Wait—oh, wait!” she cried. “No—don’t kiss me, Rodney. It’s all wrong, wrong, wrong. Everything has changed. No—don’t kiss me. I must go—let me go in alone. I don’t understand—I don’t

know what it is. Good-night. Please say I've gone up to my room with a headache."

She slipped away from him and ran back to the house, like some wild creature surprised in the silence of the woods.

X.

JANE was very quiet and grave when she met Armand the next day, and she thought with a curious tightening of her heart that his thin brown face looked old and tired. He did n't speak when she came up to him, but held her hand for a moment, and gazed inquiringly and very sadly into her eyes. She avoided his gaze. For the first time in her life Jane did n't feel quite honest, and for the first time she could not bear to look a fellow-creature in the face.

"Well, Mademoiselle?"

"It's all right," Jane said hastily. "Yes. I've explained elaborately, and it's quite all right. It was a sort of misunderstanding between us. There's plenty of time for misunderstanding to arise in three years, is n't there?"

She spoke with a pitiful earnestness which made him wince.

"And now you are very happy?"

"Ye-es," said Jane, in a low voice. He watched her curiously. "I'm all at sea!" she cried with a sudden frankness. "I don't know where we are yet. You know what you said about the mischief of time? You—you are obliged to lose touch in three long years, are n't you?"

She sat down, Lanselle beside her.

"But you have been thinking of him all the time," he said. "You have been loving him just the same all the time you have been away? When you were in Venice—on those moonlight nights in Venice, drifting along the Grand Canal in a gondola—ah, Mademoiselle, he was with you then? When you were happy he was always there—for that is how it is with lovers."

Jane thought for a minute. "Well," said she frankly, "I took it for granted that he was, but I've been thinking it over, and, to tell the truth, I did n't think much about Rodney when I was in Venice, chiefly, I expect, because I knew he would have thought it dull. He would have thought all the lovely people dull, too. Dull and dirty. I am sure he would have said that the little canals *smelt*. To be quite exact, you know, it was chiefly of *you* I was thinking when I was in Venice, because you had told me so much about it, and you had given me the little 'Mediæval Towns' Venice, with the beautiful drawings in it, and *you* were there, too, when the schoolmaster's wife used to sing Tosti's 'Venetian Song.' Of course I remembered that, and—no, I never thought much of Rodney when I was there. He always

goes to Norway for the fishing. Even Paris tires him after a week, he says."

Armand laughed, and she with surprise noticed the relief in his voice.

"So you see," she went on in a quiet voice as she rose to go, "everything is all right. We've had a lovely long morning together on the river, and Mrs. Sagrauet is in London for the day with Marjory—and Nina Malincourt, too. They're shopping. They'll be back at five. Good-by."

"Don't go yet, Mademoiselle. I shall have so few opportunities of seeing you now before——"

"Why?" Jane demanded, quite scared. "I'm not going to be married yet. Oh, not for ages!"

Lanselle smiled sadly. "I was not thinking of your marriage. But I am going away, myself. I am going to give up the farm."

"Oh!" She had turned quite pale, and stood staring at him. "You're not going back to Paris?"

"To Paris, no. To France, yes."

"You're tired of England?" She flung the question at him indignantly.

"No, I am not tired, but I think it's time I went back to my own country."

"But," Jane faltered, "why *do* you? I shall miss you horribly. I can't think of the River House without you. Oh, don't go! Why should you? You don't know how much I was looking forward to seeing you—and Esclairmonde——"

"Thank you, Mademoiselle. But Esclairmonde has gone."

"Gone where? Can't you get her back? I was longing for some more rides with you. Anyhow, there are the other horses. I've ridden Jolie Bergère before. You know I have. I won't let her down. And l'Alouette too. And driving—I thought we'd have a picnic together one day, just you and I, as we did that day we rode to Green Pastures and took our lunch, and you *would* teach me irregular verbs when I wanted to go to sleep."

"There will be no more picnics, Mademoiselle." Lanselle did not look at her as he said this.

Jane's eyes clouded. She had been pale already that morning, but now she looked terribly distressed. Armand was sorry to see it, but he had to say these things sooner or later. Better get them over.

"Why?" Jane demanded.

He tried to speak lightly.

"Why? Oh, because you are an engaged young lady now, and will have your time well occupied till you are married. Besides, next week I go away."

"Then it's horrid of you!" Jane felt strongly inclined to burst into tears. She knew that it was unreasonable and ridiculous of her to expect Lanselle to stay on at the River House for the sake of taking her out for rides and helping her to keep up her French, but she could n't help being unreasonable. She had been depressed when she came, and when she went back to Whiteroses this depression seemed to grow upon her. It was rather remarkable in a young woman who has just been reconciled to her lover after a three years' absence and estrangement.

Lady Malincourt and Harry and Rodney were on the terrace round the tea-table when she hurried up the steps. The others would be in from town at five o'clock, they had said. They would be sure not to be in until five.

When Jane, with her lovely face flushed by agitation and quick walking, emerged in her primrose frock and flowery hat from the top of the steps leading up from the veranda, both young men started with pleasure, and fussed about her and waited on her, to such an unnecessary extent that Lady Malincourt was frankly surprised. She had not expected Rodney to be so attentive to another pretty girl at this particular juncture. If she had realized that there was any danger of this kind, she certainly would n't have allowed Nina to go off shopping with Mrs. Despard and Mildred Sagrauet. Mrs. Despard had been so enthusiastic about it at breakfast time, and had carried them off almost before they realized what she was doing. It was that sale of Rosine's which had tempted Nina. She was always a little fool about sales. She was always thinking that she had n't a decent hat to wear.

Jane leaned back in her long chair and drank quantities of hot tea, and refused cakes, and talked and laughed with feverish rapidity. She had never attempted to conceal her relations with the village, or her visits to her aunt and Lanselle. She was absolutely without that kind of snobbishness and false pride. She was, in fact, much too proud of her friendship with Lanselle to let it lie hidden under a bushel, but Rodney frowned when she told him where she had been. Even in the old days he had hardly liked it, and now it seemed more serious. He said rather sharply that the Frenchman was a rum chap. He thought him both unsociable and extravagant, and about as unlike a Frenchman as a man could well be. Morally, he was probably true to his nation, but not a bit prudent and light-hearted with it, as you had a right to expect.

Jane promptly changed the subject, but she did n't mind Rodney's jealousy. I am afraid she was quite human enough to be rather pleased at the tardy appearance of this well known symptom of affection, but she smiled at Harry Malincourt very charmingly all the rest of the

time, and when *Rodney* looked at her, she avoided his eyes. She had found it almost impossible to meet Rodney's eyes since last night, and yet he, who up to then had obviously avoided her, was now seeking her out, looking at her all the time. The old light which had always been in his eyes three years ago had come back now. The scales had fallen away. He was seeing her now as she saw him. Oh, but *was* he?

Jane started at this thought, then shook herself impatiently, for it was all very uncomfortable. She did n't know what was the matter with her. The golden haze of happiness which had enveloped her so wonderfully three years ago had given place to a very different feeling. There was no golden haze, no rose-colored mist, no glorious, reckless irresponsibility, now. Everything looked clear and hard and solid in this grim daylight. Perhaps it was because she was so much older and more sensible, with a knowledge of the world which she had not had three years ago.

"But it was very nice while it lasted," she told herself wistfully. "I liked it very much three years ago."

They all came in at five, as they had promised, Marjory rather noisily, Nina rather quiet and very pale and pretty in a black Gainsborough hat and a china-blue frock. She was a tall, handsome girl, with very fair hair and a rather weak mouth, but her eyes were larger than Jane's, and like beautiful dewy pansies in their unfathomable depths of changing color. Rodney, leaning over Jane's chair, watching her resolute little profile as she turned her head to talk to Harry, rose reluctantly and got some tea for the late-comers. Nina was tired? Yes, very tired. He asked her a few absent questions, and she saw with hurt surprise, almost at once, that even while he spoke to her, his eyes were on the girl opposite in the primrose frock.

"Does n't Harry seem a little—well—*épris*?" She laughed and made him look at her.

"No!" He seemed surprised and irritated. "Oh! He's just making himself agreeable to the nearest pretty girl. Always does, does n't he? Unprincipled chap, Harry!"

"She *is* pretty, is n't she?" There was not much enthusiasm in poor Nina's voice, but it was n't to be expected of her at such a moment. She was tired, and this was not quite the kind of welcome she had expected. All the way home in the train, she had been thinking how much Rodney must have missed her; and how glad he would be to see her home again. She had been sure that they would find him waiting for them at the station. What had happened to Rodney?

Before she went to bed that night Nina knew that she had lost him. Oh, why, *why*, had she played with him so foolishly all the last few days? He had been ready to speak, at one word of encouragement from her, and then everything would have been settled, and he would

not have thought of so much as looking at another girl. Men were incapable of seeing charms in other girls when they were first engaged. She had always heard so. Of course, later on, if you were n't careful—but, then, Lady Malincourt believed in early marriages. Long engagements were almost always a mistake.

Nina saw little of Rodney that night. He and Harry were teaching Jane to play billiards, and Nina was chained to a bridge-table with her mother and the Rector and Mrs. Sagrauet. Marjory, who had abandoned bridge, sat at the piano and sang little French songs in an undertone, till Harry came upstairs in rather a bad temper, and then she had her work cut out to charm him back to his amiable self. Harry felt that he was not having a fair look-in. Rodney had asked him straight out to go and find Mrs. Despard. Harry was very indignant and nearly refused to go. He knew what sort of a pretext *that* was, and he obeyed at last very unwillingly. What he did *not* know was that Rodney, directly the door had closed behind him, had put down his own cue, taken Jane's away from her, and made her sit down beside him on the wide, soft divan. He did n't know that Jane's head was now on Rodney's shoulder, her face pressed to the black cloth of his coat, and that she was crying softly for no earthly reason, and strangely cold and unresponsive to her lover's caresses. Rodney was losing his head. There was no doubt of that. He saw Jane with new eyes. They were not the eyes with which he had seen her three years ago, and he knew it. Perhaps he understood better than Jane did the worth and irrevocable loss of the golden glory which had surrounded them then, but for the moment this new madness which had intoxicated him was enough for him. Jane allowed him to kiss her, but she would not repay those kisses, although she kept on telling herself fiercely that it was right he should make love to her, when she was to marry him, and they had waited for each other so long.

Mrs. Despard looked up very keenly as Jane came into the room that night. The girl had said that it was "all right now," but something in Jane's face puzzled her.

For three days things went on like this: Nina pale, slighted, almost in tears; Mrs. Sagrauet amazed, indignant, and frankly outspoken to Marjory about Jane's shameless annexation of her susceptible son; Harry half angry, but still only half in love, and playing the part of the jealous rival with a kind of artistic enjoyment; Rodney openly in love, and unmistakably bewitched by Jane; Jane herself, sometimes very white and scared-looking, sometimes flushed and feverishly excited, sometimes keeping out of Rodney's way, at others deliberately seeking him out because she knew she ought to prize every moment of his society and glory in his devotion, and because she was quite sure that it would all come right presently. But on the evening

of that third day—an evening when Jane had kept Marjory chained to the piano, and had made Harry and Nina sing their old duets together while she sat in the full light on the settle in the little drawing-room—poor Nina, turning suddenly round, saw Rodney take Jane's hand and put it to his lips with a low laugh. She saw the expression in his eyes when Jane wrenched her hand away. She saw Jane flush and give the hand suddenly back to him, with a ludicrous air of apology. She saw the look of possession in his eyes when he took it and held it.

Poor Nina! She was singing "She Is Far from the Land," but at the words,

"Oh, make her a grave where the sunbeams rest
When they promise a glorious morrow,"

her voice broke, and, saying something confused about feeling faint and silly, she hurried out of the room.

Marjory stopped with her hands on the keys. Harry looked embarrassed and began to hunt among the music.

"Don't say anything to Mother, Mrs. Despard," he murmured uncomfortably. "I expect Nina would rather be left alone."

Marjory did not reply. It was not the first time she had felt sorry for that poor child in the last few days, and she was almost angry with Jane. She ran her fingers lightly and absently up and down the keys, and wondered what she had better do. What on earth *could* she do?

But Jane had not been looking at her lover when Nina hurried from the room, and she had seen the girl's miserable face. Full of an honest concern and a sincere, if ignorant, sympathy, she rose and followed her.

XI.

I SUPPOSE Jane did n't quite realize what it was that had upset Miss Malincourt, or she would have thought twice before she acted upon that hasty impulse and followed her upstairs. In truth, up to that moment, she had refused to allow herself to believe that there had ever been anything but the most trivial flirtation between those two. Rodney belonged to her, and she to him. If he was helping to pass away the time of her absence by amusing himself with another girl, well, it was only what you could expect. *She* had had more than one charming boy friend while she was away. She would be a narrow-minded, exacting little idiot if she objected to Rodney's girl friends. It had never occurred to Jane that even if it *was* only play to Rodney, it might be anything but play to Nina. Miss Malincourt had the light-hearted, flippant modern manner, which was in itself very mis-

leading, and Jane had put down Rodney's open attention to her as a rather small-minded punishment for his own sweetheart.

She thought that Rodney wanted to punish her by making her jealous, or by showing that he did n't care, or something equally silly. Now that they had had it all out and got over their great explanations, he would naturally abandon this undignified way of showing resentment, and lay his allegiance once more at the feet to which it rightfully belonged.

Even when Nina's white face and stricken eyes had thrust themselves upon her notice, she had not grasped the real reason. The fact was that she had not thought about Nina at all. She was much too deeply engrossed and worried with her own affairs just then; much too occupied with the intricacies and complexities of her own heart, and it had never struck her that the other girl was being slowly and surely drawn into her own little melodrama to play a leading and most tragic part. She saw only that the poor thing was either unhappy or very ill, and that no one else seemed to grasp the fact or care about it, and, full of pity and a keen longing to help and comfort her, she crossed the room to the door and opened it. Quick to see what was happening, Marjory hurried after her and caught her before she was half way up the stairs.

"Jane, what are you doing?"

Jane turned, pink-cheeked and lovely, and stood looking down at her, half ashamed of her impulse.

"Come back at once, Jane!"

"I'm afraid Miss Malincourt's ill," Jane explained, surprised by Mrs. Despard's peremptory manner. "Did you see her face when she went away?"

Marjory's reply was given in rather impatient tones: "She is n't ill. And if she is, can't you see that *you're* the last person who can do anything to make her better?"

Jane stared and flushed at the brutal unkindness of this remark.

"I am? Why?"

"Because——" Marjory began impulsively, and then stopped. "Oh, come down, little idiot that you are! Don't you see—oh, well—I'm glad you're so unconscious, but I'm not going to let you go up and worry that poor child, with your pink face. It's in the worst possible taste—this errand of yours, I may tell you. Come back to the drawing-room at once. Leave her alone. She'll be all the better for a good cry. There's nothing like having it out with yourself on these occasions."

Jane, now both amazed and indignant, came slowly down again. She was no fool, and she was beginning to understand faintly what Marjory meant. It made her feel very angry with everybody. She

was angry with Marjory first, then with Rodney, then with Nina. Was everybody in a horrible puzzling conspiracy to humiliate her? How dared Marjory imply that Nina's unhappiness was her fault? She had never in her life intentionally made another person unhappy. Marjory ought to know that.

Perhaps Marjory did know it. At any rate, she seemed disposed to give her the benefit of the doubt, and she tucked her hand into the girl's arm and laughed more kindly as they crossed the wide landing together.

"My dear goose," said she, "don't you see that you've only saved your young man in the nick of time? Don't you know that his ship was drifting fast onto the Siren's rock? Don't you see that if we had delayed our dramatic reappearance for one more day, we should probably have been too late? Do you mean to tell me that you don't know that Rodney has been drowning his sorrow in——"

"Flirting?" Jane suggested in depressed tones. "Yes, I'm afraid I guessed that, but I thought it was nothing that mattered. I knew *he* could n't be serious."

"Upon my word! Your modesty does you credit, my good child."

"And I never even thought about *her*."

Marjory laughed at this frankness.

"Well, don't worry about her; only—if I were you—I'd be as nice to her as I could. She's bound to have her dark hour. It's the inevitable result of these three years. I would n't flaunt my happiness too openly just yet. Of course I don't know exactly what *did* happen to upset her to-night, because my back was turned, but——"

Jane grew scarlet as she remembered what Nina must have seen. It was that silly little affair with her hand, which had unfortunately——

"She's been poaching on your preserves," Marjory pursued lightly, "but you must do her the justice to admit that you'd left them open to annexation for a very long time. There was n't a sign of protection; not even a board up to tell the unwary public that trespassers would be prosecuted. I'm sorry for the poor child, but it's the sort of thing that *will* happen on this muddled planet. She'll have to have a nice strong tonic three times a day, and be taken abroad for change of scene, and in three months she'll be engaged to another young man of equally engaging manners."

Jane sat down on the bottom stair and regarded her blankly.

"Do you mean—you don't mean that she *cares*—really—for Rodney? Why, he's *mine*!"

Marjory laughed at her indignant tone.

"Then, *that's* all right. If he loves you, he certainly won't trouble his head about Nina Malincourt. Her mother must take her

away at once. She will, of course. Oh, they'll be off in the morning. You'll see."

"Do you mean that that girl is *unhappy* because of me?" Jane asked in horrified accents.

"Well—naturally."

"Oh!" Jane's eyes were full of pained surprise and indignation. "But I can't bear it. I won't have it. I've never made any one miserable before. It's a shame that I should be made to feel like this when I can't help it. I've *never* been made to feel a brute before. I've never made any one unhappy in my life. It's not fair."

"Haven't you?" Marjory asked, with meaning. "What about poor Rodney three years ago? What about Myles Bartlett? What about Captain Marion? What about young Cranmer?"

"Oh, that's different!" Jane cried sharply. "Men *are* different. They so soon forget. I meant girls. I meant that I'd never made a girl unhappy. I hate to feel I've made any girl suffer. Oh, it's much, much worse! I know—I know exactly what it must mean to a girl. Marjory, I'd give anything in the world to know that you are wrong to-night."

"Anything?" Marjory asked in a low voice.

Jane's face was very white. She hid her eyes for a minute, and then she pulled herself up again by the banister.

"Oh, I'm worried," she said miserably. "I'm in a whole horrible sea of worry, and I can't find land. I'll go in and say good-night. I suppose I *must* say good-night? I wish I could slip away without. Could you prevent Rodney from coming out of the room with me? I don't want to say good-night to him—alone—not to-night. I don't want to say good-night to Rodney on the stairs. I'm in a perfect sea of worry. Marjory—life is *awful!*"

The half-satirical smile faded from Mrs. Despard's lips as she put her hand on the knob of the drawing-room door.

"Poor little baby! Why, *this* isn't one of the troubles of life. Most girls would enjoy *this* experience. If life holds nothing worse than *this*——" She laughed. Jane shivered and passed through the door.

"Don't!" she whispered.

When she found herself safely up in her room, she did n't switch on the light, but sat in the big chair, staring out of the window into the darkness, wrestling with a million tormenting spirits which had been born that night in the garden when she had won Rodney back. It seemed horribly unjust to poor, honest, single-minded Jane that all these complexities should have come of one more or less self-sacrificing attempt to do right. The worst of it was that she was not quite sure *now* about the motive which had prompted that action. Had it been

entirely an unselfish desire to do the best possible thing for Rodney's happiness which had sent her away from him? Had n't it rather been a certain dogged pride which had made her determined to fit herself for *any* sphere in life; an obstinacy which had forbidden her to admit herself beaten? The memory of that check still lay like lead upon her heart when she thought of it, yet Mrs. Sagranet had surely got her money's worth now. Jane knew that she would be a good and useful wife to Rodney. She knew that she could help to make him popular, and charm all his friends. If he put up for Parliament, as he meant to do next year, she knew that she could fight his battles for him and charm his constituents. She liked the idea of such a campaign tremendously. She would do it better than Nina. Nina was too diffident, too stand-offish.

"I know their ways," said Jane truthfully. "Miss Malincourt will be gracious, but she'll condescend, and they'll know it, and they'll feel small. I could n't condescend. I'm just one of them, and I know they'll like me."

Jane's self-confidence and frank comprehension of her own charms were perhaps a little blatant just then, but you must remember how much she had been spoiled and petted and loved these three years. Why should she anticipate failure, when she had never known the meaning of the word?

So she sat there in the darkness, thinking deeply and trying to understand her own heart, which was more puzzling and disconcerting to her than anything else, and two hours slipped away like nothing, leaving her chilled to the bone and very weary of herself. It was half past twelve when a low knock at her door brought her back to herself and made her start.

"Come in," she said in a surprised voice. If it was Marjory, why did n't she come through the other door from her own bedroom?

The door slowly opened and the light was switched on. Jane covered her eyes quickly, dazzled by the sudden glare. Nina Malincourt, in a trailing white kimono, shut the door and came into the middle of the room. Her pale hair was plaited in two long ropes and hung over her shoulders, shining almost like silver in that light; her face was white, her eyes red-rimmed. Jane stood waiting for her to speak, almost in terror, but she was obliged to break the trying silence herself.

"Have you been crying all this time?" she bluntly and tactlessly said.

"Yes." Nina sat down suddenly on the foot of the bed and hid her face on the oak rail. She was shaking and trembling all over, a pitiful sight. Jane's heart was touched.

"Oh!" Nina said at last in a choked voice. "I'm ashamed—I'm

ashamed to come. I've never been really miserable before. I've never suffered such agony. I—I don't know what to do, but I'm afraid of the night. I—*had* to come."

Jane was seized with a burning desire to be kind. She longed intensely to comfort this poor tall thing who was big enough to pick her up and carry her under her arm, but she did n't in the least know what to say. She had never been celebrated for her tact, perhaps because of her uncompromising honesty, and so she just held her tongue and waited.

A soaked ball of a handkerchief rolled from Miss Malincourt's knee to the floor. Jane picked it up, regarded it doubtfully, and then hurried over to a corner drawer. She drenched a soft, fine one of her own with lavender water, and gave it to Nina. Nina was staring at her with wild eyes.

"Look here," she said. "It was all right till you came, you know. How can everything go so terribly wrong in a few days?"

"Nothing *has* gone wrong!" said Jane sharply. She was very sorry for Nina, but it was certainly she who had made this unfortunate mistake.

Nina laughed bitterly.

"I suppose you want to know why I came to you? I suppose you think I'm mad to come here and let you gloat over me!"

"Gloat!" cried Jane indignantly. "I never gloated in my life." Indeed, she had n't.

Nina fixed her with mournful eyes.

"I believe I shall go mad," she whispered hoarsely. "It was all going along in a kind of wonderful dream. It seemed as if it was fate. It seemed as if we were just drifting, as we—we were meant to, don't you know? It did n't seem as if anything could go wrong. There did n't seem to be any other people. It did n't seem possible that any one *could* come between us, when there were no other people who mattered. You don't know how—how *exquisite* it was!"

Jane was silent. Did n't she? Had she forgotten?

"And then you came and broke it. You came here and broke the spell. What have you done? How could *any* girl do so much harm in so short a time? I've been trying and trying and hoping, because I *know* he loved me, and then to-night I realized for the first time what it really meant. I've lost him. Oh, my God! What shall I do?"

She broke into long, shuddering sobs and rocked herself to and fro in such an agony of grief that poor Jane's heart was utterly melted. An insane desire seized her to give this girl everything in the world that she wanted, if only she would stop crying. Yet she pulled herself together and told herself to be firm.

"I'm dreadfully sorry," she said. "I can't tell you how sorry I

am. I never thought that Rodney would do this sort of thing while I was away——”

“What?” Miss Malincourt looked up sharply.

“Yes,” said Jane with dignity. “We’ve been engaged for three years. You mustn’t think of Rodney any more—like—like this, because, you see, he belongs to me. We—we have loved each other for three years, and now we are together again after our long separation.”

“You are engaged? You and Rodney?”

“Not openly,” said Jane hurriedly. “But that’s *my* doing. I asked him to wait a little while.”

“He loves you still?” There was a curious note in the other girl’s voice, a more hopeful ring which bewildered Jane.

“Why—of course.”

“Oh!” Nina rose with a sharp, appealing cry. “Thank God it’s only that! I’m glad it’s only that.”

“I don’t see anything for *you* to be glad about,” cried Jane sharply.

Miss Malincourt pushed back her wet fair hair.

“In three years people always change,” she said. “I did n’t know that he was *bound* to you in any way.”

“Bound?” Jane asked slowly.

“Yes. I was afraid—I was sure he’d just fallen in love with you. Oh, I did n’t know that it was only a kind of pitiful *réchauffée*.” She spoke eagerly, but Jane grew crimson and her heart beat sickeningly.

“He loves *me*,” Nina said in a low, earnest voice. “He loves me with all his heart. Oh, he’s told me so a thousand times with his eyes, and I was a fool and kept him from speaking out because it was all so lovely as it was, and I was afraid that the silly, sordid fuss of an engagement would spoil everything. I wanted to go on as long as possible just as we were. The afternoon you came we were in the garden together, and he wanted to make love to me, and when we were still on that seat—the one by the croquet lawn—he began. He kissed me—and I ran away from him. I was afraid of spoiling everything. And now he avoids me. I see—I see why he avoids me. He’s bound in honor to *you*, but he *loves* me.”

“Upon my word!” cried Jane, with blazing eyes. This was too much.

“Oh, do go away!”—Nina slipped to the ground and caught Jane’s hands. “Oh, please, please go away, and break off with him before it’s too late. I would n’t ask you if you both cared. I’m not so weak. I’m not mad, but I see it all now, and I tell you that you’ll spoil two lives if you go on with this madness. He does n’t love you. Oh, I dare say he likes to make love to you, because you’re pretty and young, and I know what men are, but he does n’t love you in the right way.

Besides, you don't love him. I know. Do you think I don't know? You avoid him. You won't look at him. Why, I *love* to look at him! One does if one really *cares*. I can't keep my eyes away. I've been watching you both for days. Do you mean to tell me that *you* feel that beautiful glow of happiness all round you, as I did?"

Something was tugging at Jane's heart and telling her to do a thing that her pride forbade. She desperately summoned her pride to her rescue, and asked herself fiercely if she was to acknowledge failure at this eleventh hour.

"I've never been beaten yet," said she to herself, as she wrenched herself away from the clinging girl.

"You must be mad," said she coldly. "Do you think I would betray my lover when he has waited for me and been true to me all this time? You must be mad. I'm very, very sorry that Rodney has misled you like this, but I am sure you have misunderstood him, somehow. I am an honorable person. I can't break a promise for a reason like this. If Rodney feels like—like you say he does, why, then, he must ask me himself. If he wishes to be set free, of course I will do it at once, but he must ask me himself."

Nina sank back and covered her face with a little cry. Then she sprang to her feet and pushed her hair out of her eyes, and spoke in an utterly changed voice.

"Thank you," said she. "I might have known. I ought to have known. I'm sorry I've troubled you like this. Please don't think that I shall ever do it again. I've learnt a lesson. I think I was mad."

"Good-night," Jane said remorsefully, but Miss Malincourt apparently did not hear, for she made no response as she went out of the room.

Jane sat down suddenly in the nearest chair, and dissolved into tears.

XII.

ALL the next morning, Whiterooses seemed to rest over a sleeping volcano. There was a feeling of storms and thunder in the air. Jane was tired and pale after a sleepless night, and Nina had breakfast taken up to her own room. She did not pretend to eat it, however, for Jane, passing her door an hour later, saw the untouched tray standing on a table outside. Miss Malincourt had no appetite for food, it seemed, and mute evidence of the havoc she had wrought struck at poor Jane's melting heart like a blow. She had a healthy appetite, herself, which had never failed her, and nothing could have convinced her so tragically. She did not know where to go or what to do. Marjory, thinking it best to keep out of the way, was writing letters in her

own room. Rodney was out somewhere with Harry Malincourt, and when Jane peeped into the library she found Mrs. Sagranet and Lady Malincourt plunged deeply into an intimate conversation, which came to an abrupt end at the sudden intrusion of her brown head, so she hastily withdrew it.

The sound of the young men's cheery voices in the hall an hour later was quite refreshing. She felt that Harry, at least, would be a sane and cheerful refuge. She was all at sea about Rodney. She was in a whirl of conflicting emotions, and her only definite consciousness was that she didn't want to be alone with him. Surely, in the circumstances, this was very unnatural and strange.

She was walking aimlessly along the gallery when they came in, and she hung over the railings, through one of the arched openings, to speak to them.

"You look a bit tired," Harry said at once, smiling up at her. Rodney called to her to put on a hat and come out into the garden with him.

She was sorry—she would have liked it, but she had letters to write, Jane replied hurriedly, which was curious when one remembers how desperately put to it she had been to kill time since breakfast, and how truthful she generally was. As she leaned over to talk to them, Nina's door opened and shut again softly. Then, downstairs, the library door opened and Lady Malincourt came quickly out, crossed the hall without speaking to the young men, and ran upstairs past Jane, into her own room.

Jane drew back with a heightened color, for there had been a look in the eyes of that stout, kindly lady which had made her feel suddenly very small and mean and uncomfortable. She felt as if the whole world was linked together in a hateful conspiracy to misunderstand and wound and crush her. Rodney's mother came to the library door as Jane slowly descended to the hall, and said in rather an uncertain voice:

"Rodney, come in here for a minute, will you?"

Rodney obeyed her, with a last longing look at poor Jane, and then she found herself alone with Harry, who seized his opportunity without delay.

"Do come on the river," the ingenuous youth murmured persuasively. "You'll come with me, I feel sure. Don't let's waste any more time. We'll give old Rodney the slip."

Jane laughed and hesitated. She felt safe with Harry, and the sunshiny morning tempted her. She had thought of running down to the River House to see Lanselle, and ask him if he could see any daylight in the dreadful darkness which had overcast her heart, but he had told her not to come there again.

"We'll get our hats and fly," said he, with an apprehensive look at the library door.

"Would you?" she asked doubtfully. "I'm not sure that I ought."

"You surprise me," Harry said reproachfully. "I *know* you ought. You want fresh air. You're like a little ghost this morning."

Jane ran up for a shady hat, and when she came down she found to her joy that one of the Rectory girls was waiting for her in the hall. It was Penelope Lavernaye, her favorite, a nice, gray-eyed child of seventeen. She hugged Jane and asked at once why she was so pale.

"It's Princess Snowwhite this morning," said she, shaking her head at Jane. "I know you've just met the seven little dwarfs and you're frightened of them. You're afraid they're going to imprison you again. No, that's not it. You've been into Bluebeard's chamber—and seen things. *That's* why you're so pale. I came——"

"To take us up the river," said Jane promptly, and they set off, the three of them, happily enough. The fresh, light breeze cooled Jane's hot forehead, cleared her brain, and soothed her troubled heart. Lying back against the cushions of the little painted boat, with the loving arm of the Rectory girl round her, Jane felt better. There was an understanding at Whiteroses that if you found yourself on the river a long way from home, you might lunch how and where you pleased, and if you reappeared by five o'clock for tea, nobody was anxious. It was one of those divinely golden mornings which come so rarely, and, as Harry pointed out, it would be criminal to waste it in hurrying back for lunch. So they spent the whole day on the river, and Jane grew more and more forgetful and light-hearted, and showed herself once again the delightful holiday girl that she was.

The Rectory girl, seeing as usual nothing but the dark, haunted woods and magic towers of her beloved fairy tales, hypnotized her companions presently, and so they found themselves after a time floating down an enchanted river, with adventures waiting for them on every bank.

"There are always dragons lurking in ambush on the banks, waiting to devour Prince Charming," said the imaginative child.

"And I am Prince Charming, of course," said modest Harry.

The Rectory girl hesitated. "I'm not sure. It always *used* to be Rodney. I think it ought to be Rodney, but as he is n't here, I suppose you'll *do*."

"Thank you," Harry replied in hurt tones. "Princess Rosered must be left to decide that."

It was very childish nonsense, but they kept it up without any effort, being still quite young and full of the joy of life, and when they lunched in the green trellis arbor in the garden of the "White Hart,"

Penelope explained that the swinging sign was the portrait of that very white hart which the poor Princess Blancheflower had been turned into, for being so much more beautiful than the witch's wicked daughter.

"Do you remember," the girl asked Jane suddenly, leaning both her elbows on the table in a way which was certainly tabooed in the Rectory dining-room—"do you remember the day Monsieur Lanselle brought us all here to tea, and how he played dragons with us, and he was the enchanter—the wicked magician? There was no Prince Charming that day, and the magician had it all his own way."

"Yes," said Jane thoughtfully; "I remember."

"I do like him, don't you? He always played up so well, and he knew such thousands of lovely stories that we had never heard. Old French fairy tales about wolves and things. I dreamed about the *Loup Garou* for months. Most of his stories had never been translated into English before. I'm awfully sorry he's in trouble."

"Trouble?" cried Jane, starting and spilling a little lemonade on the cloth.

"Have n't you heard?"—the Rectory girl looked disturbed. "But they're talking about it all over the village. They say he's lost quite a lot of money, you know. We're all so sorry. It's because of that that he's going away."

"Go on!" said Jane, in such a queer voice that Harry dropped his cigarette and stared at her. Penelope went on, uncomfortably fixed by Jane's horrified gaze.

"Mother says he's spent too much money on horses and things. She says you can lose more money at farming than anything else, if you once thoroughly let yourself go, as he did. And you could n't expect him to succeed, she says, among those keen farmers, with his foreign habits, and the foolish way he trusts everybody."

"I see." Jane's voice was very low. "Do you mean, then, that—that he's failed?"

Penelope Lavernaye looked uncomfortable. "Oh, not quite as bad as that; but he's going to give up, only just in time. Father says he's come to see at last that it is time he stopped. Father says it's time he stopped throwing good money after bad. He'll go back to France and live in the country. Mother says she expects he'll be all right, only he'll have to be satisfied with a bicycle instead of all those horses, and——"

"A bicycle!" cried Jane, half choking. "A bicycle!"

The Rectory girl looked hurt.

"Well, *we*'re quite happy with bicycles. We've never been able to afford horses. If you constantly regard your machine as a white Arab, or a black mule with scarlet trappings and bells, you get quite

as much pleasure out of it. Mine's called Katinka, and to me it's quite as much a fleet Arab steed, with a flowing mane, and footed like the wind, as——"

"Oh, don't!" cried Jane. She pushed away her chair and stood staring before her, with a pale face and frightened eyes. Armand! Her kind, dear, true friend Armand was in trouble, and he'd never even told her. He'd listened to all *her* selfish confidences, and advised her, and helped her, without a word about himself.

Without a word?

Ah! but there *had* been a word. There had been more than one word. He had told her that he had sold Esclairmonde, and he had refused to say why. He had told her that he was going away, and she had been too much engrossed in her own paltry affairs to insist upon knowing *why*. This was why. She knew now. "How awful—how terrible life is!" thought poor Jane.

All the way home in the boat she pulled silently, and racked her brains to try to find some way to help him. For she *must* help him. She knew that the rest of her life would be simply unbearable to her if she failed to help him now, when he wanted it most. A wild idea of making Rodney marry her at once, and then getting the money from *him*, occurred to her, to be instantly dismissed. At this moment, marriage with Rodney seemed further away than ever. If *only* she had money of her own, like Miss Malincourt. She wondered if there was anything left out of the money she had given Marjory.

She was silent and distrait all tea-time, and it was not a very cheerful assemblage on the terrace that afternoon. Mrs. Sagrauet was distinctly cross. Lady Malincourt was upstairs, bathing Nina's head. Nina's headache was awful, Mrs. Sagrauet said. Rodney had gone off in the big motor, and would not be back for a couple of days.

With considerably damped spirits, the Rectory girl took herself off after tea, and Harry picked up a book and disappeared into the depths of a long chair.

Marjory took Jane upstairs, and said, directly they got inside her room, that if this sort of thing was going on she would clear out to-morrow. She had never seen such a fuss in her life. All about a girl who was crossed in love. As if Nina was the only one. Insane!

"I wonder she is n't *ashamed*," Marjory cried, "to give herself away like this! She'd pretend that she did n't care, if she had any spirit. And then for Rodney to run away! It's the most cowardly thing I've ever seen. Upon my word, Jane, you *have* done it this time!"

"Yes," said poor Jane dejectedly; "I do seem to have done it. Yet I never meant to hurt anybody. Really, Marjory, if any one is to blame, surely it's Rodney, and not me."

"Not I," Marjory amended. "Do you really think so?"

"I know it," said Jane obstinately, but another subject was engrossing her now, and she crossed the room to the window and stood looking disconsolately into the deserted garden.

"Marjory, I know I've been awfully expensive all this time, and I hate to ask you for it, but—is there any of that money left?"

Marjory stared, then she laughed softly, as if she was rather pleased about something.

"What money?" she asked disingenuously.

Jane flushed.

"The thousand pounds. I know I can't expect it, but if there is, I should be glad of it just now."

"More frocks?" Marjory asked lightly. "Or do *you* want to run away, too?"

Jane laughed rather ruefully. "I feel very much like it to-day," said she. "I've never had so many cold looks in my life. But I shan't do it. I don't believe in running away. It's better to face the music. It's not for frocks, either. You know I've got everything. It's—well, I want to help somebody."

Marjory's face changed. She looked disappointed.

"My dear, I do hope your aunt is n't in difficulties. I did n't know you had any worries of *that* kind. I hoped you wanted it to—well, never mind. I'll let you have something at once——"

"No!" Jane met her eyes honestly. "Aunt's all right. I can't tell you who it is, because the person might n't like it, but if there is anything left, I should be glad. If not——"

She sat down suddenly and looked so wretched that Marjory, after a moment's keen regard, went without further discussion to her writing-table and filled up a check. She brought it over and let flutter into Jane's lap.

"There," said she lightly. "There's that left. I meant to give it to you as soon as—well, it's yours to do as you like with."

Jane eagerly read it.

Pay to Miss Jane Rose

One thousand pounds.

£1,000

MARJORY DESPARD.

Jane opened her eyes wide, gasped, clutched frantically at Marjory's hand, and cried: "But—it's all of it! I don't understand."

Marjory dropped on her knees beside the girl and laid her arm lightly round Jane's quivering shoulders, looking very earnestly and affectionately into the troubled young face.

"My dear little girl," she said quietly, "don't you know that you saved me? If you had n't given me the money that day, I think I should have drowned—or sold—myself. I don't know which would

have been worse. You see, I was horribly in debt, and the humiliating part of it was that I owed more than half the money to a man who wanted to marry me. It was a Greek called Elisar—oh, well, never mind his name. He came to my help when I was in a bad *impasse* once, and then—well, it had just got to this: I had to find eight hundred pounds or marry *him*. And I—well, I'm one of those foolish creatures who love only one man, and I can't forget my husband. It was just selling myself, and you saved me. It was n't a little thing that you did for me, Jane. But I *have* an income, though I can't touch the capital, and we hardly spent more than half of it while we were living, as we have been living, for the last three years. And not only that, but I've been quite happy too—happier than I've been since Ronald died. You see?"

"Not quite," said Jane, in wondering tones.

Marjory sighed. "Well, you're a happy little thing, Jane, and you're honest too, and all these things are infectious, I suppose, for I know you've made me happy, and I'm not sure that you haven't made me honest. Honester than I was, anyhow. Honest enough for *this*." She touched the check with her fingers, and drew Jane's brown head to her shoulder in quite a motherly way. Anything more unlike Marjory's usual detached attitude could not well be imagined.

"Why, you little honest thing—I believe I love you," said she.

Startled by such unusual kindness and affection in the hard and flippant Marjory, Jane gulped down a sob and tried to speak, but Mrs. Despard went on:

"I'm not going to take a penny of your money, Jane. Everything I've spent on you has been richly repaid. Don't I tell you that you've saved me? This money is yours, and yours alone, and I give it back to you with my best love. Do exactly what you like with it. I was hoping it would come in for your trousseau. I was *afraid* you would want to fling it at Mildred's head. Oh, yes, I can spare it. I've saved money, you see, in these three years, and then there was Uncle Jim's legacy last year. You can take it with a clear conscience."

Jane folded the check with trembling fingers, and rose to hunt blindly for the hat she had thrown down.

"You can't go out," said Marjory promptly. "At least, not now. There's only just time to dress for dinner. Besides, you must n't rush into anything. Promise me—I don't want to be a preaching old thing, but I want you to promise me not to do anything with that money till to-morrow morning. I know by experience that it's as well to sleep on an impulse of this kind. Promise me. It's all I ask."

"Of course I'll promise," said Jane, with a deep sigh. It was the least she could do, she thought ruefully, but just then it seemed a good deal.

XIII.

THE rest of that day passed like a dream to Jane; a long, painful dream in which people looked at her strangely, and quite ignored her pitiful attempts at cheerfulness. Nina Malincourt came down to dinner and sat between Marjory and her mother, looking like a ghost.

Jane tried to talk to Harry on her side of the table, but he too was silent and rather strange in his manner. Jane knew that his mother must have been telling him something unkind about her, to change him like this. He had liked her so much on the river that morning, and now he only answered her remarks in a strained, uncomfortable way, and seemed afraid to look at her.

After half a dozen rebuffs, Jane gave up all attempts to enliven that gloomy dinner-table, and, with one frightened, appealing glance at Marjory, kept her eyes henceforward on her plate. When, later on in the evening, Marjory played softly in the little drawing-room, Jane huddled up beside her in a low chair, and presently Mrs. Despard began to talk to her in a low, singsong, chanting voice, in time and tune to what she was playing:

"Cheer up! They'll all get used to the idea presently.

Are you sure enough of Rodney to go away with me now and leave them to fight it out among themselves?

You could n't expect anything else, my good child, so, for Heaven's sake, cheer up!

You've got your man safely at your feet again, and nothing else ought to matter.

We'll go up early to bed. This atmosphere is getting unbearable.

When Rodney comes home, I shall tell him exactly what I think of him, Deserting the camp at such an hour!"

One after another, Marjory fired off these remarks to slow music of the most depressing type. After an hour of such dirges, Jane felt as if she was on the verge of bursting into ignominious tears. What was the good of assuring herself that she had acted only for the best, and that she was only clinging to something which rightfully belonged to her, when she could see with her own eyes how terribly her return had devastated this comfortable household? She crept upstairs to bed at ten o'clock, and hurriedly undressed without one look into the glass. There was no comfort in pink cheeks and bright eyes that night for poor Jane.

When the light was out, she began to cry softly, and cried herself to sleep at last, to dream fitfully that she was Princess Rosered, and that she had been wandering wearily and forlornly in the enchanted woods, trying to find her lost Prince, only to see him turn into a loathsome monster before her very eyes when she succeeded. Then

going on and on through the interminable forests in search of his kingdom, the path suddenly became impassable, and haunted with angry, muttering, revengeful spirits. In the thick of these horrors, the Prince resumed his own gay and handsome form and vanished, and she was alone with the terrors of the black wood and a thousand shrieking, pawing shapes thick in the heavy air around her. A clamorous noise of voices and violently jangling bells did not stop when she awoke, and she sat up in bed bathed in perspiration, with her hands outstretched, crying:

"What is it? Oh, what is it?"

Marjory, wrapping herself hastily in a scarlet and gold burnouse, came swiftly through the door, and switched on the reading lamp by the bed.

"Hush!" she said. "There's something wrong. I'm afraid some one's ill. I can hear them out in the passage. The servants have been called up, I think. That was the servants' bell we heard. Servants are always awful to wake."

Marjory opened the door onto the landing, and peeped out. Mrs. Sagra-net stood there in her dressing-gown, giving orders to a sleepy, dishevelled maid. Marjory heard something about "Plenty of hot water," and then asked what was the matter.

"It's Nina." The mistress of the house turned on her with worried eyes. "I'm just going down to telephone to the doctor. Nina's horribly ill."

"Ill? What's the matter, then?"

Mrs. Sagra-net looked at her queerly. "I wish to God you'd never brought that girl here!" she said harshly, and then hurried downstairs. In five minutes she was back again, and Marjory, hanging over the banisters, was horrified by her face.

"He is n't at home. His wife says he drove to Pendragon in the dog-cart, to dine and sleep at a friend's house—at the Griffiths'. She says that the Griffiths are n't on the telephone, and the car's out of order. Mr. Griffith hates telephones and motor-cars and any modern conveniences. What on earth am I to do?"

"Is Pendragon far?"

"Twenty miles, at least, from here."

"Can't you send your own motor for him?"

"Rodney's taken it."

"I thought you had two. What about the old Mercedes? *He* took the Daimler, I suppose."

"Yes, there's the Mercedes, of course, but the chauffeur is with Rodney, and none of the other men can be trusted to drive the car. I always told Rodney that he ought to let one of the stablemen learn, but he was too pigheaded. You see, he generally drives it himself."

Marjory thought for a minute. "But is n't there another doctor in the place?"

Mrs. Sagrauet shook her head. "We've never had one in the village since Doctor Cloud went. There is n't any practice, you see, for a good man. Doctor Prague has a surgery in the village, and comes about three times a week. It's the most unusual thing for him to be out of reach like this. His assistant is away, too, for his holiday."

"It does seem bad," Marjory murmured thoughtfully. "But what about young Malincourt. Can't *he* drive?"

"His mother says no. *He* thinks he might manage, but his mother is quite hysterical at the thought of it. She thinks he would kill himself. Her nerves are in an awful state. You see, Nina——" Then she stopped. "What on earth are we to do?" she asked helplessly. "I believe that child will die."

"Oh!" Jane, whose pale little face had gradually become visible round the door of her room, now came forward in her long white nightgown.

"Let me go!" she said quickly. "I can go."

Mrs. Sagrauet laughed contemptuously, and turned away, but Jane followed her, catching at the sleeve of her dressing-gown.

"Let me go," she said again. "I can drive the Mercedes. I can drive almost any car. If it's in order, I can run over to Pendragon in half an hour."

Mrs. Sagrauet turned, looking from Jane to Marjory with angry, incredulous eyes, and then Lady Malincourt herself, grotesque in curling-pins and a hideous wrapper, came out and said in a husky voice:

"She's dying, I believe. She's in a most horrible state. I don't believe *anything* can save her." The poor woman swayed as she spoke, and Marjory had to step hastily forward to catch her in time. Jane's eyes blazed, her cheeks flamed.

"I *shall* go!" cried she. "I can manage the car. I'm not a liar. Whether you believe me or not, I can and *will* go to Pendragon and bring the doctor."

She rushed into her room and flung herself blindly into her clothes, Marjory following her and vainly trying to twitch them into decent order. Jane did n't wait for a hat, but wrapped a woollen scarf round her head, hurried into the big coat Marjory held out for her, and rushed downstairs. Harry was already out in the yard, looking rather helplessly at the Mercedes, now standing ready in the big shed. He was one of those young men who turn limp and useless at the mere suggestion of mechanics. A sleepy groom was talking to him doubtfully, and they both stared as Jane came out.

"I say," Harry objected gravely, as the girl went into the shed and took a business-like and careful look round at everything, "it's very good of you to try to help, but you ought n't to——" he stopped.

"Ought n't to what?" cried Jane. She switched on the current and started the engine. The thing was beginning to thump and mutter when she sprang in.

"I shall come with you, then," Harry said, looking very uncomfortable, but Jane smiled grimly, remembering his treatment at dinner.

"No, you don't. You've no coat, and I can't wait, and, besides, your mother will want you. You must n't leave her. I prefer to go alone. Get out of the way, please! Open the gate, James. I understand the car thoroughly, and I know every inch of the road. Open that gate, please—quick! Stand back!"

The great car grunted away round the side of the house and into the long, curving drive at a fine pace. The sharp wind in her face, and the excitement and defiance in her heart, sent her blood dancing and tingling through her veins. Marjory had pushed the little hurried note which Mrs. Sagranet had written to the doctor into the pocket of her big coat. Jane knew the Griffiths' house well. She knew every house in Pendragon.

She drove very well, and it was almost as light as day in that white moonlight. How glorious it was to be driving all alone, as fast as one liked, while the rest of the world was asleep! A white mist lay along the ground, but it rose no higher than the axle of the car-wheels. She had driven this car, with Rodney beside her, only three days ago, and it answered to her touch like a horse which loved its master.

Then, presently, her excitement cooled down, and she began to think of her errand. Nina was ill. How ill? How could a person get so suddenly and alarmingly ill in a few hours? Illness could n't be brought on by unhappiness, could it? In novels, girls often went into a long and elegant decline when they were disappointed in love, but not in real life, and not all at once like this. Perhaps it was heart-disease. People were liable to die from shock at any minute, she had heard, when they suffered from heart-disease. Oh! This was not a pretty thought.

Jane drew a deep breath as the car swung around into the high-road, and she began to make up her mind that it *was* Nina's heart which had gone wrong. It was *her* doing, then—hers and Rodney's. If Nina died, she would be nothing more or less than a murderess. Jane shivered, and suddenly felt horribly alone and frightened. The strange quiet and moonlit peace of the lovely country lanes led all at once into a cold, gray, menacing world, peopled with reproachful, condemning spirits.

Troubled and desperate, she hunted about for comfort, and as usual found Lanselle. She felt a glow of warmth in the thought of him, for he at least understood her and believed in her, and would never misconstrue her motives and actions, as everybody else seemed to be doing. Marjory *was* good to her, but there was n't the same comfort, somehow, in the thought of her. Jane felt that Marjory would n't give up an inch of comfort for her or anybody else in the world. But Lanselle! One after another all the kind things Lanselle had done for her came back to her. Ah, he *was* a friend!

And he was going away. Flooded with horror and a kind of vague remorse which was both disconcerting and unusual, Jane put on speed and tried to race her worries, but it took her more than half an hour to drive to Pendragon, and in all that time she had never once thought of her lover. It never occurred to her that at a time like this there was Rodney to lean upon; Rodney to help and comfort her; Rodney who would be sure to understand; and when she left the car at the garden gate and hurried up the path to the house where the doctor was staying, she was shaking and white at the thought of what in her thoughtless cruelty she had done to poor Nina. How glad she was that there were still lights in the house! It was quite two o'clock, but Mr. Griffiths and the doctor were still sitting smoking and talking over the library fire. Mr. Griffiths left her in the hall with Doctor Prague. The doctor did n't remember her at first, but he spoke very kindly to her when she told him that she really was the Jane Rose he had known for years, and that she had brought a note—an urgent note—from Mrs. Saganet.

"Indeed?" He raised his eyebrows. "How did you come?"

"In the car. In the Mercedes. There was no one else. Won't you please read the note and come at once?"

He was already quickly glancing at that hasty scrawl. Then he looked at Jane.

"You know about the young lady?" His grave, surprised voice frightened her.

"I'm—I'm afraid so," she faltered.

"Oxalic acid. I wonder she is n't dead. She probably is by now. The girl must be out of her mind. What on earth did she do it for?"

"Do it?" Jane cried with wide, horrified eyes. "How do you mean 'do it'?"

He did n't look at her, but went on struggling into his coat.

"Yes; Mrs. Saganet says she has been trying to kill herself by drinking oxalic acid." He hurried back to the library to explain matters to his host, and Jane went out, blindly stumbling down the steps into the garden. She heard him hurrying along the path after her, and she started the car without a word as he sprang in.

"Had n't I better drive?" he asked with a smile, but Jane shook her head. She was incapable of any speech just then, and the horror of what she had just heard seemed to paralyze her. The great car swung along at such a rate that the doctor found himself obliged to remonstrate.

"It's lucky I've made my will," he said. "Look here, my good child, I'm a valuable person. Don't drive me to perdition to-night. I'm not ready to die."

"I am!" cried Jane fiercely, and the man beside her started at her tone, and regarded her little, agonized, moonlit face with some interest. Then he bent forward and tried to take the steering-wheel, but Jane would not allow that.

"Let me do something!" she said wildly. "I shall go mad if I don't do something." He saw then that she had better be allowed to have her own way, and philosophically abandoned himself to his fate. They rushed through the empty lanes at a pace which would have astonished the law if it had happened to see it, but they were quite unhindered, and at Whiteroses she saw, from far down the drive, that the great door stood open and that some one was waiting, outlined, silhouetted, against the light. She stopped the car, and Harry Malin-court ran down the steps and opened the door. She sprang out, the doctor following her.

"How is she?" Jane cried with chattering teeth.

"Bad!" said Harry curtly; then to the doctor:

"I say, you've been splendidly quick. Come up, will you, at once? My mother is waiting for you. I'm afraid you're too late."

He ran upstairs, and Jane, left alone in the hall, sank on her knees on the great tiger-skin rug in front of the empty grate, and covered her face with her hands.

XIV.

For hours Nina lay between life and death, and the doctor stayed all night at Whiteroses. It was Marjory who came down at last and found poor Jane still crouching in the hall. She made her go back to bed at once. She was going back to bed herself, she said. There was nothing *they* could do. Nina was no worse, and it would n't do for every one to be worn out and exhausted at breakfast-time.

"Besides," said Marjory bluntly, "if *you* stay about in full view of everybody, you may hear some very unkind things. I think, for every reason, it will be better for you to keep out of sight."

With an aching heart, Jane dragged herself up, feeling that it was all horribly unfair. What had she done to deserve this? She had only tried to do what was right. How *could* she give Rodney up when he loved her so?

But she followed Marjory, humbly and obediently, and allowed herself to be divested of her big coat and untwisted from the woollen scarf round her untidy head. She put on a dressing-gown, and lay huddled up on the outside of her bed, crying miserably and longing, longing, for any comfort and reassurance. She felt that even Marjory's sympathy was divided now, and that she was too impatient and worried to attempt to comfort her. Perhaps Marjory saw deeper into things than Jane did, or perhaps she thought that Jane understood the situation better than she did understand it. Whatever it was, she contented herself with covering the poor child with the satin quilt and went into her own room, closing the dividing door after her.

Forlorn and wretched, Jane cried herself to sleep again, and rose at eight o'clock, almost afraid to dress and go downstairs. The maid who brought her early tea told her that Miss Malincourt was still dangerously ill, but the doctor was more hopeful. At nine o'clock Mrs. Sagrauet telephoned to Rodney to come home. Nina was asking for him. Whether she lived or died, Rodney must be brought to her. In the meantime, the nurse from Dalesford must be met at the station. Harry took a dog-cart for that.

At eleven o'clock, Jane heard the Daimler come grunting down the drive, and she longed to run out and meet Rodney and hear a few loving words from him. He, at least, would be kind and gentle with her. He would understand that it was not her fault. She appeared trembling at the library door, when he came hastily into the hall, and she noticed at once, with a sinking heart, how white his face was; how strained his look. Why—how tremendously he must *care* for Nina, if— He cast one cold, contemptuous glance at poor Jane, and then called harshly to a footman who was crossing the inner hall:

"Harolds! How is Miss Malincourt?"

"About the same, sir, I believe. Better, if anything. The nurse has come, sir."

"Nurse? Good God! Where's Mrs. Sagrauet?"

"Mrs. Sagrauet is upstairs, sir."

Rodney ran up, two steps at a time, tugging off his thick gloves as he went, and Jane gazed after him in horrified dismay. She crept back into the empty library, and sank into a deep leather chair, quite crushed by this last blow. She could n't understand why *Rodney* should behave like this. Whatever wickedness *she* was guilty of, he was surely guilty of it, too. Whatever she had done to break Nina's heart, and drive her to this terrible step, surely he had done it, too. If anything, *he* was the worse, because it was *his* careless attentions and thoughtless behavior which had fast planted the false and cruel hopes in the poor girl's heart. No, it was beyond Jane to understand Rodney's actions. She let her head fall back upon the arm of the chair, and

sat there in puzzled misery, without moving, for at least half an hour, and then she heard Rodney's voice again speaking sharply to some one in the hall. The library door was flung suddenly open, and he strode into the room.

Jane looked up at him piteously. What did he mean by coming and staring at her with those angry eyes?

"How is Nina?" she whispered faintly.

"The doctor thinks she's out of danger," he replied curtly. "Thank God for that!"

"Yes, indeed," said poor Jane, with a sob. Rodney was leaning against the oak mantel-piece, watching her coldly. It seemed to Jane almost funny that Rodney should join in the universal condemnation, considering——

"I want to ask you something," he said at last, nervously fingering a silver ash-tray as he spoke. "There's something I must ask you."

She did n't speak, but looked up very miserably.

"Before I went away the other day," he said harshly, "my mother told me something. That was why I went. I was absolutely stunned by what she told me."

"What was it?" Jane asked faintly. She felt that it might be anything.

"She told me the real reason for your flight three years ago."

"The real reason?" she repeated in frightened tones.

"Yes." Rodney's voice was biting with scorn. "She said you went away because she bought you off. Was that true?"

"But——" Jane began. He interrupted contemptuously.

"Oh, I see that's true. She offered you a thousand pounds to give me up, and you—took—it!"

"But——" poor Jane began again.

"Did you take it?"

"I took it because——"

"Oh, don't trouble to invent a reason! I understand. You wanted a good time. Marjory was in my mother's pretty plot, and offered it to you. So you took my mother's money, and accepted Marjory's invitation, and——"

"Oh!" Jane rose slowly, but Rodney went on fiercely, without allowing her to speak:

"God! What women can do! And I believed in you! I thought you were so honest and true and—I thought you loved me. You did your best to break my heart and ruin my life, and when you came back and saw that I was beginning to get happy again, you tried to wheedle me back. You said the other night that you went away because you were afraid of spoiling my life and disgracing me! You did n't tell me that you had *sold* me."

"Oh!" Jane was still staring at him, but the color was coming back to her cheeks now, the light to her eyes, and the check folded away in her purse seemed burning through to her very heart. Oh, to take it out and fling it in their cruel faces, and cry, "There's your hateful money!" But she *could n't* do that. No, she had other plans for that money. She had earned it fairly and truly. She had kept to her share of the bargain. It was her own. She had a right to use it to save her friend. But—she would have sacrificed everything else in the world just then to be able to fling that money at their cruel, remorseless feet and go straight out of the house forever.

Rodney faced her with bitter, scornful eyes, and waited for her to speak. At first Jane wanted to explain, and a torrent of words rushed to her lips; but as she looked at him she realized that nothing she could say now would really make him understand, because— Ah, why was it? Because of the change. The awful, irrevocable change which had come over everything struck at her heart, and all at once her air of defiance disappeared; a tear rolled slowly down her cheek; her eyes, looking like wet hyacinths, were raised to his so sorrowfully that he felt his anger melting, his defenses weakening.

"It all seems like a wicked dream," she said in a low voice. "Is it possible that you and I can stand looking at each other—like this? Why, you look at me as if you hated me! Have you been bewitched, to speak to me like this? The Rectory girls would say that we had been changed by magic—black magic. Are we—*are* we the same two people? Why, we were lovers only——"

Rodney turned abruptly and walked across to the window. He could go on better with his back turned.

"It's only fair to ask you if you have any explanation to offer," said he grimly.

Jane was silent. Rather surprised at her sudden quiet, Rodney rashly turned and looked at her again, and his eyes softened at the sight of her distracting young beauty, her obvious distress.

"I don't want to behave like a brute," he said in a low voice. "You were always honest, Jane. You must have an explanation. For God's sake, tell me the truth!"

But Jane said nothing. She was watching his changing, softening face with frightened eyes. He was changing just as he had changed that night in the garden, and she saw that the game lay in her hands again. She could win him over now if she tried. She had only to tell him the truth, with pretty, beseeching looks. She had only to say: "I had no money of my own to spend on making myself fit to be your wife. I could n't give you up, because I loved you. I could n't give you up without a fight, because you were more than life itself to me. I had to do the only thing possible in my power. I kept to my bargain

honestly. I stayed away three years, and all that time I worked hard to make myself good enough for you." He would believe her now if she said all these things, because he was beginning to weaken again under the enchantment of her nearness and dearness. It would not be her honesty which would convince him. It would be her eyes, her rose face, her soft, beautiful hair. She did not attempt to deceive herself. She *could* make him believe her, but——

Then why not do it?

"If I do it," said Jane to herself, as he waited, eagerly and intently watching her changing face, "he will take me in his arms, and kiss me, and by and by he will marry me. I believe I could make him forget all about Nina. And if she gets better——"

The thought of Nina flooded her soul with a clear and unmistakable light, for Nina loved him. There was no doubt of that. Nina had taken her life in her hands, and tried to go out alone into the dark and cold of the unknown country, because she could not face this world without him. How Nina must love him to do that!

"Do I love him like that?" Jane asked herself quickly; and even as the thought entered her mind, Rodney came towards her, and she instinctively shrank back.

"Could I do what she did?" Jane asked herself. No. Honest to the core, she did not attempt to deceive herself now. No. She loved life. Until these last terrible days, she had enjoyed every hour of it. But for Nina's sake she must be dishonest in one little thing, however much it hurt her and stained her soul. It seemed that when Rodney was away from her, and out of reach of the spell of her beauty and charm, he could easily believe these dreadful things of her. Then for Nina's sake she would explain nothing. She would make no defense. Let him believe the worst of her now!

She laughed strangely, and she looked so lovely, standing there laughing with wet eyes, that Rodney too smiled and came quite close to her; but Jane waved him back, for her mind was made up at last.

"It's all quite true," she said flippantly. "Your mother bought me with a check for a thousand pounds. I did n't sell you cheap, did I? I went away to spend the money and have a good time. I sold you for a thousand pounds. It's quite true. It's a good thing for you that you've found me out in time."

She came to the end of her courage there, and slipped out of the room, leaving him standing in angry, amazed silence. She ran out into the hall and down the steps, without a hat, in her cotton frock, and she hurried across the garden, and into the drive, and then out into the lane which led to the village.

There was one place where she would always be believed. There was one person she would always trust. There was one house which

always held a friend. She looked over the wall into the garden of the River House, and was bitterly disappointed to find nothing there but a stray chicken hunting among the cabbages. She went round to the side door, with the brick porch, where she had so often sat for her French lessons, and knocked timidly. There was no response. Mrs. Brothers was evidently doing something upstairs, and there was no one to answer the door. The thought that Lanselle himself might be out made her heart sink sickeningly as she knocked again. She thought she heard a movement in his study as she knocked a third time, and she waited a few seconds longer, then walked into the narrow hall and tapped on the study door. There was no answer. Driven to desperation, she opened it and went in. Lanselle was sitting at his desk, doing something to an account book, evidently absorbed in his work. How pale and tired he looked! The room was in terrible disorder. Several packing-cases full of books stood about, and the whole place seemed fusty and dusty. This was most unusual in a person of such tidy habits, and Jane hurried up to him, horror-struck at the sight of those packing-cases.

"You're not really going?" she cried, forgetting as she spoke all her own trouble. Indeed, it seemed to her then that no other trouble could possibly be as devastating and impossible to bear as this.

Lanselle started, and rose, not looking pleased at all. His worry seemed to deepen, if anything, at the sight of Jane.

"Yes, Mademoiselle; I am going to-morrow."

Jane's eyes shone. Here was her chance. She tugged at her purse and came quite close to him, putting her hand on his arm and looking earnestly into the sad, dark face.

"Oh!" she said quickly. "You must n't go. I've heard—I know now why you're going away, and you must n't—indeed, you must n't! I can't bear it. I simply can't bear to let you go like this. I'm hurt, cruelly hurt, that you did n't tell me that you were in trouble. You might have trusted me. It was cruel to let me hear it from outsiders. You might at least have given me a chance to help you. If I was in trouble of *any* kind, you're the very first person I should come to. Indeed you are."

"I am glad of that, Mademoiselle." He was looking at her with puzzling and very miserable eyes as she went on.

"Why did n't you?"

He smiled, but there was no mirth in the smile.

"I am afraid you are the very last person in the world I can come to, Mademoiselle."

Jane flushed. "You might suppose so, but I'm not quite so poor as you'd think. Would a thousand pounds stop you from going away?"

"No, Mademoiselle; not a hundred thousand pounds." The misery in his voice startled her, and she saw that there was something here which she did n't understand.

"You can do a *great* deal with a thousand pounds," she went on uncertainly. "It goes much further than you would think. Oh, do—do take it! I—I implore you to let me help you! Can't you see that I shall just break my heart if you go away now?"

Lanselle started and looked at her inquiringly.

"What made you think I wanted money?" he asked. Jane was rather taken aback by this.

"Why—you're going to leave the farm——"

He smiled faintly.

"There might be another reason than that of poverty, Mademoiselle."

"You've sold Esclairmonde."

"I had no further use for her."

"You—you don't make farming pay?"

She felt sure that this was too mild a way to describe such a disaster, but was trying to spare his feelings.

"Don't I? Are you sure?" He moved a little away from her, and looked out of the window at Jolie Bergère, cropping comfortably in the field.

"Don't you know, then, why I am going away?" he asked.

Something in his voice made her heart beat quickly—so quickly that she could not answer him. He went on rather unsteadily.

"Perhaps I had better tell you the truth."

"I should think so!" cried she.

"You are going to be married, Mademoiselle, and that is why I am going away. I am not brave enough to stay and see you happy with another man."

"Oh!" Jane sank back into a chair and stared helplessly up at him.

"I sold Esclairmonde because I knew that you would never ride her again. I sold her because I was not brave enough to bear the sight of her, after I had lost you."

Shaken and silent, Jane looked straight in front of her. Lanselle's voice was almost too low to hear, but she knew what he was saying.

"You see. It's a stupid reason. It's because I love you, Mademoiselle." He laughed, with a weary shrug of his shoulders. "I had not meant to tell you. I shall be sorry to-morrow that I have told you. One does not want to cloud the happy dreams of young love. The troubles come soon enough. One does not want to cast shadows. The shadows come too soon."

"Yes," said Jane, in such a shaken voice that he cursed himself

for a selfish brute. But Jane did not think him selfish. "The troubles have come already," said she sorrowfully.

"Ah!" He turned and regarded her keenly.

"I am not going to marry Rodney," said she in deliberate tones. "Do you remember what you said about the mischief time could do? Do you remember telling me that people always changed in three years? It was quite true. You were right. I believe you're always right. I changed. Rodney changed. We—we grew away from each other. It was no one's fault. It was no good looking round for some one to blame, because there was n't any one except that tiresome old Time. When I came back I found that all the beautiful golden glory of happiness which had been like a magic shield between us and the world—I found that it had gone. I found that *he* had fallen in love with another girl. I found that I——"

"Yes, Mademoiselle?" His eagerness startled her and her voice faltered.

"You told me once how dangerous Time was. You said: 'He isn't an old man with a scythe. He's a wicked magician with a wand. He uses that wand in strange ways.' I could n't understand it then. I did n't believe you. I had never thought that things would change so in three years. I thought real love lasted forever. It always does in books."

Lanselle began to speak, said something inaudible in his own tongue, then stopped and let her go on.

"So—I thought it was because Rodney was angry, and I tried to explain. I thought that if he forgave me, everything would be as it was before. And he did forgive me, and he seemed in a sort of way to love me again, but I—when he made love to me, I simply could n't bear it."

"Mademoiselle!"

He came and put his hand on her shoulder, leaning over her to look in her face.

"Yes," said Jane, honest to the end. "Then, I remember that I hardly thought of him after the first year, except when I did my lessons, and only as a sort of spur, you see. When I was in Venice, when I was in any beautiful place—oh, it was never Rodney I thought of. It was never Rodney that I wanted to be with. It was never——" She stopped and laughed nervously, but she dared not meet his eyes. "I did n't understand till I heard that you were going away," she said. "I did n't *really* understand even then. I only knew that it would break my heart if you did. But to-day, when I had that check in my purse—when Rodney accused me of selling him—when I would have given anything in the world to be able to fling the money in his face—oh, then I knew—I knew there was one thing I could n't give

up. It was the chance of helping you." She lifted her clear, lovely eyes to his agitated face, and suddenly he was kneeling beside her and holding her in his arms; and she knew that she was glad to be there. She knew that her happiness of three years ago was nothing to the golden glory which surrounded her now. Her cheek was pressed against his dark head, Armand's kisses were on her lips, he was murmuring little words of love and delight in his own tongue. They were together at last, and there was no one else in the whole wide world. Rodney, Nina, Marjory—they were all in the misty past. They had all melted away. They no longer lived for Jane.

"So if you're only going on my account," said Jane at last, with a happy sigh, "you need n't go—need you?" The sound of her own voice brought her back to the world, and she dragged herself away from him and went to his desk to fumble blindly among his papers. There was still something that she had to do.

"You're not really poor?" she asked, looking round eagerly. "You have n't lost everything? You mean it? You are not deceiving me?"

He smiled.

"No, no; I am not poor."

"Then, will you give me an envelope quick—and a sheet of paper?"

Surprised, he obeyed her, and she sat down and wrote a hasty letter with a shaking pen. It was Jane's hour of triumph.

DEAR RODNEY:

I return the money I had from Mrs. Sagrazet, with much pleasure. Please give it to her, and tell her that I am sorry I shall not be able to come back to Whiteroses. I am going to Aunt. I am very, very sorry I have behaved so badly, and done so much mischief. I did n't understand. I release you from your engagement to me, of course. I did n't understand that we had grown away from each other. I was too stupid at first to see that we had both changed. I am afraid I wilfully shut my eyes, because I did n't *want* to see that I had been beaten. I had never been beaten before, but those three years were too much for me. Time got the upper hand. Good-by. I am glad Miss Malincourt is better, and I should like you to ask her to forgive me for being so blind and stupid.

Always your sincere friend,

JANE.

P. S. I will write to Marjory.

She took Marjory's check, put it inside the letter, fastened it up in the envelope, turned, and once more found herself in her lover's arms.

"Now I feel honest again," said Jane.

SUBIACO

AN AUTOMOBILE TRIP AROUND ROME

By *J. Orbaan*

LESS than half an hour after you have crossed one of the poorest quarters of Rome—at the gate of San Lorenzo—and left behind you the mournful cypress-garden of the churchyard, Campo Verano, you reach the foot of the mountain range of Tivoli. The road has not been perfect, but its beauties have made you forget the sudden jumps over rutted points. Also there were some stops for huge cars loaded with uncut stone and rough blocks of *pozzolana*, the perfect cement from the Roman Campagna. Stone from Tivoli, and *pozzolana*, have been the building material for the greater part of the marvellous architecture of Rome. This to console the tourist for stopping. On the other roads it would have been wine-carts, with their conductors heavy in sleep, going or returning between Rome and the wine-producing villages of the Alban mountains. Tivoli does not produce wine worth being exported.

The guide-books tell enough about the Villa Hadrian, and something about the sulphur baths passed along the Via Tiburtina. While Hadrian's Villa is in an out of the way place, the modern hydrotherapical station announces itself without any doubt. A miserable steam street-car serves the place during summer and winter. In summer special bath-trains bring the visitors and the Roman team of water-polo players.

About this point the scenery takes on a grander aspect. The white road stretches through fresh meadows sprinkled with violets. The evergreens give a serious note of color in the foreground, and Roman and mediæval ruins invest the landscape with historical interest. Yet the eye will wander from this gracious scene to the wonderful hill where lies Tivoli with the peculiar and attractive profile of an old town. The hill shivers with the glitter of olive-woods, silver-gray and gray-green. Behind, rises a broad panorama of mountains—the utmost range of the Sabina, from the sharp-pointed Monte Gennaro to the lofty-shaped Monte Guadagnolo. It will awaken every man's Alpinist

instinct to look at those majestic mountains, even if he knows that their height is not overwhelming. Each is worthy of a day's excursion. The rocky top of Monte Gennaro offers a splendid panorama of Latium, reaching to the sea, including the bed of the Tiber and the Lake of Bracciano. Behind, towards the West, the Italian Alps, circling around the Gran Sasso of Italy, offer an unexpected view of real mountain scenery. Other beauties of the Monte Guadagnolo are a group of lofty little villages of great age. In one of those, looking westward—Santa Maria in Vulturella—is a chapel of the times of the Fathers of the Church, containing real relics of old Christian sculpture in wood, and remembrances of Saracen invasion—the peaceful invasion of oriental art. The mountain has also an outlet by a pathway to the Arx of Palestrina, where the tourist finds himself again in a land of Roman history and antiquities.

I give with intention the example of Santa Maria in Vulturella, for it is typical of art in that region. Rome and its history have overpowered all thought of mediæval art in this part of the country. The foreign colonies of our days are divided into the antiquity worshippers of Rome and the mediævalists of Florence. Only as an exception do they occasionally stroll in each other's territory. The rule is, to keep strictly to their own domains. For instance, in Rome and in a good part of Latium, are quite overlooked the frescoes of the middle ages, which would be closely studied in Tuscany. At one side of the Via Tiburtina, which we passed, are rare frescoes in Palombara Sabina, and farther on in the valley of the Anio, there are in forgotten churches interesting samples of the mysterious school of painters which we know only from the underground church of San Clemente.

The whole valley may belong to the middle ages, and to our admiration of nature always the odes of Horace sing in under-voice. The scenic illustrations of these wonderful poems are to be seen in the master paintings by Dutch artists of the seventeenth century in the Louvre and the National Gallery of London.

Nature has provided the valley with the quick and cold water of the Anio. Even in these modern times of irrigation there are left gorgeous corners of rich vegetation, crowned with the broad umbrella of Italian pines. Horace leads us along the "preceps Anio" and sideways to his country place, where yet the Fons Bandusia flows. Of painters we are reminded by a rocky nest, Saracinesco and Anticoli, lovely in their isolation, the places which in the memory of man have sent their inhabitants to Rome as models. A short distance past Tivoli, scattered cells in the rock bear the name of Saint Benedict.

We penetrate through the marvellous road in the valley. The wall of mountains becomes more and more majestic, the landscape broader and stronger in the simplicity of its outlines, the villages placed as in

feudal times. The name of the great Saint of history absorbs us. That means to be brought from the tiring Roman antiquities, from the Republican or Cæsarian period, to the very beginning of the middle ages.

The heart beats quickly as the magnificent vale of Subiaco opens before our enchanted eyes, with its prelude of nature's beauty from Tivoli upwards in the valley of Aniene.

At Subiaco some hours may be passed by the tourist with great delight and profit. From down in the valley, where there are ruins of Neronian buildings, he can go in meditation to the height from where the light of Benedictus first shone upon European civilization. Along his way there is leisure to work out the comparison between the rising road of historical facts and the steep path over the calcareous rock. His widening horizon, embracing more fully the stupendous views, can represent the spiral wandering from the narrow sight of Cæsar to the broad vision of the Saint.

Midway on the hill he is rewarded for the tiresome climbing by a group of edifices which present æsthetic enjoyment surpassed only by intense historical interest. He is already at his first rest—Saint Scolastica. A gentle monk in the habit of Saint Benedict shows a rare collection of old manuscripts and books printed in that same monastery between 1465 and 1467. Some of those parchments were written in the ninth century, and the books printed here are among the earliest specimens of printing in Italy. History is a peculiarly closed circle in this country, as in no other. Here on the foundation of this order, which keeps science as a task even till our days, the art of printing, the greatest aid of science, started in the peninsula. It *seems* mere symbolism and is bare truth.

Our spirit is prepared for the visit to the ancient chapels. Sacro Speco, "the holy grotto," certainly was once the abode of Saint Benedictus. We enter, blinded from the powerful light of the Italian day, into the darkness of the range of chapels. The way winds under noble arches, between walls closely covered with strange frescoes of hardly known authors, down alongside chapels where the prayers of deep-inclined monks sound like running water pouring from the very rock. As if to increase the tension of our awe, there is painted on the wall a genuine portrait of Saint Francis. No doubt seems left as to its authenticity. The two most mighty monastic orders of the world meet in a kind visit of their founders. A small garden on the edge of a precipice still preserves the roses told of in saintly legends. In a courtyard the raven, his companion in exile, is at home; as if one and a half thousand years had not passed since Benedict gave in the "Holy Grotto" the rules for all time to the first scholars of the order.

When the violet shadows of the late day begin to creep along the

velvety green of the surrounding mountains, you have left far behind you Subiaco, and passed Mandela, Vicovara, and Castel-Madama. Above Tivoli the sky raises an ethereal symphony of beaming yellow striped with shaded green, like an aurora borealis. Dusk surprises you dreaming before the classic splendor of the scenery. From now on there will be only the two cones of light from the lamps before you, till they strike the first stones of the old Roman wall.

May a providential look at the calendar and a special meteorological favor of St. Benedict bless you with a clear-moon night in your flight through the Campagna!



A MOOD OF NATURE

BY GEORGE BENEDICT

AS high as the small grass of the field,
 Eight inches high, as high as my head,
 Lie I reclined; and look o'er the tops
 Of the grass to the tips of the tall black trees;
 I restlessly turn, and put my lips
 And flatten my cheeks 'gainst the savory soil;
 And stretch my arms to embrace the earth:
 Alas! the little my arms can hold!

And so I've turned from the *show* of things!
 For which is taller, the grass or the tree?
 One size to my eye are grass, tree, and self:
 All small to the Infinite; equally nought.
 Better am I than they until
 I say so; that instant they're more than I:
 As much as the pure little simple child
 Is more than the braggart who swells and lies!

For we three alike take suck from the earth;
 And not one of us three that knows what he sucks!
 And if I am more than the tree in brains,
 The tree rears his bushy head nearer the Sun;
 And the green little grass is sweeter than both;
 And sweetness is not to despise, you'll confess:
 Then who shall say who is less, who is more?
 Who shall say? 'T is lost in Eternity!

THE WOMAN OR THE SPIDER

By Will Levington Comfort

Author of "Routledge Rides Alone," "The Glowworm," etc.

STRANG went into the big Argentine town of Las Puntas with a thin wallet and a frightened heart. He was a grave young man, with still many lessons to learn from the grim old mother of the elect whose name is Poverty. Las Puntas he had never heard of before, but great packed life was there. It subdued the small bit of aggressiveness which he had left. The ship in the harbor, which he had just quitted (after four days down the coast), had scared him with its squalor and the apparently noxious breeds of men aboard. There was a haunted look in his eyes from the lack of money.

Now, the queer, the humorous thing about it was that Strang was from New York. With certain scales of the monster Manhattan he was more than remotely familiar. His line was to hunt men, and he had done many worthy small things, from the point of view of those who live that way. To find a man who can herd human game in New York frightened at Las Puntas is not new, though funny. The change of climate and the bigger view dazed him.

He had done all his things young—in the first crude years of a white man's activity; just twenty-seven, he was, for this adventure. He was drawn too fine by the small ideas of his calling to meet the world—until he could become adjusted. He was too conscious of himself and criminals, to be expanded. Also he had been observant of prisons full of hard faces, instead of seas and coasts.

The detective-bureau with which he was employed—it was not a regular municipal office—sent Strang and another man, named Dillon, out after Lamartine, who had pointed toward South America. Lamartine was a big German, who had mixed matters in bonds to his own delight and profit, leaving many score of alleged stock-holders in various conditions of hate, hunger, and loss. Lamartine was a mean man, a vampire, a robber of the poor.

Now, Strang had left the office with ample personal and official funds, but the large views from a ship had appealed to him, and he began to let down the bars. It must have been something of the vacation-spirit which stole over him, for he became absorbed in scenery. Then two

men with cards called, and he forgot to look into their faces. They took all but a tithe of what he had. This idea of breaking training after years of one-pointed endeavor is a shock to any man.

So he was up against the crust of things without a wire to hook him to home—and without his man. Moreover, Las Puntas was one of the blackest towns in Argentine. Great reactions were upon him—reactions of wines, and cards, and ports. These make a man think faster.

There was a vague clue which connected Lamartine with Las Puntas. Leaving his ship and reaching the pier by a small boat, Strang followed the first hotel-runner who caught his sleeve. The substance was not in him to discriminate. His ship had been vile, and the hotel to which he was taken was equally so—with an added local vileness. Feeling his few coins, Strang was glad of the hotel, but he felt his clothing soiled at each contact with a man or a railing; also his self-respect.

The building was a broad, low Spanish affair in what had been recently a back-street. Big towns change quickly their arteries, when the slums of the world are rushing in to pick up metals. Faces in the dim lobby, and the denizens of the dinner halls, told Strang the character of the place—made him think of newspaper-tales of new gold towns in the American West. The supper that was brought proved his surmises.

But to his room there was a balcony. Old quiet Spain had built it, and old Madrid sang there. It was not named in the price-list of the present proprietors because the usual clientele was not looking for memories nor sentiments. Neither was Strang, but he sat there and breathed.

Voices of detestation reached him from the hotel, and the street below was riven with black hasting figures. . . . Suddenly a bit of healing and beauty touched his consciousness—a woman's voice from a balcony to the right, and in a tone of pleading:

“But I know he was an American, and he looked rather well-bred——”

A man's tones came back humorously: “But an American who comes to Las Puntas and chooses this hotel would not be ‘rather well-bred’—unless he was broke.”

“He may have made a mistake,” she answered lightly. “He looked lonely and sad and New Yorkish. Of course I may be wrong, but, Melton dear, we really should see some one else—or we'll tire of each other. For days and days we've been locked up here. I don't know *why*. I've wanted so to see the city. . . . Don't let me ever get tired of you, Melton! . . . Two people can exhaust each other in one room—I mean, even if they love as we do. It must be something human! Take this chance and ask the stranger in. He may

be as lonely as—we are! If he is not of our kind—there is always a choice way of saying good-by.”

All this Strang heard. He found himself bending toward his neighbors' balcony—found himself in a torture lest the man should laugh away his welcome. . . . Presently, when there was a tap at his own door, he answered as if springing out of a trance. He could just discern, when the door was open, a tall, fine figure. The face was in darkness. A voice that was deep and desirable asked:

“Oh, I say, sir, would n't you like to come in and see your neighbors next door, or next balcony, as you like? Mrs. Yarbin said you looked lonely and American. She is the same. As for myself, I should be glad to please you, and—the lady always. . . . I guess we're both mixed up in rather questionable quarters. We have n't changed because we have n't but a day or two left in Las Puntas. There's a bottle of wine and good company in there, I assure you.”

“Thank you,” said Strang. “I was feeling lonesome. From the standpoint of this hotel, Las Puntas is certainly somewhat of a depresser.”

The other room was a livable place—indeed, a place of cheer. It looked as if these people had been here some time, though going in a day or two. A woman's touch was upon all the ornaments, which were many and fine. Every tissue and fabric of adornment bore the testimony of opulence and taste. A buffet with a glisten of crystal; a tiny pantry with the shine of silver and the purity of linen; a larder, behind glass with a choice cut, and a display of fruit. The room was very dim. All these things Strang's cultivated detail-attention caught as his eyes adjusted to the lack of light.

He had not yet actually seen the man's face. Any face is harder to discern than dead objects, but he glanced at the woman as she passed the window. Hers was a fair and quickened influence—health, lineage, ideals, ardor, fragrance—the kind of face which makes a man dream. She spoke. Strang did not follow the words, but the voice was amorous as a country chime. The detective had not known much of women, being busy for so long. She started a neglected poem in his brain.

The man lit a cigarette suddenly, and Strang turned and received a subconscious shock of violence. The face he saw was deeply and tensely lined; masculine, but fine. It was the face of a man who has thought and suffered with the rights and wrongs of the world and his own life—so hard to adjust. The galvanism of the first shock, as the match was lighted, slowly developed detectively into a thought that he had seen the man before.

“I passed you in the hall just about dinner-time,” the woman said. “I'm sure you did n't notice, but to me you seemed strange

and out of place here—American also. We all have a touch of that terrible nostalgia. It's queer how one's country or one's village calls. So I suggested to Mr. Yarbin to call you in for awhile."

"It was very good of you. My name is Strang. I'm from New York."

"I was there once," said the man, in a way of quiet humor.

The evening was delightful enough to make a memory—one of the kind that forces a man to be glad that he is alive—enough to appreciate a bit of beauty. Such things are not to be duplicated. Strang forgot to look at the man, and listened to his neglected poem, as the woman moved with her touches here and there. . . . But the inevitable was the man's face! It was bigger and more important than the poem and the woman to Strang, even when he was compelled to notice how the woman's soul was Yarbin's. . . . Suddenly a flash came to the detective—an ugly picture: a basement police-office in a soiled district of New York; small pictures all about the walls—pictures and placards of fallen and wanted men—some dead by violence already; some in stone and steel.

The face of Yarbin had been there! The loot in connection was a vast thing, but the looted corporation was vaster in funds. The detective remembered the exact corner in which the profile before him had hung in an imperfect half-tone; even remembered the world's excitement and his own man-hunting spirit, as the papers published the details of the case. . . . There was a big reward still standing. Here was bigger game than Lamartine—and already caged!

"You eat very lightly, Mr. Strang. Don't you enjoy this wine?" asked the lady with the poem-stirring eyes.

"Suppose he remembers me," Strang thought as the woman was busy at the buffet. "My name is Strang here and home, and men like Yarbin know my game. He'll kill—or I'll kill him first."

The woman returned to speak with him, and her presence crushed the idea of capture for a moment. . . . They parted for the night, and Strang went back to his own balcony to think.

"He's bigger game than Lamartine," he repeated, "and Lamartine is a sight harder to find. If I wire the office that I've got Al Phister, alias Melton Yarbin, and Dillon brings in Lamartine—God! what a victory for the house!" But always came to him the appeal of the woman and the things she had said. . . . Strang pressed his temples with his knuckles because the thoughts were running too fast for his former pace. Finally he slept, with the last thought that his game was still within gunshot.

In the cool and quiet of the early morning, when there was not a sound in the next room, and Las Puntas was showing him sunlight

instead of shadow, Strang thought it all out again—the evening, the woman, and the man. . . . “Yarbin is attached to a big reward because his crime was immense. The reward still holds. I have no money to trace Lamartine. If I cable for funds, the office will begin to think of what they gave me. . . . God! how can I cable with a dollar or two? But I’ve got a frank! If I cable that here’s Phister, I can get anything without a thought.”

The ideas began to get too fast. He went below, and watched the natives for a space. The message was forming in his brain:

Wrong clue on Lamartine, but have captured Phister. Send funds.

What a cry would be raised in the office in his name! In his room, he looked at his guns; then heard a soft foot-fall in the next room, a door opening, a light tread in the hall, and a knock at his own door.

“Don’t bother opening, Mr. Strang, but we have breakfast whenever you are ready, and it will be much better than below. Come!”

The detective dropped down upon his bed. . . . The woman was too pure to know that Phister was a thief, and he was so good to her—that he meant all. . . . He joined them. The room was enchanting in the golden light, and the pair were noble together. . . . And here they were hung up in the hell of South America for their—no, for his—sin. . . . It occurred to Strang that the man was big enough to keep on loving his one woman. His first doubt of the woman came. He was sorry for it, and recalled for the first time that his business was to look for evil in people. His idea had been that the woman’s love was ardent but temporary.

The breakfast was all that fine hands could do. . . . Strang started to leave, but Yarbin followed him into the hall. Was it the moment of his meeting with the crook? Was one of them to shoot first and quickly? . . . Instead a calm voice, the voice of a gentleman, called after him:

“Strang, frankly speaking, what do you know? What do you want to know? I can’t understand the way you look at me.”

“I only know that you have been very kind, and that I’m obliged,” the detective managed to say.

Yarbin looked up quickly and smiled. They faced in the hall, and the woman was humming a song of Spain. Strang was holding the butt of his pistol, looking to fire through his pocket at the slightest deadly intent of the other.

“I think I must have been all wrong,” Yarbin said in his mild, masterful way, “but it occurred to me that you were out after bigger game than lions——”

The woman interrupted them laughingly, gave Strang her hand,

for he had told them as a ruse that he was going away. He looked at her, who had favored him continually as a guest. She had made him think of New York and Romance, which is hard for a woman to do gracefully and be in love with a man at the same time. Yarbin said no more. Strang moved across the hall to his own door, their smiles following him. Away from them, he thought of his own career again, and was interrupted by a knock which brought the following from his office:

Lamartine caught by Dillon on Chilian coast. Your clue entirely wrong. Better come in.

"Now they're laughing at me," the tired faculties of the detective prompted. "I've got to pick up Phister or I'm a dead one."

Then he remembered that he had done many perfect things with the small game in that life back home which was so far and so alluring.

"They would send me money to get home, even if I was fired. What's the matter with me? I'll pick up Phister, and the woman be——"

He moved unsteadily to the streets again, his only refuge. It was a blinding street, for the day was getting high. "Dillon has Lamartine, I'm disgraced, and Phister is up-stairs."

The sun was literally oxidizing the filth of the sordid hovels and the reeking roadway. It began to tingle his scalp, when he happened to feel the pistol in his pocket. He muttered aloud but thickly:

"I'll go and get him!"

On the stairway with his head bent down, a spider attracted his attention. Why? No one knows, unless the spider had scurried toward the baluster from the vibration of his tread. Certainly his brain had been in the room above, arranging the details of the capture and the possible—always possible—idea of the other man shooting first.

Halting rigidly, he thought of two things: the first, that this man and woman, looking so decent together, had entertained him when the whole world of Las Puntas was an abomination; second, he had seen men adventuring around this far port with less than *his* small change, but with valiant hearts and ragged trousers. These were white men, like himself, with far more of the Open spirit in them—more of the dare and hell-take-care-of-to-morrow stuff than he had ever dreamed of, wandering around the pent evils of this big town.

"It would be a good thing to try! They seem to like it. There is big life down here, and I can use my hands or my head or my gun. I won't cable for money. The office can go to the devil. There are other offices, and the world to play in. . . . And that pair up-stairs! The woman is the first I ever saw worth while, and the man has too much brains for me——"

"Oh, Strang, what are you doing on the stairs—sick?"

It was Phister, alias Yarbin, passing above. The detective scrambled up to him and looked him in the face, forgetting his gun.

"Say, Strang, I've got a notion that you're broke, and no good man should be without the cheap metal stuff down here. Just wait a second, and I'll get you a wad. I happen to have plenty."

He slipped into the room and brought back a bundle large and tight.

"What a quiet chap you are about your troubles! I think you'll find this do for a day or two. You can't get on a ship without reckoning with a purser. It's too bad, but it's surely so."

Strang did n't look at the wrapping of bills, but he felt the hand of Yarbin warm and firm in his own, and in a kind of a daze he saw the smile of the other, looking up. The lady was humming in her room, and New York and all America was in the melody.

That afternoon Strang looked back at Las Puntas from a ship's deck, and that night he paced it alone.

"The office will take me back for the old work I did," he thought. "If not, there are other offices. I came pretty near being a discard."

When the stars were clearer on the big Atlantic, and the tiny Argentine ports twinkled on the left, there was a smile on Strang's face. He uttered a really effective sentence:

"I wonder which it was that saved Phister from me—the woman or the spider?"



GENIUS

BY WILLIAM STRUTHERS

I.

HE had a thought;
 'T was so divine
 That Wisdom whispered: "It is mine."

II.

He sang a song;
 It was so sweet
 That plowmen paused to note its beat.

III.

He spake a word;
 It was so good
 That it became his neighbor's food.

FLAHERTY'S PROMOTION

By Burton E. Stevenson

Author of "Cadets of Gascony," "At Odds with the Regent," etc.



I.

LIEUTENANT DENNIS FLAHERTY sat in his chair and yawned. Then he stretched his great arms high into the air, and his great legs out before him, and wriggled. He had inside him an uncomfortable, stuffed feeling. For Lieutenant Flaherty had long contracted the habit of eating more than was good for him, and the consequence was not only an increasing embonpoint, but a habitual torpor, as of a gorged python. When he had been a patrolman, these effects were less marked, since exercise and fresh air aided digestion. Even as sergeant he had had to move around a good deal. But since his promotion to the lieutenancy, his duties had consisted largely of sitting in a chair and looking wise. So his girth increased and his mental agility diminished, until there were times when his brain seemed scarcely to work at all.

It had cost Flaherty six hundred dollars to be made a sergeant, and twelve hundred to secure the lieutenancy. He did n't fully understand the workings of the game—indeed, he considered it none of his business—but he knew that twenty-five hundred more would be needed before he could get a captaincy. Who got the money, he did n't know, but that was the price. He looked upon it as an investment, and a good one. Oh, yes, he had read newspaper denunciations of "the system," just as he had read denunciations of many other things. Them newspaper fellers had to have somethin' to fill up with, and the world seemed to wag along pretty much as it had always done.

So, since the hour of gaining the lieutenancy, Flaherty had set himself to save the sum needed to secure the next promotion. And this was about to be accomplished. He had eighteen hundred dollars, scraped together from the unfortunates of his district, and the wardman, who dealt with the powers that be, had offered to take his note for the remaining seven hundred. So Flaherty was happy. He knew that, as captain, it would n't take him long to raise the money to pay that note, and then he could begin saving for the next degree. He had visions of the day when, as inspector, he would be in receipt of that

more than comfortable income which, it was well known, inspectors always enjoyed.

Now, don't, in the innocence of your hearts, go to condemning Flaherty. He was no moral leper; he was an honest and generous, if somewhat thick-headed, Irishman. We are all the products of our environment, and Flaherty was the product of his, no more to be blamed for obliquity of vision than is the cannibal who eats his fallen foe. In fact, Flaherty was a better man than some. He had risked his life in places where others had held back; his hand was always in his pocket, and if the money he gave away had really been earned by others, why, how many of us earn the money we call ours?

Can you see him sitting there, with his rotund body, and florid face, and big black mustache, and black close-cropped hair growing low on neck and forehead; with the little good-natured creases at the corners of his eyes, and the great stretch of jowl that hung above the collar? He tipped the scales at two hundred and ninety pounds, and that was one reason he was fonder of sitting than he used to be.

Well, there sat Flaherty at his station that July afternoon, when in unto him entered a slim, nervous, prosperous-looking individual whom he had never seen before. And this is where our story begins.

"Lieutenant Flaherty?" asked the stranger.

"The same," said Flaherty.

"My name is Jones," continued the stranger, and handed Flaherty a card. "Of the American Vitagraph Company. We want your assistance."

Flaherty had a dim idea that it was new patent medicine, and that a testimonial was required for insertion in the newspapers, together with his photograph, in uniform. He had been exploited in this way before, once in company with Mrs. Flaherty and the children. It had tickled them to have their pictures in the papers. Besides, it paid.

"Set down," said he, and waved toward a chair. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Jones. Now, what kin I do fer you?"

"Well," said Jones, sitting down and settling back in his chair and carefully crossing his legs, as if they were fragile and might break, "you know we're a big concern—the biggest in the country. We've got 'em all beat when it comes to lifelikeness and sensation. But we've got to keep hustling, for some of the others are pretty close at our heels. The younger generation, you know."

Flaherty did n't know, but he nodded. He had learned long since the folly of asking questions. They only displayed one's ignorance.

"What we want to engineer now," added Jones, "is a bank robbery."

"What?" said Flaherty, sitting up. "A bank robbery!"

"Yes; the real thing, you know: hold-up, murder of faithful employee, get-away, and final capture. You can fake the interior

scenes all right, but we've got to take the exterior on the street. We thought of the National Trust. It has an imposing façade."

The last word was Greek to Flaherty, and the idea flashed through his head that he was talking to a lunatic. The stranger's eyes were certainly preternaturally bright.

"Go on," he said.

"The trouble with these street scenes is to keep back the crowds, especially in New York. You know this is the worst rubber-neck town in the world. We carry our own people, who know just what to do, and if the crowd breaks in, it spoils everything. The success of the whole thing depends on the effect. We rehearse the whole thing in advance, work out every little detail. I don't imagine the scene at the National will take over four or five minutes. We want to show the thieves running out and down the steps and hopping into their autos. We're going to have a pursuit by the police, and a running fight, but that can be done out in the country somewhere, with nobody around to bother. You can't imagine how critical the people who go to see these moving-picture shows are getting to be."

Flaherty heaved a sigh of relief and mopped his face with his handkerchief. At last he understood.

"Mighty hot in here," he said. "Not a breath of air. Let's go across the street an' git somethin' cool."

Mr. Jones assented and they crossed the street to the Imperial Café, where two tall glasses, in which ice clinked and mint floated, were soon set before them.

"Nice place," said Jones, looking around. "First time I was ever in it."

"Yes," agreed Flaherty, "and does a good business." He had often thought that, if he were not in the police and on the highway to promotion, he would like to conduct such a place as this—a nice, clean, law-abiding place, with a steady custom. "Now," he added, as he pushed back his glass, "go on with the story."

So Mr. Jones told in detail of the plans of the Vitagraph Company for a wonderful new picture, which would catch and hold the multitude by the impressiveness of its detail. It was to show a bank robbery, the robbery of the biggest trust company in New York. The robbers would dash up in their automobiles, enter the building, overpower the clerks, hand-cuff them to the railings, perhaps shoot one or two as examples to the others, grab the trays of money standing about and empty them into the suit-cases they had brought with them, enter the safe and fill their suit-cases with the currency stored there; then they would dash back to their cars, and a wild ride would follow through the streets and out into the country, with the police in hot pursuit. At last the robbers would be brought to bay, some would be killed, and the rest

captured and led back by the police in triumph, while the stolen money was restored to the vaults of the trust company, greatly to the relief of its president, who was just preparing to commit suicide.

"That last don't sound hardly nateral," objected Flaherty. "He'd be more apt to cop out what was left an' hike out fer Canada. You don't know them presidents."

Mr. Jones admitted that his acquaintance with the presidents of trust companies was not extensive; but the important thing with moving pictures was not so much a slavish adherence to the truth, as the introduction of certain homely elements which touched the heart of the multitude. They had thought they might show the president rewarding the widow and children of the old and trusted employee who had lost his life in defense of the company's millions. Perhaps they would do that yet; meanwhile, suppose we have the glasses replenished?

Flaherty agreed.

"Of course, you know," he said, "you could n't really pull off a thing like that. All the teller's got to do is to touch a button at his elbow an' send in an alarm that'll bring about a hundred men on the scene inside o' three minutes."

"It's the teller who does that, is it?" inquired Mr. Jones.

"Yes; the payin'-teller. He's in a little cage right at the left as you go in. An' even if he did n't git to do that, a crowd o' men runnin' down the steps would be nabbed by somebody. There's always a special officer on duty at the door, an' a patrolman on the block."

Mr. Jones nodded and rattled the ice around in his glass reflectively.

"Oh, well," he said, at last, "it's just like the stage. A lot of things happen there that could never happen in real life. All the people ask is to be amused and excited. Just so it's pulled off in good shape—that's all they want."

"That's your lookout," said Flaherty. "What is it you want me to do?"

"We want you to take a detail of six or eight men down to the National Trust and hold the crowd back on either side, while we take the picture of the get-away. It won't take over five or six minutes, so that traffic won't be impeded. Anybody who's in a hurry can cross over."

Flaherty looked at his companion.

"What is there in it for me?" he asked.

"How will two hundred do?"

"Make it two-fifty. I'll have to give the men a fiver apiece."

"All right," agreed Jones. "I guess we can afford it. If the film turns out all right, it'll be a gold mine. Of course, if it don't turn out right, we'll expect you to give us another chance. Something happens,

once in a while, to spoil the film, and then we have to take it over again."

"That's all right," said Flaherty. "When do you want to do it?"

"Suppose we say to-morrow morning. We've got the film all ready up to this point, and we're anxious to get it out. The fact is," he added, leaning across the table and speaking in a lower tone, "we've got a tip that Pathé Frères are working up a big film along these lines, and we want to beat them to it."

"To-morrow mornin', then," said Flaherty. "What time?"

"Nine-thirty's the best time. There won't be so many people around as later in the day."

"That'll suit," agreed Flaherty. "I'll have the men there on the dot."

"Good!" said Jones, and got out his pocket-book. "Here's the two-fifty," and he counted out five fifty-dollar bills.

"Thanks," said Flaherty, and slipped the bills into his pocket. "Have somethin' more?"

"No," said Jones, rising. "I've got to be getting along. I've got a lot of details to attend to."

"Good-by till to-morrow, then," said Flaherty, and they shook hands and parted.

Flaherty stopped to purchase and light a black cigar. Then he returned to his chair at the station, and fell into a pleasant reverie, as he watched the smoke circle upwards. He would take eight patrolmen and give them five dollars apiece. That made forty dollars. Taking out another ten to be spent in celebration, left two hundred. He would have to borrow only five hundred. Captain—then inspector—it would n't take long! And, smiling a satisfied smile, his chin sank lower and lower upon his breast, his cigar dropped from his fingers, and he peacefully slept the remainder of the afternoon away.

II.

PROMPTLY at nine-thirty the next morning, Lieutenant Flaherty marched his detail of eight men down the avenue to the National Trust. He found two automobiles drawn up by the curb before the building. One of them had a big moving-picture camera mounted over the dash, and the operator was busy adjusting it. Six or eight men lolled in the tonneaus, among them Jones, who sprang out as he saw Flaherty and his men approach.

"Everything's ready," he said, and Flaherty noticed again how bright his eyes were.

"All right," said Flaherty, and his men began to push back the crowd which had collected in a minute. "How much space will you need?"

"Oh, about fifty feet. And keep a lane clear, so that the cars can get away."

"All right," said Flaherty again, and threw a line across the pavement on either side of the building.

The patrolman on the block came running up to investigate, and Flaherty explained the situation. Then, as the cars backed around and headed uptown, the crowd saw the picture-machine and understood, too. Some moved on, but the greater part tarried, grinning expectantly, to see what would happen.

"I guess that's all right," said Flaherty.

Jones looked over the preparations with a critical eye.

"Yes," he said; "but be sure nobody breaks through."

"Oh, nobody'll git through," Flaherty assured him. "Don't you worry about that."

"All right," said Jones, and nodded to the men in the cars.

The operator of the picture-machine began to turn the crank; the men jumped out, each with a suit-case, and, with Jones at their head, charged up the steps of the building. An instant later, the great doors swung shut behind them.

One minute, two minutes, three minutes passed, while the crowd watched the entrance, still grinning expectantly. A depositor hurried up and protested loudly at being detained for such foolishness.

"Just a minute more," said Flaherty soothingly. "Just a minute more."

"I don't feel just right, some way," remarked the patrolman, watching the entrance anxiously.

And then the doors swung open and Jones appeared at the top of the steps, his men behind him, suit-cases in hand.

There was a sudden shout from the crowd, and Flaherty's men held it back with difficulty. The motors in the cars were humming, and Flaherty saw that a wild-eyed man, with a broken hand-cuff dangling from one arm, was following the make-believe robbers down the steps.

"Thieves!" he screamed. "Thieves! Stop them, officer!"

His face was white and agonized as he turned it to where Flaherty stood immobile.

"Thieves!" he screamed again.

"Good actor," said Flaherty to himself. "But what's the use of him yellin' so? That won't show in the picter."

And then, as the patrolman, who was young and inexperienced, mopped the sweat from his face, the rearmost of the robbers, feeling the pursuer at his heels, paused, turned, levelled a revolver, and fired.

The pursuer stopped for an instant rigidly on tiptoe, half-way down the steps, then crumpled and rolled limply to the bottom and lay there on his face.

The crowd cheered.

"Great!" said Flaherty. "Astonishin' how them actors kin fall like that without hurtin' themselves."

The patrolman did not answer, only mopped his face again.

But the robbers were in their cars and off like a shot through the lane that had been cleared for them, the man at the machine in the rear car turning the crank frantically. And the passers-by understood and smiled and made way.

Flaherty watched them until they were out of sight, then, as he turned, he saw that the limp figure still lay where it had fallen at the foot of the steps. Flaherty bent over and shook his shoulder.

"All right, old sport," he said. "It's all over. You kin come to, now."

The still figure did not respond, and, with a sudden tightening of the heart, Flaherty turned it over. Blood was slowly oozing from an ugly hole in the forehead. The man was dead.

"Why, that's Dixon, the watchman," said the patrolman, his face livid, and a sudden frightened stillness fell upon the crowd.

Flaherty felt his throat constrict and go dry as he sprang up the steps and hurled himself through the door.

A groan burst from him as he saw what lay inside.

Prone on the marble floor, where a bullet had stretched him in the first instant, lay the paying-teller; while a dozen pale and frightened men were neatly handcuffed to the railings. The money-trays were empty and the doors of the great vault stood open.

The robbery had been accomplished just as Jones had outlined it the day before. And as he bent above the body of the teller, slain before he had had a chance to touch that button at his elbow, Flaherty groaned again. For he felt that the blood of the murdered man was on his head.

III.

THE cars were found, an hour later, in the garage from which they had been rented. Their drivers reported that they had stopped at Times Square and that all but one of the men had got out and walked quietly away. The man who remained had come on to the garage, paid for the rental of the cars, said he would send for the camera, and disappeared in the crowd outside. That was the end of them. The camera proved to be only a box with a crank to it, and a cheap lens in front.

And Flaherty? Oh, Flaherty is now the proprietor of the Imperial Café. You may see him there any day. He's not as fat as he was, and he looks considerably older. They tell me he is subject to fits of melancholia.

THE BROWN PAPER PARCEL

By Karl von Kraft

I FIRST met Hammond on shipboard, as one of a small party of "personally conducted" travellers—Europe-bound. At once I was captivated by a something in his bearing which subtly yet simply ignored the barriers usually set between strangers, and we soon became sympathetic friends. Even now I can't quite account for this attraction—perhaps it was the fine gray-eyed sincerity of his homely face: a rugged, clean face, tanned by the high winds of the prairie country; or it may have been the sense of repose I felt when I first gripped his huge satisfying fist. At any rate, I found that my first strong impressions were quite borne out by after happenings.

Hammond, as I soon learned, was a Western school-teacher of some light and leading—a big man in a small community, I take it, and frankly in love with his work. To him it was a calling; yet he did n't take himself too seriously. I never met so simple-hearted, direct, and open-minded a man. The "effete East" could not have produced him—he was too well aware of the things he did n't know, too unashamed in asking sincere questions, too unconscious of the uses of veneer. Once in a while some shallower person would poke fun at Hammond, but it never hurt him. He assayed pure metal.

One thing, however, was mysterious about the Pedagogue, as we had dubbed him. He always carried about with him a largish parcel done up in brown wrapping paper. Porters carried his baggage aboard the liner, but the bundle he held under his arm. It was most carefully stowed in his stateroom—by his own hands. And if he ever opened it to gaze at its cherished contents, it was always behind a closed door.

If anything, Hammond's vigilance was increased when the shore-journey up from Naples began. The brown paper parcel was never committed to a *facchino*—no porter had been known to touch it. It was never forwarded by goods-train, nor yet by post. Always—through Italy, Switzerland, and down the Rhine—Hammond himself placed it, reverently it seemed, in the luggage rack of his compartment, or dozed on the seat with the parcel beside him, and even refused to have it stowed under canvas as is the general custom on the Rhine steamers.

Of course all this caused no end of chaffing. But Hammond stood it with the same open, naïve smile—and without offering one word of enlightenment. The wag of the party suggested that the parcel might contain Nebraska hard-boiled eggs with which occasionally to supplement the Pedagogue's simple continental breakfast, as he was known to have a well-developed appetite. Hammond only smiled.

Mrs. Tuttle wondered if he might be carrying with him a bundle of his sweetheart's love-letters, for he was a regular inquirer at *poste-restante* in every town. But again Hammond only smiled.

I don't know what we should have done at table d'hôte when fresh jokes came slowly, had it not been for the good old reliable Brown Paper Parcel—for by now we had begun to capitalize it, in thought and in speech. Whole mystery stories were concocted and related about it. Poetic suggestions not a few were offered covertly by the ladies. And now and then some one pulled out the stop of sentiment. Still Hammond only smiled.

When we should reach Cologne the Pedagogue would leave the party, we heard. On the afternoon of the last stage of the Rhine journey, from Bonn to Cologne by boat, we began to realize what the companionship of this simple, frank, gentle man had been meaning to us all. About three o'clock Hammond began to gather his traps together and to say good-by to his several friends. The Brown Paper Parcel he still held securely under his left arm. Presently he drew me gently aside from the rest, and we passed together to the stern of the boat where the passengers were fewest.

"Now," said he, "I'm going to tell you. You are of German extraction, and you will understand. This parcel contains"—in spite of myself I felt a movement of inordinate curiosity—"a suit of clothes."

"A suit of clothes!" I murmured in amazement.

"A suit of boy's clothes."

I shall never forget the look in his gray eyes. I thought I saw a glimmer of light on the mystery. But I did n't.

"Out in the little Western city where I teach," he went on, "one of my boys—a fine, red-cheeked German lad, from Arolsen, Waldeck—became rather a favorite of mine. Last April typhoid took him, and before he died they sent for me. He was quite alone in America, for the farmer-uncle with whom he had been living had gone back to Waldeck, leaving Rudolph to finish his final year in the High School before returning to his parents at home.

"When I saw him, he had n't time for many words, but he asked me to take this suit of clothes—his school suit, it was—and carry it to his parents in Germany, for he knew I was about to make this vacation journey."

We were both silent, Hammond and I—his thoughts reverting to the blonde German lad, while I was recalling the old German custom, how that when a family has lost a distant dear one the most precious thing for love and memory to feed on is some garment worn by him who has gone. But it must not be posted, it must not be expressed, it must not even be passed from strange hand to strange hand—it must be carried by some loving messenger direct to those who mourn.

At length Hammond spoke.

“So, now you see why I always carried the poor lad’s love-gift myself. I shall meet his old father and mother, and his only sister, in Cologne—at evening to-morrow. They will have come a long journey—and so,” he affectionately tapped his once mysterious charge, “and so will the Brown Paper Parcel.”



IN THE RAIN

A REMINISCENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES

BY DAVID POTTER

AS I swam across the river in the rain,
 The raindrops rang a warning to my brain:
*“There’s a crooked knife for you,
 And an ugly spear or two
 That’ll make you wish you had n’t come again.
 Go back!
 Oh, a dead man won’t look pretty in the rain!”*

As I swam across the river in the rain,
 The lurking lizards croaked a grim refrain:
*“For a cheek of velvet brown
 Shall a cayman drag you down,
 Or a man-trap spit you on a pointed cane.
 Go back!
 Can’t you see the jungle’s slippery with the rain?”*

As I swam across the river in the rain,
 My blood beat up an answer very plain:
*“Gold-black eyes as soft as night
 Gave a promise of delight,
 And never was there pleasure without pain.
 Go back?
 Why, her hair will be all shinin’ in the rain!”*

THE INSPIRATION

By Anne Peacock

MILES GRANT threw back his head and breathed deeply of the crisp, sunny October air.

"It's a perfect morning," he said, by way of greeting to Peyton, whose aggressively business-like gait slowed as the two came face to face.

"Perfect? Maybe," answered the lawyer, somewhat brusquely. "I'm no judge of perfection. It takes you poets to find perfection in this dreary, sin-stained world. Have you seen the morning papers?"

"I never read newspapers," said Grant absently, his fine eyes lingering on the golden mist which hung over the Park. Peyton made a gesture of irritation, but he smiled affectionately into the poet's attractive face.

"No, I suppose not. Where are you going?"

"Nowhere—anywhere. The world is wide—and, incidentally, my dear Peyton, I might remind you that the world is not a dreary, sin-stained place, but the abode of beauty, on a day like this. It is also full of adventures—I go to seek one," he added, with a half-jocular wave of the hand.

"Oh, come along—keep me company. I'm a bit down, this lovely morning of yours," said Peyton, and the two turned down the Avenue. He reverted presently to Grant's remark. "No, you blessed old dreamer, I suppose you don't read the newspapers. I wish to Heaven there was n't a printing-press in existence for about a week. Confound it all!"—he thumped his stick savagely on the pavement.

Grant sighed. He was sincerely absorbed in the rare joyousness of the day; it went to his head like wine, and he preferred to remain in his dreamy state of semi-intoxication, with images and happy lines forming themselves in his mind. Nevertheless, with the gentle courtesy which was one of his many charms, he gave himself to his friend.

"What is troubling you, Peyton?" he asked.

"Oh, well—I had a talk with the district attorney last night—you know the Grand Jury returned an indictment yesterday—and he wants me to appear as counsel for Gondieff."

Grant stopped and turned indignantly to face his friend.

"That assassin? That cowardly murderer? Of course, you refused, though. Why, Bently knows they don't need a real lawyer for the defense—no jury in the country could fail to convict. You defend Gondieff? The Devil's Advocate himself could n't make out a case, and you know it."

"That's true enough. Still, Bently argues that, if the court appoints me, there will be no possible chance for his friends to say that Gondieff was not adequately represented. You see, this—this fellow claims that he has done a righteous act in killing Arnold. My God! Think of it, Grant, that George Arnold, with all his fine achievement and his ideals, his nobility, should be shot down by a mad anarchist——"

"Don't," interrupted Grant, his face drawn with pain. "I loved George as I might love a brother. I revered him, too, for he handled men as I handle words—and always for good, Peyton. He always worked for the good. Last night I went to see his wife—she sent for me. They were happy—you know that as well as I; every one knows how ideally happy they were. She told me of the things he'd planned to do in the mills—bigger things even than he'd done already for his men up there. And then to think that the mad act of a crazy criminal——"

"There you've got it," broke in Peyton. "This fellow has friends here—rabid anarchists like himself. He won't select a lawyer, and if his friends manage to get hold of some scamp who can frame up a plausible insanity dodge—well, you know how that works sometimes. On the other hand, a couple of papers are showing an inclination to make a martyr out of him. It ought to be possible to railroad such a criminal to Sing-Sing—but the law gives him a chance, and we've got to let him have it—with precautions. This is all *sub rosa*, Grant," he added.

The poet nodded. "I don't understand it, Peyton. In fact, there are many things I don't understand—this Gondieff, George's death, the insane undercurrent of life——" He broke off abruptly. The joy of the morning was gone, for him. Peyton observed his pain.

"Dear chap," he said gently, "I knew that this hit you hard. You and George were such close friends. Sorrow and you have not come into frequent contact—it is better so, I suppose. You helped him, I know that—he loved your work. It seems only yesterday that he talked to me about your poem 'Brothers.' He said, 'Peyton, that's fine. There are lines in that poem embodying all I've striven to express in years of hard work—and lines that give me inspiration for years to come. We're all brothers—my men and I no less than Grant and I. I work for the end he sees in a poet's vision. It is my inspiration.'"

Grant took off his hat, heedless of the passing crowd. "Did he say that? Then I am content." He turned abruptly and left Peyton gazing after him.

"Grant is a dreamer," he mused. "He does n't know life—*real* life, but Arnold knew it, to the core. And yet Grant inspired him. By Heavens, he inspired him to the finest and noblest things! Poor Arnold." After a moment, he sighed, and, to his own surprise, added, "Poor Grant." Then he took up his work.

The poet wandered aimlessly through the golden morning. He felt himself a shadow, moving restlessly among unrealities. Yet there was a tiny glow in his heart. Arnold had been inspired by his poem, "Brothers"! Arnold, the strong, keen-eyed man, who was called hard and stern by those who did not know him, and who had never found it easy to speak freely even to those he loved. And now came this, through Peyton—a sort of accolade from the dead. His beautiful dream of the ultimate fraternity of all men had been real to Arnold, had made music of the strivings of a real man's soul. Grant walked unseeingly through the passing crowds, as he had always done, musing on his sorrow and the little glow in his heart.

Something recalled him to actualities, and he looked about him. Before him rose a grim outline, and he shuddered as he turned away. Then, fascinated, he stared at the Tombs. In there, then, was this Gondieff, this mysterious dealer of death. "Why? Why?" he groaned. And for days the question rang in his mind. Then, one morning—a golden, crisp morning—he entered the prison and was led to Gondieff's cell.

Peyton, protesting, had secured his admission; he did not understand, but the dumb questioning in Grant's usually serene eyes was not to be denied. The poet stood before the bars and peered into the cell. A man rose from the cot and came to the bars. They gazed at each other, antagonistic and bitter. The man outside saw a youth with high, narrow forehead, a waving mass of black hair, dreamy brown eyes, a sensitive mouth; he saw a slight, anæmic figure, shabbily garbed, and slender, brown hands clutching the bars. The man inside saw a pale, intellectual face, dreamy gray eyes, a subtle distinction of feature and figure; and then he uttered a joyful exclamation.

"Miles Grant!" he cried.

