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Studies in Saffron

By Thomas Grant Springer

I—THE BLOOD OF THE DRAGON

THROUGH the legend-dimmed mist of centuries we look back to the stony plain of Mars, where Jason harnessed the fiery-breathed bulls of Vulcan to the plow of Æetes, and in the furrows that he left behind him sowed the Dragon's teeth. And, straightway, there sprang up from the torn soil armed men ready for battle. Blinded by the dust that the hero threw into their faces, they turned swiftly upon one another with unreasoning fury and slew and slew.

To-day, across the seas, the once smiling land of France has been turned again into the stony field of Mars. Plowed by the howitzers of the Huns, harrowed by their machine guns, in the ground thus prepared by the fiery-breathed bulls of a modern Vulcan, unknowingly the teeth of the Dragon were again sown, and those of the Dragon's blood sprang up into armed men, and slew and slew, blinded not by the dust that humble labor cast into their eyes.

Kan Wong, the sampan boatman, sat in the bow of his tiny craft, looking with dream-misted eyes upon the oily, yellow flood of the Yangtze River. Far across

on the opposite shore, blurred by the mist that the alchemy of the setting sun transmuted from miasmatic vapor to a veil of gold, rose the purple-shadowed, stone-tumbled ruins of Hang Gow, ruins that had been a proud, walled city in the days before the Taiping Rebellion swept with its fiery blight over the lowlands of the rich Yangtze Valley, withering the rice fields, drying the standing tea in the bud of the leaf, sweeping away villages and even whole cities, as the leaves of the willow tree in the path of the simoom are stripped and whirled off upon its fierce breath. In those fiery days of the Dragon's wrath, the gods turned their faces from men and returned to the fastnesses of the distant hills, leaving at the mercy of the "Hairy Rebels" upward of a hundred million souls. Of these a good tenth left their flesh and bones to the later fertilizing of the Yangtze Valley during the fifteen years that it forgot the ways of peace, and the claws of the Dragon harrowed it in anger for those who had turned from him and the worship of their ancestors. Even now, seventy years after the "Ever Victorious Army" forced peace again upon the land, Hang Gow is but

one of the many gigantic monuments of destruction that the Dragon's wrath left behind.

Viewing its slowly dimming towers as they sank into the fading gold of the mist that the coming night thickened and darkened as it wiped out the light with a damp hand, Kan Wong dreamed over the stories that his father's father—now revered dust somewhere off toward the hills that dimly met the melting skyline—had told him of that ruined city, wherein he, Kan Wong, had not Fate made men mad, would now be ruling a lordly household, even wearing the peacock feather and embroidered jacket that were his by right of the Dragon's blood, that blood now hidden under the sun-browned skin of a river coolie. Kan Wong stuffed fine-cut into his brass-bowled pipe and struck a spark from his tinder box. Through his wide nostrils twin streamers of smoke writhed out, twisting fantastically together and mixing slowly with the rising river mist. His pipe became a wand of dreams summoning the genii of glorious memory. The blood of the Dragon in his veins quickened from the lethargy to which drudgery had cooled it, and raced hotly as he thought of the battle past of his forefathers.

The War of the Rebellion of New China had been fought far away to the north and east. Only its backwash of reform had welled up the Yangtze, slowly and almost imperceptibly. Its tide crept so insidiously into Old China, the China to which Kan Wong belonged, and so little changed his condition, that he would never have known of it save for the edict that had removed his cue, thus taking him from under the Manchu yoke without affecting the grooves of labor upon his shoulders, on which the new yoke settled with the same weight of burden. New China meant nothing to him. The nobility of his forebears had been inherited from the Manchu, and it was lost when they cast their lot with the Taipings. Kan Wong still looked

back into the shadow of the Dragon, a shadow now removed, but in which gleamed the glory of a past that should have given color to his future. War, that great leveler of the highborn to the soil, and the raiser of the lowborn into exalted places, had cast his fortune into the descending scale of Fate when it had spilt his father onto the Yangtze plain, stripped of honor and weapons, a wreck of revolution whose offspring, like the chip of a blasted oak, had fallen upon the oily bosom of the river. The only heritage that the past had bequeathed to Kan Wong was the tales of glory before the Taipings rose: the fifteen years' strife, loot mounting to wealth. Then the scales tipped as the plow of war turned under the spoils of the vanquished, and he rose from the strife-torn soil, a weed growth where a family tree had fallen in its flower.