The poet drew back. "You—you know me?" he said indistinctly.

"Know you?" laughed the boy—he seemed scarcely more. "From your pictures—yes; but I never thought to see you this way, face to face. And yet—I might have known you would feel sympathy for me, you above all men."

"Sympathy?" said Grant harshly. He sat down on the stool

provided by the guard, and Gondieff sank on the foot of his cot. His eager eyes never left the poet's face; he leaned forward, smiling happily, intertwining his fingers with nervous gestures. Grant was loath to look at the lean, brown hands; they seemed stained with red.

"Yes, of course," the eager voice went on. "But I did n't dream you'd come to see me. Now nothing matters—nothing." He reached for a well-thumbed book, and Grant, with a start, recognized the latest volume of his own poems. "Yes, they are yours—my inspiration." With a simple gesture, Gondieff raised the book to his lips. Grant moistened his own before he said hoarsely:

"Tell me."

"There is n't much to tell." The voice was soft and gentle. "I was always poor, always half-sick. We were all poor—we were oppressed. We lived below; you know—ah, *you know*—what I mean. In the world of darkness, my father, my mother, my sisters, all 'below.' And those who were above trampled us, pressed us down farther into the darkness. But light came—to *me*. And to others. Those who were above hated us, but I rose, in spite of them. I tried to bring more light into our darkness. It was my work. I drifted into the mills *he* owned, and tried to arouse the clods who labored in the darkness there. He found me out, and sent me away. He said his men—God! his *men!*—were content. He said he cared for them, worked for them. He lied. It is only in the darkness, 'below,' that truth is spoken. Then he laid off a lot of his 'men.' He said it was hard times; there was no work. He had money for himself; *he* could live in hard times. They could n't."

"You don't understand," interrupted Grant. "He had big plans for improving the condition of his men—he had spent so much money on them, he *had* to close his mills for a time. He saw ahead—wanted to do what was best for them."

"Best for keeping them his slaves," went on Gondieff, in the same even tones. "Yes. I came here. But I knew what suffering there was up in his mill town. Then one day I saw him here—riding in a fine carriage, with a woman—a woman in furs—and we were cold and hungry. Then later I read in a paper, when we were dying from heat in the darkness 'below,' that he was at his country-place."

"His wife was ill," muttered Grant.

"Yes. Many, many women among us were ill, too," went on the even voice. "And then—and then I read your book. At first, I thought, 'What does he know? He is rich, and he has never lived in the darkness!' But I read it, again and again. At last I saw that you *knew*. And I read your message. 'Brothers'! We are brothers, all of us. It must be made true in life. You showed me the way to help. He was not the only one who pushed us back into

darkness, but he was one. So I read 'Brothers' again, and then I killed him. Now I am to die for it. That does not matter." The brown eyes raised reverently to the gray. "You inspired me."

Grant sat motionless, his head bowed. Gondieff watched him patiently. Presently the guard shuffled nearer, and touched the poet's shoulder, then retreated to a discreet distance.

"You have made me very proud and happy," said Gondieff. "You wrote of the future. I acted for the future, for the years to come." Grant moved abruptly and stood up. For the first time a wild light appeared in the murderer's eyes, and he clutched the bars fiercely. "I did right," he said.

"It was a dream—'Brothers,'" said Grant. "I did not know——"

"You knew—you knew," repeated the other. "Thank you. Good-by." He held out his hand, forcing it between the bars. Grant drew away with repugnance, then he whispered, "Why not, indeed?" and pressed the slim, brown fingers, which clung to his for a moment, while the brown eyes dwelt lingeringly on his own.

Half blindly, he followed the guard down the corridor. The golden morning greeted him. He went slowly into the street, dazed and chilled. What had he done, of good or evil? What had he known of the inspiration he had given to Arnold and Gondieff? The passing crowd jostled him, and for the first time he saw men as realities—and was afraid.



THE ONE WAY

BY ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH

HE sought the Haven of her Heart
 Along a thousand ways,
 But all in vain, for paths grew dark
 And wound in endless maze.

High seem to men the paths he took
 Of luxury and ease,
 Of wealth that with its promised things
 So many hearts would please.

One path another found that lay
 Far from the heights above;
 Straight to her heart it beckoned him—
 That little path of Love!

THE SILLY THINGS

By Frank Lawrence

IF there is anything I detest about housekeeping, it is the marketing. One is forced to rub elbows with all kinds of people and listen to their personal affairs. I realize how hard it is to support a large family when food costs so much—indeed, I subscribe to three charitable institutions that supply meals to the working classes—so there is no excuse for their dinning their poverty in my ears. At least, they might leave their noisy young ones at home. Only last week a dirty little brat had the impudence to pull my Zeta's tail. The poor dog was frightened out of her wits!

As soon as I enter a shop, the proprietor rushes up with a "Good morning, Miss Copleigh! Fine weather we're having." Of course the man means well enough, but he should know his place. It is not good form to discuss the weather with tradespeople.

That is why I have often tried 'phoning, or having the dealer call for my order; but I never seemed to get what I wanted unless I went for it. My brother is very particular about his food, and I have to superintend every dish Marie cooks. Of course Will disapproves of my taking such trouble with his meals, as it is hardly the proper thing for the Van Alstynes of Gramercy Square. Still, I pocket my pride in order that Will may eat safely.

I do not remember how I came to know Philip by name. He seemed to be the only butcher in the Hamilton Market who could wait on me without telling me his history or asking impertinent questions. For a young man, he was most discreet. After a while, I would defer my order several minutes in order that he might wait on me. I often allowed him the privilege of suggesting various cuts, and would tell him the cunning things that my sweet Pomeranian, Zeta, had done. He always listened with the greatest respect, and made no flippant remarks, as his class usually do. At first he gasped at my lorgnette and answered rather stupidly; but he soon became accustomed to my needs. I believe he understood my nervous temperament, for I never saw a young man so grave and earnest—especially about the eyes.

It would indeed be beneath me to remember when I began to think this Philip a deceiver. I recall one Saturday morning when, after I

had distinctly ordered him to send me a leg of lamb which I had inspected, I received a leg of mutton. Now, Will cannot bear the thought of mutton. Besides, I had ordered lamb, as I told the proprietor. I shall never forget the fellow's cool explanation:

"I was thinking of something else."

As though tradespeople should think of anything but their customers! It was most provoking.

I suppose I was foolish to notice him next day. His nervous manner ought to have been sufficient warning. I had to repeat my order for porterhouse steak twice. Instead of answering, "Yes, ma'am," as if my choice was a real pleasure to him, which is what one expects of tradespeople, he shambled off to the ice-house and returned, not with the steak, but with the absurd question:

"Did you order porterhouse, Miss Copleigh?"

If I had not known him to be a polite young man ordinarily, I should have complained at once to the management. He was probably not feeling well, but he had enough sense to keep it to himself. Zeta often acts queer when she is ill.

The very next day he sliced my bacon so clumsily that he cut his finger. He paid no attention to it until I was forced to remind him. Then he laughed and said, "It does n't hurt."

"But the bacon!" I cried, stamping my foot. As though I cared about him! It is irksome to a lady of taste to be so inconvenienced.

"Excuse me, I forgot," he mumbled, tying up his finger and dawdling over the strip. "Did you order kidneys, ma'am?"

"Yes, and I'm in a hurry. You should stay home when you're ill, Philip."

He looked up quickly with his big brown eyes, and his lip trembled. For a moment I thought he was going to be impertinent.

"That won't pay the rent," he muttered. "It won't make me forget, either."

"Forget what?" I asked. Instantly I regretted my question.

"A girl," he blurted with his head bent over the kidneys. "She meant a whole lot to me—once."

I was too displeased to smile. It was absurd to hear this uneducated fellow with a soiled apron and a butcher's knife talking of love. Instead of dropping the subject then and there, as I should have done, I told Philip he was foolish.

"I know it," he said meekly. "That's why I try to forget, but I can't. She's just spoiled my whole life. If it was n't for the folks, I'd as lief be dead."

That very evening I broke one of the china plates belonging to the family set with the Van Alstyne arms; and I was frantic with grief. Then Will complained about the toast. I reprimanded Marie,

and she had the impudence to tell me I had made the toast myself. That Philip's eyes had affected my nerves. The lecturer was right when he said that the laboring classes have little control over their feelings.

I dropped into the market next day, to give Philip one more chance before I complained of him.

"I'm sorry if I bothered you yesterday," he said gravely.

"How could you bother me?" I asked, unable to comprehend his maunderings.

"I spoke about my lady friend."

"Oh, yes; I remember. You said you were going to apologize, I believe."

"Why should I apologize? She got tired of me because I did n't have the coin, and he did. I could n't take her to shows and swell rackets, so I dropped out. If she wants me back, it's up to her."

Never had I known Philip to be so insolent.

"Do you think that's fair to her?" I remonstrated, rather nettled by his manner. "She'd be a fine girl to ask your pardon, even if she were altogether to blame. You don't really care for her, or she could n't hurt you, no matter what she did."

This was evidently beyond his comprehension, for he said nothing.

"Have you written to her since your quarrel?"

"N'no. She made me feel too bad."

"Then do so at once."

"It's no use," he muttered. "You don't know Minnie."

His ignorance was too exasperating!

"I know myself, though," I returned sharply. "I know that I spoiled my life and another's by just such silliness. But nobody is willing to profit by other people's experience."

"And that's why you never married?" he asked, with his big brown eyes full of wonder.

I adjusted my spectacles, without deigning to answer his rude question.

"I'll write, Miss Copleigh," he said simply. "And if I succeed——"

"I want a fricassee chicken, Philip."

"Yes, Miss Copleigh."

I should have known better than to listen to the fellow's vulgar story. That afternoon I had to unravel my crocheting three times, and I forgot all about Will's slippers. The dinner failed to turn out right, while the services that evening were positively stupid.

As poor Zeta needed an airing next day, I took her around to the Hamilton Market, to complain about my order. As soon as Philip came up to wait on me, he whispered tragically:

"She has n't written yet. My little brother took the note around to her, and she could have given him an answer."

I was too angry for words! Of course I cared nothing about the girl's writing to him. The whole affair was beneath my notice. Still, I was disgusted to think that one of my own sex—no matter how low she stood in the social scale—could be guilty of such a gross breach of etiquette.

Each time I called, Philip wore the same stupid look, except that his face was whiter. He took absolutely no interest in Zeta, and never said a word when I showed him her new silver collar.

My nerves troubled me so much all day that I made Marie bring me a large cup of tea as I was going to bed, and in consequence I slept poorly. In the morning I thought a little beef-tea would do me good, and walked to the market for the air. While the silly creature was putting the steak through the chopper, he said:

"I'm sorry you made me hope, Miss Copleigh. You see, it's no use."

I ignored his remark out of consideration for his foolish feelings.

The following day I did my ordering by 'phone. As I expected, the roast was not tied up properly, and there was no suet. As though that were not enough to try any housekeeper, the meat seemed to suggest Philip's doleful face. It was the worst cooked meal I have ever eaten.

For Will's sake, I went around next day, and was waited on by a butcher who always gets my order too large or too small. I was quite surprised when Philip did not come up to see how my opinion of him was changed. I was fully prepared to ignore him, but I saw he was not in the store. I did not care to ask about him after the way he had treated me. Then I recalled an account I had read in the morning paper of a young Italian who had committed suicide because his sweetheart had jilted him. As I anticipated, the clumsy butcher cut the meat a pound too heavy, and I walked out.

Will was very peevish at supper. I am most careful of his cocoa, yet he said it was too weak.

"Then don't touch it," I snapped, rushing off to church.

On the street I almost ran into that hateful Philip. His appearance was most untidy. Evidently, he mistook my surprise at meeting him for an inquiry about himself, for without any question on my part he said:

"Have n't they told you? Last Tuesday morning I mixed up the orders. The boss called me down pretty sharp. I was sort of upset, so I—swore at him. He told me to get out, and I have n't been able to get a job since. Can't you help me, Miss Copleigh?"

I was fearful of a scene.

"Speak lower," I cautioned. "I'm afraid I can do nothing for you, Philip."

"But I'll go down on my knees to him."

I was disgusted to think of a man abasing himself in this way for a contemptible fifteen dollars a week.

"For the love of God, speak to the boss!" he cried with coarse emotion. To hear him blubbering, one would imagine that a change of butchers was very important.

"If you had n't told me to write to her," he stammered. "That cut almost maddened me."

"I told you? You ought to be very glad that you're rid of such a girl."

He rushed off with what sounded very much like an oath. Our minister was speaking from facts when he remarked that the poor have no religion.

As I was near the market, I went in to get a cutlet for breakfast. I told the proprietor that there was only one attendant who served me properly, and I failed to see him.

"I was forced to discharge him," he answered smoothly, "but he comes in every day, and if you wish——"

"I have nothing to say," I retorted. "I must be properly waited on, however, or I shall take my trade elsewhere." My only concern at Philip's dismissal was that I never could get any one to give me such tender capons.

The next morning my cutlet was brought around by a dirty-faced little urchin who winked at me and said:

"Me brother's back."

"Your brother?"

"Sure! Phil Schaefer. He told me you did it. He says that you're all right, only you're ashamed of it."

"How dare you talk like that to me! You ought to be on your way to school."

"Oh, I'll get there all right. Phil would n't let me work at all until he got the bounce. I got enough to do at home anyhow."

"But your mother?"

"She's crippled. Me and Phil has to look out for the old lady. That's why I gotter study hard and get through school. Phil useter go to night-school, too."

"Why does n't he go now?"

"Aw, that Minnie Roth down at Ruppel's tailor-shop."

"What has she to do with your brother?"

"Aw, he's stuck on her. Did n't I take a note to her last week? He's daffy about her!"

"Hush, child! What do you know of such things?"

"Oh, I'm wise. I guess nobody was ever stuck on you, was they? Phil says——"

But I cut the little brat short and sent him about his business. It is strange that he should have reminded me that I had a blue serge suit at Ruppel's, where I get my tailoring done. I went there immediately, as I needed the dress for a church euchre next Friday. As long as I was in the place, I thought I might as well see this Roth girl, in case I wanted any sewing done at home. The forelady sent her in to me. She was, as I expected, a very ordinary-looking girl, with rather pretty hair and eyes. I engaged her to come up to my home at eight and left my card.

I fail to see why people will force their private affairs on me. No sooner did this young person learn that I dealt at the Hamilton Market than she had the impertinence to ask me if I had ever noticed a handsome young man behind the counter. Out of idle curiosity, I asked her several questions about him, which caused her to flush. Of course I was perfectly indifferent as to what she thought of Philip.

"And is it true he flirts with all the girls that come into the store?" asked the silly thing. "They say he goes with the cashier."

My look silenced her for a few minutes; but as she was fitting my skirt she broke out again.

"I guess he would n't look at me now. He's getting square with me for going with Frank. I wanted to answer his letter, but I knew he'd show it to her. Besides, if he really wanted to see me again, he did n't have to write. I've got just as much pride as he has. Oh, I feel awful wretched!" She began crying so loud that I was forced to comfort her, rather than have my nerves unstrung. The creature actually believed that I sympathized with her! Before leaving, she promised to run in at lunch-hour next day, to fix the hem.

The sewing hurt my eyes so much that I had a severe headache all night. In the morning, I misplaced everything. I tried to read a novel, but soon threw it aside. It was a silly love-story.

I knew that if I went around to the market, Philip would be sure to say something indiscreet. Besides, I had not forgotten his abusive language; so I phoned to have him come up for an order at noon.

Then I remembered the seamstress. She had hardly put a needle in cloth when the bell rang, and I asked her to go to the door. I heard a little scream, and then she rushed in, her face crimson, as she cried:

"Oh, Miss Copleigh, it's Phil!"

"Tell him to come in," I said, too angry for words.

I don't know which looked the more foolish; nor can I remember what I said, as my nerves were all unstrung. I know I managed to

get rid of them both. Their faces seemed to stay in my mind all day, and I smiled in spite of myself. The whole thing was so silly.

Every time I went to market after that, Philip was all smiles, and he persisted in speaking of the Roth girl, though he knew I was displeased. One day he showed me the ring, which could not have cost more than fifty dollars. Still, as his manner was cheerful, and he made no more mistakes, I tolerated his lack of breeding. But I almost fainted when he had the audacity to invite me—a Van Alstyne—to his vulgar wedding. This is becoming a nation of upstarts!

Must I confess my curiosity? I went to the church, in spite of my repugnance, to see how dowdy the bride would look. In my heavy veil and long cloak, I managed to escape insult, while I watched the simple service. I never thought people could look so happy.

Before the wedding was over, I hastened home, thanking my stars that I had avoided the noise and vulgar display. What, then, was my surprise when a shabby coach stopped at my door! Horrors! what would Gramercy Square think? Of course I had invited them in an off-hand way, as I would wish a beggar a happy New Year, never dreaming they would take me at my word.

I was forced to admit them, although they spread rice all over my carpet. They both helped me to prepare a little spread, to which the three of us sat down. I would not have had Marie witness such a sight for worlds. That is why I dismissed her for the day.

They never stopped looking at each other. Once, when I went out for the sugar, I had to cough twice before I dared to venture in again. Small wonder her face was scarlet!

I admit I smiled freely, and allowed Philip to take Zeta on his lap. I soon regretted my condescension when the young man began his offensive thanks.

“It was so kind of you to get me that two weeks’ vacation.”

“Indeed!” I said severely.

“And the set of dishes,” he persisted, “and Minnie’s wedding dress, and the beautiful flowers. Don’t she look splendid?”

“A girl must dress when she gets married,” I replied stiffly.

“But it’s all due to you. We’d never have made up but for you. I won’t forget all you’ve done for us, and if we ever have a little girl——” I was mortified!

As he saw that he had offended me, he rose to go, looking just like Zeta when I give her a piece of cake. Before I could prevent him, he had the effrontery to shake my hand—so that it hurt. As though that were not enough, the young woman threw her arms around my neck and kissed me!

“God bless you!” she whispered. “I feel so happy! Now I understand all you’ve suffered, Miss Copleigh.”

What right had Philip to tell her that? Her perfume was wretched. They had affected my nerves so much that I was forced to cry as the coach drove off.

Philip now has his own little market. He keeps telling me endless stupid details about his home and his wife, although I have no interest in his private affairs so long as his meat is good. Nor has his wife any more consideration, for she persists in sending me fancy pieces that are offensive in my eyes. But worst of all—I blush to think of it—Philip carried out his threat by naming his first child Euphrasia.



FROM A PHILOSOPHER'S NOTE-BOOK

A CAT in the Well is worth Two on the Fence.

A DONKEY is never so fast as when he is standing still.

THE highest type of the Utilitarian is the man who serves up the wolf at his door for supper.

SOME men are so lazy that they not only do not go to the door when Opportunity knocks, but would not answer her if she rang them up on the telephone.

THERE are many pleasing sights in this world, but what is more delightful to the eye than a Mother-in-law in her own home?

THE slogan of the Anti-Tipping Society should be, "*No quarter!*"

THE trouble with the average obituary is that it comes too late to help a man to get a good job.

IF it be true that Necessity knows no law, it is quite evident why some police magistrates are considered necessities.

THE boy who is bounced for smoking cigarettes realizes at last the truth of the old saying that where there is smoke there is some fire.

THERE are people in this world who are utterly devoid of a sense of humor. For instance, we once had a cook in our employ named Ellen Burns, and it never struck her as being in the least degree amusing. Come to think of it, we did not think it so side-splittingly funny ourselves after she had lived up to it consistently for several months, although she eventually left us in a state of spontaneous combustion.

Horace Dodd Gastit



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

HIGH PRICES AND THE GODDESS OF GAUDS

THAT the glittering vanities of women have a distinct bearing upon prevailing high prices, has not been widely indicated, but may this not be a legitimate deduction? So extravagant have become the fiats of the Goddess of Gauds, that women in the set of which she is Dictator have a choice only between following her whimsies or limply retiring from her wicked world.

To-day not only is one handsome gown of ceremony required of a woman who is swimming socially, or one who wishes to be known as a model of "sartorial perfection," but a dozen equally handsome frocks, with accessories in keeping, each suitable in fabric and cut to its occasion and to the taste and figure of the wearer. More gorgeous must she be at after-dark functions than Sheba of old—she must twinkle and glitter and gleam, though not too obviously. She must no longer rustle stiffly, as was the vogue five years ago; her gowns must be softly rich, her laces must be real and supplemented by superb embroideries over cloth-of-gold, or silver: these embroideries enriched in turn by jewels, sometimes "mock," oftener real. And over all is thrown a veil of chiffon that adds to the mystery, softens the shimmer, and notably increases the expense. Thus she expresses herself through her gown. Briefly, she is dress-mad. The chronicles of the fifties have much to say of women's wit and charm; comparatively little of their frills and furbelows; nothing of barbaric splendors. Verily, all normal women wish to look well—to wear good-looking clothes that are well cut, and

worthy of ten thousand eagle eyes; but few are there among worthwhile dames or demoiselles who would feel elated at being cited as a "Fashion Doll" or a "Clothes-Tree." If the gold, silver, and jewel craze in dress-fabrics continues, contented minds in drawing-rooms or office will be at a premium. Only trillionaires can stand the metallic pressure of superfine raiment. Few wealthy moderns have the courage to be "original" in dress, unless in extravagance or in cut; yet, scattered like dew-drops upon a parched earth, we occasionally find serene-eyed young wives and mothers with whom dress is not an obsession. When prices soar, such women prefer one yester-year's frock for ceremonial occasions, aye, even sans glitter, to the family stomach yearning for accustomed strength-giving food. One solemn fact must now be faced, to wit: that there are women galore whose barbaric adornments are stolen in part from the "house-money," and who say me "Nay." The credulity of husbands on this score is matched only by the fond belief of wives regarding their husband's "meagre" lunches, down-town, so perhaps this evens up matters maritally.

Granted the cost of high living has about doubled, is it not true as well that the cost of high dressing has trebled? Extravagance is on her High Horse these days, en route for the Devil, it would seem. While Dowdiness is both a blunder and a handicap, Cleverness is not so vapid as to make that error, nor is she likely to sink her individuality to the extent of being known by the glory of her gowns. When prices soar, she does not blame the Meat Lords entirely, nor the Egg Barons. She decides that so long as the Goddess of Gauds makes women her puppets, husbands—Messrs. Meat and Egg included—must pay, and in order to pay, prices must and will tower along the entire devouring line.

MINNA THOMAS ANTRIM

THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE OPTIMISM

A GOOD example of optimism is that given by Christian Scientists. Meet one or a dozen of them wherever one may, and one is usually impressed that here is a happy people.

Not many years ago, a confession to any such leaning was equivalent to being classed with the faddists and "cranks" of the community; but even then Christian Scientists were optimists of the first water. They were convinced that right ruled, and they cared not a whit for anything else. To-day, throughout the United States and foreign lands, thousands find this belief satisfying. It is practical optimism, since by its use they keep happiness, prosperity, and first-class health.

The business man needs optimism throughout all departments of his establishment. The housewife must have it if she would build a real

home. The professional man, whether in the ministry, the law, or medicine, finds it his best assistant. This, of course, must needs be the real optimism. Not the smiling exterior which conceals but poorly the underlying moroseness or despondency, but the simon-pure article which comes from the heart, whereby its owner finds life so worth the living that his enthusiasm and steadfast courage, even in dark days, spread to all around him.

Inwardly and outwardly the Christian Scientist strives to keep a crystal-clear consciousness of the fact that good is the only thing worth knowing. He never says or thinks that the country is going to the dogs. He is never caught mourning aloud about the scarcity of money, the dearth of good servants, nor the supposed increase of immorality in the world. He rules despondency of all kinds out of thought, and the result is that every one in his vicinity feels the better for it.

One of the favorite criticisms of Christian Science is that it takes the ground that since God is good, He cannot have created sickness or death; therefore, since there is only one Creator, these things have no foundation in absolute fact and are therefore unreal. The logic of the reasoning seems to some extent lost upon the world at large, but the Christian Scientist, finding that better health, morals, and business result from the belief in the unreality of evil rather than from faith in its power, points to full measure of value received from this species of optimism, and goes on his way rejoicing.

Could the whole world be convinced that unfaith in evil is really throwing all its force in with good, might it not be worth while? Should we never again fear anything, never be afraid of germs, draughts, food, the weather, contagion, "colds," in short, all the pet bugaboos of modern times? Should we not be a healthier, saner, and a more joyful people?

The only optimism worth having is that which proves of practical use: Christian Science has demonstrated its value in just this way. Had it not done so, it would have died a natural death long ago; since there is little on the surface of it to allure or tempt the average mortal to a study of its metaphysical statements.

LOUISE SATTERTHWAITTE

EATING, A FINE ART

GASTRONOMIC Grace, the Ethics of Knife, Fork, and Spoon, and a Complete System of Practical Philosophy for Polite Feeders, are the pleasant promises of the latest educational institution. Frau Hoiker, of Budapest, has started it. Eating as a Fine Art is to be taught in all its branches, and at the end of each term the finished diners will receive diplomas.

Obviously, this new academy tends to fill an aching vacancy. These graces of the table, taught to some extent in kindergartens, preparatory schools, boarding schools, etc., are difficult of acquisition for adults who have not attended such institutions. Even if grown folk could bring themselves to what they sensitively feel would be the almost foolish expedient of joining kindergartens, there is a feeling among kindergartners that the kindergarten would be no place for them. Preparatory and boarding schools require other studies which, as all parents know, are beyond the powers of adults; and none of these institutions deal with the more extended and serious aspects of refined eating. They give no banquets—and it is fairly evident that one may be able to eat bread and milk from a blue bowl, or even devour a sandwich at a picnic, with all the graceful composure of lifelong familiarity, and yet be altogether in blushing confusion when confronted with a dish of ice-cream and a tool that looks like a corpulent olive-fork that has been run over by a road-roller.

Even the Sunday newspaper is of little real value. It can name and illustrate the tools of a banquet; describe their purposes; and even warn us, whenever we lay out this splendid array of silver in our own dining-room, to be sure to have a clean table-cloth. But custom forbids the reader to clip these details from the newspaper and carry the clipping in his pocket to consult on occasion. Such a proceeding would interrupt conversation and attract too much attention, while if attempted stealthily under the table there would be a decided danger of upsetting the glassware.

As Frau Hoiker justly observes, the matter is serious. Especially serious, one might add, for parents whose children have had the advantages of such instruction as is already obtainable. We can compel the obedience of our children, within certain limits, but not their respect; and the spectacle of a strong man or stout woman tremblingly attacking roast beef with a salad fork is one to disturb that fundamental admiration (quite apart from love) in which we all naturally wish our children to hold us. Yet this danger is inseparable from a democracy. The spontaneous rise of the parent, followed by the extraneous cultivation of the child, was bound eventually to produce Frau Hoiker's emollient academy, in which the most thoroughly self-made man can somewhat improve himself.

More than that, the institution offers a practical excuse for male Americans in Europe to dodge picture galleries. Let the rest of the family do the galleries; Father will go to Budapest and devour breakfasts, luncheons, picnic spreads, after-theatre suppers, plain and ornamental dinners, and formal and informal banquets, all under the watchful eye of Frau Hoiker. The beauty of the thing is that the student will "learn by doing." Mother's adaptability will enable her to take

full advantage of the course, as reflected by Father, without neglecting her pictorial culture; and the European pilgrimage will thus add a patriotic mite to the sound foundations of American civilization—both of mind and of manners.

RALPH BERGENGREN

COFFEE-CAKES AND CUPID

NO American mother would ever admit that she set out with intent and purpose to marry her daughter off well. Mothers high and low vum and avow that Cupid must take his course.

But that only shows what subtle psychologists mothers are. They have a strange way of knowing just how far General Cupid has progressed in his campaign against the valvular citadel. When he is in his last trenches and ready to charge, they make their daughters move their forces from the uptown restaurant to the home; from the after-theatre supper to the home luncheon.

It makes no difference how honest a mother may be, she knows many tricks in the trade of love. She knows that whoever was responsible for the old adage that the nearest way to a man's heart was through his stomach had first-hand information. But she has gone a step further than the proverb-maker, for she has added that it must be done at home, and not at a restaurant. She knows that her daughter never looks more entrancing than when pouring a cup of tea; she knows that a hotel dinner with thirty-five-minute waits between courses never melts a lover's heart so quickly as peanut-butter spread on salt crackers by a young girl in the privacy of her own residence. Thus it is that the mother manoeuvres to have her daughter pass the coffee-cakes in a quiet hour in the home. The young man looks ahead and sees her going through that delightful operation at a breakfast-table of his own in a time to come. The circuit between his heart and his stomach is complete.

The glare and glitter of a restaurant where it takes three boys to open the door does not affect the young man's heart nearly as much as a *tête-à-tête* over a table laid for two in a girl's own home. A waiter with a number on his coat can't compare to Hulda with a smile on her face.

Of course the young man never thinks of it; it never enters the girl's mind. The mother merely suggests to the daughter that she have the young man to lunch some day; and, presto! Cupid has twanged his bowstring. Truly, mothers move in a mysterious way their wonders to perform.

HOMER CROY

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THE RIDERS OF PETERSHAM

BY

RUPERT SARGENT HOLLAND

Author of "The Man in the Tower," "A Knight-Errant in Broadway," etc.

I.

CERTAIN facts are stamped indelibly on one's mind, so that no lapse of time can blur their outlines. I shall probably never outgrow the recollection of my entry into the little Southern town of Petersham, a village which had been my grandfather's home, and of which my mother had never tired of telling me. I had been born there, and have always thought of myself as in reality a Southerner.

At last I found myself actually hastening down the wide, maple-shaded avenue that ran from end to end of Petersham, bordered on either hand by the stately, high-pillared mansions of the town's socially elect. Such a house my grandfather's had been, and such a one I now found to be that of my uncle, Junius Brutus Coke.

It was May of my twenty-first year. I had left my uncle Elijah Pegram, last of a line of Marblehead mariners, in that little Massachusetts seaport, and had journeyed south to seek my fortune and certain ancestral deeds. Uncle Elijah was my mother's brother, and had never seen Mr. Junius Brutus Coke, although he had often heard of him. We knew him to be a man of position and property—a lawyer, a bachelor, and a connoisseur in books. My uncle Pegram had cautioned me not to be too familiar with him.

"To judge from his name," said he, "he must be a monymont of

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dignity. My only hope, Richard boy, is that he ain't as cold as he sounds."

I had directions as to which was Uncle Junius's house. When I reached the corner opposite the Methodist church, I turned, and, pushing open a little iron gate, went up the path that led to the high steps of the porticoed mansion. The grass and trees on either side the path were very green; a marble stag stood on a lofty pedestal near on the right, and a Venus, looking as if she had never known a bath, reclined full length in the distance to the left. I went up the steps and rang the door-bell. My ring was answered by an elderly colored man who seemed to know me by instinct.

"Mr. Richard, suh," said he, his voice scarcely rising in interrogation. "Mr. Coke is waitin' for you in the parlor."

I gave him my hat and bag, and crossed a slippery, shiny floor. I entered the room on my left, and found a tall, slender gentleman waiting for me. Instinctively I thought of a picture I had once seen of Henry Clay speaking in Congress. This gentleman wore a black frock coat, with a high, standing collar and a black velvet cravat. His hair was gray and rose in a sort of tuft over his high forehead. His eyes were piercing black; his nose a Roman aquiline; his lips clean-shaven and firmly compressed. He looked every inch the gentleman, the lawyer, the orator. Even his arm and hand, as he extended them toward me in greeting, formed part of a very impressive picture.

"Richard," said he, giving me a warm grasp of the hand, "my brother's son, welcome to Petersham. I received your letter in due course of post, and had a room prepared for you. I hope your stay will be a long and pleasant one."

"Thanks, Uncle," said I, both pleased and stirred at the dignity of the man of the house, and indeed of all I had yet seen of Petersham. "It seems a very pleasant place—quite different from Marblehead."

Mr. Coke smiled, or, rather, his eyes did and two little lines on the sides of his mouth.

"Quite different," he agreed. "As different, I dare say, as I am from your uncle Elijah Pegram."

It was my turn to be amused; for two men possibly to be more dissimilar than these two of my uncles, I doubted.

"Pompey will show you your room," said my uncle. "We have supper at half past six."

I felt that the audience was at an end. Following the old servant's lead, I crossed the long, cool hall, climbed the broad stairway, and turned down a corridor that led to a wing slightly removed from the central part of the house. I was shown into my bedroom. It was of Southern largeness—the floor covered with straw mattings, the windows screened with green, slatted shades, a large, four-posted bed towering

in one corner. Pompey expeditiously unpacked my bag, and my clothes were laid out ready for wear. I had travelled far, and was tired. The delightful coolness of the room, and the view of a little garden which I caught from the window, gave me a pleasant sense of rest. I prepared to like the home of my ancestors.

The formality of our supper-table, set for only the two of us, and waited upon by the all-useful Pompey, soon relaxed. Mr. Coke questioned me about my life, about my uncle, about my journey. I had had but one adventure out of the common on my way to Petersham, and I soon told him that.

"I rode the last stage of the journey, you know," said I, "and sent my bag on by train. When I came to the top of a hill, a mile or two out of the town, I found a man lying in the road. His eyes were shut and his face was white as a sheet. I got off my horse and went over to shake him. It was several minutes before I could bring him to. Then he asked for whiskey, and as I had a little in my flask, I poured some down his throat.

"'You hain't seen a great raw-boned white devil hereabouts?' said he.

"I told him no. He smiled, and said it was a horse he had been riding.

"'He threw me off, and if it had n't been for you, I reckon I'd have gone to kingdom come.'

"I got the man on his feet in time, and persuaded him to ride behind me into town. He seemed a very pleasant fellow as soon as he forgot his bumps. He was tall and very thin, with scraggly hair and a solemn face. He was very grateful, and said if I ever got into trouble, to let him know, and he'd try to help me out. He said he'd heard of you, and knew you were a fine gentleman. That's about all, except that he did n't ride into town with me, but slipped off before we reached the houses. I left the horse at a livery-stable near the railroad station, got my bag, and walked here."

"What was the man's name?" asked my uncle.

"Jerry Dolliver. Do you know him?"

Mr. Coke smiled and nodded. "Slightly." He seemed to consider; then, "He's rather a ne'er-do-weel," he added. "I hardly think you will care to continue his acquaintance."

"That may be," said I; "but I must say I liked his looks."

"Looks are very deceptive," said my uncle, with the slightest note of rigidity in his voice.

Supper over, we went out on the porch, and sat under the high roof, smoking long, fragrant cigars. My uncle had a pleasant taste for conversation. I realized that here was a man from whose words I was likely to learn much. The longer I listened to him, the more respect

I had for his judgment. It seemed that other men held him in similar estimation. We had not been talking for over a quarter-hour when the gate at the end of the path opened and a stout, red-faced man came up toward us.

"Good evenin', Junius," he exclaimed as he toiled up the steps.

"Good evening, Marcus," said my uncle. He waved his hand towards me. "Mr. Kellogg, my nephew Richard."

The stout man shook hands, and then fell into, rather than sat down in, a wicker chair which stood beside me. He held a crumpled newspaper in his hand.

"That man Burney's makin' trouble again," said he, rapping the newspaper viciously. "This week's *Clarion* is full of — lies."

My uncle made no answer.

"What's to be done about it, Junius?" said Mr. Kellogg. "The first thing we know, we'll have civil war on our hands."

My attention was called from his words to the garden gate. It had opened and latched, and another man was coming up the path. He climbed the steps and swept the three of us a low bow with his broad felt hat. He was rather a striking figure—tall and dark, with bright black eyes.

"Evenin', gentlemen," said he, and held out his hand to me. "Heard you came into Petersham, Mr. Richard Coke," said he. "Proud to meet the nephew of your uncle." He leaned against one of the pillars of the porch. "Have you heard, Junius, of this latest performance of Burney's? Seems to me high time the leadin' citizens gave him a piece o' their mind."

"That's what I think, too," put in Mr. Kellogg. "Suppose, Junius, you call a meetin' to consider the matter."

Mr. Coke knocked the ashes judiciously from his cigar. "If you let a dog bark till he's tired, he'll stop himself," he remarked.

"And in the meantime," said Kellogg, "what'll become of our reputations?"

"That's the trouble," said the man who leaned against the pillar. "Burney's makin' the people believe his lies. I heard some men discussin' the matter down at the hotel."

I thought my uncle looked somewhat annoyed. A moment later he clapped his hands for Pompey. When the old servant came, he told him to bring the gentlemen some rye and water. But the digression was only temporary; for no sooner had the glasses been filled and the two callers drunk my health, than a third man made his appearance on the porch. He was even more excited than the other two had been.

"Tell you what it is," said he, "if we can't stop the *Clarion* any other way, I'll go out to Happy Valley and gag the editor myself. He's draggin' the name of Petersham in the dust."

Mr. Coke held up his hand as though invoking peace. "No violence, I beg of you, gentlemen," said he. "The wise man reaches his ends by peaceful methods. Let us try diplomacy first. But now," he continued, "let us talk of more pleasant matters. I would n't have my nephew gain the impression that this town is an evil place."

"No, indeed, Uncle," said I. "I'm sure it's one of the most law-abiding in the world."

I thought the man with his back to the pillar started to laugh, but checked himself. I wondered what amused him. Soon after, the three visitors left, and my uncle and I were free to watch the moon rise above the great maples in the main street.

"Who is this man Burney," I asked, after a time, "and what is the *Clarion*?"

Mr. Coke settled himself back in his chair.

"Burney, my dear nephew, is a stranger—Kentuckian, I believe—who came among us about a year ago, and has seen fit to find fault with us ever since. He built him a house and a printing-shop out of town, in a place called Happy Valley, and there he issues a paper called the *Clarion*. I know only too well that Petersham is n't perfect, but if I were to believe all the infamous deeds he lays to the town's credit, I should have moved out long ago."

"And what are these crimes, Uncle?" I asked.

"Perhaps a score of petty things, but chief of all what he chooses to term 'moonshining.' He insists that the government laws are broken regularly by some of the leading citizens of Petersham, and that, starting with an illegal liquor distillery somewhere in the hills hereabouts, these men have spread a vicious influence through all the immediate country. He does n't mince his words. In my opinion he's simply a fanatic."

I considered my uncle's words. They seemed admirably thought out and well chosen—the statements of a man who would have been an ornament to any bench or bar.

"Suppose, Uncle," said I, "that this man Burney might possibly be right?"

Mr. Coke laughed—not genially, but rather judicially, as if he were trying to be fair to me as well as to Petersham. "You have n't told me your plans," said he, changing the subject.

I clasped my knees in my hands and looked thoughtfully up through the tree-tops at the moon.

"I should like to stay with you a little while, at least, Uncle," said I. "I should like to see my father's papers, and learn something about the property he left me. I had often thought that I might perhaps begin to study law."

"Ah, yes," agreed Mr. Coke. "I shall be glad to have a young

man about the house. I cannot yet tell whether you are suited to the law or not. As for your father's papers, we must investigate them. It will take a little time to straighten out those matters. Meanwhile, consider the house your own. I will tell Pompey to get you a young negro for a body-servant. There is a good saddle-horse in the stable for your use. Please do not hesitate to come to me at any time."

To tell the truth, I was more than satisfied. There was a certain indescribable romance about this first evening in my grandfather's house—the people, the streets, the mansions, even the trees, were more picturesque than I had dreamed them. Even the word "moonshining," casually dropped from my uncle's lips, had sent a delightful thrill through my veins.

I looked up from my dreaming. Mr. Coke sat with his fingers carefully pointed before him. He had finished his cigar, and his fine head, with its lofty brow and gray, curling hair, drooped slightly forward.

"How far is Happy Valley out of Petersham, Uncle?" said I.

He started, as if I had broken in on his chain of thought. "A matter of five miles or so. Why do you ask?"

"I was thinking of riding over to see this Burney."

"What would be the good of that?" said Mr. Coke.

"He rather interests me. I'd like to see him at close range."

My uncle thought the matter over for a few moments. "I can see no harm in that, Richard," he finally concluded. "You shall ride over in the morning and take him a message from me, or, rather, counsel by word of mouth. Advise him to have more care of his tongue, or there may be trouble."

The clock in the tower of the Methodist church across the way boomed eleven strokes. Mr. Coke rose to his feet.

"Time you went to bed, Richard boy," said he. "You must be weary after your long journey. Good-night and pleasant dreams."

He made me a courteous bow, and I returned it with due formality. I had been weary when I reached the house, but was so no longer. I was too much interested in the men and things about me.

My uncle went into the house, and I followed him. Pompey lighted up the stairs to the landing, where our paths separated. My uncle turned to his rooms on the left, I to the wing on the right. I found a gentle breeze blowing the candles on my mantel. I leaned from the window-sill and inhaled the soft fragrance of the roses and mignonette in the garden below. I watched the moon slowly sail beyond the trees, throwing them into a silver glory. It was some time before I could draw in my head and prepare to sleep. I was delighted with the soft brilliance of the summer night, with the quaint little town, so different from any I had known, and with the stately, majestic figure of

my uncle Junius. The curtains on the four-posted bed flapped gently about my ears. I am quite sure that in riding south to my old home I had ridden into a region of romance.

II.

I **AWOKE** to find the sun pouring into my room.

I lay some time in bed thinking, indulging in the luxury of letting my eyes roam about the strange room, and fancying how it should gradually come to seem really my own. I decided that I wanted to hunt up Jerry as early as I could. He had told me in rather a shamefaced way that he was usually to be found at the Bluebell Tavern, and that if he were not there, its proprietor would surely tell me where he was. Then I remembered Happy Valley. Happy Valley! The name stood out before me like a picture. Even before I found Jerry, I would go in search of John Burney and his quaint-named home.

Uncle Elijah had been a strict disciplinarian—doubtless the result of his long seafaring life. My uncle Junius seemed quite otherwise. When I had lain in bed until I was tired of it, I concluded that no one would come to wake me. I put out my hand and pulled the bell-rope, which hung down close beside me. In a moment a young colored boy appeared at the door. He announced that he was named Sam, that he was my servant, and asked what I would have. I sent him for hot water.

I dressed leisurely, stopping now and then to look out of the window at the garden, which was larger than I had supposed the night before, and which boasted a great variety of Southern flowers planted in circular rows which centred about a small arbor. The roof of the bay-window on the floor below came just beneath my window, and I saw one would scarcely need to be an athlete to jump from the roof to the ground.

I breakfasted alone, still waited on by Sam. I asked for my uncle, and was told that he had already gone to his office in a small building next the Court House. Forthwith I determined to saddle a horse and ride out to Happy Valley.

The blue waves as they rolled in about Marblehead Neck and filled the Bay were certainly very lovely on a fine spring morning, but even more lovely the rolling country about Petersham seemed to me. The town itself was much like other Southern hamlets that had grown very gradually through the past hundred years. The houses, built with a certain dignity—comfortable, quiet, with wide porches and fine lawns—had acquired a certain mellowness in time. I rode down the main street and at about a mile from my uncle's house came into the country. I had asked my way from Sam, and knew that I must ride almost

due west, following the high-road that bored through the hills. Beyond Petersham came gently rolling meadows, and near the road ran the river, here only a mild, gentle stream, which one could easily ford with the aid of occasional stepping-stones, but which grew wilder and broader as it ran west.

Gradually the grazing land rose higher, sloping up to a chain of hills which formed a semicircle in the distance. The hills nearer the road were low and green, but those in the farther arcs of the circle were higher and seemed to have been used for quarries. A bridge crossed the river to the left, and a road wound about the base of the hills, evidently used by men whose business took them to the more distant and wilder regions.

Half an hour brought me to the circling hills. The road found a gap in them, and allowed me to pass through. Here the river widened and deepened, and became of a very good size. The banks were higher, in places quite precipitous, and lined with pines and broken underbrush. I realized that before one could reach Happy Valley one had to travel through a land of little promise.

My horse was fresh, my spirits high. I pushed on through perhaps a mile of this rugged country, and then found another chain of hills, and beyond them pleasant meadows. The river swung to the left, bearing south now with rapids and frequent jagged rocks in its course, bending back into that wilder country where, I presumed, the quarries lay. The high-road, bearing in an opposite direction, crossed through the meadows and soon brought me into a little bowl among the hills, which I knew must be the place I sought. A peace and quiet hovered about it, and a score of white farm-houses spread themselves contentedly before my eyes. It seemed a strange place for a turbulent man like Burney to choose to pitch his tent in.

There were no regular streets in Happy Valley. I stopped to ask an elderly man who was weeding a garden-patch where Mr. Burney lived. He bade me ride straight on until I should come to a low, rambling house on the right, bearing the sign "*The Clarion*." I found the place without any difficulty, fastened my horse to a tree, and advanced to the door. I knocked and waited. After a few moments the door was opened by a young man. Even at that first meeting I was struck by the peculiar pallor of his face and the uneasy, inquiring look about his eyes.

"What do you want?" he demanded, as if naturally suspicious of all strangers.

"I should like to see Mr. Burney. Is he at home?"

"Wait," said the young man, and, almost shutting the door in my face, he turned away.

He was soon back again, and told me to come in. He led me

through a small hall, back across a little open court, and into a long, low outbuilding, which proved to be the printing-office. A large press stood at one side of the room; a long table, littered with papers, ink and glue pots, shears and other printers' implements, ran the length of the other wall. At the farther end was a roll-top desk, and there sat the man whom I wanted. He rose as I entered, and came towards me.

"I am John Burney," said he. "What can I do for you?"

He was rather older than I had thought to find him. His hair was quite gray; his beard, which was full and somewhat straggling, equally gray. He was heavily built and his head was inclined to bow upon his shoulders. I could see he had physical strength to match his mental determination.

"My name is Coke," said I, "Richard Coke. I landed in Petersham only last night, and I'm staying with my uncle, Mr. Junius Brutus Coke. What I heard of you woke my interest. It seems the last copy of your paper stirred up the town."

Mr. Burney smiled. "Good!" said he. "I hope you take my view of the matter."

"I really know nothing about it," I confessed. "It seems you think some men there a bad lot—some of them moonshiners."

"Exactly, Mr. Coke; so I do." He motioned me toward his desk. "Won't you sit down? I have to correct one paper, and then I shall be glad to tell you anything you want to know."

He went back to the desk, and I took a chair beside him. The young man, who had stood staring and listening to our conversation, began to set type.

Mr. Burney interested me. His eyes, which were deep-set under heavy, bushy brows, were of a peculiar gray-blue, and lighted occasionally in a manner which showed me that they might at any moment blaze forth in the full fury of a fanatic. His clothing was neat but heavy. A corduroy jacket bound with a belt of the same material, and thick homespun trousers, stuffed into boots reaching up to his knees, seemed to bespeak the farmer or frontiersman rather than the editor. The more I watched him, the more convinced I became that he was built for a leader of men, and that it would be very easy to yield oneself absolutely to his dominant spirit.

While Mr. Burney was reading the proof the young man brought him some question, and as he bent over the desk I found his curious eyes casting an almost startled glance at me before they settled on his master. I did not like this young man. I thought I had never seen such an ungainly person, such a scarecrow figure, eyes so furtive, a manner so embarrassed and yet crafty at one and the same time. He was apparently as loosely jointed as one of those dolls you work on a

string, and his clothes had prodigiously shrunk, for his trousers scarcely came to the tops of his shoes, and the arms of his coat disclosed at least three inches of wrist.

When he had answered his assistant's questions, the editor of the *Clarion* looked up at me.

"Mr. Coke, this is my friend, Elmer Simmons. An invaluable worker. You ought to know each other. I hope we shall see something of you, and that you may aid in the good work in Petersham."

I held out my hand to Simmons, and he, after a second's hesitation, gave me his hand. There was no warmth in his clasp, and I was glad to let his hand drop.

The assistant went back to his table of type. Mr. Burney faced towards me, and the fire of his eyes began slowly to blaze. He gave me a curious feeling, because, before he had said a single word, I could see that his thoughts were far afield, and that he was marshalling them as one might an army.

"Mr. Coke," he blurted out suddenly, "there is rottenness in the state of Denmark, and our country must be made over again before she will be worthy to take her place among her sister nations. I came to Petersham thinking to find it a pleasant community, where I might buy a piece of land and cultivate it. Instead, I found that the leading men of the place and of the country round-about are nothing but a band of plunderers, importing voters to suit their needs, holding all the offices and power among themselves, growing rich by making whiskey illegally, and frightening every one who utters a word of protest. I could not till my farm in peace. The call to battle rang too loudly in my ears. I determined to have my say, and so I started this paper. Its sole object is to tell the people the truth, and in doing so I don't care what snake is scotched. Petersham must be cleansed before it is fit to call itself the home of decent men and women."

His voice was low and deep, his manner self-contained, but his eyes had fairly blazed at me from under his brows.

"If what you say be true, Mr. Burney," said I, "no one could have undertaken a finer work. I must admit, though, that the little I have seen of the town has impressed me most favorably. It seems to me a very respectable place."

"Sham, all sham!" said Burney. "Those fine, old-fashioned houses hold a band of robbers. Only the lower classes of the people are really respectable, and they have never had a chance to speak their minds. I intend they shall have that chance."

"And suppose there should be trouble, violence, bloodshed?" I suggested.

"I don't care," said Burney. "The Lord is on our side."

I felt that now I understood the situation fairly well, and that

there was no use in argument with this man. Words would be as much wasted as pebbles thrown against a mighty cliff.

I rose. "Thank you very much, Mr. Burney, for explaining your purpose to me. If the facts are as you say, I wish you all success."

He held out his hand to me, and his clasp was strong as a bear's. I felt that if I met him often, I might become his slave.

"Come over to see us whenever you can, Mr. Coke," said he. "There's more hope to be found in the young than in the old. I need all the friends I can find in Petersham."

I smiled, thanked him again, nodded to Simmons, who looked up from his work, and turned to the door. Even as I did so a girl entered the room, and, seeing me, stopped with some surprise.

"My daughter Emily, Mr. Coke," said Burney.

The girl gave me a little nod, and I, bowing, passed her and went out of the door. I crossed the little court, went through the main hall of the house, and came out in front. My horse was standing patiently. I unfastened the hitching-strap and was about to mount when I heard a voice behind me. I turned around. It was Miss Burney's voice.

"May I have a word with you, Mr. Coke?" she said. "If you don't mind, let's walk a short way down the road."

She seemed a little disturbed, and I was only too glad to grant her request. I threw the horse's bridle over my arm, and led him along, with the girl on my other side.

"Do you think," she said, after a moment, "there's going to be trouble?"

The abruptness of the question surprised me. I glanced at her before I answered. She had a quaint charm of her own. She was not very tall, and was quite slender, with red-brown hair fastened in a loose knot. She wore a dark blue linen dress, with the sleeves rolled up above her elbows, as if she had been working in the kitchen.

"Trouble?" I said. "What sort of trouble do you mean, Miss Burney?"

She looked at me, and I saw a certain alarm in her brown eyes. "Oh!" she said, "I don't know what I mean; but I do know that father's making lots of enemies. I know he's doing what's right and what he ought to do, but when I see some of those rough men in Petersham, and hear what they're saying about him, I'm terribly afraid. They've sent him warnings before now, the last telling him he must stop printing his paper, and threatening to tar and feather him, and all sorts of horrible things. He only laughs, and I try to laugh, too, but sometimes I'm so scared that I can't sleep, or eat, or do anything at all, from sheer fear. I don't know why, but last night and this morning I've been particularly scared. You see, we've so few friends. There's really only Elmer to depend upon."

"I'd be only too glad to help in any way I can," I said. "If you ever have any need of me, just send me word, and I'll ride over at once. Have you anything definite you're thinking about now?"

She shook her head slowly. "No—no one thing in particular. It's only a horrid feeling that scares me now and then." She gave her head a little shake and laughed. "Please don't think me a coward, Mr. Coke. I'm not that. I'm sure I could do my part when the time came; but, you see, I've no one to talk to. Father won't listen, and that's what makes me afraid."

I could see she was no coward. A glance at her face showed me she was her father's daughter, only in her his rugged power was softened, and only the light of his eyes remained.

She stopped. "Good-by, Mr. Coke, and thanks for having listened to me. You see"—she stopped a moment, and a soft flush spread over her face—"I do so want a friend in Petersham, and that's my only excuse——"

"You have one in me, Miss Burney."

She gave me her hand, and then, with a little smile and nod, turned and walked back up the road. I vaulted upon my horse and set off to Petersham.

Happy Valley still smiled about me, but I felt a certain irony in its name. Human passions were there, and on no mediocre scale. The girl's words had made me feel as though already storm-clouds were gathering over the hills that made the rim of the bowl.

Yet I was very happy, strangely light-hearted. All my life I had thirsted for adventures, and here in Petersham it seemed as if I were likely to come upon them. I decided to keep my peace and watch.

Meanwhile I was growing very hungry. So I whipped up my horse, and was soon able to hand him over to Sam, who was sitting on the horse-block before my uncle's house, looking as if he had nothing to do but await my coming.

III.

It was past the middle of the afternoon before I set out to find Jerry Dolliver. My uncle had come home to his midday dinner, and I had given him an outline of my morning's trip. He did not seem surprised at what I told him. After dinner he had gone back to his office. Later, I set out to find Jerry.

All Petersham was drowsy with the soft spring warmth. I did not have to pass through the small business section of the town, but I could imagine how the men must be dozing over their ledgers, living as they did in the perfume of the lilac and honeysuckle, and looking out on such a lovely world. The tavern was quite deserted. The solitary attendant was trying to read a newspaper behind the bar,

but making sorry work of it. I asked him if Mr. Dolliver was about. He said no; that he had been there about dinner-time, and he thought I could find him if I went to the third house from the tavern and looked into the garden.

The third house from the tavern bore the sign of a shoemaker's shop over the door. I found the cobbler sitting in the doorway, and learned from him that Jerry Dolliver had a room there, and that he was back in the yard. The cobbler waved me through the house, and, following his directions, I came out on a little porch in the rear.

I had thought my uncle's garden luxuriant, but the one I now looked into quite surpassed it. It seemed to be owned in common by several houses, for it stretched back of a number of them, and it varied according to the respectability of the particular house in front. Where I stood, the flowers had not been well cared for, and the paths were strewn with odds and ends of rubbish; but to the left of me everything was in perfect bloom—as choice a spot as one might hope to see. I walked down the path, looking for Jerry. Finally I caught sight of his tall figure sitting on a bench under a tree. I walked over there, and had almost come upon him before I discovered that the trunk of the tree hid a very pretty girl. She was dressed in pale yellow, a rather striking color, but one which her very black hair and eyes carried successfully. At her belt was a huge bunch of bright red poppies, and two of them lay in her wavy hair.

I hesitated, thinking that the part of prudence would be to retreat, but even as I stood there Jerry turned about, and, catching sight of me, jumped to his feet.

“Ah, Richard Coke!” he exclaimed. “My friend of yesterday! Permit me the pleasure of presentin’ one of my best and oldest friends to one of my best and newest. Miss Letty Shannon—Mr. Richard Coke.”

Jerry bowed, I bowed, and the girl smiled at us both.

“I’ve heard tell of you already, Mr. Coke,” she said, in a Southern accent which on her lips sounded very soft and sweet. “Jerry tells me you brought him home on your saddle yesterday.”

She made room for me to sit beside her, and I accepted the invitation. An old negro who was working in this part of the garden came towards us, and Miss Shannon called to him.

“Uncle Joe, fetch us a pitcher of julep—your very best julep, please.” The negro grinned and shambled off towards the house.

“It was recollectin’ them juleps more than anythin’ else,” said Jerry, “that made me glad to come back to life yesterday.”

It seemed to me there were a good many reasons why Jerry might wish to come back to life. I thought I had never seen so pretty a place as that in which we sat; the spreading magnolia tree above us, the roses

and lilacs, and the honeysuckle hedge on either side, and, best of all, this pretty Letty Shannon with the lovely lips and eyes.

Jerry was telling the story of our meeting—how, when he opened his eyes in the road, he had found me leaning over him; how I had reconciled him to mounting a horse again; how we had jogged home over the road, firmer friends with each yard of the way. As he talked, I found my old liking for him come back twofold. I think it must have sprung from his being so genuine.

They asked me to tell them what I had been doing, and I described my arrival at my uncle's house, the events of the night before, and my trip to Happy Valley. Both Miss Shannon and Jerry seemed much interested.

"Has n't Mr. Burney a daughter?" asked the former.

"Yes," I said; "a girl about your age."

Miss Shannon shot me a glance from her merry eyes.

"And how old might that be, Mr. Coke?" said she.

"Nineteen or thereabouts," I hazarded.

She laughed. "I fear Miss Burney's got the better of me. I had my twenty-third birthday yesterday."

"Well," said I, "I think twenty-three's a better age than nineteen. The latter's a little raw."

Miss Shannon laughed again. "Ah, I knew it. Mr. Coke has n't forgotten his Southern tongue. Tell me more about her, if you please."

"There's really nothing to tell, Miss Shannon," said I.

She looked reproachfully at me. "A pretty girl, and nothing to tell about her? Perhaps I was wrong, after all." She turned to Doliver. "Jerry, we'll have to take Mr. Coke in hand."

"He's yours," said Jerry.

"Agreed," said I. "I'd wish no better fate."

Miss Shannon smiled, and her hand, which lay on the bench, brushed against mine.

The old servant returned with a tray bearing three glasses and a large pitcher of julep, the mint leaves sticking out like a great crown about its rim. Miss Shannon filled the glasses, and Jerry and I drank her health. I had never tasted such nectar.

The shadows lengthened, and the three of us drifted on, chatting idly, too contented to make a change.

I may be mistaken, but it seemed to me that whenever I neared the subject of any underlying troubles in Petersham Jerry cleverly turned the conversation. I was sure he did this with a purpose when I asked him about the road that led off from the main one on the way to Happy Valley. He gave me a little look, his brows frowned, and with a quick laugh he said, "Ef I wuz you, when the road to Happy Valley's open, I'd not loiter by the way." And thereupon he began to

talk of something else, although I felt that Miss Shannon was almost as much interested in my questions as I was myself.

The girl and I got on famously. The julep was so delicious that when they urged me to drink another glass, and then another, I could not refuse. With each glass I found the charm of the situation grow, and I doubt whether I should have been able to tear myself away at all had it not been for the arrival of the old colored man, who announced that supper was ready.

"Won't you stay, Mr. Coke?" asked Miss Shannon.

"I should n't dare," said I, "when I've really just arrived. I don't know what my uncle would think of me, and, to tell the truth, I'm a bit afraid of him."

"Yes," put in Jerry; "a very remarkable man, Mr. Junius Coke. I know just that feelin' you mean. You'd better not disappoint him."

We arose and walked up through the garden. Miss Shannon stopped at a bush that was simply bent with yellow roses, and, picking one, put it in the buttonhole of my coat.

We went into the house, and there I was presented to Mrs. Shannon—a nice, elderly woman who wore a little white-laced cap, with a white lace shawl folded about her black gown, and seemed as charming in her old-worldliness as Letty Shannon in her bloom. She said she was sorry I could not stay for supper, and asked me to come to see them again. I thanked her heartily, and then, alarmed at the lateness of the hour, turned and hurried from the house.

When I reached my uncle's I pushed open the old iron gate, and went up the old flagstone path to the high steps. There was a vast solemnity about the mansion. I climbed the steps and went in at the high, square-cut doorway. The cool, dim reaches of the hall, hung with portraits of old members of the family, lay before me. I thought of the little garden I had just left. Then I thought of the evenings I should have to spend with Mr. Coke, with only Pompey and Sam hovering in the background. There seemed a void in the place, and then, suddenly, it occurred to me that what the house needed more than anything else was to have a woman in it.

IV.

A NIGHT'S sleep sometimes makes a great difference in one's point of view, and I found myself the next morning less of a poet and more of a practical man than I had been when I went to bed. I do not mean to say that I had forgotten the pleasures of Letty's garden; far from it. I remembered them vividly, and liked to let my thoughts travel over them from time to time. But they could not hold the first place in the light of day. Something led me to be more energetic. I felt that somehow I was not taking the active part in Petersham's

affairs that I had fondly anticipated. I decided that I must look further into this business of the Burneys.

I was up early, and had breakfast with my uncle. I said nothing to him about my plans; in fact, something of his non-committal habit had taken hold of me. I realized that it was a valuable trait of character, and one in which I would do well to pattern after him. Therefore we talked of the weather, of the crops, of everything except the affairs which really concerned us. As regularly as clockwork he left the table and started for his office as the bell in the church tower struck the note of half after eight.

This day I decided to walk to Happy Valley. The distance was not far for a youth used to exercise, and I knew I could cover it by eleven. I told Sam that I should not need him during the day, and set off about nine o'clock. The advantage of being on foot was that I could loiter by the way, and leave the high-road whenever the fancy struck me.

The open fields were lovely, in striking contrast to the river-bank, and as I drew near the little hollow where Happy Valley lay, I stopped time and again to take in some particularly charming view of the distant country, or to turn aside to peep into some little circle of trees. I had almost come to the settlement itself when something white showing through the nearest trees in a pine grove caught my eye. I turned aside, and stepped down a little path towards the white object. When I came inside the nearest trees, I found an open circle covered with soft pine needles, and seated under one of the trees Miss Emily Burney, with a large book in her lap. The pine needles had dulled the sound of my foot-steps so that I caught sight of her before she saw me. I watched her for a few seconds. She was undeniably pretty, browned by outdoor life, and looking like a creature of the woods. I noticed that her hair was tied with a red ribbon.

I stepped into the circle, and she looked up. "Why!" she said, "it's you!" She seemed a little surprised, and yet not so much so as I had expected.

"Yes, it's I," I answered, laughing. "That's an easy way of getting out of having forgotten my name."

She closed the book slowly. There was a certain deliberation about everything she did. But she did not take her eyes from me. "I have n't forgotten your name. It's Richard Coke. Only, it happened that I was just thinking of you."

"I'm glad of that. What were you thinking?" I asked, throwing myself on the soft pine needles at her feet.

"I was wondering if you really meant what you said yesterday, or whether the people in Petersham would n't make you change. I was wondering how I could reach you if we really needed you, and whether you would come."

"I've given my promise, and I don't go back on that. Has there been more trouble?"

"Yes," she said; "a little."

Suddenly her face brightened. "But I came out here to forget all about it, Mr. Coke. Sometimes when I'm frightened or worried I take a book and run away to this hiding-place. I was reading 'Lorna Doone.' Would you like to hear some of it?"

There was a very sweet frankness about the girl's manner. She seemed to want to include me in her pleasures as well as in her worries, and as I looked up at her invitation, and saw in her brown eyes that she really hoped I would care to hear the story, I nodded and begged her to go on with it.

When she came to the end of the chapter Miss Burney closed the book with a little sigh of regret at having to stop the story for a time.

"Is n't it fine? Don't you wish you were living in times like those?"

I sat up and clasped my hands about my knees. "It seems to me we're living in quite as exciting times."

She laughed. "Perhaps we are. But they're too close to really enjoy. Well, I must be getting home, or they'll be wondering what's happened to me. Which way were you going, Mr. Coke, when you wandered in here?"

"To the *Clarion* office," I answered.

"Then our roads lie together. Come, Father'll be glad to see you."

We left the circle of trees and returned to the road. We had not far to go before we reached the *Clarion* office. I followed Miss Burney into the house, the door of which stood open, and we peeped into the living-rooms as we went through the hall. Finding no one there, we went on to the office.

Elmer Simmons stood in the centre of the room, holding an open letter in his hand. I thought I had never seen a more grotesque figure than he made. His mouth was open, and the lower jaw had dropped to what was almost an imbecile surprise. He must have been running his hands through his hair, for the latter was wildly tumbled about, and one long black lock hung across the centre of his forehead. As we entered he turned and stared at us, more particularly at me, and I must own that I returned the compliment in full measure.

"What's the matter, Elmer?" said Miss Burney. "What's become of father?" There was a little note of apprehension in her voice, but Simmons did nothing to relieve it. "Oh, Elmer," she said, "what's in that letter? Let me see it."

He went slowly across to her, still keeping his eyes fixed on me. He handed her the paper and then stepped away again.

Miss Burney held the letter so that I could see it, and we read it

together. It was a most extraordinary document, ill-written, with an evident attempt to disguise the handwriting, and decorated with a number of large blots. It said:

If the editor of the *Olarion* don't stop printing such lies as he did last week, he'll find himself ridden out of the State in a way he won't like. Mad dogs have got to be muzzled, and he's one.

The paper was simply signed, "Vigilance Committee." I took the paper from Miss Burney's hand.

"When did this come? Who brought it?" I demanded of Simmons. He was silent.

"Come," I cried, losing patience with him, "you know I'm a friend of the Burneys. For Heaven's sake, don't stand there saying nothing!"

He looked at Miss Burney, then at me. "'T wa' n't very long after Miss Emily left this morning, and Mr. Burney comes in here and finds that paper lying on his desk. The window was open, and somebody must have climbed in. I could n't find no traces of him. Mr. Burney read it and laughed. Then he went on getting the paper ready." He hesitated a moment. "I don't think it's no laughing matter."

"What's become of father now?" the girl asked.

"Said he was going for a walk to freshen up his thoughts. Said he'd be back for dinner."

"Well," said Miss Burney, "I don't see that there's anything we can do just now. You'll stay to dinner with us, Mr. Coke? I must go out and see what we have to eat."

She left us, and I put the anonymous letter on the table.

"Does Mr. Burney carry a pistol?" I asked.

Simmons nodded. "He does, but I don't think there's any good in such things." He smiled as if at some little joke of his, and I could not help feeling my original dislike of him growing stronger. He seemed so unlike ordinary people—such a curious combination of stupidity and cunning.

"I'd advise you to get one, then," I said shortly, "and take a little time practising at a tree. I don't think a letter like that's just sent for fun."

"No more do I," said he; "no more does Mr. Burney. But he won't give up writing what he thinks, and so I guess we've got to take what comes."

He walked over to the cases of type and started working at them. I found a small mirror in the corner of the room, and tried to make myself look as presentable as possible for dinner.

Suddenly two shots rang out. They must have been fired near the house. I dropped the comb and wheeled about. Simmons was staring at me across the type-table.

"What's that?" I demanded sharply.

He shook his head. I crossed the room, went down the hall, and into the kitchen. There I found Miss Burney standing at the door. Her face was white with fear.

"Did you hear?" she cried. "What was it?"

"You wait here," I said. "I'll go and see."

I strode down the road, and had gone only a few paces when I saw John Burney coming toward me. He walked very straight, with a certain pride in his manner.

"Thank Heaven," I cried, "you're all right! I thought some one might have been firing at you."

"So they were," he said as I came up to him. "Some one fired at me from behind a haystack over in that field. They did n't know how to shoot, or perhaps they did n't want to hit me."

I stared at Mr. Burney, sudden admiration for him rising in me. Here was a man who knew that his life was in danger, who had, in fact, just been under fire, and yet who could smile and show not a trace of fear.

"If we know we're in the right, there's no more reason why we should be physical cowards than moral ones, eh, Mr. Coke?" Then, with a sudden change of manner, he asked, "Where's Emily?"

I turned about and walked with him to the house. His daughter stood in the doorway, and as she saw us coming she ran forward, her hands outstretched. She flung her arms about her father's neck and kissed him time and again.

"Oh," she said, "how glad I am you're all right, Father dear! But you must be more careful. It's terrible to think of the risks you run."

Mr. Burney patted Emily on the cheek, and, with his arm about her waist, led her to the house. He spoke consolingly, quieting her in a very short time, even as he had already quieted and strengthened me.

A little later we four sat down to dinner. I did not expect that Elmer Simmons would join us, but it seemed that he was a regular sharer of the table. Mr. Burney sat at one end, and his daughter at the other, while Simmons and I were on the two sides. Mr. Burney did most of the talking, speaking usually to me, telling me of his plans for the *Clarion*, and how he hoped that he was arousing interest in Petersham in his crusade. Simmons never raised his voice above a whisper, and only spoke twice to Emily when he actually had to. The girl herself was very quiet, still a little shaken, I think, by the danger her father had been through.

"You must not think me an egotist, Mr. Coke," said Mr. Burney, during the meal, "but my thoughts are so consumed with the work I have on hand that I can think and speak of little else. Emily knows

that I have more sides to me, that I take an interest in hunting and fishing, in books and music and all pleasant things that other people love. I should like to be on good terms with all my neighbors, to live quietly, doing some work that might be useful, getting strength from this beautiful country on which God has showered so many blessings. I don't want to be always in opposition, always stirring people up, always denouncing and declaiming; yet that is what I must do here and now.

"I am here if they choose to come for me," he continued in time. "If it ever comes to that, I'm not unarmed, nor is Elmer, and we can at least give them a fight. As for Emily"—here his glance wavered a trifle—"she knows that her father is no coward. I don't think even these men would dare touch her."

About three I started back to Petersham, revolving in my mind the things I had learned that day, very much disturbed at some things, and yet with a surprising strength of resolution. If trouble came—and I had a feeling that it was almost surely coming—I knew what I should do. I should take my stand in that whitewashed house that bore the *Clarion's* sign, and should at least do my part in protecting this great-hearted man. I knew that Emily would not flinch; but time and again I found myself wishing that the pale and sinister face of Burney's assistant would not look over the shoulders of the other two.

I had left Happy Valley behind me and come into the first ridge of hills when a small boy came running up back of me.

"A man told me to give you this," he said, as he pulled at my sleeve. He shoved a small, tri-cornered note in my hand.

"What man?" I asked.

"Dunno," said the boy, and, without a word, he took to his heels and ran back the road towards the settlement.

I unfolded the piece of paper. Written on it were the words:

Don't be a fool. Don't go out to Burney's any more. If you do,
you'll live to regret it.

There was no signature. It might have been the mate to the other note. I crumpled it up and flung it in the bushes. Then I took up my march again, and now I determined that before another day had passed I would see Jerry and have him get me a revolver.

V.

SEVERAL days passed before my next visit to the Burneys'. I saw Letty and spent delightful moonlight hours in her garden. I found Jerry and had him get me a revolver, and I asked my uncle again

to put me in possession of my father's papers. The next issue of the *Clarion* stirred my blood, but made me more fearful than ever for John Burney's safety. The first chance I got I rode over to the Valley.

I rang Burney's door-bell, and even as on my first visit had the door opened to me by Elmer Simmons.

"What do you want?" he blurted, his eyes narrowing as they had a habit of doing when he looked at me. "She's out."

"I did n't ask for her," I answered. "I did n't ask for any one. I'm a friend of both the Burneys, which is more than every one can say."

I had spoken without thinking. Now I saw that he took the words to himself. Perhaps I had a suspicion of him in my mind.

"You mean——" he began, still holding the door so that only his head appeared.

"I mean nothing," I exclaimed, and, giving the door a push, threw him backward and entered.

The first door on my right was the family sitting-room. I looked in and saw Emily sitting near a window, sewing.

"Good morning," I said. "Is Mr. Burney about?"

"I'm so sorry," she said. "He's over at Farmer Johnson's. The little boy there broke a bone in his ankle, and father has some knowledge of surgery. Won't you wait for him?"

Again I noted the clear frankness of her eyes. I decided that I did n't care to see her father, after all, and that all I wanted was to sit there and talk with her.

"Have you seen the paper?" she asked, as I took a chair near her.

"Yes. It's not likely to make things any pleasanter, but I think it's better that way. Such things have got to be fought out." I proceeded to give her my views of the situation.

So we sat for some little time, she sewing and occasionally glancing out of the open window up the road, as if she were keeping an eye open for her father's return, and I sitting in front of her, suddenly grown quite peaceful and contented.

Only one shadow marred the serenity of my sky. Elmer would persist in coming into the room upon an average of once every five minutes, although, so far as I could see, there was absolutely no reason for his doing so. Seated as I was, I could see him poke his head in at the door, take a quick glance at the two of us, and then, dropping his eyes as though he were all humility, sidle into the room with his peculiar, crab-like step. Once he merely came in to look at a map which hung on the wall. Another time he got half-way to Miss Burney and then turned suddenly, as if he had forgotten something, and left the room. I had a feeling that he was trying to keep watch over us, though why I could not imagine. Miss Burney never seemed to notice his coming.

He seemed to be like a shadow one is so used to that one pays it no attention.

An hour must have elapsed in this pleasant, desultory fashion, when I saw the same small boy who had accosted me on my way home coming along the road. He was an innocent-looking urchin, with bare feet, and an old tattered straw hat pulled down about his ears. He looked the very last being in the world conspirators would choose as their tool.

"Who is that boy?" I asked, pointing out of the window at him.

Miss Burney looked up quickly, and followed my gaze.

"Oh, he's the blacksmith's little boy. He's always running errands through the town."

"And who is the blacksmith?" I asked. "What sort of a man, I mean?"

Miss Burney studied her sewing before she answered.

"He's a great big man, with a voice like a trumpet-blast. I don't think he likes father; at least, I don't think he likes father's publishing the *Clarion*. He's always sneering at it. And yet I don't think he's really bad, for I never saw a man more kind to animals. He has a little hospital for dogs, and I've often watched him caring for them as though they were children. His name's Job Trainer. The little boy's Aaron."

I saw that Aaron had turned off the road and was coming across the grass toward our window. "Hullo!" I cried, as he came directly under it. The boy looked up with a broad grin and held up a piece of paper.

"It's another message!" I cried with a laugh, and stretched out my hand for it.

"Oh!" said Emily, with a little gasp, as if she were frightened.

The whole proceeding—the very small, grinning boy, the little square of paper, and the method of conveying it through the window—seemed so perfectly innocent to me that I could n't help chuckling.

"What's there to fear in this?" I said. "If I had a scrap of paper, I'd send them back a message."

Her hand was on my sleeve. "No, no," she said. "Don't do anything to make them more angry."

By now I had taken the folded piece of paper, and the little boy had again run off to the road. I stood up, holding the note, slowly unfolding it, my eyes on Emily's face, which was paler than usual. I opened the paper, but before I could read it a long, bony hand had reached out from back of me and pulled it from my grasp. I wheeled about, to find Elmer Simmons standing close beside me.

"What do you mean?" I demanded, sudden anger rising in me at the sight of this man I detested so near me.

He did not answer at once, but looked at Emily as if waiting for her to speak.

"Give it to me, Elmer," she said quietly, reaching out her hand.

He hesitated, mumbled something I could not catch, and finally gave her the paper.

"What a lot of fuss we're making over nothing!" said I, for some reason annoyed and disgusted at the whole performance.

Emily turned the paper so that she might read it, but before she could make out the lines Simmons had reached out his hand and repeated his performance. He took a single step forward, and his skinny fingers closed over the sheet like the talons of a great bird.

"No, no, Miss Em'ly," he begged; "don't—don't read it."

"I must," she said positively.

"No, no," he continued, and his talon-like grip closed on the paper and crumpled it into a ball.

"What do you mean?" I cried. "You prowling thief!"

He half faced toward me, and it seemed to me that he fairly leered at me.

"Give it up!" I demanded, by this time boiling with indignation.

His lips opened, and I could see the gleam of his teeth. If ever I hated a man, I did this one then.

"No, no," he repeated; "not even to you, Mr. Coke." He said my name as though throwing an insult in my face. Before I knew what I was doing, I had sprung forward and my fist caught him square on the jaw. He crashed to the floor, legs and arms sprawling out as if the wires which held him in place had suddenly been broken.

I stood above him, my fist still clenched, my face blazing with rage. Then I heard as from a distance the girl's voice, cold and clear as ice.

"Mr. Coke, how could you, how could you do it? What a coward you are!"

I slowly turned from the man who lay sprawling before me to front Miss Burney. Her face was colorless, her eyes were looking at me with deep horror. She drew back as if afraid that I might touch the hem of her skirt.

"You might as well have struck me," she said. "Elmer is almost my brother. What he did he did for my sake, and you—oh!" she cried and turned away from me in a passion of indignation, "I did n't think you could do such a thing!"

My anger had passed. I was as cold as I had been hot before.

"Forgive me, forgive me!" I cried. "I did n't know what I did. I lost control of myself."

"Oh!" she answered, "but you, a strong man, to hit a man like Elmer when he was n't ready. You might have killed him. It looked as though you wanted to."

She had turned her back to me. I stood there a few minutes longer in silence, waiting for her to move. She did not do so. Finally she spoke, her face kept from me.

"You had better go now, I think. There's nothing more to be said."

I waited a second, and then, picking up my hat, turned to the door. Simmons had risen and stood back against the wall. I did not look at him. I simply groped my way out of the room. I verily believe that I would have cut off my right arm if by it I could have taken back that blow.

VI.

THAT blow I had struck Elmer changed the course of my life in Petersham. I felt shut out of Emily Burney's friendship forever, and I turned desperately to Letty. I decided that I loved her, and before three weeks had passed I made sure she cared for me. I asked her to marry me, and, after much persuasion, she promised to go to a minister's at a nearby town and become my wife. She made me wait a short time, however, and meanwhile other serious events took place.

The day came when my uncle gave me my father's papers. It was late one afternoon when he called me over to his desk in the office and produced a square tin box from a desk-drawer. The box was of the kind in which lawyers keep old documents, and a key was tied to the handle on top by a piece of red tape.

Mr. Coke leaned back in his swinging chair and smiled at me. "There, Richard," said he, "are your father's papers. Bonds, stocks, mortgages, title-deeds, and all evidences of claim. They were scattered here and there for safe keeping, and also because the estate has been much complicated by changes of value in the South. It has taken me time to collect them; it will take you time to look them over." He paused and smiled again. I noticed how fine and even his white teeth were. "I trust you are satisfied, Nephew, and that you are convinced what a careful guardian I have been."

I stepped forward, ashamed to remember I had ever thought him cold. "Uncle Junius," said I hurriedly, "I know whatever you've done has been for the best. I hope I've not been impatient. I beg your pardon if I've seemed so. You see—I simply haven't understood."

"Quite so, Richard. Youth rarely understands the things age knows. You are groping about for those guiding strings I long ago discovered. You will find them in time if you are patient. But remember that haste is always the thief of time."

I was not thinking of his words, but only of the man. He was my father's brother, the head of our house, and such a fine head he made.

My uncle Junius was of the type of men who had framed the Constitution.

It was on my lips to tell him that I was engaged to Letty. He was entitled to know this, and not learn it by chance after we were married. I had had too many secrets from him, and was ashamed of them now. I would show that I could be frank, too.

But my uncle was speaking again. "I might suggest," said he, "if you'll take it as just a suggestion, that reticence is the greatest asset a man can have. Do not cultivate the habit of speaking all your thoughts, and especially not those that bear on business." He stretched out his hand to the tin box. "I would n't open that and look over the papers here, for instance. Any one may come in and find you at it. Take them home, and we will go over them together, where we can be safe from interruption. Are you engaged to-night?"

I had an appointment to meet Letty that evening, and so had to admit that I was.

"Well, no matter," said my uncle. "Morning is a better time than night for business. Take the box up to your room and keep it there until morning. We will open the box together in my study after breakfast. I'm anxious to help you with the papers. Will that suit?"

"Yes," said I; "that will suit me perfectly."

Mr. Coke untied the tape that held the key, inserted the key in the lock, and opened the box. "There," said he, "just glance at the pile, Richard boy."

I looked and saw a great stack of folded papers. I nodded my head.

"Now," said my uncle, "I give them into your keeping." He shut the lid, locked the box, retied the key to the handle, and, rising, handed the box across the desk to me. It was quite a ceremonious proceeding.

I took the box to my own small desk and pushed it back against the wall. I opened a law-book and steadfastly bent my eyes upon it, but did not read a line. Fortunately, Mr. Coke soon rose and suggested that we go homeward. I was quite ready, and tucked the box safely under my arm. My uncle locked the door of his office and joined me on the sidewalk. Then, in state, we made our way to the old house on the corner.

I was glad to reach the old house. With the box still under my arm, I climbed the stairs. In my own room I placed the precious burden on a small table near my bed, where lay a few books I was reading, some note-paper, and a paper-cutter.

All the pleasures of life seemed met in Letty's garden that evening. She was sweetness itself. Our close companionship thrilled me at every touch of her hand or gown. At last I told her of my father's papers, that they were in my possession now, and that I was no longer a dependent on my uncle. That sense of freedom went to my head

like wine. "Why wait longer, Letty?" I begged. "I have ready money—enough for a wedding trip. There's a parson lives half-way to Brownsville who will marry us. Will you go to-morrow night?"

At first she protested, tried to argue, said she did not believe in elopements. Gradually, however, she capitulated. Finally she consented. I cannot describe the sudden sense of mastery that flooded me.

It was late when I reached home, and I tiptoed through the hall and up the stairs, so that I might awaken no one. The night was warm, and I left my door into the hall open. I did not light the gas at first, preferring the darkness while I leaned on the window-ledge, breathing the fragrance of the garden. There was no moon, but a few stars looked down on me.

I heard the clock in the hall strike one, and forced myself to stop dreaming. I lighted a candle and prepared for bed. The process did not take me long. The last thing I saw before I blew out the candle was the black tin box containing my father's papers, on the table near the curtains of the bed. The wick of the candle can scarcely have ceased to glow before I was asleep.

It must have been some time later when I woke. A noise in the room had disturbed me. It was very dark, and I lay quite still, listening and waiting. Presently I heard a movement, the least creak of a board in the floor, and then, staring in front of me, as I lay on my side, I felt, rather than saw, that some one was in the room, standing to the right of the bed.

I lay still, wondering what was about to happen. I heard another creak, then followed another silence, then came the sound of a book on the table gently moved. Some one was near me now, right by the table, close at hand. I cursed myself for a fool for having left the revolver Jerry had given me in my trousers pocket.

In a flash I knew what the thief was after! The tin box on the table! Even that second I heard a hand rap against the box. My own hand slid out of bed, between the curtains, to the sharp steel paper-cutter that I knew lay on the table. I gripped it in my fingers. Then, suddenly, I sat up and struck with all my might at the place where I thought the thief's arm to be. I struck something, the loose cloth of a sleeve, and the sharp knife pinned it to the table. I heard a wrench, the tear of cloth, and then a leap across the room. I was out of bed, but the table, fallen from my blow, lay in my way to trip me. I saw a dark object spring to the window-ledge and then vanish. By the time I reached the window the man was out of sight.

The top of the bay-window projected about a foot beneath my window-ledge, and the distance from there to the ground was easy to jump. I pulled on my trousers, got on my shoes, and followed through the window. I alighted easily on the grass of the garden, but by

that time the thief was gone as absolutely as if he had had an hour's start. I listened, but there was not a sound except the gentle southing of wind in the trees.

I did not stay long in the garden. I saw how useless would be the attempt to discover which way the thief had gone. A trellis, which had been covered with honeysuckle when I came to Petersham, rose close to the bay-window, and by its aid I climbed, with some swaying and balancing, back to my window-ledge. I had never before realized how completely I was at the mercy of any midnight visitor. For the matter of that, I believe that every house in the town was equally trustful of men's honesty.

I crossed my room and lighted a candle on the mantel. I carried the candle over to the bed. The table lay on the floor, just outside the bed-curtains, where I had stumbled on it as I jumped up. The books were scattered about. The tin box was gone. I stooped down, and, picking up the table, set it on its feet. There, near the centre of its shining oval top, was the paper-cutter, driven firmly into the wood. It pinned to the table a piece of colored cloth. I pulled out the paper-cutter, and held the cloth, a strip some six inches long, close to the candle. It bore a red honeysuckle pattern. It seemed curious material for the sleeve of a man's coat.

This survey had taken me scarcely two minutes. I stuffed the cloth in my trousers pocket, pulled on a coat, and rang the bell for Sam. Without waiting for him to answer, I went out into the hall, candle in hand. I passed the head of the stairs and went on down the corridor to my uncle's room. I knocked loudly on this door, and then, pushing it open, entered.

My uncle's bed, like mine, was a four-poster, with canopy top, and curtains that shielded the sleeper's head. "Uncle!" I called. "Uncle Junius! Wake up, Uncle!" I stood beside him and put my hand on his shoulder. He was very sound asleep.

He turned over and opened his eyes. "What is it?" he asked, in the confused manner of one suddenly awakened.

"A thief!" I cried. "I've been robbed! Some one has stolen my father's papers! He got out by the window and disappeared!"

Mr. Coke sat up in bed, very tall and white in his night-clothes. "Good God, Richard!" he said. "Are you sure? Your father's papers? Ring for Pompey!"

I pulled the rope by his bed while my uncle slipped on a pair of slippers and a dressing-gown that lay on a chair near at hand. Sam had followed me, and now stood in the doorway, candle in hand. Before my uncle was ready, Pompey had joined us.

Mr. Coke led our procession of four back through the hall and into my wing of the house. We stood about the table while I described

what I had seen. We glanced hastily about the room for any other clues. Then we went downstairs and into the garden, to search there. We could not find even the print of a foot on the grass. We had no idea in which direction to turn.

We must have consumed half an hour in ineffectual search of the back of the house and the grounds before we gave up the attempt. My uncle asked me to step into his study, and dismissed the servants. He sat down in his favorite arm-chair, and placed his candle on a stand beside him.

"I'm very sorry, Richard boy," he said. "I feel it was partly my fault for letting you have the papers. But I knew you wanted them, and could n't imagine any one stealing them overnight. To the best of my knowledge, no one knew they were here. You did n't mention that fact to any one, did you?"

"No, sir, I did not." I was glad to remember that even when I had spoken to Letty of the papers I had not told her where they were.

"Sure?" he said, fixing his eye upon me. "Think!"

"Positive," I answered. "I told no one where they were."

"H'm," he mused. "Who could have wanted them? I must admit, Richard, the whole matter's a mystery to me. We must go slowly in this, must feel our way. The papers were valuable, and some can't be replaced. There were many coupon bonds, and other documents difficult to chase. The loss is serious, Richard." He glanced at me. "But don't be down-hearted, boy. What man can do to repair it shall be done!"

We sat in my uncle's study half an hour longer, discussing different aspects of the matter. We reached no plausible solution. By that time the summer dawn was lighting the sky. My uncle rose. "I want an hour's rest, Richard. I advise you to try and rest yourself."

I returned to my room and threw myself on the bed. For a long time I lay staring at the canopy. Finally I dozed. When I woke Sam was standing beside me, and the bright sunlight was streaming in at the window.

VII.

Two most momentous facts stared me in the face as I opened my eyes and gazed at the canopied top of my bed. I was to run away and be married to Letty that night, and I had lost my father's papers. I rose like a man in a trance, and in that state let Sam shave me. Then I hurried into my clothes automatically.

My uncle told me at breakfast that he had several lines along which he intended hunting for the thief, but for some reason he did not see fit to confide them to me. His reticence irritated me. He seemed to me to be trying to make even more mysterious what was already

quite enough of a mystery. I was all for an immediate announcement of the robbery, and the offer of a reward for any information that might lead to a recovery.

Mr. Coke shook his head at my suggestions. "No, Richard, our best chance is to try to learn privately what use is made of the papers. They may be pledged as collateral at some bank, or used in a business deal in the neighborhood, but once raise a hue and cry, and the man won't dare show them to any one this side of New York."

Like so many of my uncle's statements, this position did seem the logical one to take, and yet I could not help feeling that it was not really the best way to attain the end. Sometimes he seemed to me almost as impersonal as a business corporation, and his method of work quite as involved, and he never seemed more so than on this particular morning.

It was my feeling of revolt at this attitude of my uncle's that led me when I went down-town to stop at the office of a friend of mine, a Mr. Grant. That gentleman had just finished reading his morning's mail, and with the greatest affability asked me what I would have of him. I asked his permission to close the door into the hall. When we were quite safe from all possible eavesdroppers, I drew my chair close to his, and recounted the facts of the robbery. He listened without interruption until I had finished.

"What a very singular occurrence!" said he as I came to the end. "You're quite sure that no one but Mr. Coke and yourself knew of your having the papers?"

"Positive," said I. "I told no one, and my uncle says that he did n't mention them to a soul."

"Did you see enough of the thief to describe him at all?"

"No. All I could make out was a very vague black shape. I struck at him in the dark rather by instinct than because I knew where to aim."

"And you tore a part of his sleeve? Have you got that with you?"

I drew out the small torn piece of cloth from my pocket, and placed it on the desk. Mr. Grant picked it up and examined it carefully. "It looks to me," he said, "as if Mr. Thief went in for rather fancy dressing. That's not part of an ordinary coat; it's more like a smoking-jacket or dressing-gown. Have you seen that pattern before?"

"Never. But what on earth would a thief be doing in such clothes?"

Mr. Grant shook his head. "May I keep this for a short time?" he asked. "It interests me."

"Certainly," I assented. "I've come to you for advice. Of course my uncle has taken the matter in charge, but the trouble is that, being my uncle, I'm afraid he won't listen to me and my suggestions."

"Just so," said the lawyer. "I quite understand your feelings. But he is your uncle—we mustn't let ourselves forget that." It seemed to me that he was looking at me very closely.

"Of course not, sir," I hastened to answer. "I have the greatest respect for him in the world."

"And what would you propose doing now?"

"Putting the matter at once in charge of the police, hiring detectives, if we can get any, and drawing a net about Petersham so that he can't escape."

Mr. Grant studied the piece of cloth which he still held in his hand, then he wheeled about in his swing-chair and gazed out the window into the street, his back to me, for some time. When he turned, the faintest quizzical smile was on his lips. "On that point I differ with you," he said. "I incline to think that Mr. Coke is right, and that we are more likely to get to the bottom of the affair if we keep it to ourselves."

"Of course you know best," said I. "When I came in to see you I decided to place the matter entirely in your hands."

"Then," he said in a very solemn manner, "I accept the charge. I knew your father, and I think he would have wished me to do this. I will take the matter up at once. I only request that you don't mention my interest in it to your uncle. If he has his secrets from you, you're entitled to have yours from him."

That was exactly how I viewed the situation, and I was much relieved to find that Mr. Grant agreed with me. I thanked him, and left his office fairly well satisfied with the situation.

Never shall I forget the hours of that interminable day. My thoughts had but one goal, seven-thirty o'clock that night, when I was to call with a carriage at Letty's door. A hundred times I went over each step of our elopement, and each time the details grew more blurred in my excited mind.

Early in the afternoon a light rain began to fall, threatening to grow heavier by nightfall. I stuck to my books until I felt that it was physically impossible for me to sit in my chair any longer, and then, excusing myself to my uncle with the statement that I was not feeling very well, I left the office and went home. I had made all my arrangements for our night's ride that noon, there was absolutely nothing for me to do but to get through the next five hours as best I could. I went to my room and lay down on my bed, thinking that I might sleep. Ten minutes convinced me of the fallacy of that idea. I stood at my window and watched the rain soften the outlines of the trees and bushes in the garden. Ten more minutes may have passed so. Then I went down-stairs and followed the path to the little arbor in the centre of the garden. It was not a particularly cheerful spot on a rainy day,

but it appealed to me in my peculiar frame of mind. The air would be fresh out there, and I could smoke a pipe and drowse.

I settled myself on one of the benches in the arbor, my back against a post, and puffed at my pipe. I watched some robins preen themselves in the rain. I saw drop after drop of water fall from a shining mulberry leaf directly into the heart of a rose which had opened out like a cup. The world seemed glad of the rain, and I tried to feel glad, too. I think I had just reached this thought when something attracted my attention. A man was coming down the back-stairs of the house, and was taking a little side-path through the grounds, which ran at right-angles to the one to the arbor. I could not remember having seen the man before, but that might have been due to the fact that he wore a greatcoat with upturned collar to protect him from the rain, and had pulled a big wideawake down about his ears.

Somewhat to my surprise, the man passed all the outbuildings and kept straight on. This path was seldom used, and, running some distance through the grounds, ultimately led to an old gate, which opened into a little lane in the rear of the houses on the main street. Curiosity finally overcame me, and, turning up my coat-collar, I started off in pursuit, taking care to follow at a very discreet distance.

The man went through the gate into the lane, and I followed. He took the little road, which was so seldom used that it was overgrown with weeds, and I kept my safe distance back of him. The lane ultimately ran into a wide road, and down this we splashed. After half a mile of this the man passed by a turnstile into an open meadow, and, taking a little path that skirted the side of the field, finally came to the woods. By now it was growing dark, and my watch told me it was after five, but my curiosity was rising with each step I took, so I also plunged into the woods. Here I had to be doubly circumspect, lest the crackle of leaves or snapping of twigs might give me away, but apparently I was successful, for the man kept steadily on. As far as I could judge, we were gradually working into the country where the old quarries lay.

The path became more and more clogged with underbrush, and I had increasing difficulty in following my guide. I was quite sure now that we were bearing into that desolate country to the southwest of Petersham. Presently I caught the sound of snapping twigs in other directions, which gave me an idea that there might be other people not far from us. Still I kept on, determined to see the affair through, if there were time.

Suddenly I found we had come to the edge of the clearing. The man in the greatcoat went on, but some instinct bade me stop and peer carefully ahead of me before I followed him. It was well I did so. A minute later I had stepped to the left of the path, and crouched

behind a screen of young pine trees. I stayed there, squatting close to the ground, while I got my bearings.

Before me was an open space, semicircular in shape, and not unlike the cleared stage of a theatre, only much larger than any stage I had ever seen. Trees formed a half-circle on the side toward me, and the other side was the high cliff of what must once have been a large quarry. The earth of the cliff was a dark red in the rain, and the top overhung the cleared space at the bottom so that it formed a sort of cave. The place was very secret. A road appeared to enter it from the south, but beyond that I could see no trace of opening nor of path. One swift glance told me that much, and then my eyes came back to the scene being enacted under the overhang of the quarry's cliff.

More than a score of men were gathered there, all but one or two on horses, all wrapped in greatcoats that hid their clothes, and all masked. Even the man I had followed from the garden must have slipped a black mask over his face at some point in the woods, because, although I looked for him carefully, I could only conclude he was one of the two or three who were unmounted. I knew where I was now: I had come upon a meeting of the Night Riders.

The band was gathering strength every minute. As I watched I saw half a dozen ride in at the little gate of the arena, salute by touching hand to hat, and join one of the groups. Some of the men sat their mounts in silence, grim figures in the twilight and the rain; others seemed to be talking to one another. I was too far away to hear anything that was said. All I could do was to watch and wonder what deviltry was afoot.

Instinct pointed my thoughts all one way: they meant harm to the editor of the *Clarion*. These were the men who wanted to keep the country lawless, who were interested in the moonshiners, and they had determined to have their own way. Before me rose the picture of Mr. Burney's fine, heroic face and figure, and the image of Emily, her eyes filled with devotion and implicit faith. Instinctively I uttered a prayer that they might be saved from the rough hands of this crew. If only I could have gone directly to them and stayed with them until the present danger passed! I pulled my watch from my pocket, held the dial close to my face, and studied it. It was high time that I should be getting back to my uncle's house.

As best I could, I stumbled along the narrow wood-path, careful at first to make no noise, and then where I drew farther away from the quarry broke into a trot. Finally I came to a branch that I was certain would bring me home sooner. My judgment was correct; in half an hour I was back in the garden. I hurried into the dining-room, and found that my uncle had sent word he was taking supper with a friend. I snatched a hasty mouthful, and told Pompey that

I was not feeling well and could eat nothing more. Then I went to my room and changed my wet clothes for dry ones. I took a roll of bills from a bureau drawer and stuffed them into my pocket. Now I was ready to go to the livery stable and get the carriage that was to take Letty and me that night to the parsonage. The excitement of action nerved me like a tonic, and yet in spite of my intense excitement I could not get out of my head the thought of that gathering in the quarry, and the fear of what it might portend.

VIII.

By now the rain had become a steady downpour, and the world was streaked with gray lines as I came out on the porch and started down the steps. I had put on a heavy overcoat, and pulled a rough tweed cap about my ears, and yet I was chilly. I blew on my hands to bring some warmth to them. I wondered if bridegrooms ordinarily felt as moody as did I.

Circumstances did not combine to make me cheerful. The stone-paved walk from the steps to the gate was sunk in water, and as I turned for a moment on closing the gate and looked back at the house it seemed utterly desolate and drab. There sprang up in my heart an overwhelming desire for comfort, a wish for some one who might walk through the rain with me hand in hand, who would sit by the fire with me, and make such a house as my uncle's less cold and stiff. With the longing my steps quickened. I was going to such a one; only a few short minutes divided me from her now.

I reached the livery stable and found that the man in charge had thoughtfully provided me with a snug covered carriage. I knew the cheerful-faced old negro who was to drive. Giving him his directions, I got into the carriage, and we rolled out into the muddy road.

The Shannons' house was not very far away, and yet I must have mopped my brow with my handkerchief a dozen separate times before we reached it. The rain was turning warmer, and the air seemed filled with steam. I was glad when we stopped and I could leave the stuffy carriage.

I was to meet Letty in the hall. She was to be on watch, and when she heard the carriage-wheels to come down from her room in the front of the house, dressed ready to go. The front door was unlocked, as it always was. I pushed it open, and stepped into the hall. There was no one there.

I stood still a moment, my heart beating in my ears. I fumbled for my watch, pulled it out, and saw that I was exactly on time. I shuffled my feet, and coughed lightly. No one appeared.

Another minute passed. I thought I heard footsteps overhead and listened intently. The sound ceased. Then a perfect panic of fear

seized me, and my thoughts flew about wildly. I made an effort to control myself, and stepped to the sitting-room door on the right of the hall.

The door was ajar, and I pushed it back. The room was dim in the twilight, but at the farther end I could see Mrs. Shannon seated in a chair before the small coal fire. She was dozing, her hands clasped in her lap. I hesitated a moment, uncertain what to do, then stole noiselessly out into the hall.

The Shannons had one servant, an old negro woman who had always seemed to me as stupid as she was fat. I made up my mind to search above-stairs for Letty and run the risk of meeting the negress on the way. I went up to the second floor, and called softly, "Letty, Letty!" There was no answer. The door of her room in the front of the house stood wide open before me, and after a second's thought I tiptoed across and looked in. The room was empty.

I must have stood some little time staring blankly before me. I think the picture of that deserted room was focussed indelibly upon my mind, because even now I sometimes come upon it quite unexpectedly. Outside the two windows the criss-cross lines of rain; the heavy wooden bed, half hid by curtains, in one corner; the dressing-table, littered with toilet things, on one side; a sofa, with a light summer gown thrown across it, on the other. It seemed as if the mistress of it all must have left years ago. A sense of helpless tragedy possessed me, such as one might feel on coming on one's home town in ruins when one had left it full of happy friends a short time before.

I turned and went down the stairs. This time I walked boldly across the hall and into the sitting-room. I went over to Mrs. Shannon, who stirred at the noise of my footfalls and sat up. "Why, Mr. Coke!" she cried. "What a start you did give me!"

"Where is Letty?" said I.

"Letty?" she repeated. "Let me see, what did become of Letty?" The old lady's hands fumbled with the cap on her head, which the chair had disarranged.

"Yes. I was to meet her here at seven-thirty."

"Oh, I remember now. Not very long ago, just before I dozed off for thirty winks, after supper, Jerry dropped in. He and Letty had a lot to say to each other, and they talked out in the dining-room for quite a spell. Then Letty put her head in at the door and said, 'I'm going out for a drive with Jerry, Ma. He'll take good care of me. Don't you sit up.' 'Out in the rain?' said I, thinking they must be crazy. But they did n't answer, and I heard the door shut. I think he had a buggy waiting."

I stared at Mrs. Shannon until she said sharply, "What's the matter? Are n't you well?"

"Oh, yes," I said dumbly; "it was n't that. I was just thinking." In fact, I was not thinking; I was simply stunned, as if some one had suddenly struck me on the head. Could it be that Letty had changed her mind? Could it be that she did not care for me, after all? I wanted to go away somewhere and sit down and think, before the sky should come crumbling down upon me.

I went out into the hall, without any other word to Mrs. Shannon, and very carefully shut the door behind me. Then I sat down on the stairs. I think that I was more in love with Letty then than I had ever been before, and I know that I was more absolutely miserable. My head was sunk in my hands, and I sat there all crouched up, as if I had no more interest in the world.

Suddenly I was angry. I raised my head, clenched my fists, and stared about me. There was nothing there but the dark and lonely hall. I got to my feet, and pulled my cap down hard on my head. I walked to the front door, and, opening it, left the house. It was raining now harder than ever.

"Wait here," I said to the negro driver, and hurried up the street to the house where Jerry boarded. I rang the bell, and when the old shoemaker opened it I asked if Jerry was at home. "I don't think he be," said the man, "but you kin run up to his room an' see."

I raced up the rickety stairs to the third floor and knocked at Jerry's door. There was no answer. I threw it open and entered. The room was empty, as lonely as a garret. I crossed to the little table in the centre. A broken pipe lay there, a bag of tobacco, and a torn paper-covered novel. On the open page of the book lay a folded square of note-paper, and, to my surprise, I read my own name on it. I picked it up and unfolded it. My eyes ran rapidly over the lines inside.

DEAR DICK:

Mebbe you 'll get this far, and ef so these here are the facts. I've run away with Letty, an' I'm goin' to marry her. Ef I had n't she'd have gone with you, and you would n't neither one of you been happy. I know. I've watched, an' I know. You may think I don't but I do. I know you both, an' I understand her better 'n you do, and you better 'n she does. Some day you 'll forgive me, when you're older. Don't think hard of Letty. I made her do it. I've been fond o' her sence she was a little gal.

Yours,

JERRY DOLLIVER

I read that note half a dozen times. Then I tore it into shreds and threw it on the floor. "You — hypocritical thief! You false friend!" I cried out loud. "If I only had you here!"

Something rubbed against my leg. I looked down and saw a yellow mongrel that Jerry had befriended. He must have been under the bed,

and have crawled out at my words. His big eyes stared up at me from their great, mournful depths. He wagged his stump of a tail slowly, as if in doubt as to how I meant to use him.

I sat down on the bed, and the dog sprawled on the floor in front of me. I tried to think clearly, to realize something of this thing that had befallen me. I thought I could see what had happened. Jerry had spied upon us, and had learned something of our plans. He was in love with Letty himself, and so had deliberately stolen her from me. I could not clearly see why Letty had gone with him, but I supposed that he must have overawed her in some fashion, must have carried things with so high a hand that there was no withstanding him. That much I thought I could make out before I again fell to cursing him in a blind fit of passion.

There was no use in following them now; there were half a dozen towns near Petersham where they might be married, they had a full hour's start of me, and Jerry would lay his plans to throw me off the track.

"By God!" I cried, jumping up. "How I hate that man!" The yellow dog's eyes met mine, as if in dumb appeal for his master. "Yes, I do," I cried. "Get out of my sight!" He crawled away, looking as if I had kicked him.

I went down-stairs and out into the street. I had no thought of what I should do next. The night had now closed in, and the rain blew slantingly full in my face. I was thoroughly sick at heart; I cared for nothing, for no one. I walked stupidly on and on, neither knowing nor caring where I went.

Sometimes I thought of Letty—of her sweet face, her smiling eyes, the little tricks of speech and gesture I had grown to love; sometimes I thought of Jerry, and now his face was saturnine and leering as the devil's; sometimes I thought of the great stretches of my own empty life, and then waves of self-pity swept across me. The world was out of joint.

How far I tramped I have no means of knowing, but it was very far. I was soaked through, my clothes and cap were sodden with the rain. Mud was splashed over me, for I paid no heed to the ponds in the road and did not care whether they proved bottomless or not. I must have expected to go on walking until my strength was gone, but for some reason I did not seem to tire. My brooding anger was a fire of great force within me.

I had left the houses of Petersham far, far behind. I was out on the open road to the west. There seemed to be more wind there, but less rain. It was a wild night, take it how one would, and that was my sole comfort.

As I crossed the open country the rain ceased, except for an

occasional spitting gust. Clouds broke up in the sky, and let the watery light of a pale and distant moon touch the earth. The sky was filled with flitting images, the broken light was ghostly, and it made of the fields and road uncanny regions speckled with light and shade like some vast checker-board. The woods ahead were black as pitch, but they seemed at least some refuge from this visible desolation. I was glad when their shadow fell across me, like the door of a prison, and the world was shut out again.

Still my legs hurried on, driven by a demon of unrest. I must have covered at least a mile in the woods when a noise caught my ear. It seemed to come from the river, which here flowed some hundred yards to the road's left. I could not make out the noise, although I stopped and listened. There were men in the woods there, down by the river. I hesitated, then plunged into the dripping underbrush and fought my way between the trees. A branch struck me in the face and swept my cap off. Briars clung to my clothes, and I must have cursed the forest a thousand times as I tore through it. I did not know what I was plunging into, but I fought my way on until I reached the high river-bank.

IX.

I SHALL never forget the scene that lay before my eyes. I was shocked into immobility, and stood staring down from a height.

The same spectral moonlight that had revealed the checkered meadows now lighted up the river. Here the stream was almost at its wildest, broad, of strong current, and broken by rocks. The moonlight brought out the stones in black relief against the silver current, giving them strange, distorted shapes, and sharpening their points into giants' teeth. Below me the bank shelved to a level, and here were gathered a crowd of figures that were horrible to see in the pale light. I knew they were men, robed in black, with the peaked black caps that gave them extra height; yet they might just as well have been demons from another world, so tall they stood, and so fantastic were their figures. I looked from them out to the river.

Several rocks led out to a large flat slab nearly in the centre of the stream. Three men were on the flat rock, and two of them were kneeling on the farther edge. They held the side of a narrow raft, two logs lashed together, perhaps ten feet long and three across. At the extreme end of the frail skiff, as far from the men as he could get, was crouched the figure of a man, bareheaded, barefooted, without a coat, his shirt torn at the throat, his ragged trousers flapping against his legs. I knew him even as my eyes lighted on him. It was Elmer Simmons.

Horror held me rooted. What was about to happen? What limit

of cruelty had these fiends devised? My teeth shook in my head, and I shivered from head to foot, but I kept my eyes on the raft. I saw now that a little flag fluttered at the bow. I saw Elmer throw up his head for a second, and caught a glimpse of his white, tormented face.

One instant the moonlight would set the scene vividly before me, the next a shifting cloud would darken the sky so that all was confused and black. Now I heard the rumble of thunder, and as I still waited several shafts of lightning split the sky. By such light the picture was doubly grewsome. So seen, it was more than ever like a glimpse from the Inferno.

A shout from the men on the rock now announced that their work was done. I saw one pick up a long pole, and, placing it against the nearer log, give the raft a shove into mid-stream. Cries of satisfaction, more like the yelping of wild beasts than human sounds, rose from the men on shore. My eyes were glued to Elmer. The shove had almost made him lose his balance; he had saved himself only by clutching desperately at the log on which he crouched. There he clung, his long, ungainly limbs distorted out of shape. He had not even a paddle to guide or balance his frail, unwieldy craft.

Murmurs rose on the shore. I caught the words, "Tell 'em about it down south," "Your ticket's punched clear through," "This'll teach you-all a lesson." Then I saw one black figure stoop and a second later send a stone whizzing toward the raft. It struck the water and sent up a shower of spray. Elmer leaned further to the other side, and threw up his right arm to shield his face.

Another roll of thunder, like the cannon of a giant's army; another piercing shaft of light, and now the raft had swung into the current and was speeding down-stream. The logs swayed from one side to the other; Elmer was sitting partly under water, bent double to make himself as small as possible.

A dozen men were throwing stones now, following along the shore, getting better aim each time. One stone hit the raft and sent its bow spinning the other way, then another struck Elmer's arm, and he dropped it to his side amid a howl of derision. Instantly he threw it up again, but too late. A stone struck the side of his head, and I saw him topple over and lie flat on the logs. Other stones followed as the raft swung on.

So far I had watched; now I could do so no longer. I plunged down from my height, ablaze with anger, mad with hate of these men. They were too busy to hear me coming. I ran down the slope and full into a tall figure standing a little distance from the rest. "You cowardly fiends!" I panted. "May God blast the lot of you!"

The figure faced me, and I had a wild desire to leap at it and tear the mocking cap with the eye-slits from its head.

"You simpleton!" said the man. "Do you want to be killed? They'll do it if you try to interfere."

"I want——" I cried, and sprang at him, my fist raised.

My blow was parried, and a swing from his left arm to my chin sent me to the ground, stunned. I lay there a long time, away from the rest of the men, who were moving down-stream. I was dizzy and sick.

Finally I came to realize that the men were gone, and that the thunder-storm had burst in all its fury. The rain had soaked me through, my head was aching, and I was full of horror. Yet as I came gradually to my full senses, one thought was uppermost. Elmer Simmons was being swept down that river, absolutely powerless to help himself. I had once struck him with deep hate in my heart. I must do my best to save him now.

I got to my feet tottering and weak. I went to the river and splashed water over my face and head until I felt better. Then I started to follow the bank of the stream downward.

To follow that twisting, twining river was no easy task in broad sunlight; now at midnight and in a gale it was well nigh hopeless. Banks, steep and slippery with wet ferns and moss, had to be climbed, rocks to be skirted, bogs to be waded through. I came to that wild, deep pool known as the Pit, and looked anxiously out at the dark rocks that broke its surface. There was no sign of Simmons or the raft. The current must have steered him safely through.

There was some small comfort in the fact that I now seemed to have the river to myself. The men had disappeared, their dastardly work done. They cared nothing what became of Elmer or of me.

I must have slipped on the rocks and moss a hundred times. My hands were bleeding, my clothes torn; I could hear the water churning in my shoes. Every minute or two I would look out to the river, and then scramble along again as best I could.

I must have gone on for at least an hour before I found what I sought. I saw Elmer lying on a rock nearly in mid-stream, his arms spread out across it as if he were trying to hold on. The raft had been twisted sideways, and now, free of its burden, was banging heavily across two other rocks that served to check its course. Elmer might have jumped to his rock or been thrown there. He lay quite still.

I went down to the water's edge. "Elmer!" I called. "Elmer Simmons!" The only answer was the faint echo of the woods about me. I measured the distance across to where the man lay. It must have been about a hundred feet. Then I threw off my water-logged coat and pulled off my heavy shoes.

I waded into the river, and soon was swimming. The current was strong, but the water was not cold, and I soon found myself nearing

Elmer's rock. Just before I reached it I tried treading water, and found a ledge of rock that I could stand on. Stepping along this, I came up to Elmer and put my hand on his shoulder. He did not stir.

I looked at him closely. His eyes were closed, but I saw that he still breathed. I put my arm about his shoulders and tried to lift him. "Elmer," I said, my mouth close to his ear. "Wake up, Elmer." I shook him sharply.

He opened his eyes and looked round at me. "Lemme alone, I'm done for. What d'ye want?"

"To get you on shore, in a house, in bed," I said. "Can you swim?"

He shook his head. "No, an' I don't want to try. Lemme alone."

I gripped his arm in my hand. "See here, Elmer, you've got to get ashore. You'll die out here. I'm going to take you, but you've got to do what I say. It is n't far to the other shore. Will you do what I tell you?"

He made no answer, and I shook him roughly. "Will you do as I say? I'm your friend."

"Go ahead," he murmured.

I put my arm about his waist and lifted him upright until his feet were on the ledge of rock. He was very weak, and I gripped him so hard I was almost afraid I might break his bones. But it was ticklish business, and if I was to get him ashore I must do it as best I could. The ledge was slippery, and several times Elmer's feet slid from under him, and I had to jerk him upright. Once he almost fell over the edge, and I had to brace myself and struggle with his weight during a moment when it seemed as if he must pull me in. But I had set my heart and soul on saving that man, and I fought hard to do it. Had he slipped into the water, I should have dived after him, regardless of the rocks.

When we came to the end of the ledge I told Elmer to hold tight to my shoulders, and started slowly swimming. Luckily it was a very short distance to the farther shore, but even so I had to turn about three times and catch him as I felt his hands slipping off my back. By swimming a few strokes and then resting and partially supporting him, we made some progress, though our heads went under water more than once. Still I fought on, throwing my whole strength into the battle, and finally I found we had reached the shelving shore and could walk. I hurried Elmer up the bank and then let him drop. I sank down beside him. I had no breath left to speak.

In time I turned to the man beside me. His eyes had closed. "Don't move, Elmer, till I come back," I said. "I'm going to look for help." He did not answer, but, confident that he could not go far, I decided to leave him.

On this side of the river the woods were not thick. I soon made my way through them, and found myself in a road. The thunder-storm was passing into an occasional rumble and distant lightning. By the light of one such flash I spied a cottage a short distance down the road.

The good farmer must have been surprised to open his window about three that morning, in answer to knocks at his door and calls for help, and find such a man as I looking up at him. I was barefooted, my trousers rolled above my knees, my shirt sticking to my body.

"Please," I begged, "give me some help. I've just pulled a man out of the river, and he's lying on the bank in a faint. He's nearly done for, and I've got to get him under cover."

"Who are you?" the man demanded.

"Richard Coke, nephew to Mr. Junius Brutus Coke."

"Humph!" grunted the man, trying to get a better view of me. My words must have sounded genuine, because after a minute he said, "Well, I'll come down."

In a few minutes he joined me in the road with a lantern. "Look here," I said, "d'you think you could have a bed ready for him, and something hot to drink? If you'll take him in for the night, I'll see you don't lose by it."

A woman had put her head out of the door and had heard this last request. "Leave them things to me, young man," she said. "You go right along, Father, and fetch him here."

I blessed her for those kind words. They seemed the first I had heard in ages.

Accompanied by the farmer, who told me his name was Jim Patterson, I went back through the woods. With the help of the lantern, we had little trouble in finding Elmer. The poor fellow had tried to curl himself up on the grass, his head in the circle of his arms. The light of the lantern fell on his face, and showed the cut, the blood, and the worn features. "Good Lord!" exclaimed Patterson. "He has been through it! I never see sich a sight!"

He stooped down, and, pulling a flask from his pocket, lifted Elmer's head and poured some whiskey down his throat. It seemed to do Elmer good, for he opened his eyes and nodded his head feebly. Then he sank back against Patterson's arm.

"He's as cold as ice," said the farmer. "We've got to get him up to the house as quick as we can."

We lifted him between us, making a seat for him with our crossed hands and putting his arms about our necks. The farmer had slung his lantern over his arm, and it gave us enough light to show us the easiest way. We carried him through the woods and down the road to the farm-house. The woman met us at the door.

"Bring him right in here," she said. "I've got a bed ready."

We went through the living-room to a little bedroom at the back of the house, and put Elmer down on a cot. He gave a sigh of comfort as his weary body felt the bed under him.

Mrs. Patterson was evidently a woman specially designed to meet emergencies. She had a pitcher of something steaming hot just off the stove, and she poured at least half of it down Elmer's unresisting throat.

"Now get those clothes of his'n off and rub him good and hard, while I hunt one o' Jim's night-shirts," she commanded, as she left the room.

His clothes were nothing but rags. We got them off, although he groaned at each movement, and then we tried gently to chafe the blood back through his veins. "He had a nigh squeak that time," said Patterson as he worked over him. "It's mighty lucky you was close to hand."

A little later we had one of the farmer's night-shirts on him, and a pile of blankets for cover. He had fallen into a sort of doze, from which he woke every few minutes to mutter something and shrink back against the wall. "He must ha' been terrible frightened," said Patterson. "We'll have the doctor first thing in the mornin'."

Mrs. Patterson looked at me. "An' now, young man, what are you goin' to do? You look tuckered out yourself. How about puttin' you to bed?"

Tired as I was, I knew I could no more sleep than fly just then. I looked at myself critically. A scarecrow would have been ashamed to be seen in such clothes as mine.

"I think," I said slowly, "I'll be going home. I should n't dare go to Petersham later. There'll be no one about, and I've still got the key in my pocket." With a last word of thanks, I left the house.

Dawn was just breaking as I dragged my weary limbs into town. I was too tired to think, too tired even to be angry any longer. I struggled up Main Street, meeting no one, and, turning, found my uncle's house. I let myself in at the door. My bare feet made no sound on the polished floor as I went through the hall and up-stairs. I had just strength enough to pull off my clothes and give my wet body a few rubs with a towel before I threw myself on the bed. I fell into a sort of stupor, not sleep, but yet rest.

X.

LONG after the rest of my world was up and about I lay on my four-posted bed, numb as to thought, though not so as to feeling. I ached all over, and each time I moved it seemed as if I discovered a dozen

new muscles and nerves. But the physical outlook was not the most unpleasant one I faced. I had a disgust for the world which made me wish I might never see a human being again. My indignation at Jerry's treatment of me, my anger at Letty's faithlessness, even my hatred of the men who had treated Elmer like fiendish savages, seemed to have merged into one general loathing for my kind. I could not even think of poor Simmons with any satisfaction. The fact that he had suffered did not improve the conduct of the rest.

I twisted and turned and groaned as I lay there considering. The night of storm had given place to a mild, sunny day, and the square of blue sky that I could see through my window looked inviting. But I found myself wishing that I had never come to Petersham. I felt that I should never be contented here again. My coming to see Mr. Coke had been a miserable failure; more than that, a terrible disaster, since it had ended in my losing all my father's papers. The recollection of that disaster, almost obliterated by the events of the last twenty-four hours, brought me finally out of bed. I could lie there inactive no longer.

After a bath I felt better. I dressed slowly, to avoid any unnecessary aches. The clothes I had worn the night before, little more than rags and tatters now, I kicked into a corner. Then I went down-stairs to breakfast. I was glad to find that my uncle had already left the house, as I had no desire to talk. I rang for Sam, and ordered eggs and bacon. By the time I had finished breakfast it was half after ten o'clock.

I was standing at the window, looking out into the sunny garden and wondering whether I had not better go and see Mr. Grant about the robbery, when Sam discreetly coughed in the doorway. I turned about.

"A lady to see you, suh," said he.

"Who is she?" I asked.

"I dunno, Mr. Richard. She ain't give no name."

With a little feeling of surprise, I left the room, crossed the hall, and entered the drawing-room opposite Mr. Coke's study. Emily Burney was standing in front of the mantel-piece. She looked very pale and nervous.

I stood still, my heart thumping ridiculously. "Good morning," was all I could say.

She came forward and held out her hand to me. "I want you to help," she said. "I must have your help."

I took her hand, which was cold as ice. "What's happened now?" I asked.

"Elmer——" she began, and then hesitated. "Elmer was carried away by the Night Riders last evening, and I'm afraid he's killed."

She stood off a little from me, her tear-filled eyes fixed on my face.

"No, he's not," I said hurriedly. "He's safe now—no thanks to those men, though. I found him in the river and got him out, and he's over at Farmer Patterson's house, with Mrs. Patterson looking after him."

"You?" she exclaimed. "You found him? Oh, please, please take me to him."

"All right, I will."

We went into the hall, I picked up a cap, and we passed out the front door. She hurried down the steps, I after her, and in a minute we were heading down-street toward the country.

"Tell me," said Miss Burney, "how you found Elmer." I told her as briefly as I could my experiences of the night before. When I described how the Riders had launched the poor fellow on the raft and had thrown stones at him she stopped. "Oh," she cried, "it's too horrible to think of! Poor, poor Elmer! I did n't think there were such wretches in the world as those men!"

"How did it happen your father let you come?" I asked presently, as we went on.

"He did n't. I came without his knowing it. I left a note for him."

Now we had reached the little road that led to Farmer Patterson's house, and in a moment more we came upon the farmer himself, cutting corn near the road.

"How's the man at your house?" I called to him.

He looked me over slowly. "Did n't know ye at fust. You're diff'rent from last time I see ye. The man's up at the house. The ole woman'll be glad to see ye."

I marched up to the house and knocked on the door. The kind-faced woman opened to us.

"How is he?" I asked eagerly.

"Oh, you're Mr. Coke," she said, scanning me closely. "He's been out o' his head most o' the time, but he's sensible now. Won't you come in?"

"This is a friend of his," turning toward Emily. "He worked for her father."

"Glad to meet you," said Mrs. Patterson. "Come right in."

As people will in a sick-room, we tiptoed across the living-room, and came to the door of Elmer's bedroom. I looked in first, and beckoned to Emily. For a moment we stood there, looking at the lank figure of Elmer. Then Emily ran to the bed and fell on her knees beside it.

"Poor, dear Elmer!" she cried. She took his right hand, that lay outside the bed-clothes, and bent and kissed it. "Do you know who I am, Elmer dear?"

His eyes opened, and I could see the wonder and then the happiness in them. His face, which had been drawn in pain, relaxed in a faint smile. "Oh, Miss Em'ly! Oh, is it you?" he whispered.

"Yes, it's I, Emily," she answered. "I've been so scared about you all night, Elmer, and I'm so glad to find you here all right."

The farmer's wife had followed us into the room, and stood looking down at the pair. "He's been sayin' 'Em'ly' over an' over while he tossed about. I reckon he's glad you've come."

Emily rose to her feet and turned to Mrs. Patterson. "He's the bravest man I know," she said. "He thought he was going to be killed last night, and so did I, and he left the house without a word. He's the sort of man martyrs are. Only, thank God, he did n't have to die!"

"'T was a nigh squeak, though," said Mrs. Patterson. "Another ten minutes in the river would ha' finished him. When these two come in here last night, they was both nearly done for."

Emily flashed a look at me that sent hot blood to my cheeks. She turned again to Mrs. Patterson. "Will you keep him here for a few days? I don't think we could move him safely now."

"Here he stays till he says the word," answered the good woman. "He needs nursin' an' food an' quiet. I al'ays had a hankerin' to be a nurse. There ain't no bones broken nor no illness; it's just a case for a woman to look arter."

"I wish I could stay and help," said Emily. "Might I have a chair, and would you let me talk to him a little while alone?"

I brought in a chair and placed it by the bed. I could see that Emily was fairly shaking with fatigue. Then Mrs. Patterson and I left them together, closing the door behind us.

I went out and sat on a bench in front of the house, while she resumed her household duties. Presently Emily came out.

"Sit here a few minutes," I begged. "It will do you good."

"I ought to be going home," she answered. "Father will be worried."

"Just a few minutes," I urged. "You ought to rest."

She sat down beside me, and leaned her head back against the side of the house. "Elmer knows what you did for him last night," she said. "He could n't say much, but I saw that he knew. I'm so glad."

A moment later she jumped to her feet and stood before me, her cheeks ablaze with excitement. "Come!" she cried. "Father'll need help with the paper, and I know he'll be more than ever anxious now to have it out on time."

Excitement is the most wonderful tonic in the world. Emily walked down the road from the Pattersons' cottage as if she had rested well all night. I went with her, marvelling at her, and perfectly content.

But such strength as that is based on sham, and by the time we had struck into the post-road that ran from Petersham to Happy Valley Emily had turned pale again, and her steps had begun to falter.

"Here's a place in the shade," I said, pointing out a grassy spot under a maple. "We'll wait until a wagon goes by and then we'll beg a ride."

We sat down under the maple and waited. No one but ourselves seemed to be using the highway that morning. The noon sun had grown very warm, and a patch of red clover had drawn the drowsy buzz of bees to us. Emily leaned back against the trunk of the tree, and in a few minutes her eyelids closed, and presently she was asleep. I sat on guard, keeping ants from crawling on her skirt, and gnats from buzzing about her face. Once or twice I thought of Letty, but the memory seemed immeasurably far away.

After a time a cart, half filled with hay, came creaking down the road. Emily did not stir. I rose silently, and went over to speak to the driver. He was an old, weather-beaten farmer, with a rimless straw hat, pumpkin yellow, jammed down on his head, and a corncob pipe in his mouth. I offered him half a dollar to take the two of us to the *Clarion* office. He agreed, and sat stolidly in the road, chewing the stem of his pipe, while I went to wake Emily.

I hated to do it, she looked so very comfortable. I called her name three times before her eyes opened. Then she laughed and jumped up. "I'm sorry, but I could n't help it."

I made her comfortable in the straw, tucking my coat under her head for a pillow, and bade the farmer drive on. In two minutes Emily was asleep again. I, much more comfortable without a coat, chewed a straw, and pondered the many turns and twists in my affairs.

After a leisurely journey we finally reached the Valley, and drew rein before John Burney's door. Again I waked Emily. She jumped lightly from the wheel of the cart to the ground, and ran into the house. I paid the farmer, and saw him drive slowly on. Then I followed Emily indoors.

There was a Sunday calm about the front part of the Burneys' house. I went through the court and entered the printing-office. Mr. Burney was standing near his desk, his daughter in his arms.

Gently he disengaged her clasp, and held out his hand to me. "I understand you saved Elmer's life," he said. "I thank God you were near when he needed you!"

I went forward slowly and took his hand. His magnificent gray eyes seemed to read my very soul. There was something leonine in his bearing. I knew I was facing one of the world's great men.

"We've come on evil days," said he slowly. "We must think, must think hard. They got Elmer, and they thought to frighten me.

The next time they come, it will be for worse work. I know them, and what I've to expect. Emily, dearest child, you must go away."

I looked at her. She shook her head slowly. "And leave you here, Daddy? You can't ask me to do such a thing as that?"

"Yet if I go on with the *Clarion*, who knows what may happen to us both, dear heart? Would you have me give that up?"

"Never!" she cried, standing up quickly. "Daddy, don't you be afraid for me. You know it would break my heart if I thought you'd given this up for me. Don't make me go away. Let me stay and help."

I did not see how any man could resist the appeal in her face. John Burney stood looking at her for a moment, then turned to me.

"I think it's past argument, Mr. Burney," said I. "Emily intends to stay with you. You both intend to print the *Clarion*. I'm going back to Petersham to speak my feelings, and I've faith there are almost as many decent people there as there are bad."

"Mind you, Richard Coke," he said, "I don't mind a fight. It's only Emily I'm fearful for."

"Yes, I understand that, sir," I answered. "But I guess we've got to take her, now she's here."

That may not have been gallant, but it made Emily laugh, and so brought us back to present facts.

"There's one thing, at least, that Emily can do," she exclaimed, "and that is to get some food for two starving men. Father, finish your writing. Richard, come with me while I look into the larder."

Mr. Burney smiled. "You see, Richard Coke, the truth of the old saying, 'Man proposes, woman disposes.' We're both in Emily's hands."

I followed her to the kitchen, and tried to do as she bade me with the pots and pans. We both tried to show good spirits, but not with much success, for Emily was utterly tired out, and I was beginning to realize something of what might lie before John Burney's house.

XI.

SHORTLY after dinner I left the Burneys' house. I did not go direct to Petersham. Instead, I walked down the single street of Happy Valley, looking for the blacksmith's shop. I suppose, all told, there were some thirty families in the Valley, but their homes, widely separated as they were, covered a long stretch of road. Finally I came to the blacksmith's shop, which bore a striking sign, with the name "Job Trainer" surrounded by a wreath of horse-shoes. I could hear the ring of blows on the anvil before I came to the open door. Inside, I saw a giant of a man at work.

I went in and walked over to the anvil. The smith continued his blows a moment, then, resting his hammer, he wiped his hand across his mouth, as if preparatory to speech. I could see that he thought slowly.

"Mr. Trainer," said I, "I'm a friend of the Burneys. It looks to me as if they were going to have a lot of trouble. They're going to need friends more than ever just now. How do you feel toward them?"

Slowly the man rubbed his great brawny hand across his leather apron. His eyes were fixed on me with a deep stare.

"Miss Em'ly nursed my little gal last winter when she was mighty sick. I ain't got nothin' agin Miss Em'ly."

"And John Burney?" I suggested. "Surely you have n't anything against him?"

Trainer scratched his head thoughtfully. "Burney's a man," he said slowly. "There be no denyin' that. There ain't a streak o' chicken-meat in him."

"Then——" I began, but found that Trainer had more to say, and meant to say it.

"I don't like his paper. I don't see's how he's got a right to print things that makes trouble. 'T ain't my business if the laws are broken, nor your'n, nor yet his'n. It's the lawyers' business, or them that is paid to see the gover'ment run. That's the way I see it. I'm a peaceful man, an' I ain't got no use for them as wants to stir up trouble."

That made my work considerably more difficult. I had to think over my case before I could start again. Meanwhile, his bovine stare remained on me.

"Last night," I recommenced abruptly, "some of those men, those Night Riders who dress up in masks and cloaks, came out from Petersham, caught Elmer Simmons, set him adrift on a couple of logs in the river, and nearly killed him. It was n't their fault they did n't. The next time they may take one of the Burneys. Miss Emily is n't a coward——"

"Coward?" interrupted the blacksmith, in his ponderous manner. "I seen her bind up a dog's leg no one else'd go nigh 'cause they thought he was mad. I helped her hold him, but I was skeered myself."

"She's no coward," I continued, "and they won't get her father without reckoning with her. But what can the two of them do against a score?"

Trainer continued his silent stare for a full minute, then he slowly shook his head. "In a fight I be always with the under dog," he announced.

I took hope. "If they come—if the Riders come out here to

Happy Valley—will you stand by the Burneys?" I asked, trying to keep my eagerness out of my voice.

"I won't see 'em come to harm," he said finally, "ef I kin help 'em. Though, mark ye, I don't approve o' this paper business. Let the laws take keer o' themselves."

"Good!" I cried. "That sounds like the man Miss Emily said you were. Do you think any of the neighborhood will stand with you in this?"

The faintest ghost of a smile flitted across Trainer's broad face. "Ef them fellers come up here an' opens fire on Burney, I reckon a few would n't mind so much joinin' in the game, jest to make things even."

"Then I leave them to you," I said. "All John Burney wants is a fair field."

"He be entitled to that," said the smith gravely, "same as the rest of us."

"Good-by, Mr. Trainer."

"Good-by, young man."

I walked out of the smithy, feeling much relieved. When I stepped outside I glanced back. The smith had again lifted his heavy hammer to his shoulder. He made a fine figure so, a martial figure, with the hammer reminiscent of a battle-axe.

I tramped back the road, more than ever conscious of the extreme tranquillity of everything about me. It was that hour of mid-afternoon when a country village seems to have settled for a nap. A reaping machine whirred evenly in the distance, like the buzz of a drowsy giant bee. I had almost to make an effort to remember that the forty-eight hours had twisted my fortunes almost out of recognition. I had lost my father's papers and part at least of my inheritance, I had lost the girl I was to marry, I had saved a man's life, and had taken up the broken threads of friendship with Emily Burney. That was quite enough to make me thoughtful.

It was nearly sunset when I reached the broad thoroughfare where Petersham transacted business. Scarcely knowing whither my steps tended, I walked down the street and stopped before Mr. Grant's door. I could see from the window that he was in, and apparently unoccupied, so I entered.

Somewhat to my surprise, the lawyer was bending over some old daguerreotypes which lay on his desk. He glanced up as I entered, and I noticed that his eyes seemed somewhat far-away and dreamy.

"*Absit omen!*" he exclaimed, and put up his hand to remove his gold-rimmed eye-glasses and wipe them on a large silk handkerchief. "Come in, Mr. Richard. You come at a good hour. I was looking at some pictures of your father."

I crossed to the table, and stood at his side, looking down at the old daguerreotypes that lay before him. One was of a boy of about sixteen, the other of a young man of twenty-one or thereabouts. I knew both pictures. They had been in my mother's room at Marblehead.

"Your father," said Mr. Grant, replacing his glasses. "As happy-tempered, gallant, and lovable a youth as ever I knew. How well I remember when he grew his first mustache—very becoming it was, too, and made him the envy of all the rest of us boys, whose hair was like pig's bristles. But we weren't envious; it seemed only right that everything about Robert Coke should be good-looking. And your mother. Dear me, I don't believe there ever were two people in Petersham so happy before or since! Bring up a chair, Mr. Richard, and sit down."

I drew a chair close up to the table. Mr. Grant smiled at me rather apologetically.

"I was doing a singular thing when you came in, sir," said he. "I was talking to your father's picture. I was putting questions to him, and trying to catch his answers. Oh, I was very much in earnest, although it does sound strange! Much depends on the answers I read there."

He leaned back in his swinging chair, and for a few moments his eyes were as lost in thought as they had been when I entered. Then he sat up straight, and his hand reached to the desk and touched the other picture.

"Your uncle Junius," he said, and bent over the two pictures. I did likewise, much interested.

"Junius," Mr. Grant said, "was so absolutely different from Robert. He was our High School orator, he was apt at winning prizes, older people always predicted that he would have a great career. Look at the eyes and the mouth. Every one understood Robert and loved him, because he was so easy to understand. I doubt if any one thoroughly understood Junius, and I know many were afraid of him because of his air of secrecy."

"I know," I said. "I often feel it now."

"Yes," Mr. Grant answered. "Very likely. I've been looking at him, too, this afternoon, and trying to make him talk, but he won't say much. Robert was easier. I think I understand him now."

He closed the cases gently. "This has been a serious afternoon for me. I have had to decide a very important matter." His eyes rested on me a moment, and then he smiled. "I feel I've decided right."

There followed a silence, which I was the first to break. "Excuse my interrupting," said I, "but I wondered if you'd learned anything about my papers."

"It 's scarcely an interruption," he murmured. He swung back, facing his desk. "I think I may say that I'm on the track of them, Mr. Richard. You must give me a few days more before I make you my report."

His words gave me great cheer. "Oh, as long as you wish, sir," I hastened to reply. "My uncle is moving slowly. I'm so glad to hear you think there's a chance of my recovering them."

"A very good chance. Meanwhile, not a word to any one of what I'm doing. You understand."

"I understand." I rose. "Thank you so much, sir. You were a friend of my father. I'm sure he would thank you, too."

Mr. Grant had risen, and stood now with his hand resting on the cases. "I believe you're right," he said. "That was what I had just gathered from my talk with him."

I was somewhat mystified, but Mr. Grant added nothing to enlighten me. He was still standing so, half-smiling at me, when I left his office.

XII.

A few days later Mr. Burney called at Farmer Patterson's and took Elmer home with him. I heard that the Riders had had another meeting, and anxiety drove me out to the Valley the next morning.

Ten o'clock found me, dismounted from my horse, standing in front of Job Trainer's smithy. The great doors were wide open, the huge anvil stood like an enormous tree-trunk square in its place, but the smith was not to be seen. I pulled the iron ring outside the door, and the bell jangled loudly. A moment more, and Trainer appeared at the little door that led from his shop to his house.

"Morning, Mr. Trainer," said I.

"Mornin', sir," said he. I thought he looked rather strange, as if he had not yet got into his day's harness.

"Open for business to-day?" I asked at a venture.

He came slowly forward, and finally half sat, half leaned, upon the anvil, his brawny arms, which I think he must rarely, if ever, have covered with shirt-sleeves, folded across his chest.

"I'm a poor crittur," he announced solemnly, "an' I know it to the bottom of me boots. But I am thankful this mornin', rightly thankful, sir, an' I say as how she's come over me like with a ton o' bricks."

"Who?" I asked. "Mrs. Trainer?"

"No; Miss Em'ly."

I stared at him. "What's she been doing?"

He wiped his face with the flat of his great arm, more from habit than anything else.

"Last night my little Annie got the croup," he resumed in the same

solemn manner. "Her ma's been poorly some time, an' a-bed for a week. She could n't do nothin' for Annie. The Doc he come, an' he shook his head, an' sent me out for some med'cine. I knew she was goin' to die, for I ain't been a very good man, an' I could jest nat'rally feel it." Again he wiped his forehead with his arm. "I went down to the store, an' got the stuff, an' come on back, an' I reckon I sorter stumbled like, for I wa' n't feelin' good. Prutty soon I heard some one say, 'What's the matter with you, Mr. Trainer?' I looks up, an' there was Miss Em'ly. 'Annie's got the croup,' says I, 'an' she's mighty bad.' 'Can't I help?' says she. 'Let me go along with you.' 'I've been a bad man, Miss Em'ly,' says I, 'an' her ma's sick in bed, an' I dunno what to do.' 'I know what,' says she, and she walked along with me, and come into the house. Poor li'l Annie was havin' a hard time, an' the Doc was shakin' his head. He give her the stuff from the store, but it did n't do much good. Then Miss Em'ly, she tuk charge, an' she sat there with little Annie all night."

I waited a minute. "Is she better now?" I asked.

"She be," he answered. "Miss Em'ly held her tight, nussed her all night long, an' she pulled little Annie through." Again he wiped his forehead. "I'm a thankful man this day, sir, an' I hope a diff'rent one."

"Has Miss Emily gone home yet?"

"She's just gone. Annie's sleepin' quiet."

There followed a pause which I broke abruptly. "Mr. Trainer, Miss Emily and her father are going to have a lot of trouble. Those men, the Night Riders, are coming out here to destroy the *Clarion* press, unless Mr. Burney stops his paper, and that I know he won't do. There's going to be trouble then, and I should n't wonder if they tried to burn his house down over his head. They're going to need help badly."

The smith's big blue eyes were lighted with slow fire as they looked at me. "I'd stand afore her through hell fire," said he slowly. "P'r'aps you don't know what little Annie is to me."

And before his fixed gaze my own eyes had to drop.

Talk about comfort! I got more actual satisfaction out of those few words of Job Trainer's, and the way in which he said them, than in anything else I had known for weeks. He looked a big enough bulwark to protect anybody from anything as he leaned against the anvil. I said a few more words, and left the smithy, carrying with me a very vivid impression of Trainer's thankful and almost reverent face.

I walked my horse back to the post before the *Clarion* office, and tied him there. I knew that Emily would be sleeping after her all-night vigil, and, fearful of disturbing her in any way, I crept around

the house and came to the printing-office by a side-door. I found Mr. Burney seated at his desk, and Elmer making cuttings from newspapers at his table in the opposite corner.

I thought Mr. Burney's face looked more than usually serious, and almost careworn, as he sat at his desk, but his eyes seemed to brighten as they lighted on me. He held out his hand, and I took it in a warm clasp.

"Good morning to you, sir. Good morning, Elmer," said I.

Elmer showed his teeth in a dry sort of smile and gave me "Good morning." I rested my arm on the top of Mr. Burney's roll-top desk, and looked intently at him. As I looked, all my old respect and admiration and pure fondness for him welled up within me. He seemed so simple and so true and so fearless.

His voice had sunk almost to a whisper. "They are coming out here, Richard, to destroy my press. They know if they can do that they can silence me. They will come out here and take it, and God knows what they will do with it—most likely drop it in the river."

"Unless you give up the paper," I added.

"Unless I give up the paper—and that would be the same as losing the press. They sent me word at dawn to-day."

"And of course you will go on?" I said.

"Yes. It may seem strange to some, but I must go on. Duty is rarely a word that sounds well in men's ears, and when duty means constant struggle, misunderstandings, perils, it's a hard and bitter word. Yet, if it should come to that, Richard, I know that I would give up everything to do what I know, beyond all argument or doubt, is my work."

We looked at each other in silence a short space of time.

"You're not alone in this," I said finally. "There are men in Petersham who think as you do. I'm going to prepare them for this fight. There must be some here in the valley, too. I know one—Job Trainer. I've just seen him, and he'll stand by us to the end. And when the next *Clarion* appears, he and I'll help deliver it. There'll be no harm in showing that you've recruits who are n't afraid to show themselves."

"Thank you," Mr. Burney answered. "I hate to draw you into this, and yet I know it's right."

"And I also," I answered.

We shook hands again, with a certain sense of performing a formal rite. As I left the room, I glanced at Elmer. He sat hunched up on his high stool, his eyes fastened hungrily on John Burney's face, his whole expression full of mute adoration.

My heart was singing high as I left the printing-office, for my talk with Trainer and with Mr. Burney had nerved me. Yet there was

one thing more I wanted. That, however, I did not expect to have, for I knew that Emily must be sound asleep. Fortune was kind to me. As I untied my horse in front of the house, I heard a window raised, and, looking about, I saw Emily at her window in the second story. I took off my hat and waved it to her. She leaned out and beckoned to me.

"You've been to see Father?" she asked.

"Yes, I've just left him. And I've seen Job Trainer, too. He told me of a certain person who'd been at his house all night."

Emily flushed. "It was nothing. I've always been fond of little Annie. She's a darling."

"Trainer is with us now, hand and foot, bound and delivered. And, by the way, I'm coming out every day."

"Why?" she asked.

"Oh, well, I think I'm needed." I hesitated. She looked lovely, her soft, red-brown hair loosely knotted, and her eyes very bright. "Emily, I want to have a long talk with you soon. I've a lot of things I want to say."

Emily laughed. "You're always telling me that, and then, when you have the chance, you're quite speechless. Tell me now."

I shook my head. "Not this way. I'm no Romeo."

"Very well, then; ride on—to glory. Wait one moment, though." She disappeared from the window, and a second later reappeared and dropped a great red rose down into my hands. I looked up at her face, and found her smile more tantalizing than ever.

"What does this mean?" I asked.

"That I'm happy, and want every one else to be so, too. If the rose will give you pleasure——"

"It does—a great deal." I fastened it in my coat, and looked up again. "I wish, Emily, that you'd come down a moment."

She shook her head. "I've lots of work to do, and I know how it would be. I don't dare. This is a workaday world, Mr. Richard Coke."

"It's not!" I cried. "It's the most beautiful, wonderful world out here." But the window was shutting, and I was left to cry my rapturous exclamations to the empty air.

I had work to do as soon as I reached Petersham. This was Tuesday noon, the *Clarion* would make its appearance on Thursday, and the Night Riders' attack would probably follow at once. I had only a day or two in which to see what I could do to raise recruits.

There were certain men who I knew would help, men I had heard speak vigorously on behalf of Burney and his stand. There were perhaps half-a-dozen of them. Now I hunted them out, and, having made my assurance of their position doubly sure by a little preliminary

feeling about, I told them the exact state of affairs. I told them that probably Thursday night the Riders would go to Burney's house to destroy his press, that he intended to fight for his property, and that if we were unwilling to let this lawless band rule the country, we must stand beside John Burney. We must have horses and guns. I need not have added that—every man to whom I spoke had a horse and a gun. I need scarcely have tried to raise their fighting spirit; that was latent in every mother's son, and not far beneath the surface either.

With the aid of six staunch adherents, I did considerable proselytizing, and by Wednesday night had the satisfaction of knowing that the town was divided against itself. I had reason to fear that the great majority of people were opposed to Mr. Burney, but I knew that many of them, on account of age and a natural indisposition to take an active hand in anything, would content themselves with voicing their opinions from their porches, while I knew that those who now stood with me would take the field at the first call to arms.

Late Wednesday afternoon I dropped into Mr. Grant's office for a little chat. He had given me much good advice during the past few days, and I had fallen into the habit of reporting to him at frequent intervals. I had the good luck to find him in his room. He closed the book he was reading with a bang, almost as if he were glad that I had interrupted him. "How's it going, Richard?" said he, with a smile wrinkling the corners of his eyes.

"Time's growing short," I answered. "The *Clarion* 'll be out to-morrow, and then we'll see what we shall see."

"Is Junius in his office?" he asked, somewhat abruptly changing the subject.

"No, he went over to Westboro to-day," said I, naming a neighboring town where my uncle had some clients.

"Will he be back to supper?"

"No; he said he would n't be home till late."

"I'd like to go over to your house with you, Richard. There are one or two little points about the robbery I want to try to clear up."

We left the office and walked to my uncle's house. Again Mr. Grant fell into a reminiscent vein and talked to me a great deal about my father and of how fond he had been of him.

The old house was cool and quiet when we entered it. I took Mr. Grant up to my room, and he looked about him with interest. Then I showed him how easily a man might jump from the window to the roof of the bay-window, and so, by means of the trellis, to the ground.

"When the man escaped by the window you followed him," said the lawyer, "but when you reached the garden he had disappeared?"

"Yes."

"Did you look next day for foot-prints?"

"Yes, but there were none. The brick walk runs along by the house and out to the servants' gate at the right. The thief must have stuck to that."

"And then you climbed back, and walked down the hall to your uncle's room, went in there, and found him in bed, sound asleep?"

"Yes, that was the way of it," I agreed.

"Will you show me Junius's room?"

I led the way down the hall to the other side of the house, and pushed open my uncle's door. The room was scrupulously neat; it might have been specially prepared for our inspection. Mr. Grant walked carefully about it, glancing at the pictures and the quaint, old-fashioned furniture. "A beautiful highboy," said he, stopping before a tall, dark mahogany piece, with brass handles that shone like gold. "And a magnificent wardrobe," he added, passing on to the next piece of furniture. "How roomy these things are!" He turned the key in the lock and threw open the door. Then, after a moment's hesitation, he put his hand into the wardrobe and pushed the clothes that were hanging there right and left. "Everything as neat as if a woman had cared for them," he said finally, and closed the door. Then he passed on about the room, and in the course of his admiring tour he opened two closets and looked through the contents. He seemed very much interested in everything belonging to my uncle.

"And now, Richard, I should like to go out to the garden," he said, when he had completed his round.

I took him out by the door at the rear of the entrance hall. We stood on the brick path that led from the back of the house to the gate into the side street, which was the servants' entrance. Mr. Grant glanced across the flower-beds to the little summer-house, and then took a careful survey of the rest of the garden.

"What's that little shack down along this brick walk?" he asked, pointing to a small wooden building on our right.

"Oh, that's an old shed where they keep the garden things, ash-barrels, and such like," I answered.

He walked down toward it and opened the door. I followed him into the shed, which was quite roomy. In one corner leaned a lot of garden tools, near by was a great coil of hose, beyond were boxes and barrels filled with rubbish waiting to be carted away. Mr. Grant walked over to a ladder that stood against the wall. "Ten feet high, I judge," he speculated. Then he put his head out of the shed door and looked toward the house. "That ladder would just about reach to the second-story windows of the house," he remarked. "I don't suppose this shed is ever locked."

"Oh, no; there's nothing of any value here."

He turned back toward the ladder.

"The thief would n't have needed a ladder, though," I added. "The bay-window roof under my window and the trellis would be quite enough."

"Yes, yes, quite enough," he agreed, somewhat absently.

I watched him prowl about the shed, dipping his fingers into boxes of rubbish, kicking an old tin bucket that was full of scrap iron, and I wondered what it was he had in mind. At last, as he leaned over a barrel in a far corner, I heard him give a little whistle. I stepped nearer. He was pulling what seemed to be old clothes out of the barrel, first a black coat, then some moth-eaten trousers, then a long garment that was folded inside out. He threw the coat and trousers on the shed floor, and brought the last garment out to the light. He unwrapped it and turned it about. It was an old and soiled flowered dressing-gown.

Giving me this to hold, Mr. Grant put his hand in his pocket, drew out a wallet, and, opening it, took a scrap of cloth from it. He laid this scrap on the cloth I held. It matched exactly. Then I understood. The man who had stolen my papers had worn a dressing-gown, and in some way the gown had found its way into the bottom of this rubbish barrel in the shed.

"There, Richard, do you see?" said Mr. Grant.

I nodded my head. "It's very curious," was all I could find to say.

He turned the gown over and fitted the scrap to the arm from which it had been torn. Then, without more words, he made a bundle of the gown and led the way out of the shed.

"Now, Richard," said he, when we stood outside, "I have all I want. I'm going to take this with me, and I'm going out the servants' gate. Keep mum about all this. You'll hear from me very soon. Meantime, not a word to any one."

I nodded. A minute later he had shut the gate behind him.

I walked back to the house, and sat down in my uncle's study. The portrait of Henry Clay, right arm nobly extended, looked down upon me. I sunk my head in my hands, and stared at the floor.

XIII.

THURSDAY came, and while the lark was still singing his welcome to the dawn I was covering the road from Petersham to Happy Valley. In the printing-office I found Emily, her father, and Elmer. The latter had charge of the press, and already a great white pile of papers lay stacked upon the table. Emily was folding the sheets as they fell from the press, and John Burney was running his eye down the columns on the first page of a copy.

"Well, I see it's out," I said, taking in the scene before me.

"Yes," said Mr. Burney, and, stepping over to me, handed me the copy he had been reading. I saw staring at me an account of all the events of the past week, including word for word the message that the Riders had sent to Mr. Burney.

"People shall know the truth," said John Burney. "Then let them decide between us."

"Good!" I agreed. "I heard last night that the men who deliver the paper for you had refused to work for you any longer. Is that so?"

"Yes, I'm sorry to say it is. I'll have to deliver it myself."

"I've a better plan than that. Let me do it. I think Job Trainer will help me. They might do you a mischief, but Trainer and I are n't so well known."

Mr. Burney looked rather dubious. "If there's danger, I ought to run it," said he.

"I think there's quite enough danger in staying right here," I answered. "If the *Clarion's* going to make another appearance, the editor must n't run unnecessary risks."

"If the *Clarion* is to make another appearance," he repeated musingly. "I pray God that my work may not go for naught."

"Then that's settled," I said, after a moment. Mr. Burney said nothing, but I knew that he had agreed.

A serious air had come over the room, and to lighten it I stepped to Emily's side. She welcomed me with a smile.

"Can't I help?" I asked.

She pushed some of the sheets toward me. "It seems to me you're helping us a great deal," she said.

I caught Elmer's eyes upon me, and something in them made me check the rising tide of speech. I picked up the papers and began to fold them as she did, but I could not keep my eyes from her slim, pretty fingers nor from her soft, sun-browned arms.

Slowly the press ground through its work, and the damp pages dropped on the long table in front of us. Elmer, himself almost as mechanical now as the press, fed in the untouched sheets. Emily and I seized the printed ones and silently turned and creased them. Mr. Burney had gone to his desk, and was writing letters. We were all a little startled at a sudden knock at the door which opened into the yard.

"Come in," called Mr. Burney.

The door was pushed open, and Job Trainer, looking bigger than ever, it seemed to me, stood there. In his arms he held a large water-melon. He pulled his hat from his head. "I heered Miss Em'ly tellin' little Annie how much she keered for melons," he remarked, "so I brung her one. It oughter be good by the soundin', but melons is tricky things."

"Thank you very much," said Emily. "It looks like a beauty. Won't you set it down?"

Thereupon Trainer advanced into the room and placed the melon on a chair. "Is that the new paper?" he asked, looking at the press.

"Yes," said Emily. "Would you like one?"

"I ain't much of a reader," he answered, eying with some misgiving the copy she held out to him. "But I'll take it back to the shop and have it layin' round when folks stop in—jest to show where I stand in this here matter."

He folded the paper and stuffed it into his trousers pocket. Then he gave a tentative little cough. "Ain't there anythin' else I can do to help you folks along?"

I looked up quickly. "Will you help me deliver these papers, Mr. Trainer? The regular men have quit, and I don't know how Mr. Burney'll get them taken to Petersham unless you and I lend a hand. It is n't hard work, but we may get called hard names."

"Hard names don't break no bones," said the blacksmith, with a slow smile. He glanced at Emily, who had bent again to her work. "I reckon you folks need me more'n the shop does to-day. I'm your man for the papers."

"Thank you ever so much, Mr. Trainer!" said Emily quickly; and I could see from his eyes that the smile which went with her words had paid him a thousandfold for the work he had offered to do.

"I'll stop for you at the shop," I said, "as soon as we've got the papers into the wagon. I don't think there'll be any trouble, but you might stick a pistol in your pocket, if you've got one lying around loose."

Trainer nodded. "I kin keer for that," said he. "Mornin' to you all," and he turned and left the room, closing the door quietly behind him.

I found Emily standing close beside me, her hand resting ever so lightly on my arm. "Dick, have you a revolver with you?" she whispered.

"Yes; I've been carrying it now for over two weeks."

"Oh, do be careful, please," she went on. "It's terrible to think that any of you may be hurt."

"Was n't Elmer hurt?" I asked, looking across at him, as he stood half hidden by the press.

"Yes, he was, and I'm so afraid the troubles have n't stopped there."

Perhaps I took unfair advantage of her alarm. I could not help myself. I put my hand on hers. "I'm almost glad you're afraid," I whispered, trusting to the noise of the press to hide my words. "Emily, some day I've a lot to tell you!"

The color stormed her cheeks, her lashes hid her eyes from me, but for a moment we stood so, and I could feel my pulses beating almost louder than the press. Then she gently drew her hand away from mine, and, moving to a little distance, picked up the newly printed sheets and folded them. I went on working blunderingly. It seemed to me that I could see nothing, think of nothing, but that dear figure just beyond my reach.

In some fashion that week's *Clarion* got itself printed, folded, and stacked. By the time the papers were tied in convenient bundles, Elmer had brought the delivery wagon to the door. We all helped carry the papers and pile them in the wagon. Mr. Burney had given me a list of the people to whom the copies were to be distributed by hand. He and Elmer took charge of the mailing-list.

With a few last words of advice and warning, I mounted the driver's seat and drove down the road. I called back to Elmer to put my own horse in the stable. When I pulled up before the smithy, I found Job Trainer waiting for me at the door. He climbed to the seat beside me and folded his arms across his chest. I think his mere physical presence would have given me courage enough to drive through a hostile army.

We had little to say to each other as we took up our progress toward town. The wagon was heavy and jolted over the road, throwing the piles of the *Clarion* on top of one another. The two horses were neither young nor frisky. Trainer and I were each busied with his own thoughts.

As we neared Petersham, we began to find ourselves objects of interest. The news of the Night Riders' threat had probably spread to every farm-house in the county, and here now, in our loaded wagon, was the visible answer John Burney was making to the threat. Farmers stopped work to gaze at the big wagon as it rumbled along the road, and whenever we threw one of the folded papers on the porch of a subscriber it was eagerly seized upon by all the grown members of the family. The fact that Trainer and I were delivering the paper, instead of the regular men, also caused comment. Some men simply grinned, more nodded encouragement, and a few scowled upon us. To all this Job presented a perfect immobility, sitting like a man of stone, occupied with thoughts far too deep to be concerned by what these men might think. I tried to imitate him, but with small success, for my cheeks would flush or pale as we passed different men, and I was continually on the lookout for a stone or something more dangerous.

As we came to the road that led to the quarry, we met a man on horseback, who I was sure was one of the Riders. He had an evil look in his eyes as he neared us and drew rein. I expected trouble.

"What you got there?" he demanded.

I was for driving on without making any reply, but Job put his right hand on the reins and stopped our horses. "This be a load of to-day's *Clarion*, hot from the press. Would yer like to buy a copy, Mister?" said he, in his deep voice.

The rider's scowl grew. "I did n't think there was two men in the country would peddle Burney's vile stuff," he declared.

Job looked ahead of him down the road and clucked to the horses. "There's some men grows wiser every day they lives," said he. "I reckon you don't keer to buy a copy. G'lang." This last to the horses.

The other put his hand to his hip pocket, and my own hand flew to mine. But the rider changed his mind. So we drove past him, majestically unruffled, and heard his horse canter on along the road.

Presently we came into Petersham. We started with the outlying streets and made their circuit. I gave the reins to Job, and myself delivered the papers, jumping down from the wagon and handing them in at the door or stuffing them into mail-boxes. Our work was done quietly and quickly. We caused no particular comment until we came near the centre of Main Street, where were gathered the Court House, the post-office, and all the chief stores.

Like a breath in the wheat, a whisper of our coming must have spread through the heart of the town. As we slowed up before the post-office, windows were raised, doors opened, and in the twinkling of an eye the drowsy square was full of animation. Cyrus Robbins, the postmaster, himself came out to the wagon, and took his bundle of copies from my hands. A dozen small boys, mysteriously freed from school, danced about our horses or stood on tiptoe on the pavement, trying to look into the wagon. A woman hanging out of a second-story window opposite the post-office, her head bound with a dusting cloth, gave voice to her thoughts. "Hooray for Burney an' the *Clarion*!" she shrilled. "Hey, son, bring me a copy."

That seemed to break the ice of suspense that had held the square. Some voices answered her back. I heard one deep bass cry, "The — preacher's made trouble enough!" and another remark, "Ole man Coke's family cert'nly hev run to seed;" which, of course, was meant for my ears, but in another minute I was too busy selling papers to the crowd of men and women who surged about us to listen to such comments. Some smiled as they bought their *Clarions*, some scowled and muttered, but nevertheless bought, doubtless out of curiosity. A few asked open questions.

"Say, sonny," said an old man as he handed me his pennies, "who's the giant you got sittin' there to holt your horses?"

Before I could answer another had spoken: "Why, don't you know him? That's blacksmith Trainer, over to the Valley. Don't he look like a cigar Injun, though?"

I glanced at Job. He sat bolt upright, rigid of face and figure, not unlike the statues that grace some tobacco-shops. He did not smile, nor even look about him. I think he imagined he represented the majesty of the law.

A few men, gathered together in front of the Court House, looked as if they would like to rough-handle us. They sent emissaries here and there among the people, saying bitter things. I was called a "scab," a trouble-breeder; the *Clarion* was called vile names without number. Finally a young fellow with coal black hair and eyes and a yellow skin edged up near to us and broke loose with a string of low epithets aimed at John Burney. I felt rather than saw Job Trainer stiffen. He stood up. "Would you mind repeatin' them words, young man?" said he.

Instant silence fell. The young man flushed. "What's that got to do with you?" he said guardedly. Then he gained courage. "I've got a right to speak my mind, and if I think that Burney's a sneak an' a liar, I've got a right to say so."

Trainer was on the ground, in front of the horses, just before the speaker. He looked very big and calm. "You kin say what you like to yourself, but not to me. Mr. Burney's as honest a man as the Lord ever made, an' you're the liar."

They looked at each other a moment, and then some of the youth's friends helped him out. One man called, "We'll show Burney what we think of him all right, all right!" and another chimed in: "Don't take much rope to hang a lot o' scamps."

Trainer looked around at the last speaker, and when he turned back the young man had slipped among his friends on the sidewalk. The blacksmith smiled grimly. "Some men was made fer kindlin' wood," said he, "an' I reckon that's all they're good fer."

He climbed back to his seat on the wagon. For a moment I felt that the issue hung in doubt. I could see that young man's face, and it was very black. The men crowded about him looked black, too. The scales balanced as to whether they would try to rush us out of town or not.

Then a man on the post-office steps caused a diversion. Suddenly he flung his hat on the ground and squared off, fighting fashion. "To — with everybody!" he cried. "I'm the lad what knocked out Georgy Sam! Come on, one at a time. Step up, gen'lemen!"

There was a laugh, more laughs, then a round of laughter. The man was a Petersham character. And when the laughter died down, the skies had cleared and the pitch of tension had broken. I blessed that man's inborn sense of humor.

The town square had become a sort of family picnic ground by the time I picked up the reins and called to the horses. Men made way

for us with good-natured banter and chaffing. The enemy had retired behind their doors. I drove past my uncle's office. There was no one at the window or on the steps. Finally I turned off Main Street and went to the livery stable. There I was to leave the team.

Trainer climbed down, I after him. He was as stolid as ever, and as uncommunicative.

"Now we'll go get some dinner," said I. "We've done a good morning's work."

He grunted. "Might have been better." I knew he was thinking of that black-haired youth.

"Save it all up," I answered. "If I'm not much mistaken, they'll be coming out to-night. They've got to come if they're going to save their faces."

"Let 'em come," he growled.

I took Job to a restaurant for dinner, so that there should be no danger of his meeting Mr. Coke. Afterwards he went back to the Valley, and I busied myself with plans for the coming struggle.

XIV.

WITH the coming of dusk, my plans were practically completed. As the last stroke of seven should sound from the town-hall clock, I would mount the horse which Sam would have ready, and head for the western road. At least a dozen other men would strike into that road at or about the same time that I did.

There was great stillness in the old house as I went out into the hall. I had the feeling that I was bidding a tentative good-by to the peaceful, age-mellowed rooms and all the things they held. I was very proud of them and their traditions, prouder than I had ever been before.

I had already had supper, and now stood, watch in hand, waiting for the deep voice of the town-hall clock to strike. As I stood waiting, I saw, through the open doorway, a boy open the street gate and come up the path. He climbed the steps, and I stepped forward to meet him on the porch.

"Mr. Grant told me to give this to Mr. Richard Coke," said the lad, pulling a letter from his pocket. "He told me to be very careful to see that no one but Mr. Richard Coke got it."

"Very well," I answered. "Give it to me. I'm Richard Coke."

The boy handed me the letter. "Yes, I know it's you," he said, with a grin. "I seen you down-town in the wagon this mornin', and I heard folks call your name."

I nodded, absorbed in other thoughts, and the boy, seeing me so unresponsive, turned and retreated. I read my name on the envelope,

and was just about to tear off the end when the town clock broke into its first deep ring. The sound came to me very like a voice. I stuffed the letter in my pocket and wheeled about. I snatched my hat from the rack, and slipped into a loose pea-jacket. When I was ready I found Sam waiting at the gate with my horse. The last stroke of the bell had not ceased to echo in the still evening air before I was mounted and riding to the west.

I shall never know another ride like that. I could appreciate something of what Paul Revere must have felt as he left Boston on that April night. Petersham was quiet, so still that it seemed to me my horse's hoofs would draw men to their windows. Our street was empty save for a lumbering market-wagon, which I had soon caught and passed. The trees, arching above me, made a frame for the distant circular view of open country.

I was to wait in the neighborhood of a certain farm-house until the first five of our party should appear. This was to avoid the danger of our plans having leaked out and the Riders having posted men to way-lay single horsemen. Yet in order that we might not attract undue attention, we were going in two detachments.

Within ten minutes after I had forced myself to draw rein and wait, five friends had joined me, each set of face and wrapped in an air of mystery. We spoke together, in whispers, and as soon as all the first detachment had arrived, took up our journey.

The meadows were at peace; the woods, when we came into them, were swept by no louder sound than a soft whistle of the wind. Above us the sky darkened, stars were lit, and a young moon floated up and hung slantwise just ahead of us. And the soft rustle of the trees, the whispers in the hills, and the blue and silver sky all made me think of Emily.

We rode slowly, speaking little, and trying not to break the stillness all about us. Night was well advanced as we came through the gap in the hills and entered into the bowl of Happy Valley. We had no objection to being seen here, and rode boldly up to John Burney's house.

The long, low, white building, with the *Clarion* sign glistening in the moonlight, looked as quiet as ever. An old barn, some fifty yards from the house, was to shelter our horses, and there we now went. The nags safely cared for, I led my little band back to the door of the printing-office.

There was no excitement here. Mr. Burney sat at his desk, writing by the light of a big lamp. Elmer was sorting type at his table. Emily was not in sight. The big press stood at one end of the room, quite oblivious to the fact that it was to be the object of a bitter raid.

Our coming raised the tension. Mr. Burney put away his writing,

and shook hands with all our men, thanking them in a deep voice faintly vibrant with emotion for their great kindness in coming to his aid. They brushed his thanks brusquely aside, as men will under the strain of excitement, and pretended an unusual interest in everything about the office. Elmer stopped working over the type, and sat on his high stool, as I had so often seen him before, his long legs crooked up like those of a giant crane, his head bent forward, and his eyes peering from under his brows. The lamp in the bracket back of him cast his queer, ungainly shadow far across the floor.

I went in search of Emily, crossing the little court and hall to the dining-room. She was not there, and I went on to the kitchen. She stood, her sleeves rolled above her elbows, piling dishes on a shelf. At the sound of my step, she turned. "Oh, it's you, Richard?" she said, her voice shaking a little.

"Yes, and I'm glad to be here, right here with you. I hope you're not frightened. I've been wanting to be with you all day."

"No, I'm not frightened, but—I'm so glad you've come."

As I looked at her, her eyes were hidden by her lashes a moment, and her cheeks flushed. I stepped forward. "Oh, Emily, what brutes men are! How different women!"

She looked up and laughed softly. "You're very polite, Richard."

"I mean it."

"How do you know? You mean so many different things at different times." And she laughed again.

I was so excited that I laughed, too, at nothing apparently, and so we came out of the kitchen and sat down in the dining-room, seemingly as much amused as if we had just heard some very good joke.

But we were not allowed to laugh long. In a minute or two we heard the sound of horses' hoofs on the road, and knew that the rest of our little band of defenders were arriving. That reminded us both of our situation, and Emily's face grew pale again and her eyes big and a trifle strained, although I knew it was not fear for herself, but for the rest of us, that was stirring at her heart.

I did the best I could to convince her that the Riders would leave as soon as they found that the *Clarion* press was guarded by a band of determined men, or that, if they insisted on trying to come to close quarters, a scattering fire of shot from the house would teach them the lesson they deserved. She only half believed me, although I think she really tried to. Too much was at stake for her to persuade herself readily of our success. Then I told her what she ought to do: how she must stay here in the dwelling part of the house, preferably above-stairs, and on no account venture out until her father or I should come for her. She nodded her head as if in assent, but her eyes were far away in thought.

I glanced at the clock on the mantel-piece. It was after eleven. "I must be going over to the office now," I said slowly. "You're sure you're not afraid to stay here alone?"

"Afraid?" she answered. "Yes, I'm more afraid here than I'd be with you men. But I know how you all feel. I'd be a hamper." She held up her head resolutely. "No, I'm not afraid. I've got plenty of nerve. I'm all right—unless—unless something happens to Father or you or Elmer."

Her voice had suddenly dropped to a whisper. My hand, resting on the side of my chair, chanced to touch hers. For a moment we sat there side by side, hand clasped in hand. Then, drawing a little away from me, her eyes shining, she said, "Richard, I'm so glad you came to Petersham!" I would have spoken, but she quickly shook her head. "No, go now. They need you over there more than I do."

I could say nothing, my heart was too full of a sudden intoxicating joy, and while I stood so she ran lightly from the room. "They need you more than I do." Ye gods! I felt myself a very Samson now!

The printing-office had quite a military aspect by the time I returned to it. Men lounged against the walls, sprawled upon chairs, or walked about the room, trying to seem perfectly composed. Job Trainer, arms folded, stood at attention near the desk. But if some stranger, utterly ignorant of the real circumstances, had entered, I am certain he would instantly have felt the warlike spirit in the air.

Presently a man who had been talking to John Burney went around the room, putting out the lamps which hung in brass rings about the walls. After that we sat in darkness, instinctively lowering our voices. I knew that by now it was some little time after twelve.

I was sitting so that I looked out one of the windows that faced the main road. Of a sudden I saw them coming, enormous black figures in the moonlight, riding what seemed enormous steeds. The black cloth fell from their shoulders to their feet, the black caps with their peaks towered high. Here and there was the glint of what looked like steel.

I was afraid, I admit it, for one instant. I had the old horror of the spectral. I felt that these creatures were more than men. Then the shudder passed, and I touched the man next me on the shoulder. "Here they come!" I whispered.

Our men crowded to the windows. In the darkness we could hardly be seen. We watched the Riders slowly gather in the road until there seemed an enormous group of them. Then three put their horses over the grass, and rode up to the door of the printing-office. "The ——— fools!" a man behind me muttered, as though to nerve himself.

A shot rang out so abruptly that I jumped. Then came a voice: "Burney, come out here!"

No answer came from the office.

Again the voice: "Burney, we've come for your press!"

No answer from the office.

The three rode closer, right to the door, and one, stooping sideways, knocked upon it with the butt of his pistol. He hammered until he tired. "Open your door, or we'll break it down for you!" came the command.

The summons brought no answer, and one of the men turned and beckoned. Two men who had dismounted ran up with a heavy log. Using this as a battering ram, they crashed against the door. But we had taken care that the door should hold.

Now the three who had come first were off their horses. One of them came to my window, and I drew back into the shadow. A pane of glass broke before his pistol-butt. "Out of the way," growled a voice, and Job Trainer stepped up. He flung up the broken window, and stood face-to-face with the man. "You will break honest men's windows, will you?" he roared, and drove his right arm at the man's face like a great engine-rod. The Rider reeled, threw up his arms, and toppled to the ground.

Meanwhile the door was sagging. Our men closed about it, and put their shoulders to it, but more Riders had brought more logs, and the battering never stopped. At last the hinges snapped, and the wood broke inward. We jumped out of the way, and then back onto the fallen door. Half a dozen of us faced the Riders.

"Give us the press!" cried one. "Hand over Burney and that press!" called another. "Out of the way and we'll take it ourselves!" yelled a third.

But none of them came on, and, though we could not see their faces, they saw a ring of ours.

"See here, you men," said one of the Riders, "we've come here for Burney's press, and we're going to have it! Your blood's on your own heads if you stand in the way. Where is Burney?"

"Here," said a deep voice.

"This fight's on your own hands. Will you give up that press?"

"No; it's mine, and I keep my property."

"Then, by God, we'll show you!" and on the word the man plunged in at the opening, the others crowding behind.

Blow fell on blow. I ducked and then drove my body full into the nearest man. And all around was fighting and cursing, and a wild swaying of men. Then behind us came an avalanche of strength. Trainer and the men from the window crushed against us, and we sent the Riders sprawling back through the door hot-foot. I know I caught one man on the jaw as I was hurled against him.

For a minute or two they rested, nursing their bruises and pulling

themselves together. They must have seen our faces as we stood ringed about the door, and have realized that they could reach the press at the other end of the room only by sweeping us out of the way. That looked no easy task. Job Trainer had pushed a little in front of the rest of us now, and stood glaring at the enemy, his huge fists fairly twitching with his desire to hammer some one.

Now the Riders gathered into a group and conferred. Then they moved slowly away, back as far as the road, where two or three of them were in charge of the horses.

"Thank God, they've given it up!" I heard Mr. Burney ejaculate. "Not they!" said some one else, and Trainer muttered, "What a dog-gone shame!" We drew back into the house and patched up the door as best we could. I stood at a window, watching, and wondering what would come next.

Three minutes later I realized. A cart had been drawn up beside the road, and several of the Riders now climbed up into it. They began throwing out what seemed to be bundles of wood and bales of straw to the others. A man looking over my shoulder cried shrilly, "They've got torches and faggots there, and straw soaked in kerosene! Look sharp! They'll be burning down the house!"

Flame after flame flashed forth, torch after torch was lighted, and the Riders seized the wood and the straw and came on toward the house. They were a lurid-looking crew with their peaked head-pieces and the tossing flames dancing all about them. And now they meant real mischief.

"What shall we do?" some one cried.

"There's only one thing to do," John Burney answered. "We've got to meet them outside and keep them away from the office. It's that or have it burnt down over our heads!"

"Come on, then!" cried Job Trainer, with joy in his voice. A minute later we were out of the building and waiting for the attack.

I scarcely know how things happened then, they came so fast. The Riders, devil-like, rushed upon us, striking with their torches. We broke and separated, each man waging his own campaign. I heard some scattering shots. It seemed as if we fought in a sea of flames and a din of curses and wild cries, blows and falls. I saw a man just beyond me touch his flame to a bundle of straw and poise himself to hurl it at the roof. I jumped at him and tore the stuff from his hand. He turned and struck at me, I struck back, and a second later we were rolling on the ground, pounding each other with might and main.

When I tore myself free and leaped to my feet I had an instant's glimpse of some of our men on the roof fighting flames, of Trainer with a chair in his hands, crashing it down on a Rider's head and knocking him senseless. My man had lost his torch and straw, I had

tangled him in his cap and cloak so that he was almost choked, and he limped as he stood up. A howling mob was about me, and the lust of battle in my veins. I seized the burnt out torch and dashed at the nearest black-robed man.

At that moment came a shot. Then followed another. The man before me dodged and I ran on, pulling the pistol from my pocket. I heard a voice that sounded like John Burney's, as if in pain, and ran that way. I found it was he, that he had been hit in the leg and was stretched on the ground. I saw the man who had shot him, a tall figure, and my heart cried for revenge. "Curse you!" I shouted at him and headed his way. Some one hit at my arm and knocked my pistol from my hand. I found myself facing the Rider, the torch I still held ready to hurl at him. I thought he cried, "You fool!" and caught the light on his pistol-barrel. "You shot Burney!" said I, as cool as ice. "Shall I shoot you?" he answered. "Shoot and be ——!" I cried, and leaped at him. But as his finger moved some one rushed between, some one who rushed at him, and who took the shot in his own body. His arms waved, and he fell backward. I bent forward. To my horror, I saw it was Jerry Dolliver.

Rage followed horror. I rushed at the Rider, and, beating down his pistol, tore at the mask he wore. One wrench brought it away. In the wild light I saw the cold, malignant features of my uncle!

"You!" I cried. "You! You have killed Jerry!"

XV.

JERRY'S head rested on my knee, and I was calling to him. My words were a wild, incoherent stream. It occurred to me that this was a horrible reminder of my first finding him lying in the road on my way to Petersham. I prayed that it might prove a nightmare, but meanwhile his head was heavy and his face pitifully white.

"Jerry," I cried in his ear, "Jerry, for God's sake, open your eyes!"

Finally the lids fluttered apart. He moistened his lips. "Dick," he whispered, "I heard of the trouble, an' I wanted to help you. I was watchin', an' I did n't want you to get kilt." His eyes closed again.

"So you ran in? Oh, Jerry, Jerry! Oh, dear God, let him live! Oh, please let him live!"

But the face was even whiter than before. I bent to his ear again. "Jerry, Jerry dear, do you forgive me?"

Once more his eyelids fluttered open. "You forgive me, Dick? I did n't go for to hurt you with her. Take care of her for me, Dick!"

"Oh, I know it, I know it, Jerry! I know you were perfectly right. I love you, Jerry. Oh, what a mess it's been!"

"Would you mind"—the words came very slow and low now—"Dick, holdin' my hand in yourn?"

I took his hand and held it very tight in mine, but it seemed to do no good, for his eyes closed and his body sank lower in my clasp.

I glanced about. I had forgotten the battle. The Riders seemed to have vanished. Men were beating out fire on the roof.

"Help!" I cried. "Come here quickly, some one!" Very gently I laid Jerry down.

When I looked up, Emily was there.

"Quick!" said I. "Get some men here."

Almost instantly she was back with three men. Together we lifted Jerry and carried him to the house.

"Can you get him upstairs, to my room?" whispered Emily. I nodded, and we bore him carefully up the stairs and placed him gently on her bed.

"Now a doctor!" I said.

"He's coming," answered Emily. "He's been down-stairs, binding Father's leg."

For the first time I remembered. "How is he, your father?" I cried.

"It's not a very bad hurt. He's comfortable now." She laid a hand on my arm. "And you, Dick, you're all right?"

"All right," I answered, and hurried to the door to hasten the doctor. He was in the room in a minute, and working over Jerry, while Emily and I stood in a corner, too frightened to speak.

It seemed hours before the doctor turned and gave us a few directions. Then we stood by and watched him cut and bathe and bind. I can never recall what he did. Finally I know he said: "He's a fighting chance for it. Go now. I'll look after him."

Silently we stole out of the room, and tiptoed down the stairs. "Was any one else hurt?" I asked as we came to the door.

"Not very badly, I think. Cuts and bruises and burns. I watched you from my window. I had to look. Oh, those horrible shots!" She shivered. "And Job—I can see him now! How he fought with that chair! Oh, he was wonderful!"

I sat down on the doorstep. All of a sudden I felt very weak. I put my hand up to my forehead. My face was dripping wet.

"Thank Heaven they're gone," I muttered. "I was all right, but I'm weak as a baby now. It was seeing Jerry and—him."

As I sat there, a gentle hand rested on my shoulder, almost as if to support me, and presently I heard Emily's voice say, "I'm thanking God for a great many things, Richard."

I turned my head and looked into her eyes, bright and star-like

with unshed tears, so close beside me. I held out my arms, and suddenly she had nestled in them. It seemed we had found content after a long, long struggle for it.

It was the doctor who woke us. His voice seemed to come from some far away distance behind us. He said: "I think he'll recover. It's a bad shot in the chest. I'll send a woman in to nurse him, and I'll be in myself every two hours. Now I'll see to the others." He turned and his steps echoed down the hall.

Emily drew herself away from me.

"God is good, dear," she said. "He's given Jerry back."

I bent my head, and for a moment we sat in silence. Then I looked up at her. Nothing could lessen this miracle that had come to me. "Emily," I whispered, and, bending, held her in my arms again and kissed her. I forget the rest.

After a while I was back in the printing-office. It looked as if the battle had been fought there rather than out-of-doors. The press stood safe in its old position, but the door was gone, all the front windows broken, Mr. Burney's desk, Elmer's high table, and all the chairs and stands for type broken and piled in confusion where they had been used to barricade the entrance. Several men lay resting on the floor, their heads or arms recently bandaged by the doctor; others stood gathered at the door. Two lamps now lighted the room and showed a dismal place. All the excitement had gone from the men's faces and manners. They were just tired and sore, and a full reaction seemed to have set in.

I joined the group in the open doorway, and learned all the news from them. The doctor had told them that John Burney's wound, although painful and likely to keep him in bed for some time, was not dangerous, but that Jerry Dolliver had had a very narrow call. No one seemed to understand how Jerry had happened to be there. I could only suggest that he had probably ridden out by himself to see what was going to happen, and had gotten in the way of a bullet when he saw me in danger. It was generally believed that as he had not worn disguise he was not one of the Riders.

Each man told again and again the stirring incidents of his own share in the fighting. Some, who had leaped to the roof to put out the flames, had burned hands and clothes to show. Several thought that the Riders' headgear and cloaks had handicapped them, and that they had more wounds to carry home than we. So far as was known, none of their side had been shot. Luckily, there had been little firing—such hand-to-hand conflict did not permit it. Some one had tried to kill Mr. Burney, but otherwise the shooting seemed to have been very scattering. I did not speak of my own encounter with the tall Rider.

Now it was learned again, and more in detail, of blacksmith Job's part. It was he who had really turned the tide of battle while I had been holding Jerry. They showed me the chair with which he had cleared his path wherever he went. It was he, almost alone, who had driven the Riders back, and finally sent them flying to their horses to escape his onslaught of blows. I looked about for him, but he was not to be seen, and some one told me he had gone home as soon as the doctor had told him that Mr. Burney was not seriously hurt.

As soon as the outcome of the fighting was clear, our men had held their hands and allowed the Riders to scramble off or drag themselves away. In a short time they had disappeared down the road, the well riding beside the wounded, and the whole party keeping close together. Some had lost their masks and been recognized, but no one told me if my uncle had been discovered.

Our men were almost unanimously agreed that this night's work had ended the Riders' reign. The tale of the fight and of the Riders' defeat would spread at once through the country, and the power of their mysterious strength be broken. They had learned what some, at least, of their townsmen thought of them. Yet although they, John Burney's friends, had won, they felt the shadow of such a fight upon them. A civil war can bring small satisfaction to the victors when they know the enemy to have been of their blood. Our band had no real sense of jubilation; rather regret that affairs had ever reached this pass. Petersham had been rent in two, and the wound would be long in healing.

This was the feeling that hung heavily over all of us as, in the early hours of the morning, the men left the *Clarion* office by twos and threes for their ride home. All were tired, worn, and spent with excitement, and the chill air of the October dawn could scarcely cheer their spirits. I watched them go, standing out on the grass before the house, now scarred with great black patches where the fires had been. None of us called messages to one another, for fear of disturbing the wounded men within-doors. It might almost have been the return of the vanquished rather than of the victors.

As the last man rode out of sight, I turned back to the printing-office. I was not yet ready to go home. I walked in at the ruined doorway, climbing the pile of furniture that blocked it, and sat down on the edge of an overturned table. As I sat there, I felt the touch of a hand on my shoulder. I turned and found Elmer standing beside me.

"Mr. Coke," he said, and although he spoke in his hesitating way I thought his look into my face was steadier than usual, "you will marry Miss Em'ly. I know you will—oh, yes, I know you will."

"I love her, Elmer," I answered, "more than anything else on earth."

He took his hand from my shoulder, and his eyes seemed to glisten. "I hated you first thing, an' I hated you a long while after. I thought you was bringin' trouble to them both, an' I love them both so's I can hardly bear to think about it. It almost chokes me sometimes." He waited a moment. "But I was wrong. You did your best for 'em both."

"I tried my best to help, Elmer."

He nodded his head at me. "I know it, I know it. And I could see what was comin'. There was n't no use in tryin' to fight it. You an' Miss Em'ly was goin' to marry."

His eyes seemed now to have the distant vision of a prophet. He stood very still, his face almost marble white in the lamplight, and I noticed for the first time lines about his mouth that seemed to speak of self-conquest, and that refined his whole face.

Then, before I knew it, he had fallen on his knees and caught at my hand. "Oh, be good to her," he said brokenly. "Be good to her. I'd have given my life for her. There's no one like her. Be as good to her as—as any man can be."

"I'll try to be, Elmer," I answered, almost as much moved as he.

"Do, do," he pleaded. "But men are so diff'rent, an'—you may n't see her as I do."

I could find no words to speak, and shortly after Elmer was on his feet again.

"I had to tell you this, Mr. Richard," he said. "I've always loved her, an' I've been so frightened of the man she might love." He added hastily: "Not frightened for me, but for her."

I sat still, looking up at him. I knew him for a much better man than I. I sprang to my feet. "Elmer," I cried, "I've never been fair to you. I've never known you really. Forgive me. I know you now. I know what you are." I held out my hand. "Will you be friends?"

He put his hand in mine. I saw him no longer as an ungainly, twisted creature, but as one of the finest, truest men on earth. I saw him at last as I think Emily must have seen him always.

After that he left me, and I sat down on the overturned table again. I felt that the scales had dropped from my eyes this night. I had walked through my life here blindly, no more able to tell the good from the bad than to know my boyish passion for Letty Shannon from love itself. I had been but a boy, after all. But this night had made me a man. I saw Jerry now, true to me in every act and thought, knowing Letty and knowing me as I had never done, watching over me, and ready to make the last great sacrifice for my sake. I bent my head in my hands as I thought of him. Then I came to Elmer. Here was another man, a real man, no such vain, changeable, blind creature as

I, but fit to be a hero by every test of fate. I knew that I had brought him untold suffering, and would still do so, but I knew that he would never let Emily catch a glimpse of it. What stuff some men are made of! When I rose from that table, I thanked God that He had sent two such men my way.

I came out from the office just at that time before dawn when it seems as if the whole world is listening for day's coming. I was almost afraid to break the stillness with the noise of footsteps. And as I stood there, spellbound, as it were, by the hour, it happened that I put my hand in the pocket of my coat. Mechanically my fingers drew out a paper that was there. I remembered it now. It was the note Mr. Grant had sent me just as I was leaving home, and that I had not had time to read.

I stepped back into the office, that I might have light to read the letter. I tore open the envelope and unfolded the sheet of paper within. My eyes ran quickly over the words.

DEAR RICHARD COKE:

The man who took the tin box was your father's brother. I felt you should know this before you leave home to-night. The papers were probably worthless. Come to see me as soon as you can, and we'll try what we can do to save something from the wreckage. Black sheep will turn up even in the best of families.

Your father's friend and yours,

ANTHONY GRANT

I was not surprised. Although I had not actually phrased the thought to myself, I had lately been coming to believe that my uncle's slyness was beyond the need of proof. I had suspected even while I tried not to. But to-night's events had lifted the last veil from him. He feared and hated me; he would not have stopped from putting me out of his path forever. Well, I was relieved to know that there could be no more delusions between us. I knew where I stood and where he stood.

I tore the letter slowly into tiny bits and threw them through the window. Then suddenly the hideousness of the situation broke upon me. He was my father's brother, he was the bearer of my name, he was the respected Master of Petersham. I remembered how I had seen him first, and how my admiration had risen instinctively at sight of him. His face had been so noble, his voice so kind, his welcome so generous. I thought how I had compared him in spite of myself to my mother's brother, Uncle Elijah Pegram, and how, much as I loved him, the lonely, weather-beaten, rough-timbered old sea-captain had seemed an infinitely lesser figure. Yet he was true as steel, and Mr. Junius Brutus Coke as false as Judas. The scales had fallen, and for a time I stood there blinking in the new light.

At length I saw my way again before me. I would go back to the old house and become its master. If one Coke had been false to his family, another would labor so far as in him lay to repair that family name. So planning, I crossed the little court to the house and tiptoed down the hall, hoping that I might get some further news of Jerry and Mr. Burney before I left.

Perhaps my step was heard, perhaps it was kind fate, but I had not stood in the hall above three minutes when a white figure came lightly down the stairs.

"How are they now?" I whispered.

"Jerry sleeps," whispered Emily. "Father is restless and tosses about. He's afraid he won't be able to get the *Clarion* out. He says it must come out on time next week, but the doctor's telling him he must lie perfectly still for at least a month has frightened him."

"Tell him," I whispered back, "that the *Clarion* shall come out; that I'll bring it out, and keep bringing it out until he's ready to make me assistant editor."

"Oh, Dick," she said, "I know that'll ease his mind."

"And now I'm going back to Petersham, Emily."

"Must you go? We've plenty of beds, and you must be so tired."

"No, I must go. I have something yet to do."

Perhaps a heavy note in my voice caught her ear. She came closer. "What is it, Dick?"

"A little business matter of my own. I'll tell you later. Don't ask me now. You've quite enough to think of. Good-night."

"Good-night, Dick."

That was all we said, but she had slipped into my arms and out again, long enough for me to thrill anew as my lips met hers.

Through the still night I walked to the near-by stable, mounted my horse, and rode down the highway. The scene of battle was very quiet now; peace seemed to rest upon the low white house. I rode out of the cup of hills into the desolate lands beyond.

Dawn came before I reached Petersham. I rode straight to the old house set in its frame of trees. I was no longer excited; I doubt if I have ever been as calm as when I looked at the big house in that early morning light. I whistled my call for Sam, and as if he had been waiting at the door, he answered. I threw him the reins.

"Is Mr. Coke at home?" said I.

"No, Mr. Richard," said Sam. "He ain't been home at all to-night."

I walked up the path to the house and mounted the stairs. I had the feeling that the house knew it was I who came, and that it welcomed me. I went in at the door and up to my own room. There, after a long time, I fell asleep.

XVI.

THE dining-room had not seen Mr. Junius Brutus Coke when I came down to breakfast about noon next day, nor had his bedroom, nor his study, nor Pompey. He had vanished overnight, and I wondered if he was to be seen by me no more. Perhaps it was his way of letting me know that he had abdicated, and that the house was mine.

I assumed my charge without giving the matter much consideration. I told Pompey that I had reason to believe that my uncle might be away for some time, but that our life there would go on quite as usual, and that he should do all the marketing for the present.

Then, almost as if I fancied that Mr. Coke might be in hiding somewhere within-doors, I made a round of the rooms and halls, investigating as far up as the old garret, and as far down as the cellar. I poked into chests and closets, I pulled aside curtains and peered into dark corners, but I found only the inanimate objects that belong to an old house.

For some reason, I was in no hurry to go abroad, almost fearing that Petersham might show some appalling scar as the result of the last night's battle. Therefore, I spent the better part of the day going over the house and considering plans for the future, and it was only late in the afternoon that I ventured forth to call upon Mr. Grant.

Main Street wore its usual air of unruffled calm. I met no bandaged heads nor venomous glances. I was glad to see that Mr. Grant's office-door was open, a sign that he was within. The sign did not belie the fact. I was shortly shaking hands with the elderly lawyer as earnestly as if we had not met for years.

"Well, Richard," he said, "thank God that trouble's over! I heard the news early this morning, and I believe we'll be decent now. It takes letting of blood to cure some evils. Sit down, boy, we have something to tell each other."

I sat down beside him. "I got your message. My uncle apparently has n't been home since." I found that I could not tell even him how and when I had seen my uncle last. That would have to remain forever a secret between us two.

Mr. Grant frowned at his desk. "I suspected long ago, Richard, that things were not as they should be with Junius. I knew he was speculating, I knew he had been losing a great deal of money. When you first told me of the delay in obtaining your father's papers, I had an inkling of the truth, and when you told me of the loss of the box of securities, I was certain I could name the thief. But how I hated to do it! Justice was on one side, but your well-founded pride in the good name of the Cokes seemed on the other. That day you found me looking at your father's picture decided me. I thought he wanted justice for his son.

"Of course it's easy to see now what Mr. Coke did. He found that your father's estate was gone, spent by him in his deals. He could n't put you off forever, so he gave you that box, and let you see one or two real securities lying on top. The rest must have been mere packing. Then, having arranged that you should not go over the contents until next day, he stole the box. The ease of reaching your window and of returning to his own room by ladder was self-evident. There were chances that his plans might go wrong, but he was in such a hole that he had to take those risks. Perhaps if you had n't come to me he might have gotten away with the trick. I have known Junius long enough to appreciate the spell he can lay on people—and especially on a young and hero-worshipping nephew. He could lay the same spell on me once upon a time, when we were boys together."

"Yes," I assented; "I don't think I should ever have suspected him myself. It would no more have occurred to me than that the man in the moon might have done it."

"He counted on that, Richard. He knew that if he could only keep you to himself, he was safe. He was the magician who was able at all times to weave his spell about you."

"But now the castle has fallen," I said very soberly, for it is no pleasant thing to have such illusions shattered, "and there's little left except a pile of ruins."

Mr. Grant looked at me thoughtfully. "There's the house, Richard. I doubt if we'll find that there's much else left—probably nothing of your father's, perhaps a little of Junius's property. But the house, I know, is left, for I looked up the title to that the other day, and I found that you would have to join in any mortgage or conveyance. And the house now belongs to you, by every claim of equity and justice. It is little enough he can do to make up to you for that of yours he's squandered." He paused a moment. "Of course, you realize, Richard, that he can be made to stand a criminal trial for what he's done?"

I shook my head. "No, we can't do that. I know you yourself would n't do it, Mr. Grant, if you were in my place, and—I could n't do it anyhow. We'll let him go—but I hope we don't meet again."

"Perhaps that is best," said the lawyer, "to let him go. You will have the house of your fathers', and I should be delighted to have you study law with me, if your tastes run that way."

"I don't know yet," I answered. "I shall have to look about a little bit." I was thinking of what I had said to Emily about helping her father with the *Clarion*. Such work appealed to me more at the moment than the staid profession of the law.

Shortly after I left Mr. Grant, we having reached a fairly complete understanding of the situation. He was to continue making his investi-

gation of my uncle's affairs, but I understood very clearly that, although here and there something might be saved to me, it would be but small pickings left after the feast was done.

That night I spent at home, thinking much of my father, and of the curious chances of circumstance that will sometimes thwart the dearest wishes of a man, so that the property he has designed for the protection of his children may fail them through the very custody he has considered the most safe. My uncle did not appear that evening, and I considered that the old house and we who dwelt in it were rid of him.

Next day I rode out to the Valley. The golden October sunshine lay upon it, and seemed to have swept it clear of all the shadows of that night. With my heart singing, I went into the house. I found Emily, and she told me that her father was getting on splendidly, and that, although his leg was in a plaster cast, he was able to dictate matter for the newspaper to Elmer and to her. Jerry was still very ill, and the doctor and the nurse were with him much of the time. He would recover slowly. She told me I could not speak to him, but might look in at the door of his room. I went upstairs, and pushed the door gently open. Jerry seemed asleep, but at sound of the opening door a woman who sat by his bedside turned. It was Letty. She tiptoed over to me, and we stood together in the hall. She was very pale, and the black rims under her eyes made them seem larger than ever.

"You know," I said, "how he saved my life?"

"Yes," she answered; "and now that I know he's going to get well, I'm happier than I thought I could ever be."

"He's a wonder, Letty. How little I ever really appreciated him!" I felt my eyes growing misty.

"Oh, he's so brave, Dick! I understand lots of things better now. I'm going to start all over again—fresh."

"So am I."

There was some sound in the room, and she turned instantly and glided in. I felt that I should never again underestimate the love of women.

I went into Mr. Burney's room, and found him, partly propped up by pillows, dictating to Elmer.

"Well, Richard," said he, "the paper's coming out, as usual, just on time. A little thing like a ball in the foot is n't going to make me lose any of my subscribers."

"I'm glad to hear it, sir. Did Emily tell you how much I want to help?"

"She did, and you shall," he said in his hearty way. "Emily's editor-in-chief *pro tem*, but I know she'll need assistance, wonderful girl as she is. Will you believe me, Richard, she told me this morning that she hoped it would take Dolliver and me some time to get well,

because she enjoyed managing a hospital? And, bless my soul, she knows more about nursing than any professional I ever saw!"

"I almost wish I'd been laid up, too," I said wistfully.

Mr. Burney laughed. "Never mind. You'll find you have your hands full when you try to get out the *Clarion* for me. I don't think I'll do any more dictating just now, Elmer."

The latter rose noiselessly, and in his stealthy manner left the room. "Now, sit down, Richard," said Mr. Burney. "I want to have a long talk with you, and tell you how wonderfully well my friends stood by me. They are trumps, every man of them. I had Job Trainer in here yesterday, and told him what I thought of him. Now it's your turn."

I sat down, and we had our long talk. I know it was long by the clock which stood on a table near the bed, but it seemed as if we had only begun to discuss the recent events when Emily came in at the door with her father's dinner on a tray. I wonder if Mr. Burney noticed the sudden flush of her cheeks as my eyes rested on her.

"I'll go out to the office now," said I, "and see what I can do there. Do you think, Emily, that you'll find a few minutes after a while to come out and instruct me? I know you're awfully busy, but I want to get started right."

"I'll be out after a little while," she said, without looking at me, as she set the tray upon her father's table. I left the room slowly, walking backward, I do believe.

Half an hour later Elmer, having shown me what there was for me to do, went into the house for his dinner. I took up a page of copy that lay on the desk and tried to bring my thoughts to bear on it. I must have sighed aloud. Another sigh answered me, and a voice said, "Is it such very hard work, Richard?"

I looked up to find Emily standing midway in the room. I jumped to my feet. "Yes, it's dreadfully hard. I can think of only one thing in the world at present."

"And what is that?" she said.

"Come to the desk and I'll tell you."

"And if I'll not come? It may not be worth the hearing."

"Oh, but it is!" I exclaimed. "So much worth it that I'm coming to tell you. I think I'll shout it out so all the world may hear."

"Oh, don't, Richard!" and she took a step forward in alarm.

"Yes," I said; "I shall shout it unless you stop me. I can only think of one thing, and that is——"

But a hand was laid on my lips, and I was dumb.

Presently, after we had talked of a number of things, but not at all about the *Clarion*, Emily, who had been sitting on her father's desk, pushed me, who happened also to be sitting on the desk, a little

away from her. "Do you know, Richard Coke," she said quite severely, "you've told me many things, you've even asked me a question——"

"And you've said you'd marry me," I put in in quick alarm.

"But there's one thing I don't remember to have heard you say."

"What's that?" I asked.

"Can't you think?"

I shook my head.

"It's only three words, but, Dick—oh!" and she laid her hand on my arm and her head in its former place, "I should like to hear you say them."

"Three words?" I repeated. Then I saw a great light. "Oh, Emily, I've been saying them with every breath I drew!"

"But in words, Dick, in words."

"I love you," I said. "I thought of course you knew that."

"Again, please, dear," she whispered.

So I said them again and again, and finally gave up speech and told her in other ways. So I learned something new about Emily: that words with her are not the mere paltry coin they sometimes seem.

At nightfall I rode back home again, very loath to leave that interesting family in Happy Valley. There was no sign of Mr. Coke about the house. When I asked Pompey if he had heard anything concerning my uncle that day, he simply shook his head as before, and said: "He have disappeared without a word to me, Mr. Richard, suh," and I thought there was an aggrieved note in his voice.

For a few days I spent my time alternating between the town and the Valley, and helping prepare the next issue of the *Clarion*. Then, on Wednesday morning—I remember it was the day before the paper was to appear, and all my work on it was done, and it was wholly in Elmer's charge as printer—as I looked out the window by Mr. Burney's desk, I felt that it was beyond me to stay indoors longer. Indian summer lay upon the land. I jumped from the desk-chair and hurried to the garden, where I knew Emily was fixing a little lattice for her sweet-peas to climb.

"I can't stay here another minute," I said to her. "The roads and the hills are beckoning. Let's be going somewhere."

She smiled at my eager humor and rose from her knees. "I think I'm feeling just the same way you are, Dick. I know what we'll do. I ought to go to Petersham for some shopping I've been putting off. We'll go together."

"Where can I get you a horse?"

She pointed to a house down the road. "I used to get a little mare from a man who lives there. Will you see if I can have her now?"

I found the owner, and was soon bringing the mare back with me,

she apparently as eager to be out in the world as was I. Meanwhile, in the twinkling of an eye, it seemed, Emily had changed and now appeared, booted and in riding-clothes, the fairest picture of a horse-woman.

She on the little mare, and I on my own roan, took the high-road. There may have been other fine rides before, but I doubt it. We passed the little circle in the woods where I had found her that summer morning, and she had read of *John Ridd* and the beautiful *Lorna* to me. We told each other all we had thought that morning, and countless little things that had happened then and that we now suddenly remembered.

We rode through the hills, the bare upland country, and into the meadow-land that lay about Petersham. Now and then I lagged a bit behind, the better to see Emily, and then, catching me at it, she would dash away, and I would chase after her. But when we came to the town itself, she insisted we should be more decorous.

"Let's ride by my house," I said, when we were at last in town.

She nodded her assent, and we rode down the street under the arching maples. When we came to the corner I drew rein. "Don't you think, Emily," said I, "that you ought to have a look at it and tell me what changes you'd like made?"

She blushed. "What would the neighbors think, Dick, if they saw me going there with you now?"

"The neighbors are miles away. Besides, Pompey makes the most delicious raspberry shrub, and you're warm, so you ought to have some before you go shopping."

I whistled, and in a moment Sam appeared and took my horse, while I helped Emily down. I pushed open the iron gate and stood aside while she passed through. We went up the stone-flagged path, and just at the steps I whispered to her that the old house was welcoming its new mistress. "I love it already, Dick," she whispered back. "It's nicer than any air-castle I ever built."

I was proud of my father's house then, prouder of it than I had ever been before. The great arch of the Colonial front door seemed to take on new beauty as we stood in front of it. I looked through the opening down the long hall, cool and quiet, its polished floor almost bare of rugs. When I turned I saw that Emily's eyes had followed mine into the charming hall. "We will go into my uncle's study," I said, "and have our raspberry shrub there. I want to show you some things that were my father's."

This time she assented without demur. We turned into the room on the left of the hall.

I rang a bell for Pompey and ordered our refreshments. Then I showed Emily the old portraits on the walls, and the heirlooms that had

been kept with a befitting reverence. She could appreciate and understand them all; she seemed even to feel that they were in a way part of her own inheritance.

"I've loved this house, dear," I said after a time, "ever since I first entered its doors, but I've felt almost as long that it was much in need of a woman's care. It's been waiting for you, dear, a long, long time."

"And I think I've been waiting for it," she answered.

A discreet cough in the hall warned us of Pompey's approach, and we were seated quite properly on the sofa when he entered with the shrub and the glasses. Then we were left to ourselves again.

After a time the glasses were empty, and Emily insisted on stepping over to a little mirror to make certain that her hair was not disarranged. Satisfied at last, she came back toward me, but stopped before the hearth to look at the portrait of Henry Clay that hung over the mantel.

"What a splendid-looking man!" she exclaimed.

I stood by her side. "Magnificent," I agreed. "Do you know that picture always reminds me of my uncle? He stood just so, one arm outstretched, when he met me here, and his was as handsome a face as one could wish to see."

"What's become of him, Dick?" Emily asked.

It was strange that I should have caught the sound of a light footstep at such a moment, but I did. I wheeled about. Mr. Coke stood in the doorway. He stood very straight, with a little smile on his lips.

"So," I said, "you have come back, after all?"

He waved his hand in deprecation of my question. I could still wonder at the graceful gesture.

"I have much to talk over with you, Richard," he said slowly, and he looked toward Emily, who had now turned to face him.

"Whatever you have to say she would like to hear," I said. "We have no secrets from each other. This is Miss Burney, John Burney's daughter, and my promised wife."

Mr. Coke bowed, such a bow as I am sure few men could make, and, glancing at Emily, I saw that she was charmed at his courtesy. I realized that I must make this scene as short as possible.

"Since we were last in this room together," I said somewhat abruptly, "I've learned many things. Some I've learned with the help of Mr. Anthony Grant, and those relate to my father's estate and why I lost his papers. The others I've learned for myself, and those are between us two alone. Mr. Grant and I have reached the conclusion that I shall keep this house, and that you may keep your secrets."

"Is the bargain fair," he asked, "Nephew Richard?"

"No," said I; "it's not, but I'm content with it. In spite of what's passed, we're still of the same blood."

"But is it fair to me?" he asked.

I saw suddenly behind the smiling mask. "Yes," I cried; "a thousand times more than fair to you! I am the head of the house of Coke in Petersham, and you leave town a stranger!"

"What shall I do?" he said.

"Do?" I exclaimed. "Your nest is feathered somewhere, go and live in it. But remember that from now on if you come to this house, if you appear in Petersham, I give my secrets into the care of the law."

He touched his lips with his silk handkerchief. "You are dramatic, Richard. Have a care. The law? Pshaw, I've been a lawyer forty years."

"Well," said I, "try it and we'll see. A new light has come to Petersham, and the *Clarion's* rung in a new day."

"In that case," said he very suavely, "perhaps it is really time that I was going. I have ever been conservative, I fear." He bowed to Emily. "Take good care of him, my dear. A wild youth, a reckless temper." Then he glanced at me. "And yet, in spite of all, I can't help liking him a little. It may be his grandfather in him. He was a very fine man."

Perhaps that echo of family pride made my uncle draw himself up quite erect again, toes turned out, and stand so for a minute. Perhaps it was simply second-nature with him now to be picturesque, or perhaps his eyes had rested on the long portrait above the mantel. In any case he stood there, and he made a very fine figure of a man.

He was gone, and Emily had turned to me. "What a splendid face, Dick! Are n't you treating him rather hardly? I know the house is yours, but could n't he perhaps have a room in it?"

So had his influence affected even her, sure judge as she was of the good! I shook my head. "No, dear, I don't think I'm unjust, but he must have no place here any more. He would only stir up a troubled past, and this house is to have a future."

Yet, notwithstanding my assurance, I was very thankful he was gone. I knew that sometimes his face would haunt me, and I knew that, in spite of all he had done to me, I could not help but feel, even as he had felt toward me, a little liking. A very remarkable man, was my uncle Junius, a very big man, in fact, only, unfortunately, his talents had taken to growing in the wrong direction.

I shook the thought of him from me. "Now," I said, "I must show you the little arbor out in the garden. I've often dreamt about you there. Come and show the garden you are real."

"But I must go shopping, Dick," Emily protested.

"One can go shopping any day," said I, "but one can only——"
and I stopped, for I was not certain what I was about to say.

"One can only do what once, Dick?" she asked. "What were you going to say?"

"Nothing," I answered. But she would make me tell her.

"'Make love only,' were the words," said I unwillingly.

"So that's the way you feel about it, is it?" she asked, her eyes very bright.

"No; I can make love to you all the days of my life, and I shall," I answered. "I'm ready to go shopping, if you wish."

But when we came into the hall we turned toward the garden and not toward the front door, and it was Emily who turned. Of course I had to go her way.



CONSOLATION

BY E. F. HULSWIT

MY mother said, long years ago,
Within her heart sang soft and low
Two charmèd words—a tiny lay:
"Some day," it ran. "Some day! Some day!"

When Youth strove bitterly with Life,
And sank outwearied in the strife,
When e'en Hope failed, and Love had fled,
"Some day, some day!" the voice still said.

She told me she had heard the song—
Now faint and low, then clear and strong—
Till toil and care had dulled her brain;
But in her age it came again.

I watched by her the night that she
Did slip into Eternity.
Oh, wondrous change! One glorified
Lay in the place of her who died.

Dear God, that look of blest surprise!
Did heaven open 'fore her eyes?
And is it Death Thou send'st to say,
"Tired child, thy Some Day is To-day"?

THIRTY YEARS OF PENCRAFT

WHAT IT CAME TO AND WHAT IT COST

*By General Charles King**

Author of "Lanier of the Cavalry," "The Colonel's Daughter," etc.

IN TWO PARTS—PART I.

AWAY back in the sixties, just after the Civil War, I had been stationed at New Orleans, and later, during the so-called reconstruction period, was there again on staff duty, seeing much of life in Louisiana and Mississippi. Those were "Ku Klux" and "White League" days, and ours were most unwelcome duties. It was good to get away from them, even to go to Arizona and the Apaches, but before going, in hopes of eking out the slender pay of a married subaltern at an expensive station, I had written a story. It described conditions in the Southwest at that particular time. It did not eulogize the "Carpet Bag" government; it did not satirize the Senegambia legislatures then electable; it simply told what I had seen of both, and by no means all. That initial effort went to the Harpers in search of a market, and boomeranged back inside of a month. This was in 1873. Not until more than ten years later did that manuscript become "available," and then a prominent member of that old-established house inquired: "Why did n't you come to us instead of that Quaker City concern?"

Now, this is the way it happened: Straight from New Orleans we went to Arizona, the manuscript and I—that is, straight as one could then go, which was by rail to San Francisco and by steamer thence, a two-weeks voyage to the Colorado and another week up that winding,

* Few, if any, American writers have won a greater or more deserved popularity than General Charles King; and surely none in his chosen field. He has depicted the American soldier, and army life in general, with his pen as faithfully as did the late Frederic Remington with his brush. General King began his career as a writer while a subaltern shortly after the Civil War. His literary reminiscences, covering the past three decades, add an interesting chapter to the annals of American letters

THE EDITOR.

shallow stream. Politico-military work was gladly dropped in favor of Indian fighting, even though that presently led to the loss of some of the sabre arm, and later to all hopes in the line of promotion. But before the retiring board settled that matter, the regiment had again crossed the continent, had left Apache land to take a second campaign against the Sioux, had fought and followed them through miles of Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, and Dakota, driving Sitting Bull across the British line and Red Cloud out of business. Then followed the rush to save Chicago in the riot year of 1877. Then back to the grand chase of Chief Joseph, the modern Moses of the Nez Percés, along the upper Yellowstone. Then came the campaign against the Cheyennes, and finally in the winter of '78-9 the manuscript and I were again in Louisiana, both now in quest of employment. The surgeons had said I should give up the sword, so nothing was left but the pen.

It had so happened that one valuable habit, at least, had been contracted while in active service, that of keeping a diary. Whether on staff duty in the South, or campaigning over our Western frontier, everywhere with me went note-book and pencil, and faithfully each day's doings were jotted down. I never dreamed how much it would all be worth. There was the unvarnished record of several years of sharp, stirring work, of long months of each year crammed with strenuous life, for cavalry service in the seventies knew few idle moments. It was rough as the Rockies themselves, but it was a grand experience. A month for recuperation in a Western city revealed the fact that even old friends and schoolmates knew nothing whatever about that life. "How on earth do you kill time out there?" was the question, coupled with unflattering suggestions as to whiskey and poker. One night I broke loose and told them, and was astonished when a journalist present urged me to put it in writing for his paper.

And so at last, in '79, the door was opened. From the old note-books of the Sioux campaign, each Sunday for several months the story was told, and in the summer of 1880, as compensation, the Sentinel Company of Milwaukee published in pamphlet form five hundred copies. "Campaigning With Crook," therefore, was the first of more than fifty books, and much more than fifty shorter stories, for which I am accountable, to see the light.

But all this time the old manuscript had been waiting for a chance. The *United Service*, a military monthly, was then being issued in Philadelphia. Its editors were favored with a peep at those graphic pages, and finally wrote that they could find a publisher if I could find four hundred dollars to cover the cost. I said I could n't find forty or even four that were not imperatively needed for other purposes. So again the little romance went into hiding. But several

papers had said surprisingly pleasant things about "Campaigning With Crook." Presently two or three little sketches of army life were submitted to, and appeared in, the *United Service*—they were too trivial to be paid for—and then came a request for another look at "that old Ku Klux story." The editors had become inspired with an idea: An officer of high rank in the Navy had written a long tale of man-o'-war life. They were minded to publish two serials in the magazine—the other of soldier doings, and my yarn might answer the purpose.

But by this time, 1881, the State University had been in need of a retired officer, and for something much more in a soldier's line than story-writing. This, too, led to close touch with the citizen soldiery of my old State and to welcome and lasting relations with them. The experiences were novel. The horizon was broadening, and in the occasional hours of leisure, and out of the pages of the past, a new story had begun to bubble in my brain—a story that, to my thinking, had more possibilities than its Ku Klux predecessor. Two chapters had been roughly pencilled on a ten-cent block. These, instead of the travel-worn tale of reconstruction days, were sent to the *United Service*, and back came, not the expected, as hitherto, but a sweet surprise. "I have read it carefully, critically, and in extenso," said the editor, "and I am delighted with it. We start it at once."

And so before the fifth chapter was written, and long before the story was blocked out, and over a year before the closing pages were penned, the first and second chapters of "The Colonel's Daughter," then called "Winning His Spurs," burst into print, and, willy nilly, I had to go on and finish it.

Written utterly haphazard, penned or pencilled month by month when the magazine needed copy, and never before, the story went prayerfully on. Without one definite idea in my head at the start what was to be their lot at the close, or their career in betweentimes, the characters were sent on their way, and the author chased after as best he could. The only romance or work I ever began without previous plan and study, "The Colonel's Daughter" set a pace, so say the critics, that left its flock of successors far in the rear. For thirty years have I been trying—trying hard—to write something that would seem to interest as many people, but the first to appear was about the last to lose its hold on the reading public. The "Daughter" has outsold, outlived, them all.

Sixteen months, I think, it ran through the columns of the *United Service*. "Campaigning With Crook" had netted me a little over a month's Army pay. The long serial was, of course, an experiment, and the terms for its payment, as originally offered by the editors of the magazine, were these: On its completion as a serial the publishers would bring it out in a paper binding, to be sold at fifty cents

the copy, yielding me ten per cent. of the wholesale price. In other words, my share was to be three cents on each copy sold. If it sold a thousand copies in course of a year, I might look for thirty dollars.

But better fortune was in store for it. The magazine was printed for its publishers by the J. B. Lippincott Company, of Philadelphia. The story had caught the eye of the head of the house, and before it had run its course as a serial, there came a finer offer. The Lippincotts would publish and issue it in *book* form and pay me ten per cent. on the wholesale price. My share would thus be nine cents on every copy sold. I gratefully accepted, and their check for some ninety dollars when the book was about a year old was the first financial result to me of that fortunate publication.

For the first year "The Colonel's Daughter" found few readers outside of the army. For the work of an unknown author, it had received, however, rather remarkable book notices, most of them so delightful that they were presently collected and reprinted in a little pamphlet of their own. The Lippincotts pushed the story. The field was new and almost untrodden, and presently, as they expected and as I did not, it took a start, after its year of languishing, and began to sell. Meantime, "the old Ku Klux story," of whose value I had serious doubts, had followed "The Daughter" in the pages of the magazine, and presently the Lippincotts offered to buy that outright, and issue it also in book form. The price named was not far from what the campaigning sketches had brought me, not large, but probably all its promise would warrant. It was launched just after "The Daughter" began to swim serenely on a rising tide, but I doubt if ever it sailed in her company a single day. The very name, "Kitty's Conquest," savored of triviality, yet there were some descriptions that were real, and it told of times that then had few chroniclers.

The second year's sales of "The Daughter" prompted the Lippincotts to suggest another essay, but meantime a veteran publisher of subscription books had consulted the editors of the *United Service* about an eight-hundred-page history of famous battles—from Marathon to Plevna. That brought the next proposition, and eighteen months were given to study and labor that netted a little less than one thousand dollars. If the future history and final catastrophe of "Famous and Decisive Battles" could have been revealed to its struggling author, ten thousand would hardly have induced him to touch it.

It was late in '85 before the old pen could again turn to fiction, though there had been two short stories for LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE, and certain other sketches. Then in just ten weeks, after months of planning and plotting, the sequel to "The Colonel's Daughter" was written, and in an unhallowed hour was given the utterly inexpressive and equally misleading title of "Marion's Faith." People

who looked for a Sunday school story were much aggrieved, and readers who sought for more of "The Daughter" were disappointed. Soldiers said it was stirring and realistic. "You're all right so long as you stick to scouting and fighting," was the way old comrades put it. But the women wanted love-making, and there was n't always enough to go round. "Marion" never quite caught up with "Grace," though her friends were many and her sales were large.

In spite of the damaged sword-arm, there had come military duties that took a lot of time. We had then and still have a famous cavalry troop in the Wisconsin Guard, and they had given me work I loved. It led to more—to the duties of inspector and instructor of the entire State force. That was nearly twenty-five years ago, and here, notwithstanding the age limit, am I rejoicing in it yet. Financially, those duties could not pay as did the old pen. Professionally, personally, and in every other way, they paid infinitely more.

But there were reasons why I *had* to write, and other reasons—bless their bonny faces—kept coming. LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE had just branched out on broader lines, and began printing a whole story in a single number. John Habberton and Julian Hawthorne had led off brilliantly, and, lo, for the third number "The Deserter" was announced, "By a Captain King," said the New York *Sun*, "which means killing the goose that laid the golden egg." In just three weeks that story was written on a "hurry call." It was seventy-five thousand words in length. It brought an immediate check for five hundred dollars, and orders from LIPPINCOTT'S editor for more as fast as I could write them, and at double the price.

To the day of her death my keenest critic, Mother, declared "The Deserter" the best of all the stories, and she had *placens uxor* to back her. The *Sun's* prediction "petered out," as somebody said that year of 1886, for LIPPINCOTT'S published "From the Ranks" a few months after, paid a thousand cash, and promised a raise. Then, lo, the Harpers bid six hundred for a medium length Civil War story, to run as a serial, and got it in "A Wartime Wooing," which, with Zogbaum's pictures, was presently given a frame-work of its own and launched in the book-stores. And then a strange thing happened! That six hundred dollars was for all rights, yet one day brought a letter: "The little story seems to have found friends," it said, "and we feel that you should have a share in the proceeds," and they gave it in shape of a five per cent. royalty, and are paying it yet. Moreover, they asked how soon a big story could be built for them, and speedily it came.

For then it was that hope began to dawn. Just back from a visit to the old regiment, and a breezy week of riding to hounds over the eastern edge of the Llano Estacado, with orders for three big, and all the little, stories that I could write, is it to be wondered at that the

first move was out of a boarding-house into a home we could call our own, even though we paid rent for it? Heavens, how at first the mother and the olive branches thrived in that sunshine! "Dunraven Ranch" was told off in six weeks, overlooking the children's playground, and the Texas rides were transferred to its pages and those of LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE, which wanted another right away, even with *Harper's* editor calling for copy.

And then it was that the old pen straddled. Working alternate chapters on each, sometimes as much as six thousand words a day on "Between the Lines," and three to four thousand words on "Laramie," going out only for a gallop in the late afternoon, I wrote two utterly different stories at one time. The few months spent in '61 in front of Washington, with my father's brigade, had filled my heart with enthusiasm for the volunteers, especially the men of Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and Vermont, with whom we were associated. Even to enter West Point, it was hard to leave them. In "A Wartime Wooing" the famous Twentieth Massachusetts had held the centre of the stage. A story was seething that should bring to the front the Badgers, Hoosiers, and Wolverines, who later made up the Iron Brigade, but for the Harpers I chose to tell of the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac, and, to my thinking, the strongest work that ever I penned went into "Between the Lines." From North and South letters commending it came in numbers, and from across the sea, through a former staff officer of Cavalier Stuart, came words that set my heart and the story's fame to bounding. It was the description of the great cavalry fight on the right flank the third day of Gettysburg that won this outspoken praise, and the deft use made of it by the Harpers, and the concomitant fun we had with the *Brooklyn Eagle*, whose critic had called it all a purely "mythical combat," boomed the sales up in the thousands, eclipsing for the time even those of "The Daughter."

But that was the last of the penning. Laboriously, ploddingly, long, long hours at a time that shrivelled and shortened old arm had rushed the cloven steel over myriad sheets of copy, and a queer condition of things set in as "Laramie" and "Between the Lines" were finally finished. It was not pen paralysis or writer's cramp, but something keenly neuralgic that would start above the elbow after a few hours' work, and presently go stealing from shoulder to finger-tip, and setting my teeth and nerves on edge. The tedious writing out of every line in slow, legible form became a sore trial. Several chapters, too, had been lost in the mails, and all had to be rewritten. The phonograph was just coming in. "Why not try it?" said a friend, and try we did, at first with comical result, as when our heroine's finger-nails, referred to, after the Tennysonian method, as "vermeil

tinted," came out "vermin tainted." But presently the cylinders passed to the care of a wiser head and surer hand, the roughly pencilled pages carefully read into the machine reappeared accurately typed, with a carbon copy to be held in reserve, and presently, too, these were favored with helpful criticism previously unknown to them, for, with the exception of "the old Ku Klux story" and a Christmas tale I wrote for the Harpers (more than twenty years after, dear old Mr. Alden's words of congratulation on "Captain Santa Claus" are sweet to recall), not an eye save my own had seen the pages until they were opened by the editor.

Between 1889 and 1898 there were written for the Lippincotts—some for the magazine at stated prices, and others, longer and more ambitious, for "copyright" books—no less than sixteen stories varying in length from sixty to one hundred and twenty-five thousand words, "Captain Blake," "The General's Double," and "Under Fire" being the longer efforts. For the Harpers, during the same time, was written "Cadet Days," and they also brought out a fine edition of the old "Campaigning With Crook." The Lippincotts, not to be outdone, issued new and illustrated editions of the "Colonel's Daughter" series, and increased the royalties.

In 1893, yielding at last to the long-cherished plan of my mother, I had taken the family abroad. Still another publisher had loomed up, promising higher pay and fine results. It was easily possible to supply more than the two stories annually, as, at most, required by the Lippincotts. We were not yet earning by two or three thousand what this new move might cost us a year, and little did we dream to what it would and did lead! Fine offers were being made for all the old pen could produce for a term of years. In an evil hour the bait was taken, and we set sail for the Rhineland.

Near Bingen we read that a panic had started. We read of the bursting of banks, and that even our own had gone under. At Lausanne came by cable news of the burning out of our floor, at least, of a fire-proof warehouse. Good-by to our books, goods, and chattels! Double work would be needed to repair damages, and it could n't be done there. We might still carry out the grand maternal wishes and educate the children abroad, but the ways and means must come from home. Paterfamilias had promised a monthly contribution to the Authors' Syndicate, and had kept the pact. The first place he looked up on landing in Gotham, where dollars are ever needed, was the office of that aspiring association, and he found it, as advertised, on the third or fourth floor. He also found it—abandoned.

Then it was that he listened to the voice of the charmer and the tuneful lay—intransitive—of Publisher Number Four. What it all came to is herein told only in part.

LITTLE BROTHER

By Elizabeth Maury Coombs

“**W**HY, Cousin Jane! I *thought* I heard some one out here.”
“Yes, I was trying to lift the knocker. Every one has forgotten to oil its——”

“Hinges,” supplied the slightly younger woman. “And now I look at it, Uncle Alfred has neglected to manicure it—I learned that name for cleaning your finger-nails when I was in the city.” Miss Lydia lifted the old brass hand which held a copper ball, whose peremptory tap-tap had echoed along the sleepy old hall for nearly a hundred years.

“Who would have thought he would get careless enough to neglect the brasses!” she went on. “But, you know, Ma never thought he would make a good house-boy. All those children of Daddy Jake’s turned out badly; he was a very good darky, but his second wife was a mighty skittish kind of yellow woman. However, we have had Alfred fifty-odd years now, and the girls do so dread a change.

“And how are you all? I heard about your little spell, but just could n’t get out to inquire—of course you knew how busy we’ve been. Can you think of anything busier than three old maids with a baby? And such a baby!” and Miss Lydia laughed, such a chuckling, childish laugh one’s eyes could almost renew the dimples of merriment in the wrinkled rose-leaf cheeks—those dimples that one long-passed summer of love and life had seared with its pitiless hand.

“Come right into the chamber, Cousin Jane,” continued Miss Lydia. “How did you say Cousin Lewis was? Yes, this late spring has been right hard on us old folks; but Pa always said, you remember, that ’t was the March snows put the season in the ground.”

“Yes,” snapped the older lady; “they put a season in me, too, and raised a mighty good crop of late rheumatism.” She leaned heavily on her companion’s arm as they came slowly down the wide hall, past the two tall, carved-back, comfortless chairs, and their elongated counterparts in the glassy polished floor. Pausing to pick a fragrant leaf from the stiff bunch of citronaloos and clove pinks on the candle-stand, the old lady looked up and said in her usual querulous tone, “Nearly five already, if that clock’s right—which it

never has been. I've always believed it kept time by ear. And Jim will come by for me at six." The old clock, with its filigree hands before its face, almost smiled as Cousin Jane passed, while it ticked on self-righteously toward the wrong hour.

The open back-door framed the garden, basking in the June sunlight, its pink poppies swaying in the swing of a lady-like breeze. But the two old women had passed the flower age, and the older one said pertinently, "How are your early strawberries?"

"Only fair this year," Miss Lydia sighed softly. "No, strawberries are n't what they used to be, Cousin Jane. You and I remember the Alice Maudes that Pa raised right there"—pointing—"where those hollyhocks are below the snowball bush. Little Brother wanted the hollyhocks in that corner, though, so they could be near the gray palings—and they *are* prettier—he said they were so like French gardens."

"Yes," assented Cousin Jane; "I have noticed them there a good many summers, staying all buttoned up till August because it's too shady."

"Well, you know," almost pleaded Miss Lydia, as they turned to go in the door, "when they do come in, they are so much nicer to have because the others are all gone."

There was an air of cool green comfort in "the chamber"; one wondered why, for the old "hit or miss" rag carpet was in shades of faded blue from ghosts of Little Brother's well-washed overalls and the grays of the "girl's" guinea-chicken calicoes. Yet the note of green lingered in memory. So the geraniums in terra-cotta pots and saucers on the window-sill, with the view of the gray-green poppy leaves beyond, spelled rest even to the fidgety old woman who received the turkey-tail fan Miss Lydia offered, and waved it with a certain left-over grace from an admired girlhood. Relics of beauty linger long after a beautiful youth; sometimes, on an old and faded woman, they seem like a dead woman's jewels on an ugly second wife.

"Take the rocker, Cousin Jane," said Miss Lydia, "Ma's old rocker, here by the window, where she could see to sew. Would n't she love to sit here now and be making hemstitched frocks for Little Brother's baby!"

"Yes, she would, I suppose; she always set a great deal of store by Henry, and," Cousin Jane continued, "she seemed to think the more you girls sacrificed yourselves to him, the greater man he would be. But I have always said, 'Selfish parents raise unselfish children,' and there's some truth in that, just as your Cousin Lewis says, 'Bad example is better than precept.' Look at the sober children of drunkards! But go on and tell me about the baby; you did n't tell me a word of it when I was here that evening."

"Well, Cousin, you know I had n't dreamed a word of it then. We were at tea that same evening when I saw the little boy that runs errands for Smith's store come in the gate with one of those dreadful yellow envelopes in his hand. I think they ought to be made to have them blue and green sometimes, instead of that bilious yellow; but, any way, I took it from him when he came to the basement window. 'T was the first I had ever handled, and I read my name on it just as plain as print.

"The girls opened it for me, and it was from Little Brother, asking me to come at once. I had rather people would just say, 'I am dead,' and not go beating about the bush with 'Come at once.' I believe it would scare me less. But somehow they packed my clothes, and I started that night. And it was a frightful journey, roaring through railroad cuts and rattling on the track after that. The house-boy on the cars seemed real kind, and tried to persuade me to go to bed. At least, I suppose he thought he was being kind to try and persuade me to go to bed in a roomful of men. But I sat up until he came in and said this was Washington, though how he knew in that pitch dark, I don't know. Then he brushed my clothes and took out my satchel.

"Little Brother met me at the top of a flight of steps. I was mighty glad, for I would have been scared to death in a city, not having been in one since we went with Pa to the Richmond Fair in the fall of 1885. Then we went in the day, though; and trains seem to make such a rumpus at night."

"In what part of Washington does Henry live?" put in the old lady, as Miss Lydia hunted up her sweet-grass basket, and commenced to hemstitch an interminable inch-wide ruffle of linen cambric.

"I never rightly knew the name of the street where the house was, as he always gets his mail at the office."

"Umh-hm," murmured the old lady, with a lift of her eyebrows. "Well, go on."

"As I was telling you, Henry met me with a nice closed carriage at the depot. Dear boy, always so considerate, though it was n't a damp night. The first words he said were, 'Sister, you were always so good to everybody——'"

"And that's the truth," ejaculated Cousin Jane.

"Dear Henry," continued his sister, "always so appreciative of the smallest kindness, and so thoughtful for others even in his grief."

The older lady looked out of the window a little absently during this eulogy, and when her gaze returned to the now half-tearful sister of Little Brother she said rather severely, "You stopped where he took you to his home."

"Not to his home, Cousin. He had boarded with these ladies after

he left Cousin Julia's. Not that they seemed in poor circumstances, such as we understand, but Henry explained they were ladies alone——”

“Ah, yes, I see, and took him for company,” with a slight dilation of delicate old waxen nostrils.

“Exactly,” explained Miss Lydia, and then continued: “I started to tell you that as we were driving on he said to me, ‘Sister, when I first came here’—that was a year ago—‘I was married secretly. I did n’t tell you about it, because I was afraid you might worry.’ . . . Always thinking of others,” sniffed Miss Lydia, from some mysterious depths of her black skirt producing a handkerchief. Then he said, ‘That was because we have always been so poor, and you and mother had worked so hard to send me to college. After that we lived with my wife’s aunt;’ and the poor child tried so hard to control himself when he said, ‘And now my wife is very ill—dying, the doctor says, and she will leave a little girl—and, Sister, I just knew you would take care of it for me, and I sent for you because she begged me to take it myself.’ But, of course, the poor boy could n’t do that, because he has his business—a very successful one now, I know you will be glad to hear—and he lives at the Club.

“Well, by this time we had reached the house. Little Brother explained to me as we went that the aunt kept a very fashionable boarding-house, and that they were having a party—they had one both nights I was there. Pearl’s aunt met us, and just between you and me, Cousin, I did n’t care very much for her—though she certainly did have beautiful taste in house-furnishing; the inside of that house was nearly full of looking-glasses. She herself was dressed as you or I would have been if we were going to a ball.”

“Not I, Lydia Ann Lewis; speak for yourself,” answered Cousin Jane, pursing up her naturally small mouth until it assumed the size and expression of a well-made buttonhole.

“Well, a neat print wrapper would have been more to my way of thinking, considering there was illness in the house—Ma always wore a gray, sprigged with purple, at such times—but Little Brother said people in cities wore low neck and short sleeves no matter how old they were. She did n’t look old, though—not a gray hair, a beautiful suit of bright auburn, and such a sweet color in her cheeks!

“She took us up a long staircase. The rooms were bright as daylight, and young girls and men were dancing in them, corks were popping, and the smell of flowers came sickening sweet along with the cry of a violin; somehow they have always reminded me of a sick baby’s wailing. The aunt—I never could rightly get her name—said she hated all this racket to go on while Pearl was sick, but women must live. We stopped in an outer room, ’way up-stairs, and

waited for the doctor to come out. It seemed hours to me until he did, for the aunt had on some right heavy perfume, and that with the iodoform from the sick-room, and me having been up all night, I began to feel mighty faint and far away.

“And just about that time the doctor came out—a gruff, gray old gentleman, but kindly, I reckon—and he looked at me from under his stubby gray eyebrows, and then said, ‘Lewis, why did you bring your sister here?’

“Even Brother, as patient as he is, was angry for a moment, and then told him, ‘My sister comes of her own accord, and will take the child home with her.’

“Then he turned back to me, and said, ‘Madam, you are a good woman, and I, for one, respect Quixotism, but I am afraid you are laying by a mighty stock of trouble for your old age. Blood will tell,’ he muttered as he washed his thermometer and put it back in his satchel. When he turned round, he said, ‘Madam, you understand that to bring up this child will require a great deal of vigilance!’ I knew then what he was driving at: he thought I was an old maid and had had no experience with croup. But I told him better. I said, ‘Doctor, indeed I do understand, and at the very first symptom I always give a dessert-spoonful of sugar soaked in petroleum, and follow it up with a hot mustard bath up as far as the knees. I am not as inexperienced as you seem to think. I really raised Little Brother, because of Ma’s being so poorly after he was born, and he only needed to get his feet the least bit damp to go to coughing.’

“He took up his hat sort o’ smiling, and said, ‘Well, I’ve nothing more to say, Madam. If you understood your brother’s symptoms, you will understand those of his child.’”

“Well, as she is a girl,” sighed Cousin Jane, “I hope they may not be quite so pronounced.”

“But where was I?” continued Miss Lydia, biting off a fresh needleful of thread with a slow, benevolent bite, not the swift, spiteful snip of most maiden ladies. “Oh, yes, then the nurse came in—a sister of charity in a black dress and a white tucker and a long string of black beads. We followed her into Pearl’s room. She was conscious, and Little Brother went and knelt by the bed. I stood there, and I could n’t help noticing, Cousin Jane, there was lace on everything, even to the very sheets, and pink silk under white for the pillow-slips, just like a girl’s party dresses. Then the poor, heart-broken boy said to me, ‘Sister, this is my Pearl,’ and all the time those violins crying downstairs sounded like babies wailing ’way off in the dark and the rain, though they meant it to be a waltz, I reckon.

"Then Little Brother said, 'Pearl, sister says she will take the baby and care for it, and it shall never lack for anything I can give it.'

"She looked up into my eyes a long time, and then said, waiting long whiles between each word, 'You—are—a—good—woman, and, maybe, you will help my baby to be one too.'

"We waited, and when she had rested some she said, 'Bring my little girl to me, Harry.' She said 'Harry,' and her aunt called him 'Handsome Harry'; that's what they called him everywhere, she said. And he brought the baby and laid it by her, and she rubbed her hand over its hair—such little brown silky curls—and said, 'Kitten, kitten, such a fuzzy little kitten,' and we've called her Kitten ever since. Don't you think it's pretty?"

"Yes, oh, yes, mighty pretty—till it reaches cathood!"

Ignoring the comment, for she was accustomed to her cousin's peevish temperament, Miss Lydia resumed her recital: "Then the poor little child—for child Pearl was, Cousin Jane, only nineteen and so much to live for——"

A significant sniff from Cousin Jane showed she had noted this point.

"She said, 'I don't seem to mind dying much'—though not in a religious way, it seemed, as I had to tell our pastor. And she asked me, 'You will name her for me, won't you?' and when I said, 'Yes, of course, my dear,' though her mind seemed clear, she said, 'I want her called Magdalene,' but she must have been delirious, for her own name was Pearl.

"What is it? No, I didn't see Cousin Julia at all; I had thought I would let her know, but Henry said he would rather I didn't. You know he has so much delicacy; he hated to obtrude his grief even on a member of his own family. He didn't even let her know of Pearl's illness. They seemed to have mighty poor neighbors; no one sent to inquire. I could but think of our old friends here in Summerfield, who would have sent in more calves-foot jelly on such an occasion than the whole family could dispose of. When it was all over, no one sent a flower or asked to be allowed to watch the night with us.

"Only one carriage to follow her to the grave! Her aunt seemed deeply affected, and lost control of her emotions so entirely that Little Brother thought best for him and me to go alone. It was raining quite hard, and he insisted on my remaining in the carriage, but he stood by the grave with his head uncovered until it was all done.

"On the white stone cross he had erected," said Miss Lydia, with an air of having used the right word, "there was only one word, Vol. LXXXVI—31.

cut deep into it: 'Pearl.' No other name or date; Little Brother was always so exquisite in his tastes, and hated ostentatious parade.

"Yes," she resumed; "Henry has changed right much in appearance. He carried a good deal more flesh, and is even a little bald. You can remember, Cousin, his beautiful pink and white complexion. Well, city life has almost ruined it. Last time he was here I prepared him a nice glass of new milk, with a tablespoonful of sulphur in it, and brought it to him before breakfast—Ma's old spring remedy, you know, and mighty easy to take if you shut your eyes and hold your nose and don't think what's coming—but he did n't seem to relish it.

"No, we don't see very much of him. He comes up sometimes to see the Kitten, as he calls her, but he never goes out anywhere. You know, the truth is, Cousin Jane, I don't think the people in Summerfield—even our old neighbors—ever really appreciated Little Brother."