He grunted and tapped his now dead pipe on the gunwale. The ashes, like those of his dreams, fell upon the darkening waters of the slow flowing river. He turned back under the arched matting to blow the charcoal brazier for the evening rice, for there was no woman with sprawling brood to make an effigy of home for him. He was of the Dragon's blood and would rule a lordly house, as was his right, or none at all; and so he remained a celibate, looking with contempt upon the coolies who spawned upon the river like so many weak-fleshed fish. What need had he of sons to worship and perpetuate his memory if it were not worthy? Better let the line die out with him, who burned punk and prayer papers to ancestors whose past was glorious, than raise a coolie breed of water beetles to skim the oily bosom of the Yangtze, picking up a miserable existence from the scum of its refuse.

The mist turned a faint yellow with the rising of the round, copper disk of the full moon. Kan Wong sat again in the bow and dreamed in the golden light. Off somewhere along the river's winding

length, where it crawled slowly to the sea, lay the great coast cities. The lazy ripples, light-tipped, beckoned with luring fingers. There was naught to stay him. His sampan was his home, and movable, therefore the morrow would see him turning its bow downstream to seek that strange city where, he had heard, dwelt many Foreign Devils who now and then scattered wealth with a prodigal hand. If it had been in the old days when he, a son of the Dragon, might borrow its claws, there was the loot of piracy to lure. But now the blood of the Dragon was cold and sluggish, even in the veins where it still flowed. His brethren fawned for favor, even as he must, but not to his own kind. He would go down the river, even to Shanghai, and work, since no other means offered, until he had enough to buy a junk. Then with a few adventurous spirits aboard there was still the fighting gains of piracy along some of the river stretches. Years before it had been his fortune to serve a Foreign Devil, and he had since often met "boys" on whom he could practice the pidgin English he had acquired for just such an adventure. And so, under the magic light of the moon, he curled up in a sleep that the soft radiance warmed to a brood of dreams that would be his freight down the river till the gray hand of the dawn tapped his eyelids and bade him open them.

In that pale hour when the mist, not yet dissipated by the rising sun, lay in a cold, silver veil upon the night-chilled waters, he pushed out from the shore and pointed the sampan's prow downstream. Days it took him to reach salt water. He loitered for light cargoes at village edges, or picked up the price of his daily rice at odd tasks ashore, but always, were it day or night for travel, his tiny craft bore surely seaward. Mile after slow mile dropped behind him, like the praying beads of a lama's chain, but at last the river salted slightly, and his

tiny craft was lifted by the slow swell of the sea's hand reaching far inland.

The river became more populous. The crowding sampans, houseboats, and junks stretched far out into its oily, oozy flow, making a floating city as he neared the congested life of the coast, where the ever-increasing population failed to find ground space in its maggoty swarming. As the stream widened until the farther bank disappeared in the artificial mist of rising smoke and man-stirred dust, the Foreign Devils' fire junks appeared, majestically steaming up and down—swift swans that scorned the logy, lumbering native craft, the mat sails and toiling sweeps of which made them appear motionless by comparison. A day or two of this and then the coast, with Shanghai sprawling upon the bank, writhing with life, odoriferous, noisy, perpetually awake.

Kan Wong slid into its waterfront turmoil, an infinitesimal human atom added to it. His tiny craft fixed itself upon the outer edge of the wriggling river life like a coral cell attaching itself to a slow growing atoll. From there he worked his way inshore, crawling over the craft that stretched out from the low banks as a water beetle might move over the flotsam and jetsam caught in the backwater of a sluggish stream. Once in the narrow, crowded streets of the city itself, he roamed aimlessly, open-eyed to its wonders, dreamily observant. Out of the native quarter and into the foreign section he moved, accustoming himself to these masters of mystery whom he was about to serve, calling sluggish memory to his aid as his ears strove to reconstruct the meaning of the barbarous jargon.

Into the quarter where the Foreign Devils and the native population came together to barter and to trade, he strayed one day. A Foreign Devil in a strangely unattractive uniform was addressing a crowd of coolies in their own tongue. Kan Wong attached himself to

the outer edge of the impassively curious throng, his ears alert, his features, as ever, an imperturbable mask. The foreign officer, for such he seemed to be, was making an offer to the assemblage for contract labor: one dollar a day, with rice, fish, and tea rations, for work in a foreign land. Kan Wong translated the money quickly into *yens*. The sum seemed incredible to him. What service would he not perform for such payment? Why, within a year, or two at the very most, with careful frugality, he might return and buy himself a junk worthy of his Dragon dreams of the river. And then . . .