"You are mistaken there, Lydia Ann. I have known Henry from his cradle days, and I have appreciated him fully. But there's Jim at the gate, and those sorrel colts won't stand a minute."



THE ROCK-FLOWER

BY JOHN KENDRICK BANGS

DOWN on the cold gray rocks hard by the sea,
 Where earth is bare and bleak, with ne'er a tree
 Or blade of grass to show that 'mid the strife
 Is aught that bears resemblance unto life,
 I found the other day a blossom fair
 That peeped from out a jagged crevice there,
 And held its head as high as any rose
 That in the soft earth of my garden grows;
 Serene 'mid those surroundings, dull and gray,
 As any lily was its snow-white spray,
 It viewed the sea, the rocks, the rugged coast,
 As though this were the spot it loved the most,
 And uncomplaining lived its little hour
 As if 't were in some well-protected bower
 Wherein all joy and hope fulfilled were blent
 With harmony, and peace, and sweet content.

'T was like a word divine sent forth on high,
 A whisper faint as some half-hearted sigh,
 But thrilling to the soul enmeshed in care
 With thoughts of hope to overcome despair!

THE LUST OF CONQUEST

By Rafael Sabatini

CESARE BORGIA lay at Soligno with his army, master of the whole territory of Foggia, with the sole exception of the capital itself, which, grim and impregnable, defied him from its eminence. Cesare was too good a captain to be in haste where haste must prove expensive. Soligno afforded him pleasant quarters, and these he was content to enjoy what time Famine did his work for him with the defiant town.

In Foggia itself, one evening of early autumn, the old Count Guido degli Speranzoni sat in council with his captains considering the desperate straits to which Cesare had reduced them, a consideration which brought them nothing but the gloom of hopelessness.

"There is one course only can save Foggia," said del Campo, and when they pressed him to name that course, "The death of Cesare Borgia," he explained.

Men shrugged their shoulders. Del Campo told them nothing that they did not know, but he told them something they could not achieve.

"I would," growled Speranzoni, his fierce old eyes narrowing most wickedly—"I would I had him here in Foggia." And his wrinkled hand, held out palm upwards, tightened without closing, like an eagle's talons, ready to seize and rend.

"You'll have him soon enough," snapped Paviano, who inclined to grimness in his humor.

"Aye, when he comes in power, you mean," the Lord of Foggia assented sadly. "Not so mean I. I would have him seized at Soligno where he lies, and brought a captive here to be held for ransom. Thus might I save the State." He looked about him at the despondent ones who formed his council. "Is there none will attempt it for the love of Foggia?" he asked point-blank.

In his captains' faces, one and all, he read that he asked the impossible, and he turned as for sympathy to his daughter, his only child and heiress to the State of Foggia, who in that quality was present among those men in council. Her splendid beauty inspired in him a fresh line of intercession. He turned once more to his captains.

"Is there none will do it for the love of Eufemia degli Speranzoni?" quoth he, and caught in more than one pair of eyes a responsive gleam. "It were but fitting," he explained, "that Foggia's savior in such an hour should be Foggia's future ruler—my daughter's future husband."

Del Campo, young, ardent, and ambitious, looked as he would make the task his own; Paviano, too, though far from young, seemed on the point of taking up the challenge, and two or three besides. But it was Guido's daughter, herself, who was the first to speak.

"What you say, my lord father, is most just," said she. "Foggia's future ruler should be Foggia's savior in this hour, and so she shall be."

"You, Eufemia?" cried her sire, wheeling in his chair to face her.

She stood before them, magnificently tall and graceful, her bosom heaving slightly, the color ebbing and flowing in her cheeks.

"Yes, I," she answered without weakness. "Here is a task that asks for guile, not strength. Let it be mine to attempt it."

Loud-voiced protests filled the room. All the men had risen, and each swore this must not be.

"But the danger!" wailed her sire, raising shaking hands and fearful eyes.

"Will not be as the danger to del Campo or Paviano or any other of these noble gentlemen. I shall know how to guard myself. Depend upon me."

When Count Guido spoke of her as Foggia's future ruler, he was less than accurate; for she ruled there already, and what Madonna Eufemia degli Speranzoni wanted none might long gainsay her. And she prevailed now as she prevailed ever, and if when she left Foggia in the dead of night she left behind a loving dread for her, she left, too, a certain hopefulness, for men knew and had confidence in her mettle and her wit.

Soligno conquered—and all trace of conquest sedulously removed, as was the way of Cesare Borgia—was settling down to its workaday aspect. In what, after all, can one ruler differ intrinsically from another to the ruled? Though princes perish, thrones crumble, and dynasties be supplanted, citizens must live and eat and go about their business. Thus, whilst some remained in Soligno who scowled as Cesare Borgia, Duke of Valentinois, went abroad, the greater portion bared their heads and bowed their duty to the conqueror, the great captain who had made it his life's task to build a mighty empire out of all the petty tyrannies into which Italy was broken.

One fair morning in late August Cesare rode down the Borge

dell'Annunziata, the centre of a group of horsemen, mostly young, all richly-apparelled, and seeming by their talk and laughter in the gayest mood. Debouching from a narrow street into the market-place—thronged now with traders as in time of peace—the little calvacade was met by another coming in the opposite direction and very different of appearance, all being in harness and full-armed. At its head rode Don Miguel—Cesare's Spanish captain—and he alone was without armor, dressed in clumsy peasant garb, for he was newly returned from a secret visit to the city of Foggia, where he had spent the last three days reconnoitring the strength of the besieged and their supplies. He now drew rein, that he might give his master the fruits of his daring expedition.

The horsemen, mingling what time Don Miguel and Duke Cesare talked apart, so blocked the entrance to the street that a litter advancing towards it from the market-place was forced to halt and wait until its way should be clear again.

Don Miguel was talking earnestly, urging Cesare to make assault upon a point at which he fancied weakness—for all that he was seldom a man to advocate measures rough and direct. Cesare listened, half-idly, nowise inclined to be guided by his counsel, and allowing his eyes to stray, as do the eyes of a man not over-engrossed in what is being told him. They chanced to fall upon the litter, and what he saw there caught his roving glance and held it. A curtain had been drawn aside, and at the very moment that he looked he saw an elderly woman pointing him out—or so it seemed to him—to her companion. It was this elderly dame's companion whose splendid beauty now engrossed his gaze, and in that instant her eyes, large and solemn as a child's, were raised. Their glances met across the little intervening space, and the Duke saw her lips part as in surprise, saw the color perish in her cheeks, leaving them ivory-white. In homage, not to the woman, but to the beauty that was hers—for, like all of his race, he accounted beauty the most cardinal of all virtues—the conqueror doffed his hat and bowed to the very withers of his horse.

Checked in the middle of his argument, Don Miguel frowned at this proof of inattention, and frowned more darkly still when to show the extent of that same inattention Cesare asked him softly:

“Who is that lady? Do you know?”

The Spaniard turned to look; but in that moment the curtains fell again. Cesare, a smile on his lips, heaved a soft sigh and then fell very pensive, pondering the element of abnormality, slight as it was, that the incident had offered. He had been pointed out to her, and at sight of him she had turned pale. What was the reason? He could not recollect that he had ever seen her before, and had he seen her, hers was not a face he would be likely to forget. Why, then,

did the sight of him affect her in so odd a manner. Many men had turned pale before him—aye, and women too—but there had always been a reason. What was the reason here?

Don Miguel's escort had drawn aside, leaving a passage clear, through which the litter and its attendants were now passing. Cesare's eye went after it awhile, then he turned again to Miguel.

"We'll talk of this again," said he. "Meanwhile, follow me that litter, and bring me word where its occupant resides." With that, Cesare pushed on, his cavaliers about him; but he went thoughtfully, still pondering that question: Why did she turn pale?

The reason, had he known it, might have flattered him. Madonna Eufemia had come to Soligno to destroy by guile one whom she had ever heard described as an odious monster, the devastator of all Italy, another scourge of God, more worthy of the name than Attila himself. She had looked to find a horror of a man, hideous, malformed, prematurely aged, and ravaged by disease and the wrath of Heaven. Instead, she beheld a youthful cavalier, resplendent of raiment, magnificent, though slight, of shape, and beautiful of countenance beyond all men that she had ever seen. The glory of his eyes when she had found them full upon her had seemed to turn her faint and dizzy. Nor did she recover until the curtain fell again, and she bethought her that, however superb and gallant his appearance, he was the enemy of her race, the man whose destruction it was her high mission to encompass as she stood pledged.

The litter moved forward. She reclined with half-closed eyes, smiling to herself as she remembered how avid had been his gaze. It was well.

"Madonna, we are being followed," whispered her companion fearfully.

Eufemia's smile grew broader, more content. The affair was speeding excellently.

She was housed in the palace that had been Paviano's, in the Via del Cane, hard by the Duomo; and thrice that day her women brought her word that the Lord Cesare Borgia had ridden by, all eyes upon the windows. Towards sunset she bade a lackey set a chair for her in the marble balcony that overlooked the street, and there on the occasion of his fourth passing the great captain beheld her seated, taking the cool of eventide what time one of her women read to her.

She had no eyes for him at first; they were turned skyward, a rapt expression on her face, as though her soul were lost in the exquisite melody of words which her woman was pouring forth for her delectation. Anon, however, she seemed to grow conscious of his presence, and looked down to find that he had reined in his jennet and sat considering her, his auburn head bared in homage as though

he stood before a shrine, his glorious eyes full of strange wonder. As their glances met, he bowed low, as he had done that morning; and she, mastering the odd emotions stirring in her, smiled palely down on him in recognition. As if content with that, he gently shook his reins; his horse moved on, and she fancied she caught the flutter of a sigh—but that was surely fancy. Slowly he rode down the street, turning as he went ever and anon to look over his shoulder, nor covering his head again until he did so in a final gesture of salutation ere he was lost to her view beyond the corner.

On each of the three days that followed was this pretty scene repeated, and on the fourth there came at noon a dainty page to Paviano's house, bearing a scented letter in the Duke's own hand, wherein the latter craved like the humblest suitor for the honor of permission to offer in person his services to Madonna Eufemia Guasti—for by this name she had elected to be known, giving out that she was the daughter of a rich Venetian trader.

This permission being accorded, the Borgia came some few hours later, and, leaving his splendid cavalcade to await him in the street, he went alone into her presence. He came superbly arrayed, as a suitor should; his doublet was of cloth of gold, milk-white one silken hose, sky-blue the other, and the girdle from which his sword was hung blazed with priceless stones.

She received him in a chamber well worthy of his magnificence, and for company she had none but Basilia—her elderly companion of the litter. Tightly strung to her task though she be, yet she feasted her eyes upon the rare beauty of his resplendent presence, nor repelled the dangerous rapture that his haunting eyes and soft melodious voice awakened in her.

They sat awhile in studied talk, flavored with hints of his regard for her, and her wonder grew at the difference between the man she saw and the ogre she had looked for; he was, she had been told, a creature whose soul was all compounded of intelligence and ambition; harsh, unscrupulous, terrible to friend and foe alike; a man devoid of heart, and devoid, therefore, of pity or of mercy. She found him gentle, respectful, mildly gay, and of a rare sweetness of speech, till she was forced to ask herself might not envy of his great generalship be the only source of the detestation in which he was held by those upon whom he warred.

Wine was brought by a page, golden Falernian in an exquisitely wrought Venetian vessel, from which with her own hands she poured it into two cups of beaten gold.

"It is most opportune," said he, his voice calm and deferential, "that I may pledge you."

She flushed as if well pleased, and, taking one cup, she bade her

page to offer him the other. At that some of the passion latent in him, at which, as if despite him, his ardent glance had hinted now and again, seemed to leap forth. He repulsed the cup. "Nay, nay!" said he, his great eyes full upon her, their glance seeming to envelop and hold her as in a spell. "Let one cup suffice, I do beseech you, madonna, unworthy though I be. Pledge me, and leave me wine in which to pledge you in my turn."

She would have put the honor from her as too great—for not until Basilia told her afterwards did she suspect that this was less a measure of gallantry than precaution. Cesare Borgia took no risks of being poisoned. She protested then; but Borgia insisted, and his will made sport with hers as does the breeze in autumn with the withered leaf.

She drank, and handed him the cup. He received it with bent knee, as though it were a sacrament, and drained it, his eyes upon her.

He took his departure soon thereafter, having first obtained her leave to come again. When he was gone she shivered, and sank limp into a chair, to fall a-weeping for no reason in the world that she could fathom. Yet that night she wrote to the Count, her father, that all was going better than she could have dared to hope, and that within the week she looked to place that in his hands which should enable him to end the siege of Foggia.

At that same night, in council at Soligno, there was a scene that threatened to grow stormy. Cesare's captains, urged by the arguments of Ramiro del'Orca, complained of the inaction in which they sat, of the precious time that was being wasted, and clamored that Foggia forthwith be taken by assault.

"It will be costly in human lives," Cesare reminded them, and left them stricken by the softness of this contention from one who was so little wont to reckon in lives the cost of what he desired.

"Will it be less costly a week hence?" quoth the great Ramiro, snorting.

"Assuredly," was the smooth reply. "Famine will have weakened their resistance, we shall have completed our mining of the wall at the spot where Don Miguel found it weakened, and through the breach we can pour our men into a starving city that will be in no case to offer us resistance, seeing us within."

"And what of the time that is being lost?" Ramiro asked.

Cesare shrugged, and his lips parted in a soft smile. "It will pass pleasantly enough, no doubt, here in Soligno," said he.

"Aye!" thundered the other. "There is the whole truth and cause of this delay." He smote the board a blow of his colossal fist; his great red face grew apoplectic; his rolling eyes seemed shot with blood. "The time passes pleasantly enough for your magnificence here in Soligno." And he laughed most horribly. "Meanwhile——"

"Meanwhile," Cesare's voice interrupted him, his words falling like drops of icy water upon the captain's red-hot temper—"meanwhile Ravenna needs a temporary governor. You shall fill the office, Ser Ramiro, until I can spare a better man. You start to-night."

To the contempt implicit in Cesare's words, Ramiro gave no thought. His dismissal at such a moment from the seat of war left his spirit limp as an empty bag. Recovering an instant, he flushed and spread a hand in protest.

"My lord——" he began. But again he was not suffered to proceed. From mask-like in its impassivity, Cesare's face was of a sudden stirred. His eyes narrowed.

"Captain del'Orca," said he, "you are interrupting the business of this council. If you have aught to say to me, say it when I come to Ravenna in a fortnight's time. Fare you well."

He uttered no threat, as another might have done; he did not so much as raise his voice; but the menace quivering, nevertheless, in his even tones was such that the great captain heaved himself up, bowed low, and went without another word.

Thus departed from Soligno the only spirit great enough to have saved Cesare from the peril that delay was spreading for him. The remainder, cowed by the Duke's invincible resolve, and by the example he had made of the one who had dared oppose it, bowed to his will in the matter of the reduction of Foggia.

Days passed, and for Cesare, at least, it seemed that they passed pleasantly, as he had promised that they should. He was so much at the house of Paviano, at the feet of the peerless Monna Eufemia Guasti, that it seemed his court had been removed thither from the castle. For Eufemia herself, the season was one of sore experience. In his absence she laid her plans for his ultimate capture, in correspondence with her father; in his presence she was all numb, fascinated, filled with horror almost by her task, the very creature of his will.

At last was reached that fateful evening that had been settled for the odious deed. He came at twilight, as was now his wont, and kissed her hand in greeting, as was also his custom now. The windows of the great apartment in which she met him stood open to the gardens, and thither he invited her to go with him before he had been two minutes in her presence.

"It is chill," she demurred, "and there is the dew." Slight though this demur, so great was her subjection to him that her heart-beats quickened as she urged it.

He sighed heavily. "I am oddly oppressed to-night," said he. "I have need of air. Come, my Eufemia." And he took her hand to lead her forth.

She shivered at his endearment, at the soft caress of his voice, the

pleading ardor of his eyes, and suffered herself to be led into the open. Slowly they paced down a laurel-bordered avenue towards the grotto that was the garden's most conspicuous feature. It was known as the temple of Pan, and the marble figure of the sylvan god could be descried gleaming faintly amid the green darkness of the cave. In a little clearing opposite stood a marble bench. Here Cesare bade her sit; here he seated himself beside her, and, as before, he sighed.

"It is sweet in you to have done my will," said he, "since it is to be my last evening with you, my Eufemia."

She started guiltily. His last evening! How knew he that?

"As how, my lord?" she asked.

"Harsh necessity commands me," he answered. "To-morrow we deliver the final assault that shall carry Foggia."

Here was news. It seemed that not a moment too soon had she arranged to act.

"You—are certain it will be final?" she questioned, puzzled by his assurance.

He smiled confidently. "You shall judge," said he. "There is a weakness in the walls, to the north, above the river, spied out a week ago by Don Miguel. Since then we have spent the time in mining at the spot, and there has been during this week an odd lack of vigilance in Foggia. It is as a town lulled by some false hope. It has served us well. Our preparations are complete, and at dawn we fire the mine and enter through the breach."

"So that I shall see you no more," said she, feeling that something she must say. And then, whether urged by make-believe or by sheer femininity, she continued: "Will you ever think again, I wonder, when you pass on to further conquests, of poor Eufemia and her loneliness in Soligno?"

He turned sharply, and his calm eyes looked deeply into hers—so deeply that she grew afraid, thinking he must see the truth in the very soul of her. And then, behind them somewhere, there was a crunch of gravel, and Cesare was looking over his shoulder in the direction of the sound. Across the avenue at that moment a shadow flitted and was lost amid the denser shadows of the laurels. Apparently he either saw it not or left it unheeded, for he turned again to Eufemia, who sat cold with terror. He leaned towards her.

"Shall I come back to you, Eufemia?" he asked her ardently, his eyes upon her, his arms outstretched. "Would you have it so?"

Again their glances met, and she turned almost dizzy under those eyes of his, instinct with a mysterious passion that seemed to enwrap her as in a mesh of fire. She swayed towards him. "My lord! My dear lord!" she murmured, faltering. His arms were round her, crushing her slender body against his own, his lips were scorching

hers. Thus a moment; then with a panting cry, her palms against his breast, she thrust him from her.

"What now?" he asked her gently, wondering.

"You love me?" quoth she. Then begged him: "Say that you love me!"

"What else?" he answered, questioning in his turn, his hungry arms held out again.

"Wait! Wait!" she panted. She was livid now; her eyes distraught. Suddenly she hid her face in her hands, and fell a-sobbing. "Oh, I am vile!" she cried. "I am most vile!"

"What are you saying, sweet?"

As suddenly as she had lost it did she regain her self-control. "You shall learn," she promised him. "Awhile ago you heard a step behind us. Assassins wait you in the garden there—brought here by my contriving!"

He never stirred. Smiling, he continued to look down upon her, and it flashed through her mind that, so great was his faith in her, he could not believe this thing she told him.

"I was sent hither," she informed him, "to lure you into capture, that you may be held as hostage for the safety of all Foggia."

He seemed slightly to shake his head, his smile enduring still. "All this being so, why do you tell me?"

"Why?" she cried, her eyes dilating in her white face. "Why? Do you not see? Because I love you, Cesare, and can no longer do the thing I came for."

Save a sigh, that seemed to be of satisfaction, there was still no change in his demeanor; his smile, if anything, grew sweeter. She was prepared for horror, for anger, or for loathing from him; but for nothing so terrible as this calm, fond smile. She drew away from it in fascinated terror, as she would not have drawn away from his poniard had he made shift to kill her for her treachery. Sick and faint she reclined there, uttering no word.

Then, smiling still, Cesare rose quietly and moved a step in the direction of the alley, the zone of danger. It became clear to her that he was going; going without a word of reproach or comment; and the contempt of it was as a whip of scorpions to her flesh.

"Have you naught to say?" she wailed.

"Naught," he answered, pausing.

Under the spur of pain her anger rose. "My men are still there," she reminded him, a lurking fierceness in her quivering voice.

His answer seemed to shatter her wits. "So, too, are mine, Eufemia degli Speranzoni."

Crouching on the bench, she stared at him. She swallowed hard with a gulping sound. "You knew?" she breathed.

"From the hour I met you," answered he. "Don Miguel had penetrated into Foggia to reconnoitre. When your litter passed me in the Via del Cane I sent him after it. He had seen you at your father's palace."

"Then—then—why?" she faltered, leaving her meaning to be guessed.

At last his voice was raised from its habitual even tones, and it rang like stricken bronze. "The lust of conquest," he answered, smiling fiercely now. "Should I who have brought all Italy to heel fail to reduce me Count Guido's daughter?" He leaned towards her as he explained, and his voice sank once more, but a bitter mockery abode in it. "I was resolved to win this fight against you and your woman's arts, myself; and your confession, when it came, should be the admission that I am conqueror in your heart as I am elsewhere. For the rest," he added, and the mockery grew keener, "such was their faith in you at Foggia that they relaxed their vigilance and afforded me the chance I needed to prepare the mine." He gathered his cloak about him to depart, doffed his hat, and made her an obeisance. She rose painfully, one hand to her brow, the other to her heart.

"And I, my lord?" she asked in a strangled voice. "What fate do you reserve for me?"

He considered her in the fading light. "Lady," said he, "I leave you to your own."

He beat his hands together thrice. There was a rustle among the laurel bushes, and a half-dozen men came down the garden towards him. He addressed their leader shortly. "Amedeo," said he, "you will apprehend what men are ambushed here."

One glance he cast at the white, crouching figure on the seat; then he turned and without haste departed.

Next morning Foggia fell, and Cesare, the conqueror, sat in the palace of the Speranzoni.



COGITATIONS

No man ever accuses himself of hypocrisy. This fact alone makes many of us hypocrites.

A HOLIDAY is a time when city folks go to the country and city folks go to the city.

CREDIT is a good thing until it becomes merely an excuse for spending the same dollar twice.

Ellis O. Jones

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS

By Thomas L. Masson

WHIPPLETON had been expecting the settlement of his uncle's estate for so long, that it had become an old story. He had almost forgotten to think about it.

Suddenly, one morning, shortly after he had entered his office, he received a telephone message from his uncle's lawyers. He dropped everything and went down to see them.

Fifteen minutes later he was on his way back, in his pocket a certified check for one hundred thousand dollars. Such is the celerity with which, in these days, business affairs are conducted.

When Whippleton arrived at his office, almost bursting with joy over his good fortune, he found his old friend Salter waiting for him. Salter looked worried.

"Dropped in to see you this morning," he said, "on a matter of great importance to me. Don't suppose it's any use, but I am really in a bad way."

"What's the matter?" asked Whippleton, his voice full of sympathy. At that moment he was feeling kindly toward all the world. He had n't had time to readjust himself to the new conditions. Besides, he had known Salter for years, and had every confidence in him.

Salter explained that, owing to an unexpected turn in his business affairs, due to the failure of a mill, he was temporarily embarrassed. He could pull through, he said, if he had ten thousand dollars.

"Of course I know," he concluded, "that you probably can't do anything for me, but I thought perhaps you could suggest some place where I could get the money."

Whippleton smiled. It pleased him intensely to be a good fairy.

"My dear boy," he said, with a wave of his hand, "I think I can help you out. I'll give you a check."

Salter gasped.

"You don't mean it!"

Whippleton was writing it out.

"Yes, I do. Here it is. You can deposit it to-day, but don't try to cash it until to-morrow, as I must make a deposit first."

"I don't know how to thank you."

"Nonsense! Delighted!"

"Let's see. How long——"

Whippleton waved his hand again.

"Oh, that's all right," he said carelessly. It was really a pleasure to help his friend, in addition to the fact that it tickled Whippleton's vanity immensely.

"No hurry," he exclaimed. "You can send me a demand note if you like, as a matter of record."

"I'll do it! Old fellow, you have saved my business. I can't thank you enough."

"Don't mention it," said Whippleton, in an off-hand manner, as if he were in the habit of dealing out ten-thousand-dollar checks to his friends.

Brimming with gratitude, Salter went out, and Whippleton hurried over to his bank to make the deposit.

He was acquainted with the cashier, a man who enjoyed the confidence of the community.

Whippleton told of his good fortune, and inquired about investments.

"Here is a bond selling at ninety-eight," said the cashier, "that I can thoroughly recommend. It is a first mortgage, and a lien on all the property"

He gave a short description of the bond and its possibilities, and explained about the condition of the market. Whippleton listened attentively, and said:

"Very well. I am satisfied. You may buy ninety thousand dollars' worth of these bonds at the market price."

"That will be around ninety. Very well. I will notify you when they are delivered."

When Whippleton got home that night, he wore a quiet smile, which was not utterly lost on his wife.

"You seem pleased with yourself."

Whippleton explained, losing nothing in the telling.

"Yes," he said; "I had the pleasure of buying ninety thousand dollars' worth of bonds to-day, and——"

"I thought you said the check was for a hundred thousand," said Mrs. Whippleton sharply.

He had n't intended to mention the Salter transaction, but his joy had made him rather careless.

"What did you do with the other ten thousand?" she pressed him.

"I lent it to Salter," said Whippleton, with an assumption of indifference which he did not feel.

"Lent it to Salter!"

"Yes. Was n't it lucky I could help him out? Needed it badly

to tide over his business. Mill failed. I knew you'd be tickled to death to think I *could* help him."

Mrs. Whippleton was not so easily fooled by this statement. She knew it proceeded from weakness—and fear of herself.

"Um!" she exclaimed. "You ought to have a guardian. You'll never see that ten thousand again."

"What do you mean? Salter is as honest as the day is long."

"Of course," replied Mrs. Salter satirically; "he *means* to pay it back, but *you wait*. Just think," she went on: "you had one hundred thousand, and now you have n't but ninety."

Somehow, during the next week, that cutting phrase sank into Whippleton's consciousness more and more:

"You had one hundred thousand, and now you have n't but ninety."

By return mail, he had received from Salter a note which stated formally that the sum of ten thousand dollars was payable on demand.

On demand.

That was a temporary consolation. But the feeling of security proceeding from it soon lost itself.

Whippleton found himself inquiring in various quarters about Salter; and the more he inquired, the more uneasy he became.

His wife did not spare him.

And he might have had that hundred thousand intact!

It was a distressing thought. It gathered impetus. It came to possess him utterly. He determined to get that money back. He cursed himself inwardly to think he had been so weak as to give it up so easily. And then he experienced a revengeful feeling towards Salter to think that that innocent gentleman should have taken advantage of him, by appearing on the scene at such a critical moment. Twenty-four hours more and he would have regained his balance—gotten back, as they say in books, to his normal self.

He determined to get that money. He would vindicate himself with his wife.

At the end of a week he dropped in to see Salter. That gentleman greeted him effusively.

"You did a great thing for me," he said. "Can't tell you how I feel about it."

"Oh, that's all right," said Whippleton feebly. He had come along with the intention of being firm, but his friend's manner unmanned him. He resorted to prevarication.

"The fact is," he whispered, "when I let you have that money the other day I was feeling flush. Since then things have gone rather against me."

Salter's eyes almost filled with tears. He was teeming with gratitude and affection for his friend.

"I'm sorry to hear that," he exclaimed. "I suppose you would like to get that money back."

His face grew solemn.

"I don't know just exactly——" he began.

Whippleton stopped him.

"Oh, it is n't quite as bad as that," he said. "I would n't put you to any inconvenience. Only——"

He began to grow confidential again.

"You see, I am looking ahead a little, and am going to make certain arrangements in the future, and I thought if we could arrange on a date, it would be easier for both of us."

What Whippleton really meant was that he wanted to pin Salter down, but did n't want him to know the real reason.

"How would three months from now do?" Whippleton asked with an appearance of vagueness.

"I think I can manage it then. Why, I *must* manage it then, of course," said Salter. "After what you have done, old man, I certainly would n't put you out. All right." And he wrote out another note, making it three months from date.

"You can destroy the other one."

Whippleton went away somewhat relieved. He wished, now, that he had made it two months. Every moment until he got back that ten thousand seemed precious. Still, three months was better than no time set. He tried to be philosophical about it, even though his wife continued to rally him on his incompetence.

"Like to see you let *me* have ten thousand to lend to any friend of mine," she said tauntingly. "Why, you'd laugh in my face."

As the day of settlement approached, Whippleton grew more and more nervous—especially as there had been an ominous silence from Salter.

Promptly at ten o'clock on the morning when the note was due, however, Salter appeared in the office. It had been a great effort on Whippleton's part to restrain his anxiety, and he had been tempted to call up his friend a number of times. Now he was glad that he had n't.

Salter's face was worn and haggard. He looked like a ghost.

"Old man," he said, "I would n't have disappointed you for anything, and I have that money; only——"

He gazed at Whippleton despairingly.

"Must you have it now?" he whispered.

Whippleton was now almost as abnormal as he had been on the morning he had loaned the money—only it was in the opposite direction. It seemed to him he could n't wait to get his hands on that ten thousand dollars.

"I really don't see how I can get along without it," he replied. "Of course"—taking refuge in a cowardly misstatement—"if you had let me know a week or so ago, I might——"

"I thought I might pull through, but the last day or so some complications have risen. Oh, well, I won't bother you with my troubles. Here is the check. Deposit it at once, will you? And I can't tell you"—Salter's voice quivered—"how much obliged to you I am."

Whippleton hated to take the money, but he thought of his wife.

"I certainly wish," he said, "that I could let you have it longer. Maybe by and by——"

"Oh, that's all right," said Salter. "It was a bargain. Besides," he exclaimed, "don't you suppose I know you would do it if you could? Did n't you let me have it on the instant before? Oh, I know you've got to have it, or you would insist on my keeping it!"

He wrung his friend's hand.

"I shall always remember it," he said. "Now, don't you worry about me. I'm all right."

After he went, and Whippleton saw the check lying on his desk, he experienced a feeling of remorse. He would hurry after him and give it back. But no! He really had done Salter a favor. And then, if he waited, there was no knowing whether or not he would ever get his money back. Salter might be deeply involved. It might be a kindness to him *not* to let him have the money.

Thus Whippleton quieted his conscience, as he went around to the bank to make the deposit.

"I suppose you've noticed the way those bonds have gone up," said the cashier, his hand on Whippleton's shoulder. "Always glad when a customer makes money on our advice."

To be candid, Whippleton had not thought much about the bonds. He had been so concerned about his ten thousand that he had thought of little else.

"Why, I saw the other day they were three or four points higher," he said.

"Well, they have gone up six points in three days. Something extraordinary! But, then, the conditions are right. Why not sell out and take your profit, and then reinvest in something else a little later?"

Whippleton figured on the back of an envelope.

"Why, it's over ten thousand profit," he said. "They've gone up twelve points. All right. Sell 'em out."

In ten minutes the transaction was completed.

Whippleton hurried home, his exultation rising with each step.

At last his revenge on his wife had come. For months she had had the laugh on him.

Ha! And so he needed a guardian, eh? Well, well!

When they were alone over their coffee at the dinner table, he said smilingly:

"So you think I don't know anything, do you?"

"I sometimes think you make a fool of yourself. There was that money you lent to that man. And, by the way, is n't it time for him to pay it back? Of course you'll never get it! Not now!"

"Oh, of course not," replied Whippleton, with a slight touch of satire in his voice. "*Oh, of course not!* And yet, strange to say, he not only paid me—by a genuine certified check—but I have also made a little extra money. That sum left to me, my dear girl, has swelled to one hundred and ten thousand dollars. Of course I'm not a business man, and I may make a fool of myself lending money to a man whose word is as good as his bond; still, I *do* know a little something."

"Is that really true?"

"Here are the figures. I have just sold out, and cleared over ten thousand from some bonds. You see, my dear, you don't know it all."

"How could you!"

"What do you mean?"

"He paid you, did he?"

"Certainly; this morning—as he promised."

"How could you take it?"

"How could I take it! Why, have n't you been making all manner of fun of me for months because I lent him the money? And now you talk this way!"

Ignoring his remark, Mrs. Whippleton arose and picked up an evening paper lying on the table.

"How could you," she repeated, "especially when you knew he was going to fail!"

Whippleton jumped as if he had been shot.

"Fail!" he cried. "What do you mean? I have n't seen it."

"Well, I happened to. The name attracted my attention."

She pointed to a small paragraph which said that Salter & Company had assigned for the benefit of their creditors.

"I suppose you think," continued Mrs. Whippleton, "that you were lucky to get your money back; and yet—you were his friend."

"But I did n't know he was going to fail. He did n't say anything about it. He merely asked if I had to have the money."

"And"—scornfully—"you told him you had to, when you had just made a profit equal to the whole amount, from your old bonds. What despicable creatures you men are!"

Whippleton turned white in his pain.

"Why, hang it all!" he cried, "if I had been allowed to obey my own instincts, I should have let him have *twice* that amount. But you made fun of me, and sneered at me, and told me I was a fool."

"Well, I would n't go back on a friend," she said. "Dear me, you never will understand a woman, if you live to be a thousand years old. I——"

Whippleton waited to hear no more. He ran from the house, and in half an hour he was at Salter's.

"My dear fellow," he exclaimed, "why in the world did n't you tell me. I had no idea it was so bad."

He grabbed him by both shoulders, with manly affection.

"I did n't want to trouble you," said Salter. "I knew, of course, you would have helped me further if you could. I just got that check up to you before I assigned, so you would n't lose anything."

"And it finished you up, did n't it?"

"It was your money."

"But look here, I *can* help you out. Why, my dear friend, I can let you have twenty thousand to-morrow, if you say so. You must get on your feet again. Don't you worry. I'll stand by you even if——" Whippleton was reckless. He did n't care now.

"Even if it's *thirty* thousand!"

Salter's eyes glistened with new hope.

"You don't mean it!" he said. "But how can you do it? That's what I don't understand."

And Whippleton leaned over and whispered in reply:

"I did n't think I could this morning. But since then I've confided in my wife, and she says she can help me out."



REVEALED

BY IRENE STANLEY MARTIN

I HAD not anything to guess You by,
 Dear God! How could I know the Infinite
 By sunshine gilding eastern hills, while night
 Still held my inner world and not one why
 Of all my questioning lay hushed and stilled
 In moulten light? And what to me the stars
 In twinkling gladness set on high? Huge bars
 Of mystery shut me from You, and filled
 My soul with loneliness intense. But *Life*
 Came close at last in *Love!* Horizons met
 And stars stooped low to bring me every good.
 Arms gathered me from out my fruitless strife,
 To joy of being—not a limit set!
 In *Love* You are revealed and understood.

GETTING BACK TO WORK

By Minna Thomas Antrim

IT'S good to be back; fine to think that, as of old, you are going to say "Hello!" to old Tom, to pat Dandy Dick's immaculate back, and to get a rise at lunch-time out of Harry about the "Great Big Fish" down Avalon way.

How the Spirit of Home gets into a fellow's veins the instant he strikes the old town! How good it looks to him; how more than any other spot under the canopy does it call to everything that is best in him! You have had a summer that beats all records: never such weather, such sailing, such piny breezes, such a sea; but from the bottom of your heart you are glad to get back. It is such a joy to feel the old harness as you tighten the buckles. You like the thought of "orders coming in"—that means hard work for weeks to come. You have still in your nostrils enough ozone to furnish adequate zest for months of hard labor. You beam upon your fellow workers, and the office boy. Even the janitor's face looks comely to you. As for the streets, they teem with delight. In the afternoon, as you walk homeward, you ask yourself, perkily pulling yourself up as you pass them, where upon His footstool could prettier girls be found? You are pleased to find that the Urchin has saved your evening paper for you. "Keep the change, Kiddy," you say, then call yourself ungentle names for making it a quarter instead of a nickel; but you are so all-fired happy, this your first after-vacation day, that you forgive yourself, promising faithfully not to let it happen again—until next year, at least.

What a glorious day it is! It beats you how any one can doubt that it took more than Man to mobilize the various elements for such an autumnal triumph. Apropos, you will go to church more; it's a bad thing to flunk one's religion. Not that you intend to qualify for a saint—the gods forbid!—but if a fellow believes in anything, he ought to fly The Colors at the appointed time, that's all.

Another thing you tell yourself you'll do, and you mean it *this* time, by Jove! You'll get into closer touch with your wife and the girls. You were a grouch just before they preceded you to the shore, and you know it. And why? Because, poor things, their monthly bills were necessarily steeper than usual. You have been thinking for years

about making them an allowance. Now you will do it, and at once. Each of the girls, and Mother, shall have their own incomes. The thought of their delight, especially that of the loyal little wife, thrills you to the additional decision to make them absolutely independent as to feminine "must haves." You can afford it, then why not? What you do for your friends you always do "*en prince*." You'll do this correspondingly. You are proud of your family; you'll make them as proud of you.

Your eyes brighten, but, naturally, you don't know this, until good old Tom, your brother-in-law, runs into you and nearly un-hands you with his unholy paw. You make a noise like a bear, then tell him—you've got to tell some one, or bust—that his sister and the girls are going to lug around their own bank books in future, whereupon he gives you a look that warms you like a dry Manhattan. As he jumps on his car suddenly, you blink, then sing out, "Come around to-night," and he shouts, "Can't! We're going to the theatre;" then the unspeakable pay-as-you-enter trap closes upon the best fellow on earth—according to you.

As you amble along, you are so obsessed with this beatific idea of financially rewarding the very good, that into your head pops the notion of raising your stenographer's salary. She is a fine woman, capable as any man; loyal to the firm, and no longer young. She has plugged away at her machine all through the hot months, while you and yours have been having the time of your lives. You'll do it! You feel like a chump that you have not done it before. You are not a philanthropist, not apt to mingle business with sentiment, nary a time if you know it, but right's right, and that woman should have had more money for a year past. She's earned it; she's going to have it, too.

Yourself? Well, you are going to hustle. You are going to let your competitors see your heels oftener than your face. You are still young, only forty-five, and feel like a two-year-old loose in an oat-field near running water. Yes, you are going to make a pot of money, and, incidentally, to make a more vigorous try for worth-while citizenship. You have let business own you body and soul; now you intend to own it. You are going to interest yourself actively in all things that will enhance the prestige of your city, and when you can do so, tellingly, you are going to speak out loud in meeting for the civic good and— By Jupiter! you are home—already.

As you open the door, you see away back into the dining-room. How cozy it looks! How homy! The rose-shaded candles are lighted. Succulent odors steal forth faintly but perceptibly, and blend with merry woman laughter. Your home-coming joy is complete.

THE PROLONGED HALLOWE'EN

By Caroline Wood Morrison

MOREL SHANDON rose early the morning after Hallowe'en, and his father smiled to hear kindling being split at dawn. While breakfasting, the boy's hair dripped from recent friction with a wet brush, and the back of both his hands showed nearly clean.

"Have a pretty good time last night, sonny?" asked his father, drawing deductions.

"Morel was not among that crowd," his mother said, making an exclamation-point of her thin-lipped mouth. "My boy was in bed by half-past eight. I saw to that."

Morel ate fast and kept silence. Mr. Shandon choked over his coffee. His wife gave him a withering glance.

"It would have been like you, Sam Shandon," she accused acidly, "to have been out there helping those budding criminals."

"Come, now, mother, hardly so bad as that," he murmured pacifically.

"What I mind, what every good citizen takes to heart," pursued Mrs. Shandon, somewhat in the manner of an oration, "is the indifference shown by the city council to disgraceful and disorderly conduct. You men could stop it, but, I'd like to ask you, has there ever been an arrest in this town for Hallowe'en pranks? Has there?"

"The—the boys tie handkerchiefs over their faces," protested Mr. Shandon weakly.

"Oh, do they? Of course no man could penetrate such a disguise. I want to tell you that this farce has got to stop. I give you and the rest of the city council fair warning. We have formed a Good Order Society, we women and a few *right-minded* men, and we mean to protest against the breaking of law and order in Fairview!"

"My best wishes flock with you. What is the *modus operandi*?" asked Mr. Shandon, taking to Latin in defense of his dignity as one of the councilmen in contempt.

His wife regarded him triumphantly. "We're going to let the

gates hang in trees, leave the old wagon on the roof of the shed, and porch chairs hung on telegraph poles—we're going to leave them!"

Peculiar sounds from Morel drew a keen look, but Mr. Shandon rushed to the rescue with—

"Sneezing again, sonny? I thought your cold was broken up."

"I closed his window myself last night," said Mrs. Shandon. "He could n't have slept in a draft. Go and roast an onion at once, Morel. It's the best remedy in the world."

Morel obeyed with unaccustomed alacrity. Once out from under the maternal eye, he rolled in ecstasy on the kitchen floor. Would the town really remain delightfully, side-splittingly topsyturvy all the year, a prolonged Hallowe'en joke? Nothing so delicious could possibly occur.

But it did! The Good Order Society was potent in Fairview. Against its dictum no mere man ventured so much as to remove his chicken-fence from his neighbor's chimney. Miss Treice, the president, went so far as to insist that her front door remain fastened with the paling from the Shandon fence, taking company around the back way while she volubly explained:

"I want the men to have a good look at this work of law-breakers and get enough of it. Let 'em see their town now in the condition to which their neglect is reducing it!"

There were mothers who looked askance at the sons of other mothers, but if any harbored doubts of her own boy, she locked suspicion in an indignant breast and grimly set her face in defiance of "that pusillanimous city council."

The boys chuckled, roared behind house-corners, giggled under public opinion, and had the time of their lives.

The Indian summer, sweet with nuts, persimmons, early apples, blue haze, and blushing tree-tops, witnessed, day by day, old gray gates sagging from high branches. Deacon Mason's chicken-coop stood on the Shandons' front porch (rash were the hand that dare remove it!). A garbage-can swung from the town's one arc-light. Dr. Betts stormily demanded that the undertaker's sign be removed from his door, but his own wife refused the concession. "Mother" Pickens was more successful in her appeal when she loudly complained:

"I done paid a dollar for that thar notice, 'Lye For Sale Here,' and I wants it took off Lawyer Mayo's winder and brought home. I needs it."

Lawyer Mayo, under cover of darkness, returned the property.

The fun had lasted several weeks, and disorder had almost to order grown, so accustomed were they all to topsyturvydom, when a change came, on a day, to the spirit of the boys. Muddy feet were scraped

noisily and carefully. Again Morel split kindling in the early hours. (His *confrères* were likewise employed.)

"Mother dear," said the Shandon scion at breakfast, his hair polished, his tie almost straight, "the Danville High School team is coming to play ours next week."

"Well, don't you get hurt in a horrid football game," scolded his mother anxiously. "There's another matter that men ought to take up. Talk about suffragists! If women had the ballot, our children would n't have their bones ground as in mortar, and their necks and legs and arms broken, to amuse a heartless crowd!"

Morel swallowed hard, then ventured, "I say, Maw—Mother, there'll be a crowd, and all strange boys. They'll poke fun at our town. Let's take down our gate and put the coal-house door back."

"No, my son," said his mother firmly. "The men who live here have no proper regard for law and order. Let them have time to admire the result of their indifference. Why, your father actually laughed when I told him that a butcher's ticket, 'Hogs' Heads a Specialty,' was hanging over the barber's shop!" She addressed her husband: "Think of it! Martin Brothers' sign, 'Ladies' Clothing One-Third Off,' nailed to the theatre, and no arrests! Things shall remain as they are until the night-marauders are captured, punished, and forced to undo their nefarious work." And she gloated in her own eloquence.

"Come, now, mother," Mr. Shandon pleaded, "don't be too severe. After all, the real punishment would fall on the parents in fines. And you must understand the whole thing was meant for a joke."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Shandon, with a mirthless laugh; "and it is so funny! It would be a shame to curtail a joke like that."

The boys met in solemn conclave. They could hear in advance the jeers of Danville at shiftless people who left chicken-wire hanging on chimneys, and door-bells tied to outdoor tobacco figures! But able-bodied players were needed for the approaching game, therefore no criminal dared confess and thus, by accepting responsibility, mend the matter.

The city council, though sympathetically aware of the boys' mounting nervousness, made no move. Calmly they let the women strive for that which their Solonic wisdom had been unable to attain: the maintenance of order, with the keeping of boydom out of jail.

Miss Treice (coming out of her kitchen door) announced that one of the Danville boys was her cousin, and she meant to give the team a supper. Mrs. Shandon, standing on the porch beside the old chicken-coop, told Morel that he was welcome to bring home some of the visitors, if he cared to.

The Fairview "Coyotes" began to plan surreptitious measures of

relief, but were continually baffled. Tom Adams, called "the Camel" because of a distinguishing lower jaw, had climbed one tree and laid hands on its unusual fruit when stern feminine tones demanded:

"Did you put that gate up there, young man?"

"No'm, I did n't," protested the quarter-back. "I—I just came up to see if the hinges was rusting, ma'm;" and he hurried down.

At midnight Mrs. Shandon intercepted Morel on the front porch, in suspicious proximity to the chicken-coop.

"Where are you going, dear?" he heard her ask.

"Me—oh, me? I was n't going anywhere," he stammered. "I must walk in my sleep."

Like all successful reformers, Mrs. Shandon had no sense of humor; she also was lacking in a knowledge of human nature. She entertained no suspicion of her boy—that a roster of Hallowe'en's "dreadful law-breakers" might include his name had not once occurred to her—but she feared that suspicion might attach to him if he were discovered undoing the mischief of others, and she did not return to her room until Morel had crept dejectedly to his. Though less credulous in regard to her son's innocence, Mrs. Adams was equally bent on keeping him home after dusk.

"Gee, but women'd make awful policemen," groaned Sylvester Smith. "'Pears like they're everywhere at once. They make all the touch-downs in this town. Wish't there wa'n't no such fool thing as Hallowe'ens. Won't them Danville fellows guy us, with the place in this fierce shape! You'd think folks'd have some pride and want their old gates and things back."

"Well, they don't," grunted Tom dolefully. "Looks like we gotter stand for it. Them skates'll rate us with Shantytown, that's what we're up against!"

The taunt nerved their captain to renewed effort. His mother caught him, that night, crawling along the porch roof.

"I dreamed I was going out to see the Little Dipper," was Morel's faltering explanation. "This sleep-walking grows on a fellow."

"You must have indigestion," commented his mother. "I'll nail down your windows. It really is n't safe to leave them open."

The boys despaired, and the game was ominously near.

The night before the struggle for pigskin honors a terrific storm swept the town, the first element let loose in it that was stronger than the Good Order Society. Thunder rolled, lightning cut out vivid scenes like an impressionist artist gleaning genre life-studies for the walls of a salon. Early in the evening the theatre with its borrowed sign was struck and the fire company called out. Wildest excitement prevailed. At last the boys were free from observation. They believed it a special dispensation of Providence.

Figures grotesque in the scurrying rain fought against wind and tumbling awnings, climbed swaying trees, toiled like Inferno laborers, strange burdens on their backs.

Tom Adams was hurled from a tree; Sylvester Smith was blown off a telegraph pole; but Tom came down on a gate—extraordinary air-ship!—and with Sylvester fell a garbage-can and a porch-chair. Honor and victory!

The wagon coming off the shed made many women scream that the thunder was growing worse. The Judge's son headed for the local "dump," loaded with old tomato-cans. Morel Shandon shouldered and carried the offending chicken-coop half a mile, water pouring down his neck from its triangles.

They flinched not for the lightning; the whirlwind fought with them for their grip on shingle roofs and the sides of wet buildings. To thunderous rolling, their feet trod the running streets. When morning came at last, smiling rosily down on a rejuvenated town, Miss Treice's front door would open, and the Shandon porch did not suggest a poulterer's. Fairview in staid and sober guise was ready for Danville. Even Martin Brothers' marked-down sign had been removed by a considerate stroke of lightning. Lawns glistened, each separate grass-blade had met its love and wore a diamond pledge; the streets had that soft, flowing lustre which comes from recent drenching; hedges bristled with rain-drop bayonets. Gates were rehung, flower-beds washed clean of refuse, like young hearts purged of grief by a night's tears. Mrs. Shandon, surprised out of her conventional rectitude, appeared at the front door with her hair in magic curlers. Mrs. Adams was calling across the fence:

"I hope Morel did n't catch a new cold. I saw him out in all that storm."

Mrs. Shandon drew herself up to her full height. "I do not doubt his being there," she asserted boastfully. "My son takes after me, and has an almost fanatical civic pride. Our town's condition was a great humiliation to him. I hope Tom is better. I hear he had a fall last night."

Mrs. Adams wavered, colored, frowned, cast a glance at Mrs. Smith, who, with many expressive upliftings to heaven of hands and eyes, was whispering over the gate to Fielding Scott's sister, and said in altered tone, leaning forward confidentially:

"They say Sylvester Smith is one mass of bruises, from head to heels."

Although there were many similar bruises and many aching muscles in Fairview that day, the new civic pride combined with school spirit proved too much for Danville. The "Coyotes" won, and the city council came out in a body and cheered them lustily.

THE PLATONIC FRIEND

By Gertrude Morrison

LAYING aside his pen, James Wray crossed to the window, threw wide its sash, and leaned out over the city. The misty magic of the raindrops made the familiar outlines of the trees on the campus seem lost in the glory of a nimbus, and lent to the scene the delicacy and the boldness of a Corot. Beyond, the lights of the city blurred.

Bending far out, drinking in the night's appeal, its intimate suggestion of humanity close at hand, of companionship, he murmured:

"O gleaming lamps of London, that gem the city's crown,
What fortunes lie within you, O Lights of London Town?"

He went back to his desk to try his own fortune, to seek that which, possibly, "lay shining in the distance."

Drawing toward him the sheet of paper on which, with pen that lingered as if loath to leave its task, he had traced "My dear Alicia," he continued—

The time has come when I can no longer mask as "Platonic friend." While you needed me sorely for just that, a combination of monitor, big brother, father confessor, child playmate, with now and then a touch of "mothering" tucked in on the side, I was content to be your "old dog Tray." But to do so longer were unfair to you and unworthy of myself.

You came to college a bashful Freshman, shy of girls, afraid of men. You drifted into my classes. And when—with that impressiveness with which we young professors think to clothe ourselves in a dignity beyond our years—when for the first time I called that name since grown so sweetly familiar, there was in your eyes a helplessness that won your way into my heart, where, Love, I fain would keep you.

You thought nothing of it; or, if you did, the youngsters of my fraternity were quick to tell you that "Professor Jim," as they dub me in whimsical affection, always adopted little girls, liked them immensely, but never, no, never, ate them. And so you learned to come to me in simple confidence, guilelessly, laying bare to me your petty griefs, your girlish heart-burnings, your triumphs.

You came, presently, to talk of men. In your Freshman year, when you voted your instructor in Greek "just sweet," I laughed outright. When a Sophomore, Alicia, your whim was the captain

of the football team. A "pretty, witty, Junior"? The leader of the Glee Club twanged under your window—

"Teach me how to love,
Like a turtle-dove."

I, from our house next door, heard, and chuckled under the bed-clothes. Also a "cadaverous cuss" penned you verse, missie, with which you were mightily taken. A Senior—fie upon you, Alicia! How you did scare me when you discovered genius masking in freckles, snub-nose, and ill-fitting clothes—but *that* your sorority sisters soon settled. Am I unkind, Alicia? Sweetheart, I love to tease you; but I'm proud of the little charmer.

One by one your "heroes" stepped from their pedestals. Only just once rumor would have it that at last you cared, that in the love scenes of our college theatricals, in which you shared honors with graceful, careless, ne'er-do-weel Jack Harmen, neither of you was *acting*. But I knew that you were letting Harmen monopolize you only because your tender heart ached for his "fallen and traitor life," and longed to help him find himself. We never talked it over, little girl, but when we of the Faculty escorted Jack to the edge of the campus because once too often he had "gone down the road to the jolly Vendome," and gently but firmly dropped him over, I fancy, little Alicia, that you decided to content yourself, thereafter, with elevating humanity in the abstract. Yet do you know, dear heart, that your budding womanliness never more appealed to me than in your futile struggle over poor Jack? However unworthy the cause that called them forth, I honor the staunchness and the fidelity with which, in the face of all remonstrance, you stood by your friend. It gave some of the rest of us courage to make more of an effort to reclaim such fellows as Jack. You have given me courage to do a great many things, Alicia.

Am I fit? In the big things, yes. I have the respect of my fellow men, and am entitled to it. But in the little nameless kinks of character, insidious in their destructive power— Alicia, don't marry me unless you can truly love me. Can't you love me? Your heart is free. Through everything you have come to me for that counsel which surely you must have preferred from the man you love, had there been such other than myself.

Because you have turned unconsciously to me, I dare to hope that, when you search your heart, you will find in it something more than just "Platonics" for your old dog Tray; a friendship, at least, so tinged with warmth that we may hope to fan it into flame. Believe me, those loves which are rooted in mutual esteem, quickening gradually into a more tender regard, stand best their trial by the years. And so, dear one, good-night.

Suffering the pen to fall from his hand, the young professor again walked to the window and raised the sash. No longer limned, the Corot trees; a Whistler night now, all bluey-gray fog and vapor. Here and there, scattered over the grounds, a reddish flicker signed the night-owl; in the sorority house across the way, where *she* lived, a few white, electric gleams; and far off toward San José a low, lurid orange spot,

moving swiftly. Its uncanny stare, as of a Cyclopean eye, sent a chill of depression over him. It wanted but a voice, and he was in the clutch of the naked hand of that monster of the night. Around him, the sleeping campus, humanity in its presence—yet how remote.

“O mocking lamps of London, what weary eyes look down.”

Below, a quick step kicked up the gravel walk, leaped onto the porch. “Fellows!” an excited cry reached him as the door swung to. There was muffled sound of startled exclamations, quick question and reply. Presently one came running, and threw open his door without preliminary knock. “Prof.,” said his “frat.” brother in a troubled voice, “that little girl of yours next door is off to San José with Jack Harmen in his auto. The girls have just found her note. They’ll be married before any one can stop them.”

The young professor looked off through the window, instinctively searching out that low, lurid eye, swift-moving, now a mere dot. Out of the night he caught the refrain—

“O cruel lights—of London!”



THE ROAD TO CURRASHEEN

BY AGNES I. HANRAHAN

THERE'S a lonesome rugged road,
 An' it leads to Currasheen;
 Brown bogs lies close along it,
 An' there's ne'er a patch av green.
 But och the sun kep' smilin',
 On the way to Currasheen;
 An' ev'ry bog was beamin'
 Wid the love av my Paudeen!

Bewhiles when I bees thinkin'
 Av yon road to Currasheen,
 The Goolden Gates comes nearer;
 An' I seems to see Paudeen—
 Tho' there's star-ways all through Heav'n
 Lightin' smooth wee paths between;
 We'll search in troth for lone bogs,
 Like what led to Currasheen!



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

THE FETICH OF THE "GIRL"

IN American life, after the tyrant Gold, comes the tyrant Girl. She dominates our society and all our art in its various manifestations. For her and around her our novels are written, our plays produced. Of her our pictures are painted, to her our manners are adjusted.

Hundredfold, month by month, she smiles and smirks upon us from the covers of magazines and books, naughtily, haughtily, proudly, or pleasantly, according to the whim of those artists who have betrayed their talents into slavish and monotonous prostrations at her shrine. Thus pictured types of "girls" are produced and labelled—impossible creatures, dehumanized, unnatural, sexless, and artificial idols—no less monstrous an evidence of superstition than the ikons before which the Russian moujik bows him down. In the face of these unwholesome, bloodless, and false simulacræ of real life and real girlhood, the American moujik casts himself in the dust, for in the heart of him is that willing subservience to the callow feminine, the feebly pretty, the conspicuously dainty, and also many false and pernicious ideas of what he supposes is chivalry. He is unable to see that this exaggerated girl-worship is destructive of the finer, riper, higher ideals of womanhood, that it is essentially an abasement—cruel and exclusive towards womankind as a whole, in that it exalts mere physical prettiness above essential worth of character, and this to a degree unknown in other lands, whatever their standards of beauty may be.

It is an idolatry that is devastating our art and literature, for it has placed in the hands of the immature and weak the right or, at least, the power to set up tyrannical standards to restrict the expression of the sincere artist. By having made her the idol of himself and of herself, the American man has deprived the "girl" of something infinitely more precious than this exaggerated worship of her prettiness, and that is a masculine ideal of true womanhood. He has made her her own ideal. That is fatal to the individual, to the sex, and to the nation. It has already resulted in a decadence and debauchery of the very type it sought to deify—as is apparent in the frightful pictorial excesses and riotous extravagances of certain draughtsmen, whose "girls" have developed into enormous masses of hair and lace, pointed extremities, distorted bodies, and features with huge, ridiculous ox-eyes—doll-like effigies and painted automata appealing to sensuality through the eye.

The contemptuous drooping eyelids, the supercilious lips and tilted noses, of these abortive creatures, which, until their designers foisted them upon us, found no living likeness in all the land, make the punishment that has been doled out to us for our mad adoration of something shallow, soulless, and untrue. The pictured type has now bred and reflected itself in reality; the unhealthy admiration has brought forth the equally unhealthy objects of its fetichism.

Let not the American popular artist delude himself into the belief that he is serving art or truth or interpreting our life, so long as he is painting china dolls or coloring paper images, the while overlooking the beauty, picturesqueness, truth, and significance of a wrinkled old apple-woman nodding beside her fruit, the farmer's daughter milking, or the plainest-featured mother rocking her babe to sleep.

HERMAN SCHEFFAUER

THE CLUBBOY

DURING some years past, the opinion has evidently been gaining ground among educators that the clubboy is not an altogether desirable product of educational surroundings. Clubs and fraternities, it has been anxiously pointed out, menace the democracy of the colleges. The clubboy, so far as the professorial mind has been able to examine him in his club, is not notoriously scholastic. There is a suspicion that his mental stimulus comes from bottles rather than books; that pool and billiards do not provide the rugged kind of exercise best calculated to offset the labors of the class-room; and that the books and the periodicals in his club library are not invariably those that his professors of English would have selected.

The clubboy, in short, is father to the clubman, and therefore, by

implication, father-in-law to the ex-chorus girl. Such, at least, is the connotation that the usages of the modern newspaper have given to the title "clubman," and one can hardly blame the educators for feeling more than a little worried.

But fortunately for the world at large, the clubman of the daily newspaper is an exceptional being. For every one of him, there are thousands of other clubmen of a quite admirable order, so much like any other pleasant, comfortable gentlemen that they never get in the newspapers at all. So, we fancy, it is with the clubboys. To be sure, they don't tend to make the colleges any more democratic. But even without them, the ambitious determination of educators to have larger and larger classes has already made our leading colleges too big to be altogether democratic under any conditions whatever.

RALPH W. BERGENGREN

THE HIFALUTIN' HYPHEN

ALTHOUGH the general tendency is to do away with unnecessary marks of punctuation, the hyphen is still uselessly retained in "to-day," "to-night," and "to-morrow." That the retaining of the hyphen in these words is not only useless but absolutely criminal is easily demonstrated by a bit of simple mathematics.

There are 178,236,592 English-speaking people. The words "to-day," "to-night," and "to-morrow" are together used forty-eight times daily by every person—five of these being written out in long-hand. Thus the daily output of hyphens in these words totals 891,182,460. Taking the average length of a written hyphen to be one quarter of an inch, you have a straight line 3,864 miles long. At the usual rate of writing, it would take one man seventy-six years to insert the hyphens in these words, and his salary would amount to \$78,436.

But, avoiding all theory, "to-day," "to-night," and "to-morrow" are daily hyphenated four times each on 234,192 typewriters, and three times daily on 184,216 linotype machines. Remembering that a pressure of one ounce is required to strike a typewriter key, and two and one-half ounces to depress a linotype, we see that in writing these hyphens a total of 352,974 foot-pounds of energy is expended, or enough to draw a passenger train across the United States.

To avoid appearing picayunish, no mention has been made of the waste of ink and paper, but this would approximate in value the daily bread supply of the State of New York.

The hyphens in "to-day," "to-night," and "to-morrow" should be discontinued today.

JOHN E. ROSSER

LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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AN ACCIDENTAL HONEYMOON

BY

DAVID POTTER

Author of "The Lady of the Spur," etc.

I.

FESSENDEN put the girl gently down on the flat rock at the edge of the stream.

"There you are, little woman," he said. "You really ought to be careful how you go splashing about. If you had n't screamed in time——"

"Did I scream?"

"Rather! Lucky you did."

"I did n't scream because I was afraid. I stumbled and—and I thought I saw an eel in that pool, ready to bite me. Eels *do* bite."

"Undoubtedly—horribly!"

He stepped back with a little flourish of the hat in his hand. "I beg your pardon," he said. "I took you for a child. That dress, you know, and——"

"And my being in paddling."

"I'm afraid I've been rather presumptuous."

The color in her cheeks deepened a little. "Not at all. It's my own fault. This afternoon—just for an hour or two—I've been dreaming—pretending I was n't grown up. It's so sad to be grown up."

His eyes sparkled with instant sympathy. "After all, are you so *very* old?"

She was seventeen or thereabouts, he guessed—a girl lately arrived at womanhood. Her hair was arranged in a bewildering fashion, requiring a ribbon here and there to keep its blonde glory within bounds. Beneath the dark brows and darker lashes blue eyes showed in sudden flashes—like the glint of bayonets from an ambush. The delicately rounded cheeks, just now a little blushing, and the red-lipped mouth, made her look absurdly young.

She had sunk to a seat upon the rock. One foot was doubled under her, and the other, a white vision veiled by the water, dangled uncertainly, as if inclined to seek the retirement possessed by its fellow. His gaze lingered on the curve of throat and shoulder.

“If Phidias were only alive——” he said.

“Phidias?”

“A Greek friend of mine, dead some years. He would have loved to turn you into marble.”

She gave a little crowing laugh, delightful to hear. “I’d much rather stay alive.”

“You are right. Better be a Greek goddess alive, than one dead.”

She laughed again. “You’re—unusual.”

He bowed with another flourish. “Then, so are you.”

Their eyes met frankly. “Thank you for coming to my rescue.” she said. “But you’ve been standing in the water all this time! What am I thinking of! Come up here.”

She sprang to her feet, as if to make room for him upon the rock, but sank back quickly. He gave her a scrutinizing glance.

“What was that I heard?”

“I asked you to get out of that horrid water. It must be frightfully cold.”

He shook an admonitory finger. “Bravely done, but you can’t fool me so easily. I heard a moan, and—and I won’t remark that you’re crying.”

“You’d—better not.”

“You hurt yourself when you stumbled.” His firm hand was on her shoulder.

“No—n-o. Well, even if I did turn my ankle, I’m not crying. It’s very tactless of you to notice.”

He tried to catch a glimpse of the slim leg through the dancing water. It swung back in vigorous embarrassment.

“The other ankle, then?”

“Ye-es.”

“I’m awfully sorry. Can’t I do something?”

“I think I’ll go home.”

“But you can’t walk.”

“I think so. Is n’t this just too tiresome? I *will* walk.”

She rose to her feet at the word, but, once there, gave a cry, and stood tottering. His arm caught her about the waist.

"Where do you live? Near here anywhere?"

"Oh, yes; just up the lane. But it might as well be ten miles." Her brave laugh was half a sob.

"Not a bit of it! Hold tight."

She flushed and gave an astonished wriggle as she found herself lifted and borne up the lane.

"Don't squirm so, child," he ordered.

"You're carrying me!"

"Oh, no! We're playing lawn-tennis."

"Goodness! You fairly *grabbed* me."

"Perhaps I ought to have asked your permission, but if I had you might have refused it."

She laughed. "I think I should."

"It's too late now," he said contentedly. "Does the foot hurt?"

"Not much, thank you—thank you, Mr.—"

He was obdurately silent. She tried again.

"Thank you, Mr.— Please, what's your name?"

"'Puddin' Tame,'" he laughed.

"Where do you live?" she chanted delightedly.

"Down the lane.' No, *you* live down the lane."

"It is n't far now. Are you tired?"

"Oh, no! I'm doing very well, thank you."

"Perhaps you'd better rest."

"By no means. I hope you live over the hills and far away."

"You are n't bashful, are you, Mr. Puddin' Tame?"

"H'm." He peered down at the injured ankle. "How's the foot?"

"A little—cold."

"I'm afraid the wrench has interfered with the circulation. Poor child!"

"Really, it does n't hurt—not much."

"I see you were born to be a heroine."

"And you're a 'knight comes riding by, riding by, riding by'—"

"So early in the morning," he finished. "If the knight were sure you thought so"—his eyes were on her cheek—"he might claim a knight's reward."

She fell abruptly silent.

The Maryland spring was well advanced, and the path along which they moved was carpeted with flowers. The blue bells of the wild myrtle swung almost at their feet. Scarlet runners rioted over the low stone wall at either hand. The sycamores and oaks were clothed in tenderest green. Beyond the left-hand wall, rows of peach-trees marched away, flaunting banners of pink and white.

Fessenden heard the tinkle of the brook, winding in the shadow of overhanging banks. Sights and sounds lulled him. He felt himself in harmony with the quiet mood of the girl in his arms.

Truly this was an unexpected adventure! His eyes rested upon the piquant face so near his own. It possessed a refinement of outline that was belied by the humble fashion of her gown and by the position in which he had surprised her. The precocious daughter of a farmer, perhaps, or at best the neglected child of one of the war-ruined "first families of the South."

He found himself speculating upon the sort of house he was likely to discover at the end of the lane—perhaps a crumbling colonial mansion, equipped with a Confederate colonel and a faithful former slave or two.

He smiled unconsciously at the red mouth, and was somewhat disconcerted to find the blue eyes watching him.

"Were you making fun of me, Mr. Puddin' Tame?"

"Word of honor, no! I was smiling to be in harmony with the day, I fancy."

"Maryland is lovely. You're a Northern man, are n't you?"

"I freely admit it. But I'm on my way to a house-party at Sandywood."

"Sandywood?"

"Yes. You know it, of course?"

"Of course. It's just over the hill from the Landis house—our house. Sandywood is the old Cary place."

"I don't know. I'm to visit a family named Cresap."

"It's the same place. The Cresaps are only occupying it for a while."

"Then you know Mrs. Cresap?"

"Hum-m. Aunt Landis knows her, but I suppose she does n't know *us*—not in the way you mean. I live with Aunt Katey Landis at White Cottage. Uncle Bob Landis supplies Sandywood with eggs and butter and milk."

"Oh, I see."

"You've never been on the Eastern Shore before?"

"Never. But I've learned to like it already. To rescue a girl from man-eating eels, and——"

"Girls don't go in wading every day, even on the Eastern Shore."

"If they did, I'd walk over from the railroad station straight through the year."

"From Sandywood Station?"

"Yes. I was delayed in Baltimore on account of meeting a friend there, so there was n't any one at the station to meet me. I'm a good walker, and——"

"And the fairies led you down the wood-road in time to save disobedient me."

"Disobedient?"

She nodded. "Aunty Landis told me that I must n't go in wading. She said it was not becoming—that it was very improper."

"How unreasonable!"

"That's what I thought. But I wish now I'd obeyed her."

"But that would have meant that the poor knight would have ridden by without an excuse for knowing you."

"Alas! Well, your task is nearly done. We must be near White Cottage."

"Don't say that."

She glanced about, and then gave a wriggle so violent that she almost slipped from his arms.

"Put me down!"

"What's the matter?"

"We're nearer than I thought. There's the big oak. The lane comes right up to the back door. The house is on the main road, you know. Put me down!"

"But why should n't I carry you into the house?"

"Because—oh, because Aunty Landis would be terribly frightened! She'd think something dreadful had happened to me. Please put me down. I can limp along, if you'll let me use your arm."

He allowed her to slip slowly to the ground. "There you are, then; but be careful."

A sigh of relief escaped her as she tried her weight gingerly on the injured foot.

"It's ever so much better. I won't even have to hop." Her face was upturned earnestly. "Thank you very much, Mr. Puddin' Tame. You've been very kind."

"You're very welcome," he returned, and, seized by a sudden paternal tenderness, he stooped and kissed the red-lipped mouth.

She stepped back with a sharp "Oh!" mingled of anger and the pain of her twisted ankle. "Oh! Why did you do that? We were having such fun, and—and now you've spoiled the whole afternoon. What a—a perfectly silly thing to do!"

He quailed before the bayonets flashing in the blue eyes.

"I was carried away," he said humbly.

"I hate you!"

"No, no. Don't—please don't do that. Of course I was wrong—unpardonably wrong, I suppose—but you looked so young, and—well, so adorable, that I— Oh, please don't hate me!"

His gloom was so profound that, in spite of herself, she felt her wrath begin to melt.

"If you're sure you're very sorry——"

"I'm in the dust," he evaded.

"Then—all right." She smiled a little, but with caution—he should not be allowed to think himself too easily restored to favor. "I frightened you, did n't I? And you ought to have been frightened. But to show you I trust you now, I'll use your arm as a crutch. Come on. Oh, *what* a delicious sight for poor Auntie Landis!"

Truly enough, the spectacle brought to her feet a motherly-looking woman who had been knitting on the porch of White Cottage.

"Good gracious, child! What's the matter?" She fluttered down the steps to meet the bedraggled adventurers. "Have you hurt yourself, dearie? Oh, dear, dear! What is it? Have you broken your leg?"

"I'm all right, Auntie. Don't worry. My ankle *might* be turned a little, that's all. This gentleman has been very kind to me, and helped me home."

The woman made Fessenden a spasmodic bow. "I'm sure we're much obliged to you, sir. Is it your ankle, dearie? I told you not to go in wading. The idea of such a thing, and you a young lady!"

"Now, Auntie, please don't scold me—not until my foot's fixed, at any rate."

Although the girl's lips quivered warningly, Fessenden could have sworn her eyes laughed slyly. But the older woman's vexation was effectually dissolved by the other's pitiful tone.

"There, there! You poor silly baby! Come right in, and I'll put your foot in hot water and mustard. That'll take the soreness out." She passed her arm lovingly about the girl's slender shoulders and was leading her away without more ado. The girl hung back.

"Auntie, I have n't thanked him—half."

"I'm sure the gentleman's been very good," said Mrs. Landis, "but he knows your foot ought to be soaked in hot water just as soon as can be. There won't be any too much time to do it before supper, any way."

"By all means," agreed Fessenden. "I'm very glad if I've been of service." Mischievousness awoke in his glance. "I've had ample reward for anything I've been able to do."

The blood crept into the girl's cheeks, but she was not afraid to meet his eyes.

"Good-by," he said with evident reluctance. "I hope your ankle will be well very soon." The laughing imps in her eyes suddenly emboldened him. "May I come to-morrow evening to see how you're getting on?"

"Of course—if you like. We're through supper by half-past seven, and——"

"Supper?" he returned, and paused so pointedly that the girl laughed outright.

"O-oh! Would you care to come to supper with us, really?"

"Don't ask me unless you're in earnest."

"Will you come, then, at half-past six?"

"I'll come. Thank you—immensely. Good-night. Good-night, Mrs. Landis."

"Good-night, good-night, Mr. Puddin' Tame," called the girl as she hobbled up the steps, supported on the older woman's arm.

He waved his hat from the gate, and the girl blew him a smiling kiss—to the very evident embarrassment of Aunt Landis.

II.

FESSENDEN turned to the right on the main road. At a little distance he paused to glance back at White Cottage.

There was nothing of the colonial manor-house in its lines. Clearly, it had always been the home of humble folk. He fancied that good Aunt Landis—whose husband supplied Sandywood "with eggs and milk and butter"—would be the last to lay claim to gentility.

It was a little disappointing to be compelled to abandon his dream of a Confederate colonel and of a decayed "first family."

"But the little girl is perfectly charming," he mused, and strode up the road humming:

"Oh, she smashed all the hearts
Of the swains in them parts,
Did Mistress Biddy O'Toole."

The directions given him by the station-master at Sandywood Station had been so clear that, although a stranger to this part of the country, Fessenden had found his way thus far easily enough.

Now, as he topped the rise, his eyes fell at once upon Sandywood House: a buff-and-white structure, with the pillared expansiveness of a true colonial mansion. It was set upon a knoll, across an intervalle, the wide expanse of the Chesapeake shimmering in front of it. Ardent Marylanders had been known to maintain that it was fully the equal of Mount Vernon itself.

The avenue leading up toward the back of the house from the main road wound a couple of hundred yards through a garden of box and lilac, then swept the pedestrian about an ell to the steps of a demilune porch, and almost vis-à-vis with half a dozen men and women drinking tea.

A plump, neutral-tinted woman, a trifle overgowned, hurried forward to greet him.

"Why, Tom Fessenden!" she exclaimed. "So here you are at

last! You bad man, you did n't come on the right train. Your things arrived this morning, but when the car came back from the station without you, I thought you 'd backed out. The next thing I was expecting was a letter from you, saying you could n't come at all, you irresponsible man!"

"I *would* have been a loser."

"Ve-ry pretty. Really, though, we *have* a jolly crowd here. All complete except for Roland Cary. If Roland Cary had n't notions!"

"Is any man foolish enough to decline an invitation from you?"

"Any man? Oh, Roland Cary's a cousin."

"Lucky man! Madam, may I ask if he is so attractive that you wish he had come instead of me?"

"I wanted—wanted him to be here with you, silly. He—he is perfectly charming. You know, I'm half afraid of *you*. You're such a superior old Yankee that I dare say you despise us Marylanders, and were as late in getting here as you *dared* to be." The perennial challenge of the Southern belle was in her tones.

Fessenden laughed. "I ran across Danton in Baltimore. Blame it all on him."

"Charlie Danton? Oh, is n't he the most exasperating! Now, come up and meet everybody. Boys and girls, this is Mr. Fessenden—Mrs. Randall and Dick Randall, over there. And Pinckney—Pinck, do get out of that chair long enough to be polite!—my lord and master, Tom. That's my cousin, May Belle—May Belle Cresap—and Harry Cleborne; and *this* is Miss Yarnell, the celebrated Miss Madge Yarnell; and—and that's all. How funny! I do believe I'm the only one of us you've ever met before."

"That proves how benighted I've been," he returned. "But what can you expect of a man who's never been on the Eastern Shore?"

Detecting something proprietary in the manner of the young man who hung over the back of Miss May Belle Cresap's chair, he abandoned his thought of taking a seat next that languid lady, and instead inserted himself deftly between Pinckney Cresap and Miss Madge Yarnell.

Cresap shook hands heartily. "Glad to see you, Fessenden. I've heard a lot of you from Polly ever since she knew you in New York—before she did me the honor to marry me. Glad you've got down to see us on our native heath at last." He poked a rather shaky finger at the stranded mint-leaf in the empty glass before him. "A julep? No? You mentioned Charlie Danton just now. You've heard about his high doings, I suppose. Perhaps you're in his confidence?"

"Not at all. He's in mine, to the extent of persuading me to buy a small yacht of his this morning—sight unseen. He promised to telegraph over this way somewhere and have it sent around to your boat-landing—if you'll allow me."

"Of course. My man will take care of it when it turns up. Danton's a queer one." He rattled his empty glass suggestively at his wife.

"He seemed as cynical as ever," commented Fessenden.

"He ought to be. They say that if it were 'befo' de wah' he'd have to meet a certain Baltimore man on the field of honor—a married man, you understand. Coffee and pistols for two!"

Fessenden was willing to elude the foreshadowed gossip. "We're shocking Miss Yarnell, I'm afraid."

The girl was, indeed, sitting with averted head, her face set rather sternly.

"Eh! Oh, I beg your pardon, Madge," said Cresap, with real concern.

"I hardly heard what you were saying," she rejoined. "I was thinking of something else."

Her voice was unusually deep and mellow, and Fessenden's sensitive ear thrilled pleasurably. He glanced toward her.

She was a decided brunette. Her eyes as they met his had a certain defiant challenge, a challenge at once bold and baffling. The distance between her eyes was a trifle too great for perfect beauty, but her complexion was transparently pale, and her teeth were wonderfully white and even. The poise of her head was almost regal, and she had a trick of coming very close to one as she talked, that was very disconcerting.

On the whole, Miss Yarnell was a charming person of twenty-three or four, and he began to have a decided appreciation of the adjective Polly Cresap had applied to her. Moreover, the sombre challenge in her dark eyes impelled him to further investigation, under the clatter of tea-cups and small talk about them.

"Why 'celebrated,' Miss Yarnell?" he began. "Why 'celebrated' rather than 'beautiful' or 'stunning' or downright 'handsome'?"

"Polly's rather silly," said Miss Yarnell.

"Are you dodging?"

"I never dodge. But Polly is silly—yes, she's unkind, although she'd be in tears if she dreamed I thought so. She ought not to have called me *that*. No, I don't dodge, but I suppose I can refuse to answer."

He declined to notice the ungraciousness of her response. "Oh, of course, but I'm certain to learn the reason you're 'celebrated' from some one—badly garbled, too," he laughed.

Contrary to the spirit of his badinage, she seemed resolved to take him seriously. "That's true. I may as well tell you. I'm celebrated—'notorious' would be a better word—because of that affair in Baltimore last year. I was an idiot."

"Hard words for yourself. I think I don't understand."

"You don't know Baltimore, then?"

"Very little. The Club is about all, and that not more than once or twice a year."

"The Club! If you've been there once this winter, I'm afraid you've heard of *me*. I'm Madge Yarnell, *the* Madge Yarnell, the girl who tore down the flag at the cotillion."

"O-oh!" He gave her a long stare. "It was *you*."

She winced before the contempt in his tone, and her eyes glistened suddenly. "I'm confessing to you," she reminded him with a humility that he knew instinctively was wholly unwonted. "I'm not proud of what I did, although some of my friends"—her glance swept over Polly Cresap—"are still foolish enough to tease me about it."

Compelled by his eyes and the light touch of his hand on her arm, she rose with him, and they sauntered together to the isolation of a pillar on the porch-edge.

The great bay, now purpling with the first hint of sunset, stretched from the foot of the knoll to the hazy hills of the western shore. Little red glints flashed from the surface of the water and seemed to be reflected in the depths of Miss Yarnell's sombre eyes.

She stood with her hands behind her, her head turned a little from him, but held very proudly. A strong woman, evidently; a passionate one, perhaps; a devoted one, if the right man were found. Fessenden, studying her covertly, realized that for the second time that day he had encountered a girl who stirred in him an interest novel and delightful.

"Tell me about it, Miss Yarnell," he said at last. "I've only heard that you refused to enter the cotillion room so long as the Stars and Stripes decorated the doorway, and that finally you took down the flag with your own hands. I remember the *Evening Post* had a solemn editorial on the sinister significance of your alleged performance. It could n't have been true—I realize that now that I know you. No one could accuse you—you of—that is——"

"Of vulgarity. Thank you for being too kind to say it. But I'm afraid most of it's true."

"I can't believe it."

She turned a grateful glance upon him. His steady, reassuring smile seemed to give her a long-needed sense of comfort and protection. In spite of herself, her eyes fell before his, and her cheeks reddened a little.

"I'll tell you all about it," she said. "I did it on a dare. A year ago I was unbelievably silly—I've learned a great deal in a year. A man dared me—and I did it."

"I don't acquit you—quite; but what an egregious cad the man must have been!"

"No, no, don't think that. He never dreamed I would really dare.

But I was determined to show him I was n't afraid—was n't afraid of anything—not even of him.”

“Of him?”

“Yes.”

“O-oh!” he said slowly. “I see. Well, *were* you afraid—afterward?”

She swung her hands from behind her back and struck them together with a sudden gesture of anger.

“No, but I hated him. I hate him! Not that he was n't game. When I turned to him with that dear flag dangling in my hand, he swept me off in a two-step, flag and all. But he smiled. Oh, how he smiled!” She drew a long breath. “D—— his smile!” Her desperate little oath was only pathetic. “I can see that triumphant twist about the corner of his mouth now, like a crooked scar.”

“Good Lord! Charlie Danton!”

Her startled look confirmed the guess her words denied. “No, no.”

“By Jove! don't I know that smile? We were in college together, you know, and I've made him put on the gloves with me more than ~~once~~ on account of that devilish smile. But I'll do him the justice to believe that he did n't really suppose you'd take that dare.” He interrupted himself to laugh a little. “How seriously we're talking! After all, it's no great matter if a—rather foolish girl did a rather foolish thing.”

She refused to be enlivened. “I had it out with him,” she said. “And since then we have n't seen anything of each other. You heard what Pinckney Cresap said just now?”

“About Danton and the possibility of a duel?”

“Yes. I'm afraid that's partly my fault. I sent him away, and——”

“I see. If he's weak enough to seek consolation in that way, he deserves to lose you.”

She smiled frankly. “You're very, very comforting. I'm glad I confessed to you—it's done me good.”

The clatter of the group at the tea-table behind them had effectually muffled the sound of their voices. Their eyes and thoughts, too, had been so preoccupied that it was only now they became aware of a small boy standing on the gravelled walk in front of them. He wore a checked shirt and patched trousers on his diminutive person, and freckles and a disgusted expression on his face.

“Gee Whilliken!” exclaimed this apparition, with startling vehemence. “I been standin' here 'most an hour, I bet, without you lookin' at me oncet. I'm Jimmy Jones.”

“Welcome, scion of an illustrious family!” said Fessenden. “What is your pleasure?”

"Ah, g'wan," returned Master Jones. "I got a letter, that's what. I got a letter here for——" He broke off to scan his questioner closely. "You're the man, ain't you? Tall, good-looker, wet pants. Say, Mister, ain't your name Puddin' Tame?"

"'Puddin' Tame'?" asked Miss Yarnell, smiling. "Is it a game you want to play, kiddy?"

"No, ma'am, 't ain't a game. I want to see *him*. Say, ain't you Puddin' Tame?"

"I've been called so," admitted Fessenden, surprised but greatly diverted. "But I'll let you into a secret, Jimmy: it's not my real name."

"Aw, who said it was? Don't I know it's a nickname? Guess I heard of Puddin' Tame before you was born."

"I believe your guess is incorrect, James."

"No, 't ain't neither. Say, here's the letter for you. There ain't no answer." He thrust an envelope into Fessenden's fingers, and disappeared around the corner of the house with a derisive whoop.

The sound served to divert the tea-drinkers from their chatter.

"What! A *billet doux* already?" said Mrs. Dick Randall. "This is rushing matters, Mr. Fessenden. I think it's only fair you should let us know who she is." A chorus of exclamations followed, in which, however, Miss Yarnell did not join.

"Polly," said Cresap at last, "don't tease Fessenden. Rather, if your inferior half may venture the humble suggestion, I would urge a casual glance at his trousers. What do you see, Little Brighteyes?"

"Goodness, Tom! They're *wet*. Positively dripping!"

"I lost my way coming over, and had to wade through a brook."

"And I never noticed it until now. And I declare I have n't given you a chance to get to your room yet. Pinck, why *did n't* you remind me? Ring the bell, please. Tom, you must change your things right away."

Alone in his room, Fessenden read the note delivered by the cadet of the house of Jones.

DEAR MR. PUDDIN' TAME:

Shall we have it for a secret that you're coming to supper at our house to-morrow? We aren't quality folk, and maybe Mrs. Cresap would n't like it. So please don't breathe it to a soul, but just steal away, and come.

BETTY.

III.

BEFORE luncheon the next day, Fessenden had begun to acquire some acquaintance with the members of the Sandywood house-party—a particular acquaintance with the celebrated Miss Yarnell. It did not take him long to perceive that Miss Yarnell and he had been provided

for each other's amusement. Harry Cleborne's fatuous devotion to May Belle Cresap—Fessenden rather disliked the two-part Christian name—and the good-natured cliquishness of the four married people, threw upon him the duty of entertaining the unattached bachelor girl. He took up the burden with extraordinary cheerfulness.

Pinckney Cresap watched his progress, frankly interested. Once, indeed, he took occasion to compliment him.

"You Northerners *have* some temperament, I see. If only Roland Cary were here, my boy!"

"He would have even more, I suppose," laughed Fessenden. "Polly told me about him yesterday."

"Eh? Oh, yes, so she was telling me. Oh, I'm not sure about the temperament—unfortunately, I have n't had a chance to judge." He chuckled. "But there's a charm there, that's certain." He chuckled again, as if vastly amused at the recollection of some humor of Roland Cary's. "An eligible *parti*," he went on. "The head of *the* first family of Maryland. Father and mother both dead—brought up by a doting great-uncle."

"Confound him! I'm quite jealous. Where is he? Does n't he dare show himself?"

"Off on some philanthropic scheme, I believe. Roland Cary has notions. But you need n't be jealous—you're doing very well with Madge Yarnell."

Toward noon, as they were all debating whether or not a game of tennis was worth-while, a trim-looking sloop rounded a wooded point of the bay shore, and ran down toward the boat-landing.

"I think that's your yacht, Fessenden," said Cresap. "If Danton has been keeping her up at the Polocoke River Club, she'd be just about due here now."

"Let's all go down and have a look at her."

A hat or two had to be gotten, and by the time they reached the landing-stage the boat was already tied up. A sunburned man touched his cap to the party.

"Mr. Charles Danton's *Will-o'-the-Wisp*," he said. "I was to deliver her at the Cary place, to Mr. Fessenden."

"I'm Mr. Fessenden. She looks like a good boat."

"There ain't any better of her class from Cape May to Hatteras," said the boatman. "It's a pity Mr. Danton's got the power-boat idea in his head."

"Yes, he told me that was one of the reasons he's giving up the *Will-o'-the-Wisp*. He's bought a hundred-ton steam-yacht, I believe."

"That's right, sir. Well, she's all right, and I'm to be master of her, so I guess I had n't ought to complain, but, after all, a real sailer is better, I think, sir."

The boat was sloop-rigged, seaworthy rather than fast, and, for her length, very broad of beam and astonishingly roomy. Spars and deck were spick and span in new ash, and her sides glistened with white paint.

"Would you like to go over her?" suggested the boatman. "Here's the keys to everything, Mr. Fessenden—the rooms, and these are for the lockers and the water-tanks."

The party clambered aboard and proceeded to explore the little craft. The women exclaimed with surprise and delight.

"Two cabins!" said Mrs. Dick Randall. "One at each end—do you see, Polly? And what's this cunning cubby-hole between the rooms?"

"That's the galley, ma'am," answered the boatman. "The kitchen, you'd call it. Do you see that little oil-stove, there? Big enough to do what's wanted plenty. Yes'm, she's as well found as any old-time Baltimore clipper, she is. A cabin aft for the owner, and a fok's'l room for me. Mr. Danton used to say he had a right to make me comfortable, if he wanted to. You know his queer ways, maybe. We kept the stores in those lockers. She's got some of 'em aboard yet."

"I should say so," declared Polly, who had been rummaging about. "Potted tongue and jams, and a whole ham, and, I declare, here's the sweetest little coffee-tin full of coffee!"

"Mr. Danton was thinkin' of takin' a cruise," explained the boatman. "And when you beught the *Wisp*, sir, he telegraphed to turn her over right away, in case you wanted to use her while you was here. Well, gentlemen, if you'll excuse me, I'll be walkin' over to the station to catch my train back to Polocoke." He touched his cap and tramped away up the knoll toward the road.

"Let's all go for a sail in her," said May Belle.

At the suggestion, an idea sprang full-grown into Fessenden's mind.

"Some other time," he returned. "I'd rather try her out by myself first. I want to see if she has any mean tricks before I risk any life beside my own. If the wind's right, I may tack about a bit this afternoon."

He realized that he had explained too elaborately—Miss Yarnell bent an intent look upon him. As he was returning up the pathway at her side—the others a safe distance ahead—she touched his arm.

"Please take me with you when you go sailing this afternoon?"

"Oh, I may not go. If I do, I think you'd better not. You see, the *Wisp* may be crank."

"Nonsense! Besides, I'm a good sailor—swimmer too. I should n't care if we were capsized."

"I'd care for you."

"Please take me. I want particularly to go."

"Really, I can't."

"You mean you won't!"

"I'd rather not, at any rate."

Again her intant look surprised him. "Not if I went 'on bended knee' to you?"

"Not if you begged me with bitter tears," he laughed.

"I thought you would n't, before I asked you," she said broodingly.

"I knew it would be of no use."

"You did? Why do you want so much to go?"

"If I tell you that, will you tell me why you won't take me?"

"I can't promise. But what reason can there be except that I don't care to risk your life in a boat I know nothing about?"

"What solicitude!" she said with sarcasm. "'Men were deceivers ever.'"

She gave him an enigmatic smile as they took up their tennis rackets.

Beyond an amused wonder at the vagaries of the modern American—or, at any rate, Maryland—girl, this incident made little impression on Fessenden's mind, occupied as it was with schemes of its own. By the time luncheon had been over an hour or two, however, and it drew on to the time when he might be expected to take out the *Will-o'-the-Wisp*, he confidently anticipated a renewal of Miss Yarnell's request.

He was downright disappointed, therefore, when the young woman in question announced that she had a slight headache and thought a nap would do her good. Polly and Mrs. Dick chorused hearty approval, and Pinckney advised a julep.

Thus supported, Miss Yarnell mounted the staircase from the wide hallway, not vouchsafing a single glance at Fessenden, who lingered rather ostentatiously about in his yachting flannels. Although his determination—as whimsical as the girl who had inspired it—to keep his projected visit to White Cottage a secret forbade the presence of Madge Yarnell upon the *Wisp*, he would willingly have had another trial of wits with her. However, this was denied him.

Mrs. Dick and Polly made perfunctory petitions to accompany him, easily waved aside. Dick Randall himself and Cresap were too lazy even to offer their companionship. May Belle and her follower had taken themselves off an hour before. Thus Fessenden found nothing to hinder his announced plan of trying out the *Wisp* alone.

"I'm off," he declared. "By the way, if I'm not back for dinner, don't worry, and don't wait dinner for me. The wind may fall and make it a drifting match against time, you know, so don't think of delaying dinner, if I don't turn up."

Once on board the sloop, he cast off, hoisted mainsail and jib, and stood away to the northward.

Although unfamiliar with the dry land of Maryland, Fessenden was

not entirely so with its waters. Once or twice he had taken a cruise on the fickle Chesapeake, and he was fairly well acquainted with the character of the sailing and the configuration of the bay.

Moreover, he had given a half-hour's close study to some of Cresap's charts that morning. He knew, therefore, that his first long reach on the starboard tack would take him well clear of the land. Thence he planned to come about and sail with the wind to a little cove he had noticed on the map. This cove lay a mile or so above Sandywood, and was concealed therefrom by a heavily-wooded point. He counted upon making a landing there about six o'clock.

It was a delightful day for sailing. The breeze was firm, but not too strong—just brisk enough to ruffle the water with a steady purr under the bow as the sloop slid up into the wind.

In pure enjoyment Fessenden whistled shrilly and sang snatches of song. His trip had enough of mystery about it to arouse all the boy in him. The thought of his evasion of Miss Yarnell's importunity, too, made him laugh aloud. To be sure, his merriment was a little diminished by his recollection that she had shown no desire to accompany him at the last. Was she merely whimsical, he wondered, or had she acted with a motive?

He hauled the mainsail a trifle tauter, and watched with critical eye the flattening of the canvas. The *Wisp* fairly sailed herself, and needed little attention. He burst into song:

"And bends the gallant mast, my boys,
While, like the eagle fre-e-e,
Away the good ship flies and leaves
Old England on her lee."

He stopped. The wind pushed persistently at the flattening sail; the water purred under the bow; the shore was already hazy behind him. These things were as they ought to be, yet he had become conscious that something extraordinary had interrupted his flow of song.

His eyes, sweeping the whole horizon, came back to the sloop, surveyed her slowly from bowsprit to rudder-post, and rested finally on the closed double-doors of the little cabin that faced him across the cockpit.

At that moment a loud knocking shook the latticed doors. Then a mellow voice spoke distinctly:

"'Behind no prison grate,' she said,
'That slurs the sunshine half a mile,
Live captives so uncomforted
As souls behind a smile—
God's pity let us pray,' she said."

The doors were flung open, and framed in the hatchway appeared the upper part of the body, the dark hair, the defiant eyes, and the faintly-smiling mouth of the celebrated Miss Madge Yarnell.

IV.

For a moment Fessenden could only stare. Then he gave a long whistle.

"This Maryland climate is—extraordinary!" he remarked to the horizon.

Miss Yarnell mounted the pair of steps from the cabin to the level of the cockpit, and seated herself on the lockers.

"I simply had to come," she explained.

"Marvellous impulsion!"

"I'm not welcome, then?"

"I'm afraid you've guessed it."

"Obstinate—man!"

"Artful—woman!"

"You are a very chilly person. I think I'll begin to hate you pretty soon."

"Really!"

"Now that I'm here, you might as well make the best of it. Please, sir, I'll try to be very agreeable and entertaining, if you'll only be kind to me."

"You'd move a heart of stone, but mine's a diamond. You're always charming—I admit that freely—but I can't consider that in this particular situation. No, no. 'Off with your head; so much for Bolingbroke.'" He braced the wheel against his knee and began to haul in the sheet.

"You're going back?"

"Yes."

"To put me ashore?"

"Right, my lady."

"Then you intend to sail off again to—to do what you like?"

"Humanly speaking, yes."

In spite of the heeling deck, she rose abruptly, her eyes wide and resolute.

"Mr. Fessenden, I'm going with you this afternoon, wherever you go. If you take me back to the landing, I won't go on shore. You'll have to use force, and I warn you I'll resist, and I'm strong for a woman. I solemnly vow I'll make a dreadful scene. And I'll scream, and I can scream *hideously!*"

Her words were utterly convincing. He let go the sheet and stared. "By Jove! you *are* a terror. What in the world is all this about?"

"Never mind."

"But you make me mind. Surely all this can't be a mere freak on your part. Or is it a joke?"

"No. I've a reason for my—my very unladylike conduct."

"Strike out the adjective. But what's the reason?"

"I'd rather not tell." She resumed her seat, as if she thought the victory won. Her eyes dwelt on the lines of his powerful figure, well set off by his gray flannels. "You are a distinctly good-looking man, but obstinate."

"And you're a remarkably lovely girl, but eccentric; very—eccentric."

"You don't know my reasons."

"I've asked for them."

She laughed evasively. "Is n't it about time to come about?" she said.

"It is. But how do you know that? Are you a witch?"

"In with the weather braces," she commanded. "Stand by to tack ship! Ready about! Helm's alee! Round we go, now. Make fast! All snug, sir."

Accompanying her rather uncertain display of nautical language with a pull at the sheets that proved her strength, she gave Fessenden her assistance in bringing the *Wisp* before the wind.

Afterward there was silence between them for a long time. The knots slipped away under the keel of the little yacht, and she drew rapidly in toward land. Fessenden consulted his watch. It was half past five. He decided that it was time to land—time to send his unwelcome visitor away, and to keep his appointment with Betty for supper at White Cottage.

Miss Yarnell examined the little binnacle beside the wheel.

"Due east," she said sombrely, "almost. If you go back to Sandywood, Mr. Fessenden, remember, I've given you fair warning."

"Fear not, mademoiselle. Far be it from me to force you to try your screaming powers on me! I shudder at the thought. No, no. Do you see that cape two or three points south of east? Piney Point, it's called. That's the place I'm aiming for. Are you content?"

"Perfectly content."

She met his puzzled frown with a faint smile. "You beat the Dutch," he declared in an injured tone.

It was just six o'clock when the *Wisp* grounded gently on the sandy beach of Piney Cove. The westering sun flung red bands across the pine woods, here growing almost to the water's edge.

Fessenden led a line ashore and made it fast to a convenient tree. "Now, Miss Yarnell," he smiled, "the voyage is over. I'll really have to ask you to leave me—with my thanks for a delightful afternoon, after all. If you follow the bay shore, you'll be at Sandywood in half an hour, I fancy."

She had joined him as he stood on the beach. "Thank you," she said gravely, "but I'm going with you."

"Really, this is rather—rather——"

"Impossible," she supplied. "Yes, I'll agree to anything you like to say of me, but, Mr. Fessenden, it's very important for me to go with you—to your appointment."

He stared, bewildered not only by her audacity, but by her apparent knowledge of his plans.

"Do you deny that you have an appointment with some one near here?" she demanded.

"I don't deny it. But what if I have? This is too ridiculous! I don't know how you know where I'm bound, but—I don't want to be rude, Miss Yarnell—but even if you do know, I don't see how it matters to you."

"It does matter to me," she said, sudden passion in her voice. "It matters terribly."

Her suppressed excitement, her entire seriousness, could no longer be doubted.

"I don't understand," he said. "I think you must be making some mistake."

"No, no. I don't know exactly where you're going, I admit, but I know who it is you're going to see."

He felt a baffling sense of amazement over an impossible situation. "Who is it, then?" he demanded.

"Please, *please*, don't let us mention names. But I know. Mr. Fessenden, I recognized the envelope that boy brought up yesterday."

"The envelope? O-oh! You did?"

"Yes. I've seen that style of envelope too often not to know it. Now do you understand why I want to go with you?—why I *must* go?"

"I'm as much at sea as ever. Why?"

She flushed vividly. "If you really can't guess, I—I can't tell you."

He stared at her helplessly, then tossed both hands in a gesture of despair. "I give it up. I give *you* up, in fact. You fairly make my head spin! It's getting late, Miss Yarnell. I think you'll find a path behind the grove."

"I'm not going to Sandywood."

"Then I'll leave you in possession of the yacht. Good-night."

He took off his cap smilingly, and, turning, walked rapidly inland. He had not gone half a dozen yards when he heard a light footstep behind him, and wheeled to find her at his very heels.

"I'm going with you."

"You'll dog me across country?" he asked incredulously.

She flushed painfully, but stood her ground. "I'm going with you," she repeated.

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned. For a moment he eyed her rather malevolently. "Come back to the sloop, then. We'll talk it over."

She followed obediently as he clambered over the low rail of the *Wisp*.

"I don't know what to make of you," he complained.

"I hardly know what to make of myself."

"If I had more time, I might be able to get at things."

"You'd better simply take me with you."

"Hum-m," he said contemplatively.

They were standing side by side on the floor of the cockpit. He waved his hand toward the bay. "All this beautiful scenery ought to be good for your malady—whatever that may be. Look at that sunset, Miss Yarnell. Why, hello! What's that? Dead into the sun! Can't you see it?"

She peered beneath the arch of her hand to mark the point. At that moment her elbows were gripped as if by a giant. She felt herself lifted, then thrust firmly, although gently, downward into the little cabin.

It was all done in an instant. Fessenden slammed the double-doors deftly upon his prisoner and dropped the catch into the slot.

"Good-night," he called reassuringly. He leaped ashore and hurried inland.

V.

FESSENDEN was well aware that the frail catch that held the doors of the *Wisp's* cabin would not long hold prisoner so vigorous a young woman as Madge Yarnell. He guessed that in ten minutes she would be wending her disconsolate way toward Sandywood. But ten minutes would be enough—he gave himself no further concern about her.

He followed a cow-path beyond the pine grove, crossed a meadow or two, and struck the road not far above White Cottage.

A quail called in a field of early wheat, and was answered from a thicket of elderberry near at hand—a charmingly intimate colloquy. Fessenden was serenely conscious that it was good to be only twenty-eight, and on his way to dine, or sup, with an artless girl.

In ten minutes he was halting at the gate of White Cottage. Although it was only the dusk of the day, the window shades were down, and the lighted lamps within sent a glow across the wide porch. The door stood invitingly open.

As he clicked the gate behind him, he felt as if he were about to enter another world than the one he had left at Sandywood—the enchanted world of boyhood.

At the thought, he pursed his lips and sent the rounded notes of the quail through the evening haze.

He had not time to repeat them before a slender figure, appearing as if by magic, extended him a warm little hand.

"Bob White!" she said gaily. "I'm very glad to see you. I was

in the hammock under the hickory there. That gives me a new name for you—I was tired of Puddin' Tame." Her lips echoed the whistle.



"I'm glad you've come, Mr. Bob White."

"Did you dream for a moment I would n't?"

"I was a little afraid you might forget your promise. No, what I was really afraid of was that you would n't find a chance to steal away. You *did* steal away, did n't you, ve-ry quietly?"

"I did. I sailed away, at any rate, and I did n't tell a soul where I was bound."

"I knew you were a reliable man."

"How is the sprained ankle? You don't seem to be noticeably crippled."

"Of course not. That's all well now—I've been resting in the hammock all day. But come into the house. Supper is ready, and Aunt Landis has the most delicious chocolate, with whipped cream."

She tripped ahead of him up the pathway and into the house, calling: "Aunt Landis! Uncle Landis! Here he is. Here's Mr. Bob White. He's ready for supper, I'm sure."

The long-suffering goodwife met him in the living-room. "Good-evening, Mr.—ah——"

"My name is——"

"Bob White," interrupted the girl. "Please let it be Bob White. That *must* be your name. Don't you like it?"

"Very much."

"Then that's what we'll call him, please, Aunt Landis. Yesterday you were Puddin' Tame, to-day you're Bob White, and all the time you're really somebody else. I'll have the fun of meeting a new man any moment I like."

Mrs. Landis received this remark with a look as nearly approaching to sternness as she was capable of. "Betty, you must behave. Remember, you ain't as much of a baby as the gentleman maybe takes you for."

The girl fell silent, and seated herself upon a chintz-covered sofa. Fessenden scanned her more closely than the dusk outside had permitted him to do.

Her hair was gathered in a shining braid that hung quite to her waist, a girlish and charming fashion. Her blue eyes watched him demurely from beneath a broad, low forehead. The sailor suit of yes-

terday had given place to a simple white frock—Fessenden noticed that it came fairly to her ankles, now discreetly slippered and stockinged.

At the moment of seating themselves at table, they were joined by Uncle Landis, a middle-aged farmer whose preternaturally-shining face and plastered hair, not to mention a silence unbroken throughout the meal, gave plain proof of recent rigorous social instruction on the part of his helpmeet.

The memory of that supper has always been a delight to Fessenden. The omelet was all golden foam; the puffed potatoes a white-and-brown cloud. The spiced cantaloup and brandied peaches reminded him of the wonderful concoctions his Grandmother Winthrop had made—she who would never allow any one but herself to wash the glass and silver.

The hot Maryland beaten biscuits were crusty to the smoking hearts of them, withstanding his teeth's assault just long enough to make their crumbling to fragments the more delicious. The chocolate, in blue china cups not too small, was served as the Spaniards serve it and as it ought to be served—of the consistency of molasses candy when poured into the pan.

And then came the creamy rice pudding for dessert, whereupon Fessenden won Mrs. Landis forever by asking for the receipt and gravely jotting it down in his notebook, in spite of Betty's laughing eyes.

Betty's talk flashed and sparkled to his sallies. She showed a self-possession remarkable in a farmer's daughter who was encountering a man of the world for what must have been the first time in her life, as he fancied. Once or twice he felt that she had led him on to talk of himself and to expand his own ideas to a degree unusual in him.

"Betty, you're a witch," he declared at last. "I've been clattering away here like a watchman's rattle. You can't be interested in all this stuff about my cart-tail speeches for honest city government."

"But I am interested, decidedly. I like to hear about men that do something—they're a novelty." Her frank smile warmed him. "I know there are enough worthless men in the world to make the useful ones count all the more. 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.' That's as true in Maryland as anywhere."

"You're a worldly-wise small person."

"Oh, I read and think a little, Mr. Bob White." She nodded her head at him until the blonde braid danced.

After supper Uncle Landis abruptly vanished. Aunty Landis lingered in the dining-room on the plea of clearing off the supper things—in point of fact, Fessenden saw her no more that night. Betty led the way to a couple of steamer-chairs at a corner of the porch.

The breeze had freshened a little, and he tucked her knitted scarf about her shoulders with a care not altogether fatherly.

"Thank you, Bob White. You're very kind."

"Who wouldn't be kind to you, Betty? Look there! Over the top of the hill. Even the stars are peeping out to see if you're comfortable."

She gave her little crowing laugh. "What a poet! I always think of Emerson's verse about the stars. Do you remember it?"

"Over our heads are the maple buds,
And over the maple buds is the moon;
And over the moon are the starry studs
That drop from the angel's shoon."

"Where did you learn Emerson?"

"I had a teacher who liked him."

"Did any one ever tell you that you talk as a prima donna ought to talk, but never does—'soft, gentle, and low'?"

"Is that a compliment?"

"Certainly. Perhaps you sing."

"I'll get my guitar."

She flashed into the house and back again. The starlight enabled him to see her indistinctly as she tightened the keys of a small guitar.

"I like this song," she explained. "It was written by Fessenden, you know."

"By whom?"

"Thomas Fessenden, *the* Fessenden, the man who——"

"Oh, of course."

To hear himself thus referred to, to hear one of his own casual songs launched from the lips of a country girl in the splendor of a Maryland night, was a novel experience even for Fessenden. He realized with amusement that his identity was wholly unknown to Betty, that capricious young person not having allowed him as yet to mention his own name.

She sang, her eyes laughing upon him as her lips rounded to the whistle of the quail in the refrain.

"At eve, when first the fading glow
Of setting sun foretold the night,
The tender call came, soft and low,
Across the dying light:
(Too sweet for cry,
Too brief for song,
'T was but a long
Contented sigh)
Bob White!
Good-night, Bob White!
Good-night!"

Fessenden applauded softly, and his young hostess smiled appreciation.

"Tell me about yourself, Bob White," she said. "Are you 'tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor'?"

"Betty, perhaps *you* can tell *me* something. I got away to you without letting any one at Sandywood know, by going for a sail in my sloop."

"A ve-ry good idea."

"Don't be too sure. After I'd gotten well off, one of the house-party—a girl—coolly appeared from the cabin. She'd been bound to come with me, you see."

"Why?"

"That's the problem. She was very mysterious, and persistent, no name! When we landed in Piney Cove, she insisted upon following me."

"Goodness me!"

"We had the most extraordinary time—I fastened her in the cabin by main force. I don't understand it at all. She said she knew I was coming to meet you, and seemed very much wrought up about it. Hold on! She did n't mention your name, but she said she knew who it was I had my appointment with."

"How could she guess?"

"We happened to be standing together when your little friend, Jimmy Jones, brought your note. She said this afternoon that she recognized the style of the envelope."

Betty's guitar slipped from her lap to the floor. "Bob White, Bob White!" she exclaimed. "What's her name?"

"Did n't I say? She's a Miss Yarnell—Miss Madge Yarnell, from Baltimore. Do you know anything about her?"

The girl stooped to rescue the guitar. Her warm cheek touched his as he, too, groped for it, and both recoiled a little consciously—Fessenden in amusement at his own confusion.

"Do you know about Miss Yarnell?" he repeated.

"I've heard her name. A girl—the woman who gave me that song—knows who she is. Is n't she the girl who tore down the flag?"

"Yes, that's the one. Can you imagine why she pursued me so? Do you suppose she really recognized your writing paper? And even if she did, what is it to her?"

She twanged a careless chord or two. "Oh, perhaps she was vexed because you did n't stay at the house-party," she suggested; "because you preferred White Cottage to Sandywood."

After a while he struck a match and looked at his watch. "Nine o'clock. I must be going. If I stay much longer, the Cresaps will be sending out their launch to tow me home. You know, I'm supposed to be becalmed out in the bay. I hate to go. I've had a bully time."

"Really?"

"Perfect. Betty, look here! I'm staying at Sandywood only until Tuesday, and to-day's Friday. H-i-n-t!"

She rose and made him an adorable curtsy. "Bob White, Esquire, I respectfully invite you to come to my picnic to-morrow."

"Will there be a picnic, really?"

"Yes—for you and me."

"Great! I'll come, and humbly thank you."

"Then you must be at the foot of the lane by the brook at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. And it's another secret, remember. Do you think you can get away?"

"I *will* get away. Perhaps I can invent a business letter that will call me to Baltimore."

She clapped her hands. "Oh, I'll attend to that. You know Jimmy Jones is really the Sandywood Station telegraph boy, and he'll do anything for me."

"I don't doubt it. There's at least one other person in the same happy condition."

"Have n't you a friend in Baltimore who might possibly send you a telegram—somebody so real you could just show it to the Cresaps, and they'd believe it? What fun!"

He chuckled. "This is a real conspiracy. The only friend the Cresaps and I have in common is Danton."

"Who?"

"Charles Danton. D-a-n-t-o-n."

"I'll remember."

"All right. At ten o'clock to-morrow, at the foot of the lane. You'll meet me there, honest Injun, Betty?"

"Honest Injun! Hope I may die!"

She had followed him to the edge of the porch and stood looking down at him as he lingered a couple of steps below.

"Good-night, Betty."

Her hand slipped into his outstretched palm. "Good-night, Bob White."

"I've had a lovely time."

"So have I."

He had not released her hand, and now she leaned toward him until the great braid of her hair fell across her breast.

"Bob White, I'm rather sorry I was so—so violent yesterday, when you were carrying me and—and did what you did."

She was so close to him that he felt her hair brush his forehead. The blood was pounding in his ears, and his throat was parched. He lifted his left hand slowly to her neck to draw her lips to his. Then, all at once, he steadied himself.

"Oh, you little witch!" he said. "I swear I don't know whether

you're an innocent or a demon. No, no, Betty! The next time I kiss you, you must ask me outright, not merely *look* at me! Do you ask me?"

She snatched her hand away. "Certainly not. Never!"

"Good-night, then."

"Good-night, Bob White."

She stood motionless until he was lost in the darkness, then whistled softly:



She waited until the call was answered from the slope of the hill; then, laughing rather wistfully, she sought Aunty Landis.

VI.

FESSENDEN joined the others at Sandywood while they were still lingering over coffee in the library. His belated appearance, casual and unconcerned as he endeavored to make it seem, was greeted with a storm of badinage.

"Oh, my prophetic soul! You were becalmed sure enough."

"Does the poor boy want a bite to eat?"

"We were just organizing a relief expedition for you, old man."

"What a lonely time you must have had of it, Mr. Fessenden!"

This last thrust was from no less a person than Miss Yarnell. He gave her a broad smile in return.

He allowed the others to believe what they would, explaining only that he had been compelled to leave the *Will-o'-the-Wisp* in Piney Cove. Cresap promised to send his man up to bring her back to the landing-stage.

"I'm afraid you'll find the cabin-door catch is broken," said Madge Yarnell in an undertone, as she halted near Fessenden on her way to bed.

"If I had n't been sure you'd smash through easily enough, I should have come back to the sloop and sailed away with you."

"With me?"

"Certainly—made you captive like an old buccaneer. Willy-nilly, I should have clapped you under hatches, and sailed for the Spanish Main."

Her brooding eyes dwelt long upon him. "That's very interesting." She struck her hands softly together. "It's worth thinking about. Thank you for the suggestion, Mr. Fessenden."

"I'm not sure I understand."

"Of course you don't. You're only a man."

In the morning, although he was not down for breakfast until nine o'clock, he was ahead of any of the others. One of the servants handed him a telegram. He read it with amusement over Betty's cleverness.

THOMAS FESSENDEN,

Sandywood, Polocoke County, Maryland.

Meet me Club one o'clock. Important personal matter. Want your advice. Don't fail me.

CHARLES DANTON.

He requested the butler to turn over the telegram to Mr. and Mrs. Cresap, and to explain to them that he would be back at Sandywood before dinner. On the plea that he vastly preferred a walk, he managed to evade the man's suggestion that the car be brought round to take him to Sandywood Station.

Precisely at ten o'clock he was cooling his heels on the stone wall at the foot of the lane.

In that shaded hollow the sun had not yet pierced to dry the dew from the wild myrtle. Now and then the clambering creepers rustled where a field-mouse ran shyly through them. An oriole flashed from a sycamore, like an orange tossed deftly skyward. Spring was a living presence—Fessenden was stirred by its exuberance as he had not been these ten years.

By and by a rattle of wheels came to his ears. Presently a serene gray mare hove in sight, escorting, rather than pulling, a low-swung victoria with an ancient calash-top. So capacious was the hood that at first he could descry no one in its depths. Then the mare came to a condescending halt, and a laughing face leaned into view.

"Good-morning, Patience-on-a-Monument."

"Good-morning, Grief. Grief, that's the fluffiest hat I ever saw."

"Have you been waiting long?"

"Hours and hours."

"Then, come, get in. We're going driving 'over the hills and far away.'"

She clucked to her steed, and the old mare, disdainfully obedient, conveyed them straight through the brook—the water rising to the hub—and up the windings of a wood-road beyond.

"The first thing a man wants to know on a picnic," affirmed Betty sagely, "is whether or not there's enough to eat. There is n't, but there will be."

"I rest content. Betty, who taught you to dress like that?"

"Do you like me?—my clothes, I mean."

"I like both, profoundly."

She was all in white—fluffy hat, linen shirtwaist, duck skirt, and

low shoes. Her hair was done into some sort of knot on her neck—Fessenden was rather weak at deciphering a girl's coiffure. Her eyes shone wonderfully clear, and her smiles were frequent but uncertain, as if she bubbled with jokes too ethereal to share even with him.

"Betty," he said, "do you mind my remarking that you look adorable to-day?"

"Only to-day?"

"Always, you witch! Betty, don't tell me that any mere district school made half of *you*."

"Why not?"

"Well, it sounds a bit impertinent of me, but your voice—your talk—your dress! And, above all, you have the air—ah——"

"Of a lady, Mr. Critic?"

"Exactly. One does n't expect to find *l'air distingué* in a farmer's daughter."

"A farmer's niece."

"Of course. Perhaps that makes all the difference. Do you mind my asking who your mother was, Betty?"

"My mother was related to the first families of Maryland."

He could hardly forbear a smile at the pride manifest in her tone. "I see. She has a right to be proud of her daughter."

"Really? Bob White, that's the very nicest thing you could say to me if you'd tried a hundred years. Mother died when I was quite a little girl."

Fessenden was silent. For a while, the girl guided the gray mare from wood-road to rambling lane, from lane to turnpike, and from turnpike back to lane. As they rounded a low hill, Fessenden felt the salt breath of the bay upon his face.

"Where are we bound?" he asked.

"To Jim George's. It's a sort of inn—a very rustic inn. He cooks delicious things. People come here for dinners from as far as Baltimore, but I think it's too early in the season yet for anybody to be here but us."

"I hope so with all my heart."

They ascended a sandy track through a little forest of pines, and emerged upon an open space. At the foot of a bluff the bay stretched to the horizon. On the forest side stood a log-cabin, amplified on all sides by a veranda of unbarked pine.

From this structure promptly hobbled a white-haired dorky.

"Mawnin', lady. Mawnin', gemman, sah. A day o' glory fo' the time o' year. Yas, sah, yas, ma'am, a real day o' glory. Won't you 'light down, ma'am?"

"Of course we will, Jim George, and we want some of your best shad."

"Ah d'clar to gracious! Is that yo'-all, Miss Betty? Good Lan'! it's been a coon's age since I seen yo' purty face round hyah. It does me proud to see a——"

"Shad and corn-pone, Jim George," she interrupted. "I want you to show this gentleman we can still cook in the South."

"Ah 'll show him. Ah 'll show him, Miss Betty. Rufe! Rufe! Come hyah and take Miss Betty's hoss."

A boy led the mare away, and Fessenden and the girl established themselves in a hammock under a solitary oak at the bluff's edge.

He drew a long breath of the salt air and smiled at his companion. "This is Paradise, and not even a serpent to mar it."

In an incredibly short time Jim George appeared, bearing a tray piled high with eatables, and proceeded to spread the cloth on a table under the oak.

"Miss Betty," he said, "and, gemman, sah, there's a shad-roe as is a shad-roe. Jes' yo' eat it with all the buttah yo' kin spread on it. This hyah co'n-pone needs a *spoon* for it. Them baked 'taters grewed theirselves right hyah in the patch behind the house. They's as sweet as honey. And hyah's some milk. Yo' 'member Jersey Molly, Miss Betty? Yas 'm, this is *her* milk. None o' yo' *pastorilized* stuff neither—this is jes' plain *milk*."

"Betty," said Fessenden, when Jim George had left them to themselves, "allow me to drink your health in Jersey Molly wine."

She touched her tumbler laughingly to his. "Skoyal! Bob White, do you know it was only the day before yesterday you picked me out of the brook?"

"I was just thinking of that. At any rate, we're better acquainted than people ordinarily are in months."

"In three days?"

"Certainly," he maintained.

"You're a very funny man."

"I'm perfectly serious."

"I was wondering why you should care to come on a picnic with me. I'm only a country girl, after all, and you—you're different."

"I care to come because *you* are *you*, and that's plenty reason enough."

"Hum-m."

"Can you say as much?"

"I'm not sure."

"Cruel child!"

"I did n't say no—I only said I was n't sure."

The afternoon slipped away, and at last they ordered their equipage for the homeward drive. Old Jim George bowed them off.

"Good-by, Miss Betty. Good-by, gemman, sah. Ah hope yo' bofe

come hyah agin right soon—yas, indeedy, and I hope yo' come togedder, too. Ya ha!" He screened his mouth behind his hand and added in a stage whisper: "Miss Betty, that's a mighty fine gemman yo's got, he is so, mighty fine."

They pursued the even tenor of their way homeward. The early butterflies flicked the gray mare's nose. Blackbirds pilfered a meal from the plowed fields beside the road. Once a thrush—to Betty's infinite delight—perched on the dashboard and sang a hasty trill.

"Spring is lovely," declared Betty.

"Lovely," agreed Fessenden with enthusiasm, and did not feel guilty of a commonplace.

Into the calm of their content came the clatter of distant hoofs.

"There's some one riding down that crossroad there," said Betty. "A woman. Is she waving at us, do you think?"

They peered out from the calash-top, and made out a horsewoman galloping down a side-path toward them. Her whip was going on her horse's flank, and now and then she brandished it as if to signal the two in the victoria.

Betty pulled up. "Let's see what she wants."

In another moment the horsewoman was near enough to bring an exclamation of recognition from Fessenden. "Hello! I believe it's Miss Yarnell."

"Miss Yarnell?"

"The girl who said she recognized the envelope you sent me the other day. Perhaps she wants to ask the way home."

Miss Yarnell rode out of the crossroad full tilt, and only checked her sorrel when his nose was within a foot of the gray mare's. Fessenden viewed this characteristic impetuosity with curiosity, which changed to amazement when his eyes fell upon her face. Her eyes were blazing, and her teeth were clenched.

She did not wait to be interrogated, but faced the calash-top.

"I've been looking for you!" she cried. "Come out here where we can talk." Her tones were not loud, but her voice was choked with passion, and she lifted her riding-whip as she spoke. "Come out! I want to have a talk with you."

The response was more prompt than she could have anticipated. Before she could carry out her evident purpose of forcing her uneasy horse to the very dashboard, Fessenden slipped from the victoria, ducked under the mare's head, and, seizing the sorrel by the bit, forced him back.

"What's up, Miss Yarnell?" he said, with stern jocularly. "You mustn't ride into people's laps, you know."

"Oh, I don't want *you*," she said. "I want *her*." Again the silver-mounted whip was brandished toward the calash-top.

Betty's piquant face emerged from its depths. "Are you looking for me?" she asked very sweetly.

Miss Yarnell's arm fell. She stared at the childish face—at the wide-opened blue eyes and slender figure.

"O-oh!" Her voice was tremulous, all hint of violence gone from it. "You! I thought it was—I thought it was some one else."

"At any rate, it is n't proper to threaten one with a whip," said Betty gravely.

"I—I know it. There!" Her arm swung up, and the whip spun a flashing arc through the air before falling into a field of ripening wheat. "The hateful thing!" She faced the girl again. "I'm sorry. I've been acting like a fool. I beg your pardon—and yours too, Mr. Fessenden."

She checked the horse she had already started to wheel, and appealed to Betty. "I *must* ask you. I came after you because I thought you were—were some one else. I thought so because of that envelope Thursday."

"A Baltimore friend of mine happens to have lent me a box of her notepaper." There was impatience in Betty's explanation.

"O-oh, I see! But—please!—that telegram from Charlie to him"—she indicated Fessenden. "I supposed—some one—had sent that—to put me off the track."

"It was n't sent from White Cottage."

"Then it was real?"

"I know nothing about it," returned the girl icily.

Miss Yarnell wheeled her horse. "It was real! And I've been wasting time—wasting time!" Going helter-skelter, she was out of sight before Fessenden had time to resume his seat in the carriage.

"Whew!" he said, as they resumed their jog-trot pace. "She is a queer fish! But, Betty, why tell a tarradiddle, even to get rid of her?"

"I did n't."

"I mean about the telegram you sent me."

"I did n't send you one."

"What! One came—signed by Charles Danton, too, just as we arranged last night."

"I had nothing to do with it. After you went away, I remembered that I did n't know your real name, and I was afraid a telegram for 'Bob White, Esquire,' left in the servants' hands, would go wrong. So I did n't send it. I wondered how you'd get away to meet me, but I knew you would contrive some excuse."

In his mind's eye, he saw the address of the telegram, "Thomas Fessenden," yet it was true that his identity was unknown to his companion—through her own caprice, to be sure.

He gave a long whistle. "Then that wire really was from Danton. By Jove! if he wanted my advice about anything, he ought to have let me know in time. Confound him, it's too late now! It serves him right."

He turned to look for sympathy in Betty's eyes, only to find there a light that baffled him.

"Are you angry with me about anything?"

"I'm not sure whether I am or not. Men are so—so bad, and so presumptuous."

"Good heavens! Have I done anything?"

But in spite of all he could do to solve this new Betty, she set him down at the foot of the lane a very perplexed young man.

VII.

AT Sandywood, Fessenden was little surprised to learn that Miss Yarnell had been summoned home to Baltimore—on account of sickness in her family.

"I think she must have gotten a telegram at the station," said Polly Cresap. "She'd been out riding, and when she came in she was in quite a flutter, and told us she had to go home immediately. I really did n't understand just who was sick. We're to send her things after her. You did n't see her at Sandywood Station, did you, Tom? She must have taken the same train you came in on."

"No," returned Fessenden, truthfully enough. "She's rather a headlong sort, don't you think?"

"Yes, I suppose so. But, poor girl, she has a good deal on her mind! You know, before this disgraceful affair of Charlie Danton's with——"

"Polly!" said her husband warningly.

"I don't care, Pinck. You know everybody says so."

"But nobody knows anything, my dear."

"At any rate," she rattled on, "before this affair, Madge was quite fond of Charlie Danton, and now I believe she's eating her heart out."

"Remember, Fessenden has just been up to Baltimore to meet Danton," cautioned Cresap. "How do you know it was n't about this very thing?"

"Oh, goodness, Tom! Am I rushing in where angels fear to tread?"

"Not at all," he assured her. "Danton did n't mention the matter at all."

"Besides, Polly," said Cresap, "no girl eats her heart out nowadays. That sort of thing dates back to hoop-skirts and all that. Madge Yarnell can take care of herself, I'll wager."

The next day was Sunday, and for Fessenden the morning dragged

rather wearily. But after luncheon he had the inspiration to suggest a sail in the *Will-o'-the-Wisp*. May Belle and Cleborne announced that they had already arranged to go for a walk together, but the others avowed their willingness to sail.

The wind was fresh, and Mrs. Dick Randall sat beside Fessenden at the wheel, and met the flying spray merrily. Dick himself flirted with Polly Cresap under the protection of the jibsail forward. Cresap drowsed accommodatingly at full length in the lee gangway.

"Harry Cleborne and May Belle think two are company," said Mrs. Dick.

"Are they engaged?"

"Oh, I imagine there's only an understanding."

"Do you think that sort of arrangement is dignified?"

"What a funny way to put it! No, I don't think so, now that you put it that way. Madge Yarnell, now—Charlie Danton and she had only an understanding—everybody took it for granted they'd be married some day—and look how it's turned out."

"But I understood their falling-out was due to outside influence—was n't it?"

"Partly, of course. But a regular engagement would have had more dignity about it, just as you say, and they would have had to be more careful."

"No doubt."

"Now, there's Roland Cary——" went on Mrs. Dick.

"The handsome cousin Polly spoke of the other day?"

"Yes. There's a dignified person for you. Hum-m! Dignified in some ways, but a perfect dee-vil in others."

"He must be a very interesting sort. I'd like to meet him."

"Oh, he—he is interesting. But I'm worried about Madge and Charlie Danton's case."

"I agree with Cresap—Miss Yarnell will follow her own course, whatever that may be."

"I suppose so."

The bracing air and the dancing yacht, if not the conversation, held Fessenden's interest for an hour or two. As he headed toward home, the glory of the day put a happy idea into his head. He would return Betty's picnic of yesterday by a day's sail on the *Wisp*. Somehow he would manage to elude his Sandywood responsibilities again.

Darkness always fell long before dinner was served at Sandywood. Therefore, Fessenden, going for a stroll in the wilderness of a garden, ostensibly to indulge in an ante-prandial cigar, found in the dusk no difficulty in extending his walk to White Cottage.

A boyish sense of romance always took possession of him when he approached Betty's vicinity. A knock at the cottage door, and a

direct inquiry for her, would have been too commonplace. No workaday method of communication would suffice under a sky shot with stars and in an air a-tingle with spring.

Lights shone in a couple of rooms in the upper part of the house, while the lower story was in darkness. Apparently, the farmer's family was already preparing to retire for the night.

Fessenden scouted about the place, smiling to himself at the absurdity of his own action.

There was nothing to indicate which room was Betty's, and at a venture he tossed a handful of gravel against the panes of the corner room—then another.

Betty's head and shoulders were the response, framed in the glow of the lamp gleaming through the white curtains behind her. The face, delicately oval, and the slender throat, seemed wrought of gold.

"'So shines a good deed in a naughty world,'" said Fessenden aloud.

"Who's there?" she called.

"It's I."

"Oh, *you!*"

"Yes. Can you come down a minute?"

"No."

"Please come down, Betty. I want to see you about something."

"No-o, I can't. Is it anything important?"

"Immensely important. You are n't vexed with me still, are you?"

"Of course not. And, Bob White, I did n't tell you yesterday, but I did appreciate it very much."

"Good!—but what?"

"The way you jumped out of the carriage and seized her horse, when she was so belligerent. It was very capable in you."

"If it were n't dark down here, you could see me blushing. Come down and see."

"No. Bob White, you have n't come around here like a Romeo to—to say good-by, have you?"

"Heaven forbid, Betty! I want to ask you to go on a picnic with *me* to-morrow, in my sailboat."

"Oh, goody! Hum-m! I don't know. For how long?"

"All day. We can sail down to Rincoteague Island and back."

"Who's to go?"

"Only you and I, of course."

"I'm afraid that would n't be quite—well, quite——"

"Oh, I see. Then your aunt is invited, too, of course—but reluctantly."

"We'll come," she said, with decision. "Shall we bring the luncheon?"

"No. The sloop has a lot of stuff on board now. Besides, there used to be a hotel on Rincoteague—such as it was. I'll have the *Wisp* in Piney Cove at nine to-morrow. We must start early, you know."

"We'll be there. Thank you very much."

"Betty, do come out a minute—long enough to shake hands. I have n't seen you all day."

"You funny man!" she said. "If I were n't—a farmer's girl, I should think you were—flirting."

He was unable to muster an instant reply. A shade, snapped sharply down, cut the fair hair and laughing face from his view.

There was nothing left for him to do but to make his way back to Sandywood, which he did very thoughtfully.

After dinner the men grouped themselves in easy chairs at a corner of the porch, to enjoy their cigarettes. Harry Cleborne drew his chair to Fessenden's.

"Will you try one of my home-growns, Mr. Fessenden?" he proffered. "That tobacco was raised on my own plantation."

Fessenden accepted a cigar, suddenly conscious that Cleborne's unwonted attentions must have an ulterior motive.

"Thank you. You're a Marylander, then?"

"Virginian," returned the other. "My home's in old Albemarle. I've seen a good deal of Maryland the last year or two, though." His eyes strayed toward the white gowns of the women.

"Maryland has its attractions," said Fessenden.

"Yes, that's so—even for you?"

"Oh, yes, for me, too."

Cleborne folded his arms, crossed one leg over the other, and blew a long cloud of smoke. "Look here, Mr. Fessenden," he said, "that's what I want to speak to you about—Maryland attractions." He spoke with evident embarrassment. "May Belle—Miss Cresap—and I saw you yesterday, sitting on the wall at the end of the lane to White Cottage."

"Hum! You did?"

"Yes. We were out for an early morning walk. Of course, then, we know you did n't go to Baltimore—not on the morning train, at any rate."

"Well?"

Impatience showed in Fessenden's tone, and the other went on quickly: "We were out for a stroll again this evening, and—you may think it's none of my business, but we saw *her*. She was at the window as we passed the house."

"You seem to be fond of walking."

"It was entirely an accident both times. But it won't do, Mr. Fessenden."

"May I ask *what* won't do?"

"I don't want to be impertinent, sir—you're an older man than I—but, of course, it's easy enough to guess that you've been going over to White Cottage because *she's* there. Is n't that so?"

"Certainly it's so. But is there any harm in that?"

"There may not be any harm *yet*, but won't there be?"

"This is ridiculous. Betty is n't much more than a child—a very charming one, I admit."

"Who?" demanded Cleborne "Betty?"

"Betty Landis, man. Are n't you talking about her?"

"Never heard of her," returned the other shortly. "I'm talking about you know whom, Mr. Fessenden. I'm sorry I spoke. I wanted to give you a friendly hint that you should let another man look after his—his *own* himself. I don't care to be laughed at in this way."

"What the devil do you mean?"

Cleborne pushed back his chair savagely. "I'm through," he snapped.

As good as his word, he stalked off to join May Belle.

VIII.

DAWN was reddening the leaves of the oak outside his window when Fessenden awoke. From the great bay below the house came the ruffle of water—the wind was freshening. But it was not the mutter along the shore, nor the tang of the salt air, that had aroused him.

What could that idiot, Cleborne, have been driving at in his talk of Betty? No, Cleborne had declared he had never heard of her. Then, whom could his dark hints be about? Was the Virginian a subtle joker, acting at the instigation of Polly or Mrs. Dick? It was not unlikely. And did Madge Yarnell's peculiar conduct have any connection with the matter?

While he was still puzzling over Cleborne's words, he fell asleep, and when he awoke again, at a more reasonable hour, his mind instantly became too full of plans for the day's excursion with Betty to hold any conflicting thoughts.

At eight o'clock he ate his eggs, toast, and coffee, solving the problem of presenting a sufficient excuse for his proposed day's absence by the simple process of not attempting it.

At the last moment, the freshening wind suggested the probable need of ample protection from the weather. Accordingly, he carried a double armful of steamer-rugs and rain-coats from the house to the *Wisp*.

In five minutes he was standing for Piney Cove. It took him half an hour or more to reach it, for the wind, blowing steadily from the

northwest, held him back. He was rewarded by finding Betty and Aunty Landis awaiting him on the beach.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Landis. Hail, Dryad of the Pines!"

"Hail, Old Man of the Sea!"

Her eyes were as clear as twin pools; her lips were smiling, ready as always to laugh with him or at him, as opportunity might offer. She held her head with that defiant tilt of the chin that was to him one of her always-remembered characteristics. The sunlight flashed from the bay to the shining braid of her hair.

Her white sailor suit was set off by two daring bands of color—a scarlet handkerchief at her throat, and a scarlet sash about her waist. That most effective head-dress, a man-o'-war's-man's white hat, crowned her head. Fessenden's eyes dwelt upon her with such frank delight that she blushed a little as Mrs. Landis followed her on board the *Wisp*.

The course was set southeast for Rincoteague Island. After a dubious phrase or two about the weather, Aunty Landis ensconced herself just within the opened doors of the little cabin. Here she produced an infinite number of gigantic stockings (male) from a work-bag, and proceeded to darn them.

"I hope both you and your aunt are good sailors," said Fessenden. "It promises to be a bit rough before we get back."

"Oh, yes. I hope it does blow. To be wet and cold, and to see the water boiling up ready to drown us—that would be living!"

"You strange child! You have a philosophy all your own. Did you know that?"

She nodded sagely. "Of course. I hate people who have n't. That's one reason I like you."

"Thank you. I'm glad to hear you confess that there's more reasons than one. I like *you* because—because you seem to me to be all golden. Perhaps the sun dazzles me."

"Perhaps," she smiled.

"You and the day are golden, but remember the song in *Cymbeline*:

"Golden lads and girls all must
As chimney sweepers come to dust."

"'Golden lads and girls,'" she repeated softly. "Oh, they can never come to dust while there are days like this to sail and sail!"

Her arms, extended yearningly, as if she would have plucked the secret of youth from the tossing bay, fell to her side. "I wish we could sail forever—never to go back to the sad land."

He thrilled. "So do I. Let's do it—you and I together."

"And Aunty Landis?"

"I'm not so sure about Aunty Landis. The stockings might give out, you know."

They had left Piney Cove not long after nine. With the strong northwester behind them, they made such progress that before two o'clock they were in sight of their destination.

Rincoteague Island lies on the very border-line between ocean and bay. On the eastern side, it is crowned by a straggling forest of pine and oak, and looks almost boldly toward the near waters of the Atlantic. A small hotel, and rows of bath-houses, mark it as a "resort"—a resort sustained by the excursion steamer that makes daily trips thereto from the towns of the mainland.

Although aware that the *Wisp* had been making extraordinary speed, it was not until Fessenden bore up direct for Rincoteague that he realized how the wind was freshening. He had put his helm down a little carelessly, and instantly a cupful of water took him in the back. He glanced astern, to find quite a sea racing after.

"Positively it's roughing up," he said. "Will you be afraid to face a head sea going home, Betty?"

"No, indeed; not with such a sailor as you, Bob White."

"Good! The sloop could live through a hurricane, 'so let the wild winds blow-ow-ow.'"

They stood in for Rincoteague pier. The excursion steamer had just disgorged its passengers there, and the sight of the horde convinced the party on the *Wisp* that the inevitable fish-and-oyster dinner at the hotel was not likely to prove a thing of beauty. Accordingly, Betty took the wheel and skilfully put the sloop alongside a smaller pier—rather rotted and insecure, to be sure—on the lee or ocean side of the island.

While Fessenden was making the *Wisp* fast, Mrs. Landis and Betty explored the larder, with highly satisfactory results. Potted slices of chicken, strawberry jam, boxed crackers, pickles, and aerated waters of several sorts, furnished "eatin' stuff enough for anybody," as Mrs. Landis avowed. She herself had thought to bring half a dozen wooden picnic plates and a complement of knives, forks, and spoons.

"Did you stock the *Wisp* for a polar expedition, Bob White?" asked Betty.

"Oh, all this stuff was left in her by the man I bought her from. I suppose it would have been more trouble to move the stores than they were worth. Have you everything you want? Then 'all ashore that's going ashore!'"

They ate their luncheon in a sheltered hollow at the lower end of the islet. A projecting clay bank, a huge stranded log, and an overhanging holly-tree, made almost a cave of it. Aunty Landis was a highly satisfactory chaperon. After luncheon, when she was not darning, she was perusing a pamphlet of Sunday School lessons. And when this was finished, she brought a leather-bound memorandum-book from

the bottomless work-bag, and entered upon an intricate calculation of household accounts.

Fessenden chatted with Betty. He had not yet begun to analyze the reasons for the pleasure he felt in her company, or hardly to understand that the farmer's daughter who could hold a man of his experience by her side for the better part of three days must possess extraordinary charm.

"Now we are in the pirates' den," said Betty, "and that log is a treasure-chest full of—of what?"

"Of doubloons and pieces of eight. I'm the pirate chief, and you are my captured bride."

"Oh, goodness!"

"Do you know, I made a remark something like that to Miss Yarnell the other day, and she took it quite seriously?"

"Was she afraid of the pirate chief?"

"She eyed me in that brooding, blazing way of hers—you remember how she looked when she tried to ride over us on the road the other day?"

"Remember!"

"Exactly. She eyed me in that fashion, then thanked me for the suggestion."

"What did she mean?"

"I have n't the least idea. Betty, what do you know about her?"

The girl put her hand suddenly on his arm. "What was that? A drop of water? I do believe it's going to rain. And hear the surf! It's fairly roaring. It must be blowing hard. I wonder if the yacht is all right."

The thought brought them to their feet, and out of their sheltered hollow. They found a changed world.

While they ate, clouds had been gathering west and north, and now seemed to fill the whole space from bay to sky. A mile or two beyond the island, a white line advancing over the churning waters gave promise of a furious squall. Worst of all, the wind had risen until, even on their leeward side of the island, the swell was momentarily growing heavier.

"By George!" said Fessenden. "It looks as if we were in for it. Betty, we'd better have a look at the *Wisp*. That rotten old wharf!"

"I'll race you to it!" she cried.

He overtook her in half a dozen strides, and, throwing his arm about her shoulders, fairly swept her along with himself. She came no higher than his shoulder as she ran. Her eyes laughed up at him, and her shining hair brushed his lips. Aunty Landis was left hopelessly in the rear.

At the old pier, the waves, running far in beneath the flooring,

were breaking against the ancient piles, while the structure complained in every joint. The *Wisp*, tied stem and stern to a string-piece, was plunging furiously.

"She seems to be all right," said Fessenden, "but I think I'll put an extra half-hitch in each of those lines." He still steadied Betty against the wind as he spoke. "It would n't be pleasant to be forced to go home in that excursion boat."

Releasing his companion, reluctantly enough, he made his way out on the wharf. She promptly followed.

"Go back, child. The wind will blow you away."

"I'm—all—right," she gasped as he bent over the stern-line. "The rain will be here in a minute, and we'll need the rain-coats." She sprang aboard gaily.

"Come back!" he ordered. "I don't believe it's safe, Betty."

"Only a minute," she called. She waved a careless hand and dived into the cabin.

At that instant, a wave struck the *Wisp* on the inboard quarter and heaved her strongly outward. The stern-line held staunchly, but under the tremendous strain the string-piece gave way like the rotted punk it was, not a foot in front of Fessenden.

"Betty!" he roared. "Betty!"

His cry stirred the heart of the girl within the cabin, and brought her instantly onto the floor of the cockpit. Before she could realize the danger of the situation, the worst had occurred.

He was already kneeling at the forward line, heaving hand over hand to haul the bow of the *Wisp* alongside. The sloop was almost within reach when another wave struck her. The line was snatched from his fingers, and the yacht, flung to the full length of the rope, carried away the string-piece as before. The *Wisp* was adrift!

As the timber sank under his feet, Fessenden clutched at a wharf stanchion. By a miracle, he saved himself from going overboard.

As if recoiling from the freedom so suddenly won, the *Wisp* took a slight sheer toward the pier. The tide, running like a mill-race, swept her broadside past Fessenden.

"Betty!"

The girl, her body lithe and alert, had been steadying herself by the safety-rail of the cabin roof. Her face had whitened at the sight of Fessenden's peril, but it was only now, in response to his hoarse shout, that a sound escaped her.

"Bob White!" she cried, her arms suddenly extended in piteous appeal. "Oh, Bob White!"

The watery space between the wharf and the sloop was hopelessly wide, but, uttering an inarticulate and despairing oath, he took two running steps and leaped,

He struck fair on his feet on the very rail of the *Wisp*, stood tottering, fought wildly for his balance—and then Betty's firm little hand plucked him safely inboard.

"Thank you, Bob White," she said.

There was no time to return even a smile in answer. He gripped the wheel and gave the sloop a sheer with the hope of beaching her outright. But wind and wave caught her.

"Close the hatch!" he roared.

As it happened, the forward hatch-cover was already in place. Betty snapped to the sliding storm-door of the cabin barely in time. A sea swept the *Wisp* from end to end, flattening Betty against the side of the cabin, and nearly swamping the yacht at a blow.

Fessenden was glad to escape by putting the craft dead before the wind. Bare-poled as she was, the *Wisp* fled southeastward like a frightened thing. The rain, the clouds, and the night overtook them together.

With a thrill, Fessenden felt a long, regular swell suddenly begin to lift the battling yacht. There was still enough of daylight to permit him a sight of Betty's pale little face.

"Betty," he said, "don't be frightened, but I'm afraid we're clear of the Capes. This feels like the Atlantic."

She made a staggering rush and reached the lockers. There she sat down beside him as he struggled with the wheel. The spray flew clear over them again and again.

She laid her wet cheek an instant against his arm. "The ocean?" she said. "I hope you won't be seasick, Bob White. I know I won't."

"You're a trump," he said.

IX.

Now and then the sloop yawed alarmingly as they ran before the wind.

"This won't do," said Fessenden. "I must get some sail on to steady her. Do you think you're strong enough to hold the wheel, Betty?"

She gripped the spokes, her hands beneath his. The quiet strength in his clasp comforted her mind no less than her body,—in a moment she nodded confidently.

Leaving the helm in her charge, Fessenden literally crawled forward. Ordinarily, the jib was handled by means of the sheet led aft through a couple of small blocks to the helmsman, so that one man could both sail and steer without moving from his place. Now, however, the fierceness of the wind impelled Fessenden to extra precautions in his endeavor to make sail.

He took care to wrap the sheet twice about a cleat before hoisting away, but as soon as the jib rose above the low gunwale, the wind tore it

from the lower bolt-ropes, and it blew straight out, held only by the bowsprit halliard.

He would have attempted to recover the ironed-out sail by reaching for it with a boat-hook—a foolhardy undertaking at any time—but Betty, divining his intention as he showed black against the whitening crest of the waves, screamed so shrilly that he desisted. There was nothing left for him to do but to make his way back to the wheel.

“Child,” he said, “you’re wet through, and I’m afraid we’ve a wetter time before us. There’s no use in your staying out here to get soaked every other minute. Go in the cabin, out of harm’s way.”

“But you’re being soaked, too.”

“I’m a man.”

“I’ll stay with you.”

“No, you won’t. I can’t think of letting you do that. Watch your chance and get inside there. Slide the hatch-cover to, sharp, before any water gets in.”

Rather to his surprise, she yielded, and dexterously slipped into the cabin. Although her presence had been more comfort to him than he realized until she was gone, he bent his whole attention to keeping the *Wisp* from broaching to, which would have meant the end.

The worst of the rain-squall had passed, but the night was as black as a wolf’s mouth. The wind, blowing half a gale, piled up the waves behind the *Wisp* to a height that might well have proved a menace to a craft three times her size. Thanks to her tight-closed hatches and her seaworthiness, she shed water like a petrel, yet the towering swell of the Atlantic might crush her at any moment. If they fell an instant into the trough of the sea, they were lost.

Fessenden contemplated the possibility of constructing a sea-anchor. But whatever might have been possible for an experienced seaman, his nautical knowledge was too limited for him to undertake the work.

And even if he could make and successfully launch a sea-anchor, the most dangerous part of the task would follow—that long and terrible moment it would take for the sloop to swing round, head on to the sea. The waves might roll her over and over before he could even clasp Betty in his arms. The risk was too great. He breathed an inward prayer, and held the *Wisp* resolutely before the wind.

He had three dangers to face—the ever-present terror of being overtaken by the following sea, the likelihood of being dashed against a hidden coast in the black night, and the chance of being run down by some merchantman or man-o’-war, threshing through the dark.

Suddenly the cabin hatch snapped open and shut again.

“Betty!”

“I’m going to stay with you.”

“Go back.”

"No. See, I'm wrapped up splendidly. And here are oilskins for you."

Indeed, a quaint figure she made of it, in a rain-coat miles too big for her slender body, and a sou'wester hat, somewhere discovered, fairly engulfing her little head.

For the first time that night, he laughed boyishly. "You dear child! You must n't stay, though."

"Put these on, Bob White. Perhaps you'll get dry underneath."

Still keeping a controlling hand on the wheel, he managed with Betty's help to encase himself in the fisherman's oilskins she had found.

"Now, then," he said, "you must go in."

For answer, she seated herself beside him. "No, I want to stay here. I'm afraid to be alone in there—with you out here, and the dreadful black water all about."

"I thought you were n't afraid of anything."

"I'm going to stay."

"You can't, Betty. I order you to go in."

"I won't go."

"Betty," he cried in despair, "it will be better for me if you're out of the way. Don't you see?"

"No-o, I don't."

"You'll be safer."

"You know I won't. You're only trying to make me comfortable, while you are left out here in the cold and wet. Let me stay. If—if we must be drowned, I want to be near you, Bob White—please."

There was no resisting this appeal. A thrill of pity went through him as he looked down at the slight form crouching under the all-too-low gunwale. She should not die if he could prevent it.

"Can you see the compass?" he asked. "How are we heading?"

She rubbed a little of the brine from the binnacle-glass. "Yes; now I see it. North is where that mark is, is n't it? Oh, I know—southwest by south."

"What? Look again."

"That's right. Sou'west by sou'."

"Then the wind is shifting to the northeast. Betty, we're headed for Cape Hatteras."

The dread name apparently produced no alarm in the girl's mind. "I've always wanted to be in a storm off Hatteras."

"Well, you're likely to have your wish before morning, if this gale keeps up."

"If we reach Cape Hatteras in the dark like this—abruptly—what will happen?"

"I fancy we'll hurt Cape Hatteras's feelings."

"Oh!"

After a silence, he felt her hand touch his arm as if she needed comfort.

"Poor little girl," he said. "Don't worry. I won't let anything hurt you."

"I know. I'm—all right."

"There's plenty of ocean about Hatteras," he went on, rather to reassure her than because of his belief in what he said. "We may not get near the land. Even if we do, Pamlico Sound is just behind it—there's only a sort of stretched-out island between the sound and the ocean. We might slip right through an inlet into the Sunny South."

"It is n't—very likely, is it?"

"It's quite possible," he maintained.

Presently, to his delight as well as to his surprise, he heard a little crowing laugh.

"What is it?"

"Aunty Landis! Goodness! I never thought of her until this minute. What will she do?"

"Go home on the excursion steamer, of course. But she'll have to stay all night at the hotel. The steamer is n't likely to risk crossing the bay during this blow."

"You don't suppose she'll think we're drowned? She may be in a terrible fright over us."

"Oh, I hope not."

Hour after hour wore on, and still the storm drove them southward. All night Fessenden, in a way that was afterward a marvel to himself, fought a ceaseless battle with the sea and wind. His hands were numb and his feet were like ice, but he stood staunchly to his task.

In spite of his urgings, renewed from time to time, Betty crouched beside him all night long. She too was cold, colder even than he, for she could not warm herself by action. Still she held her post. Perhaps she knew that her presence there was an inspiration to him as real as the sight of the flag to the fighting soldier.

Toward morning the clouds broke overhead. The stars began to shine through. Then, to the relief of the *Wisps*' crew, the wind began to fall, and about dawn the waves had ceased to be formidable.

"Betty," said Fessenden joyfully, "I really believe we've pulled through."

"Hurrah!"

While she held the wheel, he managed to lay hold of the now flapping jib, and to set it after a fashion. This greatly steadied the sloop.

Then, at last, Betty consented to listen to his persuasions to turn in in the cabin.

"We're pretty well out of danger now," he declared, "Go in and rest, Betty. Take off those dripping clothes——"

"Only steaming, please."

"Amendment accepted! But take them off and go to bed. I'm afraid you'll be sick—and then what should I do?"

"Will you promise to wake me in an hour? *You* are the tired one. I've loafed all night."

"I'll wake you when I think it's time to turn the wheel over to you. I promise you that."

"I'll go to bed, then."

"Good! And, Betty, light that oil range and dry your clothes by it. Now, off with you, quick!"

It was full daylight, although the sun was not yet visible. For the first time in many hours their faces were plain to each other's view. Both were pale with the long night's exposure, but both were smiling.

Betty lingered in the act of closing the cabin-hatch upon herself. "You'll be sure to wake me soon?"

"Yes."

"What a night we've had!"

"Rather lively, was n't it? I assure you, I'm glad to see you this morning."

"I'm glad to see *you*. Oh, very glad!"

She closed the hatch gently behind her. No sound of a sliding bolt followed—she trusted him too innocently to lock the door against him.

For a while he heard her moving about, then all was quiet. He pictured her tired little body cuddled under the blankets while a grateful warmth crept over her. He smiled to the gray sea at the thought.

The wind and sea diminished rapidly. The sun rose out of the waste to the east, and the last of the foul weather fled before it. In an hour or so he ventured to hoist the mainsail. The sloop bore it well, and under it made swift progress toward the southwest. Sooner or later, he knew he must sight land in that direction.

Indeed, it was not yet ten o'clock when a remote gray line took shape off the starboard bow. He could not repress a shout of joy:

"Land! Land ho! Land!"

In a moment the cabin-hatch was opened wide enough to let a sleepy voice be heard. "Did you call me, Bob White?"

"I did n't mean to wake you, child, but land's in sight."

"Land? Oh, that's good! But I must have been sleeping for hours. You ought n't to have let me be so selfish."

"Not at all. You can do your trick at the wheel whenever you're ready, and I'll turn in a while."

"I'll be out in ten minutes—no, twenty, for I'm going to get breakfast for you."

"Breakfast!"

"Certainly. Do you think you can drink a cup of hot coffee?"

"Jupiter Pluvius! Hot coffee? Alas, I must be mad."

"You'll see," she laughed. "In twenty minutes."

Indeed, it was not long before she again appeared. "I've just come to say good-morning."

"Did you sleep well?"

"De-li-ciously. I can only stay a minute—breakfast is cooking. You poor man, you're still in your wet clothes, while I'm as dry as toast."

Her garments, down to her very shoes, spread since dawn on the racks above the range, were dry and even smoothed. Only the scarlet sash and handkerchief were missing—the salt water had ruined them.

The braid of shining hair no longer hung down her back, but now encircled her head in heavy coils, a new and charming arrangement. He was vaguely conscious that it made her look strangely mature, and endowed her with a mysterious dignity.

"I have n't been really wet for some time," he assured her. "If you'll take charge, I'll have a look at the chart in the locker here. Perhaps we can tell where we are."

"I'm not at all sure," he announced after a brief study, "but I think we are n't so far down as Hatteras—the wind fell away very rapidly toward the last. That may be the North Carolina coast, though—Currituck Island, perhaps. You know the sounds run Currituck, Albemarle, and Pamlico."

"I know the coffee must be boiled and the ham broiled by this time. Take the wheel and let the cook attend to her duties."

She flatly refused to touch any breakfast until he had eaten his fill, and waited upon him in spite of his protests. Never had broiled ham, hard crackers, and marmalade tasted so good. And the strong, hot coffee warmed his very soul.

"You wonder!" he said, as he presented the tin cup for more. "Where did you get this gorgeous dinner-set?"

"I found it among the pots and pans in the galley. There's quite an assortment your predecessor left."

"Oh, that coffee! You miracle of a child!"

Her eyes sparkled as she watched him swallow a second cup. "What do you think of the cook?"

"I think the cook's an angel."

"Have you finished? Then to bed with you."

"I'm off. Just hold the *Wisp* to the course she's on. Call me when you can make out the land distinctly."

He patted her benevolently upon the shoulder and started forward. "Well, here goes the weary sea-boy to his slumbers."

She waved her hand as he descended the fore-castle ladder.

In a little while he slid back the overhead hatch a foot or so and looked out. He was invisible to the fair helmswoman, but the coils of her hair shone just above the top of the cabin roof.

"I'm almost asleep," he called. "Good-night, Betty dear."

He held his breath. Would the intimacy wrought of the night's peril and companionship avail? An answer, low and very gentle, went with him to his dreams.

"Good-night, Bob White—dear."

X.

WHEN he awoke, it seemed to him that he had slept a scant half-hour, but his watch, which had come unscathed through the wettings of the night, showed that mid-afternoon had come.

The *Wisp* rose and fell very gently, and he thought with satisfaction that the sea must be entirely calm.

In the tiny bath-room of the fore-castle, he revelled in a fresh-water bath. As he passed the looking-glass, he surveyed his face ruefully. In vain to lament his looming beard! A diligent search failed to reveal the razor he had hoped Danton's boatman might have left.

It was only when fully dressed and engaged in smoothing down his hair as best he could that he became aware of a strange thing. There was no sound of rippling water under the *Wisp's* bow.

And then he realized that the gentle motion of the sloop could not be caused by the rise and fall of the Atlantic swell—a swell majestic even at its calmest. The *Wisp* was not under way, but was at anchor in quiet waters!

He ran up the ladder, shouting: "Betty! Betty! What's up?"

For his pains, he bumped his head on the half-closed hatch-cover, and for answer to his call heard—nothing. With another cry of "Betty!" he leaped upon deck.

There was no Betty. In a quiet inlet the *Wisp* was lying alongside a float connected by a plank to a pebbly beach. A tongue of land separated the harbor from the outer ocean. At a little distance on this sandy tract appeared a straggling group of houses, and anchored near the *Wisp* was a steam yacht, a pretty craft all white and gold.

All this he took in at a glance. A second disclosed a note pinned to the hatch-cover. He had it open in short order.

BOATSWAIN BOB:

I could n't bear to wake you. A man who helped me make fast the *Wisp* says this is Currituck Sound, and the city (?) is Kitty Hawk. I've gone to get some things. Be sure your clothes are dry.

NANCY LEE, A.B.

Kitty Hawk was on the chart—of so much he was certain—and he guessed that it contained a shop to supply its needs. He determined to purchase some sadly needed apparel for himself. In the shop, too, he would be certain to find Betty.

Still a little languid from his experiences of the night, he strolled leisurely along the sandy path. The day was clear and pleasantly warm. On his left the sun glinted upon the now kindly sea, and on his right the seagulls shrieked and fought above the waters of the sound. And presently he would see Betty.

He entered the village. The few people he met greeted him with a stare of frank curiosity, a stare generally followed by a friendly nod.

As he had anticipated, he soon came upon a building bearing a sign:

BAZAAR. DRYGOODS AND GROCERIES. POST-OFFICE.

In front of it a wooden bench extending along the sidewalk, and three or four lank loungers thereupon, furnished irrefutable proof that the centre of Kitty Hawk's business activities was at hand.

He remembered that he had not had a sight of Betty for five hours, and he pushed open the door of the "Bazaar" eager to see again the roguish mouth.

To his disappointment, she was not in the shop. However, the proprietor, a sandy-haired native inclining to corpulency, was prompt to supply his needs, nor was he backward in answering Fessenden's question as to whether or not he had seen a young woman in a white sailor-suit.

"You-all are off the sloop 'at come in jest aftah the big yacht, I reckon. Yes, suh, yoah wife's jest been heah."

"My wife!"

He could have bitten his tongue off the next instant, for the man gave him a sharp, not to say suspicious, look.

"Yes. The young lady's yoah wife, I reckon, suh. Her and you-all come togethah, did n't yo'?"

"Yes—no—that is——" stammered Fessenden.

The shopkeeper stopped in the act of wrapping the assortment of haberdashery and razors Fessenden had picked out.

"It ain't my way to quawl with good money," he said, "but I'm a professin' Baptist, and I'm *obliged* to say if yo' two folks have come sailin' round these parts 'ithout bein' lawfully married—well"—he sighed regretfully—"then, suh, you-all can't buy nothin' in my stoah."

But by this time Fessenden had recovered his wits. "No, no, man," he said. "You don't understand. She's my daughter."

"Oh, yoah daughtah? Then it's all right, of co'se. Yes, suh, I can see now she does favah you-all a heap." Although desirous of being convinced, his suspicions still lingered. "But you-all are a pretty young-lookin' fathah, that's a fact, suh."

"Forty is n't very young," returned Fessenden mendaciously. "Which way did you say she went?"

"Why, she met some of yoah friends from the big yacht. They was in aftah theyah mail. They-all went out togethah. Yoah friends beat you-all in consid'abul, did n't they?"

His friends on the big yacht? What was the fellow talking about? Fessenden repressed a half-uttered question. No need to reawaken the man's slumbering suspicions as to the character of himself and Betty! He settled his bill, and left the "Bazaar," bundle in hand.

The shopkeeper's talk had stirred him profoundly. Betty? Good Lord! For the first time he saw how others might look upon their enforced cruise together. She was almost a child, true; but was she near enough to childhood to be beyond the breath of scandal? This was a devilish mess!

He could not bear to think of himself in such a light. Far less could he patiently endure that through any fault of his—yet his fault was only his presence—her name should be blackened. What could he do? His feet lagged as he pondered, his head hanging.

He knew that Aunty Landis must have borne the news of their disaster to Sandywood. What would thoughtless Polly Cresap say when she learned that he and the farmer's pretty daughter were not drowned after all? And impertinent Harry Cleborne? How would Madge Yarnell judge him? With brooding scorn, perhaps. As for Charlie Danton—Fessenden could picture all-too-clearly his bitter smile, the scar-like line twitching the corner of his mouth. By God! he would suffer no sneer from Danton.

He wondered if any of the villagers had conveyed to Betty, even by a look, the suspicions that accursed shopkeeper had thrust upon him! He would find her at once. His presence might act as some sort of shield for her.

Conscious that some one blocked his way, he glanced up sharply. Charlie Danton stood before him—Danton, not sneering, not even smiling, but watching him very gravely.

XI.

So near had Danton been to Fessenden's thoughts that he was able instantly to connect the Baltimorean's presence with the shopkeeper's talk of the people from the steam yacht. He was the first to speak.

"Where's Betty?"

"She's with my wife—on the *West Wind*."

"Your wife?"

"Yes. I was married two days ago."

"Danton! You—married? You're joking, old man."

"Not in the least. I was married last Sunday—to Madge Yarnell."

"Madge Yarnell! What!"

"Is Mrs. Charles Danton," said the other.

Fessenden was too dumfounded to do aught but stare. His friend slipped an arm through his and turned him about.

"There's room for us on the bench there. Let's talk it over. Madge and Betty are doing the same down in the sand-hills now."

Fessenden yielded without a word, and they seated themselves on the bench.

Danton was a man under thirty years. He was slight and pale, and had much of the abrupt manner of that ancestor who had come to Baltimore in the train of Jerome Bonaparte, and who, like his master, had found a wife there.

"You're really married?" said Fessenden. "By Jove! I can't get over it. To Madge Yarnell, too. Then what in the world has become of—of—ah——"

"Of a certain other lady?" appended his friend with perfect coolness. "I don't blame you for wondering about her. But never mind now. I want to tell you about my wedding. It was unique in the history of the Chesapeake, I promise you." His laugh had a ring of heartiness that surprised his listener. "Tom," he went on, "I'll be frank with you. I've been in more than one crooked path in my time, but I'm through with that sort of thing. Thank Heaven!"

The other's amazement found expression. "I swear I don't know you. What's come over you?"

"Love," said Danton simply. "Madge's love, and all that it means. She says she has told you of that tearing down the flag matter last year. That proved to me and to her that I owned *her*—I'd known for a long time that she owned *me*, you understand—but after that affair she sent me away, and I, in revenge, went after—— I was a cad, I know. Well, I hope I'll never be again."

"About your wedding, old man?"

"I'm coming to that—and I'll skip the long story between. Last Saturday, after Madge met you and Betty on the road, she galloped to Sandywood Station, and sent me a reply to the wire I'd sent you."

"A bit cool, that."

"I've got it in my pocket now. Here!" He read the bluish slip, smiling faintly the while.

CHARLES DANTON

The Club, Baltimore.

Impossible to come, but understand. She promises to be West Wind eight o'clock Sunday night, ready.

"Hum! What did that mean?"

"It meant that I thought I understood. I thought that you had discovered the—the Other Lady, in the farm-house where she was—well, was hiding from me. I believed she'd told you to tell me she was *ready*—at last. I'd had the *Wisp* stored for that very reason, you know, and then shifted to the *West Wind* because it was larger and more seaworthy, in case *she* wanted to go right across to Gibraltar."

"Was it as near a thing as that?"

"No matter now. The result of the telegram was that I was at Polocoke landing and aboard the *West Wind* by eight o'clock Sunday night. I give you my word I never dreamed of a trick—who would?"

"I don't see——"

"You will in a moment. My skipper, Williams, met me as I came aboard. 'She's below, sir,' he said, 'and gave orders we were to put to sea just as soon as you turned up.' Faithful soul! He did n't know he'd been tricked either—does n't know it yet, for that matter. He'd run away with the Queen of India if he thought I wanted it done. 'Right,' I told him. 'Shove off, and go full speed as soon as you're clear.' With that, I dived down into the main cabin. She was n't there, and I looked into my stateroom. I could n't see her there either, so I stepped to the inner stateroom—the two connect, you understand—where I thought she must be."

He smiled soberly at Fessenden's interested face. "Tom," he said, "every word I'm telling you is for your soul's good. It's all the truth, but it's a parable, too—for you. Well, as I reached the doorway between the two rooms, somebody seized both my elbows from behind. By George! she's as strong as a man."

"What! Not——"

"Yes, Madge."

"Great Scott! I begin to have a glimmer."

"I had just time to see that it *was* Madge before she pushed me inside—into the inner room—and slammed the door behind me. It locked with a spring."

"She was outside?"

"Yes, in my room. I was inside that."

"I understand."

"Precisely. I fancy I don't need to tell you much more. I was a prisoner in my own yacht, and that yacht headed full speed down the bay, my men acting upon what they thought were my own orders. A lovely girl was in my room. I was as much separated from her as if I were in the moon, but my own crew could n't know that, and neither could the world."

"She's a heroine."

"She is—the most adorable in the world! She talked to me

through the closed door. What she said—well, that's only for her and me. I saw at last what a mad fool I'd been. Then—then she threw herself on my mercy.”

“ You seem to have played the man.”

“ She'd make a man of a snake! I saw myself in my true light at last; and I understood *her* at last. God bless her!”

“ Amen!”

“ We ran on down to Old Point Comfort, and the chaplain at the fort married us that same night.”

The two men shook hands.

“ After we left Old Point,” went on Danton, “ we cruised about a bit, got mussed up by the storm, and ran in here. And then you—you and *Betty*—appeared.”

His emphasis brought a penetrating look from Fessenden.

“ You said you were telling me a parable. You don't mean—surely you can't—*Betty*!”

“ I do.”

“ Do you dare to think——”

“ I don't think anything. What I say is that my case furnishes a parallel to yours.”

“ Speak out, man! What! You mean you think I ought to marry her?”

“ Well, then—yes.”

“ Good God! Marry *Betty*!”

“ Yes.”

Fessenden rose abruptly to his feet and walked away a few paces. He stared unseeingly across the stretch of sand to the sea beyond.

A hundred images of *Betty* flitted before his mind's eye—images graceful and smiling, sad and gay, merry and serious, always infinitely winsome. Her voice sounded in his ear—teasing, angry, kind—always low-toned and charming.

He faced Danton. “ Marry her? I've been wanting to do that very thing since the first minute I saw her—only, I did n't know it.”

His friend's face shone with relief and pleasure. He broke into a boyish laugh.

“ Great!” he said. “ You're the right sort, Tom. I knew it, and I told *Madge* so.”

Fessenden could not respond to the other's mood. “ All very well. But what will *Betty* say?”

“ Ask her.”

“ I intend to. But is she old enough—is she in a position—to understand?”

“ I tell you, yes.”

“ And I tell you I'm very doubtful. A mere child, a country girl,

ignorant of the world, ignorant, perhaps, of what marriage means! It's a hard position for me, and it may be worse—it may be horrible—for her."

"Ask her," repeated Danton. "Look there!" He levelled his walking-stick. "Do you see the dunes there—the second hill? Somewhere beyond that you'll find Madge and Betty."

Without another word, Fessenden pulled his cap over his eyes and strode off.

He skirted the first hillock, and on its farther side came abruptly upon Madge Danton. She gave him a warm hand. Her eyes had lost their defiant look; rather, it seemed to him, they included the world in their gentle glance.

"You'll find her beyond the next hill," she said.

"You've talked to her—as Danton talked to me?"

"Yes. She understands—her position. I know I don't need to warn you to be—careful."

"No, no."

He did not find Betty beyond the next hill, nor the next. But, hastening down the hollow ways, he almost stumbled over her at last—on a sunny slope above the sea.

She looked up at him, her eyes as clear as crystal. "Hello, Boat-swain Bob!"

The greeting steadied him immeasurably. He knew that not so much what he should say in the next few minutes, as how he should say it, might determine the course of their lives. He longed with all his strength to be given a divine tact and a divine gift of speech.

He threw himself on the sand at a respectful distance. "Hello, Nancy Lee!"

Thanks to Kitty Hawk's "Bazaar," a scarlet ribbon again shone at Betty's throat. Her hair was as he had last seen it—coiled superbly about her head. Again he felt the air of dignity and aloofness of which the coiled hair seemed the symbol.

Fessenden's eyes, quiet and tender, met her own, his glance as clear as hers.

"Betty," he said, very simply, "we've been through a lot together, and I want you to marry me. Will you? Don't think I'm asking you because of any chivalrous fancy. I want you because I love you, and for nothing else in the world." His own words fired him. "Dearest, I've loved you since the first minute I saw you. You know that—in the bottom of your heart, you know that's true."

Her eyes, which at first had met his unwaveringly, quailed a little. The red crept slowly into her cheeks.

"I'm only a—a country girl," she said. "And you're the famous

Mr. Thomas Fessenden. I did n't know your real name until Madge told me, you know."

"Will you marry me, Betty?"

She eyed him soberly. "Madge said I *must* say yes, if you asked me."

"You poor child! Don't mind what she says. I want you to love me, if you can."

"I like you thoroughly, Bob White."

"Is that all?"

"That's all—I'm sorry," she answered gravely. "To marry a man, and not to love him, would be—horrible."

All the chivalry in Fessenden's nature stirred at her words. His clenched hands sank to the wrists in the soft sand, and his voice shook a little as he answered:

"Not if—if we marry, and still remain only—friends."

Her glance searched his soul. "O-oh! Can you—mean what you say?"

"I give you my word of honor. Do you remember that night—good heavens! was it only last Friday?—that night I had supper at your house, and what I told you when you looked as if you were willing to say good-night in a certain way?"

"I remember."

"Well, I'll stick by that."

She rose to her feet.

"You have n't answered me yet," he protested.

Her face flushed exquisitely. "There's a church in Kitty Hawk," she said. "And I believe a minister comes over from the mainland once a month. Madge says he is due—to-morrow."

XII.

THEY were married in the little Kitty Hawk church at noon the next day.

Before the hour of the wedding came, certain matters had been attended to. Letters had been written in time to catch the launch which would return with the minister from Kitty Hawk to the mainland. The clothing stock of the "Bazaar" had been materially reduced by the demands both Betty and Fessenden had made upon it. The *Wisp* had been loaded with everything in the way of food, water, and utensils, that could be needed for a fortnight's cruise.

"Why bother with the sloop?" Danton had demanded. "There's plenty of room on the *West Wind*. We can all go honeymooning together, eh, Madge? Over to Bermuda, if you like."

To Fessenden's infinite relief, Betty had declined this well-meant

offer. "No, thank you," she had said, blushing a little. "After to-night, I'll go back to the dear little *Wisp*—where I'll belong, you know. Bob White is going to take me down through the sounds, and then back through the Dismal Swamp, home."

Madge and Danton, supplemented by the entire crew of the *West Wind*, were the witnesses at the wedding.

It seemed to Fessenden that Betty's eyes were bluer than the sea that broke on the inlet bar, and the light in them more mysterious and wonderful. She looked a fair and innocent child.

He answered the minister's questions, and even signed the marriage certificate, in a sort of daze, a daze from which he roused himself only after they had eaten the wedding breakfast on the *West Wind*, and having boarded the *Wisp*, were waving farewell to the others across the water.

Betty serenely assumed command. "I'll take the wheel, Boat-swain Bob," she said, "and you get up sail."

He cast off from the float, and set jib, flying jib, and mainsail in a trice. As the sloop gathered headway, the helmswoman stood under the stern of the larger yacht.

"Good-by, good-by, children," called Danton patronizingly.

"*Bon voyage*, children," chorused Madge. "Be sure to love each other."

"Good-by, old married people," retorted Fessenden.

The *Wisp* stood wing-and-wing down the sound. Fessenden lounged at his ease beside the charming captain.

"Betty," he said, "has it yet occurred to you that you are really my wife?"

She gave him a swift, half-frightened glance. "No-o. I have n't really had much time to think about it, you know."

"Just now it came over me in a sort of wave. If you don't object, I'll call you 'dear' occasionally, simply to assure myself it's true."

"Whenever you like," she returned politely.

"Dear!"

"Oh! That's rather—pronounced, is n't it?"

"Very well pronounced. Very pleasant to pronounce, in fact."

She sat down trustfully beside him, a guiding hand on the wheel. "Do you know, Bob White, I've often thought it would be delightful to sail like this with a rather good-looking—comrade?"

"Am I the man, may I ask?"

"You are."

"Thank you—dear. And do you know that for the last two or three days I've been thinking I'd give my hope of salvation to sail like this with Betty Landis?"

She gave him another quick glance. "With whom?"

"I mean with Betty Fessenden, of course."

"O-oh!"

"I'm dreaming now of sailing on and on with her. The other night I dreamed that she put 'dear' after my name, and that if we could only sail and sail long enough she might do it again."

His half-closed lids hid the warmth in his eyes, but his voice shook with the passion he struggled to control. She shrank a little.

"You need n't," he said. "Please don't. You can trust me absolutely. I—I was merely dreaming, you know."

"I did n't mean to hurt you, Bob White—dear. Trust you? My presence here shows that I do—you know that." Her fingers touched his hair so fleetingly that he hardly dared believe she had meant it for a caress.

Presently she relinquished the wheel to him and took his place among the cushions.

He noticed how round her throat was, and how deliciously white. The rose-tipped chin and red mouth held him fascinated, until the glint of bayonets in the eyes warned him to control his glances.

"You're the most adorable skipper I ever saw," he declared.

"I've a confession to make, Boatswain."

"Confess then, Nancy Lee."

"My ankle was n't hurt that day in the brook. I did n't really stumble."

"What!"

She nodded contritely. "No. I did it on purpose. Was n't it perfectly shameless?"

"I've had a far-away feeling that you made a miraculous recovery from that strain. But why did you pretend?"

"Just as a game. I wanted to see what the—the good-looking stranger would do."

"You found out."

"Goodness, yes, did n't I!" They laughed together at the thought.

"Madge and Charlie Danton," she went on—"do you think they're really in love? I mean, do you think their love will last?"

"Don't you?"

"Ye-es, I do. She has just enough *esprit de diable* to hold him. It's 'infinite variety' that pleases him, I fancy, and Madge is twenty women in one."

"You're a philosopher. By the way, where did you learn French? Do they teach that in the 'little red-roofed schoolhouse' in Maryland?"

"Have n't I told you about my teacher? And I went to a very good school in Baltimore, if you please."

"That reminds me that I know hardly anything about my own

wife—only that her name was Betty Landis. You once told me that your mother was well-connected, Betty. Who was she?"

The mainsail sheet, which she had been carelessly handling, at that moment slipped through her fingers, and the boom went flying out. He was barely able to keep the sloop from jibing.

"Be careful, child," he warned. "Take a turn or two around that cleat there."

"Bob White," she said, when affairs were again in order, "I've been thinking—of what you must be giving up in marrying *me*. I don't mean only your bachelor freedom, although I know that's precious to a man. But you are giving up—everything."

"I'm lucky to get the chance."

"Perhaps I've spoiled your career."

"Nonsense!"

"It may not be nonsense. You are a man of a different world from the country one you found *me* in. It was only an hour ago we were married, but I can see already that I was perfectly mad and unutterably selfish to let you sacrifice yourself for me. A braver girl—a better girl—wouldn't have cared what silly society might say. I was wicked to marry you!"

"Tut! tut!"

"I'm perfectly serious—miserably serious."

"Then I'll be serious, too. I admit that you and I ought to be different, but we are n't. I don't know why it should be so, dear, but we both 'belong.' We're the same sort. You must feel it as well as I."

All that golden afternoon they sailed, and all the afternoon they talked. Her mind played with a hundred fancies, grave and gay, and Fessenden heard her with delight, and with ever-renewed wonder. She seemed to him a sort of Admirable Crichton, possessing heaven-sent intuition of all that was rare and charming and useful.

At dusk they lowered all sail, let go the anchor, and made the sloop secure for the night.

Then, with his respectful help, Betty cooked the dinner, and served it on a camp-table in the cock-pit.

That dinner was Olympian. A sirloin steak, deliciously broiled—"I intend to give you a *man's* dinner," she had declared; French fried potatoes, as hot as the flames they came hissing from; coffee, as clear as amber; and fresh tea-biscuits which one was allowed to dip in Kitty Hawk honey.

When the dinner things had been cleared away, they sat under the stars and watched the lights twinkle here and there from lonely cabins alongshore. Now and then Betty's fingers strayed over the guitar she had borrowed from the *West Wind*. The light breeze sighed an

answer through the cypress and tamarack trees of the swampy cape near-by.

Betty pointed dreamily shoreward. "The 'swampers' down here are a wild lot. During the war my uncle was attacked by them—on the way down to his district."

"His district?"

"He commanded the Eastern Military District of North Carolina, you know, and—and——" She broke off abruptly. "Oh, dear! My foot's asleep—terribly! Will you put a cushion under it for me?"

"One minute," he said. "I don't quite make this out. If your uncle commanded a military district here during the war, he must have been a Federal general, a man of distinction, yet you——"

"My foot's asleep, and prickles dreadfully."

"Just a moment." She could feel the growing fixedness of his glance. "I—remember—this sort of thing has happened before. On the island—Rincoteague—when I asked you what you knew about Madge Yarnell, you suddenly discovered that it was raining. This morning, too, something was said about your mother, and somehow the sail got adrift at that very moment. You had hold of it. And just now your foot falls asleep in the nick of time. Betty, I don't like this sort of thing! I've had enough confidence in you to marry you—to marry you very much in the dark. Isn't it fair you should have confidence in me, a little?"

She was listening with half-averted face and a smile that baffled him.

As he watched her, a score of confusing recollections rushed through his mind like fiery phantoms: Madge Yarnell's recognition of the envelope received from White Cottage; her determined effort to accompany him thither the next day; her theatric assault upon them, whip in hand, on the road from Jim George's—even yet he found it hard to believe that they had narrowly escaped a tragedy!

Harry Cleborne, Fessenden had then imagined, had warned him against his pursuit of an innocent country girl, and had puzzled him by obscure reference to another man, and on top of this had denied all knowledge of Betty Landis.

He recalled a hundred reticences and reservations on the part of Betty, natural enough at the time, but now possessed of a disturbing significance. Her knowledge of the world; her voice and bearing; the words she had let slip of her mother, of her Baltimore friends and school, of her uncle, the Union general! What did these things mean?

Light began to break upon him. Madge had not pressed upon them that day because she had discovered only him where she had expected to find Danton. Cleborne had really babbled of Danton and the Other Lady. Danton himself, in their talk on the beach at Kitty

Hawk, had said that the Other had been in seclusion—hiding from his pursuit of her—in a farmhouse on the Eastern Shore.

He towered over Betty in sudden fury. "What! What is all this? Who are you? Who are you, I say?"

The smile died from the girl's lips, and she shrank before his white face and fierce eyes.

Shame and rage so choked him that his words were almost incoherent, but they were the more terrible for that. She cowered away from him to the very limits of the gunwale.

"Oh, please!" she said. "Don't! Don't! Oh, please!"

The tenderness he had lately felt for her came over him in a wave as he looked down at the shrinking figure.

"I—I beg your pardon," he said. "I lost my head. Don't be afraid—it's all over now. I beg your pardon."

Without another word or look he turned and sought his room in the forecabin.

Half an hour later, as he lay staring into the darkness, he heard a muffled beat, as of a drum. Betty was playing her guitar in her room.

Gradually the drum-beat increased and quickened until it grew into a continuous roll, a throbbing cadence that thrilled through and through him. The roar of the wind and the mutter of the sea was in the shattering roll of the drum.

At the very height of its clamor—while he strove in vain to catch its meaning—it passed abruptly into silence. He was left staring into the dark.

XIII.

TOWARD midnight, the girl lying wakeful in the after cabin heard a tap at the door.

"Betty, are you awake?"

"Yes."

"Don't be frightened, but I think there may be a little excitement out here pretty soon."

"What is it?"

"Some of the 'swampers' up to a bit of thieving, I fancy."

"I'll be out in a moment, Bob White."

She found him, clad only in shirt and trousers, leaning against the side of the cabin, and staring shoreward. She divined his frank smile, and smiled in return.

"Thieves?" she asked in a whisper.

"I'm almost sure of it," he answered in the same tone. "I heard a boat bump against the side of the *Wisp* a few minutes ago. I

think they were drifting down with the tide to reconnoitre, and were swept in closer than they had expected to be."

"Have you a pistol?"

"On the locker there. Lucky Danton lent me one of his. You are n't afraid?"

"Not—with you."

"I dare say they won't come back. Listen now! See if you can make out anything to starboard. I'll watch on this side."

The night was very dark. The stars were obscured by light clouds, nor was there a moon visible. Their eyes could penetrate the darkness little farther than the rails where a whitish mist hid the surface of the water.

Betty gazed intently. A sidelong glance showed her Fessenden kneeling on the locker opposite her, his half-bared arms folded on his chest. His powerful form gave her a comforting sense of protection. She stared again to starboard.

From the mist two great hands gripped the rail of the sloop! Then a face—the face of a negro—rose into view, a knife gripped in his teeth. So impossible, so barbaric, did the apparition seem, that for a long breath Betty stared spell-bound.

Then her scream whirled Fessenden about. He crossed the cockpit at a bound, and struck savagely at the negro's jaw. The latter ducked with the skill of a trained boxer. Throwing up a hand, he caught the other by the throat, dragging him forward.

Fessenden struck again, grappled with his antagonist, tottered, and plunged headforemost over the rail upon him. Both went down struggling wildly.

Betty snatched up the revolver, hardly knowing what she did, and stared down upon the boiling water.

Fessenden's ghastly face, his groping fingers, his throat from which stood up the handle of the reeking knife! The possibility of these things strained her mind to the breaking point. A horror of what the loss of him would mean to her drew a piercing cry:

"Bob White! Oh, Bob White!"

As if summoned by the sound, the two men rose into view—a yard apart. Betty fired on the instant. The shot went wild, but the negro, for the first time aware that firearms were at hand, dived deep. They saw him but once again, his head a black spot in the mist as he swam frenziedly for his drifting punt.

Her shaking hands helped Fessenden over the rail.

"You—that dreadful knife!—you are n't hurt?"

"I knocked that out of his mouth the first thing. A couple of teeth along with it! But the fellow can swim like an alligator—he

would have drowned me at his leisure, if you had n't fired. Thank you, child." He patted her shoulder. "The row must have been rather rough on you."

"It does n't matter—so long as you're safe."

"It's all right. Well, that 'swamper' won't bother us any more to-night, I'll swear—so I'll get out of these wet togs. Lucky they're the flannels I borrowed from Danton."

She reached both hands to his dripping shoulders. "Tom! Tom! I want to talk to you." She was laughing, yet half in tears. "Oh, it's ridiculous—it's pitiful to think we are husband and wife, and—and you don't even know my real name."

He stared down at her. A slow tremor shook him. "Then you admit—that I don't?"

"I know you don't, you—you silly boy! Go and change your clothes. Then come back and talk to me. Come soon!"

In a wonderfully short time he rejoined her. Only his damp hair showed his late struggle with the robber, but his very quietness betrayed his emotion.

She was awaiting him on the cushioned locker, a lighted reading-lamp beside her.

"Sit down here," she said. "Close! You need n't be afraid of me. I—oh, I've a hundred things to say to you!"

"Good. It was thoughtful of you to bring out that lamp. I can see your face better while you talk."

"And I yours—you dear boy."

"Betty! Be careful what you say. I've got myself pretty well in hand, but I can't stand much of that sort of thing."

She laughed deliciously. "I brought the lamp to let you read something." She produced an official-looking document. "Look at this. Do you know what it is?"

He peered at it. "No-o. Yes, of course. It's our marriage certificate, is n't it?"

"It is. Mr. Thomas Fessenden, do you realize that you signed that document some twelve hours ago and did n't even read the name just above your own?"

"Above mine? That must be *your* name, Betty!"

"Of course, silly boy. But you have n't yet seen it. You were so excited that you may have married an Abiatha Prudence or a Mary Ann, for all you know."

He gave her a penetrating glance, then snatched up the lamp and held it so that its rays fell full upon the certificate.

Just above his own signature was another in a feminine hand: "Roland Elizabeth Cary."

He repeated it stupidly, "Roland Elizabeth Cary."

She nodded, blushing hotly.

"You?"

"Yes—please."

"Not Landis?"

"She was my old nurse. I've always called her Auntie Landis."

"*Roland Cary* that they all talked about! Not a man, but *you?*"

"Are you awfully disappointed? I was named after my great-uncle, General Roland Cary."

"Great Scott! Polly Cresap said *Roland Cary* was charming. Mrs. Dick Randall told me that he—no, that *Roland Cary* was a 'dee-vil.' Cresap quite raved over—over Roland Cary. I've been as blind as an owl!"

"It was wicked of me to fool you so long, but it was such a joke. All my cousins always call me Roland Cary, as if it were my only name."

"Then you're Elizabeth Cary—the Miss Cary of Baltimore, that people made such a fuss about when you came out last year—the 'Cary of 'the' Carys?"

"I suppose I am."

"I hope you'll give me credit for never believing that you were any ordinary person."

"Yes, I do."

"But *why* did you do it—masquerade in the Landis farmhouse? I remember somebody said 'Roland Cary' had 'notions.'"

"I did it to be near a friend—to have a chance to shelter a friend without attracting notice. A woman—the Other—the one that Charlie Danton——"

"O-oh! It must have been she Cleborne saw at the window—and I thought he was warning me about you!"

"I kept her out of harm's way—really in hiding. I did n't know how it would all end, but it did end perfectly."

"You mean that Madge Yarnell ran away with Charlie Danton, and solved the problem?"

"Not only that. The very night before *our* elopement—yours and mine—she received a letter, a *dear* letter, from her husband. They'd been on the point of making it up for weeks. You see, nothing *impossible* had occurred."

"I see."

He had put down the lamp so suddenly that the light had flickered out. The mist was gone, and the velvety blackness stretched unbroken from shore to shore. Far down the sound, the red ruin of the moon was rising from the water.

"Child," he said, "for a young woman of your position you have married in a very reckless and off-hand way."

"I knew you were—real. I knew I could trust you."

He gave a short laugh. "Thank you. But if we're going up and down this weary world in—in this fashion, forever, I think I'll soon begin to wish that the 'swamper' had put his knife into my heart."

She caught him tenderly by the chin. "Oh, Bob White! If you had never come back to me—out of that black water!"

He trembled from head to foot. "Betty!"

"I know—I know. Dear—will you kiss me?"

"For God's sake, Betty! You don't know what you're saying. After all, we're husband and wife—a kiss between you and me can't be play any longer. It means—it *must* mean—everything."

She leaned toward him, her eyes exquisitely tender.

"I know, dear," she said. "Must I ask you again? Will—will you kiss me?"



SONG FOR ALL SOULS' EVE

BY MARION CUMMINGS STANLEY

FAR blows the blast, the stars' pale light
 Faints o'er the waning year;
 Loud cries the wind,—it is the night
 The dead draw near.

The winds are wild, and midnight tolls
 Across a shrouded sky;
 Souls of my dead, beloved souls,
 Are ye anigh?

Oh, if ye sigh upon the wind
 Or on the air do ride,
 Fly low, sweet souls, and ye shall find
 One heart is wide.

The hearth is warm, clear burns the light
 Ye lit in days before.
 Souls of my dead, pass not to-night
 The open door.

THIRTY YEARS OF PENCRAFT

WHAT IT CAME TO AND WHAT IT COST

By General Charles King

Author of "Lanier of the Cavalry," "The Colonel's Daughter," etc.

IN TWO PARTS—PART II.

BACK from Switzerland, bent on repairing damages as speedily as possible, I found the old houses ready to take new stories at the old rates, but a new and importunate publisher ready to offer more. "I never gave a note in my life," said this enviable man, "and I don't owe a dollar." It sounded well. It seemed improbable. It *was* a whopper! So was his subsequent boast to the head of "the old Quaker City concern" that he now held the author "in the hollow of his hand." But he bid two thousand dollars cash for the first thing I could write, and there were now additional reasons for writing.

Two gifted women had evolved in part a soldier play, and had invited my collaboration. From three different lawyers about that time had come letters advising action against certain playwrights for "pirating," as they said, a story of mine. Many papers professed to see in a very stirring and successful military play nothing but a dramatization of "Two Soldiers," which the Lippincotts had published along in 1890. One legal experience that year, however, had been quite sufficiently expensive, and I desired no more. But here was a chance to own a third of a play, and it was taken. During the months of my absence abroad it had been sent to a New York manager, and a long time passed before it went back to Boston, and then speedily came to me startling tidings.

"From an unimpeachable source," my fair collaborators had learned that "Fort Frayne" too had been "adapted"—that with but slight alteration in names, etc., it was to be launched by certain buccaneers of the stage, and only one thing could save it. "Tell Captain King to write it at once as a novel, and publish it before they can push the play." Whether the danger was or was not as represented, the plan was worth trying, and in a few months "Fort Frayne," a novelization of

the play, instead of a dramatization of a novel, was in the hands of this new publisher, and in 1895 he rushed it by thousands on the market, and asked for more.

Conservative friends said the invader was setting a pace that would soon break him down. But there was that ever-present need of mine, and presently the need increased—the olive branches were growing, and so were the bills. Publisher Number Four offered still a better price, and so, when not engaged in the annual tale for the old house, the pen was spinning yarns for the new. At first these latter works appeared in creditable form; so did the payments; but it was n't long before there came jarring complications. Number Four's advertising methods were to me objectionable. Then came a delayed payment at a critical time. Number Four had been sending letters, three a week, urging the completion of a manuscript before the promised date. I put on steam and sent it. His written agreement called for payment on receipt of the manuscript, and the manuscript called for the check. It failed to come. I wrote, and finally wired. The excuse was that I had n't said *where* it should be sent. I had stipulated, and he had promised, that nothing should be bound until proof-sheets had been read and approved by me. Next thing came a book whose proofs had never been submitted. "Had to take advantage of a boom in the book market," said Number Four. "It has been carefully revised by an expert reader here."

I found "it" fairly riddled with typographical flaws of the most flagrant character, yet in this wretched shape he had unloaded it on the market. Then notes began to come instead of cash. Then appeals for extension. Then requests for renewals when new notes were due. I had run across the seas for a two months' rest and a Christmas visit to the family, and it was easy to fancy the smile on the face of the head of the Quaker City house when he got my cabled request for a cabled remittance. He sent it without even a "What did I tell you?"

Then, too, there came a letter from an old West Point comrade, a writer whose pen had spoken to tens of thousands, he who had been the first to urge me to listen to the offers of Number Four. Now his words were: "Drop him or you'll be done for"—and they came just after the final chapters of a long story had been sent, four-fifths of which were already in Number Four's possession, and Number Four's notes therefor in mine. It was too late to drop him.

In '97 came the first inauguration of our gentle-mannered President, and with his advent a boom in the book trade. Number Four met his notes. The sales, he said, had surpassed anticipation, and if I would write one more he could promise phenomenal results. Work for the Lippincotts fortunately filled the time and was going far to filling the financial gap. I had labored without ceasing for eighteen months,

and was looking forward again to a six-weeks sight of the "little chickens and their dam." In January I had booked and paid my passage to Genoa by the blessed old Rolling Billy, whereon Henry Loomis Nelson, Hobart Chatfield Taylor, and I had had so lovely a run through the Azores, "Gib," and Algiers three years before. Everything looked cheery. Hope once again had spread her wings, when lo! the Maine was done to death in Cuban waters; the people took the bit in their teeth, and rushed Congress and the President into a war. Instead of sailing eastward for sunny Italy, I went careering away to Manila, and the command of a brigade.

Here again was the service I loved and the life I was fit for. Here again came Fate—and the physicians. One year in the new grade, with a joyous bit of stirring, spirited campaigning, with almost every mail bringing requests or orders for pen-work; then had followed serious illness, and finally the doctor's dictum: "Get out of here by the first transport or go in your coffin the next."

On the long, dreary, homeward voyage was penned for Number Four the first of the Philippine stories. In August it had been photographed, typewritten, and sent off. In September the notes became due, but meantime we had an experience.

Shortly after reaching Manila there came a big clipping from the New York *Tribune*, with a portrait, and tremendously mendacious stories of deeds of physical prowess in the Civil War, such as carrying a wounded officer a mile and a half under heavy fire, he weighing two hundred pounds. This was accompanied by an announcement that the heroic personage described was now engaged in writing a novel for this new publisher. The clipping came from Number Four himself, with the statement that he had been instrumental in its insertion. It was six weeks coming. My answer repudiating the whole thing was a like time in getting back. So over two months elapsed between Number Four's first and second letters on the subject, quite time enough to enable him to forget the first.

In '97 officers of the army serving on the staff of the Grand Marshal at the inauguration parade wore full dress uniform, with a broad white silken shoulder sash. Camera fiends had caught many of them, and a home photographer had asked me for a sitting for a certain purpose. As luck would have it, Number Four soon thereafter came upon one of the resultant photographs, and instantly wrote his desire to use one in the next book. It was promptly denied. He persisted. One of his representatives even came out to argue the matter, but he was positively forbidden to use it for any such purpose.

Yet the first things I saw on reaching San Francisco were scores of prints from that very photograph on my persistent publisher's advertising "doggers." During my absence he had sent an agent to the

photographer on the plea that he was bringing out a "souvenir volume," and asking for all photographs that he had of the author. There was no time to write, he explained; the photographs were needed at once, and the photographer fell into the trap. The mischief was done before I knew it. Number Four was much aggrieved when ordered to surrender that plate. He promised compliance, but when the express package reached the office it contained every plate but that. He had retained it long enough to have it copied, so that when the book came forth the following month—the last book of mine he ever published—it was embellished with the forbidden photograph and scattered by thousands all over the land. So, too, by that time were many thousands of the few others I had been foolish enough to write for him, cheap editions selling everywhere for thirty cents or so, and spoiling the market for their betters. Though it cost me much more than a year's pay, and came just as the notes fell due and I was choosing my cabin for the long-looked-for voyage and another peep at the now long-absent family, I read without surprise and almost with complacency that Number Four had "filed an involuntary petition."

There was no more voyaging for me. There had been countless ills, and concomitant expenses, for the household. There was nothing to be done but work the harder. With Number Four eliminated, there were still the old reliables, Harpers and Lippincotts, to handle what might be left of my wares; there was still that hope.

There was also Fate again. Within the next month came the bolt from the blue sky—Harpers had failed, and the great Lippincott plant, fired from without, had burned to the ground.

At this juncture came a letter from a new and strange publisher. "Old Scot" McClure had gone the way of all flesh. "Famous and Decisive Battles" had become the property of a successor who wished me to write an additional chapter, "Santiago," and alter the existing last page. I declined.

A year or so later I heard that a local bookseller had a new edition of "Famous and Decisive Battles" for sale, and curiosity led me to look it up. With several short new chapters on battles neither famous nor decisive; with a total alteration of my closing page, and the insertion of a paragraph I never would have written or authorized; with a portrait of the author made by stealing a head from a photograph that belonged to the Lippincotts, and setting it on a torso that belonged to a stranger, this hybrid had been secretly pushed and sold to confiding dealers, and it bore on the cover the name of Publisher Number Four. The bookseller refused to say how or where he had got it. "It is one of the secrets of the trade," said he, and then presently went out of business. But the bogus volume can still be bought and sold, and life is too short to spend in running it down.

Then, heaven be thanked! there came publisher Number Five, a sturdy old soldier with the Medal of Honor for heroism in the Civil War, and for him at odd intervals in the course of the few years that followed, there were penned the stories of the Army of the Cumberland and of the Potomac that I had longed to write. But the market had been glutted with the cheap goods of Number Four, so there was little hope for new stories at standard rates, and less for the old. Nevertheless, these tales of the Civil War days did fairly well, and led on to the three years of study and work on what we fondly hoped would bring substantial reward. There were strange and uncanny experiences meantime, but let me finish with this. Number Five had served under the eye of George H. Thomas, the lion-hearted, and well nigh worshipped him. I revered that great leader, and with him for the central figure a war romance was woven, historical so far as Thomas and his battles were concerned, yet there ran through it all quite a story by itself. It was the last of the long works. "It is the best thing you have ever done," wrote the publisher. It won the praise even of two journals that for years had been hostile. It brought letters and commendations beyond expectations, but "The Rock of Chickamauga" was too solid to float. In one terse epigram, its failure with the reading public was explained: "Too much truth and too little fiction."

Meantime, however, there had been these other experiences, almost dramatic in their character. Publishers Number Six, in 1902, came forward with a bid for a Civil War story then running through the old *United Service*. They were strangers, but they got it, and were binding it when, defaulting on three notes, they had a fire in the premises, and a sudden stop to business. About this time the Referee in Bankruptcy paid two and a half per cent on the paper of Number Four, but that of Number Six has never yet found a redeemer.

Still, in 1903, hope a third time spread her wings and soared high in spite of all the knockouts of the past. A man I had faith in came forward with a plea for a man in whom I had none. The former had brains, business capacity, and cash; the latter had been Number Four's right bower, and I regarded him about as I did his former employer. He had succeeded in making my friend believe him both honest and capable. The friend had been an accidental backer of Number Four, and now Number Four's old adjutant had come forward with a fine scheme. The plates of the old stories were still intact. The stories had sold splendidly, said he. "If you can induce their author to write a few more like them, even two or three a year, with Remington and Deming to illustrate, and me to print and push them, you'll get every dollar back and thousands besides."

So my friend, the angel, came with the scheme, and at first I would none of it. Then came his second proposition: "If I guarantee you

against the loss of a cent and take all you can write, what better offer could you have? It's the one way left me to get back what I've lost. If I can put all this money into the project, can't you pocket your prejudice and put in your pen?"

That ended my opposition, if it did not end the doubts. The angel was a man of many enterprises. He installed the promoter as business manager, "staked" him from the start, left everything in his hands, and went his way. The first story was written and published in a blaze of glory. Beautiful binding and fine illustrations enhanced the value of rather a stirring tale, and "A Daughter of the Sioux" went like wild fire. New York and Boston papers reported it for weeks among the twelve books most in demand. "An Apache Princess" followed, without Remington, he having been exclusively demanded by another, yet the Apache did nearly as well as the Sioux. Our angel was delighted. The first year of the compact went blithely on. The second saw three books launched by the new firm, now fairly to be recognized as Publisher Number Seven. But the old symptoms, the old tricks, were beginning again to come to light: broken promises as to pictures and proof-reading, the "temporary" substitution of notes for checks, then appeals for renewals, etc., the angel being far distant and beyond reach, and finally the expected and the inevitable. For weeks the manager had been urging earlier completion of a story than the appointed time. Then came a frantic wire from the suddenly returned angel, followed by full particulars. "Send nothing more to Seven," said the angel. "He's"—but the Editor prefers not to print the angelic descriptives.

But I had just sent it.

The tale of Number Seven's meteoric flight is left to better hands. Honorably, loyally, and to the uttermost penny did our Angel fulfil his pact with me, but cruelly had he been bitten. On the previous occasion there had been something left in the way of plates, books, etc. Now, said he, he found everything mortgaged that could n't be carried off, and printers and binders demanding payment not only for their bills, but for money borrowed by his manager. Now he could not even get the books for which he had paid. Even the manuscript, finished only the week before, was lost in the shuffle, and long its fate remained a mystery. Not until the spring of 1906 came there trace of it. A New York paper announced one day the speedy forthcoming of a new story by the author of "The Colonel's Daughter," a tale of exciting adventure in the Philippines, entitled "Lieutenant Sandy Ray." Under a different name, here was probably the missing link. I wired at once to the Angel, and the Angel blocked the game.

Yet Publisher Number Eight claimed and contended that it was all legitimate. He had never submitted proof-sheets or proposition of any kind to the author, it is true. He was about to rush the thing on the

market without the customary overhauling of its creator, and under a different name. A Wall street broker and banker, was the explanation, had offered it for sale, and Number Eight had bought it. He and the Angel patched matters between them, and "Sandy" finally came forth from the jungle.

It is thirty years, as this retrospect is written, since the first sketches saw the light in the columns of the home paper. As a means of helping a lively household to all manner of things they could not otherwise have enjoyed, the seashore and the countryside, the Rhine and Switzerland, long years in France and Italy, the mastery of foreign tongues and the delights of Paris, Venice, Florida, and Rome, not to mention typhoid, diphtheria, and other expensive maladies, the old pen had certainly served a purpose. What it all came to, financially, could be told in five figures. What it all cost in wear, tear, and vexation of spirit, and in ways too devious to describe in ten chapters, could not be told—even in figures of speech.



MAH ARMS IS COL' AN' EMPTY

BY MARGARET ADAMS

I 'S a li'l honey baby, 'way up thar in glory.
 Wundah ef ah 'll evah git tuh see dat baby eny mo'?
 In de chu'ch ah lissens to de good ol' pahson's story,
 But ah seems tuh sorruh aftah, jes de way ah do befo'.
 Mah arms is sholy col'
 Wivout mah honey chile tuh hol'.
 Ah know she 's up in heaben, but oh, ah wants her heah!
 De birds is in dey nes'
 Close to dey mammy's breas'—
 Mah arms is col' an' empty, mah eyes is full ob tear.

O Lord, ah ought tuh thank yuh, dat yuh tuk mah chile to heaben.
 (We-uns is so po' an' black, an' de ways we go so bad.)
 Ah tries tuh see it dat-a-way—how kin ah be fo'gibben—
 Fo' ah cain't, ah jes cain't do it, when mah hea't 's so pow'ful sad.
 Mah arms is sholy col'
 Wivout mah honey chile tuh hol'.
 Ah know she 's up in heaben, but oh, ah wants her heah!
 De birds is in dey nes'
 Close to dey mammy's breas'—
 Mah arms is col' an' empty, mah eyes is full ob tear.

GENEVIEVE MAUDE'S PERISHIN' SOUL

By Elizabeth Jordan

THE sound, as it disturbed the mid-afternoon torpor of the Alvord garden, was at first recognizable merely as a remote and melancholy note. It might have been the bleating of a lost lamb on a desolate mountain-side, or the call of some little river craft adrift in a fog, or the early effort of a shy amateur getting acquainted with a cornet. Men and women heard it, lifted their brows, and went their ways in peace. But when it took on the character of the wail of a banshee, the shriek of an approaching locomotive, and the farewell blasts of a transatlantic liner leaving her dock, those citizens of the quiet old town of Queensbury who happened to be abroad returned to their homes with swift dispatch, closed their doors, and put down their windows. They realized that Genevieve Maude Alvord, aged five, was demanding from her domestic circle some privilege wisely withheld; and they explained to one another, quite unnecessarily, that "the unfortunate child" had "broken out again."

In the home of Genevieve Maude a painful scene was moving toward its customary climax. The young person's invalid mother had wrapped herself feverishly in the bed-clothes, and, after pulling pillows over her head, had settled down to hysterical weeping. Miss Malcolm, her nurse, abandoning her patient for the time, devoted the resources of her professional skill to abortive efforts to silence Genevieve Maude, assisted by Katie, the waitress. Rover, the faithful dog of the Alvord family, had retired briskly into his kennel, where he lay motionless in its remotest corner. Helen Adeline and Grace Margaret, the eleven and nine-year-old sisters of the infant disturber, sat huddled together in the garden, their countenances thickly overspread with virtuous condemnation of sin and sinner, and their backs turned ostentatiously toward a row of fascinated village children hanging over the garden hedge. The Reverend Josiah Alvord was mercifully absent.

The combined physical efforts and moral suasion of Miss Malcolm and Katie eventually produced an effect. The uproar subsided to occasional shrieks and then to continued gaspings and gurglings,

punctuated by remarks to the effect that Genevieve Maude had withdrawn her affections from the universe. Shortly afterwards she emerged from the folds of Katie's ample apron and coldly withdrew her features from the encircling hand of the nurse. Deeply encouraged, Miss Malcolm launched upon a brief and pointed discourse suited to the understanding of an infant of five years, while down in the garden Helen Adeline and Grace Margaret breathed once more and then groaned in unison. When Helen Adeline spoke, it was with the solemnity due the occasion.

"She's getting worse," she remarked bitterly; "she's getting worse every single day. An' Mamma says she don't know what's going to become of her; an' I'm sure *I* don't!"

Grace Margaret gave a nod pregnant with meaning, but refused to prophesy.

"Nothing we do to help her really helps a bit," resumed Helen Adeline, throwing herself flat upon the ground and there regarding the situation with increasing gloom. Propping herself comfortably on her elbows, she continued:

"The simple life did n't help when we made her do that, nor the eth'cal culture did n't help. She acts badder every day. Her poor perishin' soul is worse than it was las' summer. If we don't save it soon"—Helen Adeline's thin lips set inflexibly, her small sharp eyes narrowed—"we can't ever save it at all. Then how 'll you feel, up in heaven some day, and your poor little sister down in Hades!"

Grace Margaret, sitting placidly beside her, gulped uncomfortably at this, but, recovering herself, murmured something implying a knowledge of Maudie's outspoken indifference to locality. The other waved the interruption aside.

"We've got to do something right straight off," she resumed positively, "and it's got to be something dreadful; it must n't be nice, easy things like simple lives an' eth'cal culture, but big, terrible things like Hades. I guess if Maudie Alvord knew what Hades was, she would n't ever say again she was n't afraid to go there."

The eyes of Grace Margaret widened with sudden interest. Turning, she stared hard at her sister, whose own eyes shifted and finally fell.

"You mean, make Maudie know what it is?" she then asked feebly. "Make her feel jus' zif she was *there*?"

Helen Adeline nodded. Grace Margaret drew a long breath of sweet anticipation, and snuggled down close beside her sister.

"How?" she whispered. The older child reflected.

"I don't know yet," she conceded slowly, "but I'll think 'bout ways, an' we'll do it. Papa says souls is vitaler than bodies, an' souls mus' be saved. It don't matter 'bout Maudie's poor perishin' body.

She's as fat as she can be, an' she eats all the time an' nothin' does her any harm. An' Mamma's so sick an' Papa's so busy we've jus' got to save her soul by ourselves, an' develop her character an' make her a fine noble woman, like Miss Stimson says."

Miss Stimson was Helen Adeline's teacher. Her influence and some of her vocabulary lingered in the mind of one pupil, at least, even during the long summer vacation. "Miss Stimson," Helen Adeline had been heard to remark, "used lovely words."

Thus heroically outlined, the noble work of redemption took on additional charm.

"What'll we do first?" Grace Margaret inquired, eager to begin operations.

"I don't know e'zackly." This expressed doubt was a concession from Helen Adeline, who usually posed as knowing all things. Her smooth brow creased as she continued:

"I guess we can't do it all by ourselves. I guess we'll have to let Fannie and Georgie Tyrrell help us, and p'r'aps some more. It'll take lots of folks to be devils, 'cause we'll have to use pitchforks, p'r'aps, and throw Maudie back into everlasting flames, like it says in the Bible. There must be slimery serpents, too, but I guess they'll have to be angle-worms, 'cause we have n't got any serpents."

"Maudie likes angle-worms, an' she just loves to play with fire," murmured Grace Margaret, not wishing to depress the orator, but dimly realizing imperfections in the plan. Her sister looked annoyed. "Then we won't have 'em," she said crossly, rising to her feet. "She can't have anything she loves, 'cause it's got to be Hades an' save her soul. I guess we must read the Bible an' see what it says; then we can do things better. Le's go an' look at Papa's."

They went, and, finding the worn volume in its accustomed place on the table in the minister's study, resumed their favorite attitude—flat on their stomachs—and, spreading out the book before them, pored over its pages. Even at eleven the Bible was an old friend to Helen Adeline, and she handled it now with the ease and facility of frequent use.

"Le's see," she began tentatively, as she wet an eager thumb and turned the leaves. "Here's what it says in Matthew: 'The angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just'—that's Maudie being severed from us, you know," she explained kindly—"an' shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.' Maudie'll have to do that her own self, for of course the just an' the angels don't have to do it."

She marked the verse with a bit of paper and continued her feverish search. "There's something somewhere," she added thoughtfully, "bout being fed with the crumbs from the table, so we'll do that,

and dipping your fingers in the water an' cooling their parched tongues, but I don't remember where it is. We'll do it anyhow, and we'll do all the things Georgie Tyrrell's big brother told him about the river Sticks, you know, an' Tantalum, an' the apples, and the man that kept rolling the stone up the hill an' it always came down again, but he just had to. A man named Virgil told Archie Tyrrell about it, an' he told Georgie 'cause it was so interestin'. We'll go and see Georgie and Fannie an' the others an' get everything ready before Maudie comes."

Preparations for the redemption of Genevieve Maude were found to be more complicated and difficult than the optimistic mind of Helen Adeline had conceived them. Even with the assistance of half the children in town, the stage-setting for this performance was not ready until the next afternoon, and when it was finally complete, a further embarrassing delay was caused by the unwillingness of the star performer to accept the difficult role thrust so summarily upon her. The combined efforts of Helen Adeline, Grace Margaret, Georgie and Fannie Tyrrell, and the Chester twins were needed to persuade Genevieve Maude to embark upon her weary journey on the Styx, though that fateful stream was but a sun-kissed pond in the Tyrrell field, and Georgie Tyrrell himself, in a paper mask and the mackintosh of his elder brother, waited impressively in the prow. The Perishin' Soul, who was to make the eventful crossing, clung to a safe point on the shore and surveyed Charon with doubtful giggles.

"Aw, come on, Maudie, an' have a boat ride, then," urged the youth, when all other inducements had failed. "Don't you want a boat ride? Come along, an' I won't take any of the rest, no matter how they beg."

This suggestion was so gratifyingly different from those preceding it that the Perishin' Soul permitted itself to be hauled on board, and, taking a seat in the rear of the boat, regarded Charon with growing interest and pleasure. As the craft moved slowly off on its tragic journey, those left behind on the shore set up, at a signal from Helen Adeline, a series of far-reaching and mournful howls, but to Genevieve Maude this was to be expected and but added zest to the experience. She, too, would have howled had she been left behind. To have the trip to herself, to feel that the others were envying her—this was life. She sat up very straight and began to enjoy the excursion. As an outlet to her increasing emotions she burst jubilantly into a kindergarten song, and the Styx was crossed to the inspiring strains of "My Heart is Dod's Wittle Darden," while the Perishin' Soul hung over the stern and paddled two fat hands in the water.

On the shore the brow of Helen Adeline, watching this touching and innocent scene, grew dark with annoyance. Her histrionic sense

had warned her when the first note floated toward her that this was not the spirit in which the doomed approached their fate, and she hotly resented Genevieve Maude's airy disregard of her role.

"Don't sing, Maudie," she shrieked; "you must n't sing. Souls don't never sing when they're crossing the Sticks. You mus' gnash your teeth, like this." She illustrated wildly, but in vain. To Genevieve Maude her gestures and cries were but another proof of the older sister's longing for a boat ride. She did n't care who did the gnashing if she had the row. Standing up to lend greater dignity to the effect, she introduced into her song an original high note kept for great occasions, and threw kindly and encouraging kisses to the depressed band of her friends. Helen Adeline turned her back upon this discomfiting anti-climax and sat down with tragic disgust.

"If that ain't sickenin'!" she confided to Fannie Tyrrell. "No soul never goes over the Sticks that way—singin' an' throwin' kisses. But you jus' wait," she added acidly, "till we get Maudie on the other side. *Then* you'll see."

This reflection cheered her, which was well, for, in the joy of lending herself to its pleasant prospect, she missed the painful spectacle of the Perishin' Soul swarming up Charon's leg as the two left their craft, and tearing the mask from his face with shrieks of triumph. The children ran around the pond in time to disentangle them, and to restore something of dignity to a shamefaced boatman.

"She's such a cute little rat," he explained apologetically to Helen Adeline, when that irate young lady took him sternly to task for faithlessness to his high mission. "And she's having such a bully time that I can't help laughing."

Helen Adeline's lips set.

"You wait," she promised darkly—"you wait till she gets into Hades. Harry Minot is going to be a slimery serpent, with Mamma's gray shawl and the jack-o'-lantern head Archie lent us. I guess that'll show Maudie!"

In front, the Perishin' Soul was trotting toward the Tyrrell barn, her hand in Charon's, her feet keeping a cheerful hop and skip accompaniment to his brisk stride. Charon had resumed his mask, but the hand that held Maudie's was the hand that had made willow whistles for her all summer, and the back under the mackintosh had carried her tirelessly for miles. Heartily and whole-souledly Genevieve Maude approved of Charon. With him she indulged in her nearest approach to connected conversation.

"*Yike* Hades," she volunteered now, stopping to refresh herself by a kiss on the freckled hand that held her own. "*Yike* Hades *yots*. *Yike* Georgie."

Georgie grinned behind the mask, and registered a vow that they

should n't "scare the kid" with their silly tricks. He held fast to her fat hand, as the little group approached the barn and the game went on. Helen Adeline stood forth as mistress of ceremonies. Checking her friends within a few feet of the wide door, she addressed them in impressive tones.

"Now," she began, "we mus' separate the just from the unjust. The just shall stand on my right, and I want them to come as fast as I call." She ran over the names of all the children but one, and each proudly lined up beside her. At the end the unfortunate Genevieve Maude stood alone. She turned to the mistress of ceremonies a smile that would have won over Satan himself.

"Now me, Addie," she gurgled happily. Even the heart of Helen Adeline failed her for a moment, but only for a moment.

"Yes," she replied sternly, "now you. An' you're going to be cast into outer darkness an' weep an' gnash your teeth, because you're bad." A sudden recollection of Maudie's famed megaphonic powers checked her thoughtless words. "No," she added hastily; "you need n't weep. Don't weep. You just gnash an' that will be 'nough." She illustrated again as she spoke, having made various intelligent inquiries as to the process of gnashing, and Genevieve Maude gnashed after her, at once and with whole-hearted enthusiasm. With a weary sigh Helen Adeline checked the frivolous exhibition.

"You must n't gnash until you're cast into outer darkness," she explained impatiently. "We cast you first, and then you gnash. Now le's all get hold of her an' cast. That's the outer darkness over there, an' Hades is in the barn."

She indicated a large excavation at their right, possibly four feet deep, and thoughtfully filled with hay by Georgie Tyrrell during the morning preparations. The fat body of Genevieve Maude was seized by determined hands.

"We'll swing her three times," directed Helen Adeline breathlessly, "and when I say 'three,' we'll cast her. Then, Maudie Alvord, you just gnash as hard as you can."

For a moment Maudie looked doubtful, but the swinging proved pleasant and the final arc her fat body described on its downward course was highly exhilarating.

"Do it aden," shrieked the Perishin' Soul, thrusting her head up to the edge of the pit and hanging on to the sides. She was breathless and dishevelled, but she was full of joy. "Cas' me aden," she begged; "p'ease cas' me aden!"

Helen Adeline grasped her arms and hauled her, none too tenderly, back to the level ground, where the others stood.

"She won't do a single thing right," she almost sobbed. "She won't gnash, an' she won't help her soul the least little bit. We'll

throw her right into Hades now, and p'raps when she sees the slimery serpent she won't think it's so awf'ly nice."

The willing hands of her assistants were stretched forth once more, and Genevieve Maude, shrieking in anticipatory delight, was borne close to the door of the dim old barn, in whose shadow the slimery serpent lay in wait. He was highly impressive in the jack-o'-lantern head and with the generous folds of Mrs. Alvord's striped gray shawl wound tightly about his person and trailing far behind him. Hearing his cue, he uttered a long-drawn hiss which made even the initiated tremble in their little shoes. Unconsciously but hastily they backed away, exchanging awe-struck glances. Genevieve Maude looked interested.

"W'a's dat?" she asked alertly. The mistress of ceremonies indulged in a sigh of gratification. At last the sinner was beginning to be impressed.

"You will *see*," she began impressively, and paused only in time to make a frantic clutch at the Perishin' Soul and grasp her disappearing petticoats in a firm hand. For the Perishin' Soul, full of eager interest in the mysteries beyond, and impatient of this delay on their brink, was dashing eagerly into Hades before her time. Her sister yielded to the carnal temptation to give her fat body an impatient shaking.

"Wait till you're thrown in, Maudie Alvord," she hissed, emphasizing her words with a succession of jerks. And she added with an awful calm: "You'll know soon 'nuff what that hiss is *then*."

Once more they seized the infant by her arms and legs, and Genevieve Maude, realizing that she was to have another swing, yielded herself with shouts of rapture to their willing hands. At the instant of the final word, Helen Adeline paused, moved by a swift reflection. Standing her little sister again upon the ground, she fixed her with an eye of awful sternness.

"I jus' want to say, Maudie Alvord," she announced tersely, "that if you climb out of Hades and ask us to throw you in again, we'll-never-play-with-you-another-time-as-long-as-we-live. You mus' stay down there, an' gnash your teeth, an' shriek. Do you understand?"

Maudie nodded, temporarily sobered. Then she lent herself once more to the passionate but all too brief delight of the preliminary swings. At Helen Adeline's "three" her little body shot forward, through the barn door, into the dim interior, and fell, somewhere, without a sound. Outside, the band of children waited impatiently for the hiss, the shriek, the gnashing of teeth; but for a moment no noise came from inside except the sedate and eminently contented cooing of pigeons and the scrape of the hoofs of old Dobbin in his stall. The listening children began to exchange frightened glances. Helen Adeline alone radiated solemn content.

"I guess she's not having so much fun *now*," she announced briskly, breaking the silence. "I guess p'r'aps the slimery serpent is crawling over her an' she does n't like it." On tip-toe she approached the barn door and looked in. The others followed. As they did so a delighted giggle burst upon their ears, followed by urgent requests in the voice of Genevieve Maude to "det up." Turning their eyes in the direction of the sounds, they beheld the Perishin' Soul securely mounted upon the back of the "slimery serpent," who was crawling rapidly and feverishly about, protesting helplessly as he did so. The lantern head had fallen off, his face was covered with perspiration and dirt, and his movements were sadly impeded by the heavy folds of the gray shawl; but these trifles were not interfering with the whole-hearted joy of his rider, who held on tightly by his ears, and kicked him violently when his movements were not expeditious enough to please her. He turned upon the disgusted spectators a red and crestfallen face.

"Something tickled my nose," he explained, with an effort at dignity, "so I had to sneeze a lot, and that made the lantern fall off. Then Maudie fell in on top of me, and—and she stayed there and thought I was a horse. I was so afraid she'd get scared that I played I was, and I began to give her a ride, and she's—she's been riding ever since," he added pathetically; "an' now I can't get her off."

Georgie Tyrrell detached the reluctant legs of Genevieve Maude from the perspiring sides of the serpent, and with a groan of fatigue the latter rose and cast off his outer wrappings. Then he tenderly felt his ears, and seemed greatly relieved and somewhat surprised to find them still in their accustomed places.

"She held on by 'em," he explained, as he rubbed them to restore the circulation. Genevieve Maude surveyed him with eyes full of beautiful memories.

"*Yike* Hades," she confided to the assembled audience. "*Yike* Hades. *Yike* Harry. *Yike* ever'body." She was at peace with the universe.

"You lie right down, Maudie Alvord," shrieked the outraged mistress of ceremonies, aghast at this disedifying outcome of a great conception. "You lie right straight down and let the slimery serpent crawl over you. He has to. That's what he's for. It was jus' wicked of you to ride on his back. Now you get down, Harry, an' crawl over her."

But Harry modestly declined. He explained with some heat that he was tired, and that the game was no fun, anyhow. "You can't scare that kid," he added, in an aside of mingled admiration and disgust. Genevieve Maude, unconscious of this tribute, cheerfully awaited fresh developments in the new game. How nice her sisters could be!

"Then we'll all roll," announced Helen Adeline positively. "We'll *all* be serpents an' roll over her."

The memory of the intoxicating delight of the half-hour that followed will remain with Genevieve Maude well into her womanhood. To be "it" in a new kind of tag, to be the centre of interest in a rollicking game with the older children, was more than she had dared to hope for. Her clothes were torn from her back. Her body received many hard knocks and recorded the experience with many bruises; the slimy serpents were sometimes heavier than was comfortable; but the enraptured shrieks of the Perishin' Soul awoke the echoes of the big old barn and made the rafters ring. At last Helen Adeline rose wearily and shook the dust and hay from her garments.

"It's no use," she conceded. "It ain't helpin' her soul a bit. She's just havin' *fun*. We'll have to do something else."

The Perishin' Soul sat still and regarded her pantingly, her small mouth open, her round face shockingly dirty, her pinafore in rags.

"*Yike Hades*," she murmured again, encouragingly and in gracious praise, as soon as she could speak.

Helen Adeline turned the light of her countenance from her and for a time meditated in silence. At last an idea occurred to her.

"Are you thirsty, Maudie?" she asked with interest.

Genevieve Maude nodded. "So 'm I," confided Helen Adeline to the others. "We all are. So we'll all have a drink, 'cept Maudie. That's one thing about Hades. They don't have drinks. You go and get a pail of water, Georgie, an' a cup. We'll all have big drinks 'cept Maudie; an' we'll wet her parched tongue with our fingers."

Georgie departed grinningly on his mission and returned with a full pail of cold spring water and a tin cup. One by one the thirsty children drank, the Perishin' Soul awaiting her turn with a touching courtesy, trust, and patience. When they had in turn emptied the cup, Helen Adeline turned to her.

"You can't have any, Maudie," she announced implacably. "Souls in Hades don't have any, *ever*."

Genevieve Maude's eyes widened. Her mouth opened. An alarming spasm contorted her expressive features. For an instant the perfect delight of existence in Hades was blurred to her vision. Helen Adeline went on hastily: "Don't cry. You can gnash if you want to, but you must n't cry. We're going to cool your parched tongue; every one of us will." She issued her orders as sternly as a general in the field. "You come, one by one, and put your fingers in the pail," she directed; "then you put it on Maudie's tongue. She can have all that's there," she added kindly. "Now begin, Maudie; stick out your tongue."

Madie thrust forth a red ribbon of tongue, and the relief corps began its congenial task.

"You must n't lick 'em," commanded Helen Adeline disgustedly, withdrawing her finger from her little sister's mouth and searching on it for signs of teeth. "An' you must n't bite. You must jus' *parch*."

The Perishin' Soul obeyed orders according to her lights, and the inspiring ceremony went on. Genevieve Maude, still the centre of attraction, still in the limelight, was still content. She recalled dimly memories of days when she had played alone with her dolls while these larger superior beings flocked together. Now they were playing all afternoon with her. What mattered the unimportant details? She was happy. When she had with unswerving patience licked all the fingers she was moved again to utter her terse tribute of appreciation. She realized dimly that it did not appeal to her audience, but her heart was too full for silence.

"*Yike Hades*," she muttered happily, nestling against her sister. "Yants to stay in Hades *awways*."

The children exchanged shocked glances. For a moment Helen Adeline lent herself to unmixed despair. Then a final inspiration came to her.

"We have n't made her roll the stone yet, like the man did," she reminded the rest, cheering perceptibly as she spoke. "We'll make her keep rolling it up, and we'll keep rolling it down. It must be a big heavy one—awful heavy. You get one, Georgie."

She surveyed, with an appreciative eye, the young boulder with which Georgie presently presented her. It was large and round and quite impressively the thing—not too terribly heavy, but certainly too heavy for a five-year-old to move with comfort. Helen Adeline walked around it, regarding it from every side with deep satisfaction.

"That'll do," she said at last. "Now, Maudie, the rest of us will sit down an' watch an' pray, while you roll this to the other side of the barn. Then we'll roll it back, an' you'll have to do it over, an' over, an' over, an' over."

The spectators seated themselves in an imposing circle at one end of the barn, and Genevieve Maude began her task. For a short time there was no sound but the determined grunts with which she unabashedly punctuated her efforts. At last, after much tugging and pushing, the stone had reached its place. In obedience to a signal from the presiding genius, Georgie Tyrrell pushed it back to the starting point. With an unconscious sigh, Genevieve Maude approached it and began her weary routine.

Half an hour passed slowly. Several of the younger children fell asleep. The boys removed their marbles from their pockets and started a quiet game. The girls, led by Helen Adeline, kept a relentless gaze

upon the infant Sisyphus and replaced the stone at the starting point after each difficult triumph. Genevieve Maude's back ached. Her short fat legs ached. Her head ached. Her eyes felt dull and heavy. But she was still in the limelight. She was still the object of interest. She was still playing with her elders. She was still content. Occasionally she trotted back to the end of the barn to kiss some of the spectators—an attention received, in each instance, with stolid calm.

"*Yike Hades,*" she remarked on these occasions.

"I'm 'fraid," conceded Helen Adeline, rising heavily, after the assemblage had passed a long period in somewhat depressed silence, "we'll have to take pitchforks and cast her into everlastin' flames. It's the only way. I don't believe this is doing her a bit——"

But this final test of the Perishin' Soul was spared Genevieve Maude. The voice of Helen Adeline died away abruptly as a shadow darkened the barn door, and her eyes sought the floor guiltily as the Reverend Josiah Alvord entered. Genevieve Maude, her intrepid little back to him, was laboriously and pantingly completing her ninth pilgrimage. He grasped the meaning of the scene in one keen glance. Then without a word he gathered his baby into his arms, studied her dirty face and torn garments for a moment, and turned quietly to his eldest daughter for an explanation. That glib young person seemed unaccountably tongue-tied.

"It's her soul," she faltered at last. "We're tryin' to save it."

Her father regarded her in silence, awaiting more, and in that moment Genevieve Maude, feeling that the role of chief performer was being taken from her, made a sturdy effort to regain it.

"It's Hades," she explained, wriggling uneasily in her father's arms and struggling to reach the floor again. "*Yike Hades. Yants to stay in Hades awways.*"

For a moment the minister looked shocked. Then his thin lips twitched unsteadily and his sombre eyes twinkled. He held the child close, patting her with a tender hand as he spoke to her, but his eyes still swept the little circle of guilty faces before him.

"Father's baby is tired," he said comfortably, "and must come in to take a nap. Helen Adeline may come to me later in the study," he added, as he started toward the door. But Genevieve Maude was favoring the audience with the preliminary symptoms of one of her wild outbreaks.

"Don't yant to do," she wailed, kicking out wildly and beating at her father's breast with her dirty little hands. "Don't yant nap. Yants to stay in Hades *awways*. Yants to *give* in Hades!"

The Reverend Josiah Alvord sat down suddenly. If an outbreak was to be prevented it must be done at once, for the sake of his sick wife. Above all, no member of his godly household, however young

and tender, must be permitted to voice such heresy. He settled his daughter firmly on his knees and looked straight into her brown eyes as he spoke to her. The other children regarded the two in awestruck silence.

"Don't you ever want to see Mamma again?" he inquired conversationally. "Mamma will not be in Hades, you know. *She* will be in heaven. Good folks go *there*."

Genevieve Maude nipped the inauguration of a particularly high note and hesitated. Her father followed up his advantage.

"And Father, too. He will not be in Hades," he announced with entire conviction. "Don't you want to be where you can see him?"

An expression of awful uncertainty disturbed the repose of his infant's features. She breathed hard and still struggled to escape, but more feebly.

"Nor your sisters, nor Katie, nor any of your playmates," continued the minister, with reckless finality. "None of them will be in Hades. There will be no one there you love. There will be no one there who loves you—not a single person. Would n't Maudie be very, very lonely?"

Without an instant's hesitation Genevieve Maude decided that she would. This was a new point of view and one to appall her. If Hades was a place where no one loved or was loved, then Hades was no place for Genevieve Maude Alvord. Her passionate little heart could find no happiness there. But she had already chosen it. Was it now too late to change? She clasped her father convulsively around the neck and burst into heart-rending lamentations.

"Don't want to 'tay in Hades," she shrieked, kissing him wildly, as one who had been lost and found again. "Yants to tiss Muvver. Yants to tiss Addie; yants to tiss Gwacie; yants to be yoved."

Somewhat aghast at the sudden effect of his eloquence, the minister quieted the child and carried her around the circle for the exchange of the moist and sticky caresses her soul craved. Then as her sobs subsided under their soothing influence, and peace hovered over the assemblage, he bore her out into the sunshine of the late afternoon and across the neighbor's grounds into his own garden. With eyes wide open and long-drawn quivering sighs, Genevieve Maude lay still, her thoughts busy with many things. True, the afternoon had been pleasant, but this peaceful sunlit world was pleasant, too. Hades was a dim, mysterious place, fascinating, to be sure,—but without *love*. She strangled her father in a tighter grasp and asked a question:

"Yove in heaven?" she demanded. "Yove *ever'boddy*?"

Her father followed the workings of the little mind.

"Oh, yes," he answered, with quick reassurance. "God is there to love little girls, and all the angels——"

"An' Muvver? An' Farver?" asked Genevieve Maude guardedly, repudiating this vague band and seeking further reassurance as to the presence of her own.

"Yes; Mother, and Father, and Sisters, too."

Genevieve Maude drew a long breath, looked back at the barn for the last time, and cast from her forever the temptations of the Pit.

"Yants to do to heaven, den," she remarked with conviction. "*Never* doin' to Hades 'ny more." She hesitated for a moment, and then, though moved again by happy memories, handsomely made her final capitulation.

"Yants my soul saved," she announced, with a heavy sigh.



FIELDS

BY JOHN NORTHERN HILLIARD

OH, the gray fields, the hay-fields,
 And the azure arching over,
 When the west wind dips to kiss the lips
 Of the laughing lazy clover;
 The rhythmic swish of the swinging scythe,
 The swaying of brown bodies lithe,
 A song from the throat of a bluebird blithe,
 And the lilting plaint of a plover.

Oh, the sweet fields, the wheat-fields,
 And the blue sky bending over,
 When the south wind sleeps and the wild hawk sweeps
 And the chickens seek the cover,
 The wide field glows with noonday heat,
 The reapers rest 'neath sheaves of wheat,
 And the chirr of the cricket sounds as sweet
 As the liquid notes of the plover.

Oh, the lorn fields, the corn-fields,
 And the gray sky glooming over,
 When the north wind blows from the land of snows,
 A blustering, boreal rover;
 In scattered shocks the sere stalks lie,
 Flailed by the wind that hurtles by;
 A flap of wings, a crane's clear cry,
 And the echoing pipe of a plover.

THE FAILURE

By Will Levington Comfort

Author of "Routledge Rides Alone," etc.

CAWTHORNE came in from the fields, and his father, whose heavy work in the world was done, took charge of the tired team in the barn-yard. The young man washed in the open by the kitchen doorway, and towelled briskly with the sunset in his squinting soapy eyes. His sister was at the kitchen stove, and Cawthorne patted her bare arm as he passed into the darkened parlor. There he summoned a contralto to sing to him from out the brazen throat of a phonograph.

He listened raptly. In fact, there was a moment when the song had a real inner stress for him, so that he bent forward toward it, covering his eyes with his hands. Just in the climax the energy of the machine gave out, and he sprang up angrily to start the thing afresh. Again, sweetly, richly, the lady sang to him; and again the high moment of the piece was demoralized by the quavering voice of his father calling him to supper.

In the evening Cawthorne called upon a country girl who lived a mile north, but he departed at an hour so early as to be a cause for pain in the gentler heart.

Alone in his own parlor afterward, he listened and listened, and that night he dreamed with the moonlight on his face.

Tools, groceries, and harness parts were needed from town the following Saturday, and Cawthorne brought back with all these things the other obtainable records moulded by the voice of Mary Corinth. That night he was alone with his treasures; and in his dreams afterward a beautiful lady came out of the brazen throat and sang the old first song, smiling into his eyes the while.

It was not many days after this that the young man was summoned in from the fields by the frightened voice of the little sister, to learn that his father would call him to supper no more.

The stock and the acres were quickly sold. Cawthorne was sad, but he was free. His brain need strive no more in the open vast between the fallow lands and the towering sun. He took the little

sister with him to the centre and base of all things where records are made. New York was just a shell when he came, a hot, dusty shell, holding only those humans who were needed to keep the great civilization-machine in motion. There was work for Cawthorne to do, and such was the speed, and so sheer the energy, with which his work was done, that the man a step above in the mercantile mill gave him tasks more and more. Huge morsels of raw and refined toil were handed to this long strip of country manhood, and the man a step above reported to *his* ranker with quiet enthusiasm how the new one could assimilate punishment in the way of overwork.

Free and tireless in the evenings, Cawthorne studied the city as one enchanted. He saw it all as no citizen could ever see it, and with thoughts and impressions which city-bred men feel only subconsciously. He looked into the dollar gorges at night when the currents ran low and the sound of the pick was still. He found the human quartz, the waste and wash of Success, and sensed the great pity of it all. He followed the glittering veins of pleasure—learning, not partaking. He peered well into the great crucible where the overflow of Europe is burned into Americans. And always he was listening for one voice and one old song.

One day he passed the building where singers and orchestras and humorists gather to perpetuate their wares on disks and cylinders, so the far country places may laugh and weep. Mary Corinth had passed in and out of that red stone entrance, and high in the building, she had sung for the greater glory of her time. Cawthorne could not enter. The woman who had come to him in the scenes of harshest labor, whose beauty of soul and song whitened his dreams, had turned this place for him into a forbidden sanctuary.

It is plain that he was not of the metropolis, inasmuch as he had kept the country boy's illusions and timidity; yet to look at him, this was hard to believe, for he was of cleanest cut, groomed in detail like a prince, but with an American man's unostentation. He had the City's quickness of eye, with none of her weariness, and a steady jaw which Success was whipping fine.

A red and rampant anger clutched him on a certain night at the end of his first year in New York. The strains of the old song came to him as he passed a buffet. To think that she had been brought, even in a mechanism, to such a place . . . He covered his rage with reason . . . It might be that her vision of things was so large that she would have been glad to be heard there—to enter such a place with a sweep of purity.

And one night he went to a presentation of "King Nord." He was a moment late, reaching his seat in the darkness. It was a Devenney play, and New York waited upon this actress. A woman

began to sing. She was *Svensoren*, one of the characters of lesser starhood—a Norse maid, giving up her lover and her father to the deep. The man who composed that song of hers had possessed a soul, and his soul had swung him back, in a splendid moment of creation, to the very beaches of those mighty men of the north who challenged the sea. And all that the master had conceived, the singer executed, adding a psychic quality of her own. In her weird and thrilling harmony, the heart of the Norse maid was laid bare—the might of her race, the gray austerity of her country; her own love, the inner agony of parting, stoically repressed. Bare of throat and arm, and wearing a gray-brown, strangely-fashioned garment, she sang her lover away in the midst of straining cordage, booming breakers, and the mouthing of a gale.

But the great audience scarcely warmed to the performance. The people were waiting for Devenney and her Norse lover, the king. Only a few hearkened deeply to this maid of breaking heart. When the lights were turned on, the shrunken, whitened face of Cawthorne was bending forward. He seemed to have passed through some Gehenna in that half-hour of darkness. The small talk played about him:

“Why, that is Mary Corinth,” a woman said, glancing at her programme. “Why, I saw her in Langhorn’s drama, ‘Tiger Lily,’ not more than two years ago. Such an obscure part for her to be playing now!”

“But remember, she is with Mrs. Devenney,” said a man beside her.

“Nevertheless, I’m afraid she must be on the wane,” resumed the woman. “The stage sets a terrible pace for certain artists. Besides, Mary Corinth is no novice. Why, five years ago——”

Cawthorne heard no more. Something had clouded his eyes, and he was fingering his way out among the parquet chairs. That night his heart arose high above the battle of his brain. He loved the pale Norse maid with all the honor and ardor of new manhood. More than two years before, he had loved her when the instrument brought her voice to him. The tongues of women nor vipers could change this, nor the lines which the years might have left upon her sweet, inspiring face.

That he should ever build a home about her; that she should ever touch him with her arms, her lips—these were dreams of far-off lives; but he felt, even while struggling with the hesitations of a country boy and the fear she was married, that he might some time see her face to face and tell her what her voice had brought to him out in the open where he had so vaguely hungered.