The officer talked on, persuading, holding out the glittering lure of profit and adventure. Kan Wong listened eagerly. He had thought there was a ban on contract labor, but perhaps this new Republican Government, so friendly to the Foreign Devil, had removed it. Surely one who wore the uniform of a soldier and an officer could not thus publicly solicit coolies without the sanction of the mandarins, or escape their notice.

Kan Wong studied the crowd. It contained a few Chinese soldiers, who were obviously keeping order. He was satisfied, and edged his way closer to the speaker. There, already, ranged to one side, was a line of his own kind, jabbering to a Celestial who put down their names on slips of rice paper and accepted their marks, which they made with a bamboo brush, that they bonded themselves to the adventure. Kan Wong gained the signing table. Picking up the brush, he set his name, the name of one of the Dragon's blood, to the contract, accepted a duplicate, and stepped back into the waiting line. To what he had committed himself he did not know; he did not care, so long as his pay was forthcoming; that it would be he had no doubt, for the Foreign Devils, especially those who spoke the English tongue, were famed for their honesty. They were not like the Portuguese, whose tongue was

the father of lies. Strange they were, it is true, but good masters to serve. Having bound himself to them, his way lay with them across the sea that stretched out to the east, away from the river on which his life had been spent so fruitlessly, and to which he would not return until he could mount its tide with the honor to which he felt that his blood entitled him.

His pay and his rations, he was told, would begin two days hence, when he was to report to the fire junk now lying at the dock, awaiting the human cargo of which he was a part. Kan Wong memorized the directions as he turned away from his instructing countryman. Of the Foreign Devil he took no further notice. Time enough for that when he passed into service. The God of Luck had smiled upon his boldness, and, reflecting upon it, Kan Wong turned back to the river and the sampan that had so long been his floating home. No sentimental memories, however, clung about it for him. Its freight of dreams he had landed here in Shanghai, marketing them for a realization. The sampan now was but the empty shell of a water beetle, that had crawled upon the bank into the sun of Fortune to spill forth a dragon fly to try newly found wings of adventure.

He found a customer, and, with much haggling after the manner of his kind, disposed of his boat, the last tie, if tie there were, that bound him to his present life. Waterman he had always been, and now had come to him the call of the Father of All Waters. The tang of the salt in his nostrils conjured up dreams as magical as those invoked by the wand of the poppy god. Wrapped in their rosy mantle, he walked the streets for the next two days, and on the third he took his way to the dock where lay the fire junk that was to bear him forth into the wonders of the Foreign Devils' land. Larger she loomed than any he had ever seen, larger, oh, much larger, than those

which had steamed up the Yangtze in swanlike majesty. But this huge bulk was gray—gray and squat and powerful. Once aboard, he found it crowded with an army of chattering coolies. They swarmed in the hold like maggots. Every inch of space was given over to them, an army, it seemed to Kan Wong, in which he was all but lost. An army it proved to be as the anchor lifted and the boat swung slowly down the river and out into the deep swell of the lordly Pacific.

Once clear of land, the native "boss boys" began instructions in almost military discipline. Everything was done by rote and rule. The rice and fish and tea were served at stated time, squads being told off to act as kitchen police. In squads they took their exercise on deck, now up, now down, a given space at a walk or a trot to keep them in condition, and always under the eye of the uniformed Foreign Devils. Yet they were kindly treated and well fed. Attention was paid to their welfare, and they were allowed as much liberty as the crowded vessel permitted. Kan Wong wondered at the order and orderliness of it all. Of a truth these Foreign Devils possessed much magic, and their junk, smooth-riding even in storm, was a thing that excited his wonder.

The display of his admiration, his ready seamanship when occasion offered, his quiet dignity, and an indefinable something that set him above the coolie crowd with which he was surrounded brought him to the notice of the Foreign Devil who had them in charge. Discovering that Kan Wong had a smattering of pidgin English, he put him in charge of a squad, noting with keen satisfaction the quiet and efficient authority he immediately exerted over them.

Day after day across the waste of water the ship took its eastern way. Never had Kan Wong dreamed there was so much water in the world. The broad,

long river that had been his life's path seemed but a narrow trickle on the earth's face compared with this stretch of sea that never ended though the days ran into weeks. The land coolies chafed and found much sickness in the swell, but Kan Wong, used ever to a moving deck, found the way none too long, and smiled softly to himself as he counted up the dollars they were paying him for the keenest pleasure that had ever been his.