The following day he moved about half-tranced, and night found him again at the performance of “King Nord.” The Norse girl was

slender, tall, very white of throat. Her arms were marvellous, almost musical in their effect; her face piteous in the pain of the moment's illusion . . . In the interval between the first and second acts, a gentleman of the professions, apparently, informed a companion that Mary Corinth had once married an artist.

"Excuse me, sir," Cawthorne whispered huskily, "but can you tell me if they are still together?"

"No," replied the other, courteously enough; "this blessed world of ours is not yet adjusted for the union of two such temperaments."

Winter sallied back into mid-spring the following day. Snow gusts found no grip upon the steel-frozen pavements, but flurried and drifted in miniature ranges upon the ringing roadways. Down-town was emptying. The tired city people sank into the clammy air of the subways, climbed the stinging-cold iron ascents of the Elevated, scurried from the ferry waiting-rooms to the ferry cabins, there shivering to read headlines and anticipate the night to come.

Cawthorne, after working hours, was at variance with the throng. On that doom-gray afternoon he went about the bravest venture of his life. In the final surge of his falterings, he halted before a hotel far up-town. Longing and timidity fluttered in the balances, but the first drew him in. Mary Corinth received the stranger . . . All women were small before him, and she who had looked so tall upon the stage was just his shoulder-height. He found a smile that pinned itself upon his heart of hearts, and a tense, tired look about her eyes which spoke of age and work and art and the wisdom which comes from many pains . . . She saw the unspeakable stress upon his face and hastened to make him comfortable.

"I did n't feel at all ready for dinner," she said, "and the book I was reading proved a sort of infant-soul product, and so what can I do, Mr. Cawthorne,—for you?"

His lips moved inaudibly before a sound came. "I heard you sing at home," he faltered.

"At home? You—why, I thought you were a New Yorker."

"I mean by record—and the world came to an end for me—I mean, so far as any other woman but you."

He was in a dream. His utterance was purely of inner making.

The singer scanned him. She found a type altogether new; she was divided between exerting some gentle pressure of dismissal and of solving the fine but formidable matter which shone in the stranger's face.

"Where did you hear me sing?" she questioned quietly.

"I was away in the fields," he said—"in a little house in the midst of the fields. My father worked in the fields all his life . . . I bought you and brought you home among others, and you sang to me."

Her tired eyes brightened as she watched him. "And—and what did you think?" she asked.

For a second the thought came that she was playing with him. The metropolitan which had evolved within him made this thought possible. All he had asked from her was largeness and simplicity to listen to the beautiful thing which had moved and moulded his life. He could not see that to her he was a creature of a sort startlingly new.

Something of that which was passing in his mind, she sensed with impatience. "Sincerity is too good to spoil," she said quickly. "I thought I saw it in you, but tell me your story—tell me what you thought when you heard me sing."

"I loved you."

It was spoken in the husky, memorable way of a boy's first telling. He looked askance, but with eagerness, as he went on: "I used to conjure you as you sang to me, and one night I saw you in the darkness. I knew that you were good and beautiful, from the way you sang, and you meant to me all that was pure of this great life here. When the time came, I left the farm to become a part of this. So far—I have done quite well, but sometimes I am lonely for the lonely places . . . Always in the evenings I have listened for your voice—listened in all the streets for the old song. Why, your very name was wonderful to me, as I used to look at it in gold upon the record—Mary Corinth! And now I've told you—you'll forgive me—won't you?"

She had listened in hunger, searched him from his boot-tips to the low parting of brown hair beginning upon his left brow. She found him clean to her eyes, and she felt his words to be virgin pure from a stalwart who had a man's worldliness in the cut of his clothing and profile, but a once-touched boyish heart. After the pressure of listening and watching she fell into a defenseless social creature.

"How long have you been in New York, Mr. Cawthorne?"

"Nearly two years. I came in the summer."

"But you might have found me before this. Still, it is true I have been on the road most of the time until the middle of this season."

"I did not dare to seek you until I heard 'King Nord'—last night and the night before—and to-day I could n't help coming."

She scarcely knew what to say, and the words which came troubled even as she uttered them: "It is just a passing thing. No one remembers song-records. You are so young—why, you will laugh at this moment when you become a full man."

Then she saw how she had hurt him, and out of her large and sudden pity was born the impulse to sing to him. She knew the one he loved—the old song of Mary Corinth in high bloom. It had always

been her own, and she had spent her twenties singing it over the land. . . . Yet never did she sing it with a wider heart than to that one bowed head.

In the face that looked up to her after the singing, the woman saw that what he had said was true; and then fear entered the vast quandary which covered the new world of hers. It was a new world because this stranger was big and clean and masterful to look upon and so enchantingly boyish in his romance. It was a world she had glimpsed in few far visions between the wars of ambition. Her fear was not alone for herself.

"That is it," was all he could say.

At the door there was a moment of exaltation. . . . She put him from her. With the knob in her hand and the brilliance of new-born beauty in her eyes, she whispered:

"Come to-night to 'King Nord.' I shall sing to *you!*"

At the stage-door afterward, he sought her, ready to wage lone war with a mob or to shrink back among the alley shadows at her word. Meeting him, she did not know what to do, so she told him to go away.

"May I see you to-morrow afternoon—just a moment?" he asked.

"No. I shall be out to dinner."

"The next afternoon?"

"Must you?"

The little question was intuitive, and a little smile, not in the general plan at all, made haste to form itself witchingly about the two words. Mary Corinth had suffered since their meeting in the late afternoon, suffered because she had allowed a boy to beguile her weary heart through the freshness of his adoration and the sincerity of his praise. It was not that she failed to be drawn to him. Indeed, his attraction was so subtle and alluring that she had to force it out of her mind to make room for the building and the buttressing of her decision. . . . Yes, she could bear to freeze his next advances. Art and the years had steeled her to any pain. . . . Before her mirror in the dressing-room of the theatre, her brain formed a sentence which covered the whole matter:

"Cawthorne, Boy, you are too dear to spoil!"

On the afternoon of the second day following, she admitted Cawthorne.

"Lady," he said, standing white-faced before her, his fingers clenched, "I don't want to grieve you—don't want to burden you—and you mustn't think I am like those men who haunt stage-doors. Years ago I loved you in the fields—loved and pictured you and dreamed. I love you now and always—that's all."

The perfect way which in his absence was delineated vividly as

ebon upon Parian marble, had grown wavering and fitful now to her eyes. Only in flashes clear and cruel it appeared; and between the flashes she beheld the glowing peace her spent heart craved.

"My dear friend, I cannot see you again," she said, in a slow, chilling way.

"Don't say that, Lady—oh, don't!"

He came a step nearer. The look of his face weakened her.

"You are the man out of this wide country I have wanted, Cawthorne, Boy!" she whispered. Her eyes seemed frightened, yet fascinated, by his, and her lips and fingers twitched pitifully. "You are the man—that as a girl—I dreamed about. I sang to you in the metal—yes, it was I—singing to the man who longed to love me and was strong and pure. Oh, how I have needed you, Cawthorne, Boy!"

She sank into a chair and covered her face. He leaned over her, his hand trembling in her hair.

"But it is gone now!" she cried suddenly. "Don't think that I am lying to you—it is gone! I am an old woman. I have given my soul and body to the thing called Art, and there is nothing left but the shell of me, crisped, worthless . . . I can only think of woods and fields and silence—of a little white house on a lonely road. I have toiled and lost, and now my youth is gone, and I cannot think of my lover!"

"I will take you to that little white house, Mary," he said softly. "White fields in winter, green in spring, and gold in the summer-time. And the crows pass over the little white house from woods to woods, and the neighbors are far away . . . Then I would come in wet from the fields, and you would sing——"

She covered his lips with her hand. "You are not a boy when you woo a woman like that!" she said strangely.

"It is because you have given me hope and I love you so," he answered.

She gathered the mightiest of her forces to save him.

"My star is waning, and I have proven a Failure—a Failure!" she told him hoarsely, for it was the inmost horror of her life.

"You sang your way into my heart, Lady, and I love you," he answered simply.

"This is Earth—old Mother Earth!"

His eyes were burning and he bent over her again. If the world should end that instant, he told her, he would seek her and no other spirit in "No Man's Land."

"Cawthorne, Boy, I have been married!" she whispered, looking up into his eyes.

He smiled at her. "I know it, Mary. What do I care, so long as you are free?"

She pushed him aside and almost ran to the door, opening it wide. Her face was death-like.

"Go away—go away now! You must not speak another word to me! . . . Ah, go quickly!"

Had Cawthorne been a few years older, he would not have obeyed.

On the afternoon preceding the last performance of "King Nord," Mary Corinth received a letter from Cawthorne by messenger. Her pale face flushed as she read. He was pleading with her to meet him once more—to have supper with him after the final performance this night.

"A 'Last Ride Together,'" she whispered raptly. "If I were a wise and a strong woman, I should tell him no."

They met at the stage-door. She took his hard arm with a little shiver of delight. Slowly they walked, speaking little, but breathing deeply the soft air of the starry spring night . . . At a little table in their café, she stared at him, her elbows upon the cloth, her cheeks in either palm.

"Three weeks has made you older, Cawthorne, Boy," she said quietly.

"You have not let me come to you," he replied.

"And you have thought of me every day?"

"Yes—and nights!"

"Don't mind me asking foolish questions. I should not have come. I am utterly weary."

"Lady, let me take you to the little white house on the lonely road."

She bent forward, smiling a little. There was something clinging, girl-like, in her attitude. Her lips were parted, her gray eyes brilliant. Then she spoke slowly:

"I told you once, dear, that this is old Mother Earth. We are Earth's people. I am twelve years older than you are, and I have lived—lived! If I did what you ask, you would hate me in a year, and the fields would rise up to torture you as they did before . . . Listen: Mrs. Devenney has asked me to spend a fortnight with her in the mountains. When I come back, we shall be sweethearts—always remembering ourselves. We shall have fine evenings and long Sunday rambles together, until my work begins again. I will sing you the old song, and we shall be playmates—until you tire of me—"

He would have spoken, but she raised her hand. The color and the lightness had left her lips, but she went on bravely:

"But to marry you—to drag you from your big work here—to bind myself, a burnt-out creature, to your new and splendid life—that would be the act of a low woman . . . I cannot do it, dear one, because I love you far too well."

STOCKINGS AND PUMPS

By Anne Dana

I AM a Daughter of the Confederacy, and the funny part of it is that I was admitted into the sacred circle in spite of the fact that my father, my grandfather, and my husband were on the Union side during the late unpleasantness. And the reason that I am a member of that heroic band is not that I am a Southern gentlewoman by birth and feeling, but that I was once present at a real battle and a real Confederate victory. That battle was Monocacy, one of the most hotly contested of the war.

I was just sixteen, and I had a boy lover who was eighteen—Roy Kirby. He lived in Baltimore and was going to school—getting ready for college, in fact. In the summer his father, who was a banker, made him work in the office—“to keep him out of mischief,” his father said; which we thought hard. We loved each other romantically and rapturously (all that is out of fashion now, but some day it will be revived), and we loved each other forgivingly. We must have done so to have overcome such a terrible obstacle as a patriotic difference of opinion concerning such a vital question as the war which was upon us. But we did forgive each other, and we have continued it during our married life. He was for the Union, and he brings me flowers on General Lee’s birthday, and I’m a Johnny Reb, and I bring him flowers on Abraham Lincoln’s birthday, and we both burn incense before the portrait of Roy’s elder brother, who was killed at the battle of Gettysburg, fighting on the Union side. But we don’t give in a bit. “States’ Rights,” say I; “United States’ Rights,” says he; and that ends it. We are happy.

In July, 1864, I lived in Frederick City, Maryland. On Saturday, the 2d, I went over to visit some friends of mine, the Jamiesons, who lived on the Washington Pike about a mile from Monocacy Bridge and only four miles from Frederick. My mother drove me over, me and my “hat trunk.” I was to stay a week. Everything was quiet, a guard on the bridge, and nothing happening. Indeed, from the beginning of the war regiments of both sides had come and gone through Frederick, the blue and the gray, without meeting, and without doing much harm, except to horses, cattle, chickens, and pigs, so we thought

no more of the passage of troops than we did of the clatter of the barnyard.

On Friday night the Jamiesons were to have a dance, and Roy was invited. His father had allowed him a week's vacation on account of the Fourth, to be spent with his cousins at Frederick. And my mother, hearing of it, hustled me off to the Jamiesons', because she did not approve of early marriages. Roy, hearing of that, turned sulky because he thought I was running away from him. And then he got the Jamiesons' invitation, and rode over on the night of July 8th in his evening suit and pumps and white silk stockings, and with him his cousin, also a boy, bravely attired. And when we met he said, "Oh, Queenie!" and I said, "Oh, Roy!" and it was all right. We whispered our vows at midnight, in the moonlight, behind one of the big white lilac bushes that guarded the entrance of the grounds. Poor bushes that died the next day in smoke and blood!

My engagement ring was a large fire opal, set in rubies. I could see it distinctly in the moonlight, and I gave a little cry of terror. "Oh, not opals!" I exclaimed. "That means bad luck." But Roy took me in his arms and kissed me and calmed my fears, and I said the ring was beautiful, as it was—is. It's on my finger now.

At two o'clock Roy and his cousin mounted their horses for the short ride to Frederick; for my lover had to go back to his father's office on the morning train. They rode straight into the arms of a body of scouts, Lew Wallace's men, and were arrested as rebel spies.

What had happened was this: Discovering that Washington with its great defenses was unguarded, as well as the roads leading to and from it, Generals Early and Gordon crossed the Potomac with twenty thousand men to menace the Northern Capital. Lew Wallace with five thousand men met the Confederates at Monocacy River, and one of the bloodiest battles of the war ensued. Each had his wish: the Confederates the ground and victory; Wallace the triumph of the long day's fight which held back Gordon and Early until Grant could throw troops into Washington and save the city. Wallace retreated along the Baltimore Pike, taking our boys with him. And in those days a Northern general was a fearsome thing. On our side we believed that if a gallant lad had been taken as a spy by Stonewall Jackson's men, he would have had his ears pinched by the great general, and been sent about his business. And we also believed that under the same circumstances General Grant would have had him hanged at once on the roadside, beside his tent, as a sauce to his "feast of Lucullus."

The girls and I would have been glad to sleep the morning after the dance, but were not allowed. Breakfast at 7.30 was the rule of the house, and every one was expected to be present, unless ill or disabled. After that if you wanted to go to bed and stay till noon, you could go.

I remember that breakfast well, because it was a long time before I ate anything again: fried chicken, waffles, Maryland biscuit, corn-pone, cold ham, berries, and heavenly coffee.

After it we all sat on the wide front porch, and the Jamieson girls and I talked of what we should do next, finally deciding on a horseback ride through the shady woods. Why no one knew or guessed of the impending battle, I cannot imagine, except that, as I have said, the coming and going of troops were common occurrences. As yet there had been no fighting within thirty miles, and no fear of it. As we arose to prepare for the ride, three officers in blue trotted rapidly down the pike, and called to Mr. Jamieson to take his family and fly to the woods. The "rebels" were coming. Before we had time to do anything, other officers came along, shouting, "To the cellar with you! To the cellar!" The colored servants fled to the woods, leading horses and driving cattle and pigs in front of them. They had been told what to do in just such an emergency. They were faithful creatures, those black people, and brave. Mr. Jamieson sprang for his gun, to fight on the Union side. I packed my hat trunk—I was n't going to lose my pretty gowns if I could help it—and dragged it down to the cellar, where mother and daughters and I took refuge; all on the right side, all praying that our cause would win. And with us were the old black mammy and the old black cook. In order to reach the cellar, we had to go around to the side of the house and down steep stone steps. And so it was that I saw the battle of Monocacy through wide barred windows, and it lasted from 10 A.M. to 4.20 P.M. by the clock. Everything was different from what I had expected. There was the patter of bullets, the screaming and bursting of shells, the thunder of cannon on both sides, and the smell and drift of smoke; but the fighting in front of our eyes was a hand-to-hand conflict of savage men, in groups of twos or threes or more, shooting with their pistols, clubbing with the butts of guns, slashing with their bayonets, or wrestling and falling over each other, intent to kill. We could see it all as distinctly as you see a drama on a stage, except when the combatants came too near and there was only a play of blue and gray legs, or the fall of broken and bleeding bodies. On the side towards Monocacy bridge a Federal howitzer was pounding, and one of the balls struck the Jamieson house, but fortunately only the dining-room and kitchen annex, which went down with a horrible roar of falling walls.

During the lulls of the battle Mrs. Jamieson and her daughters would call at intervals: "Don't fight on the lawn! You are ruining the lawn. Go down in the road and fight." And it did n't seem to me strange. Now it does, but it did not then. The beautiful young lives were going out, the brave young bodies were breaking in blood and agony;

but the ancestral home seemed crumbling to pieces as well, and velvet lawn and hoary trees were ruined for another generation. I was only sixteen and a thoughtless girl, but I seemed caught up into larger spaces where the passions of men were lost in their pain, and I felt a vast pity for each shattered one, the blue or the gray, each dying so gallantly for a principle; and for my lilac bush, and for the drenched and tormented grass and the puzzled tree trunks, yielding themselves so innocently for nothing that they could understand—the quarrels of insensate men, to whom the gentle boughs would so gladly have given peace and shade. I am a pagan in this: I believe the big trees know things—not common things, wise and comforting—and that they suffer as well as die.

At 4.20 came the raucous, wolfish, tantalizing, triumphant “rebel yell,” and I knew that our side had won. General Gordon had commanded the battle from this point, and at 4.30 he came himself to help us up the stone steps, over pools of fresh blood, and between writhing or quiet forms, the blue and the gray, into the house. The ruined lawn, the road in front as far as the eye could see, the porches and the lower rooms of the mansion, were filled with the dead and dying. The general set us all to work giving water to the wounded, for in gunshot wounds the pain itself is not so tormenting as the thirst. At six the living and unbroken bivouacked. Kitchen, store-room, and dining-room were in ruins, but some coarse food was hastily found and prepared at the negro quarters, and the general and his staff ate with us. Mr. Jamieson had discreetly joined his black contingent in the woods. Old mammy objected to eating and drinking under such conditions. “Oh, Miss Clara,” she wailed, “don’t eat. Pray, child, pray!”

“I’ve been praying all day,” said her doughty mistress, “and my prayers have been answered. And now I want food—so get to work.”

A poor fellow came in and begged a pillow for his brother, who was dying outside. He thought he could die easier with his head on a pillow. “I’m the last of six,” he said, “and I don’t know how I am going back to South Carolina to tell my old mother.” On our way to bed we found a sharpshooter at the head of the stairs, dead. He was in blue. And all night long there came horrid sounds from the rooms and the halls below—men babbling with fever, or groaning with pain, or praying, or calling for sweetheart, wife, or mother. A tenor voice kept singing over and over, softly but triumphantly, “When Johnny comes marching home again,” in lower and lower tones, until we divined that Johnny had marched home.

Outside, a little distance away, the surgeons were plying their savage merciful trade, and there were screams of agony while probe or saw did its terrible work. “May God forbend such fearful sounds of direful war!” We were huddled three in a bed, and shaking with excitement

and terror and fatigue, but we could not sleep, until Peggy arose and solemnly handed us each a piece of white beeswax, which we softened and put in our ears; and so, plugged to silence, we slept at last.

The next day Early and Gordon slipped away on the Washington Pike to Washington. They sat down and looked all around its impregnable fortifications, bristling with the bayonets of Grant's men sent up from City Point, on call—Wallace had warned him; and then turned around and crossed the Potomac again, all the bloody slaughter of Monocacy useless.

And Roy sent us word—how he managed it, I don't know—that he and his cousin were prisoners in General Wallace's hands not many miles away, and in danger of their lives. Mr. Jamieson himself drove Peggy and me to headquarters, and the great man received us courteously but gravely. Yes, the young men were believed to be rebel spies. Yes, the punishment of spies was hanging. At that Peggy burst into tears, for Roy's cousin was her boy.

"Why don't you cry, you little Reb?" said the General, looking at me, not unkindly, I thought.

"I'll cry hard enough when Roy is dead," I said hotly. "Meanwhile, I am trying to think of something that will save him."

"Oh, you are? What, for instance?"

"Spies don't generally go into business in white silk stockings and pumps," I said. "The poor boys had only come over to a dance at the Jamiesons'. We did n't any of us know you were going to kick up all this rumpus."

I know now that Lew Wallace meant no harm to any of the various citizens, young and old, whom he captured before the battle as a precautionary measure; and that they were carried along with the army in its retreat only because he had more important things to do than to set free a number of scared non-combatants. I also know now that, like Emerson, he loved a lover.

"Silk stockings and pumps," he said, laughing, and ordered the boys into his office. They were a sorry sight. They had struggled with their captors, and their evening suits were torn and dusty, their white silk stockings clay-colored, and their pumps full of holes where they had cut out pieces that pinched. For dancing pumps are always a little tight, and the polished leather drew and stung on the long forced march. In spite of the Presence, Roy and I flew into each other's arms, and Tom and Peggy did likewise. And the General ordered the release of all his citizen prisoners, and we thanked him and went back. My mother came for me that night. She expected no less than to return with a beloved corpse, and had brought Cæsar and the big carriage, which was a good thing, for they—the boys, her daughter, and her daughter's hat-trunk—about filled it. And in her

joy at holding me in her arms again she gave her consent to a long engagement, which was all Roy and I wanted. Tom and Peggy had to wait awhile.

Five years afterwards Roy and I were on our wedding tour and stopping in New York at the St. Nicholas. It was a night in January, and we were going to the opera to hear Nilsson sing in "Mignon." As we crossed the corridor who should loom up in front of us but the General.

"Ah, here 's little Johnny Reb again," he said, laughing, "and her husband, I suspect," and shook hands with us both. "Still silk stockings and pumps," he continued, taking in all the details of our bridal attire. And then he put us into the carriage and closed the door, and bent his noble head and kissed my hand in parting. And that is the last I saw of the great General.

"Stockings and pumps," said Roy. "I should think so. We must establish an escutcheon, pumps *couchant* and stockings *salient*. But it looked very nip and tucky, now, did n't it, dear?"

And I said, "No," and kissed him. For by that time I knew. And we are very happy, and have been ever since. Though it's States' Rights forever, and never say die; though we be dead.



THREE CHURCHES

BY WITTER BYNNER

THREE churches has Grenstone,
 All on one street,
 And there, in a graveyard
 Kept very neat,
 Stands a vigilant guide
 For the passenger's eye,
 A maiden of marble,
 And points to the sky.

The man who designed her
 Had meant her to say:
 "Come, good little children
 Of Heaven, this way!"
 But with hand gaily lifted
 And angle all wrong
 She capers and says:
 "Come along, come along!"

THE DOOR THAT OPENED

By Marion Hill

THE girl stood looking down upon the young man in every way known to the human calendar. It cannot be said that he minded it. Terry Moran, representing the slums, was used to being looked down upon by Miss May, representing fashionable society. At this individual moment she was militantly drawn up to her full height, such as it was, while he slouched very comfortably on the street curb, his back against a hydrant, his feet in the gutter. He had the poise of one thoroughly at home. As he was.

It was the girl who was out of bounds. The affluence of her pink silk parasol made it look rude to the scenery, and the beruffled skirts which she held in one hand seemed to curl up in anguish of themselves to get away from the cans and bones and garbage of Terry's residence street.

That street, being as unfloral and as narrow as the back of a camel, was quite naturally called Garden Avenue.

Garden Avenue, though short, was thirsty, beginning refreshingly and unpretentiously with a corner saloon and ending just as unpretentiously and much more refreshingly with a second one. Clotheslines strung with ragged wash flapped in gay sight from Monday to Monday, apparently never taken in. Garden Avenue's sociability was beyond caviling question, being self-evident, for dogs and goats in a good state of repair, cats in a poor state of repair, chickens in all states and children in no states at all, in addition to men and women absolutely unrepairable, huddled companionably together within its restrictions, from one end to the other of the noisy year.

Miss May ought to have known better than to be there at all. Possessed, however, of a small fortune and a large desire to do good in the world, her natural intelligence was often clouded, and she visited many places she ought to have kept away from. The fact that she did not get into serious trouble was owing entirely to the wisdom of those whom she went to teach.

They liked her not because she was helpful, but because she was helpless; not because she uplifted them, but because she very much entertained them; not because she was morally their superior, but because she was what you might call immorally young and pretty. Even Terry

Moran, the frequently harangued, liked her. Therefore, now that she scourgingly demanded of him, "Are you not thoroughly ashamed of yourself, Terry?" he chivalrously gave her what he knew she wanted by replying promptly:

"Yessum."

At this her face darkened. She was in that earliest of Life's moods when the whole comedy of existence consists in turning everything possible into tragedy.

"'Yessum!'" she shuddered educationally. "Say, 'Yes, Miss May.' *Yessum* sounds neither respectful nor self-respecting."

"H——!" filtered gently but silently through Terry's subconsciousness. Aloud, he obediently said, "Yes, Miss May."

To ease the need for which expression cried, he indulged in movement, somewhat of a rarity with him, Terry being able to out-Buddha Buddha when it came to doing nothing violently and forever: he stooped over the gutter, gazed in it selectively, picked up its likeliest twig, wiped this fastidiously clean upon his trousers, and then chewed on it with philosophic reflectiveness.

Not till her next words did he have the least inkling of an idea as to what he should have been ashamed of.

"A big strong fellow like you," she swept on accusingly, "being content to idle away your time on the street!"

This petrified his teeth midway in a chew. To his positive knowledge, the street was innocent to inanity. He knew of so many other places where he could idle with really brilliant luridness, that for a moment he felt tempted to exonerate himself by mentioning them to her. But, wisely thinking the better of it, he forced his jaws to resume masticating, and forbore speech.

"Your one ambition seems to be to loll in the sun," she went on, "while all the helpful world is open to you, offering you its rare opportunities which come but the wonderful once. Yet you and your class, letting them slip by, sit and whine that you are oppressed!"

Terry never. Never. Nor did his class. Unwilling, though, to give so pretty a girl the lie, Terry preserved his noble silence. But he disgustedly threw away the twig, feeling that all his comforts were begrudged him. There was nothing left him but the hydrant. He pressed his back more firmly against it, gloriously testing its solid actuality.

Tipping her pink halo so as to keep the sun out of her dove-like eyes, Miss May burst out desperately:

"This talk of 'heredity and environment' makes me tired!"

Terry nodded. It made him tired, too.

"Environment does *not* make the man," she severely went on. "Is it not rather man who makes his environment?"

Again Terry nodded. It was likely. In Garden Avenue man made a heap of things he did not want and did not know how to spell nor what to do with.

"And he voluntarily sticks to that environment all his life," flamed Miss May, "and then curses it with his dying breath!"

Terry radiated approval—of the curses.

That he could have thoughts contrary to those she kindly gave him, Miss May never dreamed. She took him to be putty in her plastic hands. But he was more than putty. He was protoplasm—subject to propulsion from within.

Slumped against the hydrant, all rags and idleness, he made quite a picture in his way. In spite of shifting eyes, vain mouth, and weak chin, his face was annoyingly handsome, its unhealthy pallor and leanness lending him a look of spurious refinement; and he had the well-modelled hands and feet which belong so oddly often to the world's vagrants. He had the lazy, slow smile and the sleepy, slow gaze of all those who keep abnormally wide-awake. His hair, too long over the forehead, so that it straggled into his eyes, was curly—the kind which argues in some mysterious fashion a correspondingly curly kink in the moral fibre of its owner. Terry's personality, though shrieking aloud of certain vices, whispered too of a few uncertain virtues; for in his sensuous moodiness there lurked the potential poet, and in his self-centred indolence was a hint of that celestial egoism which is the first necessary rung in a ladder to the stars,—Terry had the ear-marks of a Man.

Whenever she looked away from him, he shot at her glances curiously keen, blazing disconcertingly with much knowledge yclept unwise. This permitted him far to outrank Miss May—as a collegiate. Her knowledge was of the good only—as dangerous a possession in a crisis as a razor to an epileptic.

At the "dying breath" point, Miss May's eloquence suffered an intermission, and both she and Terry focussed their gaze upon an especially noisy but indubitably mirthful happening which was taking place at the farther end of the "avenue." A volubly drunken woman was being cajoled, hauled, and prodded into the patrol wagon by two policemen. Terry watched the scene to its close from under eyebrows murderously huddled, Miss May from under brows disdainfully arched.

"Disgraceful!" she commented, referring to the woman, as the patrol rattled away.

"Yep!" snarled Terry, referring to the police. Why did they not, for a change, let his mother alone?

Being a settlement worker, Miss May was possessed of all facts concerning Terry, barring the one or two most necessary ones. The drunken woman was unknown to her, yet Terry's natal day was not.

"Terry, this is your birthday," she said, astonishing him. "That is why I have hunted you out. You have become of age. The law will now allow you to go into one of those horrible saloons and wreck your immortal soul!" Perceiving that he shirked the emotion due, she reached down and took his hand in hers, saying arousingly, "But not if I can save you. Oh, Terry, stand up on your feet like a man and let me talk to you!"

As she gently tugged him, Terry slouched upright, the personal appeal in her voice waking sensitive responsiveness in his heart, the touch of her hand upon his wrist running through him like uneasy fire. He so frightfully missed the support of the hydrant that had it been his twin flesh and he just surgically parted from it, he could not have felt more amputated and bereft, nor held himself more loosely.

His ignoble, collapsible appearance so worked upon his guardian angel, that she talked to him—so Terry put it to himself—like a Dutch uncle,—though why a Dutch uncle should be considered worse than, say, a Scandinavian aunt or any other Transatlantic relative, is a mystery he did not try to solve.

"Choose a better path, Terry," she implored, her warm fingers tightening earnestly on his. "*Do*. Shake off the influence of your surroundings and grow upward away from them. Happiness, esteem, and wealth are waiting for you if you will only reach out to them and labor towards them."

He drew a quick, shivering breath. From his wrist to his heart, from heart to brain, from his brain to every tingling nerve in his body, the uneasy fire raced and burned.

Pleased with this emotion and putting it down to her eloquent appeal for the higher life, she went on still more convincingly:

"*Dear* Terry, homes are open to you, but you must first fit yourself to be their guest. I know better than to demand of you bricks without straw, Terry, and so have written down for you on this paper names of some good men and women to whom you can apply for employment. Start out for the goal, Terry. You cannot help but reach it. Remember, God made you in His image; do not degrade that image. To-day you have become a man. Let it be a good man, Terry, for your Maker's sake, for your own sake, for my sake!"

For her sake! He was awake at last. For her sake—those were the words he held to, letting the others fly over his head. For her sake! There blossomed within him something brave and spiritual, caused, it is true, by the vibration of her nearness upon his senses, his elemental senses—which misunderstood and vituperated things, by the way, call to birth the noblest and purest resolves of a life.

"Give me the paper," he stammered harshly. "I'll try. I promise. I'll be a man. A good one. For your s——" But the

audacity of this concluding phrase gagged him, and he wrenched his hand from hers to put it up to his throat and punish that throat by strangling. So extremely physical was Terry that it seemed to him it was not his mind, but his tangible larynx, which had come near to formulating indiscretion; therefore he clutched and twisted it while he glared savagely at his companion. To be intense without brutality was impossible to his breed.

"Here," said Miss May, handing him the philanthropic list with haste, and shrinking visibly from she knew not exactly what.

Queer—but when immature young womanhood, in her fancy-free wanderings through altruism, stumbles upon a piece of unkindled manhood, she is possessed of but the one idea of getting a little fire to it. Fascinated, she stays on the spot, applies a match to the pile, fans it with her hat, pokes it, brings new twigs, drops to her knees and blows it; if the kerosene kind, she pours on kerosene; in a word, works for a blaze like the valiantest Prometheus. Nature, never a discourager of such labor, sees to it that the flame eventually leaps up. Then the fair laborer promptly grows terrified and puts her foot on it. If she cannot squog it out, she runs.

Smiling him a farewell, a glad farewell, Miss May turned her pink parasol upon Terry and got out of the neighborhood as completely as possible, going back into the familiar purlieus of her own well-clad, well-fed, well-bred world, but leaving him mentally outcast from his, mentally divorced from his natural surroundings, mentally unfit for any others on a higher plane, yet reaching blindly towards them in obedience to her inspiration, an obedience which had all the pathos of the bravely futile, being as pitifully vain as is the resistance of the grass-blade to the storm, the defense of the blossom against the gale, the opposition of the dewdrop to the sun.

"But I'll do it, I'll do it," he muttered vaguely. He ran his eye furtively down the names on the paper and then showed fine campaigning powers by deciding to try the women first. "No bricks without straw, huh?" He studied the names over again. Were they bricks? Were they straw? Maybe straw. What inclined him to the straw notion was seeing the word "hay" in the name Haywood. Mrs. Haywood. He'd begin with her. The world wanted him, did it? Well, that was news. He spat over his left shoulder for luck, and then set out for Mrs. Haywood's.

Reached, Mrs. Haywood turned out to be a motherly woman whose house rang with the music of child-laughter. Terry heard it from the outside. He never got in. Mrs. Haywood's motherliness was, as sometimes happens, for her own only, and she plainly showed Terry that she thought him unsanitary.

"Stand there, please," she ordered, from the top of her stoop,

and indicated the second step from the street. In that way she interviewed him, keeping a current of fresh air circulating around him for the better safeguarding of the family health—her family, the only family that counted. To Mrs. Haywood, every cough might be whooping-cough, every flannelled throat diphtheria, every pimple small-pox. Which restricted her flow of humanity.

“Garden Avenue!” she finally said, moving back into her house at receiving this reply as the last to her series of impertinent questions. “Why, that is the very centre of the typhoid district!”

Which of course was a good reason for helping Terry out of it. But she waved him peremptorily back into it and shut the door upon him.

“Mutt!” commented Terry, who had met these germ-haunted ladies before, and who was always resentful of their insinuations of his own unwholesomeness. He willingly slunk away from this sorry straw. Frowningly he searched the paper for a name as unstrawlike as possible. Stone. Stone would do.

His second hungry trudge took him almost back to where he had started. He found that Mrs. Stone was out. She did not even own a step for him to rest upon, so he lounged awhile against her area-railing. Mrs. Stone, so it chanced, was down-town lecturing working girls to the effect that they would show truer womanliness by staying at home rather than by seeking the publicity of platforms. With tears in her voice, she urged them always to be ready at their own portals to welcome the Footsore Guest, haply an Angel in disguise. It was a heartfelt address and was published in the next day's paper, where it was read and approved of by a whole lot of earnest women—all going down-town on the cars.

When sufficiently strengthened and refreshed by leaning against the home-keeping apostle's area railing, Terry scanned his list and settled on Miss McKilligan.

The sun was low in the heavens and lower still in his hopes when he finally set eyes upon her. Some women take to philanthropy in order to show off their faces, others to forget theirs. This last was Miss McKilligan. But she was interested in Terry—tremendously. She probed him without remorse. She was accumulating statistics of poverty, wishing to write a novel about them. And the impertinent questions she omitted to ask Terry were extremely few, if any. She wrote his answers in a note-book. When sated with appalling facts, she truly told Terry that he was old enough to take care of himself, and dismissed him. If she had only not been writing a book, she would have known intuitively that it is just *when* a boy is old enough to look out for himself that he needs somebody's eye upon him in the worst kind of a way. But she dismissed him.

He turned his dispirited self towards Number Four's house.

Number Four was a bustling small person, spectacled and kind, but cautious. She asked Terry into her reception hall and actually gave him a seat. She drew his attention to the hall. She seemed rabid on halls. She told Terry she thought she could make a hall-porter out of him. Things began to get on. Terry took heart. She arrived, still cautiously, at the final questions of engaging him. She had many visitors, it seemed. Terry would have to know how to treat them. So she asked him some extremely insolent things. Had Terry owned a dictionary, and had Terry owned a desire to look into it, both farcically unlikely hypotheses, Terry would have expected to find "philanthropy" under the synonyms of "impertinence." Her final point was to demand of him if he had ever had any "house-training."

And Terry, unfortunately remembering a comfortable institution where he had once been squarely treated and decently taught, replied: "Yes. At the Reform School."

Number Four's hall being rich in valuable brasses, extremely pawnable, she took off her glasses, rubbed them nervously, and terminated the interview negatively.

Out in the street, Terry straightened his back for the first time in hours. He held himself erect for the queer reason that night was near. The sun was down and lights were being lit. With the going down of the sun, Terry's assurance always rose. He and the night were on safe terms with each other. He laughed softly and unctuously aloud at the effect of his reformatory disclosure. His thought, shorn of its comicality (some might call it profanity), was to the effect that if Truth's advantages were only one-tenth as sensational as its disadvantages, the Lie Rampant would hide its diminished head and give up.

Just as Terry was ready to do. But he stuck faithfully to his list of names.

"Aw, I'll tackle the Guy," he muttered.

The Guy was Number Five and a man.

Tracked to his office den and bearded there, the Guy had a dangerous look. The lateness of the hour made things bad for the visitor and the visited. Man and boy together were fagged out, tempers rawly on edge.

Being rid of the ladies, Terry felt himself under no courteous compulsion to take "talk," and this hinted defiance was noticeable in his bearing. His hunger and weariness were noticeable, too, but to the eye of prosperity were but added offenses against office propriety.

"Well, what do you want?" shot Number Five, bunching his beetling eyebrows and using the grunting, challenging voice which belongs inevitably to that hour of the working day and to the general situation.

"Work."

"Work! Same fairy tale." The grunt became sardonic and the brows piled bunch upon bunch. "Who sent you?"

"Miss May," said Terry, giving the name like a prayer.

"'Miss May'! 'Miss May'!" Number Five batted it about. "If 'Miss May' only had sense enough to realize that my time is quite as valuable as 'Miss May's,' 'Miss May' would spare me a few of these visitations!"

At each belittling repetition of the name, Terry knotted his fists tighter and tighter; but he said nothing.

"Work!" scoffed on Number Five. "What can you do?"

Knowing perfectly well what he could do, Terry was not going to jeopardize his chances by telling. He gave his lurking smile—sure sign that he was not amused—and narrowed his eyes to sleepy slits—sure sign that he was seeing too much. Still he said nothing.

This silence, since it was judicious, was very angering. Number Five repeated his question more insultingly:

"What can *you* do?"

And Terry's answer to this was not given to the Guy alone, but was a cumulative reply to all the impertinent inquiries of the thankless day.

"I can mash your fool mouth in!" blazed Terry—to society at large.

No one, not even Terry himself, could have complained of the way he was thrown out.

The blow with which he struck the sidewalk knocked the last splinter of spirituality out of him. Whispering curses, he picked himself up and slunk away from the derisive arc-lights of that unsympathetic thoroughfare, seeking the more charitable dimness of Garden Avenue. He fearfully wanted supper.

But he found his own house dark and barred. Then he remembered that his mother was not dining at home that evening.

Shambling drearily from his deserted doorstep, uncertain what to do, he was beckoned to most cheerfully by the friendly lights of the saloon opposite. Terry hurried over and put his hand on the door. Then he stopped and raised his head as if listening to some one's low call: "Remember, *dear* Terry, God made you in His image. Do not degrade that image." Terry's reply to this call was of too blasting a nature to repeat. The whole universe blew up under it. Terry banged his hand against the ready door, and it swung wide for him. He was in.

And how glad he was!—how glad! Hunger, thirst, weariness, and humiliation were eased away from him. In a bright twinkling of time all the desire of his young life was bestowed welcomingly upon him—a worthy desire was it, too—a desire for warmth, light, cheer,

charity, companionship, food, drink, music, and greeting. Here nothing was grudged, no questions were asked.

"Fill up, Terry Moran!" cried a score of convivial voices. If some of them were thick, this but weighted the conviviality. "And fill up, all, and drink to the boy. We've been hearing it's your birthday, lad. Our treat. Here's to you, Terry—a long life and a merry one."

"A long life and a merry one," said Terry, touched and grateful. He took the glass.

"Hold on!" cried a wit. "Here's an improvement—a short life and a merrier!"

"A short life and a merrier," agreed Terry, laughing.

And that was the birthday toast which he swigged gladly to the sweet dregs, not once only, nor twice, but again and again and again. And under its potent influence he turned from mute to loud, from loud to soft, from soft to song, from song to tears, from tears to sleep, and, it is to be hoped, from sleep to forgetfulness.

Identically in point of time with Terry's debauch, though in a further, fairer haunt of town, Miss May, gotten up in white lace and white flowers till she was a veritable perfumed white violet of a girl, sat under the gleam of her home lamp, recounting her day of mercy to a clever-looking chap whom Garden Avenue with tactless veracity would promptly have labelled Her Young Man. And that is what he was. Though both had palpitating doubts about it.

Quite fortunately for everybody concerned, himself included, he was not at all a Good Young Man. Instead, he was a very Bad Young Man, who smoked, idled, gambled, drank, and committed other allied sins, just as Terry did, all to an unlimited degree, but always in very proper places, to the end that he was outrageously esteemed and sought after by all who knew him.

This Bad Young Man, scorning all these esteems, wished only the hidden esteem of Miss May; therefore, when he heard her artlessly boast that she had that day reclaimed a Soul from the wet gutter and had turned it safely over to dry philanthropists, he was touched half to death, and he silently made up his Bad Young Mind that even if he had to invite Terry to be his chauffeur, Terry *should* be reclaimed, all the good people in the world to the contrary notwithstanding. So at the first decent interval that arrived, he lingeringly made his farewells to Miss May, took his departure, and strode through the night, bent on hunting her Terry up.

Being the Bad Young Man that he was, he made not the faintest attempt to interview the listed philanthropists. Instead, without loss of time, he located Garden Avenue; got there; located Terry's house; got there; located the nearest saloon, and headed for it wisely at once.

OUT OF BOUNDS

By Owen Oliver

Author of "The School-Mother," etc.

GIRLS are n't the same as boys, of course, but they can't help it, and some of them are all right—for girls. Essie Malcolm is better then a good many boys.

She belongs to Old Malcolm, our head mathematical master, and the Classical fellows call him "Two and Two." They always call the head math. master that. He's been at the school for two terms now. He's a ripping sort when you know him, but we did n't at first. He never made jokes like the other masters, and you could n't tell if he saw them. The fellows thought he was an old stick, but you could n't rag him. He expected you to work, and that was against him, of course.

His wife was dead, and he had n't anybody but Essie. He thinks a frightful lot of her, but we did n't know that then. She was a pale little kid, and she walked with a crutch, but now she can do without it. She had enormous eyes, and some people would call her good-looking. I should.

They lived next door to the Dunnes. He's the master of the Classical sixth, and we call him Jolly Old Dunne. The masters' houses are supposed to be out of bounds, and they have spiky high railings round them, as if they were lunatics. (Some of them are!) The masters' daughters are supposed to be out of bounds, too, but the Dunne girls were n't that sort. We used to go and sit on top of their railings (you had to be careful that you did n't spike yourself) and so did they. If old Dunne came along they'd take hold of his arms and call him "darling." So he could n't say anything. They were uncommonly nice-looking, and they generally had about four sweethearts each in the school. They hated any of the fellows to talk to other girls.

They set us against Essie at first, and called her "Miss Prim." They said she would n't speak to us because old "Two and Two" held with bounds, and was going to give it to us hot if we went near his garden. She used to come and stand at her railings and stare with her big eyes when we were chaffing the other girls. It struck me one day that she looked beastly lonely, and I told the Dunne girls that it was a shame.

"It's just like a lot of girls," I said, "to leave a poor little lame kid out in the cold."

"It's just like a lot of boys," Mabel Dunne answered, "to send a poor little boy to Coventry, and say that he's a sneak when he is n't."

She meant Fathers. He was a pal of hers, and she got him out of Coventry. The Dunne girls always stuck up for their pals, whether they were right or wrong. That was one of the decent things about them.

"Rot!" I told her. "We don't do it without a reason."

"Neither do we!" she said. "Clever Dick!" (My name is n't Dick, but Arthur.) "You speak to her and see if she does n't sneak to her father. I know her sort."

"I don't," I said; "but I'm going to."

"I dare you to speak to her!" Mabel said; and the rest all dared me too. So I walked over to the kid. I meant to speak to her anyhow, so I was rather glad to have an excuse. They could n't say anything about it, after I'd been "dared."

She took up her crutch as if she was going to run away, but she did n't.

"My name's Bagshawe," I said. "What's yours?"

She went a bit red, and looked as if she was frightened.

"Father said that I was to tell him if any of you boys spoke to me," she said, "because it's against the rules."

"If you do you'll be a sneak," I told her; and she seemed as if she was going to cry.

"If I don't," she said, "I shall be a sneak to father; and he—he has n't anybody but me; and he trusts me; and I promised him. I did n't think that I should want to speak to—I mean I did n't think that any of you would want to speak to me. And now you'll think I'm a sneak."

"No, I won't," I promised. "Don't be an idiot and cry or they'll all laugh at you. You can tell him. I don't care."

"I'll have to tell him," she declared; "but I'll say it was all my fault, because I was lonely and miserable, and I looked as if I wanted some one to speak to me, and you only did it because you were kind." She stopped to get breath, and I put a word in while I had a chance. It's the only way when you talk to girls.

"You need n't get yourself in a row," I offered. "You can put it on me. I don't care. And if I'm going to get in a row for talking we may as well talk. What's your name?"

"Essie Malcolm. What is yours, besides Bagshawe?"

"Arthur. How old are you?"

"Thirteen. How old are you?"

"Fifteen. I'm in the mathematical fifth, and the under sixteen football team, and I won the junior quarter-mile at the sports." I was sorry that I bragged about running, directly I'd done it, because she looked at her crutch. "What's the matter with your leg?"

"I was knocked down by a motor. The doctor says it will get better some day. Does it make me—I mean, do you notice it very much?"

"Oh, no!" I declared. "Hardly at all." That was a whopper, but I wanted to cheer her up. "A girl is n't like a boy. You don't notice how she walks, when she's good-looking."

She went quite pink at that. It made her better looking.

"I'm not," she said. That was to make me contradict her, of course. So I contradicted her, and she seemed tremendously bucked, and grinned and talked like anything.

It made the Dunne girls mad to see me chummy with her, and presently Carrie came to our end of their garden, and asked if Essie ought to stand on her bad leg. She is a spiteful, red-haired little beast, and her sisters sat on her afterwards for doing it.

Essie did n't answer, but I did.

"A bad leg is better than a bad tongue," I said; "and if I had hair like yours I'd stand on my head to hide it!"

She bounced off in a rage, and we were never good friends afterwards, but I did n't care. Essie said that it was rude of me; but she giggled, and I knew that she was pleased that I'd stuck up for her.

We talked for an hour, then she said that she must go in.

"I *do* wish I had n't to tell father," she said; "but I'll tell him it was all my fault."

"There's no need," I advised her. "He'll only report me to the head, and *he* won't say much."

"Are you sure?" she asked.

"Quite sure," I declared. I was. He never says much; but I did n't know what he might *do*! He is a ferocious old brute. We think he is the finest head that any school ever had.

Old Malcolm was as quiet as usual the next morning, and I thought perhaps she had n't told him after all, because girls can generally find a good reason for not doing what they don't want to do. But when school was over he asked me to stay behind. So I saw that I was in for it.

"You know the rules about bounds?" he asked in his quiet way.

"Yes, sir."

"Yesterday you broke them?"

"Yes, sir."

He leaned back in his chair and set his spectacles straight to have a good look at me.

"Whose fault was it?" he asked.

"Mine, of course," I said. "I went and spoke to her, and she could n't very well help answering, you see, sir; and, besides, she's two years younger, and——"

"Tut, tut!" he interrupted. "I know all about that; but she says it was her fault, because she looked as if she wanted you to speak to her."

"Oh, no, sir!" I said. "Not at all. And—and she must be beastly—I mean very—lonely, sir. It was n't her fault at all. They have n't been very strict bounds, sir; about speaking to—to the masters' daughters."

"In my case they are very strict," he declared. "My daughter will not use the back garden in future." I thought he was an old brute, but I did n't say so. "You can go." I started for the door. "Wait a minute. Your work is very promising; very promising. If you'd like to come to tea with me this afternoon, I'll run over your preparation with you."

"Thank you, sir," I said. I managed to keep from laughing till I was out in the passage. I knew jolly well that Essie had made him ask me. Girls can make their fathers do anything.

When I went there the servant showed me into the dining-room, and said that Mr. Malcolm would be down in a minute. I thought at first that I was n't going to see Essie, and that was his way of taking a rise out of me; but I noticed her boot sticking out under the curtain. So I rolled her up in it. She had a lot of games, and we played draughts. I gave her two men; but old Malcolm beat me frightfully when I played him. It was a great tea. There were five sorts of cakes and potted meat. After tea old Malcolm let me play the piano, and showed me a lot about chords. I am awfully fond of music, but I only play by ear. He went over my preparation with me, and he made the conic sections seem quite interesting. I had just begun them. He said that I was sure to be first for the junior scholarship, but he was n't sure if I should reach the standard. So he'd give me a few extra lessons if I'd be a sensible chap and work. I could n't very well get out of it; but I felt he'd "had" me rather!

After that I often went there to tea, and he always brought Essie to see the school matches, and when I was n't playing I talked to her. The Dunne girls set the fellows on to rag me about it, and I had two fights. I licked Hardy in three rounds, but Sanders was too big and heavy for me. I was glad that a prefect stopped it in the seventh round. I should n't have given in because he'd called Essie "dot and carry one"; but I would n't have been able to stand up after three or four more rounds.

The "pre" was Maitland, the captain of the school. He found out what the fight was about, and when the fellows were making fun

of Essie and me, because we were sitting together at a school match, he came up and sat beside us; and when he went he took off his cap to her, just as if she was grown up. Maitland is a gentleman.

Things were all right after that, till I got a letter from India, where my people are. The governor had lost a lot of money, he said, and the mater had sold her jewels, and he would have to take me away from school, and I should have to go into an office, instead of staying at school and going on to the University.

Believe me, old chap [he wrote], this is what cuts me up most. I know that you'll feel bad about it, and you must write me a separate letter, and tell me; but, whatever you do, make out that you don't mind, when you write to the little mater. She's heart-broken about you.

It was a half-holiday, and I sat down and wrote a long letter to the mater, instead of playing football. I told an awful lot of lies in it. I said that I'd always thought school rot, and the University was worse, because the fellows who got on in the world were those who started business young; and I was frightfully bucked at the chance of beginning real work; and I meant to make a fortune, and then I'd buy all sorts of things for her; and I'd seen a diamond necklace in a shop just like I meant to give her when I was rich, but I expected it would take five or six years.

I wrote another letter to the old governor, and owned I was a bit cut up. (It's no use trying to humbug him. He knows how a fellow feels about things, and he was at the school himself, and the head took the Classical fifth then.) But I'd do my best, and I did n't mind so long as I grew up a decent chap like him, and I'd try to manage that. And he need n't send me too much money, because he'd want it for the small kids at home. I sent some unused Indian stamps that I had to buy sweets for them.

When I had done the letters I went and told Essie about it. She squatted on the floor beside my chair and stroked my hand.

"If you are poor when you grow up," she said, "I will marry you, if you want me to."

It's funny what a lot of girls think about marrying!

I never meant to let any girl marry me; but fellows generally do; and I thought that I'd rather it be Essie, if I had to; and she'd want some one to look after her, if she did n't leave off being lame. So I answered that I expected I should want to when I grew up. I think she would be a good sort of wife.

The head had told old Malcolm, and he seemed awfully upset when he came in. He shook his head and made noises in his throat, and mentioned that he lost his little son when it was a baby. It must be jolly awful, I think, to have your baby die. It's funny how they

grab at your fingers and try to put them in their mouths. He said that I was a most promising young mathematician, and he had expected a great future for me.

"Arthur *will* have a great future, daddy," Essie said; "and if he does n't we shan't care!"

"We!" said Old Malcolm. "We, indeed!" Then he went and played the piano till tea-time. Essie whispered that he was fearfully fond of me. He's a good sort.

After tea he did my prep. with me. I did it more carefully than usual. I thought, as I'd only another fortnight at school, I'd better make the most of it. When we had finished he smoked his pipe and talked to me like a Scotchman. When he talks Scotch you always know that he is excited.

"Arthur, my lad," he said, "you're a guid boy—to the leemited extent to which a boy is ever guid! You've been a brither to that little lassie of mine. . . . It's the richt sort of lad that likes the little and the lame. But she'll be all right again in a year, please God! You're ower young to go out in the world yet. I'll write to your father and offer for you to stay on here a year at my expense. Eh, boy?"

I thought it over for a long time before I answered.

"Thank you, sir," I said. "I mean more than that, you know, sir. . . . I want to stay; and I'd like to be with you and Essie, but— You see, I want to earn something and help the dad and mater. They're such a good sort, sir. You see, I'd be a year ahead by starting now. I wish I knew how to thank you properly, sir."

"Perhaps you're right, my lad," he said. "Perhaps you're right. God bless you! . . . You'll stay with Essie and me for the holidays and till your plans are settled, anyhow."

"Yes, sir," I said. "I shall like that."

Every one at the school was very decent to me. The head talked a lot about "exceptional arrangements to meet exceptional cases," but I could n't make out what he meant, except that he had written to the governor. His wife asked me to tea and gave me a pocket-knife with nine things in it, and her stamp-album, because she had n't collected for a long time. Some of the stamps were fine. Jolly Old Dunne gave me a tip, and all the masters did something nice for me. Maitland wrote to his father, and his father wrote to mine, and said he'd take me into his business. The fellows got up a "sub" to give me a present on leaving; and the masters and their families got up another. The Dunne girls told me that they were going to be friends with Essie and look after her for me. Carrie very nearly cried, though she tried to laugh. "Her l-l-leg is g-getting all right," she said, "b-but my h-head is n't!" I told her it was a jolly handsome head, and she was

too good-looking to grumble about her hair. She said, "You *are* a donkey, Baggy!" But she liked it; and she made friends with Essie; and they are friends now. But Essie said that she should miss me if she had a thousand friends. I thought I should miss her too. You grow fond of a kid when she's small and lame. She was getting over the lameness, though. That was some consolation, but I was cut up, and it's no use denying it. You see, I'd looked forward to being captain of the school football team some day.

The afternoon before breaking up, the head sent for me.

"Bagshawe," he said, "you've won the junior scholarship. I have represented the special circumstances of your case to the governors, and they have adopted my suggestion to pay the three years' grants down. This will enable you to stay here for a year without cost to your father. I have cabled to him, and he has cabled back that his affairs are improving; and, after the year, he hopes to be able to keep you here. I am very glad. I have had to—er—take notice of some boyish mischief in the past, but—but, if you were my son, I should be satisfied with you, my boy."

He put his hand on my shoulder; and then I broke down and blubbered like a baby. I'd felt *awful* about going, though I would n't own it. Essie was worse than I had been when I ran and told her. She must have felt awfully bad about it, from the way she laughed and cried. So I did n't rag her for kissing me.

The awkward thing was that they'd bought the leaving presents. I said they could keep them till I really left, but they insisted on giving them to me after the speeches the next day. The head's wife did it.

"We are more pleased to give them because you are staying than because you were going," she told me. "They will remind you that we think a lot of you and expect a lot from you; and you will feel bound to fulfil our expectations, I am sure."

I do feel like that, of course, and so I can't decently flunk. I told Essie so when we were talking at the seaside one evening. (I went there with Mr. Malcolm for the holidays.)

"Of course you can't," she said. "If you flunk it will be *frightful* for you! You'll be poor; and if you're poor I've made up my mind to marry you."

"Look here, Essie," I said, "I don't think that's fair on you. I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll settle to get married whether I'm poor or whether I'm not!"

I dare say you'll think it's a bit rough on me to have to get married; but I don't look at it like that. A fellow's almost certain to do it some day; and, if you can't help having a wife, I think it's sensible to make sure of the best girl you know.

SNITZSKY

By Daisy Rinehart

THE Senior Interne came and stood by Snitzsky's bed, looked down at him for a moment, and then felt his pulse. Snitzsky resisted a strong impulse to spit upon him, because he had learned by three months' experience in this strange country that such conduct brought swifter and fiercer reprisals than in his own Russia. How he hated the Interne! First because he was a fellow man, and Snitzsky hated all of his kind; secondly because he was in authority, and Snitzsky, by inheritance and training an anarchist, hated all the powers that be; thirdly because of his six feet two of blonde, full-blooded magnificence, which was an insult to his own cadaverous deformity; and lastly because of the Look—the look that all his life had come into every eye save one that had lighted upon him, the look that was born of his ratty-eyed, mangy-haired, unwholesome malevolence.

The unconscious Senior Interne felt his pulse long and frowningly. "You keep very quiet and don't move around or excite yourself in any way—not in any way—you hear?" he said impressively; then he went out, closing the ward door after him—not so carefully, however, but that it fell slightly ajar, letting his voice come back to Snitzsky in his bed opposite the door: "Unless Snitzsky's heart braces up, he'll have to go into Room A to-morrow;" also the voice of the Golden-Haired, protesting, "Oh, Doctor!" as she shut the door.

These words stirred up a most suicidal tumult in Snitzsky's afore-said weakly laboring heart. He knew all about Room A, across the hall from the ward door. Many patients had he seen go in there from the ward, but only sheeted lay-figures came out—on the little wheeled stretcher. One went into Room A to die—decently and in private, attended only by the black-robed Sister Ursuline. But Snitzsky had never even in his most painful moments thought of himself going in there, and the idea aroused him to alternate paroxysms of fear and rage.

Ever since the accident, a week before, he had lain terrorizing the ward with his shrieks and maledictions—only too well comprehended by all who heard them, though uttered in a foreign tongue. Not even the wildly delirious fever patient in the bed next his own had done half

so much to disturb the peace of the other occupants of the crowded room, until doctors and nurses, all but the Golden-Haired, had lost all patience and cried out upon him.

The door opened again, and the Golden-Haired came in alone.

"Lena!" called the fever patient imploringly; but Snitzsky, disregarding the Doctor's caution, threw himself forward and grasped the edge of her white apron as she passed him.

"I go not into Room A—I go not!" he screamed, peering with his wild rat-eyes up into her face.

The Golden-Haired stopped and leaned over him. The Look was not in her eyes—it was never there—but instead there came a wetness, and for a moment, by some telepathic sympathy, Snitzsky saw himself as she saw him—a helpless, broken thing, quivering under the hand of the Relentless, the Inevitable, closing in to grasp him, and it brought his case home to him so forcibly that he dropped back limp and panting on the bed.

Then soothingly she straightened out his crumpled body with her firm hands. "Don't, now!" she protested. "Don't excite yourself this way. You must keep as still as possible, and not cry out or exert yourself, like you have been doing. It is very bad for you—do you understand? Be quiet now, and try to sleep. If you can't, I'll come presently and give you the little needle that will stop the pain and make you rest better."

"Lena!" called the voice again, more urgently.

The Golden-Haired turned away, and Snitzsky, all his usual mental processes brought to a halt by what had just fallen upon him, followed her half unconsciously with his eyes to the bedside of his neighbor.

"Well, Mr. Wall, what can I do for you?" she asked pleasantly.

The young man who lay there, with an ice-cap set belligerently on the side of his shaven head, was watching her half threateningly, half imploringly, with his fever-brilliant eyes.

"Lena, you need n't s'pose I did n't see you whispering with him in the hall! Do you think I'm blind or an idiot?" he exclaimed angrily.

Snitzsky listened only half-comprehendingly, for his English was limited; but the rest of the ward gave greedy attention, for the history of the fever patient—the elopement of his wife a few weeks before his illness—had been whispered among them, and his hallucination about the night nurse caused him to be regarded with romantic interest. Melodrama appeals to the charity ward.

"Don't you know me—your nurse that's waited on you so long?" asked the girl indulgently.

"Sure I know you, Lena. S'pose a man don't know his own woman? Think I don't know them little yaller curls?" He put up his hand and touched them caressingly.

The girl drew back slightly. "Well, be good now, and let me take your temperature," she said, humoring him and presenting the little instrument to his lips.

He opened his mouth obediently and let her insert it; then he lay watching her while she straightened his bed and removed the collapsed ice-cap, his eyes softening adoringly whenever her fingers touched him.

Presently the door opened, and the Senior Interne came in again, hat and stick in hand. He leaned over and spoke to the girl in a low tone. "I'm going for a walk. Will be back in a little while," he said.

Suddenly the sick man sprang up in bed, biting the thermometer in two and spraying its silvery contents recklessly over the offending Interne.

"Do you think I'm going to stand for this right before my very eyes?" he cried furiously, jumping to the floor and seizing the Doctor by the throat. "I'll cut your heart out!" he cried, looking around helplessly for a weapon. "I'll choke your eye-balls clean out of your head, you scoundrel! And you, too, you shameless hussy!"

The boy with the broken arm, in the bed on the other side, lifted himself up on his good arm and chortled his enjoyment of the scene. "Soak him one for me!" he muttered; and Snitzsky understood enough of what he said to concur heartily.

The Senior Interne dropped his hat and stick and caught hold of Wall, but the nurse interposed hastily in an undertone: "Go out, Doctor! Go out quickly! You know the sight of you always excites him."

"But you can't manage him alone," he protested.

"Yes, I can. He'll get quiet so much quicker. You're always good for me, are n't you, Mr. Wall?"

The Interne went out, leaving the door ajar, and the girl put her arm around the young man's shoulders and tried to force him gently backward on the bed. "Now, now," she said coaxingly, "lie down and be quiet—there's a dear."

The poor young creature took hold of her arm with both hands and laid his head weakly against it. "Oh, Lena," he said brokenly, "don't go running after him! I'm your own man as loves every bone in your body, from the top of your head to your little curly toes. Come back to me! I want you so!"

The ward panted its appreciation of the scene.

The girl, her face very red, leaned over and looked him steadily in the eyes. "Mr. Wall," she said slowly and impressively, though her voice broke, "look at me. I'm not Lena—I'm not your wife. I'm your nurse, Miss Moore, that's been waiting on you and taking your temperature and giving you your ice-bag and trying to be good to you all these weeks. You know me—now, don't you?"

"Then where is Lena? I want her. Go and get her and tell her I want her so," he said, falling back on his bed.

"I wish to heaven I could," muttered the girl. "But you must lie still now, and I will bring your nice lemon and egg that you like, and some more ice in your ice-cap to cool your head."

Partly sobered by her earnestness, and exhausted by his own violence, Wall lay quiet, while the nurse hurried from the room for the promised refreshment. The ward subsided with a sigh of contentment.

Snitzsky's fevered brain turned from the scene back to the contemplation of his own affairs.

To-morrow, unless his heart braced up, he must go into Room A. But he *would n't* go into Room A. They were fools to think it. He had too many things to do to go out like that. There was Michael Krapotkin to be dealt with—Michael Krapotkin, whose treachery had gotten him shut up for three years, narrowly escaping a much worse fate, and whom he had followed to America. There was Jacob Mero-vitch, his cousin, rich and a fool, waiting to pay the usual penalty for both these indiscretions in the far city of Chicago, towards which Snitzsky was journeying when the accident overtook him. There was that band of compatriots awaiting his coming in that same city of Chicago—what might they not accomplish in this new, free country with a leader of Snitzsky's experience and cunning? Last but not least was the man whose automobile had run him down. Snitzsky had looked cursing into his eyes for one instant as he lay under the front wheel, and knew that he would know him again, for all he had sped away so quickly. Talk about Room A to a man with all these things before him! He spat contemptuously.

The nurse came back and attended to the wants of the fever patient; then she went about the ward, settling her other patients for the night. Lastly she came to Snitzsky with the "little needle," as she had promised him.

"I go not into Room A," he asseverated, as she withdrew it from his arm after giving him the hypodermic.

"No, no," she reassured him, "not if you'll keep quiet like you are doing now and take your nourishment and medicine regularly;" but he noticed that she did not look at him when she said it.

Then she went out into the corridor and sat down to make up her night report at the desk under the drop-light opposite the ward door, which was left open in order that she might listen for calls from within.

The fever patient slept fitfully, with starts and mutterings. A midnight stillness fell upon the ward, but Snitzsky could not rest. The opiate had dulled the pain in his broken ribs, but the damaged engine in his shattered chest was thumping away with such a slow,

labored thud that it seemed as if it might at any moment knock off work altogether. What if the Doctor, coming in the morning and looking at him—always with the Look—and holding his wrist for a while, should whisper to the Golden-Haired, "Snitzsky must be moved into Room A *at once*"? What could he do? He was helpless against them. And once in Room A, then the Inevitable and the little wheeled stretcher and the sheeted lay figure, this time himself, and then—what? Snitzsky did n't know, and did n't want to know. The more he thought about all this, the heavier the work of the engine seemed to grow.

Now faces began to rise up around him. He peered fearfully at one of them and recoiled quickly, for it was the face of the man he had worked with for three months and then stabbed in the back as he slept with his little bag of savings under his head. Then there looked into his the staring eyes of the young Jewess whom he had choked after the burning of Vilna, because she resisted him so violently; then many, many others, all accusing, for all had looked at him with the Look, and he had repaid all with hatred and injury. Never had he done a kindly deed.

Suddenly a noise close at hand startled him out of his nightmare. He opened his eyes and looked confusedly around. His neighbor was sitting up in bed, staring wildly into the hall. Snitzsky followed the direction of his eyes, and saw two blonde heads bending very close together over the desk under the drop-light. The Senior Interne was helping the nurse with her night report.

Snitzsky heard the fever patient give a gasping snort of rage; then he saw him pull a heavy stick from under his mattress and get noiselessly out of bed. Ah, the walking stick of the Doctor, which he had dropped when he struggled with the sick man. Good! Now the insane one was going to settle his account with his enemy, and to Snitzsky it seemed just and proper that he should.

The fever patient arose and moved swiftly and silently into the hall. The unconscious couple were whispering over their report, and he stopped noiselessly behind them and drew back the stick to strike. For the first time, Snitzsky saw his real intention. That blow would fall equally upon the two bowed heads—the madman was going to strike also the Golden-Haired.

Then an unaccountable thing happened to Snitzsky. An impulse seized him so foreign to his nature that had it given him time for reflection he would doubtless have cast it aside; but so sudden and overpowering was it that for one supreme moment he lost sight of self—an impulse to save that which was helpless and in danger, to respond to another's imperative need. It swept through his mind like a flash. He was no coward.

There was no time to cry out. He sprang up in bed. The engine gave a warning chug, but he did not heed it. Gathering himself, with two catlike bounds he covered the distance and threw himself upon the uplifted arm, bringing down the stick in a glancing blow upon the Interne's broad back.

He hung there long enough to see two startled faces turned toward him, then the Doctor sprang up and grappled with the lunatic and he himself was flung aside like thistledown.

Presently he came to himself and looked up from the soft arm of the Golden-Haired, into her horror-stricken eyes. "I go not into Room A," he muttered, half questioningly, half imploringly; then the engine knocked off work.

And he went not into Room A, but lay in the reception room under a bank of flowers, and no one who passed by looked at him with the Look.



THE PILGRIM

BY MILDRED I. M'NEAL-SWEENEY

I DID not ask,
Weakly, a prop—a crutch—
Nor even one wise heart near.
These were not much
For Doubtful Feet
Upon a Doubtful Task,
With no Path clear.

But my heart's cry
Went out upon the dark:
Set me, my Lord, a lamp—
One faithful ray to mark
Far off a living goal,
Whither my steps may try
Through marsh and damp.

The valiant soul
Doth trudge his way alone.
This, Master, do I learn,—
But not with woe nor moan.
Straight forward will I press,
Pay down the uttermost toll,
But thou, My Leader, if but now and then,
Let the Lamp burn.

MRS. BILLY WEIGHTMAN'S GROUCH

By Caroline Lockhart

THE R. Wilson Spencers had come from the extreme East to spend the summer months with the "Billy" Weightmans, who lived in the extreme West, and the two families had gone to camp on the bank of a swift-flowing stream, where the trout jumped in the pools, and the grouse called to one another from the savis berry bushes on the mountain-sides.

The men had known each other in a business way, but their wives had never before met, so it was not without some misgivings on the part of the Billy Weightmans' that the rash experiment of camping together was undertaken.

"You women will fight as sure as shootin'," Billy Weightman had said.

"Probably," his wife had replied philosophically; "but we'll stick it out as long as we can, and then we'll go home."

The party of four had been in camp a week, and Mrs. Weightman was acquiring a grouch of gradual but sure growth. Not with Mrs. R. Wilson Spencer, who was young, dimpling, and given to baby-talk, nor with Mr. R. Wilson Spencer, who was fifty, agreeable, and punctiliously polite, but with Billy, who was matter-of-fact, unsentimental, and laconic to brusqueness.

Mrs. Weightman's grouch was due to these characteristics.

Not that she would have had Billy fifty and florid and stout for anything. She liked him infinitely better as he was—tall, sinewy, and tanned almost to the shade of burnt leather—but the contrast between Mr. R. Wilson Spencer's graceful bon mots and Billy's grim jokes, the former's demonstrativeness and constant solicitude for his wife's safety, and Billy's rare caresses and his matter-of-fact belief in his wife's ability to take care of herself, was a painful one to the Western woman.

"Elizabeth" was the given name of both Mrs. Spencer and Mrs. Weightman, but when Mr. Spencer did not call his wife "Dearie" he called her "Betty-baby," although "Betty-baby" was squat and weighed something like a hundred and seventy pounds. Billy, on the

contrary, addressed his wife as "Lizzie"; in moments of haste "Liz," and, not infrequently, "Old Girl."

While Billy, in silence, sorted trout-flies, mended rods, or drove hobnails into fishing-boots, Mr. Spencer, in front of the adjoining tent, patted his wife's hand and called her "Pansy-Eyes"—although Billy declared her eyes were green as alfalfa.

The handful of chips which Mr. Spencer gathered for their camp-fire he laid at Mrs. Spencer's feet in much the same manner in which he would have presented so many orchids, and always with some tender expression of sentiment, whereas Billy usually staggered up with an armful of wood which he slammed to the ground with the casual inquiry:

"There, Old Girl, do you think that will hold you till I get back?"

Mrs. Weightman brooded over these things as she raced after grasshoppers or dislodged crickets and "devil-scratchers" for Mr. Spencer, who preferred live gait, but found that the exertion of catching it gave him a headache. She brooded until she came to tell herself that she occupied about the same place in Billy's heart as did his best rod and rifle or his favorite saddle-horse that he slapped with careless affection upon the rump and turned out to rustle feed for itself. The growing belief that Mrs. Spencer noticed these things and was sorry for her added to her unhappiness.

One hot afternoon when Mrs. Weightman returned to camp with two or three dozen grasshoppers kicking in a cigarette-box, her face flushed and moist, Billy raised his eyes and looked at her in disapproval.

"Why don't you let that tinhorn sportsman catch his own grasshoppers?"

"He is n't a tinhorn sportsman!" flashed Mrs. Weightman.

"Any man who fishes for trout with live bait, and shoots grouse sitting, and has a mania for killing every living wild thing he sees when he is n't up against it for grub, is a tinhorn sportsman," Billy returned with equal heat.

"You're jealous!"

Billy opened his eyes and stared in genuine amazement. Then he yelled.

"You are!" declared Mrs. Weightman hotly.

"What of?"

"His—his good manners. His polish!"

Billy yelled again.

"Say," he demanded, "did you ever see me prancing around without some kind of a collar on, even if it was one hundred and fourteen in the shade?"

"No," admitted Mrs. Weightman; "I never did."

"Which would you rather I did?" inquired Billy. "Shuck my

collar and say 'pahdon me' every time I pass within ten feet of you, or cut out the 'pahdon me' and keep my collar?"

"Would n't it be possible to do both?" asked Mrs. Weightman icily.

"Sure," Billy returned cheerfully, "but it would be a terrible strain on me. I'll do it, though, if you say so."

"I would n't ask you to be unnatural."

"And I don't like you to be sarcastic." He added in unblushing conceit: "When it comes right down to brass tacks, I don't see where Spencer has any edge over me. But tell me"—his face was serious now—"what's the matter? You've been glummer than anything ever since we came."

"If you're not sufficiently delicate—if you have n't the fineness of feeling—to understand what the matter is, I certainly am not going to tell you."

"Whew! You hand 'em straight from the shoulder, don't you, Lizzie?" Billy looked unmistakably hurt.

"And *please* don't call me 'Lizzie'! It's a horrid name."

Again Billy stared. Then his face brightened until it fairly glowed.

"I know what's the matter: you're bilious! Let me fix you up something. I've got it right here." He darted into the tent.

Bilious! Bilious—when her heart was breaking with the realization that not only was Billy not quite a gentleman, but that he did not love her any more.

Mrs. Weightman was gone when Billy emerged with an unfailing cure for biliousness, so he sat moodily eying Spencer's back hair, which he wore parted, and his Romeo slippers and purple socks. Up the stream, with her back against a tree, Mrs. Weightman wept aloud.

The plan for the following morning had been for Mr. and Mrs. Spencer to fish one side of the stream, while Billy and his wife fished the other, but when the morning came Mrs. Weightman announced her intention of fishing with the Spencers, and Billy coldly agreed.

At times, when she caught glimpses of him through the brush and saw his disconsolate face and the indifferent casts which told her that trout had lost their interest for him, she felt herself relenting, but invariably some endearing term or expression of anxiety from Mr. Spencer to his wife hardened her heart.

"Now, Dearie, *will* you be careful? If you should slip and hurt yourself, what *should* I do! It worries me to death lest something happen you!"

How different from Billy! When an unusual clatter among the rocks and some exclamation told him that she had slipped, he always turned his head and inquired calmly:

"Skin yourself, Old Girl?"

Before they came to the foot-log where they must cross to Billy's side of the stream, owing to the thick brush, Mrs. Weightman had decided that she would talk the situation over quite dispassionately with Billy, and together they would decide what to do, since they no longer loved each other as married folk should.

The foot-log was narrow, and high above the stream which rushed foaming beneath—not of drowning depth, but sufficiently deep to have dampened R. Wilson Spencer, had he made a misstep during his wobbly progress across its slippery surface. He crossed it sidewise, inch by inch, his insteps clinging close, while he clutched his pole in one hand and gripped Mrs. Spencer hard with the other. Close behind Mrs. Spencer came Mrs. Weightman.

They all were safely over the stream, but still walking the log, which reached to the high bank opposite, when, with a yell of which no listener had ever heard the counterpart, Mr. Spencer whirled, and, crowding past his wife and Mrs. Weightman, pushed them from the log to the ground, some eight feet below, while he started back over the log in leaps and bounds, shrieking as he went.

Mrs. Spencer, Mrs. Weightman, and a rattlesnake reached the ground together. Half-stunned, yet staring with horror-stricken eyes, Mrs. Weightman, pinned down by Mrs. Spencer's body, watched the snake's vicious eyes redden. It coiled to spring its length and fasten its fangs in her arm.

"Billy!" The shrill cry, vibrant with horror, had not left her lips before Billy had answered it.

With a kind of gulp, he swooped with the swiftness of a fish-hawk, gripped the snake's tail in his bare hand, and, snapping it its length as he would have cracked a whip, he all but tore its head from its body. Then he dashed it to the ground and crushed its skull beneath his heel. It was an old cow-puncher trick—he had done it often before, but never with the same fierce desperation.

As he threw the snake into the brush, a wail from the middle of the stream attracted the eyes of the still speechless persons on the bank to Mr. Spencer, who, looking like a musk-rat just come up from a dive, was struggling for a footing in the churning mountain torrent.

"Help!" he gasped feebly.

Billy passed him the end of a pole and dragged him like an exhausted salmon to the bank, where he lay pale and chattering until fully convinced that he was alive and intact.

"Billy," whispered Mrs. Weightman, and she slipped her hand into his as they started up the stream together, "I would n't swap you for any man alive."

"Would n't you—honest?" asked Billy wistfully. And he added, his eyes shining, "I know I'm not such a much, but I love you, Lizzie."



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC



A UNIVERSAL THANKSGIVING

WHY should not all the world unite one day in every year in a universal giving of thanks? The Christian should not be, and probably is not, any more thankful to the God he worships than is the Buddhist, the Mohammedan, the Jew, the Confucian, the Zoroastrian, and those of numerous other denominations, sects, religions, or whatever they may be called, who make up the religious population of the earth. In the United States, where the first public day of thanks to God for His blessings was observed, we have all faiths, and in one way or another they all recognize Thanksgiving Day. And ours is the only Christian country which has such a festival among its days of observance. Thanksgiving Day is our monopoly, but we have no desire to monopolize, and no one in this broad land of freedom would offer the slightest objection or opposition if Great Britain, Germany, France, Russia, Italy, Spain—all the Christian countries of Europe—wished to join with us on that day in returning thanks publicly to the God who controls all our affairs. Nor would we hesitate to admit into our observance of such a day any people of Asia, Africa, or the islands of any seas.

The brotherhood of man is the shibboleth of modern publicists, and steam and electricity are making common interests in the affairs of all people everywhere. But brotherhood is not possible without fatherhood, and although faiths differ, there is among mankind an almost universal belief in a One Cause, a Universal Father. Among civilized

and uncivilized there exists a sense of appreciation, a feeling of gratefulness for favors, whatever their source. As man possesses a feeling of obligation towards his fellow man for any good received, much stronger is this feeling towards that Being whom he recognizes as Supreme. It is a human instinct coordinate with his creation, and depending on no creed.

With the material, then, ready at hand for this public expression of thanks, let the nations of the earth combine in a world's Thanksgiving Day, one day in the year when all peoples shall lay aside their multiplicity of interests, shall concentrate their divergences of custom and unite in thanking the God of their worship for His manifold mercies.

W. J. LAMPTON

THANKSGIVING WOMEN

IN the far West, a certain Parson recently pulpitized his opinion that the women of America were fast becoming a thankless lot, toward God, toward Man, toward one another. He poured out this anathema because upon Thanksgiving Day more pews than of yore were empty in the churches. It is true that our Forebears were better churchgoers, but theirs were no more grateful hearts.

It is deplorable that there are so many fast days and feast days on which the church-bell is ignored. Nevertheless, we are not ingrates. The typical American woman is grateful for every good and perfect thing in which she shares. True, she has grown increasingly undemonstrative where her strongest feelings are concerned. Our women chatter like children about their fads and fancies; make a loud and joyful noise anent their hobbies; but their creeds are no longer javelins for unregenerate heads. If a woman is womanly, not merely feminine, she is a believer, though not necessarily a religionist. She must be. Her old-fashioned creeds may be myths or tommy-rot to philosophers and ego-sophers. Nevertheless, upon her knees she falls, devoutly, whenever there comes into her life anything good, from a perfect husband (to halo) to any other idealizable thing. She is so full of Faith, so assured of God's personal care, and so grateful therefor, that she goes to Him about trivialities that would shock the cleric whose God radiates Fear, and concerns Himself only with future Penalties.

Less and less do our woman talk religion, or observe its forms. Verily not because they have grown callous, but that they have almost lost their momentum. The pace of the days is terrific. Despite labor-saving inventions, somehow the claims upon every woman's time have multiplied, aye, fifty-fold. Sunday means to countless thousands the one day upon which there are at least a few hours in the morning in

which unchallenged they may sleep. The average woman in these pell-mell days is tired—always. Even those who have every service that money can buy are brain-weary, fagged with incessant goings, comings, and doings of their tee-to-tum world. The woman who best typifies the American Wife and Mother thanks her God from the depths of an overflowing heart—continually. Not one but every day is a Mother's Thanksgiving Day; and none realizes more clearly than she that to go to church to praise, even though she remains at home to pray, is the right thing. But we have agreed that she does not do half those uplifting, spiritual things of which she most soulfully approves. The average American woman may seem mindless (she is n't, really); heartless she is never. Her charities, not only in their scope, but in their tirelessness, exemplify her pulsing woman-heart. The same tender heart often gets her into very deep water; sometimes hot water, from which her less emotional kinsman or spouse must lift her bodily. The worst one may say of her in this connection is, her sympathy was misplaced. In her anxiety to "feed one of His Lambs" she has more than once befriended a Black Sheep; but, she tells herself, rather this than that some deserving soul should go hungry or quite forlorn. Ungrateful? She? Why, it is a fact that her gratitude for small things, even for the verbal appreciation of those for whom she sacrifices health, strength, and time, is pathetic.

No, Parson, we are not Ingrates. You may call us Fools, Dolls, what you will, but not ungrateful. *And here's why.* There is not in the world a crime of which ingratitude is not the evil progenitor. To wound those who have served them faithfully is characteristic of the Ingrate. None are so hated by the ungrateful as those upon whom they can no longer batten. Every instinct of an Ingrate is to decry or ignore benefits obtained. Is the American woman like that? Is any womanly woman? Truth, in her best bib and tucker, rises to testify for the American woman. Chivalry has done so—centuries ago.

MINNA THOMAS ANTRIM

THAT BOY

SOMEWHERE in this country there is a small boy wandering around, taking observations. He is not making a business of taking observations. He is just doing it naturally and in his own manner. He knows what he wants.

Now, this boy, when he grows up to be a man, is going to be a good deal more than a useful citizen. He is going to be a great citizen. He is going to be a great citizen, also, in spite of everything. He is going to override custom and precedent, and at the right moment he is going to put his finger on the fatal defect. Then all the weaker brothers,

all the mediocre men, are going to gather around him and lean on him. And a good many of them will pass more than a "bad quarter of an hour" wondering and hoping that he will be equal to the emergency.

No doubt this boy will get there, in spite of everything. But the stakes will be so high, the danger of a supreme catastrophe so great, that everybody who is hoping and fearing for that boy will realize fully and instantly that he will need all the outside help he can get, in addition to his natural capabilities.

This boy, when he acts, will not depend upon information and belief. He will not depend upon the sort of knowledge that is being handed out by women's clubs all over the country. He will not depend upon nice distinctions of psychology, or courses of study, or on schools of philosophy. But he will depend upon the kind of thing that a boy learns in games: on nerve, grit, character, control, endurance, originality, imagination, and the sort of judgment that, ignoring finicky and hypocritical moral disquisitions, goes straight to the bull's eye.

As the other fellows gather around him, hanging on his words and waiting for him to decide, he will say, and he will say it quietly:

"Boys, you do this," or "Boys, you do that."

And the boys will do it. The word will be passed around that all's well on the Potomac, that somebody who knows his business is on deck, that a big man is on the job.

All the nice women in the country will be glad. All the good mothers will rejoice. They know a thing or two yet, those mothers. They know what a boy is and what a man is. They know that a big man is only a big boy. They know when a boy comes home from school every day, that it is n't what he has learned at school that counts, but how he has learned it; they know that he does n't learn it from a State superintendent, or a modern system of ventilation, or doing raffia work.

They know that he does n't learn it because of all the money that is being spent on him, but oftentimes in spite of it.

The question at present is, whether those experts who have our school systems in charge are doing all they can for that boy. Are they making an intellectual prig of him? Are they hampering him by too much system? Are they teaching him too much?

That is the question.

THOMAS L. MASSON

THE DEMAND FOR BETTER PLAYS

THE ability of the great mass of theatregoers to distinguish between what is good and what is bad in the way of theatrical offerings has shown a distinct upward trend during the past few years. Time was when they were willing to accept a senseless play

and a lone-star cast, a music frivolity made up of "steals" set to reminiscent music, or a vaudeville bill consisting of the Great So-and-so and six or seven "chasers." But as the seasons progressed the frequenters of the higher-priced playhouses came to realize that the stage is capable of better things than the mere gratification of the producers' fancy.

The popular-priced houses were the first to respond to this demand for finer productions, and as their clientèle did not insist upon their producing only brand-new plays, they were enabled to offer attractions of decided merit and with able casts—although without stars of great reputation—at a comparatively low admission fee. As a result, there was a gradual falling off in attendance at the various high-priced theatres, and a swelling of the receipts of the popular-priced ones.

Now, generally speaking, it is the producer, rather than the playwright or the theatre manager, who is to blame for poor plays. Often-times a play that is faultless in construction, strong in appeal to the emotions, and of true artistic merit, is shelved indefinitely, or absolutely rejected, because its premier presentation will involve a great expense, or even because it does not sufficiently pander to what the producer conceives to be the public's gross appetite for the dramatically salacious. If there is no market for an author's best work, the call of a life-sized appetite demands that he throw his ideals to the four winds, and write the sort of thing that the producing manager requires. Let the other fellows gamble with the plays of literary geniuses and with the musical creations of composers of the old school, but not he! He wants the sure-fire, blush-making kind of "drama" and the easy-to-whistle sort of music. The public has always accepted his offerings, so why invite trouble. It might be dangerous to give them something more elevating.

The manager of the theatre is helpless. If he be inclined toward a dramatic uplift, his only resource is to convert his theatre into a stock house, engage a company for the entire season, and produce plays that are, in his mind, fit and proper. If he remains the exponent of travelling companies, he must accept plays that are available, whether they meet with his personal approbation or not. If he complains, he is likely to be informed that nothing at all is available for his house. In trust is tyranny!

But as the theatregoers have awakened, so will—eventually—the producing-manager. At present he is enjoying his honeyed beauty sleep, preparatory to the wakeful yawn and stretch. That he will wake up to the full understanding of the people's and his own position in the world of theatricals is inevitable. Then may we expect to have presented all that is best and most worthy in stagemod.

W. DAYTON WEGEFARTH

LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

DECEMBER, 1910



THERE WAS ONCE A QUEEN

BY
EDITH ROBINSON

I.

“LOOK out for attractive women in emergencies. These all come under the same general head, but there is no end to the special forms—letter of credit exhausted; funds run short because of illness; pocketbook stolen, etc., etc. See ‘Consular Instructions,’ in which I have no doubt you are well read”—my chief shot at me another of those keen glances that already, in our brief interview, had made me vaguely uncomfortable—“for most cases. For the rest, you must rely on your native intelligence. Remember that you are green at the business; don’t think it necessary to have everything weighed at the psychological laboratory. Remember that common-sense still has its uses, and that now, as ever, ‘this world is given to lying’!”

“You received my credentials promptly, I believe?” I answered stiffly.

“You received my reply also, I trust, without delay?” returned the Consul genially.

“Your telephone message reached me at breakfast,” I replied, with increased dignity. “It was, ‘Get a move on! My train goes in an hour.’”

“Correct. Glad the line was working well,” commented my chief imperturbably. “Admirable people, these Germans; but they don’t appreciate the value of time, like Chicago.”

“I trust that I may also mention,” I added quietly, “that I am not without natural acumen, nor wholly deficient in worldly knowledge;

although my preparation for a diplomatic career may not have lain along the lines of pig-killing and sausage-making."

Instead of seeming cut by this neat rejoinder—"J. C. Fosdick & Co." was a prominent tinned meat and sausage concern in Chicago before its senior partner received his present appointment as Consul at Donow—my chief regarded me with a tolerant smile.

"I remember the papers aforesaid said something about your being a graduate of some university or other—special course for Consul; *magna cum laude* in Psychology—was that it? Post-graduate course in Political Science and Constitutional Law—I did n't have time to go through all the rot. For myself, I have never made a specialty of human nature on the shelf. I have merely endeavored to study men and women in the market-place," he added, with some appearance of dignity.

"I think you may give yourself no uneasiness regarding the affairs of the American Consulate in your absence," I said dryly.

"I shan't," answered Mr. Fosdick easily. "If I were likely to, I should n't be going on a holiday at the present juncture. But I don't see how even a kindergarten kid could get into any mischief here. Everything in Germany is by rule and measure—ordered or *verboten*—and somebody at your elbow to tell you which is which. There is no business going on in Donow. It's chiefly a residential city, or, as some like to phrase it, a music and art centre. The American colony consists mostly of young women cracking their vocal chords under the impression that they are embryo prima donnas, or spoiling yards of canvas with the idea that they are to develop into female Raphaels. There is no social life to speak of, so you won't be pestered for invitations to this or the other court function. Donow has n't been a lively place since the King has been—officially speaking—a widower; and just now there's even less than usual going on—no parades or reviews—because his Majesty King Johann V. went last week to Wiesbaden to be cooked in the baths. Pity he won't be boiled!" concluded the Consul, with reckless disregard of *lèse majesté*.

"If any diplomatic complication threatens the peace of Europe in your absence, I will wire you without delay," I remarked, with delicate sarcasm.

"Do! Communications are easy, and I'll return by special train. Meantime, if you are in need of any sort of service or advice, call on Karl. I inherited him from my predecessor, along with other office appurtenances. He is an invaluable piece of furniture—office-man, errand-boy, gardener, coachman. If you want the Consular carriage for anything, it is at your service. Karl is an integral part of German law and order—he never had an original impulse in his life; but he's such a well-drilled machine that he goes through the daily routine

without a mistake. There's the safe—it's chiefly for looks—and here's the key. The official seal is in the upper right-hand drawer—if you should have occasion to use it, which is n't likely. The seal is the most valuable asset of the American Consulate. Remember that everything that goes out bearing the official seal is under the guarantee and protection of the United States." The last words were spoken with gravity and emphasis, as the factotum of the American Consulate appeared at the door leading into the outer office, and, with the animation of a wooden figure, announced that "the carriage of the Herr Consul waited."

"Good-by, lad," said Mr. Fosdick, not uncivilly. "Remember that for the next month you represent the United States of America on the soil of Ring-Stettin—and that it's a big thing!"

I glanced from the window at the Consular carriage as it drove off—a shabby victoria with its panels adorned with some flamboyant device, at that distance undecipherable. The railway station was close at hand, but Mr. Fosdick was too evidently of that type of American that delights in proclaiming the "bigness" of its nationality on every available occasion—a type of which the old system of diplomatic appointment offered too many examples. It was an additional piece of good fortune that for the coming weeks I was to be independent of my official superior.

I was well read in the scene of my future labors. Donow, the capital of one of the finest kingdoms of Germany, was situated in the heart of a beautiful hill country, full of historic interest. Numerous "resorts" and "gardens" were within easy reach, either by the various trolley-lines that stretched far out into the environs, or by the little pleasure steamboats that plied the river on whose picturesque shores Donow was situated. Many of the beautiful palaces, parks, and gardens belonging to the royal demesne were thrown freely open to the public enjoyment, and, with their music and open-air restaurants, added their attractions to the summer life enjoyed in Germany alike by the high and the low. It was June, and everything was in its full tide of loveliness!

The oldest part of Donow, where many of the buildings dated back to the Middle Ages and the almost mythical founder of the present Royal House of Ring-Stettin—Johann I., surnamed the Mighty—was in its centre. From one end of the city to the other ran a broad boulevard—the favorite promenade for all classes—on which were the principal shops, cafés, and places of amusement. In the very heart of the city was the Grand Square, an entire side of which was occupied by the royal palace, a magnificent structure, its façade representing the art of centuries. Opposite the palace was the superb modern opera house; and on either side, respectively, were the royal theatre and the picture

gallery—all of which, either owned or handsomely subsidized by the King, were thrown freely open to the public enjoyment.

Surrounding this brilliant centre of beauty and gaiety was a region of the same era—not without a touch of the picturesque—of dingy apartment houses, fallen from higher estate; the holdings of small artisans; and innumerable “delicatessen” shops, with tiny-paned windows filled with sausages and soured herrings, and an occasional festive announcement of a “pig-killing.” Radiating wide from this mingled affluence and squalor was the modern city—a region of luxurious villas, in spacious, well-kept grounds, and broad avenues lined with stately trees, that stretched far out into the environs, where was the royal park, the private property of the King, also thrown freely open to the people.

A little sign on the street entrance to the Consulate read, “Office hours from nine to twelve,” and even this brief period of duress might be judicially shortened. I did not envy my chief his holiday, even in Switzerland!

I made a brief survey of the premises. These consisted of an outer apartment, or waiting-room, for the Consular visitors who did not come. A couple of pipes and a stein on a beer-stained table suggested that Karl, too, despite his multifarious functions, had his private pleasures. The inner room, or private office, was accessible both through this outer apartment, and through another door communicating with the entry. A couch, a ship's chair, an American “rocker,” a roll-top desk, the safe, and a huge white porcelain stove comprised the furniture. On the wall, side by side, and draped by the commingled folds of the Stars-and-Stripes and the Ring-Stettin banner of blue and gold, were two lithographs. One was the fat, benign countenance of the President of the United States; the other was no doubt the representation of his Majesty King Johann of Ring-Stettin—a man with a reputation so unsavory that in a country less orderly and well-disciplined than his own he might well have found not only his tenure of office, but his royal life, insecure.

I stood before the picture—apparently the most recent representation of his Majesty—lost in thought, as vague stories crowded to my mind concerning this monarch of one of the most highly civilized countries of the world, who displayed a character more in keeping with that of an eastern satrap. In this pictured presence of the man—the evil eyes, scarcely discernible between the swollen eyelids, the thick, bestial lips, the gross chin—no tale of horror could be inconceivable.

So far happy was this his realm that it need not tremble at his nod. But whatever restraint “Chancellor” or “Chamber” might be in his home kingdom, God help those over whom he exercised unbridled sovereignty.

A knock at the door aroused me from my contemplation. I was at the desk, pen in hand, before calling:

"Herein!"

Karl appeared with the formal announcement of a visitor. The card read:

MRS. DANIEL DOBSON,
Chicago.

The name did not promise much; still less, the address. An inborn distrust for the world west of the Alleghenies,—not uncommon among people of Boston birth and breeding,—had recently been heightened by the personality of Mr. Fosdick, late of "J. C. Fosdick & Co., Chicago." I dallied, therefore, at the dictate of prejudice, as well as to support the theory of Consular dignity by the semblance of a rush of work, before I bade Karl show the visitor in.

At the first glance, Chicago rose several points—at least, in its feminine contingent. In figure, the lady calling herself Mrs. Dobson was slender, strikingly graceful, evidently young. Her shirt-waist was worn as only an American woman can wear it, and under her arm was a little red book—the inseparable Baedeker of the tourist. A heavy dotted veil concealed her features. I had made this mental survey even as I placed a chair for my visitor and asked how I could serve her.

"This is Mr. Robert Audney, of Boston, recently appointed Consul to Donow?" asked "Mrs. Dobson of Chicago," with a balance of emphasis on the home city that showed a nice appreciation of values. Her voice was totally unlike the piercing, strident accents heard with such unpleasant frequency from one's female compatriots abroad. I was somewhat puzzled to account for her correct accent, and even glanced surreptitiously at the card to make sure that I had noted her residence correctly. From the manner in which she sounded her a's and gave the proper value to her r's, she might have been born and brought up in Boston. Perhaps she had lived in Chicago only since her marriage!

"I came expressly to see Mr. Fosdick," she went on, in a tone of regret. "Your man told me he had just left town."

I expressed my regret at her disappointment, which I was obliged to confirm.

"My visit has a financial object," continued Mrs. Dobson, with some hesitation.

If Mr. Fosdick had been in my place, doubtless the words would have aroused his suspicion. I felt sure, however, that a trained psychological insight, added to natural acumen, was of greater value than the vulgar, bustling shrewdness of the market-place. The swift result of my own method was the decision that Mrs. Daniel Dobson

was a lady, and that the object of her call, whatever it might be, was square and aboveboard.

"It is the office of the American Consul to aid those who are 'any way afflicted in mind, body or estate——'" I had intended to quote a pertinent paragraph from the "Manual of Consular Instructions," but at the opening words my visitor raised her veil, and I was vaguely aware that I had somehow got the "Manual" confused with some other authority. Small wonder, indeed, that all other thoughts were driven out of my mind, beholding the loveliest face I had ever looked upon! Great soft brown eyes, with something appealing, almost pathetic, in their depths, shaded by long, dark, curling lashes; a clear pale complexion, a color in the rounded cheeks like the heart of a blush rose; nut-brown hair, with here and there in its waves a glint of brighter brown; the mouth a Cupid's bow in shape, with a droop at the corners that seemed to match some sorrow, scarcely yet overpast, at which that shadow in the eyes hinted. Will it be believed that I had an instant's flash of something like jealousy for the late "Daniel Dobson, of Chicago," that one so fair as this his widow should mourn him?

"Let me say at once that I am in no financial straits, either now or anticipated," continued my visitor; "but I have remained abroad for a longer period than I originally intended, and my letter of credit is exhausted—or nearly so. I have plenty of ready money at home in Chicago; but it is on deposit in a savings-bank, where I cannot draw by check. I am told that it will be necessary to give a friend at home the requisite authority. At least, I understand that that would be the easiest and quickest way to obtain the money."

I bowed affirmatively, and she went on:

"What I wished to ask you was to draw up the power of attorney. The friend to whom I referred is Mr. Eliphalet J. Handy, the former partner of Mr. Fosdick. The firm name, as you doubtless know, was 'J. C. Fosdick & Company.'"

The execution of such a document was, of course, a mere formality, involving no possible risk, either personal or official. Feeling, however, that I had the dignity of the United States upon my shoulders in my chief's absence, and it being, moreover, the first opportunity I had had to exercise my diplomatic powers, I proceeded with as much deliberation as the occasion seemed to admit. Also, I was not reluctant to prolong the present interview.

"Will you allow me to ask a few questions?" I queried.

Mrs. Dobson bowed silently—a subtle suggestion in her manner of being hurt at this apparent lack of confidence.

"You can no doubt identify yourself as Mrs. Daniel Dobson, of Chicago?" I began.

“Certainly,” she answered promptly, producing from a small hand-bag a card-case and several letters bearing the same superscription—that of well-known Paris bankers. “Will not these do?” I glanced at them curiously.

“Are you acquainted in Donow?” I continued.

“I am an entire stranger here,” she replied, with a gentle dignity indescribably touching. Then, with the apparent resolve to satisfy me on all points without subjecting herself to the indignity of further catechism, she went on: “I have just arrived from Paris. I drew the small remnant of my letter of credit before I left, as, under the circumstances, ready money was more convenient. There was sufficient for my travelling expenses and to cover a few weeks’ stay here—or elsewhere where living was cheap—until I heard from Chicago. My luggage was sent by slow freight, and will not be here for several days. My personal belongings—a suit-case and a travelling-bag—I left at the station, till I could have them sent to a hotel or pension; that is, provided I decide to remain in Donow. I was in a hurry to get this business transacted, and so came at once to the American Consulate, lest the office be closed. Mr. Handy, who was an old friend of my father’s, had expressly spoken to me of Mr. Fosdick, telling me to call on him in case I needed any advice or assistance. But if you would rather not make out the paper on your own responsibility, and will kindly give me Mr. Fosdick’s present address, I will wire him and ask him what to do. Or I might go to Switzerland for a personal interview. I am *very* sorry to have troubled you unwarrantably!”

“No, no, you mistake me,” I stammered, inwardly cursing my lack of consideration. “The questions were mere formality. You are no doubt aware that everything that leaves this office bearing the official seal carries with it the protection and authority of the United States.” I felt a certain relief in bolstering my momentary ineptitude with my chief’s own language. “Personally, I am deeply gratified and honored at the opportunity of rendering you the slightest service!”

My visitor bowed graciously, with a subtle suggestion of accepting an apology, and I forthwith busied myself in drawing up the required paper. The money to Mrs. Dobson’s credit, in a well-known Chicago bank—the statement that she produced, duly signed by the cashier, bore the letter-head of the bank—represented a considerable sum. It had been on deposit for some time, she stated, and the interest had accumulated. Presently I rang for Karl to act as second witness with myself to Mrs. Dobson’s signature. I noted, with a throb of pleasure, that her Christian name was “Rosamond.”

I indicated to Karl the place on the paper where he was to sign and handed him the pen. I should scarcely have given the stolid man-of-all-work credit for so much susceptibility: as he caught sight of my

visitor's face, he dropped the pen with a smothered exclamation, a big drop of ink rolling on the paper.

"A thousand pardons, gracious lady!" exclaimed the man, recovering himself. "It is not often that my hand trembles—an old soldier's hand; but the rheumatism has been troublesome of late," he added with a composure that somehow belied his previous agitation. His eyes never left Mrs. Dobson's face, but his name, in the sharp, fine German script, was written without a tremor.

"*Danke schön, Herr Karl,*" said Mrs. Dobson, in the pretty German phrase, with a glance at the signature, and she slipped a coin into his hand. "You have seen service, then?" she added, with the evident kindly intent of putting the man at his ease; but even in the trivial utterance she seemed fairly to hold him with her wonderful eyes.

"I served in the Franco-Prussian war, my lady. Before that, I was forester in the royal park at Steinmetz—in the service of the Grand Duke Heinrich Christian and the little Duchess Frieda," he answered, his hand lifted to his forehead in a stiff little military salute.

At the door he turned and repeated the ceremony.

"Perhaps you could recommend a quiet hotel in Donow?" queried Mrs. Dobson, as she drew on her gloves. "I should prefer one not too expensive, and, if possible, with an American table. I am told that German cooking is sometimes trying."

"I could give you the address of the place where I am staying," I answered, trying to conceal my pleasure at this possible prolongation of our acquaintance, which I had already been cudgelling my brains to compass. "I arrived only last night, and cannot speak very confidently. It is in the American quarter, and is, I believe, patronized solely by Americans. I am afraid it is crowded, and it may be noisy; but it is eminently respectable and quite removed from the German life of the town."

Mrs. Dobson's look was encouraging, and I continued:

"The landlady, Frau Schilling, is a good old soul, supposed to exercise a motherly supervision over the girl students beneath her roof; but her chief virtue, in their eyes, is, evidently, that she minds her own business to an extent that positively takes no cognizance of anything else. She told me that though she had lived in Donow twenty years, she had never been to the river, never seen the opera house or royal palace, never set eyes on either the King or Queen!"

Whether these characteristics appealed to Mrs. Dobson as to others, was problematic; but my commendatory words seemed to suffice, and she expressed her gratitude prettily as I wrote the address upon my visiting-card.

When I returned to the office—after escorting my visitor to the

street door—it was to find Karl gazing at something in his hand, with the rapt expression of a devotee. It was the generous *trinkgeld* given him by Mrs. Dobson.

Evidently, the “piece of office furniture” was not without the human weakness of cupidity.

II.

THE so-called American quarter of Donow merged from the older part of the city into the district of villas. The pension where I had taken up my abode—less from choice than at the dictate of necessity—lay nearer the more unattractive region. At the Consul’s requisition, I had made a hurried departure in the morning; and as breakfast was served, continental fashion, in my own room, I had had no time for more than a glance at my surroundings. As I left the office, my thoughts dwelling persistently on my late visitor, I was perturbed by the growing fear lest she had been unable to secure accommodations at the house; or that its vulgar atmosphere had sent her elsewhere.

My apprehensions were speedily set at rest. In the entrance hall I was met by the landlady—round-faced, rosy, with locks of white hair streaming from beneath a little muslin cap, set awry. In her hand was an official-looking paper.

“A lady calling herself Mrs. Daniel Dobson, of—ah, yes, Chic-ago”—with a glance at the paper—“has come here, presenting the card of the Herr Assistant Consul. The police regulations are very strict, as the Herr Consul doubtless knows, and demand an immediate report of every new-comer, particularly a lady from Paris. The regulations are very strict in regard to certain matters,” added the landlady decorously. “We have special orders to treat our American visitors with the greatest respect. It will, therefore, be all-sufficient that the Herr American Consul certifies to Mrs. Daniel Dobson?” she concluded interrogatively.

I assented somewhat impatiently, adding that Mrs. Dobson and her family were old friends of Mr. Fosdick’s—a statement that, if a possible slight enlargement of the letter, was well within the spirit of the truth. German police surveillance was as wearisome as it was—in the present instance, at least—superfluous. Could n’t any one see at a glance that Mrs. Dobson had not come to Donow to rob the royal treasury, or upset the King’s peace of mind?

“She referred me to you for all necessary details,” continued the landlady, industriously scribbling. “She is *rentier*—living on her own income?”

I thought of the handsome bank-account, and returned a confident affirmative.

The other questions—all of which, indeed, might have been antici-

pated by Mrs. Dobson's statement in the office—were answered to the satisfaction of the landlady. The request that the Herr Consul affix his signature to the document followed.

"It is too great an honor to my pension that the Herr Consul not only resides here himself, but sends such a lady as Mrs. Dobson," she said, with genuine fervor. "Dinner is served, Herr Consul."

The long table in the room into which I was ushered was, at the first glance, filled with girls fat and thin, light and dark, tall and short, all with rasping, strident voices that at the moment of my entrance were raised to their highest pitch, in discussion of some topic that had evidently aroused the wildest excitement.

A sudden silence followed, and a newspaper was thrust beneath the table with a celerity that defeated its own aim. Then the chorus, in a slightly lowered key, but which might still have been audible across the street, emitted:

"It's *he!*"

As every one at the moment turned her eyes in my direction, it was scarcely egotism to infer that I was the subject of conversation.

To my pleasure, I had been allotted the seat opposite Mrs. Dobson, who looked as much out of place in her present surroundings as though a queen had strayed in to hold high court in the art and music circles of Donow.

Her neighbor was a stout, elderly woman, presently addressed as Frau Meyer. Her infirmity, indicated by a small ear-trumpet, was scarcely regrettable under existing circumstances.

Directly the storm broke again—possibly on the theory that "he" shared the deaf lady's good fortune.

"It's *he*, true as you live! Not bad-looking! His eyes are gray—the paper said brown. Let me look. Sh, he'll hear."

"He's better-looking than his picture! Lovely hair—is n't that wave too sweet! I wish he'd pose for me. Excellent type of a young American! Sh, don't talk so loud!"

"Six feet two, the *Herald* said—looks taller—and broad-shouldered. Splendid set of the head on his shoulders! Sh! Let me see the *Herald* after dinner, won't you, Emmeline?"

"No, she's promised me——"

"Sh!"

A smile, hardly repressed, crossed Mrs. Dobson's face as these comments and biographical fragments floated to our end of the table. With the evident intent of relieving a painful situation, she proffered a conventional remark. Instantaneous silence followed as the table ingenuously gave ear to my reply.

The uproar began again, several subjects going on at once, like the performances in the different rings of the circus. Now one and

then another was in chief evidence, as the possessor of a particularly strident voice waxed excited or became resolute in her efforts to secure the general attention.

The girl addressed as Emmeline, who seemed to be the proud possessor of the newspaper that had created the recent vocal cyclone, was relating with much gusto an adventure that had just befallen her.

"I met him on the boulevard. He was big and dark—a Frenchman—and awfully good-looking. We almost ran into each other, the first thing! Then when we both drew back and tried to pass, each mistook the other's motion and chasséed back and forth—it was perfectly killing—till the man cried, 'A mark or a kiss!'"

"What could I do?" ran on the girl gaily, her voice, temporarily submerged, rising again. "I had left my purse at home. He took up the whole sidewalk. I must get back for dinner——"

"The Queen forfeited the right to her husband's support when she ran away with another man," maintained an austere-looking young woman, turning from an onslaught on the Madonna in the royal gallery. "Her life in Donow after her marriage was a ceaseless round of dissipation. Some one who saw her in Paris recently, exquisitely dressed, driving in the Bois, said that every one turned to look at her. How can a woman openly flaunting a life of sin be attractive to anybody! They say she has ruined more men than any woman in Europe; and she is always in debt—plays high, loses heavily, and throws away money on costly whims. For all her rank and reputed beauty and fascination, Queen Friedricha is a common courtesan!"

"It is said that she will forfeit the whole of her allowance from the King if she ever sets foot in Ring-Stettin," suggested another voice.

"Why should she want to come back?" broke in Miss Emmeline sturdily. "The greater the distance between her and that old brute of a husband, the better! The miserable wretch is thirty years older than she," she added energetically, as though the disparity of years was the worst item in the royal incompatibility.

"He is the King! Royalty should not be judged by the standards of ordinary humanity," suggested an art student, who might have contracted "broad" views of morality along with her special art theories.

"Kings ought to set an example," retorted the stern upholder of virtue in the masculine as well as in the feminine gender. "I always turn away my head when I see King Johann coming."

"I hope he does n't see you," murmured Miss Emmeline. "Was she very beautiful—the poor Queen?" she queried, her thoughts distracted from her own little flirtation by the royal amours.

The gentle speech fell pleasantly in the midst of the common shriek of condemnation. The subject appeared to be one of general

interest, and the uproar subsided sufficiently to allow the answer from another of the circle to be audible:

“At the time of her marriage, seven years ago, she was said to be the most beautiful woman in Europe. Probably none of the present American residents in Donow saw her during her brief reign—it lasted only two years. She is still, no doubt, a very beautiful woman, though much of her early charm is gone; and it is doubtful if any one, unless very familiar with her face—perhaps her personal attendants or some one attached to the court at that time—would recognize her now—at all events, not at a passing glance—so changed is she by her reckless life in Paris.”

“Perhaps it is n't her fault that she has so many lovers,” murmured the girl called Emmeline. “Some women have a nameless charm that attracts everybody, whether they try to or not, like Mary Queen of Scots”—a view that was met by a virtuous sniff from the Madonna-and-Child devotee, and the suggestion that such ladies generally understood their powers of fascination well enough to be on the winning side!

“I'd like to hear the Queen's side of the story,” maintained the girl called Emmeline stoutly, in a voice that, soft as it was—she seemed blessed with the only voice in the gifted company that did not combine the worst qualities of a saw and a file—came distinctly to the other end of the table.

Thereupon, the piercing voices combined in a general onslaught on the ex-Queen of Ring-Stettin, waxing ever fiercer and higher in denunciation; flinging, at intervals, with bitterest acrimony, that word of utter condemnation.

Mrs. Dobson had scarcely made pretense of eating, and before dinner was fairly concluded, arose from the table. I was not long in following.

The entrance to the pension was on the side from the street, leading from a so-called garden, the greater portion of which was occupied by red gravel paths, with a suggestion of spiky shrubbery and a patch of stunted grass. In the midst of this cheerless space was a small summer-house. Here a glance from the house door—accidentally ajar—showed me that Mrs. Dobson had taken refuge. A moment later I stood on the threshold of the pavilion, asking mute permission to enter; to which Mrs. Dobson responded by a wan little smile of assent.

“I'm awfully sorry it's no better,” I said apologetically. “I hope you'll be able to stay—at least, till your affairs are in shape.”

“Oh, yes, for a time, at all events,” she answered listlessly. “There is a dreary sameness about this sort of life,” she went on, repressing a shudder, “whether one encounters it in a Chicago boarding-house, London lodgings, or a continental pension. Possibly I could live more cheaply in Switzerland,” she added reflectively.

"There is a good deal to interest one in and around Donow," I suggested, recalling with satisfaction that I was well read in the region where my diplomatic labors were to lie.

"Yes, a good deal, doubtless," she answered quietly, with a curious little note in her voice, as of something deeper than mere boredom; it seemed a sort of self-insulation, as of one whom a fate transcending ordinary experience had severed from the usual interests, the comfortable, every-day relations of life. "I fear I am not a good traveller," she continued half-apologetically, as though wishful not to appear unappreciative of my well-meant attempts at entertainment. "I neglect sight-seeing shamefully. Picture galleries tire me; the opera bores me; museums exhaust me. Besides, I hate a crowd—especially a foreign crowd. The French and Germans stare so. And oh, wherever one goes, is to be assailed by the voices of underbred Americans. Where could they get such voices, even if they took lessons in vocal discord!"

She had risen, with the uncontrollable impatience of her last words, and stood in the broad sunlight flooding the summer-house. Even under this test, her beauty came out flawless, triumphant! Her hair seemed to have gained an additional glint, her skin to glow with more pearly lustre. The turn of her neck, where a few loose hairs were just twining into a tiny curl, was so exquisite that for a moment I almost lost sight of the purpose that had brought me hither; that had been foremost in my mind since the first moment of our meeting: to hold her, if only for a little space, beneath the same roof; if not, elsewhere—not so far distant but that I could see her to-morrow—and next day—and the day after. Vaguely, I saw a series of golden days in endless perspective.

"There is all the lovely out-of-door life," I went on seductively. "You can go every day to one or another little garden by the river or among the hills, and sit at a little table and drink the excellent German coffee, eat the delicious German cakes, and listen to the entrancing German music, with somebody opposite to enjoy it all with you!"—"doubly, because with you!" I added, under my breath.

"But I am alone," she made answer, with a seriousness that had in it no thought of provoking the evident rejoinder. "One must sorrow alone; but one cannot enjoy in solitude. Even the little table, with its allurements, would lose its charm if one were alone," she added, in a lighter tone, as though fearful of betraying some sorrow not to be exposed to the world's rude gaze.

"Why may not I sit opposite—so it may not be at your side!" I blurted out, never intending to speak the words, though, indeed, they revealed but little of what was clamoring within my heart.

Mrs. Dobson looked at me for a moment in silence. Yet though the next moment I was well nigh overwhelmed with the revulsion of my

own presumptuous folly, I could find no words with which to retract my utterance. I could only hold my breath, lest she punish me with word of her speedy departure from Donow. But she was merciful.

"My dear boy," she said at length, quietly—"you are only a boy, although I should have to stand a-tiptoe to look you well in the face—you must not make love to me. Why, we have known each other scarcely five hours!"

"Five and three-quarters," I remonstrated. "It was just eleven o'clock when you came into the office this morning. I am positive of the time, to the minute, because I had just noted the departing whistle of the Consul's train."

"I thought you were such a dear, good, unspoiled fellow," she went on, with the sweetest dignity that ever sat on a woman. "I thought that with you I could be myself for a little while; not be forced to parry sweet speeches or put a summary end to love-making. And now——" In the unfinished sentence lay volumes of merited reproach.

"I'm awfully sorry," I stammered. "It was beastly of me to follow you up, to bombard you with sweet speeches. If only you won't go away," I added beseechingly, "I'll—I'll promise to talk only out of 'Consular Instructions'!"

"I suppose it is the duty of the American Consul to aid those who are 'any way afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or estate'—*vide* the Book of Common Prayer," she added, with an irrepressible little smile, that betrayed she had been cognizant of my blunder of the morning.

Fearful of committing another and irretrievable blunder, I only looked my suspense.

"On that condition," she added, with a smile that nearly made me lose my head again, "I will allow you some time, perhaps, to sit opposite me at one of the aforesaid little tables. Ah, what was that?"

She turned a startled glance toward the street. Nothing more portentous had occurred than a blare of trumpets and roll of drums, borne on the still air from the Grand Square, not far distant.

"I am foolish to be so easily disturbed," she murmured, recovering herself; "but I have been somewhat nervous of late, and start at the least noise."

"They are changing guard at the palace gates, that is all," I explained. "It is a picturesque ceremony, taking place several times a day. Always attracts a crowd."

Struggling to regain her composure, she seated herself on the bench within the summer-house and partially closed her eyes. The shadow of the long, dark lashes lay on the rounded cheek.

"All you can see of the royal palace from the square is the fine façade," I went on resolutely, seeking safely in guide-book chatter.

"The entire edifice extends over an immense space, its nucleus being the mediæval stronghold of the kings of Ring-Stettin, in the very heart of which is the ancient keep, containing the famous Diamond Vault."

"The Diamond Vault! What is that?" queried Mrs. Dobson, opening her eyes and speaking with sudden animation.

Historic scenes, heroic associations, music, and art might find her unresponsive: she was none the less adorable that she betrayed the feminine weakness for diamonds!

"It is the most magnificent collection of diamonds in the world," I answered. "Many of the single gems, even, have been worth, literally, a king's ransom."

She looked so interested that I was encouraged to continue:

"The collection was begun centuries ago by Johann I., surnamed the Mighty. In those early days, unpleasant tales were rife of dungeon, torture-chamber, oubliette, and other methods by which the royal family of Ring-Stettin exacted tribute of all unfortunates who came their way. Each succeeding generation displayed the same mania for diamonds. Into the growing hoard went the spoils of many a foray into neighboring kingdoms; the treasure of monasteries; the loot of churches innumerable. Whenever and wherever war was up, his Majesty of Ring-Stettin was sure to be on hand; and equally certain to be on the winning side.

"If his predecessors on the throne had a passion for diamonds, with the present King it is monomania. No difficulty is too great, no price too high, to add another splendid gem to his heaped-up treasures. From first to last, the Diamond Vault may be said to represent every variety and degree of crime; in which his present Majesty has the distinction of excelling them all; not only in the number, but in the atrocity of his bloody deeds!"

The subject evidently exercised a fascination over my companion, despite its gruesome associations.

"Are visitors admitted to the Diamond Vault?" she queried hesitatingly.

I sedulously concealed my delight at the success of my efforts to guide her thoughts into the desired channel. Not again would I be betrayed into showing my hand too plainly.

"It is possible that permission might be obtained," I answered, with a nice appearance of deliberation. "Only," I hastened to add, "I fear it would be impossible to get permission much under a week. There is so much red-tape in Germany, you know. Most of the official regulations are absurd, no doubt; but everything here has to be done by routine, to an extent of which you could hardly be aware."

"I might stay in Donow till Friday of this week," she returned,

glancing dubiously toward the pension. "In case I decide to go to Switzerland for the remainder of the summer, that would give time for the journey before Sunday. If I had to remain longer——" She looked again at the pension, and shook her head decisively.

Inwardly determined to work the prestige of the United States of America for all it was worth, I gave a confident answer.

"Would you be so kind as to include Frau Meyer in the permit?" added Mrs. Dobson, who seemed to have an exalted opinion of the plenipotentiary powers of the American Consul. "She told me that since her infirmity came upon her she has been quite shut out from music, formerly her greatest pleasure. She is a nice old lady, and though I speak very little German, and she does not understand a word of English, we contrive to make ourselves mutually understood. The poor soul is pathetically grateful for any little attention!"

I gave ready assent to the proposition; though I could not restrain the suspicion that worthy Frau Meyer, unconsciously to herself, was cast for the part of chaperon—lest I forget that the relations of Mrs. Dobson and myself were strictly official.

Frau Meyer, she added, had recently come from Hamburg to visit a cousin or daughter-in-law or some relation in the Old Town of Donow. The exact relationship had evidently been beyond the combined linguistic powers of the two ladies.

As we left the summer-house, my companion suddenly glanced across the way. On the opposite side of the street was a small hotel, and just entering was a tall, stout man, evidently a foreigner, who paused to raise his eyes scrutinizingly to the upper casements of the pension.

"Could that be the man the young girl called Emmeline was talking about?" suggested Mrs. Dobson. "A Frenchman is so apt to misunderstand the freedom of American girls," she added regretfully.

She entered the house, and I prepared for a stroll about the city, well pleased at my first success in diplomacy.

III.

I CONSULTED Karl without delay regarding the formalities requisite to procuring admission to the Diamond Vault. It appeared that these were—on the surface—simple enough.

The Prefect of Police, to whom application must be made, explained Karl, on being satisfied as to the credentials of the person applying, would grant the permit, duly signed and sealed, and countersigned by the Grand Chamberlain of the palace. This permit was to be presented at the specified date, to the officer of the day at the palace, who had already received private instructions concerning the same.

"To-day being Tuesday, would it be possible to get the permit for next Friday?" I queried.

"Under the circumstances, no doubt," answered Karl. "Positive orders are given to all officials in Donow, royal or civil, that the greatest deference is to be shown, on every occasion, to the American Herr Consul. The seal of the United States, which, of course, all correspondence from the American Consulate bears, is sufficient guarantee of the quality of any person or persons named in such paper."

The words seemed an echo of my landlady's, the previous day. I was by no means inclined to underrate the opinion of the common people. Indeed, in my present position, I felt that it behooved me to acquaint myself with any undercurrents of popular feeling, however apparently obscure, in the political situation. I continued:

"The Americans, then, are popular in Ring-Stettin?"

"The Americans are numerous," answered Karl politely. "The Herr Assistant Consul may be aware that certain matters appertaining to his Majesty's revenues will hardly bear looking into," he went on gravely. "Years ago an agreement was entered into by a concert of the European powers, giving King Johann absolute control over a certain province in Africa. America, being then young, had no part in the compact. It has happened more than once within recent years, however, that when matters elsewhere—in some distant state, some far dependency of another power—got too rotten for endurance, and the evil stank in the nostrils of every honest man the world over, America has risen in her strength and said to the transgressor, 'Let the evil cease—or a stronger arm than thine shall dispossess thee!'

"And word is followed by deed.

"Therefore it is that King Johann desires to be at peace with the land of the Stars-and-Stripes; why he commands courtesy toward the most insignificant of its people. The buzz of the tiniest gnat may rouse the sleeping lion!"

The letter to the Prefecture duly written and despatched by official messenger, my time seemed to be my own for the remainder of the day. Indeed, Karl had told me that my visitor of yesterday was the first in months. Reclining in the ship's chair, I smoked cigarettes and looked over the newly arrived home mail, that included the last Paris edition of the *New York Herald*; in which enterprising sheet I discovered a biographical sketch of myself, accompanied by a picture not worse than the majority of newspaper representations. Presumably, this was the paper that had heralded my arrival in Donow and—through Miss Emmeline's instrumentality—created yesterday's cyclone at the pension table. Elsewhere in the same sheet was a paragraph to the effect that ex-Queen Friedricha of Ring-Stettin had been confined to her house for several days by some slight indisposition. Despite her "non-existence," the

former Queen of Ring-Stettin seemed to occupy a considerable portion of the public interest.

Presently I opened the volume of "International Law" and set myself resolutely to its perusal. But beneath my ostensible occupation, my thoughts were dwelling on my yesterday's visitor: how she had looked and spoken when she entered the office; where she had sat; the exact spot on the desk where her hand had rested as she signed her name to the power of attorney; the glance that had accompanied the low uttered thanks; the little movements of the lovely hands as she drew on her gloves. Half-forgotten lines of one supreme among women ran in my brain:

There were gay gallants in dozens,
There were princes of the land,
And they would have perished for you,
It was such a snowy hand.

Theoretically and in cold speech, love at first sight was an absurdity; practically and in unvoiced earnest, it was the most natural—nay, the one inevitable—thing in the world, when the woman in question was Mrs. Dobson—to myself, I breathed her Christian name. Her conventional cognomen was, in itself, so coarse, so unpleasant, so suggestive of "Eliphalet J. Handy" and his kind, and so redolent of the tinned meat and sausage industry, that I inwardly writhed at the association.

However unpleasant the same associations might be in the person of Mr. Fosdick, I could at least console myself that the period of subjection to the petty discomforts and jarring incongruities of my present position would doubtless be brief. I had accepted the Vice-Consulship at Donow merely as the stepping-stone to something higher. If, in the near future, I beheld myself accredited Ambassador to the Court of St. James, having risen with meteoric rapidity through the various ranks of the diplomatic corps, there was nothing inherently impossible in such a forecast. In impartial self-appraisal, my personal advantages were many; the preparation for my chosen career excellent. I was resolved to utilize to the uttermost all the opportunities of my present position. Its superabundant leisure should be devoted to study of "Constitutional Law," and to perfecting myself in the German language, in which I was already fairly proficient. Karl could doubtless add the post of language-teacher to his other vocations. I would begin forthwith.

The office factotum, having returned from his mission to the Prefecture, appeared promptly at my summons, remaining by the door, stiff as a ramrod, evidently primed for an official interview; so that my projected language exercise took less the form in which I might hope to acquire facility in the vernacular than the "Question and Answer" of an old-fashioned German grammar. A random glance about the

room, falling on the twin pictures on the wall, suggested the subject of conversation.

"How old is the present King of Ring-Stettin?"

"His Majesty is something over fifty years."

"How long has he been on the throne?"

"Twenty-odd years."

"Was he the son of the preceding king?"

"He was."

"How does he pass his time—aside from the affairs of state?"

"Hunting, Homburg, Paris—those diversions that come naturally to a gentleman of rank and wealth," answered Karl decorously.

"Such pleasures come high," I suggested, with equal choice of language. "He has money, then, for their indulgence?"

"His Majesty's revenues from the state and from his private estates are large," answered Karl.

"Is that all?"

"It is much; but insignificant compared to his income from another source," replied Karl.

"Ah, and what may that be?" I questioned.

"The Herr Consul has doubtless heard of red rubber—the Congo?" answered Karl dutifully.

Of course I knew in a general way, as did everybody, to what he referred; but the subject was too remote from my personal interests to have attracted special attention. So it was merely as matter for "language exercise" that I asked:

"What do you mean by those words, 'red rubber, the Congo'?"

"The Congo is a river in that far province of which I spoke; red rubber is its chief product," replied Karl, still in the manner of one trained to answer in the fewest possible words.

"His Majesty King Johann is Suzerain—Protector—of this country?" I queried.

"His Majesty King Johann exercises absolute sovereignty over this country, where countless thousands of helpless men, women, and children labor all day, every day, most of the night, in the African jungles, collecting rubber with which to swell his already bursting coffers. They are tortured, mutilated, slain, if they are not ready, on the inexorable pay-day, with the amount of red rubber demanded by his agents. 'Red rubber'—they are such innocent, every-day words, are they not, Herr Consul? Yet who can say for what suffering they stand to thousands of helpless blacks!"

Karl's German seemed to be freeing itself from the restrictions of Ollendorf! For me, too, the subject had lost the character of a language lesson. My cigarette had gone out, and I had risen from my lounging attitude as I asked:

"Is there no help?"

"Help! Who tries to help—who wants to help?" echoed Karl scornfully. "What can ever satisfy a rapacity that says to those who have brought their measure, 'Thou must bring more; this has fallen short!' To those who have brought much, 'Bring double, treble, the amount!' Or it may be the sap has not flowed freely; the supply may have been already exhausted; the trees bled to death; fire or enemies destroyed the forests. What care the agents of King Johann?"

"'What, thy tribute has fallen short? Thou hast dared to come empty-handed! Psh!'—a few more hands or feet are lopped off; a few more bleeding stumps of arms or legs are dragged about, the prey of swarms of poisonous insects; a few more living carcasses are rotting in the fœtid jungle!"

"Good God, why does n't somebody—everybody—stop it!" I cried, staring at the picture on the wall as at one who had been revealed the Master of Hell. There was doubtless nothing new, considered as mere fact, in Karl's narration; but the words had been uttered with a depth of earnestness, a vividness as of personal conception, that brought home their realization with sickening force. As I hearkened to the man's arraignment, I felt myself an accomplice in the monstrous iniquity that that monster was suffered to pollute the earth.

"Somebody's business, everybody's business, is nobody's business," retorted Karl. "The Congo is far away; red rubber is in demand. If for a moment some ear catches the clank of the fetters of those endless caravans winding along the dark river, the next instant it is lost in the whirl of the automobile! What would the world do for its rubber tires without the supply from the Congo?"

"But what need of this hideous extortion?" I demanded. "The King of Ring-Stettin is reputed, from his home revenues alone, to be one of the richest kings in Europe—one of the richest men in the world!"

"There is enough and to spare for a Queen; not enough for a dancing girl," returned Karl significantly. "No diamond collector in the world can compete with King Johann. Think of the store that has been added to the Diamond Vault!"

"Who was the Queen of Ring-Stettin before she was married?" I asked.

The answer came slowly.

"She was the Grand Duchess Friedricha, daughter of the late Grand Duke Heinrich Christian of Steinmetz."

Beyond knowing that there were a score of duchies and kingdoms and palatinates of the dimensions of a reasonable-sized back-yard scattered throughout the German Empire, the name "Steinmetz" conveyed no special idea to me. A marriage in European royal circles is too far-

off an event from the sphere of a Harvard undergraduate to attract much attention. Karl's words seemed to piece out yesterday's acrimonious table talk concerning the ex-Queen of Ring-Stettin.

"So she and his Majesty King Johann were well mated?"

I was unprepared for the effect of my words.

Karl had drawn himself to his full height, and in every inch looked, not the humble man-of-all-work, but the valiant and alert soldier. His words came with a force that had lost all semblance to Ollendorf; the "exercise" had become a steeplechase! Try as I might to keep pace, every now and then I lost the tail-end of some separable verb or grew dizzy in the effort to keep abreast of a string of adjectives that in the dim future might lead to its proper substantive. Once and again, sense seemed to merge into mere sound, and Karl to be a sort of human alarm-clock!

"Little Duchess Frieda was the dearest, sweetest little maid in all Germany—in the whole world! Bzz-zz-zz. Brr-rr-rr-r-r!"

He relieved his feelings by shaking his fist at his pictured Majesty, regardless of the fact that the benign face of the American President came in for a share of the malediction.

"There was not much money in the old palace of Steinmetz, where little Duchess Frieda grew up," he went on. "Her father, the Grand Duke Heinrich Christian, had been robbed right and left by his rascally neighbors, including always the worst of the lot, the kings of Ring-Stettin. Little Duchess Frieda ran about the ducal park like the children of the peasants in the village hard by; only, even in her shabby frock, she was always the Grand Duchess. I was forester in the ducal service in those days, and used to watch her running about the park, or nestling in her favorite haunt, between the roots of a huge oak, poring over the pages of a big book, herself lovelier than any of the fairy folk in which she took such delight.

"One day when she and her governess—an Irish lady who adored her—were in the park together, a whim seized the little Duchess, and she ran away from her companion, now and then glancing over her shoulder to laugh at the fat lady stumbling after, calling, quite in vain, to her little charge. All at once, in one of those backward glances, little Duchess Frieda tripped and fell. Instantly, I was on the spot, and carried her in my arms to the palace. She was unconscious for a long time; it was even feared that she might not recover. Ah, God! Bzz-zz-zz-z-z!"

"But ere long she was running about as gaily as ever. One day she and her governess were in the park again, and seeing me, the gracious lady called, and little Duchess Frieda said, '*Danke schön, Herr Karl!*'"

"Ah, the music of those words! They were new words, never spoken by another, coined by little Duchess Frieda!

"I saw then that the root of the tree, against which she had struck, had left a tiny scar on her temple.

"Since then I have heard that a single look from her will bring a man to her feet; that at a word men have shot themselves, gone mad. I can believe it, for has she not looked at me—spoken to me? And then she was only a child! One can offer no explanation of such power. It is only that some women are made that way.

"Every year her beauty grew more wonderful. At seventeen she was the loveliest princess in Europe; one of the most beautiful women in the world. She was clever, too, speaking fluently several languages besides her own, even one so difficult as your English.

"It was written in the devil's books that King Johann should hear of her; see her; want her. Bzz-zz-zz-z-z! Br-rr-rr-rrr! His Majesty made the Grand Duke an offer that would enable his Highness Heinrich Christian to foot it with the best. What, indeed, were a few millions more or less to one with that unlimited fund on the Congo!"

"And so they were married?" I queried, as Karl's narrative came to an abrupt standstill, and the old soldier, frowning heavily, seemed disinclined to proceed.

"And so she was sold!" he answered fiercely. "The day of the betrothal, which, as the Herr Consul doubtless knows, stands with us for almost the wedding ceremony, I stayed in my hut, fasting, with the shutters closed, from dawn to sunset. Immediately the bride would cross the frontier into Ring-Stettin, where at the great cathedral in Donow the wedding would take place with every imaginable pomp and splendor."

"What next?" I asked breathlessly.

"Ask God—or the devil!" returned Karl sombrely. "To-day, in Donow, the name of Queen Friedricha is no more spoken; her photographs have all been called in and destroyed; any newspaper which would print a word concerning her would be severely punished. Occasionally there appears a paragraph in some Paris newspaper or American journal; but as these rarely fall into German hands, it is considered that no special harm is likely to ensue. It is deemed, perhaps, also, that any effort at suppression might result in greater publicity."

"Is the old blackguard afraid of a scandal?" I queried wrathfully.

"The common people loved the Queen's sweet face and gracious ways. It is to prevent their murmurs, to silence her name upon their lips, that the King spends lavishly upon their amusement; throws open the royal palaces and parks to their pleasure. He is afraid, too, of the party at court, who in the two short years of her wedded life were on the Queen's side; of those who are born malcontents, ever ready to make capital of whatever material offers. Many a plot has been hatched, ere now, with a woman's name as the watchword. Revolution

is in the air—and near examples not lacking. The office of the Prefect of Police is not all red tape,” added Karl gravely.

“Is Queen Friedricha herself concerned in these possible conspiracies?” I asked.

“Conspiracy is an ugly word—one does not say it aloud in Ring-Stettin,” returned Karl. “If I might make so bold as to offer a personal opinion, it is that her Majesty was sated with her brief glimpse of royalty and has no taste for politics.”

“Whatever the official attitude of the American Vice-Consul,” I said, for the figure of the poor little wronged Duchess, the hapless Queen, more sinned against than sinning, appealed strongly to my sympathy—“in his private character, ‘God save Queen Friedricha!’”

“God bless you, sir!” said Karl, in a queer, choky voice.

Perhaps the “piece of office furniture” also had a private character!

IV.

THE girl called Emmeline—her surname had not appeared—was loitering on the sidewalk as I drew near the pension. At my approach, she glanced up with simulated surprise, followed by a half shy, half inviting smile, in response to which my steps slackened to keep pace with hers. Aside from her unfavorable surroundings, Miss Emmeline was a very pretty girl, with big, innocent blue eyes; bright fair hair, relieved from the insipidity of blonde by a glint of gold; and a rose-leaf complexion, that had just now taken a deeper tint, either from rapid exercise or from some quickening emotion. Her hat, a little white straw with a single big blush rose on the drooping brim, was tilted somewhat to one side, in a hint of rakishness. A music-roll beneath her arm was carried with such ostentation as to suggest that her present stroll had had another objective point than the Conservatoire.

“It is a fine day,” she said, as one who has given the subject prolonged thought.

After proper consideration, I assented to this view of the situation.

“I think the weather this evening will also be fine,” continued Miss Emmeline gravely.

“I should say there was every probability that the present meteorological conditions will continue,” I returned, after a judicial pause—wondering what this skirmishing was to lead to.

“It will be delightful to-night on the river terrace,” Miss Emmeline went on reflectively.

I must own that I was momentarily on the wrong tack, and that little Miss Emmeline wanted another string to her bow—besides yesterday’s acquisition. But the next moment she added softly:

“I know a secret. Mrs. Dobson and Frau Meyer are going to the

concert on the terrace to-night. I was n't listening, of course," she hastened to reassure me, "but I could not help hearing what was said. Mrs. Dobson's room is next mine, and one has to talk quite loud to a deaf lady."

She nodded farewell and hastened her steps, when another thought seemed to strike her, and she paused, looking over her shoulder to say softly:

"She is very dear and sweet—the loveliest lady I ever saw!" (The little witch apparently thought there was no need to indicate more closely to whom she referred.) "When she is near, I can do nothing but look at her and watch her every movement. Her hands are the most beautiful ever," she went on eagerly; "so soft and white, and when she moves them they seem to be beckoning to you—lovely, fluttering things that draw one's eyes after them, whether you will or no. When they lie still in her lap—why, then one must be very quiet, too, lest they take wings and fly away!" The girl drew a quick breath, as though her words could scarcely contain her feelings. She added quickly:

"I'm silly, I know. Besides, that is not what I wanted to say. It seems—does it not?—that so good and lovely a lady should have everything in the world that she wanted, though it were all the King's riches! If—if there was anything I could do for her, I should be so very glad," went on the girl earnestly. "Last night she was walking up and down her room quite softly, so that none should hear, till near morning. But I was wide awake, and thinking, too; so I knew. I thought I would tell you, because——"

"Because what?" I queried eagerly.

"Because sometimes a woman understands another woman better than a man," sighed Miss Emmeline, shooting a sidelong glance at me from under the rakish hat-brim. "Woman," indeed! The little witch could scarce be turned eighteen!

"When a woman lies awake all night," went on Miss Emmeline wisely, "it can be for only one of three things. These are," she continued categorically, "the toothache, which could not be the present case, as Mrs. Dobson's teeth are like pearls; second, that her new hat is a disappointment—and it could not be that, either, as the only difference a new hat—any hat, though it was a Salvation army coal-scuttle—could make in her appearance would be to make her look a little lovelier than the last one. Finally——"

"What next?" I demanded, coming to a dead standstill; in my eagerness, I had unwittingly brought my face very close to the one beneath the drooping hat-brim.

"That is a question to be answered by the Herr Consul—*ex-officio!*" retorted Miss Emmeline; and with another significant glance she fled

through the pension garden into the house, leaving me staring after her, dumfounded by the naïve words and look.

Some impulse led me to glance across the way. The big Frenchman was loitering near the hotel, apparently an interested observer of my colloquy with Miss Emmeline. I recalled some crude badinage at the supper table concerning a meeting between Miss Emmeline and her acquaintance of the morning—witnessed by one of the pension circle—at a café on the boulevard. Did the fellow think I was trespassing on his preserves? I returned his glare with interest, registering a mental resolve to keep an eye on him in the girl's interests.

Mrs. Dobson did not appear at either of the ensuing meals, and the hours were long, despite the friendly revelations of Miss Emmeline. Evening came at last, and I took my post, betimes, in the entrance-hall. Mrs. Dobson came down the stairs in quiet evening-dress, a wrap over her arm. Heavy, dark rings about her eyes confirmed the tale of a sleepless night. Frau Meyer was amiably waddling in her footsteps.

"I was tired with the overnight journey from Paris," returned Mrs. Dobson, in response to my greeting. "I did not intend going out to-night, but Frau Meyer has so little to divert her, and is so passionately fond of music, that I could not refuse going with her to the concert."

My petition to accompany them received smiling assent. The assembled pension was likewise setting forth, in the direction of the boulevard, which was swelling, in the near distance, to the full tide of its pleasure-seeking life.

"There is another way to the terrace—a little longer than by the boulevard, but quieter and pleasanter," I said, interpreting Mrs. Dobson's apprehensive look toward the "gang"—as the young ladies of the pension felicitously termed their collective force. She looked grateful appreciation of my suggestion.

The more circuitous way led through the picturesque part of the town, far from the crowd of pleasure-seekers, or the garish lights of the great city. Here were narrow streets lined with houses crowned by high-pitched, three-storied roofs; secluded squares in which arose a dilapidated statue out of some half-mythical past; now and again the sound of trickling water led us on the quest for its source, finding it presently in a moss-covered fountain, on whose battered brink we paused to decipher some quaint inscription in half-obliterated, archaic German. To all intents, the rambling walk—its objective point nearly forgotten—was in dual companionship; the good deaf lady amiably acquiescent in our erratic course, though uncomprehending, save as some interchange of the sign language brought us into temporary communication.

It was late when we arrived at the scene of the concert—a wide stretch of ground, protected by awnings, brilliantly illuminated and set

with the invariable little tables of German pleasure-making. We found seats on the outskirts of the crowd, near the stone balustrade that protected the terrace from the river. The expanse of water seemed almost as gaily lit as the space about us. At measured intervals, splendid bridges—great arcs of incandescent light—spanned the stream. Innumerable pleasure craft, plying between the “gardens” and other resorts for merry-making, that stretched wide from the city on either shore, marked trails of light upon the water. Smaller boats were darting hither and thither, like fireflies. The splendid music of the orchestra blended all the varied components of the scene into one appealing, passionate whole.

Gradually, however, an undertone to its beauty and fascination caught the ear—a harsh, grating rattle, having its apparent rise far up the stream. At first the sound was barely audible above the distant hum from the streets, the splash of wavelets against the terrace wall. Swelling by degrees, it had become a harsh clangor, rising above the orchestral crash and peal, dominating the entire scene, shutting out even the things of the sight, presently to die away as it had come, in a faint, far, grating rattle. The ear strained to catch the last feeble echo; ere long, was hearkening for it to begin again, out of the vague distance; to swell, to die away, in ceaseless, horrid rhythm.

I knew the sound, though I heard it for the first time. It was the rattle of the chain-cable in the river-bed, by which was worked most of the market and commercial traffic between the city and the surrounding country. To a sympathetic fancy, one still vibrating to the tale of another river in darkest Africa, there was in this commonplace source a vivid suggestion of clanking fetters; a mesmeric spell conjuring the vision of a helpless caravan winding its everlasting way through fœtid jungles. That one potent touch brought into mystic juxtaposition the near and the far dominions of his Majesty King Johann!

Mrs. Dobson's face was turned toward the river, her elbow resting on the parapet, her chin supported in her hollowed hand, looking intently out over the water. Her look, of alternate suspense and breathless attention, suggested that she too was listening for the sound from the river. Had its mystic spell been laid on her, too?

The strains of Wagner ceased, and the hum of conversation, the clink of cups and glasses, filled the ensuing pause. Mrs. Dobson's thoughts had returned from their far journey. She was regarding me attentively.

“You know all there is to be known about me, as I gave you that exhaustive autobiography the other day,” she said, smiling. “I won't accuse you of taking an unfair advantage of your position; only, like a true diplomat, you learned all, while divulging nothing.”

“There is n't much to divulge,” I answered, laughing. “I am that

individual said to be happy—one without a history. Up to the present date, mine has been merely the life of the average young American. School, college; the choice between a business and a professional career; resolved by the unexpected opportunity of the Civil Service and a Consular appointment."

"You have only yourself to rely on?" There was subtle flattery in the query.

"If I don't make good here," I answered soberly, "the alternative is the business chance I spoke of—the leather trade;" which to my thinking was not greatly preferable to the tinned meat and sausage industry. "A factory in a stifling manufacturing town—that is what I have escaped; that is to what I should be condemned by one of those irretrievable false steps sometimes committed by even the cleverest and best equipped on the very threshold of life!"

But even as the words passed my lips—spoken, indeed, more for the sake of effective contrast with the present than from any faintest shadow of apprehension—never had the future seemed so splendid, so alluring; never had "St. James" seemed so real, so near!

"I ask only a fair field and no favor," I added, more to myself than to another—though that other was Mrs. Dobson.

My thoughts ran riot to-night. How well such a woman would grace a royal court—such a court as "St. James"!

"Ah, well," said my companion, with a little shrug of the shoulders that might have been learned in Paris rather than Chicago, "Fate is too much for us all at times, and the path we would fain have chosen is suddenly marked 'No Thoroughfare.' It can be no worse for one than another, and an American can always get along somehow."

The music began again—the last number. We lingered till the grounds were well nigh deserted; then as we made our way toward the exit we passed a table whose occupants, like ourselves, were apparently wishful to avoid the departing crush. They were Miss Emmeline and the Frenchman, leaning across the table in an attitude of mutual confidence. As we left the terrace, the twain still lingered within its precincts.

The ever-shifting, brilliant life on the boulevard had assumed a childish, irresponsible aspect. The vaudeville shows, the moving pictures, the penny-in-a-slot amusements, the automatic lunch-counters, were receiving their fullest quota of patronage.

"I have never seen anything of this kind before," said my companion, her face glowing with enjoyment.

At the warning stroke of midnight, we hailed a passing droshky, reaching the pension as Miss Emmeline and her companion were bidding each other good-night at the garden gate. This time the look the fellow gave me was of unmistakable malignity.

The following morning brought a communication from the Prefect of Police—a permit for the high-well-born Herr Assistant American Consul and two companions, both carefully specified, to visit the royal vaults on the following day (Friday), as requested by the Herr Assistant Consul. To-morrow! It was very near—and after to-morrow? Even in our brief acquaintance, I could not fail to see that Mrs. Dobson was possessed by the spirit of restlessness that inevitably assails one who dwells long abroad without definite aim. Her desire to see the Diamond Vault gratified, her speedy departure might follow; leaving me tied by official responsibility in Donow.

But whatever the close of the week might see, to-day and to-morrow were mine! The morning passed without even a pretext of Constitutional Law or the German vernacular. At the first stroke of twelve I seized my hat; at the last, I was a considerable distance up the street. As I approached the pension, Mrs. Dobson was just turning in at the gate. I lost no time in joining her, and acquainting her with the result of my mission. Beneath the gracious thanks, was there a tinge of regret; or was it only the elusive shadow of my own apprehension?

We loitered along the garden path. From every casement near-by came the uproar of pianos, the chorus of piercing voices. It was very hot—a withering, scorching heat, more like the sirocco blast of our native land than that of the more temperate clime in which we were. The odor of the heavy, greasy noonday meal was in the air. Mrs. Dobson glanced toward the house and visibly winced; her lagging step grew slower.

“It has been like that all the morning,” she said, weariness in every tone of her voice, every line of her figure. I should have guessed the previous night to have known as little sleep as its predecessor. “I tried to run away from the tumult, to the lovely old streets and squares of another world, where we wandered last night; but in the daylight there was only noise and dirt and squalor. Or—I was alone!” There was a slight catch in her voice, as of one who has been betrayed into an admission of some sort. She added calmly—quite naturally, to an untrained ear—“Frau Meyer is visiting her relatives in the city and will not return till night.”

Inwardly, I blessed Frau Meyer for having chosen this auspicious time for her family visit!

“I know a lovely place up the river,” I began eagerly; “a palace old and beautiful, and an entrancing rose garden by the water’s edge. Near-by is a forest with cool and shadowy depths—such a forest as that of the fairy tale, where for long years the princess slumbered under the spell of an evil monster.”

“Ah, yes, I remember the story right well,” she answered slowly and wistfully. “It was in an old book of fairy tales beloved of my

childhood. Tell me more," she went on lightly. "Are there fairy folk in the forest? Should we find the princess still unconscious, under the spell of the evil monster?"

"I fear we should find only care-takers," I answered, laughing. "It is only a short trip," I went on seductively. "We could go either by boat or trolley, as you prefer. It was there, time out of mind, that the royal honeymoons of Ring-Stettin were spent. King Johann's and Queen Friedricha's was the last."

Mrs. Dobson turned away with a quick little gesture of misliking.

"No, no, not the Queen! I have heard already too much of Queen Friedricha. I should expect to see her ghost at the scene of her honeymoon."

"One does not see ghosts in broad daylight, in a rose garden," I argued.

The cracked dinner-bell added its clangor to the bedlam within.

"Presently will begin the usual wrangling about Queen Friedricha," I added; "and the voices get worse every day!"

The unhappy Queen of Ring-Stettin seemed indeed to call forth as much feeling, chiefly of an acrimonious sort, as that hapless queen of earlier time, to whom Miss Emmeline had, perhaps not inaptly, likened her.

"Is there anything that poor Queen Friedricha may not have dared or sinned or suffered that has not been dragged to the light of day at yonder table?" shuddered Mrs. Dobson. "Even the naughty Queen does not deserve to have that word of reproach flung at her every other minute, in those awful pension voices!" she added, a curious hard ring in her voice. She turned from the door toward the gate.

"Let us go. We will find the sleeping princess in the heart of the forest," she said gaily.

V.

We were soon on our way, taking the less frequented route by trolley, that would bring us to our destination some time in advance of the excursion-boat. The end of the tram-line left us a mile or two from the palace-grounds; this distance we traversed rapidly and almost in silence. The open-air restaurant, to which we speedily found our way, was deserted.

Before us was a wide stretch of lawn, bordered, on the water's edge, by a row of thickly branching trees, through which a little rustling breeze brought cool, leafy odors. The far line of the opposite shore was broken by a line of low wooded hills. The fragrance of the rose garden, near-by, filled every sense to repletion.

A stealthy background to the world of loveliness, the chain cable was faintly audible, the harsh rattle rising higher and higher, till the

clangor shut out the evidence of the senses, and another scene was in place of that before us.

By the expression of Mrs. Dobson's face, I could not doubt whither her thoughts, too, had journeyed.

"Nice, cheerful welcome for the Queen on her home-coming," I suggested. "I wonder if she knew the chief source of the royal wealth?"

"I have a fancy," returned my companion, in a curiously dry, hard voice, "that that very night—her bridal night—the young Queen stood at the casement yonder, and, hearing the strange noise from the river, asked her husband what it was. He answered that the people of his country often likened the sound to that of clanking fetters on galled limbs. It was music to him that it was so, for it kept ever before his mind the image of a caravan of blacks on the banks of a dark river, bearing him ceaseless tribute. He told her more—that on sleepless nights the vision of that bleeding train might pass before her aching eyes, searing their very sockets.

"He said that the diamonds she wore on breast and brow—his wedding gift—had been bought with as many tortured lives as necklace and tiara were marks in value—ah, God!" She covered her eyes with her hand, as though to shut out the baleful vision.

Despite the delayed dinner-hour, my companion ate sparingly, but drank several cups of strong coffee.

"Perhaps, sir," said the little waitress, with a deep curtsy at the coin I had placed in her hand, "you and the gracious lady might like to see the Queen's rooms yonder"—nodding toward the corner of the palace nearest the river. "The apartments are kept exactly as they were when she was here on the honeymoon, seven years ago. My mother—it is she who does the excellent cooking you have just enjoyed—was scullery-maid then at the palace. The wedding had taken place at the great cathedral in Donow. The magnificent bridal pageant swept up the river, its shores lined with people from far and near. The boats were spread with awnings of blue and gold, streaming with banners and gay ribbons, and garlanded with roses; with music echoing from shore to shore. The royal couple ascended the marble steps yonder, leading from the water's edge, carpeted with crimson velvet. Only those who are of the Blood may use the royal staircase, but it is permitted visitors to view it from above."

The little maid, as one assured of the sympathy of her audience, wishful, too, perhaps, to give good measure for a generous *trinkgeld*, kept on with her tale.

"There is a sad story connected with the royal staircase, that I may whisper. The gracious lady and gentleman are American, and will not list a word in Donow. At the time of the wedding, my father

belonged to the palace guard. The very night of the home-coming he was sentinel at the royal staircase. At the end of his beat, he turned just in time to see that a slender figure—a woman—had slipped by him. She was already on the lowest step, about to fling herself into the water. Instantly he was on the spot, and caught her by the arm. She looked him full in the face—in mute pleading to let her have her way. Imagine his horror—it was the Queen!

“It was shortly after this terrible affair that yonder restaurant was given to my father—it was formerly the grooms’ quarters,—and he and my mother were thus enabled to set up in business. Many people come this way, since his Majesty has generously thrown open the palace grounds to excursionists.”

As Mrs. Dobson hearkened to the little maid’s narrative, her eyes travelled from the row of small-paned upper casements in the gray old walls, as though seeing a pitiful little ghost glide through the garden toward the river. Seven years ago—when the air was filled, as now, with the perfume of myriad roses in their midsummer glory, and the splash of the water against marble steps fell alluringly on the ear!

Then, too, as now, the “Woe! Woe!” of that eternal chorus from the dark river beyond the seas echoed in the ear!

“A little later,” resumed the maid, “when the royal pageant set forth on its return to the city, my mother saw the Queen again. The bright loveliness of her face was gone. Beautiful it must ever be, but it had become a marble mask, out of which looked great glassy eyes. Many a time have I heard my mother say that none who saw Queen Friedricha in those early days could ever forget her, no matter how changed she had become by time or circumstance. I will run to the house and tell my mother that the gracious lady would like to hear about the Queen from one who has herself seen her.”

She had scarcely turned away when Mrs. Dobson, glancing toward the river, gave a startled exclamation. The excursion-boat was in sight.

Leaving the little maid, therefore, to her fruitless errand, we left the table, and hastened through the mazes of the rose garden to a broad alley beyond, that led us to a thickly wooded park, into whose alluring depths we plunged at random. Presently, our fancy was drawn toward a fountain at the end of a leafy avenue, and thither we bent our steps; but as we neared the fountain the splash of waters disappeared, and in its place—by the marvellous art, the necromancy, of German forestry—was a little glade in which stood a gleaming statue on a grassy pedestal. Though we had now left the river and the invading hordes far behind, the need of haste seemed to lie upon us, lest everything undergo a transformation even as we gazed.

“Let us run!” cried my companion, holding out her hand.

So, palm to palm, her soft, clinging fingers about my own, we sped

on and on, like two children, down one inviting opening after another, till we reached what might have been the very heart of the forest, where stood a single immense oak, with wide-spreading roots. Here my companion paused, and, sinking into a hollow between two mammoth roots, looked up at me with laughing face.

"I have n't run like that since I was at home, and used to leave my dear old governess, stumbling and panting far behind. Ah, how good it is to be a child again!" she murmured, as to herself.

I seated myself on the ground near by, and for a space there was silence between us; my companion apparently wrapped in thought, that, judging by her face, was happier than any whose reflection I had hitherto seen there. Some spell of the forest had likewise fallen upon me. All my previous life, all the influences in busy, practical America that had shaped my character, influenced my career, were forgotten, obliterated. I knew nothing, cared nothing, but for the present. Our wild flight through the forest had sent the red blood coursing through my veins, throbbing to my brain. My whole being reeled with the touch of a woman's hand within my own.

I could no longer restrain my speech. I scarce recognized as mine the voice that, thick and stammering, sounded in my ears; nor did I reckon in what wild, incoherent words my passion poured forth.

My companion had started to her feet, her quick breath coming and going, striving vainly for speech in which to stem the torrent of my mad avowal.

"I love you! I love you! I could n't let you go without telling you. Now that I have told you, I can't let you go!"

Blind and dizzy with all the strength of my newly awakened nature, I would have drawn nearer, taken her in my arms, strained her to my heart. But she waved me back, imperiously, royally; and I could not choose but obey. A single sunbeam, gliding through the thick foliage above, fell on her bright hair, which gleamed beneath the transmuting touch as though a crown rested on it!

She stood looking at me like one awakened from a trance. On her face was writ some unfathomable emotion—surely not all indignation, all anger. Yet more than a little word of its meaning I was not privileged to read.

"I did not know—I did not dream—it would come to this," she said, at length, slowly. "My dear boy, don't you see that it can never be? Why, we have known each other only three little days!"

"Three seconds or three centuries, it is all the same to me," I answered, and my own voice was not pleasant in my ears. "I was a beast to offer to touch you just now. I did n't mean to frighten you. You need not be afraid—I won't do it again! Only, I've felt that way about you ever since you came into my office, three days ago."

Yet my love did not date from that meeting; rather, it had had its beginning in some shadowy long ago, and there had never been time or eternity when I had not loved her! I was almost frightened at the tumult within my breast, utterly unlike anything I had ever experienced in all my six and twenty years.

She wrung her hands—the lovely hands that seemed to hold some potent witchery of their own—as though in utter helplessness, and looked at me, not now as though she would stay unwelcome speech, but rather as though seeking pardon for some offense she had unwittingly committed. Look and gesture, though only dimly understood, impelled my answer. Thank God that it was so! That no churlish resentment of mine, then or after, need add one atom to my burden of heavy memories.

“You could not help my caring. How could you prevent any one from loving you? Why, to be in your mere presence is to love! I did not understand at first what it meant,” I added; “but I know now!”

Swift upon that transformation from utter crudity to experience old as the race, deep as unnumbered centuries, came a new insight, an added perception. Was she, in truth, as indifferent as she would seem? Had not her quick breath, when I had spoken with all the strength of a man's first passion, answered my stammered sentences? Even when she had waved me from her, had not her eyes fallen before mine?

She had seated herself again between the wide-spreading roots; her interlaced hands were pressed closely over her breast as she looked up and slowly spoke:

“My dear boy, don't you see how impossible it is? I am—oh, so much older than you! Not in actual years, perhaps, but in the experience that makes a woman old before her time.”

“I shall never care for any other woman as I care for you. It is true I was a boy when first we met, but I'm not a boy any longer!” I blurted out. And then, whereby to prove the truth of my words, I flung myself on the ground before her, and buried my face in the folds of her gown.

Very softly the “slim white wonders of her hands” rested on my hair; her lips almost touched my ear as she whispered:

“It can never be. It hurts me sorely to tell you this. Some day you will meet a woman who is worthy of you—like that sweet little girl at the pension, who would raise her eyes to you if she only dared. I am grateful for what you would offer me. I shall be able to think a little better of myself, all the rest of my life, that I have won the first pure, ardent love of a strong, unspoilt young soul!”

I dared not raise my face. I knew that though her eyes were dry, tears were not a great way off. She went on:

“Don't let me suffer this last untold misery—that your love for me

has been your undoing!" Her voice was steady, as though into it was infused the strength of some new-found resolve, in which love, or at least only its purest form, refined from all dross of the world or of earthly passion, had no part.

"It may be that you stand at the parting of the ways—the 'halt' of which those wise old Greeks made so much. I am afraid—not of you any more, but of myself. I am weak—oh, so weak!" Her voice, clear and firm, vibrating with tenderness, belied the words. "What I resolve to-day, I am unable to carry out on the morrow. I am a woman of shifting moods; even of changing personality. But you are a man, good and clever and learned; one whose 'yea' to-day is the same word to-morrow and next day—and always. You say that you love me. I ask you to prove it, in the one only way, in righteousness, possible to us both. I want to save you from the misery that will come upon you, that will follow you all the days of your life, if you do not heed me; to save you from yourself—more, from that other self—in me—that ere long will again be dominant. That is what I would do—now. Don't question me, dear; only believe me. Don't treat these my words as those of madness. Don't stay under the same roof with me to-night. It were well if you were far from here on the morrow!

"If you will do this one thing, every day, hereafter, I will pray Him to be your Guide; to keep you in all your ways; most of all, to preserve you from the wiles of wicked women. I used to pray to Him for myself, but He would not listen. But surely He will hear me for you, because He will know that all selfishness is indeed out of my prayer!"

But I, understanding not at all the inner meaning of her speech—as, indeed, how could I?—thought only that she would say, in the strongest words at her command, that my love was useless; perhaps that there was some barrier, existing only in a woman's morbid conscientiousness.

"If all the rest of my life, with all of worldly success it may contain, were set in the balance against these little days, I should choose these days!" I said.

She sat very still, between the encircling roots of the great oak—"a sunshine in a shady place." At that moment, so exquisite, so exalted, was her beauty, as almost to seem unreal. Gazing, I could only stand aloof and wonder.

The silence was long in the reckoning that is not of minutes when she looked up and beckoned me to her side.

"I will tell you my story," she said, "and then you will understand why your 'good-night' must also be 'good-by.'"

She paused for a moment, as though to gather strength, then went on steadily:

“What went before does not matter. I was Mrs. Daniel Dobson, and our home life had begun. I saw my husband as he was—a man whose very limbs were so weakened by disease and evil living that they would often fail to support him, and he would fall to the ground, a writhing, screaming mass of ill-looking flesh. He was my tutor in many things that my education had left untouched, till it seemed at times there was little left to learn.

“Mr. Dobson was a man of inherited wealth, large affairs, wide political affiliations. These interests called him frequently from home; at intervals, too, his manner of living compelled him to resort to certain baths or cures. In that way, sometimes I was free from his baleful presence, to take my own course, unrestrained. For all the evil of his own life, he had immense regard for appearances, and wished the woman at the head of his household to do him credit. His political enemies, too, might make capital if his domestic relations showed aught but a fair front to the world. I must be always handsomely dressed, ready to play the part of hostess with grace and dignity over his fine establishment. He placed no limit on my expenditures; had no objection, even, to high stakes at the card table, or any other diversion in which I squandered money, provided only that my amusements were within the limits of conventionality.

“In those days I used to wonder that any one should refer to me as the young—the *young* Mrs. Daniel Dobson! Why, I was older than the oldest old woman—older than the world itself! Every morning, I looked in the mirror for gray hairs”—automatically, she pushed the heavy dark hair from her temples. Scarcely distinguishable from the blue-veined tracery was a tiny, jagged scar. Where, before, had I seen or heard of such a mark? In some half-forgotten tale of a good and well-beloved little princess—

“At first I wanted only to forget,” the sweet, clear tones went on: “the present; the past; most of all, the self I had once been. So, seeking only oblivion, I plunged deeper and ever deeper into dissipation. If I did not quite succeed in forgetting, at least, I no longer cared. By and by, even capacity for suffering seemed calloused, atrophied.

“It was then that the other man came. He never fails to arrive on schedule time—that ‘other man.’ The devil’s calendar is always accurate. I had long ago ceased to believe in love. If, as had sometimes happened, men went from me calling themselves broken-hearted, I knew that in a few days, a week, a month at farthest, the wound would be healed; and they, in turn, would be breaking some other woman’s heart, not tried and tempered and annealed like mine. This man, however, may have probed a little deeper than the others. He urged that I was young and beautiful, and that life still held what he called happi-

ness. He interested me; contrived to make me believe that there was a grain of truth in what he said. In what he held out to me, there was at least the prospect of excitement. My present existence lacked even the spice of misery.

"So I consented to run away with him. My husband made strenuous efforts to induce my return. I heard that for a whole week my absence was concealed from the public—that had always taken an absorbing interest in my every movement. It was given out that I was ill; some one who in a darkened room, with a little jugglery, might pass for me, was put in my bed; daily bulletins of my condition given out. The trick could not be kept up indefinitely, of course—any moment might have seen its exposure; but it served its purpose for a time.

"'Return and be forgiven'! I laughed at his message. Already I had tasted the sweets of freedom. A lost character? No price could be so great as that which I had already paid for misery, out of my uncoined womanhood. The blame of the separation was, of course, thrown upon me. His reputation must be guarded. He would allow me a certain income, provided I never troubled him in any way; never set foot again in Chicago. Most of the time since then I have lived abroad. An unexpected remnant of my father's estate turned up after his death. It was in regard to that that I came to your office a few days ago."

"What became of him—that other man?" I demanded, with a fierceness that I had not felt toward even the wretch she called husband.

"I hardly remember, it was so long ago," she answered, a little hardly. "We did not live together, if that is what you mean. He was killed betimes in an automobile accident."

"But why should this end all between you and me?" I demanded. "Who could blame you for leaving such a man as your husband? By the voice of your womanhood, you should have left him! What is to prevent our being married to-morrow—as soon as the requisite formalities could be accomplished?"

"My husband is still alive," she answered quietly. "There has never been any legal separation; the plea for divorce must come from him. He will never make it, partly because of the scandal it would create; partly because it is his revenge to keep me in an equivocal position."

She spoke no more. Very tired, very white, as one whose strength is utterly spent, she sat with hands folded in her lap. And when I felt that, in very truth, my pleading was of no avail, I held my peace, albeit sullenly.

The chill of approaching sunset was in the air when we took our way out of the forest. The lessened crowd, the cooler air on the water,

had overcome my companion's repugnance to the boat. The portion of the deck allotted to third-class passengers was without roof or awning, and in this freer space we found seats. The boat went on its way. Leafy odors from the hills blew softly on us; strains of music kept us company, dying out from one "garden," to be taken up on a neighboring shore.

And ever the haunting, insistent rattle of the chain-cable!

My companion, leaning against the railing, looked into the water, as though intent upon the wavelets washing against the boat's side. Aught but lovely, under whatever conditions, she could not be; but already there had passed from her face the look it had worn in the forest, a sublimated beauty, as of exaltation too pure and lofty for earth.

The boat reached the city. Most of the passengers had gone ashore, some still lingering in the vicinity of the river. Among these I caught sight of Miss Emmeline, who seemed momentarily inclined to draw back from view; but the next moment, apparently getting the better of the impulse, she saluted us with a little "good fellow" nod, and a few careless words of slangy German. As I responded to the greeting, some one pushed so violently against me as to cause me nearly to lose my balance. It was the Frenchman, whom I now saw to be Miss Emmeline's companion. I promptly responded to his insolence by a thrust that sent him ricocheting in the other direction. He gathered himself up with a muttered imprecation, and presently the twain disappeared in the direction of the boulevard.

Mrs. Dobson and I turned into our quiet street, and paused at the pension door. With averted face, my companion waited.

"Good-night," I would have said; but something held my speech. "Good-by"!—my lips refused the utterance. So in silence we parted, she to enter the house, I to turn back to the streets.

But the boulevard and its amusements offered no distraction to my thoughts. The inference had been irresistible that Mrs. Dobson had spoken out of fear of her own weakness when she bade me go from her, at once and forever! In the end, should not love like mine prevail over a morbid conscientiousness?

Again I set my face toward the pension. As I neared the railway station, the midnight train for Dresden was about to start. The impulse seized me to rush on board—to be in that far city on the morrow!

I stood as in a trance, struggling with the insensate dictate of something outside of myself; staring at the station, cursing my own impotence.

The train had rushed forth—I was straining my ears for the last puff of the departing engine!

Softly swearing, my guardian angel went her way!

Call it what you will—madness, love, the mysterious power that

certain rare natures exercise over all with whom they come in contact, themselves understanding least of all how it is done—from that moment unto the end my eyes were holden, and I saw not the pitfall in my path.

As I again approached the pension, a casement on the front was softly opened and there fell to the ground something white—a small, hard object, of which I promptly possessed myself. It proved a scrap of paper twisted about a pebble. Scarcely was I within the garden gate, hidden from the view of any one in the street, when an unmistakable figure issued from the hotel, to engage in assiduous search for something on the sidewalk before the pension. But in the interval occupied by the Frenchman in going from his room to the hotel door, another had been beforehand!

Reaching my room, I unrolled the paper, which contained a few words in French, in a stiff little handwriting, that I wasted no scruples in reading.

Remember your promise. If you offer him violence again, I will go back on the whole plan, though at the last moment.

The pension flirtation was making rapid progress; from the sidewalk rencontre to tête-à-tête appointments, evening rambles, clandestine correspondence—with a hint of something worse!

I could afford to smile at Miss Emmeline's solicitude on my behalf. That there was cause for mine in her interests, however, was more apparent. I determined to hand the note to the landlady on the morrow, with an emphatic suggestion as to her duty toward inexperienced young girls beneath her roof.

VI.

ON Mrs. Dobson's breakfast tray was a bunch of dew-laden flowers whose significance would be understood.

Karl had likewise arisen early. Evidently taking it for granted that the representative of the United States would wish to call with becoming state upon the monarch of a European country, he had oiled and polished the antique victoria till leather and metal-work shone; while the blazonry on the panels—a pair of American flags, surmounted by an eagle of the most "screaming" description, picked out in fresh paint—was conspicuous enough to satisfy the most blatant patriotism.

Later, when he presented himself at the office door, with the important announcement that "the carriage of the Herr Consul waited," he was evidently, to his own mind, a becoming adjunct to the Consular state. Obviously, the only proper dress for an occasion like the present was a uniform; and a uniform was a uniform, no matter what it might represent, or in whose service it had been worn. His costume,

striking enough for a comic opera, consisted of a belted jacket and short trousers of vivid green, with huge silver knee-buckles; completed by a green Tyrolese hat with a black quill. So convinced was the simple-hearted fellow that he had risen to all the exigencies of the occasion, that the "Herr Consul" had not the heart to object to a turn-out that as it was driven at a breakneck pace along the boulevard—attracting as much attention as Karl evidently desired—gave him the sensation of an alderman in a Labor Day procession in the home city.

Mrs. Dobson was in readiness, my flowers at her belt—a tacit acknowledgment of their silent message. Karl, in his bravery, stiff, erect, on the curb, caught her eye.

"Ah, the service of the American Consulate?" she queried pleasantly.

"The service of the Grand Duchy of Steinmetz, most gracious lady," answered the former forester, with his best flourish.

The girl students, taking an unfeigned interest in the occasion, were out in force, Miss Emmeline, who seemed to have conceived a reverential regard for Mrs. Dobson, smiling at her from the edge of the group. Mrs. Dobson was about to follow Frau Meyer, who had already unobtrusively taken her seat in the carriage, when she paused, hesitated, and, turning to the young girl, said in a voice audible only to her and those nearest:

"Oh, my dear, some day—perhaps no distant day—you and he who is your heart's heart will meet. If these were my last words to you—my legacy—they would be, 'Keep yourself unsullied, by word or look, for that day!'" From the girl's face at that moment, the warning words would not be spoken in vain.

Karl put the horse to his best speed, evidently presuming on the American insignia to give him the right of way through the crowded noonday streets. The private entrance to the royal palace, whence ingress was obtained to the series of strong chambers—three in number—known as the "treasure vaults," was on a quiet side street, at some distance from the Grand Square, where, the circuit of the vaults completed, would be the exit. There was nothing in the appearance of the gloomy gray stone façade with a low archway in the centre, to distinguish its state, except what looked like the lower portion of a heavy barred gate—the ancient portcullis—fixed in the solid masonry of the wall overhead. On either side of the entrance stood a sentinel in the royal uniform, who saluted us with elaborate ceremony. Giving Karl orders to drive around to the Grand Square, and there to await our reappearance, we entered to the right of the archway a small room with heavily barred windows, where we were received with elaborate courtesy by the officer in charge—a person of rank, to judge by his uniform and the deference paid him by several attendant subordinates. Our

permit was examined—a mere formality, we were assured. The officer added that it was usual to wait on such occasions till a certain number of people had assembled; but as he should be reluctant to discommode the Herr Consul and the gracious ladies by delay, the tour of the vaults should begin at once. There were two other gentlemen, who had arrived shortly before, and who, if there was no objection, would be glad to join the Herr Consul's party. I was about to express my willingness to this arrangement, when the two men, who had been standing in the background of the room, came forward.

The words died on my lips, as one of them proved to be the Frenchman whose previous behavior had been so objectionable. The recognition was evidently mutual, followed, on the part of the Frenchman, by a look of surprise. Raising his hat, he said in a rapid aside and with a noteworthy change of manner:

"Monsieur will pardon me that in the crowd and darkness last night, being thus unable to see monsieur distinctly and noting only his excellent German, I mistook his nationality. France does not greatly love her German neighbors, as monsieur conceives; but France is always glad to recognize America as a friend—if monsieur the Consul permits."

He completed his apologies with a low bow, that included Mrs. Dobson and Frau Meyer; the ladies, naturally supposing the act an acknowledgment of their tacitly expressed courtesy, bowed formally, Mrs. Dobson with an air of listlessness that showed how far from her mind was the present scene. The other man, a mere acquaintance of the hour, also bowed his acknowledgments of the "Herr Consul's" complaisance. Objection on my part was thus silenced ere it could be made. To overrule the general acquiescence was difficult—churlish, forced. In any case, the tour of the vaults would not occupy more than half an hour. Though stiffly, I signified assent.

A bell was touched, and another official appeared, who was to be our guide through the vaults. A heavy bunch of keys at his belt—from which he selected one to open a heavy metal door, leading from a large anteroom adjoining the office—was the only visible sign of official caution against nefarious designs on King Johann's hoards.

We were ushered into the first of the treasure vaults.

My eyes, scarcely leaving Mrs. Dobson's face, took scant note of the contents of the apartment. It was easy to see that she could scarcely force herself to even a courteous show of interest. At last her weariness could no longer be restrained.

"Where are the diamonds?" she asked listlessly.

"If madame wishes, by all means let us hasten," suggested the Frenchman, who seemed sedulously eager to offer whatever atonement might be, for his previous rudeness. The other man murmured polite acquiescence.

The next door opened, and shut behind us.

We were in the Diamond Vault. In the electric light, from unseen sources, the great space seemed ablaze with pure white radiance. Riches in their most dazzling, concentrate form were before us, so far transcending all one's ordinary experience of what men call wealth, so exceeding the power of computation, that the mind recoiled before an attempted estimate, as at the distance to the outer stars! The wealth of the centuries was displayed in every conceivable form; miniatures, portraits, sword hilts and scabbards, horses' trappings and mirrors set with diamonds, jewelry, ancient and modern; basins filled with unset stones. Diamonds in cases ranged against the wall; diamonds in standing cabinets; diamonds in caskets; diamonds in great chests, with lids thrown back, displaying tray after tray of flashing contents. Our little party stood silent, motionless, awe-struck, as the guide locked the huge metal door through which we had passed and replaced the keys at his belt.

Well and strongly, curiously and intricately, had his Majesty King Johann safeguarded these his treasures. On three sides of the vault, including the one from which we had entered, had grown, by slow accretions, the modern palace, with its living rooms and offices. The remaining side of the vault was the only one that faced the outer world. Here, just below the lofty ceiling, was a row of small slits—the apertures for the bowmen—that revealed the enormous thickness of the walls of the ancient keep. Nothing short of the week's work of a squad of men with pickaxes, or the use of the most violent explosives, could effect entrance on this the only vulnerable side of the strong room. Well might the slumbers of the royal blackguard be sound, if there was naught to disturb them but the security of his Diamond Vault.

“You can see better so, Herr Consul,” said the guide, holding a small mirror at an angle over the case before me.

I looked—and in the mirror, instead of the resplendent sword-hilt, I saw an upraised arm, a clenched fist about to descend upon my head.

I jumped aside just in time to avoid the threatened blow—and to confront the glaring eyes of the Frenchman. Some sixth sense—so quickly did it all follow—flashed upon me the perception that the man held in his hand a small metal ball, which, had it crashed against my head, had surely been the end of me.

A voice that sounded like Mrs. Dobson's—only that it spoke incomprehensible words—rang in my ears:

“Remember your promise—no murder!”

Like a tiger, the man had sprung upon me, bearing me down. Something soft and wet was pressed against my face; in my nostrils was

a sweet, sickening odor. I was stifled, benumbed; as in a nightmare, I struggled, with ever waning strength, against some invisible, inexorable force.

As at an incalculable distance, I saw a man bending over the prostrate form of the guard, while a stout woman was pressing to his face something that looked like a sponge. In this strange medley of shifting shapes, another woman was darting from one part of the vault to another, breaking open case after case with the knob of her umbrella, seizing their glittering contents, and dropping them into some receptacle beneath her unlifted skirt.

My consciousness had gone from me. At ever increasing speed, I was rushed along the whorls of a vast descending spiral, growing ever narrower and narrower, to some unknown horror in the lower deeps. I was sucked into the vortex, down—and down—and ever down—

I was in the heart of an enchanted forest. Bending over me was a beautiful princess; her lips were pressed to mine, her voice murmuring in my ear.

“Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!” a voice was saying, in endless iteration.

“Who says so?” murmured another voice, that something told me was mine, but, though my lips were moving, the tones were unrecognizable. My eyelids were weighted down as with tons’ burden, and I desisted from the vain effort of raising them.

“Wake up, you young fool! Oh, *Lord!*” began the insistent voice again, and an iron hand shook me by the shoulder.

“Where am I?” I muttered, vaguely resentful at being called back to the sentient world. For a space, I hovered between consciousness and unconsciousness, struggling to cross again the border of an enchanted forest, where soft hands rested on my hair, and a voice like none other murmured in my ear—

But I had returned too far into the world of the senses to find my way back into that of fantasy.

“Drink this!” said an imperative voice—this time in German; and a glass of some biting liquid was pressed to my lips.

All at once I looked about in wide-eyed recognition of my surroundings. I was on the couch in the private office of the Consulate. There were the American rocking-chair, the big porcelain stove; on the walls were the twin draped pictures of the President and the King. Mr. Fosdick was at my side—not fully emerged from the phantasmagoria of dreamland, it excited no wonder that he should be here and at the same time in Switzerland. A man was bending over me, feeling my pulse. Two other men, both in uniform, were in the room; one was seated at the desk, the other standing at the door leading into the

entry. A murmur of voices from the outer room suggested that some kind of a conference was going on within.

A vague perception of lengthening shadows told me that the day was far spent.

"He'll do now, Herr Prefect," said the man bending over me, addressing the personage at the desk; whereupon the latter, pen and note-book in hand, advanced to the couch and began asking all manner of questions concerning the past few days. The drift of them was imperceptible to my still befogged brain; but supposing them, in some way, to be related to my official position, I answered to the best of my ability. Presently, the catechism passed from a personal nature to queries concerning the "woman calling herself Mrs. Dobson"; to which, indignant at the form of address, as well as the indignity of bringing her name, unauthorized, into the present interview, I refused answer. The Prefect and the Consul exchanged glances. It seemed as though the latter was about to relapse into his ejaculatory paroxysm.

"It's as I told you—he's the freshest young kid out of kindergarten. She pulled the wool over his eyes completely!" he exclaimed.

The return of Mr. Fosdick from Switzerland, and the mere presence of so important a functionary as the Prefect of Police, were sufficient indications of some happening far out of the ordinary. More than this realization, my sluggish brain could not grasp.

The Prefect spoke again.

He took up the tale of the past few days, beginning with "the so-called Mrs. Dobson's" coming to Donow—nicely timed to Mr. Fosdick's departure—on information supplied by the *Herald* "Personal," concerning the new Vice-Consul. He related much that I already knew; much that I was surprised another should know; together with what had been read between the lines by official acumen, aided, doubtless, by what was already in the files of the Prefecture. Each apparently spontaneous act of mine dovetailed into a nicely measured intent of another. Seeming accident was shown to be careful forethought. Every move of the plot in its well-ordered development was traced till its climax—the Diamond Vault!

Succinctly, forcefully, the tale was told, and I could not but give ear; yet even then the recital might not have carried conviction but for that insistent image of a woman pouring handful after handful of glittering stones into her pocket. Whatever had occurred, the gravity of the Prefect's manner, the gloom of the Consul's face, hinted at something even more portentous than the stupendous robbery. Whatever fate might betide, naught else would have mattered if that picture—as of a common thief—could have been wiped from the record!

But no word of mine should farther implicate her; and my silence was unbroken.

The two men—German and American—were plainly nonplussed at my refusal to answer. The Prefect looked at his watch; apparently, for some reason, time pressed. At a nod from him, the Consul took the word.

“A bad game has been played in Donow, my lad,” he began gravely. “You can do the lady called Mrs. Dobson no harm by answering our questions. She has no doubt reached Paris by this time—where, by some clever jugglery, her absence has been concealed—and it is unlikely that she will be followed up. It is not your personal character alone that is at stake,” he went on, “but the honor of your country, which was entrusted to your hands when I left this office, five days ago. Remember your oath of office—to support to the best of your ability the interests and honor of the United States of America!” and in his voice was the ring of deep earnestness.

“I will listen,” I answered, and if my own voice was sullen in my ears, the men with whom I had to deal, used as they were to human nature in its every twist and turn, may have understood something of my agony, and were as merciful as in them lay, or as they conceived to be within their line of duty.

There proved little or no difficulty, however, in answering the Prefect's questions, most of which related, indeed, to what had taken place beneath the general gaze of the pension. But when he would ask concerning that day in the forest, with “the woman calling herself Mrs. Dobson”—that formula was adhered to with irritating persistency—again I closed my lips; and, though I lay on the rack, would have said no more. My inquisitors looked dubiously at each other.

“Let him off that part—he's pretty hard hit,” suggested the Consul. “Besides, Miss Emmeline told us all that was necessary—spooning all the afternoon, sitting in a corner on the boat. There is no observer so keen as the woman who has cast her eyes in the same direction,” he added philosophically.

The Prefect signified acquiescence, and, closing his note-book, he and the doctor went into the outer office, whence presently rose the heightened murmur of voices. The sentry was still at the entry door within. Mr. Fosdick remained at my side—moody, thoughtful, waiting—what?

“What happened next?” I asked dully, my mind reverting to the moment at which the Prefect's review of events had closed and I lay unconscious on the floor of the Diamond Vault.

“You and the guard, who was also overcome by chloroform, were discovered by the next party making the rounds, about an hour later,” answered Mr. Fosdick. “The sponges were still on your faces. They had been brought in, in capsules, saturated with chloroform, in the pockets of the two men. The sponge on your face, for some reason,

had been somewhat disarranged, and so your recovery was earlier than that of the guard."

"Were the two Frenchmen confederates?" I queried.

"It looks that way," answered the Consul dryly. "They were not seen together till this morning, and it is yet uncertain who the other man was. Their passports, which of course were duly inspected when they applied for permission to visit the Diamond Vault, were, to all appearances, correct. That part has n't been thoroughly sifted yet; but it is thought, from data already in the hands of the police, that the lady calling herself Mrs. Dobson, who, in her way, is a person of considerable influence in Paris, obtained the papers through some confederate in the Prefecture there. The official stamp is indubitably correct; the signatures are probably forged. Frau Meyer is thought to be an old friend of the lady calling herself Mrs. Dobson. An ineradicable Irish brogue rendered it desirable that she should not talk—hence her simulated deafness."

"What of Karl—that invaluable piece of office furniture?" I could not refrain from adding.

Mr. Fosdick smothered an exclamation.

"It appears improbable that Karl was cast for any part in the original plot. His presence at the Consulate seems to have been merely a lucky accident, that the lady calling herself Mrs. Dobson was quick to recognize and take advantage of. He was waiting, according to orders, in the Grand Square, when the party appeared—minus the obliging Herr Assistant Consul. It was the moment of changing guard, and the usual crowd had assembled. A young fellow caught sight of the lady called Mrs. Dobson, and, in spite of her American get-up, cried out, 'There goes the Queen!' For a breath, it seemed as though the fat was in the fire. Karl seized the youth by the scruff of his neck and shook him soundly, crying, 'I'll teach you to say, "God save the Queen!"' Before the lad could recover his senses, or any one give heed to his words, the party had entered the carriage and were off at top speed for the station, every one giving the American state equipage the right of way. Karl had taken good care that it should be recognized!

"There was an express train that would be over the frontier in an hour; everything, to the minutest detail, had been worked out beforehand. Karl is at present under arrest; but it is doubtful if any direct participation in the affair can be proved against him; though he will probably have to seek service outside of Ring-Stettin. He may find it in Paris," added the Consul dryly.

"For the past few hours," he added, "Donow has been a regular dynamo. The American Consul was wired in Switzerland. An urgent despatch was sent his Majesty in Wiesbaden. Electric communication

has been lively between Donow and Paris; and the cable hard worked from here to Washington and return!"

Not yet having recovered my normal poise, the significance of the Consul's last words escaped me.

"Did they get much?" I asked feebly.

"The biggest haul on record!" groaned Mr. Fosdick. "At broad noonday, under the very eyes of the guard! Oh, *Lord!*"

"The lady calling herself Mrs. Dobson knew the most valuable stones, and where they were placed in the vault," he continued, when his feelings would allow him speech. "The gems are not registered, as are most of the famous diamonds of the modern world—their safeguarding being considered so absolute—so, by breaking them up and disposing of them singly or in small lots, it won't be difficult to find a market for the whole of the loot. If this is a type of the new school of diplomacy, the Lord preserve us from a general European war," concluded Mr. Fosdick scathingly.

It was a feeble voice that I raised in my own defense.

"She showed me the statement—for a large amount—of the treasurer of a Chicago bank, on its own paper," I said.

"Partly by way of introduction, and partly to impress you with her financial security. What was to prevent a skilful Paris engraver from getting up a nice little bill-head to suit the occasion? It seems it did not occur to you to inquire of her alleged bankers—or their correspondents in Donow—concerning this clever lady called Mrs. Dobson!" snorted the Consul.

"At our first interview, she seemed so hurt at a simple question——" I began, cut short by the grim utterance:

"Well, you have been hurt a good sight worse!"

"No risk seemed involved in drawing up a simple legal document," I urged, combating a growing suspicion that I had not distinguished myself in the recent exercise of "plenipotentiary" powers.

"Only a little matter of five million dollars," retorted Mr. Fosdick.

"She referred to your former partner, Eliphalet J. Handy, as a family friend," I continued, in a more confident tone, interrupted again by the Consul's rasping voice:

"I will own that that name was the most staggering part of the whole business. It nearly convinced me, and, as a general thing, I require considerable evidence that the person addressing me is not lying. I don't regard the habit as proof of the utter depravity of human nature," continued the Consul easily; "it is merely that it is more natural to most people to lie than to speak the truth; and vastly preferable. But there was something so real, so convincing, about 'Eliphalet J. Handy' that I came near believing in him myself. The name was the master-stroke of the whole plot; the keystone of the

arch, the evidence of true creative genius on the part of the lady calling herself Mrs. Dobson. The only flaw in that supreme creation was that my partner's name happened to be James W. Mason!"

"Why do you speak of her in that way?" I inquired irritably. "If her name was not Mrs. Dobson, what was it?"

"Good Lord! Have n't you caught on yet?" demanded the Consul, in amazement. "You are n't as much of a Yankee as I took you to be, from your admirable Boston accent," he interpolated witheringly. "The one slip in the whole affair was when the note intended for the Frenchman fell into your hands instead; and even then the identity of the writer was reached too late to do any harm."

"It was Miss Emmeline's handwriting," I said obtusely.

"Could n't you have seen, with half an eye, that the note, though worded in French, was unmistakably in the stiff, pointed German script?" returned the Consul impatiently. "At least, she had the decency to insist that no murder be done."

"Whose handwriting was it?" I queried.

"The Queen's," answered the Consul shortly.

"What Queen?" I inquired blankly.

Mr. Fosdick restrained himself with an evident effort.

"Queen Friedricha, sometime consort of his Majesty, King Johann V. of Ring-Stettin; who for some years past, ever since she eloped with an officer of the court here—she lived with him only a short time—has been amusing herself in Paris, in the way much in vogue in that pleasant city. The big Frenchman was her latest lover, a man of rank, desperately in debt—chiefly through his devotion to her. There was probably some sort of a signal arranged between the two chief confederates, to the effect that all was going well. They must not be seen together for an instant. The hotel people had noticed a light displayed regularly every night at an upper casement of the pension, but supposed it one of the American girls carrying on a not infrequent flirtation with somebody across the way. The man seemed, indeed, to be indulging in a little affair with Miss Emmeline; but it was merely a side issue, incited chiefly by the girl herself. I fancy this experience may cure her of encouraging the attentions of foreigners. She is at present under 'chamber arrest,' but is chiefly concerned for you, crying her pretty eyes out in archaic grief that you are to be immured in a dungeon or beheaded. Of course the important part of the game was for you to fall in love with the lady called Mrs. Dobson, and be the cat's-paw in her nice little scheme; and dead easy game you proved. But it seems the Frenchman thought there was rather too much realism infused into the stage business; hence his indiscreet ebullition of jealousy—only it was n't concerned with Miss Emmeline, as you so astutely supposed."

"She was always so modest, so retiring. I had to exert all my diplomacy" (the Consul groaned ostentatiously) "to induce her to remain a few days in Donow," I uttered feebly.

Even yet the tale could not be made real to me! Perhaps I was still struggling in some terrible nightmare, presently to awake to another golden day.

"Did you think a lady of her sort would throw herself into your arms, like Miss Emmeline and her sidewalk flame; or rush into the office, exclaiming, à la Artemas Ward, 'You air my affinity'?" retorted Mr. Fosdick. "An accomplished courtesan——"

"*Courtesan!*"—the word fell like molten lead upon my brain. The tale was made real to me, indeed!

I turned my face to the wall and was silent.

The Consul laid a not unkindly hand upon my shoulder.

"Forget it, lad," he said. "That is all there is left you to do. It has been an ugly episode, but it will leave no stain upon your character. Good care will be taken, on this side the water, that the affair does not leak out; and I am instructed to inform you that your silence will be considered the equivalent of the gracious forbearance of his Majesty in refraining from bringing criminal prosecution against you, as concerned in the recent conspiracy in his domain against its peace and property. King Johann frothed at the mouth when he heard of the robbery of the Diamond Vault! A faint hope is entertained that he may not recover. If he does, red rubber will go up—and God help those wretched blacks on the Congo!

"I will suggest, ex-officio," he concluded, "that you look up Miss Emmeline when she gets home—which is likely to be soon. Sweet, pretty girl, lots of money, and dead gone on you!"

"What I may do in the future——" I began with dignity.

"In the very near future," interrupted the Consul—"so near that it might as well be called the present—you will bid us a fond farewell. Mr. Robert Audney, of Boston, recently appointed Assistant Consul at Donow, has been certified *persona non grata* to the Secretary of State at Washington; which, being interpreted, is, 'Pack up your things and get out!'"

There was a sudden cessation of voices, the scraping of chairs against the floor, as of some conference ended, in the adjoining room; simultaneously there was a knock at the entry door without.

"The carriage of the Herr Assistant Consul waits," said the sentry.

"Your train goes in ten minutes—connects at Hamburg with the next steamer for New York; you'll find your luggage aboard. Great people, these Germans; when they get a move on they beat Chicago," said the Consul briskly. "Good-by, lad. Your diplomatic career, if brief, has been eventful. Better luck in your next line of business!"

Were they shapes of words, conjured by drugged sleep—that hover about my last flickering consciousness in the Diamond Vault; or breath of warm human lips upon my own?

Was it all “stage business” and I the “easy game”; or, in the enchanted forest, mine the coming that broke the spell of the royal monster, when, for the hour, Queen Friedricha was all that little Duchess Frieda, good and well-beloved, might have been?

Were they fantasy, were they real? Those words will never cease to ring in my brain. In the hope of hearing them once more, in very truth, soul to soul, lies all my thought of Heaven!

“Oh, love, love! My only love!”



AGAINST THE GATE OF LIFE

(To Helen Keller)

BY FLORENCE EARLE COATES

AS mute against the gate of life you sit,
 Longing to open it,
 Full oft you must behold, in thought, a maid
 With banner white, whose lilies do not fade,
 And armor glory lit.

Across the years, darkling, you still must see,
 In the hush of memory,
 Her whom no wrong of Fate could make afraid—
 Of all the maidens of the world, *The Maid!*—
 In her brave purity.

For she, like you, was singly set apart,
 O high and lonely heart!—
 And hearkened Voices, silent save to her,
 And looked on visions she might not transfer
 By any loving art,—

Knew the dread chill of isolation, when
 Life darkened to her ken;
 Yet could not know, as round her closed the night,
 How radiant and far would shine her light,—
 A miracle to men!

THE WILLOW GARLAND

By Olivia Howard Dunbar

WE were having one of our intolerable weekly bridge-parties on the day that Daniel Mellick died. It was the last one of the season; but that year the season had been unmercifully prolonged into the month of soft-colored atmospheres and sweet earth-scents and whimsical impulses. The disturbing, rebellious notions that such an afternoon suggests fluttered quite wildly in my head as I strained my sleek, obedient hair within its geometrical arrangement of combs and hooked about my unhappy throat the high, thick collar of my second-best gown. Nevertheless, I meekly started out to walk through the sleepy spring haze to Emily Barringer's, who always kept her windows closed until June, and who was sure to interrupt the long, stuffy card-session by an even more oppressive interval of heavy chocolate and rich cake. . . . Of course I see now that I might have escaped it all; but it is significant that this simple reflection did not occur to me as long as I lived in Eastwell. For we never questioned anything—the women of our virtuous suburban group. There was not a self-respecting rebel among us. We were the miserable thralls of our own meticulous tyranny.

Henrietta Mellick seemed to feel the burden of the spring day even more than I. That is, I played as well as usual, and Henrietta did n't. It struck me that the excessively ladylike restraint of the other women's expressions—for none of them could bear to have an absent-minded partner—would have driven Henrietta mad, had she been other than what she was—sweet, light, passive, and utterly unreflecting. She had always a pale and shadowy appearance, and I don't remember that she looked at all different after she got the telephone message, rather late in the afternoon, about her husband's accident; or that she displayed any emotion.

We took Henrietta home in somebody's motor, and an hour later Dan Mellick died. After that, we scarcely left her alone a moment. I don't know whether our attentions meant anything to her; at all events, she did not repel us. But if the devotion of the Eastwell women, in the trying days that followed, did not touch Henrietta, it did, I confess, touch me. Not that their consideration for the widow was of an

intrusively personal character. No one in Eastwell but myself was on an intimate footing with Henrietta; she had always been so reticent, so temperamentally intangible. And I am sure that her friends were far from making any attempt to gauge her sorrow. They catalogued widowhood as—widowhood. You could n't have aroused in them the least flicker of interest by speculating as to whether Henrietta had loved her husband, although, considering the odd duality of Dan Mellick's character, this might have been a fairly stimulating theme. But they were at a stagnant phase where this ostensibly vital point had ceased to interest them. Comfortably and wholesomely domesticated as they were, they had almost incredibly forgotten the finer intensities.

But it had been quite different with Henrietta. People had liked that ruddy, expansive, benevolent exterior of Dan Mellick's. By Eastwell's ingenious appraisers of character and conduct, he had always been rated rather high. Even I could n't always quite manage to dislike him, although I knew he had been abominably unkind to Henrietta, and that she had never had the force to rebel; or, rather, that she was of that fine and gentle texture to which self-assertion is an impossible violence. It was through no garrulous confidence of the poor woman herself that I had learned that with all her passion for animals, she had never even been allowed a solitary kitten. Bit by bit, too, I had become aware that she could make no plans for her boy's education or other advantage for him that were not malevolently vetoed. And there were other, more distressingly sordid difficulties. Yet, thwarted and bullied as she had always been, I had at times seen Henrietta display a tenderness toward her husband. The contradictions of women are very odd.

I was fairly sure, however, that she had shed no tears for her ungentle lord. And if, on the contrary, she seemed rather more serene than usual, I discovered, a week after her husband's death, what seemed under the circumstances an entirely adequate reason for her feeling of relief. After her long, unnecessary starvation, there was to be freedom for them both, herself and Ned—I had it from Henrietta's own eager lips. There was money that she had not known about, that she never would have known about if—— Henrietta did not finish the sentence. Ned could go to college now. She had already planned to send him to a preparatory school in the fall. And in a week she herself was going away for a short rest—to Bermuda—and she would take the boy with her, for he had not been looking well. At that period, I was still of Eastwell and under the dominion of its unspoken laws. Honestly glad though I was of her good fortune, Henrietta's casual announcements did affect me with a certain chill. I knew very well how her promptly skipping away to Bermuda would be regarded. And though I of all people best knew that she had no reason to mourn

Dan Mellick, I still was n't sure that she ought not more carefully to simulate bereavement. But her lightness and resiliency were such that in all these years Dan Mellick had not crushed her. The social code of Eastwell had, it is true, compelled her facile obedience; but never for a moment had it tamed and subdued her as I was subdued and tamed!

I preferred not to be the first to speak of the widow's excursion, but I was shortly to find that she had observed no reticence in regard to it. It was only the next day that Laura Olmstead telephoned me to ask the address of a shirtwaist-maker that I happened to know she habitually employed. Then, circuitously but unswervingly, she arrived at Henrietta.

"Such a pity that she's ill," Laura cooed with compassion.

"I think it's only that she's very tired," I indiscreetly corrected.

"But she's going to *Bermuda!*"

"I think it's so nice for her," I rather feebly faltered.

"Oh, yes, of course. It's lovely that she's able to go—so soon!"

If it was true that the popular sympathy for her was already weakened by the mere knowledge of her altogether innocent flight, I am not sure that Henrietta knew it. Certainly, she would not have cared. On the day that she had planned, she put on her expensive and extremely becoming crêpe and patted her Ned quite gaily on the shoulder, and the two started off. I did wonder how a woman feels when her very first extravagance in dress is obliged to take the form of a perfunctory symbol of mourning; but Henrietta could n't have told me. She had never had a morbid thought in her life.

Henrietta was n't back for a month, and by that time those of us who were not already fled for the summer were engaged in our annual desperate hostilities with the moth and the mosquito. And that meant that, plunging into these practical matters with our usual intensity, there was for the time being no leisure on anybody's part to study Henrietta or to gossip about her. But early the next fall we were again in Eastwell; the curtains up, the rugs down, and the children outfitted. Henrietta and her boy had spent the summer in Gloucester. Then she had entered him at a Massachusetts school, and now she was at home again. I don't know what magic Henrietta wrought upon it, but the old Dan Mellick place did acquire an air of sprightliness that autumn that it had never worn before. But that was n't all. . . . If the widow perceptibly alienated Eastwell by such innocent self-indulgences as laying out new flower-gardens, and becoming the owner of five cats and a puppy, it may perhaps be imagined how public opinion was divorced from leniency on the occurrence of a far more significant phenomenon. For on several successive Sunday afternoons, in broad daylight, there had been seen to come out from New York and call on

Henrietta, a man. . . . And we knew, of course, that he came, not in the way that men came to our own houses, to talk business or politics with our husbands, or to amuse themselves with our children, but to see and talk with Henrietta, because she was a woman, and a lovely one.

It was about this time that Emily Barringer made up the bridge club for the winter, as usual, but nothing was said about Henrietta's belonging. I remember that in this connection I inordinately envied her her ostracism. There was no sign, it is true, that she herself was aware of it. And it was evident that she was not bored or lonely. Indeed, it was n't long after that a fresh bit of news was primly nibbled by the Eastwell women. Mrs. Mellick, some one had learned, had at various times received a second masculine visitor. When Henrietta had mentioned to me these summer acquaintances of hers, it had been in such vague, childish phrases that I had attached no importance to her confidences. Nor, when I had known that her new friends came out to see her, had it occurred to me that it was at all sensational for her to receive a man at tea in the afternoon. . . . Later on, in spite of all the stupid pother that was made about it, I concluded that nobody else really thought so either. The point was, of course, that she had effortlessly seized, and was now lightly tossing and balancing before the other women's eyes, a possession that they had long ago relinquished, and that now (unconsciously, I am sure,) they had found that they passionately valued.

For, you see, we were not old women. Our settled lives, filled with dense practical details, with seamstresses and house-cleaning and church committees and Sunday midday dinners, had given us the air of seeming older than we were. Indeed, had a single one of us dared rebelliously to revert to youth, the arrogant usurpation of our children, who were at the high-school age, and radiant and shrill with egotism, would have checked and overmastered us. As for our husbands, dear souls, they were merely husbands. So there was no help for us; and we had long soberly maintained the middle-aged point of view.

It must have been about the first of November that Rhoda Leffingwell persuaded me to go with her to a clairvoyant. Afterward, I was almost hysterically glad that I had gone. I was told that we were to go to New York to live, which was enough to make me absurdly happy. After learning this, I was too impatient to listen to anything else, so my turn was soon over, and I waited outside for Rhoda. But her face, when she came out—indeed, her whole manner that day—was one of the strangest phenomena that the whole bewitched winter brought forth. The clairvoyant had described to her the matchless perfections of her second husband. How a woman could be devoted to Bert Leffingwell and yet deliriously excited by a forecast of his successor, I am still unable to explain. But it may have been that the suggestion served

merely to revive poor Rhoda's interest in herself. It was so long since she had thought of herself in any romantic connection. And then it made more tolerable, perhaps, the disturbing spectacle of Henrietta and her easy conquests. For Henrietta, innocent child, was notoriously at the bottom of all that season's madness.

Innocent? But it is impossible to picture such perfect innocence as Henrietta's. In talking with me, her references to her increasingly persistent visitors were of the most casual and unboastful character; but it is true that, after all, Henrietta had never been known to say anything of the slightest significance. She was one of those women who move and smile and perform what is expected of them in so agreeable and harmonious a fashion that you are glad to relieve them of any burden of speech or thought. Her life was a kind of pantomime—reasonable, decorous, beautiful. It amused me often to observe that an influence so agitating as she had become to her late companions should have such peaceful occupations. For she was always poring over seed-catalogues, or knitting a sweater for her boy, or, with a languid, off-hand expertness, constructing pleasant little cakes. It was really a singular experience to pass from her smiling calm to the almost savage nervousness that the other women of the town now allowed themselves almost openly to betray. I used to think about it a great deal.

Somebody brought home one day the news that Henrietta had been seen lunching at Sherry's with one of her admirers. The rest of us did not lunch at Sherry's except with each other, which was an entirely different matter. Somebody else declared, though I doubt if this was true, that a certain motor always met her at the ferry and took her about on her little shopping excursions. Of course nobody ever suggested that Henrietta did anything in the least indiscreet, but that only too patent respectability of hers made her graceful and leisurely freedom a far more embittering spectacle than if she could merely have been dismissed from consideration as an improper character.

But if Henrietta Mellick could n't easily be emulated, other outlets had to be found for the growing discontent. One by one, on a variety of ingenious pretexts, the women began to drop out of the bridge club. Their real reason, of course, was simply that they had suddenly found it unbearably dull. I wondered whether I was alone in realizing the undercurrent of madness below our tame and proper life—and in dreading its dangerous strength. I had indeed begun to feel desperately apprehensive as to the sinister ways in which it might manifest itself, for I knew that its expressions might not always be as harmless as in the case of May Babcock, who was stout and a little high-colored, and who appeared one day in a black picture hat with white plumes, a distinctly theatrical affair, which she wore in to the opera in the afternoon with a black velvet dress cut with a train. She came out on the six-ten

express, and in the evening helped the children with their lessons as usual, so it did not seem to me that she got the utmost satisfaction from her uncharacteristic costume.

How far things had really gone wrong with us in Eastwell was proved beyond all doubt at the January meeting of our Woman's Club. A lecturer of dry, old-fashioned flavor, who had mysteriously been scheduled to speak on divorce, a topic until very recently taboo among us, stood up to declare that the present legal privileges were abused; that there was grave danger to the Home unless immediate restriction should be imposed. Ordinarily this attitude would have pleased Eastwell immensely, completely in accord as it was with our habit and tradition; but on this occasion we were out of tune. As I remember it, the interruptions were so abrupt and violent that the orator did not get half through his argument, and there were pages of statistics that he was not even suffered to unfold. No one could have listened that day to the matrons of Eastwell arguing, as they passionately did, for a briefer and frailer marriage bond, without believing the good souls to be the victims of unmentionable wrongs. People did n't feel so strongly on such a subject without personal bias; and what could be the personal bias of these inflexibly virtuous wives and mothers, securely placed and cared for as they appeared to be? Why, unless from monstrous provocation, should they insanely favor demolishing the very institution that cherished and exalted them? The gentle elderly man who did n't succeed in lecturing on divorce gained a look of horrified curiosity; and I know that he must have gone away with a new and poignant view of the obscurely tragic sufferings of women.

My own nerves quite surrendered that afternoon to the cumulative strain, and I came away from the club meeting with the feeling that I must really talk to some one. The thing was getting too portentous. So that night, as delicately and remotely as I could, I brought the matter to Charles's attention. Of course I should have known better than to do so. There are so many things that one should be wiser than to discuss with a husband. I laughed excessively, as I led up to it, so that he would n't fail to perceive that my narrative was purely humorous, and it was with positive hilarity that I suggested that Henrietta Mellick's friends were ridiculously jealous of her freedom. "What ghouls women are!" Charles remarked indifferently, as I paused for encouragement—and returned to his *Evening Post*. As nobody wishes to be held responsible for the hypothetical crimes of an entire sex, I naturally did not mention the matter again.

Meanwhile, upon the other husbands of Eastwell no such enlightenment was forced. They caught their trains morning and evening, and ate hearty dinners at night, and read the evening papers with their feet at a luxurious elevation, and in all ways pursued their amiable

and uninteresting husbandly habits with never a suspicion of the violence that was seething, of the odd unnatural fever that was epidemic in their homes. They all held the comfortable belief that they represented the universe to their wives, as indeed, until recently, most of them had actually done; and as long as business matters went well, they were perfectly reconciled to the approach of elderliness. They even felt a tribal pride in watching their sons prepare to supersede them, and, unlike their wives, they had no anticipatory horror of the arm-chair and the chimney-corner, the tottering seventh age. Indeed, it was a conversation that I chanced to have with one of this simple-hearted and rather touching sex that led me to take my decisive action.

Tom Olmstead shared my seat one afternoon on the train out from New York. With some elation, he told me that he was going West on an important business trip, and that he should probably be away six months. I tried to be congratulatory in regard to his implied good fortune, but with only moderate success. Laura Olmstead had by no means lost her rather conspicuous good looks, and there had always been a flighty strain in her. If she were left alone for half a year, to what undreamed extent might not the prevalent mania seize and sway her? I did not suppose she would forget Tom, or even care less for him, if he went away; but might not she acquire a dangerous illusion of freedom, might she not even try to rival Henrietta's little triumphs? All that night, absurd as the thing was, I lay awake and thought about it. One could not be sure that these strange surface follies would not penetrate a little deeper. What should I do? I surely could not warn the Olmstead family. The root of the matter must be reached. And Henrietta was the root. The next morning, therefore, with a righteous sense of being the guardian of homes, I marched down to Henrietta's.

I found her alone and irreproachably engaged in sewing on a white summer frock. It was always a joy to me to watch Henrietta's delicate handling of her needle, to glimpse her rigidly microscopic stitches. She looked much younger and prettier than a middle-aged widow, according to the Eastwell standard, had any right to look, and I made up my mind to tell her so. It was time Henrietta had some notion of the drift of things.

"My dear," I began, flushing uncomfortably and sitting straight in my chair, "I've come partly for your sake and partly for the others'—but the truth is that this really can't go on."

"Of course not," she assented, with baffling amiability. "It is not going to."

"But, Henrietta, you don't know what I'm talking about," I stumbled. It was so hard to say anything direct and personal to another Eastwell woman, even when one knew her well and loved her. "I don't need to pay you compliments. You know you're good and

charming. You must know it. But could I make you understand that you're a little too much so?—that there's something about you, this last year, that does n't seem to agree with the other women here? I'm putting it very mildly. You're so thoroughly nice, Henrietta, but nevertheless you—you really are a bad influence!"

"It's so foolish of them, is n't it?" she agreed calmly. I looked at her smooth, sweet, unthinking face, watched her almost Orientally gentle ways. . . . It could n't be that the childlike Henrietta *knew*?

"The situation is," I went on, considerably dismayed, "that you've dropped an unfortunate spark among our poor friends. They've not been nice to you, I know, but it's because they've been beside themselves. It's getting serious with them; and it will get more serious as long as you stay in Eastwell. Henrietta, I know of course that these men who come to see you are in love with you. Has it ever occurred to you that it might be a pleasant thing to marry one of them and go away?"

I turned my head and waited. In whatever fashion Henrietta might resent the liberty I had dared to take, I should feel that I had deserved it.

But she did not change her tone. She did not even lay aside her needle. "It's very foolish of them," she repeated. "But I was afraid you would think me foolish too"—she smiled—"so I had n't told you. I am to be married, and I am going into town to live. We have a house in Sixty-fourth Street. I have sold this place. Is that—will that—do?" She submitted her program with the most engaging docility. It was not at all obscure why people fell in love with her.

"Do? Why, Henrietta, it is perfect—if he deserves you! But—when?"

She let her sewing fall to the floor and walked over to the window. It was the first sign of not being completely at her ease that I had ever seen her show. "Next week," she confessed, in a somewhat fainter voice.

"It's the most magnanimous thing a woman ever did," I assured her. "Though you'll never know how hard it's been for them—the sight of you and your suitors. But this will make everything smooth again. Dear Henrietta, you deserve to be very happy!"

I had promised my reticent friend that no preliminary hint should emanate from me. But on the day after the marriage, when the bride was safely out of sight, it was with no little satisfaction that I widely spread the news of it. Eastwell received the intelligence precisely as I had foreseen. The thorn, by that deft operation, being successfully removed from the suffering sisterly flesh, the wound began immediately

to heal. Henrietta was fervently congratulated and received wedding presents of striking sumptuousness. To the vision of the wives of Eastwell, she was now again safely immured in a cage identical with their own. It was n't a month before they were contentedly playing bridge again, and I am told that they always speak of Henrietta with marked affection.



THE FABLE OF THE GOLDEN PLOUGH

By Clifton B. Dowd

THERE was once a Benevolent Fairy who was accustomed to doing Good Deeds in Whimsical Ways. One day she was flying across the country to attend a meeting of the A. O. B. F., when she noticed a Farmer laboring in the Fields. His horse was Attenuated and Decrepid, and his plough was Heavy and Old-Fashioned. Often he would pause and wipe the sweat from his brow. Plainly he was having a Hard Time.

The Benevolent Fairy watched him a moment and observed his Haggard Look and his general air of Misery. Suddenly an Idea came to her—to make this man Rich, so that he would no longer have to delve and struggle to eke out a Bare Living. So she swooped down and touched the plough with her wand—she was of course invisible—and instantly it was changed to Solid Gold. Then, with an amused but kindly backward glance, the Benevolent Fairy went on her way.

A year later, remembering the occurrence, she flew over to see how the Farmer was enjoying his Good Fortune. She found him in the Fields, ploughing laboriously, and, if anything, he and his surroundings looked Meaner and More Miserable than they had before. Much surprised, the Fairy flew closer, just in time to hear him murmur:

“I wish this ding-busted plough warn't so heavy!”

The Benevolent Fairy eyed him Pityingly—then she once more touched the plough with her wand, and it again became a thing of wood and iron. Then she flew away, and the Farmer resumed his Toil.

After all, are there not some folk who would die of thirst adrift on a river?

THE MOTHER

By Caroline Wood Morrison

“ I ’LOW there never has and never will come a Christmas that a woman can’t make out to find somep’n for her child if Sandy Claws don’t git around! My mammy had ten children, and we was pore as Job’s turkey, but she always had a play-pretty for the baby-children a’ Christmas eve!”

The bare interior of the lonely cabin, where the man lay helpless with a broken leg, and a sick child slept on a pallet before the fire, offered little promise of cheer. The woman went to the two-paned window. Yesterday’s fierce rain had beaten down the cattle’s spare fodder, and trampled all the trails with silver feet; and then, while yet the wood dripped, a sudden freeze had prisoned every leaf in a grip of crystal.

“ Got your come-up-withs this time, mammy,” Berry Kinslow made grim jest. “ I ’d like to see the man, let alone the womern, ’at could rob this here spot of ary pretty for the season. And this cabin ’s too far back in the mount’ns for Sandy Claws to find.”

The woman remained at the window. The sun was westering cloudily behind a forest sheeted in frozen mist, melting the violet-tinted ravine shadow with lights of emerald and gold. Glare ice spread from the very door to the trees that swayed like huge silver plumes against the paler sky. The yard grass was a fleece, the weeds by the garden fence a cloud out of which burrs and keekies opened like flowers of a strange moon-world.

“ I don’t know,” said Martha Kinslow. “ You wait.”

She moved the sleeping child to where the man could reach the little hot lips with a cup of water; she put a new log on the fire, and set half a dozen potatoes to boil. Then, winding a square of homespun about her head and throat, she stepped out into the white and silent day. Kinslow’s voice called her back. His expression of patient discouragement had changed. He was black with rage as his mouth twisted stiffly on the words:

“ I ’low you ’re agoing to borry—from Peters!”

Her cheeks reddened. “ Peters has done moved off the mount’ns. The men down to the settlement warned him arter he broke your leg—and you know it!”

“That thar’s yore story!”

Peters was a vagrant hunter whose brief sojourn near them had worked ill to the Kinslows, Peters not deftly adapting himself to mountain customs, refusing to lend powder or axe; and carrying firewood, splitting it, too, for Martha! When the trouble cleared, Peters was warned off the mountain, and Berry Kinslow was tied down with a broken leg.

As she stepped back from the frosty touch of the outdoors, Martha’s smouldering resentment suddenly blazed up.

“Berry,” she said, coming in the cabin and standing with her back against the closed door, “we-uns has got to settle this right yere and now. I can’t go on living with ary man who pesters my life out with suspicions fer no reason on earth but jest to be a-doing!”

Her black eyes shone under the drooping homespun; her mouth was a keen, scarlet line. She was, or might have been in softer nourishing, a pretty woman. Kinslow had not, hitherto, wronged his wife in thought, all the murky greenness of his mind having dripped its verjuice on the banished hunter; but desolation, destitution, the waste of snow, the silence, the gray hours upon hours, had eaten into his sanity. His tongue lashed out almost without his foreknowledge.

“Then you can go to the Settlement,” raved the fool in his anger. “Go, ——— you!”

She stood a moment looking into his sullen, unshaven face. Her good name, the very life of her child, made ill by the resultant privations, had been threatened by her husband’s unreasonable rage and jealousy. Yet, because he suffered, she had ministered unto him. But he was mending fast; sympathy no longer ruled her thoughts. When she spoke her voice was ominously low and even.

“I’ll do it, Berry Kinslow. They want help over to the ho-tel. Hit’s better ’n starvin’ here!”

“Mebbe you’ll find that thar big gazooks!” he growled insultingly.

“I mought go—to him!” she flashed, stung to an echoing madness.

“And leave the boy?”—his white heat cooling as he realized what he had done.

“Joe’s folks’ll take better keer of him nor we-uns have,” she sneered. “They’ll have a doctor.” She laid her hand on the knob.

“Come back!” To enforce the command he reached for the old gun in the corner, but his nervous finger-tips only grazed and pushed aside the cold metal.

Martha Kinslow laughed aloud.

“You’ve gone too far, Berry Kinslow. Take a good look at me, fer hit’s the last you’ll get! I did n’t mean to go at fust, but I mean it now!”

The door closed as she ended her words in a kind of animal scream. He called after her, but his voice failed to carry where, her head down, she hurried across the brittle earth.

Her shadow haunted her with fleeting shapes as grotesque and as tragic as the pain of her own heart. "I won't look at hit," she resolved, and turned into another trail so as to face the sun.

The cold was not severe, but keen with damp; the least breath of wind was like the passing of a malignant spirit, but for the most part the trees and underbrush stood motionless and spectral in their wrappings of frosted lace. The ghostly beauty of this cold fairy-work was indescribable—a marvel of shadowy softness and eerie charm. Over all hung the silence of the mountain winter. Not a bird, not a rabbit, was to be seen; every spark of woodland life was hidden, somewhere, under the impish architecture of the sleet, or fairy-veiled in the frosty velvet mist woven among the trees.

The half-clad woman struggled on. Now and then she slipped. Her hands bled from clutching at ice-bound trunks. Rocks and logs were varnished with thin ice, and once, falling among them, she went near to breaking her knees.

Now she could see nothing of the cabin except the blue smoke rising from its hearth. A few steps more, and she came upon a thing of beauty vivid as a flame—a little holly tree, its scarlet berries and rich, dark leaves encased in thick, translucent ice. Her imagination pictured the child stretching his hands for the "play-pretty" as she held it between the hearth-light and the yellow splendor of the western window. *As she held it!*

The child and Christmas eve! Her righteous anger melted away. Berry was not himself, was irritable from discouragement and confinement in the house. And it had been the man Peters who bought the corn whiskey that precipitated the fight!

She stood, hesitating, the bright holly in its crystal shroud speaking to her heart.

Would Berry remember about the turpentine and the red flannel? Men sleep soundly, and the night would be cold. If the baby waked and no one heard his whimpering cry—and there would be other nights——

To-morrow Berry's people were due to make their annual holiday visit, laden with food-stuffs and good cheer. What would they find when they came driving through the cold, hailing a desolate cabin?

It must not be desolate! Her sudden anger passed as swiftly as it had overtaken her. She found herself wondering if the fire had died down, if the potatoes were scorched. With a treasure of red-beaded green in her numbed hands, Martha, her patient, all-enduring self once more, advanced cautiously on her homeward way.

A wind began to stir; peculiar, creaking voices ran through the frozen wood. The mother, both hands clasped about the riven branch, glanced up. She was thinking, in her changed mood, how like the New Jerusalem was this one builded by the sun-gold over arches of oak and hemlock spires, when a blow as of angered angels smote her down. A tree above the path, weighted with icy chrysolite and jasper, cast down an overburdened limb. On the white earth her dark figure lay, the holly-branch clasped in motionless hands; and the limb, having struck, swerved and lay apart, sunk in its own tragedy.

Berry Kinslow managed to reach and pour a gourd of water on the scorching potatoes. He noticed that the baby slept with the peacefulness of convalescence. Not for a moment did he seriously believe that his wife would leave him. His dull brain did not sense the very real danger of her doing so.

The yellow glow changed to a crimson menace; a shadow like a presence stole across the puncheon floor.

"'Pears to me, mammy's gone a powerful long while," Berry said. He fished out a potato and peeled it awkwardly with his calloused fingers. "Women sure do lack for sense somewheres. Mammy ought to 'a' been here by now"—trying to choke a sudden fear.

The red faded slowly from the little window; only the white world, with its wholesale storage of light, contradicted the insistence of darkness. Then with a rush of glory the full moon leaped above the gelid glitter. Its light flowed like running water over the warm sleep of the child.

Kinslow rose painfully from the bed.

"Some'n must have happened to Martha," he said aloud. Instinct told him that no rage could keep her so long from the child, "and it puny."

He crawled to the door and pulled it open. The creak and moan of the straining forest was all about. He crept forth, peering up and down anxiously. Here was a broken twig, there a track in the woolly frost, yonder a thread of homespun fringe. His voice called with the crying of the night, "Martha! Martha!"

With bare hands on the icy path he made his way. When pain checked his progress he thought of the lonely room, the sleeping child, and dragged on and on. She could n't have gone to the settlement—there were women who might have done the cruel thing, but not Martha—oh, God, not Martha!

At last he saw the fallen limb, and then the woman with the holly twig in her hand. Like most backwoodsmen, he knew what to do, how to act in emergency. He had his pocket-flask; there was the ice to press on her bruised forehead.

“Martha, Martha!” His rough voice became a messenger following after death.

The child in the cabin waked. Its reedy pipe brought no cooling response. Amazed, it found itself alone, the dark at hand. The fire had sunk to a bed of coals and an occasional flicker. He crept among the fearsome shadows, and, presently, he too was calling her:

“Mammy! Mammy!”

The moon, emerging from a cloud, looked big and terrible, like a strange face at the window. The fire-logs made alarming, guttural noises, the sap groaning in sympathy with the cry of the wood outside. The lonely baby crouched, afraid and grieved; under this new and awful experience his heart almost stopped beating.

He was almost too terrified to look up when, at last, there came a sound at the door; but it opened on the miracle. Across the threshold stumbled and dragged two figures dear and familiar, a man and a woman with the Christmas gift of Love!

No longer alone! Up reached the little arms; not to the glittering holly bough, though he might crow over it by and by, but to the mother, come back to him from the gates of silence, her life the best gift the little home could have.



THE WORD

BY THEODOSIA GARRISON

THERE came a word from yesterday
 Through a world of graver matters,
 A weary truant from far away
 (Like a little, lost love in tatters);
 And this was all that it brought to say
 Through the gloom of a gray December:
 “Oh, there once was a morning in May—in May—
 Remember!”

In it came as a beggar might,
 Fearful of scorn and of chiding,
 Shrinking from hearth and from candle-light
 (Like a little, lost love in hiding);
 But I drew it close from cold and night,
 And I answered without regretting,
 “I have tried and tried, but I never am quite
 Forgetting!”

IMMORTALITY

(TO W. E. AYRTON)

By E. Ayrton Zangwill

THERE is a very little boy with curly hair who plays often by my side. Engines it is that chiefly occupy his spacious hours; much talk I hear of up-trains and down-trains and the Portsmouth express. Ever and again he clambers into the arm-chair and begins frenziedly to tug at nothingness. Then I know the vigilant signalman is working his vital levers—such an unfitting signalman in tiny suit of silken green. “The line is blocked. Shut off the steam,” my manikin cries in voice of sharp anxiety. There follows a lapse into nursery idiom: “Puffer and persons will be broken up to bits.”

Not always are the games so arduous. At times the little boy is very still. He is studying some clockwork toy or looking at his books; the train-book doth enthral him most. One day I found him seated on the floor, a limp volume resting wide on sturdy outstretched legs. It was an engineer's pictured catalogue, a strange tome to have erred into this unscientific house. Rapt, the babe gazed upon the dimly comprehended cogs and pistons. His intent, strenuous breathing stirred in me chords of poignant memory. My footsteps were not heard; he was too far away. “Does he like machinery?” he murmured in content.

And as I watch my little son absorbed in pictured engines, oft-times as I watch him with shining curls abob driving fictitious “puffers,” he fades from my sight. And in his stead I seem to see another little boy with curly head, another little boy who once pored over engines, who gazed entranced at cogwheels, who, too, did “like machinery.” So similar this other little boy appears; so dissimilar in woollen frock of tartan hues. Yet in essence even his raiment is identical. Did not his mother make it for him? Did she not feel it pretty? That was the mode for three-year-olds more than half a century ago.

One difference there is, in truth; I cannot fail to notice it. No littered playthings surround that other little child. He does not, like my modern babe, command a fleet of steamships; he is not the director

of a line of clockwork trains. The thrilling joy of self-moving possessions is unknown to him. Such things were costly sixty years ago—at least, too costly for the other little boy. A sixpence was the greatest sum he ever knew—so he himself long after told me. With that sixpence he visited all the neighboring toyshops in turn, proffering it eagerly for “any sort of clockwork toy.” “But the cheapest in those days was half a crown,” my father added, with a reminiscent sigh. He was looking into a shop-window where stood a pile of penny engines as he spoke to me. He was looking wistfully, as that far-off little boy had looked, but the dear curls were now gray. And I too felt covetous for that other little boy. I still feel covetous. I grudge my new-century son his plethora of engines. I grudge him his winding wind-mills, his walking postmen, his model motor-car. I would hold them out across the years to the other little boy, the little boy who longed for them, the little boy who had none.

And yet I know not. Was the absence of this modern pampering perhaps a stimulus? The other little boy grew to fill a worthy place. He was a pioneer in that new-discovered electric wonderland. Could he have done more had his infancy been wreathed in clockwork engines, lapped in trains *de luxe*? Might he have done less? Is it, perchance, partly because that other child hungered vainly for things mechanical that the present babe riots in a whirring wealth of them?

It may be so; but I do not think it. I think that either way such outward shows make little difference. That other boy, like the present boy, rejoiced in the one great possession: he had love. Letters I have seen of late, letters written long ago to a little son in frock of tartan hues. The ink is faded, but the affection is plain to read. “Kiss dear Mama for me,” they end tenderly. I did not expect such playful suavity from one whom I had deemed but a stern educationist.

But, indeed, that mid-Victorian household, though somewhat too austere and strenuous in our modern deeming, yet had alleviations. Much have I heard of Norfolk cakes of an irrecoverable deliciousness. Every Wednesday they would be baked, and Wednesday was the Euclid preparation day for school. All the afternoon that little boy would sit munching cakes and solving riders. Blissful, he called it. What a modest conception, I could but feel, of bliss!

Another tale my father told me, and that too bearing on confectionery. It was the first time the little boy had ever left his home. He was to go a wondrous voyage; his uncle, the ship's captain, had invited him. And when his mother said farewell, in order to beguile the first stage of the journey—for she knew well that little boys are ever hungry—she put into his hands two crisp jam tarts. But this boy could not eat them; it seemed to him desecration. He took them

far across the seas; he brought them home again. It was a knight of old guarding his lady's token. But did ever tarts before serve as the *gage d'amour*?

And in this trifling legend I seem to find another likeness between two little boys so alike. Surely each is a very loving son. I think again of the time that I first parted from my own babe, my tiny one. Did they not tell me after that he, weeping, would scan the breakfastspoons, hoping to find still lingering in one of them a reflection of his "Mum"? The foolish baby action brought a glow unto this mother's heart. So must the other mother have rejoiced in the affection of her son.

But now across my musing there breaks a shout imperious: "Close the gates. Ding-a-ding ding. The Brighton train." It is my own babe playing as ever at his engines. Nature hath endowed him with no mean lungs! Smilingly I watch him as with hot, flushed face he bangs the cupboard doors and drags laboriously at "goods-truck" chairs. Yet hidden under this rampant individuality, this strenuous, unheeding merriment, methinks there lingers shyly a dim ghost; I feel again the shadowy essence of that far-off unknown child. "Anover grandpapa," my little one was wont to say last summer, mimicking with loving baby impudence a sick man's tired pose. "Anover grandpapa"—may it be so!

For since that "grandpapa" has left us so short a time ago, many things have we heard of him, things that even to his nearest were unknown. We have heard of a wide kindness, a truly Christian charity, the unsparring gift of strength and mind and soul. We have heard of hope given to anxious mothers; of lads aroused from easy pleasuring to arduous, ennobling toil. "I am a better man for having known him"—how often have we read the words! And, more than all, we have heard of a devotion to truth, a sacrifice to duty, a passion for justice, unswerving, incorruptible. This was his faith, his creed.

But among all things uttered, one thing hath meant to me the most. It was his comrade who said it; his daughter could not have known. "For when my friend came into a room"—thus spake the friend—"his mere entrance was wont to raise the level of talk among men." O my little son, when you too enter the room of manhood, on the door of which your tiny hands are barely knocking, may you too raise the level, the common, sordid level, of our gross humanity.

And so I am glad at the little ghost I see at times before me. I think that you, my father, would be glad. For you could never cushion your soul with comfortable belief in personal immortality. Your high courage, your rare humility, to the end maintained that such conceptions were too vast for our human understanding. "What comes after?" you have said. "That is the question." Perchance, indeed,

deathless work hath won for you immortality. Of this I cannot speak; I am too ignorant. But in the common, human way you have surely found it. The little boy at my knee, prattling all untaught of steam-domes and of tenders, studying so earnestly his trivial clockwork toy, this little boy proclaimeth a truth of awful solemnity. Here at least, my father, it hath come to you, "the Resurrection and the Life."



BALLADE OF TWILIGHT AND SILENCE

BY JOHN CARTER

RUMBLE and whirl of dray and car,
 Thousand feet on the great highway,
 Torturing chords that throb and jar,
 A restless melody, wildly gay.
 Under the lilt o' the tune they play
 The silent grief of the city lies,
 And menacing swift, at close of day,
 The shadows fall and the music dies.

Deep in the virgin woods afar
 A thrush pours forth his soul to the May,
 And never a hurried note shall mar
 The ecstasy of the magic lay.
 In drowsy measure the branches sway,
 Till the sun burns low in the cloudless skies,
 And peacefully upon leaf and spray
 The shadows fall, and the music dies.

Out of the dark where no songs are,
 I that have sinned and gone astray
 Moth-like, lift mine eyes to a star,
 Voicelessly to a far God pray.
 See, from His Heaven, in bright array,
 A messenger to the dim cell flies!
 The echoes wake to his singing—nay,
 The shadows fall and the music dies.

L'Envoi

O belovèd, I know as they
 This is the one thing right and wise.
 Weep no longer; now and for aye
 The shadows fall and the music dies.

MRS. RANDOLPH'S NERVE

By John Reed Scott

Author of "The Impostor," "The Woman in Question," etc

WE had gone out on the piazza after dinner—an especially good dinner it was—and the particularly calm and satisfied look on my wife's face emboldened me.

I had been trying to say it for a week, and always my heart failed me at the critical moment. Now I got out all my courage, threw out my chest, looked as though I were charging a battery of rapid-fire guns, and waded in.

"My dear," I said, "I have made up my mind to get a machine."

Then, having said it, I, figuratively speaking, ducked and threw up one arm to protect my head.

"A machine?" said she, puzzled. "Why, Reginald, the one we have is in perfect order."

"I am not referring to a sewing-machine, my dear," I explained grandiloquently. "That is in your department exclusively. I mean a car—an automobile."

There was no reply for the space of fifteen minutes—at least, it seemed fifteen minutes to me, sitting there cringing inwardly and, I suspected, outwardly as well. Presently, my wife spoke.

"So you're thinking of buying an automobile?" she said, very quietly. "Why not, my dear Reginald, throw in an estate at Lenox and a winter home at Aiken, while you're about it."

I should have known she was inclined to sarcasm when she called me "my dear Reginald," even if the rest of the sentence had been obscure.

"Because I should need two cars, then," I replied meekly. "The gauge for Southern roads requires a sixty instead of a fifty-six and a half."

"Well, what of it?" she asked.

"This of it," I said, a trifle braver: "I can't afford two cars."

"What has that to do with the matter under discussion?" she asked lightly. "You can afford two quite as well as one."

"We will get two some time—that is," I added, "we will trade in the old one for a next year's model."

"When?"

"Next year, of course."

"How nice!" she reflected.

"Yes; that's the advantage of buying: you can always get a good deal on a trade in the next year."

"How nice!" she repeated.

"I knew you would think so," said I.

"You buy one car," she queried, "and thereafter they supply you with a new one every year without charge? How sweet of them!"

"Not exactly," I explained, though a bit of doubt entered my mind as to her meaning. "They will allow me a certain amount for the old car, and I will have to pay the balance in cash."

"And how do you pay for the first car?" she asked.

"With cash—or a note."

"And where do you find the cash?"

"I will arrange that," I said, with easy indifference. "I have n't gone into this thing hastily, my dear."

"Oh, I've no doubt you have n't," she said, and whether she spoke ironically I did not know. "How much are you thinking of paying for a car?"

"Somewhere around two thousand dollars," I answered. (I was doing better than my fondest hopes. She was astonishingly reasonable.) "I'm going to be satisfied with a moderate-priced one," I went on easily: "four cylinders and forty horse-power. We'll get a touring-car—unless, my dear, you would rather have a short-coupled one." This was about the extent of my technical language, but I thought it would impress her.

"Two thousand dollars!" she reflected. "And what will you be allowed for the car next year, when you trade it in?"

"It depends on the condition of the car; but about one-third the original price, I fancy. Maybe the car will do for two or three years."

"Will you get seven hundred dollars for it then?" she asked.

"No," I said hesitatingly. "Hardly so much."

"I reckon it will cost you about seven hundred a year," she said, "whether you trade it in for a new one or not."

"Yes; that's about right," I answered, a little surprised. I did not know she was so quick at figures.

"I don't suppose you have any notion of not running the car after you've got it?" she persisted.

I admitted that she was correct.

"And how much will that cost?"

"About three cents a mile—not including repairs and up-keep."

"Repairs, up-keep," she repeated. "What will they amount to?"

"No one knows."

"Then, in plain terms, your car will cost you at the rate of seven hundred dollars a year, and every mile you go will be more railroad fare besides. Does that include toll?"

"No; toll is additional," I admitted—"another three cents a mile, about."

"Really!" she laughed sarcastically. She went over the figures again. "So, if you travel ten thousand miles a season, it will cost you three cents a mile for toll, three cents for running expenses, and twenty cents a mile for the car. In all, twenty-six cents a mile, and that does not count repairs and up-keep. Pretty expensive!" she ended, with another sarcastic laugh.

I could not deny it; but I put on a bold front.

"Automobiling is a luxury," I said.

"Just so; it is a luxury. And we can't afford luxuries which require an initial expense of two thousand dollars."

I hung my head. It was the truth. My wife is nothing if not practical. My income was about five thousand dollars a year, I had saved about another five thousand. We could not afford it. But it is just what we cannot afford that we Americans buy. I looked up smilingly.

"No, we can't afford it, but three-fourths of the automobiles in this country are owned by people who can't afford them. I'm going to get into the push. I'll sell enough stock to pay for the car, and we will have some pleasure. Confound it! life is more than saving money."

For all my bluff at assurance, I was feeling like a boy who had been caught stealing apples.

My wife was silent—gazing intently at the distant sunset.

I waited; then spoke:

"You would like a car, Helen, would n't you?"

She looked up with a weary little smile.

"Of course," she said. "Our friends have them, and I should like to have one, too. But it is n't just to the boy, Reginald. We ought not to use our capital except for his education."

"I admit all that," said I, seeing that she was weakening; "but you and I want some diversion, and, what's more, we're going to have it."

"You have made up your mind?" she asked.

"I have," said I grandly.

"Well"—with a sigh that had in it both resignation and content—"I protested, but I can't say I'm sorry."

"You're a dear girl!" I cried, and kissed her, nor cared who saw.

I had studied the various cars, of my price, through their descriptive lists, and had picked on two, the Rameses and the Speedaway, as my choice. One of them I had decided to buy.

I went first to the Rameses place, on "Automobile Row," and conferred with the salesman.

I found him most polite and accommodating—so much so, that I scarcely needed to open my mouth—he seemed to know, by instinct, everything I would ask, and answered it before I could frame the question. After a while, I just stood back and let him go. With the car to illustrate, he gave me a discourse on high speed, low speed, and intermediate, on horse-power, stroke, cylinder, transmission, differential, carburettors, magneto, and other things I don't remember. He was an adept, and when he got to describing the running of the car he was an artist with words, sure enough.

I made an appointment for a demonstration that afternoon, at five, and left, but he picked up his hat and accompanied me clear to the end of Automobile Row. Why, I did not understand until later.

I had been at the office about an hour when the cards of automobile salesmen began to come in. How they were aware that I was a probable purchaser, I could not imagine. There were eight of them before eleven o'clock. I did not see them. Then the Speedway man showed up. Him, I saw.

He was the reverse of the Rameses agent. He did not say a word in recommendation of his car. He simply asked me if he could take my wife and me riding through the park at half-after-seven that evening, in a Speedway car.

I told him we would be glad to go, and he bowed himself away instantly. I was too green then to see that I had forced the Rameses man to show his car, by going to the garage, whereas the Speedway salesman, coming to my office, and *being admitted*, was enabled to arrange simply for a demonstration.

The Rameses man came at five, and we took a spin through the Park. His car went beautifully.