At last land appeared. The ship swung into the dock, disclosing to the questioning eyes of Kan Wong and his kind a new, strange land. In orderly discipline they were marched off the vessel and on to the dock. But rest was not theirs as yet, nor was this their final destination. From the fire junk they boarded the flying iron horse of the Foreign Devils; again they were on the move. Swiftly across the land they went, over high mountains crowded with eternal snow, thence down upon brown, rolling plains as wide as the flat stretches of the broad Yangtze Valley; eastward, ever eastward, through a land sparsely peopled for all its virgin fertility. Behind their flying progress the days dropped—one, two, three, four, at last five; and then they entered a more populous region. Kan Wong, his nose flattened against the glass that held the moving picture as in a frame, wondered much at the magic that unrolled to his never-sated eyes. Yet the journey's end was beyond his questioning.

Once more they came to a seaport. Marching from the carriages, once more they beheld the sea. But this time it was different—more turbulent, harsher, more sombre with the hint of waiting storms. Was there, then, more than one ocean, Kan Wong asked himself? He found that it was indeed so when once more a fire junk received them. This one was grayer than the first that they had known. Upon her decks were guns and at her side were other junks, low,

menacing, with a demon flurry of vicious speed, and short, squat funnels that belched dense smoke clouds. Within the town were many Foreign Devils, all dressed alike in strange drab uniforms; on the docks and here and there at other places they bore arms and other unmistakable equipment of fighting men, which even Kan Wong could not but notice.

Verily, these Foreign Devils were a strange breed! What use had they for him and his coolie brethren! Where were they taking them across this unknown, unsuspected sea? How wide was the world, and what was the end of it, and then? Well, it mattered not. A fatalist by birth and centuries of breeding, Kan Wong faced the sea again, committed to the adventure of his bond, as were they all. If they lived up to it, the Foreign Devils must live up to their part of it, as he was sure they would. His pay was mounting, the food was good and plentiful, and he was in the hands of fate. It would be a tale to tell his children some day when he returned to the broad Yangtze—children to whom he could hand down the Dragon's blood and a memory that they would revere and worship, now that he had the making of a worthy one in sight. At any rate, he had not stayed to rot as a coolie in the land where he should have been—what he meant to be before he would return to it.

The gray ship moved out into a cold gray fog. With it were other ships as gray and as crowded, ships that crawled with men, strange Foreign Devils who clanked with weapons as they walked aboard. Again a waste of water, through which the ship seemed to crawl with a caution that Kan Wong felt, but did not understand. With it, on either side, moved those other junks—squat, menacing, standing low on the horizon, but as haunting as dark ghosts. Where were they bound, this strangely mixed fleet? Often Kan Wong pondered this, but gave it no tongue to his fellow-passengers,

holding a bit aloof from them by virtue of his caste and the newly vested authority given him by the Foreign Devil, a trust that he kept to the strictest letter. Though he saw not the purpose of keeping the men under him to a rigid and seemingly senseless routine, he was his master's servant for the time; he obeyed unreasoningly and commanded obedience from the coolies under him.

Again they neared the shore, where other boats, low-built and bristling with guns, flew swiftly out to meet them like fierce, ocean birds of prey. Now they skirted high, bleak cliffs, their feet hid in a lather of white foam; then they rounded the cliffs and passed into a storm-struck stretch of sea through which they rolled to a more level land, off which they cast anchor. The long ocean journey was finished at last.

There was a frantic bustle at this port, increasing a hundredfold when once they set foot upon the land. Men—men were everywhere; men in various uniforms, men who spoke various tongues in a confusing babel, yet they all seemed intent upon one purpose, the import of which Kan Wong could but vaguely guess. All about them was endless movement, but no confusion, and once ashore their work commenced immediately.

From the fleet of fire junks various cargoes were to be unloaded with all speed, and at this the coolies toiled. Numberless crates, boxes, and bags came ashore to be stowed away in long, low buildings, or loaded into long lines of rough, boxlike carriages that then went scurrying off behind countless snorting and puffing fire-horses to the east, always to the east and north. Strange engines, which the Foreign Devils saw to it that they handled most tenderly, were also much in evidence, and always, at all hours, the uniformed men with their bristling arms and clanking equipment crowded into the carriages and were whisked off to the east, always to the east and north. They went with much

strange shouting and, to Kan Wong's ears, discordant sounds that they mistook for music. Yet now and then other strings of carriages came back from the east and north, with other men—men broken, bloody, lacking limbs, groping in blindness, their faces twisted with pain as they were loaded into the waiting fire junks to recross the rough sea.