He drew my attention to the way the motor worked, how noiselessly it ran, how responsive, how quickly it picked up speed.

I admitted everything he said.

He drew my attention to the steering-wheel, the beauty of the wood and its finish, the way the throttle and the spark were placed. He changed from one speed to another with delightful ease. He illustrated action of the brakes and the facility of control. He throttled down to four miles an hour on high-speed, and, between guard-stations, hit up a fifty-mile clip.

I grew enthusiastic—and more enthusiastic. And just then he stopped the car and said:

"You drive now."

Instantly my enthusiasm evaporated. I drew back. I did not know enough. I was——

He laughed reassuringly.

"Nonsense!" he said. "It's perfectly easy. Get your hands on the wheel, and your nervousness will vanish;" and he shoved me down into the place.

I was in a panic. The wheel, brake, clutch, levers, all looked alike—I did not know which was which.

"The lever is in neutral," I heard him say. "Now throw out the clutch and put the lever into first."

I grabbed the emergency brake and pulled it back, and at the same time put on the foot-brake.

"Not quite right," he said.

I recognized it, too, and, as they say in the army, I returned the car to "as it was."

He told me again what to do. This time I did it.

"Now speed up the engine a little, this way"—shoving up the throttle—"and let in the clutch, slowly."

I released the clutch so quickly, the car started with a jerk that threatened to break my neck, just missed the curbstone, and made straight for a tree on the other side of the road.

"Whoa! Whoa!" I cried—and sat perfectly helpless, my hands on the steering-wheel, but never thinking to turn it, or to put in the brake.

The agent reached over and straightened out the car.

"Now push out the clutch and throw into second-speed," he said.

As though there was but an instant in which to do it, I seized the lever and tried to make the change. A horrible grinding resulted, as if the car was being torn asunder.

"Push out the clutch! Push out the clutch!" he cried. "There! You see, it goes in easily now. Keep the car straight. Don't forget to guide it. Now push out the clutch again—that's right—and throw into high."

This time I managed to effect the change properly.

"That's good," was the comment. "Now you've got nothing to do but guide it."

I breathed a sigh of trepidation. "I can never learn all these things," I said.

"Nonsense! In two days you'll be running it without assistance. Give it more juice—I mean gasoline—you're coming to a hill."

I was tardy in obeying—we made half the hill, then began to slow.

"Ease the clutch a little," said he. "Not so much—not so much! No, you'll have to throw into second."

I grabbed the emergency brake and ground it down. We stopped instantly.

"You stalled the engines," he said.

I looked at him vacantly. I should have understood him quite as well if he had told me I was the undefinable X or the fourth dimension.

"Here, take the car!" I exclaimed, disgusted.

He put his hand on my shoulder. "No, no! This is excellent experience for you."

I subsided meekly.

"Now throw into neutral," he said.

I did it.

He jerked the spark up and down the quadrant, and the engines started. "Now push out the clutch. Keep it out—that's it—and throw into first-speed—that's right—*keep out the clutch!* Now listen, but don't act: take off the brake quickly, and just as the car begins to move backward let in the clutch. Do you understand?"

I nodded.

"Then, do it!" he said.

And somehow, I did it.

"Bully!" he cried enthusiastically. "Now we're up the hill, you can go into second-speed, and then into high, taking out the clutch each time."

I made the intermediate without much difficulty, but getting into high was again accompanied by a clashing of gears that instinctively made me let go the lever. It slipped, of its own accord, into neutral; we coasted a short distance and stopped.

"I'm done!" I exclaimed, and got up. "You can run it—I'll look on."

"Very good," he acquiesced. "You can learn by looking. I'll explain as I do it—and give you the reason why."

For an hour longer we drove through the Park, and he illustrated everything in the management to a car, until I began to see why the clutch must come out before you change speed, why you must speed-up the engine when "stepping down," and why let it run down when "stepping up"—and any quantity of other whys. Not that I could act upon them—that would require practice—but I was not in quite so intricate a labyrinth of mystery as at first.

"Now, Mr. Randolph, I want as a small favor," he said, as he drew up in front of my house, "that you will not commit yourself for a machine until you have seen me again. I have as good a car as there is made, for the money (*we* think it a little better), and I don't want another man to get all the advantage by taking you out, now, when you know something about driving. In other words, give me a chance."

"I'll do it," I averred. "I'll sign no contract until I've seen you again."

"Thank you, sir," he said.

My wife was on the piazza. She greeted me with a smile.

"You were trying a car?" she asked, as I came up the steps.

"Yes," said I, as I kissed her. "That was a Rameses. It's a pretty fair machine," I added condescendingly. "The Speedway man will be out at half-after seven to give us a run. I thought you would like to try it, dear."

Ordinarily, we finished dinner at about a quarter to eight, but this evening we had just come out on the piazza when a Speedway, bur-nished and glistening, drove up. My wife and Harold got in the rear seat; I took the seat in front.

We had a delightful ride. For two hours we sped through the Park, and out through the suburbs—fast, slow, any gait we wished. It was enchanting! And now the agent, having his car, made it perform—put it through its paces. Never the shock of clashing gears, never the screech of a bearing, never the rattle of a fender. Man and machine were one complete whole.

"What is the difference," asked I, after a while, "between the Speedway and the Rameses?"

The man beside me smiled commiseratingly.

"Just the difference between the full moon, there, and the half full," he said.

"They are the same price," I protested weakly.

"Yes, that's it!" he said. "We will make twenty thousand cars this year; the Rameses five thousand—you can figure how much more you get for your money with us. Our engineer gets twenty thousand dollars—that's one dollar a car on cost. The Rameses would be four dollars a car, if they pay him as much as we do ours. If they don't, they have an inferior man—and their car will show it. It's the same with material, dies, everything. The more you manufacture, the cheaper they are—and the better grade you can put in a car. It's a simple question of mathematics. Take our engines, for example."

And then I had the Speedway, from the radiator to the tail lamp, gone over in detail. When he had finished, I was ready to admit it was the best car on earth.

He wanted me to sign the contract before he left that evening, but I had sufficient nerve to decline. I promised, however, to see him to-morrow, and with that he had to be content.

"Well, which is it to be?" asked Helen, when we were once more seated on the piazza, and I had lighted a cigar.

"I admit I don't know," said I.

"The Speedway is a nice car," she observed.

"And so is the Rameses—both good cars—and, so far as I can judge, every one who has either is satisfied with his choice. There does n't seem to be a toss-up between them."

"Then, why not toss up for it?" she inquired.

"By thunder, I'll do it!" I exclaimed. "Here! Heads, Speed-away; tails, Rameses;" and I flipped a half-dollar in the air.

It fell just between us.

"Tails it is," I said.

"Rameses!" cried my wife. "I'm glad; that is what the Spottswoods have."

"How like a woman!" I thought.

The next morning, I bought the car.

"Let us keep it here for you a few days, until you've learned to manage it," said the agent.

And I gladly consented. At the end of a week, I thought I had mastered the control sufficiently to take it home; which I did, having the man go out with me, however.

My house has a driveway at the side, with a stable at the end of the lot. The carriage-shed was quite large enough for the car, and the approach easy, though there was just enough rise to necessitate going in under power. I was a trifle nervous, but if I wanted to use the car it was the first thing I had to learn, so, after I had turned into the drive, I stopped the machine, gritted my teeth, threw into first-speed, and went at the stable. I recollect closing the throttle, pushing out the clutch, and putting on the brake hard. And I was in!

"When you get a little more expert," said the man, "you can go in on high. It won't be necessary to change."

Fatal remark! It cost me a pair of broken lamps and a damaged radiator, to say nothing of a sprained shoulder and a skinned face. But "that's another story."

That evening it rained, and we did not go out. I spent the time reading my book of instructions. I am not a mechanic. In half an hour, I discovered that I knew nothing about my machine. In an hour, I was completely befuddled. Half-time gear housing, oldham coupling, front universal shaft, dope cup in front transmission bearing, spring shackles, brake-rod counter-shaft, parallel-rods, steering-gear, connecting rods—all were as meaningless to me as the cuneiform inscriptions. Light oil for the engine, heavy oil for the transmission and differential, non-fluid oil for the dope cups!

With a vague despair, I put down the book, to find my wife watching me.

"What is it, dear?" she asked, coming over beside me.

"I'm a trifle thick-headed," I answered. "I don't seem to understand much about the car."

"I thought you said you were getting along famously," she answered, surprised.

"I did," I admitted, "but I think now I lied. I don't know enough about it even to let it stand in the stable."

She laughed, a little soothing laugh, and wound her arm around my neck.

"How like a man!" she said, putting her face close to mine. "I will wager, dear, that in a week you will feel as much at home with the car as you do with your—books."

"It won't be your fault if I'm not," I replied, drawing her down beside me.

The next day was a holiday. After breakfast and a glance at the morning paper, I took my book of instructions and made for the stable. I would run the car just out of the shed into the full light, and see how much of the workings I could comprehend.

I got it out all right, which pleased me. Then, having shut off the power, I opened the hood, and, book in hand, proceeded to examine.

In five minutes I was so confused I could not have recognized a buggy from a traction engine.

Pistons, crank shaft, cam shaft, intake and exhaust manifold, connecting rod, cylinders, fly wheel, valve cap gasket, and so on, and so on! There they were—pictured in the book, with a designating mark to indicate every one of the one hundred and ninety-nine separate parts of the motor! But I could not find them.

I sank back on the grass in a helpless, half-maudlin condition.

"Oh, Lord!" I said, thoroughly dejected. "I wonder if I can sell it."

Happy thought! I got up and sneaked into the house. No one was in the library. I closed the door carefully, and called up the Rameses garage. The man I bought from answered.

"This is Mr. Randolph, who bought a car from you recently," I began.

"Yes, Mr. Randolph; what can we do for you, sir?" came back.

"How much will you give me for my car?" I asked.

"What's that?" said he.

"How much will you give me for my car?" I repeated.

"Why, what's wrong?"

"There's nothing wrong with the car," I answered. "The wrong is with me. In plain words, I'm afraid of it."

He protested.

I would hear to nothing. I wanted to be rid of it. I insisted that he take it off my hands at once.

"Well, you know, it's a second-hand car now," he said; "and the best I can allow you is a thousand dollars."

"A thousand dollars!" I gasped. "A thousand dollars! Why, the car has n't been run a hundred miles!"

"It would not matter if you had run it but five miles," he answered.

"It's a second-hand car all the same, and a new one costs us only fifteen

hundred. Better give it to me to sell—if you insist on selling. I can get you a better price that way than to buy it myself.”

“Send right out and get it,” I snapped.

“I’ll send out in the morning, Mr. Randolph—this is a very busy day with us—but you’d better reconsider, sir.”

“No; send out in the morning!” and I rang off.

I went back and looked at the car sullenly. Thank Heaven, it would go in the morning! I should be glad to get it out of my sight. I picked up the book of instructions, and regarded it, in anger.

I did not see Helen approaching—until she spoke to me.

“Well, how is it now?” she said cheerfully.

“It is n’t at all,” I replied. “It’s worse than ever.”

“Don’t be discouraged, dear—you ran it out all right, did n’t you?”

“Oh, yes; I ran it out all right. But how am I going to get it in the shed again? How am I ever to take care of it? Look! Did you ever see so many parts?”

She took the book and glanced at it.

“But why do you have to learn all this immediately?” she asked. “Why can’t you learn a little at a time?”

“That is only a quarter of it—look at the rest of the book!” I exclaimed. “I don’t understand it. I never can understand it! The truth is, I’m afraid of it.”

“What is it that you don’t understand?” she asked soothingly.

“Everything—the theory of it, the working of it. I understand nothing about it.”

“Then, the first thing to do is to have some one explain it. It must be simple. Look at the thousands of men who have cars!”

“Do you call *that* simple?” I cried, pointing to the book.

“No, not when you look at *everything* at once. I know nothing of mechanics, but I’m confident, if you start at the proper beginning and work forward, in regular order, it is simple enough.”

“I’m going to sell the car,” I said doggedly. “I’ve told the man to come for it in the morning.”

“You foolish boy—you’re going to do nothing of the sort,” she laughed—“at least, not until you understand it. My husband is not going to be put to rout by an automobile.”

It was the one way she could have appealed to me. I looked up gratefully.

“You are willing to risk your life in that thing, with me driving?” I exclaimed.

“I surely am—just as quickly as you get over this silly panic and become normal. You can do it—I know you can! Go down to the Rameses place, and have some one who understands a car, from the front to the back, explain it in plain language, a little at a time—a

little at a time, mind you—until you absorb it. Let him show you *why* you do this, and *why* you do that, and *what happens* when you do it. I reckon the first thing necessary to running a car is fire. I don't know how you get it, but you must have some force that propels, and fire is essential to that force."

"The batteries and magneto produce a spark," I explained.

"Well, then, start with them, and work out—getting the *why* and the *what-happens* with each. When you've got them all, you'll understand your car. And, what's more, you'll drive it well, dear. You do most things well."

"I'll do it!" said I—and kissed her, nor again cared if our neighbors saw.

I put the car away, without doing more than being badly frightened by the rear of the shed rushing out to meet me, and went straight to town. I told the man what I wanted.

"Good!" he said. "You're the proper sort. You'll understand your machine."

And I did. In a week I took the car out with a fair amount of confidence. In a month I felt at home with it. I am now in my second year, and, with the exception of the time I went into the shed on high, I have had no accidents—except the ordinary ones of the road.

But I have always given Helen the credit. At the critical moment, she showed the nerve and I the white-feather.



SALUTATION

BY J. B. E.

O NIGHT, O Star, O Land afar,
 In sweet surprise of glory,
 Let shepherd train and angel strain
 Sing new your Christmas story!

O Dawn, O Gift, O Heaven arift,
 O Mary, mystic Mother
 Of new-born Christ, keep ye my tryst
 With every human brother!

O Door flung wide, O full Flood-Tide
 Of light and kindness meeting,
 Unto my friend this Day outsend
 A joyous Christmas greeting!

AIDES-DE-CAMP TO CUPID

By *Ella Middleton Tybout*

Author of "A Bride for Casey," "The Smuggler," etc.

IF Miss Henrietta Crosby had been suddenly requested to name the greatest trial of her life she would instantly and truthfully have replied, "Goats." She might even have gone further by mentioning white ones. Miss Henrietta's handmaiden, Matilda Jenks, would probably have made the same statement, for totally different reasons.

"It's not that I object to goats *as* goats," complained Miss Crosby. "Nobody likes them better than I do, leaping joyously from precipice to precipice on their native mountains. And I'm sure their innocent kids are an addition to *any* landscape."

"The mountain goat," suggested the listener, "as opposed to the homely billy."

Miss Henrietta continued:

"But, as I was saying, when goats cease to be goats and become *ponies*—why, then, Randolph, I am forced to ask what this country is coming to. Is there *no* redress for unprotected womanhood?"

Miss Crosby wrote essays for the Browning Club, and prided herself upon her command of the English language.

Randolph Crosby settled his lazy six-foot length more comfortably in the hammock and lighted a cigarette.

"Why does womanhood require protection when goats become ponies?" he inquired.

"You are exactly like your father, Randolph. My poor brother is a man of sterling qualities, but many things have to be explained to him."

Miss Henrietta made three shells in the shawl she was crocheting and began a fourth.

"I bought this place," she said, "because it was quiet and sylvan, and I could have peace. I even paid the agent his first price without question, although I have since learned he had no respect whatever for the truth. But that little brook purling across the lawn was *so* peaceful I could not resist it. Little did I know what was in store for me!"

"Such is life," murmured Randolph.

"On the right hand," Miss Henrietta was now declaiming dramati-

cally, "a retired sausagemonger, *disgustingly* rich and *detestably* rude. On the left those most objectionable and populating Browns. Race suicide indeed! Those awful children, and their goats!"

"Is there," asked Randolph, "a goat to match each child?"

"There are two just alike, and they have red harness and draw a little wagon. They draw it exactly where they choose—through my privet hedge, over my flower-beds, and even up on my veranda. Sometimes they wander in without the cart. They have eaten all my lemon verbena, my cashmere shawl, and Matilda's Bible. Once they poked their heads through the drawing-room window when I had guests and baa-ed at me. They have very impudent faces and—— *Matilda!*"

Two white objects scampered across the privet hedge in quick succession, and Miss Crosby darted into the hall and pounded vigorously upon a gong.

Quite indifferent to impending doom, the invaders grazed placidly, showing a decided partiality for red geraniums, and great swiftness of demolition. Against them charged Miss Crosby, armed with an umbrella, reinforced by Matilda and a broom.

"Shoo!" threatened Miss Crosby.

"Scat!" commanded Matilda.

Randolph, shamelessly loyal to the hammock, listened for the dull thud marking the descent of raised weapons upon defenseless backs. Instead, however, he saw his aunt pause suddenly and stand as though petrified. Geraniums momentarily neglected, the goats faced her and waited her approach with lowered heads. Miss Henrietta dropped her weapon and clutched her skirts in the rear; Matilda followed suit, with undue display of white stockings wrinkling loosely over thin under-pinnings.

Stealthily, unobtrusively, moved by a common impulse, the ladies took a backward step. Simultaneously their opponents took one step forward. A moment's pause ensued, and the program was repeated.

Thus was Miss Henrietta ingloriously routed on her own domain. Inch by inch she retreated until she stumbled against the steps of the veranda and into the arms of her nephew, who waited there to receive her.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Miss Crosby.

"Gracious goodness!" ejaculated Matilda.

"Begging your parding, ma'am, for the intrusion"—it was the coachman of the objectionable Browns. "Mrs. Brown's compliments, and she hopes you have n't been annoyed."

"Annoyed!" said Miss Henrietta. "*Annoyed!*"

"They ought to be kep' tied, them pests ought," continued the man, "but the kids is that fond of 'em, and that rambunctious when it's mentioned! Come on, you varmints!"

He grasped a horn of each and departed, the goats following meekly.

"Matilda," said Miss Crosby, "next time we will resort to hot water."

"Excuse *me*, Miss Henrietta, but there won't be no next time. Which I hired out as parlor-maid and not as target for goats. Nor do I hold with scalding dumb things. So hereby I give warning of one month from to-day, and sooner if so be you wish it."

Miss Jenks retired, and her mistress sank wearily into a chair.

"Every time it happens," she remarked, "Matilda gives warning. Now I suppose I must go and pacify her."

After the exit of his aunt Randolph Crosby departed also. He strolled leisurely around the house and out the back gate, selecting a path that led past the garden of the disgustingly rich and detestably rude neighbor. At the back of the garden stood a hedge of sweet-peas in all the glory of purple, lavender, scarlet, pink, and white bloom. There Randolph paused and emitted a flute-like whistle. The vines parted enough to disclose a face, pink and white also, and framed in wind-blown hair.

"You were so long coming," she said, "I very nearly didn't wait for you."

"But you're glad to see me, now I'm here?"

"Is n't it a pity, Randolph, that you can't come to the front door and ring the bell respectably?"

"I like you among the sweet-peas, Polly, better than in the drawing-room."

"Ah, but that's not the point. If your aunt had not insisted on draining her lawn directly into *our* lawn, and if she had not a parrot that says 'good-by' sixty times an hour, I don't believe Dad would have been so implacable. He is n't pugnacious really. And Miss Crosby *has* been snippy, you know."

"I think she's really jealous of the wealth of the retired——"

"Don't say sausage," implored Polly. "It is canned beef, you know, and that's quite bad enough. I'm sure I'm ashamed to look a cow in the face, but, thank goodness, I can meet a pig without emotion. As for Dad——"

"Don't talk about our relatives," interrupted Randolph. "Talk about *us*."

And the conversation became untranslatable.

Back of Miss Henrietta Crosby's house sloped a tempting stretch of greensward highly prized by the laundress as a bleaching and drying ground. Here blankets and winter furs were aired before seclusion in cedar chests for the summer. Here also, on propitious Mondays,

various articles of feminine attire fluttered chastely in the breeze and challenged criticism as to their whiteness.

On the left, the stable of the populating Browns raised its gabled roof, a miniature replica of the house itself. On the right, the garden of the "sausage"-monger glowed glorious in its wealth of color, a riotous mass of bloom.

It was four o'clock on Monday afternoon, and peaceful enough to satisfy the most world-weary soul. Miss Crosby, freshly and crisply dressed in lavender muslin, stood on the back porch and exchanged a few words with Matilda.

"I have always," she remarked, "made a point of not having company on Monday. But you know there *are* times, Matilda——"

She paused suggestively, and Matilda responded with an acidulated smile and the freedom of long association.

"Oh, yes, Miss Henrietta, there are times and also seasons. But I do say, and must say, and will say, that dining-rooms were made to eat in, being free from caterpillars and provided with chairs and a table handy for the spreading."

"But afternoon tea is different, Matilda. *Al fresco*, you know. The rustic table under the spreading chestnut is so simple and sylvan."

"Simple it is," acquiesced Matilda; "me and Jane travellin' back and forth from the kitchen to the horse-chestnut and from the horse-chestnut to the kitchen, and like as not stumpin' our toes when least expected."

Miss Crosby sighed. Sometimes she thought Matilda had lived with her too long.

"I could have wished," she remarked, "that the wash had been removed from the line, in case my guests desired to stroll around the grounds."

"The morning being cloudy," returned Matilda, "the hanging was late. If folded wet, there comes mustiness, not to mention mildew. And back yards is back yards, whatever you may say, Miss Henrietta, not boolywards."

The table under the horse-chestnut was ready and waiting. The old Crosby silver shone in the reflection of the afternoon sun, and the delicate Sèvres cups and saucers testified mutely of joys to come.

Miss Matilda looked it over critically, then sank into a wicker chair to await her guests. She had done all that mortal could, and felt satisfied, though very weary.

Meanwhile, back among the sweet-peas, an important conversation was drawing to a close.

"You know," Randolph said, "vacations don't last forever, and mine is almost over."

"It does n't seem a minute since you came."

"And while I'm not a bloated bondholder, and must reluctantly work to earn my daily bread (*our* daily bread, eh, Polly?), still I know a very jolly apartment I'm going to lease, and I don't propose to live in it alone."

The girl said nothing, and he continued:

"So you'll go with me, Polly, and we'll do it quietly. Believe me, it is the only way."

"The only way," she repeated.

"I'm wondering," he said softly, "whether you'll ever regret it. There is so much you must do without—so much I cannot give you just yet. Little Polly Perkins, are you very sure?"

The sweet-peas swayed in the breeze, touching her cheek softly, and a humming-bird paused in passing to hear her reply. The dark lashes were raised suddenly, and Polly looked into her lover's eyes.

"Yes, Randolph," she said; "I'm very sure."

And Joseph Perkins, canned beef millionaire, smoked peacefully on his front veranda without wasting a thought upon back yards or dangerous characters lurking about them.

The populating Browns having gone on a picnic, the day passed pleasantly with the white goats. They had early escaped from the seclusion of the stable, and skipped nimbly hither and thither, seeking what they might devour and rejoicing in unlimited freedom of action.

Now, however, the afternoon was waning. They had lunched heartily and browsed delightfully on the choicest products of flower and kitchen gardens; they had taken a siesta in the canna-bed, with legs meekly doubled under them and heads drooping humbly in the sun; and they had risen refreshed, quite ready for other worlds to conquer.

So they jumped the privet hedge and looked about them. The back yard was empty, save that on the clothes-line white ghosts, suggesting Miss Henrietta dismembered in dishabille, moved as the wind stirred them, taking strange and tantalizing shapes and displaying unexpected gymnastic ability.

The breeze freshened. A nightgown sleeve, limply pendent, swelled to human proportions and raised in threatened attack. Immediately the goats dropped their heads and waited. The white form swayed toward them, both arms lifted in denunciation, and thereupon they promptly butted with all the agility they could command.

One missed his aim and passed beneath, greatly to his own surprise. The other hit the target squarely indeed, but having, in excess of zeal, risen bodily to the occasion, remained suspended in mid air, his horns enmeshed in the lace at the neck of the garment.

Only an instant he hung there, for the line parted, goat and lingerie

reaching the ground together. An astonished and indignant billy, he regained his feet and strove to free himself, but the more he struggled the more entangled he became. His enemy lay upon the ground, and he danced upon it in futile rage. It flapped across his eyes, and he gored it, only to become involved with more lace. Rising upon his hind legs, he pawed the air and bleated fiercely, but it merely spread out widely behind him, threatening to envelop him in its voluminous folds. Plainly there was nothing for it but flight, therefore he dashed madly around the house, the garment impaled upon his horns streaming after him.

Meanwhile his companion, chancing to observe another hedge, had long since skipped across it. Landing among the sweet-peas, he started on a tour of investigation, strolling where fancy indicated and sampling divers specimens of rare plants en route.

Joseph Perkins rested in his steamer-chair. The ashes from his cigar dropped unnoticed on his coat, and the paper fell neglected to the floor, for the millionaire was dozing. His silvery hair glistened in the afternoon sun, now and then stirring gently in the breeze. This white hair lent a benign expression to his countenance, as it waved thick and soft above his brow, and he steadfastly believed that none but his Maker and himself knew it was a wig.

So Mr. Perkins dozed, and billy in his researches gravitated toward him. He did not hear the clatter of little hoofs upon the veranda-steps, nor did he feel the first tentative pull. He did, however, dream that he was pursued by savages, bound to the stake, and brutally scalped. The latter tragedy occurred at the third tug, and Mr. Perkins awoke to find his hair disappearing down the veranda-steps in juxtaposition with the beard of a white goat. Being a man of action, he started in pursuit, only to see it vanishing over the privet hedge that divided him from his neighbor.

Mr. Perkins followed until he reached his own boundary, but there his courage failed. Not for worlds would he expose his shining billiard ball of a head to Miss Henrietta's unfriendly eye. So he knelt upon the grass and peered through a hole in the hedge, an angry and perplexed millionaire.

Tea *al fresco* had been a success, and the four guests were now in the state of bland repletion that engenders compliments.

"Ah!" said the rector. "A cozy nest, dear Miss Crosby. Far from the madding crowd, and safe from the clatter of the busy world. Here one may commune at will with nature; here also——"

The sentence was never finished, for into the peaceful group dashed a maddened goat. Matilda met him first. She was in the act of removing cups, and her tray was full, but the trailing white garment tripped her as she dodged, and all went down together. The table followed,

and the rector suddenly found himself seated on the ground among fragments of crockery, as with a flying leap the frenzied animal crossed the hedge and landed in a thriving rhododendron bush. Here he met his deliverance, for his incumbrance caught upon a branch and stayed there.

Mr. Perkins, beneath the hedge, rubbed his shining head and stared.

"I have n't got 'em," he said. "I'm a very temperate man. But I'm hanged if it is n't raining goats."

Cautiously balancing himself upon his hands and knees, he leaned forward. Through the gap he could see, close beside him, the wrecked tea party. Four agitated females were assisting the rector to his feet, while a fifth sat flat upon the grass, tray in hand, gazing dazedly at the shattered cups around her.

Mr. Perkins, his wig forgotten, grinned wickedly and leaned forward that he might have a better view. Then something happened. Suddenly, violently, and quite without volition of his own, he shot through the hedge and landed on the silver teapot.

"And it will never be the same again," lamented Miss Henrietta afterward, "for even the best of silver cannot sustain two hundred pounds upon its spout."

Having now demolished the last of his enemies, billy stalked triumphantly away in search of fresh adventures.

Miss Crosby told her nephew about it as they sat on the veranda after the guests had departed.

"He came through the hedge like a— a catapult, Randolph. And he had no explanation to offer."

Randolph said nothing.

"And I do think some explanation is due me as a lady. What right has he to come shooting through my hedge and sit upon Grandmother's teapot?"

"It was an unusual place to expect ancestral silver, Aunt Henrietta."

"I have a perfect right to strew my own silver over my own lawn if I choose. And you may say what you please, but it was an unseemly way for an elderly gentleman to act. But then he is *not* a gentleman—as I told him, when I requested him to leave my premises."

"Ah!" said Randolph. "What then?"

"I prefer to draw a veil over his conversation. But to say he was looking for his personal property in my grounds is preposterous.

"And," she continued, with more than a hint of tears in her voice, "when I sent in to remove my garment from the bush where that wretched animal left it, he would not allow it to be touched. He said, Randolph, that when I returned his property, he would do the same for me."

Miss Crosby paused and peered anxiously toward the rhododendron. "Can you—is it," she faltered, "*very* apparent from the street?"

It certainly was. Much the worse for wear, it hung limp, dejected, and exposed to the curious gaze of all that chanced to pass that way. It was no décolleté, short-sleeved frivolity. High of neck, long of sleeve, and decorous in length, but undeniably a *robe de nuit*, it hung on Mr. Perkins's rhododendron bush, bearing Miss Henrietta Crosby's name upon it in indelible ink.

"And when I think of broad daylight to-morrow, and the comments of the vulgar herd," she said, "I do not see how I *can* endure it."

Mr. Perkins could not sleep. The moon rose, and the stillness of suburban night deepened as he tossed restlessly from side to side. He was due to preside at a directors' meeting in town to-morrow. It was an occasion of importance, and his presence was imperative, but he felt that he could not face his colleagues without his wig. There were some things in life, he reflected bitterly, that no man could be expected to endure. He raised himself on his elbow and shook his fist angrily.

"The old cat!" he ejaculated. "The spiteful old cat! Ordered me off her premises—*me!* And I saw it in the distance, where the goat dropped it—distinctly saw it. Now it's gone. Spiteful old cat!"

Overpowered by a fresh recollection of the directors' meeting, he then swore volubly. At that moment Mr. Perkins would gladly have bartered his immortal soul, not to mention his bank account, for his wig.

He rose and went to the window. How still it was! Mr. Perkins gazed at the privet hedge showing black in the white light. He could plainly see the hole in it, larger by far than when he first passed through it, and involuntarily accepted the suggestion it offered. He would search the adjoining lawn himself, and no one would be any the wiser. Slippers and bath-robe were convenient, and he sallied forth, stepping stealthily, as though oppressed by guilt.

Mr. Perkins was thorough. Inch by inch he searched his neighbor's lawn, even penetrating to the back of the house and scanning its closed shutters suspiciously. Unsuccessful and disappointed, he returned to the front lawn and sought the gap in the hedge.

There he paused, incredulous. For the moonlight fell upon a lock of silvery hair, and although only a little bit was visible it was quite enough. Putting forth a tentative finger, he touched it. Yes, it was really hair, and Mr. Perkins's heart leaped joyously as his fingers closed upon it. He longed to feel it snugly ensconced upon his unprotected, chilly head, but he lifted it reverently nevertheless, although his hand trembled with eagerness.

Curiously enough, it felt heavy. It must be caught in the hedge, sensibly reasoned Mr. Perkins, and he was about to examine and detach it carefully when a window in the silent house behind him opened suddenly. A sense of guilt and an acute consciousness of bath-robe and slippers overpowered him, but his fingers tightened convulsively upon their prize. He would give a last pull, then make for home through the hedge.

So he pulled, quickly, desperately, and with a finality of purpose deserving reward.

There was a shrill yet stifled scream, a scrambling within the hedge, and the head and shoulders of Miss Henrietta Crosby were revealed to the horrified eyes of her neighbor. The feet of that lady were upon Mr. Perkins's territory, while the hedge kindly shielded what came between.

The ensuing silence was profanely expressive. Miss Crosby, being a woman, spoke first.

"Sir," she quavered, "release me."

Mr. Perkins hastened to comply. In his agitation he had retained his grasp on the knob of gray hair ornamenting her left temple.

"Madam," he began, "I assure you——"

"O-o-o-h!" gasped Miss Crosby, with the gurgling sound usually preceding hysterics. "Assaulted in my own gro-o-unds! Sir, would you detain a helpless woman against her will!"

Mr. Perkins drew his bath-robe closer and crouched within the shadow of the hedge.

"I'm *not* detaining you," he said. "I'll be very glad indeed to see the last of you. If you will kindly emerge, I will be delighted to go home. Pray come in."

Miss Crosby wriggled, pausing abruptly at the sound of tearing muslin.

"Man," she ejaculated, "*go away!*"

Mr. Perkins glanced over the lawn to the street, with its flaring electric arc lamp and manifest unpleasant possibilities. He also preferred darkness and seclusion.

"Madam," he returned, "I shall do nothing of the kind."

"Sir," she said desperately, "you are trespassing. I—I *order* you off my property."

"Madam," he replied, "to the best of my knowledge and belief, your feet are on *my* property. I demand that you instantly remove them."

Miss Henrietta told Matilda about it next morning from the bed where she had retired for several days.

"I could n't sleep, Matilda, for thinking of that nightgown. Something told me to go and get it, so I went. Through the hedge. Coming back, my kimona kept catching, so I slipped it off, meaning to put

it on again, of course, when I got through. When I was nearly safe a twig or something got caught in my hair, and there I was like—like——”

“Absalom,” suggested Matilda.

Miss Crosby continued her narrative, showing dramatic powers of description as the climax approached.

“And when I moved, Matilda, I heard it tear down the back. Not the one I went to get, but the one I had on, you understand. Now, I ask you, could I emerge with even a semblance of dignity? So there I was, and there *he* was. And there we stayed for *hours*, it seemed to me, until Randolph came with an overcoat and my rain-coat. And I never shall understand what he was doing looking out of his window fully dressed at three o'clock in the morning.”

The sun shone brilliantly the next day, and another conversation took place among the sweet-peas.

“Did your father catch his train, Polly?”

“Oh, Randolph, how *could* you?”

The explanation was apparently satisfactory.

“But I don't understand yet how you happened to find it.”

“Well, I just saw it, you know, where the goat had dropped it, and unobtrusively picked it up. I knew he'd want it, so I naturally kept it. When I heard about the meeting to-day I saw my opportunity, but I really felt for Aunt Henrietta. She suffered agonies.”

Randolph paused and chuckled.

“I heard Aunt Henrietta moving around because I was awake and wondering what to do. So I got up and looked out the window. When I saw your father come through the hedge I dressed, for I thought there'd be something doing. But I never dreamed——”

The graceless youth gave way to irrepressible mirth.

“Oh, Polly, if you'd *only* seen them—when I came to the rescue.”

“Yes. And then?”

“That's all, except that I took it in boldly this morning and dictated my own terms. He was so anxious to get it on again that he agreed to everything—even to asking me to dinner to-night.”

“Oh, Randolph!”

“And so, little Polly Perkins, we won't run away, for I'm coming to the front door at last and going to ring the bell respectably.”

Matilda came to Miss Crosby's window and raised the sash. In the yard of the populating Browns two white goats harnessed to a little cart meekly awaited their burden. Matilda leaned far out and shook her fist at them.

“Don't you wag your beards at me!” she commanded, and closed the blind.

LAURIE OF THE "PLAINS- MAN"

A STORY OF WESTERN CANADA

By Hulbert Footner

THE *Plainsman* occupies the last store of the Carver Block, a one-story row of plate-glass fronts on A Street, east, ending at the railway tracks. The Carver Block, all of five years old, begins to wear an air of haggard antiquity in the brand new streets of Blackfoot: most of the paint has peeled off the towering cornice, and more than one jagged rent lets daylight through that apparently solid front. The curious thing about the buildings of Blackfoot, as of other Western towns, is that they seem to pass direct from the freshness of the trowel to the snuffiness of second-hand building materials. As to this particular store, it needs no sign to identify it as the home of a newspaper—the excessive griminess does that. A flannelette curtain, once a rich green, but more recently a bilious yellow, hangs across the back of the show window, which contains nothing but the accumulations of five years' dust and a framed card of job printing samples dating from the same era. Upon opening the door, the characteristic warm, pungent smell of printers' ink and fresh pulp paper greets the nostrils, lent individuality in this case by a rich undertone of ripening bananas—for part of the back premises is sublet to a wholesale fruiterer, who conducts his business via the rear alley. There is a little sanctum in one corner of the shop, and a counter crosses from that to the wall. Damaged and unsold copies of the *Plainsman* for a year back are heaped everywhere.

Frank Ardry, editor and proprietor, was doubled over the counter, with his chin in his palms. It was Saturday afternoon, and the staff had distributed itself in quest of amusement, except that the chunking of the monotype in the basement gave notice that Leonora Colpas, the typesetter, was still at work. Frank was a good-looking youth, with a round head, broad over the ears and smoothly thatched with black; and bright, sophisticated gray eyes. His air of high and

humorous assurance, brooking no opposition, was the *Plainsman's* chief asset. But just now his colors were hauled down.

It was not that the *Plainsman* was in any worse case than ordinary: the sword of bankruptcy had always hung suspended by a hair over that devil-may-care publication. Frank had secured it from the last proprietor in exchange for a polo pony, and was considered to have received the worst of the bargain. No, he had succeeded in paying his employees for the week; it was simply the "elevation" that ailed him. I should explain that the altitude of Blackfoot is held accountable for most that goes amiss there. Frank was blue—richly and luxuriously blue.

So intent was he on his gloomy thoughts that he did not see a small figure come in through the open doorway and approach the counter.

"Good afternoon," she said.

Frank jerked his head up. His astonished and delighted eyes took in a small, slim girl who looked seventeen and was undoubtedly older. The most remarkable thing about her was the brave, friendly expression of her blue eyes. She plainly wished to ingratiate herself, but without abating any point of personal pride. The next remarkable thing was her hair, the quantity of it and its color—most like raw mahogany, but exactly like nothing else under the sun. This enframed a face cut with delicate certainty of outline, with a healthy, pale skin and lips fresher and sweeter than opening crimson petals. The vision was clad in close-fitting green, which became her rarely, and a crafty little hat of the same color.

To Frank the sight of her was like the unhopd-for granting of a secret prayer. He flushed to the roots of his hair.

"My name is Laurie Gray," she said with an engaging candor—she had the cheerful, incisive voice of a schoolboy. "I'm looking for something to do. Can you give me any work on the paper?"

"Why, yes!" said Frank instantly, the possibility of refusing anything to one so pretty never occurring to him. Some time afterwards he added, "What can you do?"

"I never worked before," she said, "but now I have to. My mother and I have come West to make our fortunes."

Her cool, cheerful frankness turned the point of sentimentality. Young Frank was compelled to be businesslike. It was soon decided that Laurie was to cover "locals," meetings, sermons, and society. The glint of a fanatic enthusiasm shone in her eyes as this fascinating program was unrolled in her hearing.

"I have dreamed of being a reporter," she murmured.

It may be remarked that there was more danger in a conversation like this than in whole bucketfuls of sentiment. Quite so! The red

head and the black unconsciously drew closer across the counter, and in smiles flying back and forth and in the kind, shining eyes, already there promised something a good deal tenderer than the customary relation between employer and employee.

They were interrupted by an ominous "'Hem!" from behind Frank's back. He looked over his shoulder apprehensively. At the head of the basement steps stood Miss Colpas, the typesetter, in her lace coat and picture hat, the plumes of the latter seeming to bristle with indignation. Leonora was a veteran pioneer of the West; without undertaking to state just how old she was, I may say, well-seasoned. She was likewise westernly free of speech and uncommonly well able to take care of herself. Ordinarily she was amiable, and ruled the males of the *Plainsman*, including the proprietor, with a rough, bantering coquettishness; but just at present she was very much on her dignity, pale under her rouge, and with black eyes glittering dangerously.

"Pardon me if I intrude," she drawled.

"Not at all," said Frank uncomfortably. "This is Miss Gray, the new reporter," he explained.

"Indeed, I was not aware!" said Miss Colpas grandly. She took a good fifteen seconds to look Laurie up and down. "Charmed!" she murmured as insultingly as she could, and made her way languidly to the street door. With her hand on the latch she turned. "I think you call for me at eight," she said indifferently to Frank, and went her ways. The door must have slipped out of her hand, or something; the impact was terrific.

Laurie had been watching her with cool wonder. "Look here," she said with her inimitable directness, "if I'm going to be here, I ought to know where I stand. What's the matter with her?"

Laurie's frankness demanded a return in kind. "You see," Frank explained, "she and her brother are the only ones in town who can run the monotype, and she knows it. Besides——"

"Well?" prompted Laurie.

"She has money," said Frank. "Made it speculating in real estate during the boom. She holds a chattel mortgage on the plant downstairs."

"H'm!" said Laurie.

"So I—er—take her about to the subscription dances to keep her in a good humor about the interest," he blurted out.

Laurie took note of his rueful grin, and suddenly her face broke up like a sunny pool under a gust from the west. She cocked up her pretty chin and laughed a peal like a boy. Such delicious, heart-disquieting music had surely never been heard within those grimy precincts.

On her very first day Laurie made herself an important factor of the *Plainsman*. As she crossed the Estevan bridge on her way to work she witnessed an accident, brought about, it might have seemed, for the especial benefit of the fledgling reporter. The only automobile in town, property of one Mackinnon, a real-estate agent and unpopular, was to blame for the ruin of an immigrant farmer's household goods. Laurie, warm with generous indignation, got half a column out of it. Womanlike, she discovered the owner's vulnerable point, and turned her pen in the wound. The reason the automobile made so much noise, said Laurie, was because it was such a *cheap* machine.

Frank ran the story as it stood, and next morning all Blackfoot chuckled over it, with the possible exception of Mackinnon. The real-estate agent was a gross creature: little Laurie, passing his shop later in the day, was publicly insulted. On her return to the office, she casually mentioned what had occurred, and Frank, with a brightening eye, took his hat from its peg, and, commanding Laurie to keep the shop, sallied forth. Laurie promptly disobeyed him. Following at a discreet distance, note-book in hand, she missed not a detail of the brief and pointed discussion which ended in the fat real-estate agent rolling in the gutter. Laurie got a whole column out of that, and Blackfoot agreed that it was the best account of a scrap which had appeared in the local press. The paper was sold out in an hour, and the regular circulation jumped four hundred.

Among other things, Laurie was assigned to cover the meetings of the town council. Her first arrival in the dingy little chamber (which is in the loft of the police station) created something of a sensation. His Worship Mayor Pink (one of Blackfoot's leading grocers) himself descended from his throne to take her hand, and all the aldermen pulled down their waistcoats and strove to look aldermanic.

Laurie soberly disposed herself at the "press table" in the corner (it has only three legs and you must watch which end you sit at), and the usual mad torrent of eloquence was forthwith unloosed. Once a fortnight the aldermen are seized with this lust to orate, and nothing will stop them. Only Sam Puffer, the ex-cow-puncher, rarely spoke—but he spat most eloquently. There was one spectator, Hennery Haddie, Blackfoot's eminent rag and bone merchant, who has run for alderman every year in the memory of man, without ever receiving a hundred votes, and who writes to the papers nearly every day. As a tax-payer, Hennery delivered a diatribe on the puddles in the main street, which was cut short only by Sam Puffer threatening to take him out and souse him therein.

Although she affected to be diligently taking notes, the proceedings

were naturally quite incomprehensible to Laurie; but the reporter on the other paper, a pale youth of an evangelical turn, offered to write her story as well as his own. Laurie smiled her thanks and found herself free to smile at the aldermen one by one. The smile of a clever woman is a curious thing: the degree of promise gathered from it by the recipient is usually in inverse ratio with his intelligence. The aldermen hastened to write out their speeches for Laurie, and the city clerk made her a copy of the minutes; but Laurie thought most of Sam Puffer, who, abashed by her presence, only scowled at her sidewise from beneath his shaggy brows.

As time went on the slender, green-clad figure, intent upon business, became one of the familiar sights of Rowland Avenue. The six tall policemen were her sworn friends, and one or another invariably accompanied her when she was called out at night. Policemen are only human; there was not one of them but sometimes drew her aside to mention some little deed of heroism he had performed—hoping it would appear in next day's paper. Laurie enjoyed alike the freedom of the banking offices and the jail. Every one wished her well, from the president of the Board of Trade down to the undertakers, who telephoned her when they had interesting corpses on view.

Her work was supposed to be done when the last of the local news was turned in at eleven o'clock each night, but how could Frank discourage her if she volunteered to stay another hour to help him read proof? They would sit side by side at the table in the rear of the little store, dark but for the single shaded globe hanging low over their heads. Laurie always had so much to say about the day's experiences, her tongue fairly tumbled over itself in her impatience to get it all out. Consider the feelings of the youthful editor as he watched the changing face of his very dear aide, and hung on the delicious tones of her merry, boyish voice. Need I say that the *Plainsman* was scandalously proof-read? There is more than one pointed story still in circulation concerning quaint misprints which escaped that precious pair of readers.

But as a result of this inspiring hour Frank would set to work each day with renewed courage to keep his crazy bark afloat. The whilom careless youth had now a definite and absorbing aim. Week by week the *Plainsman* was doing steadily better, but, unfortunately, the increased business only made the pinch of insufficient capital more keen. Leonora was the most troublesome feature of the problem. The mere sight of little Laurie was sufficient to rouse that weather-beaten virgin to a pitch of blind unreasonableness. Frank used his best powers of cajolery, but the tension was stretched little by little towards the breaking-point. There was six months' interest on the mortgage overdue.

At Laurie's third council meeting old Sam Puffer produced from his capacious pocket a box of candy, the Eastern kind, very expensive and very stale in Blackfoot, and silently laid it on the reporters' table. Laurie was immensely gratified. From the other aldermen there were audible murmurs of "graft," for Sam was a candidate for Mayor, and this was looked upon as an attempt to suborn the press. But there was nothing in that; for at the next meeting, when Sam Puffer turned up in a somewhat "elevated" condition as a result of too long a dalliance at the mahogany of the Royal Hotel, Laurie regretfully but relentlessly entered the fact in her account of the proceedings. Next day Sam came around to the office and shook hands with her. It did him good, he said, to meet a person with sand enough to call his friends down when they needed it.

The other candidate for mayor was the smug Alderman Telfair, Sam's ancient enemy. He too sought to ingratiate himself with Laurie, but with this difference—that while old Sam was a real man, who admired Laurie for a pretty girl and respected her for a plucky one, Telfair was no more than a puff-ball, who saw in Laurie the means of getting his name before the public. Laurie perceived the difference very clearly.

The *Plainsman* supported Sam Puffer, of course, but in local politics a man is very often at a disadvantage with a puff-ball. Alderman Telfair was known to be a fool and strongly suspected of grafting; nevertheless he threatened to carry the election by the sheer weight of his protestations of morality. It is so difficult to oppose these platform moralists, without the implication of championing the immoral! The only weapon the *Plainsman* had against Telfair was ridicule—which inflicts painful but seldom mortal injuries. The town chuckled, and Alderman Telfair writhed under its thrusts. Furious reprisals were threatened; the *Plainsman* merely laughed editorially and continued its course. Then one night there was a late conference in Alderman Telfair's office—men with a common grudge may be infallibly depended on to smell each other out. Mackinnon was there; also a heavily veiled lady wearing a lace coat and a picture hat.

A week later the blow fell. Frank was in Prince George, the provincial capital, lobbying for some of the government printing. Laurie had undertaken the responsibilities of editor-in-chief, with a heart swelling with pride, destined, alas, to be immediately dashed. Reaching the office after the morning session of the police court, she found Hennery Haddie in the editor's own chair, with his feet on another, and the sanctum odorous of one of the cigars manufactured, according to popular belief, from his stock-in-trade: *i.e.*, rags. Laurie's face reddened at the spectacle.

"Outside is the place to wait," she said sharply.

Hennery arose and puffed out his cheeks. He was a short, square man with a portentously serious eye, the carriage of the alderman he yearned to be, and the clothes of the rag and bone merchant he was. Hennery thought and spoke in purest journalese.

"It is my regretful duty to inform you, miss," he said, "that I have been denoted to take charge here——"

Laurie's face was a study in scorn. "Take charge!" she repeated.

"Owing, no doubt, to my well-known association with the press and public affairs," explained Hennery, with a smirk.

"What do you mean?" demanded Laurie.

"Bailiff appointed by the court at the suit of Alderman Telfair, Esquire"—

Laurie took her breath sharply.

—"Holder of a mortgage of eleven hundred dollars on the chattels of this here establishment, assigned by Leonora Colpas, Esquire—I mean, spinster."

Laurie knew all about the mortgage. Her heart seemed to shrivel in her breast, and for an instant she felt herself a small, small person alone in a vast and cruel world.

"My instructions being," continued Hennery, "to allow the business to proceed in all ways as usual, only everything printed in the paper must be satisfactory to my principal."

Laurie heard him but dully.

At this moment Miss Colpas ascended from the basement, ostensibly to ask about a word in her copy, but really to see how Laurie was taking the blow. She got small satisfaction from the acting editor: the mere sight of the other woman provided Laurie with a tonic. She lifted her head, took a long breath, and issued her instructions with perfect coolness. When Hennery went to lunch she locked herself in the sanctum and, dropping her head on the desk, cried it out like a girl. Then she sat up and, bending her pretty brows, thought it out like a man. By and by she seized paper and began to write, tearing off page after page, entirely oblivious to her surroundings and to the flight of time. Anon the tears came into her eyes, anon she frowned and then laughed outright. Laurie was putting "soul" into it. She concluded with a great sigh of relief, and, without stopping to read what she had written, folded the bulky package once across and, thrusting it into the bosom of her dress, reappeared in public.

All the afternoon she put things in train for the next day's paper as if nothing had happened. She exerted herself to be agreeable to Hennery Haddie, who, worthy man, was not sufficiently astute to smell danger. Inflated by the importance of his duties, he felt an ever-recurring need of a fresh supply of bar-room hydrogen, and by evening

there was a noticeable access of dignity in the bailiff, joined to an increased tendency to puff out his cheeks. Miss Colpas swept home as usual at five o'clock, and was succeeded at the monotype after supper by her brother. Hennery brought back some editorials from his "principal," which Laurie, with a casual glance, sent down-stairs. Laurie herself took no time for supper.

At nine o'clock the proofs for the first side came up-stairs. By this time the bailiff and the acting editor, sitting side by side at the table under the shaded electric light, were apparently on terms of perfect amity. With an innocent air Laurie volunteered to read the proofs aloud, and lifted a voice of monotony calculated to lull Argus himself. Hennery tipped his chair back, his eyes closed, and his head drooped lower and lower. Before Laurie reached the bottom of the first galley he emitted a round and convincing snore. By the very look of Hennery you would know him for a hearty sleeper, not to speak of his potations during the afternoon.

Instantly Laurie, all excitement, scampered down the basement stairs. Besides Colpas, a weak youth, completely under the dominion of his sister, Higden, the printer, and Peake, who made up the forms, were at work. Into the ears of these two she whispered, and a wide, delighted smile slowly overspread each grimy face; they violently nodded their heads and followed her up-stairs. Laurie unlocked the door into the quarters of the fruit company. Peake grasped the back of Hennery's chair, Higden took the front legs, and the unconscious bailiff was tenderly lifted and carried up the four steps into the dark loft. Inside, there were several great bins reaching to the roof, such as are used for the storage of vegetables. These were made of stout palings, with narrow interstices to allow the passage of air. One of these cages was empty and the door stood open.

Hennery woke up as they set him down, and struggled to his feet. But the cage door was already closed and the hasp secured with a stout wooden pin. Hennery's fat hand would not pass between the bars. He seized the door of his cage and shook it exactly like that animal from which we are said to derive our descent; his cries were piteous, but quite in vain. Laurie sent him a cigar to soothe his outraged feelings, and after a while he ceased his lamentations.

Meanwhile the packet of copy was produced from Laurie's bosom and sent down-stairs. As she expected, young Colpas presently came up two steps at a time and, without looking at her, darted out through the street door. Laurie spent an anxious five minutes—if they had stayed away she would have been utterly defeated, but she was counting on the motive power of curiosity, and the end justified her: the Colpases, brother and sister, entered the office, the lady plumed, rouged, and grim. She had some sheets of Laurie's copy in her hand.

Laurie stood up, and they faced each other, the little one and the old-timer.

"What is this?" demanded Leonora stridently.

"The leading article for to-morrow," said Laurie mildly.

"Not if I know it!" said the older woman viciously.

Laurie was patient. "Have you read it?" she asked.

"The first page is enough!" said Leonora, violently rattling the sheets. "Alderman Telfair is my friend!"

"Please read it," said Laurie.

Miss Colpas held the copy under the light. Laurie watched her narrowly. As she turned over the pages, first her lip uncurled, then her black eyes softened a very little; she paused and bit her lip and frowned. Finally she threw the papers pettishly on the table, her arms dropped indecisively, she avoided Laurie's eye.

"I know very well it all rests with you," said Laurie. "If you and your brother won't set it up, of course there'll be no *Plainsman* to-morrow—nor ever again!" She paused for a moment to let this sink in. "No one blames you for selling your mortgage," she continued with a reasonable air. "That was simply business. But selling it does n't bind you to help old Telfair with his dirty work, does it? You are never the one to knife an old friend when his back is turned!"

Frankness was little Laurie's disconcerting weapon. Certainly the devil was in it if man or woman could resist her when she looked like that!

Leonora was in a wretched state of indecision. "Where's the bailiff?" she muttered.

"We put him in a potato bin," said Laurie calmly.

Leonora snorted briefly: Hennery was no favorite of hers.

"I wrote this for to-morrow's paper, too," said Laurie, taking up another page or two of copy from the table and handing it over. "And I borrowed your new photograph from Peake this afternoon, and had a cut made to run with it."

Miss Colpas read an eloquent half-column appreciation of herself and her services to the *Plainsman*; "great personal popularity" and "unswerving loyalty" figured largely. The cut lay on the table; Leonora distinguished the lines of the beloved picture hat and lace coat, and in her mind's eye she could not help but see it at the head of a column.

"Would you really run that?" she said incredulously.

"Just as it stands," said Laurie—"unless you want to add something."

Leonora looked at her oddly. "You're just twisting me round your finger!" she grumbled.

"No," said Laurie, honestly enough. "It's not me, really. You see, I *knew* you had a good heart!"

The old girl's wrinkles worked curiously. She suddenly caught Laurie by her two arms above the elbows and gave her a sharp little squeeze. "Laurie Gray, I've been an everlasting fool!" she said. Then, turning furiously to her brother, she shouted, "You Colpas! What are you gaping at? Get back to work, boy!" She commenced tearing off her gloves. "Here, I'll take the machine myself, and you set up by hand!"

On his way back from Prince George next morning, Frank Ardry bought a copy of the *Plainsman* when it was brought aboard the train at White Deer station. He opened it with an amused and tender smile at the recollection of the seriousness with which little Laurie had undertaken the role of editor—and then he gasped. Clear across the top of the paper spread this amazing announcement in the largest type they owned:

**DASTARDLY PLOT TO MUZZLE THE PLAINSMAN
LAID BARE**

And underneath, in type a little smaller, this:

**ARE THE CITIZENS OF BLACKFOOT
GOING TO SEE FAIR PLAY DONE?**

He skimmed through the story with anxious eyes and a beating heart; then he read it carefully and considered; then he read it a third time—and laughed. "Oh, marvelous Laurie!" was his thought. Her strength as always lay in her frankness: here was the whole story, Telfair, Mackinnon, and the unfortunate Henny Haddie, rendered in faithful, if somewhat heightened; colors. The automobile incident was rehearsed, the midnight meeting painted in strongly, the cowardly waiting of the conspirators until they had only a woman to deal with pointed out. She was compelled to boggle the truth a little as to Leonora's part, but what she could not say honestly she left unsaid—a privilege of special pleaders. Written straight from her generous young heart, the story could not help but be convincing—irresistible. It concluded with an eloquent and dignified appeal for funds in the cause of free speech. Mayor Pink was named as the repository.

Four times in the two blocks between the station and the *Plainsman* office Frank was clapped on the back and congratulated. The office itself was crowded, not with mere idlers, but solid men, members

of the board of trade, a bank manager. Laurie was in the centre, perfectly self-possessed—only her lip trembled as Frank came in the door. In the sanctum Mayor Pink was entering checks in a notebook. By noon they had the *Plainsman* reorganized. Frank was elected president, and Laurie was put on the board of directors. Sufficient cash was subscribed to pay off all indebtedness and start the regenerated paper with a safe working capital.

Late that night, when the last friend and well-wisher had gone home to bed, Frank and Laurie adjourned to Mat Runyon's for a bite, as they often did before he took her home. Laurie, perched on a round stool, with her ridiculously small feet swinging free, was munching a cheese sandwich with perfect composure. Frank for his part could only look at her and murmur:

“Laurie! Laurie! How wonderful you are!”

She turned a frowning brow in his direction. “Oh, stuff!” she said inelegantly. “Be sensible! Pals don't carry on that way.”

“Hang the pal game!” said Frank energetically. “You've got to marry me now, that's what!”

The sandwich was on its way to Laurie's mouth as he spoke. It completed its journey, and the white teeth met through it without a tremor. Laurie chewed and swallowed the bite before she spoke.

“Would I keep my job?” she inquired casually.

“For life!” said Frank.

“Oh, very well, then!” she said coolly. “I don't mind!”

But for all her cool airs, in the swift, veiled glance she vouchsafed him Frank saw that which made his breast rise with wonder and delight.



“WHERE LOVE IS”

BY JOHN KENDRICK BANGS

WHEN troubles deep enmesh the soul,
 And all the skies are filled with dread;
 When clouds of sorrow black uproll,
 And worry lowers overhead,
 A touch of love will still regrets,
 And make of night a noon-day glow—
 Like as to winter violets
 That bloom beneath the drifting snow.

THE TREE OF HIS PEOPLE

By *Nevil G. Henshaw*

LAST winter, following an invariable custom, I spent the holidays in Louisiana—hunting upon the marshes of the Bay Vermilion. As usual, my guide was the little hunchback, Jean Le Bossu, and Christmas eve found us cooking the pick of our bag in a deserted fishing-hut upon the Pointe Noire.

We sat out late that night, talking of many things, and, as was natural, our conversation finally turned upon the feast of the morrow.

“It is a wonderful thing, this Christmas—a beautiful thing, is it not, M’sieu?” asked Le Bossu. “And the story of the Little One who was born in a stable. You should hear the *curé* tell of it some time when he is waiting for the midnight mass.”

He paused for a moment and stared out upon the bay, where the reflection of the stars seemed to bore far down into the depths of the black water.

“The little ones—are they not the real Christmas, after all, M’sieu?” he continued, with a low, plaintive note in his voice that I had never heard before. “Perhaps if I had some of my own, in a little house back there upon the mainland, I should not be where I am now. I have had many comrades, and, somehow, all of them have managed to marry. But I am Le Bossu, and it is right that I should hunt—always hunt—and so spend my Christmas upon the Pointe Noire.”

It was the first time that I had ever seen him in this mood, and I hastened to cheer him, telling him of the sport that we should have upon the morrow, explaining how I had chosen the Pointe Noire of all places in which to spend my Christmas, regardless of the pleasures that I might otherwise have had. Then, seeing that his interest was aroused, I told him of the pleasures themselves, drawing to the best of my ability the picture of a Christmas of which he had never heard—the Christmas of a great city.

I told of the lighted stores, of the crowded streets, of the snow and the ice, of the hollies and evergreens; of the many unknown things in the far-off, frozen north.

True to his forest training, Le Bossu picked out the detail that was of the most interest to him.

"This holly, M'sieu?" he asked. "It is your tree of Christmas, is it not? I have seen it, for there is one upon the hill at Petit Anse—a huge, prickly tree with coldly shining leaves and large, red berries—a tree well suited to the harsh, cruel weather of which you have spoken."

He thought for a moment, and then added:

"And there is another tree of Christmas, M'sieu—the tree of my people. Humble though they are, they have one. I did not think of this for many years, but now I know."

He was silent for so long that I forsook my usual rule and questioned him.

"And the story, Jean?" I asked.

"Oh, there is no story, M'sieu," he replied. "It is only one of those little happenings that sometimes flash into a man's life like a streak of lightning. For a moment all is bright and clear, and you see many things to which you have paid no attention before. Then the thoughts of your own affairs come back again, and it is forgotten. Had I not spoken of the trees just now, I should never have remembered my friend Dautrive or his wife Marie.

"Dautrive was a fisherman—one of those brown, half-wild men who live far out here upon the coast, struggling always against the wind and waves. Thus they live except when, once or twice a month, they come to the mainland to sell their catch, and carouse at the coffee-houses. During those hours they think that they are kings—ruling all the world.

"Marie dwelt at Anse Le Vert. She was very tall and very beautiful, yet she had reached the age of twenty and none had asked to marry her. With us, one who reaches this age unmarried is what you call an old maid—*une vieille fille*.

"It was her temper of which they were all afraid, the temper that her mother had handed down to her, the temper that had driven her father far off into another parish. You could see it always in the girl's great brown eyes, ready to flash forth at a moment's notice.

"'Mon Dieu!' the young men would say. 'She is beautiful—very beautiful; but who can live with a wildcat?'

"Dautrive saw her one morning when he was going down to his boat, still warm with the wine that he had drunk the night before. The girl stood at the edge of the sea marsh—beside a little casino tree—and, at sight of her, Dautrive paused and made a low bow.

"'God, Mademoiselle!' he cried. 'If, as they say, you are a wildcat, then are you at least a beautiful one. How would it be if, when I return, I were to try and tame you?'

"Now, knowing her as I did, I thought that the girl would become furious, and would lash him with her temper. Instead, she smiled and broke off a twig from the tree.

"'You have my permission, M'sieu,' she replied. 'I am glad that

I have found at least one *man* upon this coast. See, I will give you a token.' And she handed him the twig.

"'It is a good token of yourself, Mademoiselle,' said Dautrive, as he took it and looked at the little red berry upon its rough, white wood. 'The fruit is like your lips, and the wood is like your heart.'

"But Marie shook her head.

"'You are wrong, M'sieu,' she replied. 'The brave red fruit is for yourself. The wood is for the others.'

"Two weeks later Dautrive returned. In less than a month he and Marie were married.

"'Come, come, Jean,' he said to me when I remonstrated with him. 'You and the others do not understand. The girl has courage, that is all. Who cares for a word or two?'

"In another month he was worried, and his friends were noticing it.

"'Hola, Dautrive!' they mocked him. 'Have you tamed her yet? If so, we should like to see it.'

"After he had beaten a couple of them, he bore their taunts in silence, pretending not to hear. It was not that he was afraid. It was as though his spirit was broken by unhappiness. It is a terrible thing, M'sieu, for two souls to spend each hour of their lives in quarrelling. To me, it is more dreadful than all of the wars in the world.

"Dautrive had not been married three months before he came to me one morning as I was setting forth for the coast.

"'It is no use,' said he. 'I am going back again. You were right, Jean. No man can live with her.'

"'But now that you have made your bargain you should stick to it,' I replied. 'Wait a year, and perhaps she will change.'

"'I tell you there is no use,' he cried. 'I could not wait another day. Otherwise I would harm her. There was never such a woman. Nothing can soften her.'

"Ah, but he did not know!

"For a week after he left, Marie was like a mad woman. All through the village you could hear her denouncing her husband and telling of how she would punish him when they met again. Then, in one night, she changed and became as quiet as she had been violent before.

"I was the first to see her upon the morning of this change, for she came to my boat at daybreak, as I was preparing to go out upon the bay. I cannot tell you how I discovered the change, but even before she spoke I knew that she was a different woman.

"'Jean,' said she very quietly, 'I want you to see my husband. I want you to ask him to come back again. Tell him that all will be well.'

"That night I stopped at Dautrive's camp and delivered the message. Before I had well begun he interrupted me with a laugh of scorn.

"'Oh, yes, I will come back!' he cried. 'I am very likely to come

back! And she is quiet, you say? That is because she is saving up for my return.'

"'You are wrong,' I replied. 'She means it, Dautrive. I could see it plainly. There is something different about her—in her eyes, perhaps. The old fierce look is gone now, and they are very soft and gentle.'

"'And you are very soft and gentle to let her fool you with her tricks,' he laughed. 'Believe me, I would not return for all the money in the world. Tell her this when you get back, and you will see.'

"When I left him he had convinced me that he was right, and I delivered my message with fear and trembling. To my surprise, Marie only gave a little sob and turned quietly away.

"'I cannot blame him,' said she. 'But you will try again for me, Jean?'

"There was a note in her voice, of longing, of sadness, that I could not fail to understand.

"'Madame,' I replied, 'there is nothing that I will not do.'

"After this I saw Dautrive each time that I went out upon the coast, but I could never move him—I could never get him to believe.

"'It is only a trick, Jean,' he would always reply. 'I, who have married her, know. When she becomes convinced that she cannot fool me, you will see.'

"Yet I persisted, until he finally lost patience and forbade me to mention the matter again.

"'Enough is enough!' he cried. 'You will cease your prying into that which does not concern you. I will be annoyed no more. The next time that you speak of the affair, I will duck you in the bay.'

"That afternoon, when I returned to Anse Le Vert, Marie was waiting for me, as usual, at my landing. Before, I had always tried to cheer her, telling her that it would be different another time, but now I saw that I must tell the truth.

"'I have done my best, Madame, and I am through,' I said. 'Your husband has forbidden me to mention the matter, else he will duck me in the bay.'

"' *Bien*,' she replied. 'It is what I have feared. Yet I thank you with all my heart for what you have done.'

"Ah, M'sieu, it was very sad!

"The days went on to the end of November, and I did not see Marie again. She seldom appeared upon the streets, and it was whispered about that she was mad.

"And then, one morning as I was going down to my boat, I met her at the little casino where she had first met Dautrive. She was very pale and tired, and in her eyes there was a look that I shall never forget—a look as of one who has been forsaken by all the world.

“‘Ah, Jean, Jean,’ she cried, ‘will you not take another message to my husband? Just one—a little one—and I will never ask you again.’

“‘Madame,’ I replied, ‘you place me in a very difficult position. Your husband is a strong-tempered man, and for months he has been drinking. Also, the waters of the bay are very deep and cold.’

“‘And yet he must know, Jean—he must know,’ she pleaded. ‘Will you not tell him just this once that he must return? Will you not tell him that——’

“She paused with a great flush of red upon her cheeks and broke a switch from the casino tree.

“‘See, I will make it easy for you,’ she continued in a low voice. ‘Only give him this token, as I gave him one—once before. Only tell him to look at it well, that he may understand. Promise me that you will do this, or my heart will break.’

“Ah, M’sieu, I feared that ducking which, in Dautrive’s anger, might very well last too long, but how could I refuse? Taking the switch, I curled it in the lining of my hat.

“‘I promise,’ I replied. ‘To-morrow, when my hunting is over, I will cross to the camp and attend to the matter.’

“That afternoon, in the deep marsh, I stepped upon a moccasin and got such a bite as I had never had before. For more than three weeks I lay in a delirium upon the Point of Porpoises, and it was not until the day before Christmas that I was well enough to get about again.

“Now, in all that time I had not thought of my promise, and it was not until I left the Point at daybreak that I remembered it again. But once I remembered it, I could think of nothing else, and all day the matter lay heavily upon my mind. That afternoon I conquered my misgivings and put about for the camp of Dautrive.

“I arrived just at dark, upon the first wind of an approaching storm, and, as I had feared, the camp had begun upon the drinking that was to last all through the next day. They sat about a great fire upon the beach, despite the driving wind, and Dautrive was the wildest, the most reckless, the most drunken, of them all.

“Ah, M’sieu, my heart was like water at sight of him, but I knew that if I put the matter off for an instant, I should never have the courage to attend to it. Walking over to where he stood swaying by the fire, I handed him the token in silence, since at that moment I could not speak a word.

“‘And what is this, Jean?’ he asked with a laugh. ‘A fishing-pole—for minnows?’

“‘It is a token from your wife,’ I replied. ‘She asks once more that you return.’

“The anger that flashed into his face was so terrible to see that I

could not help shrinking back a step or two. Then he smiled very slowly, turning the switch about in his great fingers. The smile was even more terrible than his anger, for in it I could read the satisfaction of one who is about to loose a vengeance long delayed.

“‘So it is a token from my wife, is it, Jean?’ he asked almost kindly. ‘I see now. It is like the one with which she first caught me. And does she think—do you think—that I will nibble at the same bait again? But perhaps you would mock me. *Bien*. I will choose my own bait, which will be yourself. Come, *mes amis*, to-night we shall have strange fishing in the bay.’

“His great hand shot out and seized me with a grip of iron.

“‘But perhaps you have forgotten what I promised you?’ he asked with a sneer.

“‘I have forgotten nothing, Dautrive,’ I replied as steadily as I could. ‘It is a promise that I made your wife a month ago, and, had I not been ill, I should have seen you before. I am willing to take my punishment, but let me first earn it all. There is still another message to deliver. Your wife said also to look at the token well, that you might understand.’

“Still holding me with one hand, Dautrive raised the token to the level of his eyes.

“‘*Bien*. That is fair enough,’ said he. ‘See, I have looked at it carefully, and I understand. It is a switch from the casino tree—the same old bait, as I have said.’

“Then he cast the switch upon the ground and pulled me roughly toward him.

“‘Come,’ he growled. ‘The fun is about to begin.’

“A moment I gazed down at the little withered stick which was perhaps to cause my destruction, and then, like a sudden flash of light, the meaning of it burst upon me, so that I saw and understood.

“‘Wait, Dautrive!’ I cried. ‘We have both been blind. Look again and you will understand. It is something more than a switch. It is a shoot, a sprout—a little spark of new life from the old tree. Do you not see it now? Can you not comprehend?’

“I shall never forget the look upon his face as he pushed me away from him and stood with the sprout in his hands, gasping and staring by the light of the fire. All the anger was gone, all the cruelty. He was like one who has received a message from above.

“‘God!’ he cried, and the tone of his voice made the oath sound almost a prayer.

“‘And you say that the token was given you a month ago?’ he asked. ‘Then there is not a moment to lose.’

“‘We must wait until morning,’ I replied, and I pointed to where the waves were already crashing far up upon the beach.

"He did not even glance at them.

"'What is a storm to me at such a time as this?' he cried. 'Also, since you were not afraid to deliver the token, you will not be afraid to go.'

"And so we made the trip that night, M'sieu, through the storm. Three times we drove half sunk into the sea marsh, and always, when we were bailed out, Dautrive would put back again. We came up the bayou just at daybreak, and after Dautrive had left me at my landing, I slept where I sat—unable to move.

"All that afternoon I thought of the little casino and of what it had done, and that night, when all were happy with their affairs, I went quietly out to look at it again, for I was sad and lonely. When I got to the place, M'sieu, it was gone. Some one had cut it down close to the ground and had carried it away.

"And so I was sadder and lonelier than ever, and, for comfort, I went upon my return past the house of Dautrive. A moment I peeped through the window—before going on—and in that moment I became happy and contented, so that it was the most beautiful Christmas that I have ever known.

"Ah, you should have seen them, M'sieu—the mother upon her pallet, holding fast to the father's hand, while they gazed upon the little bundle between them with so much love and joy. And there, in the centre of the room, was the little casino tree, each tiny leaf and berry sparkling proudly in the light of the fire—crowned at its top with a single, rough-carved toy.

"You see, it was a Christmas tree, M'sieu—the first that I had ever seen, for my people know little of such things. How Dautrive conceived the idea of it, I do not know. Perhaps it was *le bon Dieu*. Perhaps it was his own, father's heart. Who can say?

"But since then I have known that the casino is the Christmas tree of my people, as the holly is of yours—that it is the tree of flowers and sunshine, as yours is of ice and snow. True, it is small and humble, but are we not humble also? And yet, M'sieu, had I the choice of all the wonders of which you have told, I think that I should rather see that mother's face once more as she looked upon her little one in the firelight."

Le Bossu ceased abruptly and began to arrange the fire. He seemed to have recovered his good spirits, for, as he did so, he softly crooned an old Acadian lullaby.

"Come, M'sieu," he called cheerily. "The ducks have been asleep long ago, and we must wake before them. As for this Christmas, it seems to me that, if one has a memory, he need not be so lonesome."

And as he turned to enter the hut I could see that he was smiling in the starlight.

THE DECLINE OF THE COLLAR

By Frederic Drew Bond

“ADS,” they say, are a sign of the way the wind blows in the commercial field where the dollars ripen. And from them a strange, sad fact has slowly been forcing itself on our attention. The once contemned “celluloid” collar, the despised of all observers, the butt of writers and the stigma of the impecunious, is slowly butting its way into the good society of the wardrobe, like some boulder erstwhile dubbed impossible. To be sure, it has changed its name—it’s a “waterproof” now. But what of that? The fact remains. “The old order changeth, yieldeth place to new.” The signs are unmistakable. From magazine and car “ad” to painted sign-board, the rival claims of various linoleum structures meet the view, each shamelessly—as becomes these days of commercialism and divorces—giving its plebeian directions for use:

When soiled, wipe collar with damp cloth. All traces of dirt are at once removed, and the collar is again ready for wear.

And then the sickening deceptions: “Can’t be told from linen”; “Are linen water-proofed”; “Worn by the best dressers.”

The immoral tendency of painted sign-boards has been inveighed against by the grave-minded from time immemorial; and not less subtle and pervasive is the poison in the waterproof collar ad. “Vice from its hardness takes a polish, too.” The first shock wears off. Some summer day, when four or five of our “X and Y” collars have slowly, though with dignity, wilted away, the thought turns curiously towards these new-fangled creations. We draw ourselves up on the instant. An unbecoming, a low temptation has sullied the soul.

Collars, 25c.; cuffs, 50c. Last ten times as long as the old-fashioned linen collars.

“Old-fashioned”! Has it really come to this? Sternly we recover ourselves, repress the temptation, don a fifth “X and Y,” and settle to our muttoms.

But the slight lapse from virtue has told. Already we catch ourselves stopping longer when greeted by impecunious acquaintances. Surely, *they* must wear them. We look curiously, though shyly, at their neckwear. "Pardon me, old man; there's a speck on your collar. Let me fleck it off." All the while the inquiry is running in our heads: "Is that it, I wonder? Is that it?" But that looks real. We leave in doubt and perplexity, wishing to ask, yet deterred lest the question throw a reflection on ourselves. A little later, a brazen-faced friend boldly avows the shameful thing: "Sure, I wear them regularly. Save time and expense. No, that's not one. Forgot to put it on this morning. Tell the difference? Not a bit. Brown sells them. Come up and I'll introduce you." You stammeringly decline. "Why, you're not ashamed, are you? Well, well! Did n't think such a thing of you. But every one has his pet superstition or snobbery."

You pass an hour with this unblushing friend, and you notice that his collar remains firm. You long to settle the matter by a merciless cross-examination, but hesitate. Perhaps he is not so brazen on the subject as he pretends to be. You go home, your doubts still unsolved.

You stop next day at Smythe & Smythe's, fashionable robbers in toggery, Fifth Avenue, New York, and Chestnut Street, Philadelphia. "Er—I want to see some of those new collars, you know. The kind they're advertising. Had n't anything to do, and thought I'd look into the matter as a joke."

The searching eye of the salesman gauges the depths of your guilty heart. "Oh, yes," comes his quick reply; "you mean the new 'A and B' collar, sixty cents apiece. Yes, they're just the thing for a warm day. Let me send you a dozen."

Ill with heat and anxiety, you let the bandit break into your ten-spot, and return home. Once more the magazine head-lines strike your eye:

If your dealer won't supply them, send to us direct for a trial half-dozen.

A cold perspiration creeps over you. Then the nerve of a burglar with his jimmy, of a Wall Street bank president, overcomes your scruples, and with hardened heart you write the fatal words:

DEAR SIRS:

You may send me half a dozen.

It is done. You feel a great relief—the relief of ceasing to strive for an unattainable ideal. You have definitely ranked yourself among the goats. You have lost all sense of virtue. Hence, the object of your life is to drag others down into the abyss in which you yourself have so deeply fallen.

THE TREES OF MY NATIVE LAND*

By Aloysius Coli

I AM lonely to-day for the great green trees
And the ferns and the silver rills
That bend their heads to the summer breeze
And bubble out of the hills.

The desert opens her purple cloak,
And the sun leaps up from the sand—
But oh, for a glimpse of the green old oak
That grows in my native land!

I am lonely to-day for the great green trees
Where the shadows live and die,
With God in their stately majesties,
And His voice in every sigh.
Columns of marble and storied stone
Confront me, hoary and grand—
But oh, for an hour to walk alone
In the groves of my native land!

I am lonely to-day for the bending bough
Of the maple and elm and pine
That shadow the foot and kiss the brow
With a touch that is half divine.
I walk in the dust of cities dead,
And kings have passed this way—
But oh, for a glimpse of the sun gone red,
Through the boughs of the oaks to-day!

I am lonely to-night for the shadows down
By the old gray water-mill,
With only the hunting winds to drown
The drip of the flume and rill.
I wander 'mid ancient mysteries
Where Romance waves her wand—
But oh, for an hour in the whispering trees
And the brooks of my native land.

* Written at Carthage, Africa.

THE GIVIN'EST LADY

By Eleanor Mercein Kelly

CLOSED gates and drawn curtains gave to the familiar Summers place an air of cold exclusiveness. Miss Hallie clicked the latch irrevocably behind her, struggling as usual to conceal a palpitating heart under a bold exterior. It was the little lady's very shyness which, in the effort to disprove itself, urged her often into deeds of the most brazen effrontery. The new tenant had certainly allowed it to be understood that he did not expect callers. The neighborhood on its part was very particular about whom it warmed in its bosom. Nevertheless, the fact remained that Doctor Brown's buggy had twice been seen waiting in front of these forbidding gates; and the stranger's household was reported to consist entirely of Northern servants—wretched white hirelings who, as everybody in Beech Hollow knows, have not the faintest conception of either proper cooking or nursing. As nearest neighbor, Miss Hallie saw her duty plain before her.

Fragrance from the napkin-covered plate she carried tickled the nostrils of the neighborhood chore-boy, who left off his casual labors in a rose-border to hurry forward with a wide grin of hospitality. Not so the pale, spectacled gentleman near by. "I hear the village on the front path again," he said wearily, without turning his head. "James—John—what's-your-name" ("Hit's Rufe, suh!" put in the chore-boy helpfully,)—"be good enough to tell these people once more that my grounds are not open to the public, and that any parcels must be delivered at the back gate."

The silence was intense. Rufe, staring at Miss Hallie in an agony of mortification, finally broke it with an audible whisper: "Don't you pay him no mind, Miss Hallie, ma'am! He don't mean nuffin, honey—he jes' sort o' No'thern in his ways."

"No, matter, Rufe. I see that I have made a mistake——" The soft voice broke in spite of every effort to keep it haughty and frigid.

Instantly the gentleman turned his spectacles toward her, flushing painfully. "Miss Hallie—a lady?" he exclaimed. "Forgive me! I do not seem to have acquired as yet the keen perceptions attributed to blind folk. It never occurred to me that I might be entertaining

angels unaware. Young ladies are of such rare occurrence I have not learned to recognize the flutter of their wings. It is a young lady, is it not?" he asked, rather wistfully of the silence.

"Yassuh!" answered the gallant Rufe, while Miss Hallie blushed to the waves of her silver hair.

"And a pretty one, too, if I am any judge of voices!"—the gentleman's smile was very winning. "What may I do for you, my dear? Charities—a subscription list, perhaps? Come, come, Miss Hallie! Don't hesitate to ask. From my humble distance, I am a great admirer of young ladies. Show that you forgive my rudeness by allowing me to do you some favor."

It was Rufe who rose to the occasion. "Reck'n dey ain't nuffin nobody *could* do for Miss Hallie, 'cause she'd a-done it fust for dem. She's de givin'est lady in dishyer town, Miss Hallie is. She's done brung you a nosegay, suh, and somefin in a napkin dat smells mighty fine—um-m!"

"Just a bit of Sally Lunn I made myself," explained the tremulous voice. "I thought it might—might tempt your appetite."

"My appetite is tempted to its fall," cried the gentleman, "though I have no idea whether Sally Lunn belongs to the vegetable or the animal kingdom." (Rufe and the lady exchanged pitying glances.) "Truly, this is most delicious, and most kind. How did you happen to think of me?"

"Why," smiled Miss Hallie, "I am your nearest neighbor!"

"Ah! And I am to understand that nearest neighbors always provide the passing stranger with Sally Lunn? You see," he explained, "I know so little about neighbors. Where I come from, they don't exist—or, if they do, I never happened to meet any."

"What a dreadful, lonely place!" cried Miss Hallie.

His mouth shut grimly. "It is. That's why I came away."

She leaned toward him, shyness struggling again with effrontery. "But, Mr. Morton, if you want neighbors and—all that, why do you shut your gates and act so—rude to everybody?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Have you ever been pitied? How would you like to feel that people were staring at you and whispering, 'That's Morton, the failure. Used to be something on the Street. Looks like a has-been, does n't he?' No, no; when I'm out of the race I know enough to get off the track. It's the proper thing for sick animals to crawl away and hide. All I want is to be let alone."

"No, it is n't!" she said quickly. "Oh, no, it is n't! All you want is your friends, Mr. Morton. You did wrong to hide away from them. It was n't fair!"

He laughed a little. "Friends, eh? Where I come from, friends don't seem to exist, either. I've lost my money, you know."

"What in the world," cried Miss Hallie, "has that got to do with it?"

He laughed again, less grimly. "I see that you are very young, my dear! But you have made me speak of things I did not intend to—cynical, sordid truths that are much better ignored. The Sally Lunn must have gone to my head. You see, my nervous system has got out of order a bit. That's why I came here. I wanted to get away from the old life, round the corner of the world, as it were—and sit in the sun awhile, and get used to things. There's so much sun in the South; and I'm cold, cold clear through to the heart. But I beg your pardon! I forgot myself. . . . Mr.—Rufus! The gates for this young lady. . . . You will come again, my dear? I know it is asking too much of a girl to amuse a crabbed old invalid like me occasionally, but count it among your charities."

Rosy with embarrassment, Miss Hallie opened her lips to explain, but said, "Good-by," instead. After all, if this poor, blind stranger was such an admirer of young ladies, how could it possibly matter if he made the mistake of a few decades in her age? Besides (she admitted to her secret soul), flattery from the gentlemen is not unpleasant.

"What I fail to comprehend," argued Miss Withers belligerently, some days later (she was a lady who failed, belligerently, to comprehend many things,) "is why this person comes to live among utter strangers in the first place, and why, now he's here, he declines to have anything to do with any of us? Humph! Who does he think he is? Does n't he know that some of the finest families in the State live right here around Beech Hollow? You can't tell me!"

"But I've tried to tell you so often, Jinny dear," soothed Miss Hallie. "He said he was just like a sick animal, hiding away——"

"Sick animal—gammon! Sick animals don't come to malarious climates in June, and rent places with high walls, and keep their curtains drawn day and night for fear people might peep in and see something. No, indeed! They go to the mountains, or the seashore, or sanatoriums. Oh, he's hiding away—I grant you that!" She wagged an ominous head. "There's something wrong, my dear, something very wrong."

"There certainly is something wrong," agreed Miss Hallie, "when a man is sick enough to hide away from his friends."

But Miss Withers was not to be lured from the trail by any sentimental sympathy. Her interest in mankind had soured in the bottle, as the best of wine does sometimes with the lapse of years. She was in a perennial state of suspecting the worst. It proved to be her opinion, darkly expressed, that the man was not blind at all.

"Not blind! But he *says* he is," cried Miss Hallie. "And why in the world would a handsome man disfigure himself with those horrid black goggles if he did n't have to?"

Miss Withers made a dramatic gesture. "Has it never occurred to you that those goggles might be a disguise?" she said; and produced from her knitting-bag a newspaper which furnished the inner motive of her visit. In silence she pointed out an article on the front page. In silence Miss Hallie read the account, all too familiar nowadays, of an absconding bank-cashier who was supposed to be in hiding somewhere in the Southern States.

"But, Jinny," exclaimed Miss Hallie, "it says a cashier, and cashiers are always *young* men. Who ever heard of a cashier that was n't a young man?"

"Gammon!" snapped the other, pointing in triumph to a description of the missing man. "Iron-gray hair," it read, "smooth-shaven, with a scar on the upper lip."

"There, you see!" Miss Hallie was clutching at straws. "It says smooth-shaven, and Mr. Morton wears a big mustache."

Miss Withers was exasperated out of her manners. "Hallie Thomas, you always were a simpleton! Of course he wears a mustache—of course he does! Do you suppose he wants to go around showing off that scar for people to know him by?"

They stared at each other in growing conviction, Miss Hallie's eyes filling slowly with tears. "It looks," she said—"it looks as though we had tracked him down, Jinny."

Her friend nodded proudly. "The Altar Guild thinks so, too—I dropped in on my way. The ladies were saying how sorry they were for you," she added, "because you have been running in and out of there so much, carrying him food and flowers. They know how ashamed you would be of making up to a creature of that sort."

A flash of anger effectually dried Miss Hallie's eyes. "You may tell the Altar Guild," she cried, "that I'm not the least bit ashamed of making up to the poor man, and that I'm going to keep right on doing it—so there!"

"Hallie Thomas! In Heaven's name, why?"

"Because, if this is true, he has n't a friend in the world."

Miss Withers sniffed. "And do you think that a thief deserves friends?"

"No, indeed," sighed Miss Hallie. "No, indeed. And that's the very reason he needs them."

The same evening (evening in Beech Hollow lasts from noon until the dark falls) there was prolonged screeching of an automobile-horn in front of the Summers gates. Rufe, shedding garden implements en route, answered the summons with alacrity.

"Sa-ay, Mr. Morton, suh!" he called from afar, returning. "Miss Hallie's out heah, an' she say mek haste, she's done come to tek you fo' a li'l' ride. She say it's high time fo' you an' dishyer town to be seein' each other."

"To be seeing each other!" echoed the blind man bitterly. "My compliments to the young lady, and you may tell her that I detest automobiles, that I hope never again to enter one, and that I am sorry to learn that there is such an anachronism in the neighborhood."

"T ain't no automobile, 'tain't no 'nach'onism," soothed the chore-boy. "Hit's jus' de old buggy, wif Nelly's chile a-drawin' of it, an' one o' dem horns what keeps automobbles from bumpin' into each odder. You need n't feel a mite skeery, suh. Nelly's chile is a puf-fekky safe mule."

"A—a what? I think you said a mule, Rufus? In that case"—Mr. Morton got to his feet—"you may ask the young lady to drive up to the front door. I shall be happy to accept her invitation."

The combined efforts of Rufe and a pompous, unsmiling butler landed him safely in the buggy.

"This is the first time in my life that I've taken a gentleman driving," fluttered Miss Hallie. "I suppose I should have hopped out gallantly to help you in, like beaux do; but if I let go of the lines there's no telling what Nelly's child may take it into her head to attempt. She had experiences in her youth that have left her with an— an uncertain disposition. Though she is perfectly trustworthy," added her mistress loyally.

"Uncertain dispositions so often go with trustworthiness," observed Mr. Morton. "I feared that Nelly's child was going to prove something more uncertain still—an automobile. Ugh, how I dislike the arrogant, noisy things!"

"But they're so stylish!" murmured Miss Hallie wistfully. "Nelly's child feels just as you do about them. She has a nervous temperament. I got the horn on her account, so that automobiles would treat us with more respect."

She tooted it vigorously as she spoke, producing the illusion of a machine going at full speed; and shortly informed him that they had turned a corner and were ambling past a touring-car drawn safely to one side of the road, the occupants of which looked surprised.

"You ought to patent the idea!" Mr. Morton was tugging at his mustache, and she noticed with triumph that it did not come off. "May I ask," he added, "how your steed came by its unusual name?"

"Why, it is Nelly's child," explained Miss Hallie. "But, of course, you never knew Nelly. Sometimes I forget that you're a stranger."

"Thank you," said Mr. Morton.

"The whole county knew our old buggy-mare, I expect—grew up

with her. When father died, it seemed necessary to—to slightly supplement our income, and everybody said there was money in mules. So dear Nelly—so you see——”

“I see,” said Mr. Morton. “And was there money in mules?”

She laughed ruefully. “Well, no. Not for us, at any rate. We felt that we owed Nelly’s child especial kindness because it had such an unnatural parent. I declare, I never was more surprised in any one than I was in Nelly. She’d always been such a womanly horse! But I can’t find it in my heart to blame her. The poor thing probably expected a pretty little fuzzy baby like other mares, and when she saw a long-eared, rat-tailed creature that brayed instead of nickering—why, it would have been a shock to any mother! She used to bite and kick and scream for help whenever the little colt came near her. Poor Nelly! She died soon afterward.”

“Nervous prostration, perhaps?” suggested Mr. Morton.

“I thought so, though they called it epizootic,” sighed Miss Hallie. “We had to bring her child up on the bottle; and you know you can’t sell anything you’ve brought up on the bottle!”

“Certainly not,” agreed Mr. Morton warmly.

“Oh, Hallie dear!” a woman’s voice attracted their attention. “Would you mind getting my coal-oil-can filled at the store?”

“Sa-ay, Miss Hallie!”—it was a child’s cry this time. “*Please* whoa up. We want to hitch on behind of you.”

Presently she intrusted Nelly’s child to the care of her guest while she left a dish of wine-jelly for the sick wife of Evins-the-Grocer. Then he heard her inviting to supper a family of many grateful voices, whose cook, he gathered, had left unexpectedly, after the casual African custom.

“Well!” he exclaimed at his door-step. “I have had to-day a most valuable lesson in the duties of a neighbor. No wonder they call you ‘the givin’est lady in town.’”

“Pooh! That’s just a pet-name I inherit from mother—and I don’t deserve it a bit,” she sighed, “because there is n’t anything left to give.”

“‘Cep’n’ yourse’f, Miss Hallie, ma’am!” spoke Rufe unexpectedly from the rose-border.

Miss Hallie, in the throes of indecision, hovered about her mirror like a frilly white moth. Which was the more stylish? Pink always gave her color; on the other hand, the blue bow brought out the blue of her eyes. The orchid must be considered, too, a lovely butterfly of palest mauve that was waiting to be pinned at her belt. A whole boxful of such blossoms was crowding her ice-chest at the moment, destined for the uncultivated eyes of the Home for Incurables. She re-

membered them with a pang. It is not often that an orchid is seen in Beech Hollow. She yearned to glorify her parlor with the exquisite things for just one day, inviting the neighborhood to tea. She fancied the commotion in the Altar Guild if she were casually to contribute a few orchids for the Sunday decorations, in place of her weekly nasturtiums and larkspur. But comment leads quickly to question in Beech Hollow, and if it became known that Mr. Morton was sending her orchids, how could she reconcile the fact with her own widespread report of his financial condition?

One orchid, however, was surely owing to the sacred rites of hospitality. If the goggles really were a disguise, how dreadful for her host to see that she did not wear his flowers! "His flowers"—the lingering, half-guilty phrase brought a bit of old-time song bubbling to her lips.

There was great crunching of gravel at the door, and Rufe, pulling up the mule with a flourish, cried importantly, "Oh, Miss Hallie! . . . Whoa-a! . . . Heah we is, Miss Hallie!"

From the depths of the buggy, Miss Withers, resplendent in green plaid taffeta, assured her that she was "only going to see for herself."

"Really? I thought," said Miss Hallie, with gentle malice, "that you were only going to chaperon me."

Miss Withers winced. She was six months the elder. "Make Rufe drive slower," she said tartly. "We don't want to get there on time, and have the man think we've never been to a dinner-party before!"

It was only a step from Miss Withers' door to Miss Hallie's, and another step from there to the Summers place. But there were clouds in the sky, and plaid taffetas and fluted muslins are not to be lightly risked in Beech Hollow. Of course a lady does not drive herself to a party; therefore Rufe took up as little room as possible between them on the buggy-seat, and contrived to wear a good deal of manner, considering his disadvantages. The Morton butler was his model.

"Good-evening," said both ladies pleasantly to that functionary as he flung wide the door, and Miss Hallie added, lifting a tiny foot, "You may take off my India-rubbers, please, boy."

The "boy" fixed unseeing eyes on some point above their heads, and murmured, "Upstairs-to-the-right."

They mounted apologetically, to be met by a personage in black silk with white muslin touches, who removed their knitted shawls with exaggerated care, and indicated powder and hair-pins.

Miss Withers wilted her with a glance. "We do not use cosmetics, and we arranged our hair before we came," she said, and moved majestically toward the stairs.

"Why, Hallie Thomas!" she whispered half-way down. "You did n't take off your India-rubbers!"

"I know," confessed the little lady. "I did n't like to, before her."

But as their host rose to greet them, Miss Hallie's shyness fell from her like an enveloping garment. The pale weariness of his face, with its hidden eyes, arouse every protective mother-instinct latent in her. She chatted and laughed as archly as the girl he thought her, determined that her protégé should show to the best advantage, anxious to amuse him to the point of tugging at his mustache, so that Jinny should see for herself how permanent it was.

Miss Withers, however, true to her rôle of detective, missed no incriminating detail—not the pearl studs which gave the final touch of costliness to his evening-clothes, nor the carved sapphire on his finger, nor the gold smoking-set which profaned the sanctity of Mrs. Summers' parlor table. "Poor—humph!" she sniffed, *sotto voce*. Once when the black goggles were turned courteously toward her, she made a wry face at them to show that *she* was not fooled; and as they went out to dinner, she managed to whisper to her friend, "Look out for your mother's pearl-and-cameo brooch!"

It was not a successful dinner. Two wines glowed and sparkled untasted in their glasses. Strange viands, strangely prepared, came and went in endless procession. There was no bread, except a cold, dry chunk which vanished with the soup. (In Beech Hollow, the poorest house offers at least two varieties of hot bread to its guests.) The haughty butler and the personage in black silk tiptoed about in chilling, unfriendly silence. Miss Hallie redoubled her gallant efforts, and Mr. Morton responded to them gratefully; but the chaperon was distinctly present under protest.

Later, Miss Hallie attempted "Monastery Bells" upon the piano, but her fingers were numb with nervousness, and wrong notes would pop in disconcertingly. Through the ordeal, she was wondering wretchedly whether the scent of the orchid was strong enough for him to know it by—also whether Jinny heard. For, as they left the table, Mr. Morton had bent over her to murmur, "Thank you for wearing the flowers, my dear."

They were barely safe in the welcome darkness of the buggy-hood before Miss Withers exploded: "Well! I suppose you believe after this that your protégé is both blind and poor? Aha!"

"Hush, do hush! Rufe will hear!"

"What of it? Every one will know to-morrow," said the other.

"Wh-what do you mean?"

"I have seen for myself," said Miss Withers, "and to-morrow I am going to report him to the authorities."

"No!" gasped Miss Hallie. "Oh, Jinny, you could n't! Your hospitality, your Christian charity—why, any strange dog is welcome at your——"

"Gammon! Sentimental rot! Do you suppose Beech Hollow can go on harboring a criminal forever, and being corrupted by him, and having him fall in love with you, Hallie Thomas? There, you need not gasp and wriggle. Anybody with half an eye can see that. It's disgraceful!"

Miss Hallie was too shocked to speak. There was no hope for Mr. Morton. Jinny was a woman of her word. Miss Hallie did not know that she was crying. She did not know that the buggy was standing at her own doorstep until a sympathetic cough from Rufe aroused her. Then an idea came to her, a forlorn hope.

"Jinny, I want to talk to you. No, I don't care if it is ten o'clock—or twelve o'clock!" she cried recklessly. "Come in." She turned in the light of the hall-lamp. "Jinny, we were babies together, we went to school together, we've grown up and old together. You were with me the day they brought father home, and when mother died. I was with you when you got the news that—that Jamie had married another girl. You remember?"

Miss Withers nodded.

"That's a tie that means something, more than just friendship, or kinship, or 'most anything else. Does n't it? Well, if I should tell you that after all these years I had f-fallen in love, and wanted very much to—marry somebody"—the voice trailed into a whisper—"you would n't be the one, would you, to put that person in jail?"

"So he has spoken?" cried Miss Withers.

There was a dreadful pause. Miss Hallie's head drooped lower and lower, while her hands twisted together in agony. Nobody born and bred outside of Beech Hollow can fully realize the shame of confessing unmaidenly regard for a man who has not "spoken."

"No—he never will," she said at last, very low. "He—he only likes me because he thinks I'm a p-pretty young girl. But that does n't matter—it is n't me—oh, can't you see?"

Her friend stared at her coldly. Young, wistful eyes, all the bluer by contrast with the wrinkles around them; tremulous lips that still turned up at the corners—a mouth made to be kissed; soft hair that persisted in its girlish waves and tendrils as if in defiance of the frost that held it—all these might have made their appeal to other judges, but not to the thin-lipped, flat-breasted woman before her.

"Well!" she said presently. "Because you have so far forgotten your age and station as to fall in love unasked, like any nursemaid. I do not feel called upon to protect the object of your attentions, my dear. And I trust that no consideration of friendship or association would ever cause me to fail, Hallie, in my duty to the Nation."

Nevertheless, thanks to certain twists in the nature of woman as ineradicable as the curl of Miss Hallie's hair, it was Miss Withers

herself, incoherent with dismay, who called her friend to the telephone early the next morning.

"Hallie—my goodness gracious! A strange man—I was on my way to town to inform the Authorities when I met him!—in the station-hack—inquiring for Mr. Morton! It's a detective—I know, because he had a little satchel just the right size for hand-cuffs. Run and warn him—hurry! He's almost there!"

Miss Hallie dropped the receiver and left it hanging. She flew to the picket-fence that divided her orchard from the Summers place. She could see the hunted man sitting, all unconscious, in his garden, with the chore-boy pottering near by.

"Rufe!" she quavered. "Help!"

The negro turned quickly to the beloved voice, just in time to see a pink dimity negligée clambering over the picket-fence.

"You remember the time the mob got after you!" she panted. "Mr. Morton——"

"'Fore Gawd! Is dey after *him*?" cried the negro.

"Yes, the station-hack—head it off——"

"Don't you fret—I'll fix 'em!" Rufe was already half way to the road.

She hurried to Mr. Morton, and caught him by the hand. "Can you run?" she demanded. "You'll have to."

"What is it—a fire? An earthquake?" he cried. But she had no breath to answer him. Through the shelter of some shrubbery they ran, along an alley, across Miss Hallie's orchard, and at last they sank, panting for breath, upon a bench in her vine-covered arbor.

It was just in time. Out in the quiet road, they heard a voice asking whether Mr. Morton lived near by. They heard Rufe's suave reply—no, indeed, nobody named Morton lived in that house, nor in the next, nor in the village, nor anywheres in the State, he did n't reckon.

"Why—why," cried Mr. Morton, "there's old——"

She laid her hand across his lips. "Yes, he's looking for you," she whispered. "But he won't look here—he would n't dare! I'd sick Sport on him. You're perfectly safe."

"Safe?" he echoed, bewildered.

"Oh, *don't* pretend any more!"—her voice broke. "I know who you are. You're Mr. Jones, the absconder. Truly, truly, I don't think any the worse of you—I know you are sorry now! And when the detective has gone," she hurried on, "you can just send them back all the money you took—don't you see?—and start all over again, and—and none of us will care a bit!"

"I see"—his lips were twitching oddly. "But if I send back all the money, little lady, how am I to live while I start all over again?"

"Here with me. There's enough for two if we're careful," said Miss Hallie simply. She had decided on the instant that he must not be told her age until later. He must first of all be taken care of. Surely he would rather marry even a quite old person than go to prison!

There was a moment's silence. Then he said slowly, "My dear child, am I to understand that you are offering marriage to a man fifty years old, a man whom you believe to be a criminal?"

"No, no!" she cried. "You may be an absconder, but I *know* you're not a criminal."

He turned away abruptly, and she saw to her dismay that he was tugging at his mustache. "You're not—you're not laughing?" she gasped.

"Well, no," he said. "I believe, as a matter of fact, that I am crying." Then he rose and stood before her, erect and proud, a rather fine figure of a gentleman. "I ask your pardon, my givin'est lady, for letting you deceive yourself for one moment," he said. "I give you my word of honor that I am not Jones, the absconder."

Even Miss Withers would have believed him.

"But—but the detective?" faltered Miss Hallie.

"He is a famous eye-specialist from New York, whom I have summoned at the wish of your excellent Doctor Brown. He thinks there may be still a chance for me."

"The money?" she faltered again. "You told me you had lost everything—that you were poor. But those orchids—and champagne—and the gold smoking-set—"

"I should have said that I had failed, not that I was poor—for Beech Hollow," he explained gently. "You see, for years I had put all my energies and efforts into a scheme for making one of the great fortunes of the world. It failed, thanks to 'friends.' So did my nerves and my eyes. The strain was too great, I suppose—something broke. But there is plenty of money left from the wreck to keep me very comfortably. I am arranging to buy Mrs. Summers' little place, because I am going to live here—just to be near you, my dear, to take care of you if I may until, please God, the young fellow comes along who is worthy to be your husband. For I thank Heaven," he added, very low, "that I have manhood enough left to decline your offer of marriage."

Suddenly a realization of what she had thought, and said, and done, came over poor Miss Hallie. "Oh!" she wailed. "O—oh!" and, clapping her hands to her blazing cheeks, she fled into the house.

It was Rufe, cautiously reconnoitering, who found Mr. Morton groping about among fruit-trees and clothes-lines, helpless with laughter, though his cheeks were wet. And it was Rufe who led him back

later to the arbor, where they surprised Miss Hallie in the dusk, knitting occasional tears into an afghan for somebody's baby.

"Place me between the lady and the house, so that she cannot escape again," ordered Mr. Morton, "and then, Rufus, you may go away."

"Yonder's a co'tin' moon, suh," whispered the negro slyly.

"I believe I feel it on my face, and some day, thank God, I shall see it with my eyes again," said Mr. Morton. "Miss Hallie, I've come to thank you for many things: for making me believe in the kinship of mankind, for teaching me the privilege of being a neighbor, for showing me that there are warmer things in the South than even its sun. I've never known a person, young or old, whom I so admire and venerate, and I——"

"Oh, hush, hush!" she cried. "Admire and venerate! When you hear the truth, you'll despise me. Listen. I'm not what you think me. I'm not pretty. I never was—never had a beau in my life. And I'm not young. I'm old. Every hair on my head is gray. And——"

"What!"—he had reached her in one step. "How old are you? Tell me quick—how old?"

She hesitated an instant, then whispered it.

"Hallie! It's only five years too young—my *dear!*"

She was pushing at him in a panic. "No, no. You shan't—you shan't act so! Two old people—it's ridiculous. It was different before, because I thought you needed me. I wanted to take care of you. I thought you were poor, and lonely, and——"

"And an absconder!"

"But now—don't you see?—it's all wrong!" she pleaded. "You're not even blind. There's nothing in the world I can do for you, Mr. Morton, nothing I can give——"

"'Cep'n' yourse'f, Miss Hallie, ma'am!" he quoted, his lips upon the silver hair.



THE ESCORTING GOOD

BY IREL MARLAT

WHEN we were wed 't was midst the songs of gladness at the
 birth
 Of stars—
 How long ago, my own!
 How much of life we've known!
 And still within the perfect gleam we must forget on earth
 What mars.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC



MAKE THE TRIP WORTH WHILE

IT is n't the question whether a noted psychologist can come back from across the Great Divide that chiefly concerns me. It is whether the aforesaid psychologist will know anything when he gets back. Coming back is common enough, if one can believe common report; but in each and every case that I know anything about, returning genius has left its wit behind.

I have had second-hand interviews with many of the departed great ones of earth; at least, they said, or it was said they said, that they were departed great ones; and I never like to dispute one's word. But if they were indeed what was claimed for them, then death has a more wasting effect on the mind than on the body. I have talked with an alleged ghost of Blackstone who did n't know enough law to try a case between a dog and a bone. I have listened to the wraith of Grant tell how he won the battle of Gettysburg (!) by the help of spirits. I have had advice on the purchase of mining stocks from the immortal part of Benjamin Franklin; but though the sage's "spirit" was cocksure as to the leads and blowouts of the Nancy Bell, he quite failed to remember anything about the date, purpose, or result of his mission to France.

Interviews of this sort may be useful in discouraging suicide; but I fail to see what other value they can have. If the great psychologist referred to is going to revisit the glimpses of the moon, let him make his visit worth while. Let him bring some evidence that will differ-

entiate the "spirit world" from a badly managed imbecile asylum. If he cannot do this, I, for one, do not care whether he comes back at all.

GEORGE L. KNAPP

HUMAN NATURE AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH

THERE are some latter-day philosophers who would have us believe that human nature is not the same to-day as it was in the time of the Flood. Herein do they labor without profit, for those of us who have occasion to come in contact with human nature are agreed that it is as unchanged as is canine nature or oxygen nature or anything else that is what it is. One of the most distinctive features of human nature is its prejudice against anything new that promises to make mankind better or more comfortable. Noah may have been the first man to discover it, but he was not the last. Every reformer, every bearer of glad tidings, down to the present hour, has discovered the same thing.

Therefore, let us not be surprised that the proposal to establish a national department of health is meeting with opposition. Human nature is but asserting itself with characteristic reaction. As it behaved at first mention of the printing-press, the telescope, the abolition of slavery, the enforcement of quarantine, so now is it behaving with respect to this latest innovation which would add to the happiness and the welfare of the race.

Statistics show that the people of the United States each year suffer a preventable loss of over six hundred thousand lives. Every minute of the day and night, from one year's end to the other, the life of some man, woman, or child is unnecessarily snuffed out because of inadequate care or precaution. So also do careful computations reveal the startling fact that there are constantly no less than three million persons seriously sick from causes that are preventable. To dwell upon the expense, the trouble, the misery, the hindrance, the loss, resulting from this great number of invalids and deaths would be to present an appalling picture. The financial cost alone requires ten figures for its adequate representation; a total, indeed, of no less than two thousand million dollars.

And the cases here involved, let it be remembered, are preventable cases: six hundred thousand annual deaths and three million constant cases of sickness that are caused by such things as polluted water, impure food, epidemics, uncleanness, bad sanitation, and various other conditions which need not exist if properly guarded against. Why, therefore, should they not be guarded against, as provided for by the act now pending in Congress to establish a department of public

health? There is small sense in permitting seventeen hundred fellow creatures to go unnecessarily to their graves every day of the year, to say nothing of the millions who are daily suffering from preventable sickness. At least, such is the view of the reformer—of him who would see the world made better and happier by the maintenance of good health. But the inertia of human nature has yet to be overcome.

We “point with pride” and no little boast to our Department of Agriculture, through which the federal government looks after the health of the hogs and the cattle of the nation; but when, as a people, we are asked to give approval to the creating of a like department for taking care of the public health, we become immediately suspicious and satirical, and make plain to the candid observer that human nature is elementally the same forever.

However, 't is comforting to reflect that history repeats itself. Every needed reform, every step destined to lead the world forward, has had its battle with opposition and has triumphed. Nor do we exhaust the marvels of human nature when citing its antagonism to reform; for it possesses also this encouraging and gratifying quality: that it will to-morrow acclaim with pride and passionate enthusiasm what to-day it refuses to welcome. Wherefore, we are minded to bide our time and all will be well.

CLIFFORD HOWARD

ON REFORMING CHRISTMAS

NOT content with remodelling the Fourth of July, ultra-zealous reformers are now advocating drastic changes in Christmas. Most of their attacks on the winter festival are directed towards the giving of gifts, which, they say, is productive of jealousy and hypocrisy, to say nothing of extravagance. It is true that many give beyond their means, often against their will; and those with little money foolishly try to compete with those who have much. People with whom we have long exchanged gifts, yet for whom we have perhaps ceased to care, will send *us* something, and we must not be outdone. Now, if there must be reform, let it be here. If we no longer desire to exchange gifts with some one, let us have the courage to write a friendly note and explain that we prefer not to this year. It is quite possible that our friend will be as glad to stop as are we. Or, send simply a card or a friendly letter, regardless of what may be sent to us. The hint is pretty sure to be taken the following year.

The exchanging of gifts has been a feature of Christmas for centuries. To me, it is a most beautiful custom, if—notice the *if*—it be done in the proper spirit—a spirit of genuine affection and

good-will. If two loving hearts exchange gifts of equal monetary value, each prizes what he receives far above the value in dollars and cents of that he has given. Nor do I hold with the doctrine that it is better to send merely cards or letters on Christmas day, and give to the poor the money we should otherwise have spent. I am selfish enough to want some of the Christmas fun myself; and I want my relatives and friends to have some, too. I always feel that Christmas day is sacred to my dear ones. Reformers may tell us that the furs which a man purposes giving to his wife would buy many dinners for the hungry, and many dolls and toys to make glad the hearts of ragged little ones; but—well, I should be sorry for the poor folk, but if it were my wife, she would get the furs. This is not a plea to abolish giving to the poor on this day of days; it is merely a plea for moderation. Let us remember the poor, let us give—bountifully if we can—to help them; but—don't let's overdo by failing to give gifts to those near to us.

Another thing: in giving to the poor—or, for that matter, to the moderately well-to-do—let us not give only useful articles. Those in whose lives luxuries seldom come will appreciate it all the more if they receive something which they would not have needed any way. Socks and groceries may be of more practical value than bonbons and gift-books, but if the latter will promote happiness, let us by all means give them.

R. T. H.

A GROWING MENACE

WHEN an amusement degenerates into a passion, it becomes a menace. It preys as does every inordinate thing upon an impressionable mind, until it robs it of both serenity and perspective. Whist for amusement's sake is quite as harmful as jack-straws, but at that sort of whist Fashion lifts its brows contemptuously. Excitement is the order of to-day. Nothing that fails therein is approved. Women who would blush to drink to excess stagger away from a Bridge table with haggard eyes, pounding pulses, and unsated desire. At the maximum of their madness time to eat or drink is begrudged. No gambler in the world ranks the "Bridge Fiend" on optimism. Such an idea as not winning is an absurdity, for to win is their métier.

In order to play this seductive game hundreds of thousands of infatuated women are not only sacrificing time, strength, and money, but they are stealing their children's birthright to sate an appetite that is never appeased. They are indifferent wives and careless house-keepers, robbing kindly Peter to pay jibing Paul, and laying up for themselves aftermaths not to be put into words. At the worst, their

eyes acquire a staring expression, their walk is a totter, their hands shake. The sanitariums are besieged with these nerve-wrecked women, whose husbands and brothers "confess" for them. Doctors' offices are filled with others, seeking stimulants to "go on." Specialists declare the Bridge of Fashion to be as harmful to highly strung women as alcoholism.

Appalled by what she has seen in her four years' itinerary as a champion whist player, one of the most notable Bridge players in America has thrown her cards down forever, to take up the strongest cudgels against them that she can find. According to her, and she knows, Bridge has become the curse of the feminine world. Those placid women who could play indefinitely without excitement have substituted other games lest they become confused with certain "Fiends" who risk so much to gain so little.

Pawnshop keepers are Bridge enthusiasts. It has come to be an immense source of revenue to them. All over this and other Bridge playing countries, women who can obtain money in no other way veil themselves and pawn their jewels, oftentimes heirlooms, again and again. The truth of this may be verified in any metropolis.

Not only has the madness of Bridge made domesticity a mockery; it has almost obliterated those old-time courtesies that between gentlewomen meant so much. Scarcely any fashionable woman has time to pay or receive calls. Her many Bridge engagements are prohibitive. She lives in fear and trembling lest some one from another city break in upon her unawares. She may have some money to spare, but she has no time to give to any one. Even her growing sons and daughters are obliged to be satisfied with tag-ends and a fagged mother. The telephone is her sheet-anchor when an occasion comes, as it will, when she wishes to forestall an inopportune visit from an old friend. She is not mean, she would give generously of her best, but her time, as has been said, is no longer hers. She has mortgaged it to the limit. She is bondswoman to Chance, self-manacled, true, and, stranger still, hugging the chain that at times presses sorely. Is it any wonder that, seeing woman's plight, physicians of the soul and body have separately and together evolved new cults, movements, and creeds, ready for the inevitable moment when her outraged nerves will no longer respond to the stimulus of pasteboard, when she will become as a child seeking guidance? It is *the woman who cannot afford to play the game who plays most recklessly*. Obviously it is also she who eventually comes to grief, and whose folly falls heaviest not upon her own head, but upon another's shoulders.

If wealthy women stopped to think how this mania for cards is spreading, they would end the Bridge craze, for, dearly as they are enamoured of Whist, they would not, through example, be willing

that their too imitative "Little Sisters" should be castaways mentally, morally, or financially. The very rich are credited too rarely with unselfish qualities.

That a crusade against card-intoxication is imminent cannot be doubted. Americans are peculiarly liable to extremes. New blood needs many channels, not one. With an impulsive woman, the last obsession crowds out all else. It destroys focus, nullifies conformity, engenders greed, selfishness, egotism, envy, and suspicion; any obsession touches elbows with insanity. It is a lamentable thing that so classic a pastime as Whist should fall into bad odor through the folly of some. It furnishes such a delightful way to spend an hour or two when other things pall. Unhappily the spirit of the times trends toward unquiet pursuits. Unless the element of hazard enters in, Fashion will have none of it, which is all the worse for Fashion. The menace will spread perilously unless the Yellow God should yawn across the table—whereupon Fashiondom must show a corresponding boredom and eschew the game. Therefore yawn, Mammon, yawn, that without more ado cards may again become a charming pastime, and cease to be an alarming passion.

MINNA THOMAS ANTRIM

A PLEA FOR THE PESSIMIST

THERE is a story of an ex-Christian Scientist who, when asked why he had relapsed, or backslid, or become unchristian-unscientific, confessed to having tired of being "so darned happy all the time." Evidently that man needed an occasional dash of pessimism to make life interesting after the monotony of persistent, unvarying optimism. The hopelessly incurable optimist revels, yes, wallows, in cheerfulness; his object in life is the pursuit of happiness, and, like the infant creeping toward a cake of soap, he won't be happy till he gets it.

Epigrammatic comparisons of optimist and pessimist drop often from the lips of would-be wits: "The optimist sees the rose, the pessimist feels its thorns." "Of two evils the optimist chooses the lesser, the pessimist both." It is as easy to cover the pessimist with obloquy as if he deserved it.

If there were no pessimists to ballast the too buoyant optimists, how long would the human race last? The optimist sits upon the deck of a crowded steamer, serenely smiling, blissfully content. The pessimist, sitting beside him, smells smoke and begins to fidget. The optimist says it is his imagination and advises him not to worry, for all will come right in the end. Nevertheless, the pessimist gets up and "noses 'round" till he discovers fire, which is then quietly sub-

dued. But when, on his return, he tells the optimist of it, the optimist exclaims triumphantly: "Did n't I say all would come right in the end?" And the exasperating part of it is, the optimist's confidence is justified—thanks to the pessimist.

Is it not an obvious deduction that a world made up wholly of optimists would be as impracticable as one containing only mendicant friars? The pessimist may be over-cautious, but the optimist is over-credulous. The optimist trusts in providence, the pessimist distrusts everybody and everything. The man who did n't know the gun was loaded was an optimist—he's dead: the one who feared it might go off whether it was loaded or not is a pessimist—he's still alive. The gentleman whose head was severed from his body so neatly that he could not be convinced of the disconnection till they had given him snuff and made him sneeze must have been an optimist; seemingly he had not the brains not to be. The optimist does n't know enough to go in when it rains—or at least he will start out on a cloudy morning without an umbrella, because he thinks he can borrow one from the pessimist if need be, and he usually can. The optimist saunters gayly through life, wearing that fatuous smile that won't come off, secure in the knowledge that drunken men, fools, and optimists get looked after somehow. Left to his own devices, the optimist is an irresponsible baby, dependent for his very existence upon the pessimist. The optimist is a butterfly, the pessimist a grub: without the grub there could be no butterfly.

Doubtless the optimist has his place in the world; so, too, have the amiable lunatic and the other irresponsibles. But the pessimist is the safer and more useful member of society, and it is to be regretted that his services to mankind get so little credit.

Here's to the pessimist: may he live long and (cause the optimist to) prosper!

FRANK M. BICKNELL

TRUTHS

It is as much the part of a good fighter to stay out of trouble as to get into it.

If every logical conclusion were really logical, what a dreadfully illogical thing logic would be.

MEN never make constitutions because they need them, but because they think their descendants will.

WHAT will posterity think of us when they find the number of interesting-bearing bonds we've handed down.

Ellis O. Jones



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