Then came the turn of the coolies to be crowded into the boxlike carriages and to be whisked off to the east. With them went tools—picks, shovels, and the like—for further work, upon the nature of which Kan Wong, unquestioning, speculated. It was a slow, broken journey that they made. Every now and then they stopped that other traffic might pass them, going either way; mostly the strange men in uniforms, bristling with guns, hurrying to the east, always to the east and north.

At last they too turned north, and as they did so the country, which had been smiling, low, filled with soft fields and pretty, nestling houses, little towns and quiet, orderly cities, changed to bleak fields, cut and seared as by a simoom's angry breath. Still there were little towns—or what had been little towns, now tumbled ruins—fire-smitten, gutted, their windows gaping like blind eyes in the face of a twisted cripple. Off to the east hung angry clouds from which the thunder echoed distantly; a thunder low, grumbling, continual, menacing, and through the clouds at night were lightning flashes of an angry red. Toward this storm it seemed that all the men were hurrying, and so too were the coolies of whom Kan Wong was one. Often they chattered speculatively of the storm beyond. What did it mean? Why did the men hurry toward instead of away from it? Truly the ways of the Foreign Devils were strange!

As they drew nearer to the storm, the river dreams of Kan Wong returned. This was indeed the land of the Dragon's wrath. The torn and harrowed fields,

the empty, broken towns, the distant, grumbling storm, and the armed men, hurrying, always hurrying, toward the east and north, where the clouds darkened and spread—all this was in the tales that his father's father had told him of those fifteen mad years when the Yangtze Valley crouched trembling under the fiery breath of the Dragon's wrath. Here once more he saw the crumbling towers and walls of Hang Gow in fresh ruin. Here was the ruthless wreck that even nature in her fiercest mood could never make. Truly the lure of the Dragon's blood in him was drawing him, magnet-like, to the glory of his ancestors.

At length they were set down just behind the fury of the storm ahead. Everywhere were the armed men, going, coming, in feverish haste. Those who went were full of confidence and had a sort of fierce joy shining in their faces; those who came had faces distorted by lines of pain, their bodies were broken, bleeding, maimed. The air was full of noisy sparks, of acrid smells, of rising dust and ashes. There were many sweating horses dragging past the strange instruments of which the Foreign Devils seemed so tenderly careful, and also many other fast-moving carriages propelled by a strange magic at a high speed. These tore hither and thither and were filled with men. Others, slower moving, but still propelled by the same strange magic, rumbled past, shaking the earth with the burden of their loads. Above, high in the air, flew swift, strange birds, their wings humming noisily, and, as Kan Wong learned, bearing men to and fro, in and out of the storm clouds on the low horizon.

But there was little time for them to observe all these wonders of the Foreign Devils' magic. The one who had them in charge and spoke their tongue gave them their tools and bade them dig narrow ditches, head deep. From them they ran tunnels into deep caves hollowed out far under the ground. They bur-

rowed like moles, cutting galleries here and there, reinforcing them with timbers, and lining them with a stone which they made of dust and water. Many they cut, stretching far back behind the ever-present storm in front of them, while from that storm cloud, in swift and unseen lightning bolts that roared and burst and destroyed their work often as fast as it was completed, fell death among them, who were only laborers, not soldiers, as Kan Wong now knew those Foreign Devils in the strange and dirty uniforms to be.

As the storm roared on, never ceasing, it stirred the Dragon's blood in Kan Wong's veins. The pick and shovel irked his hands as he swung them; his palms began to itch for the weapons that the soldiers bore. Now and then he came upon a gun where it had dropped from its owner's useless hands. He studied its mechanism, even asking the Foreign Devil overseer how it was worked, and, being shown, he remembered and practiced its use whenever opportunity offered. He took to talking with his fellow-workers, some of whom had themselves fought with the rebels of New China, who, with just such Foreign Devils' tools, had clipped the claws of the Manchu Dragon, freeing the Celestial Kingdom forever from its crooked grip. He took much interest in these war implements. He became more intimate and friendly with his fellows, feeling them now to be brothers in a danger that had awakened the soldier soul beneath the brown of his coolie skin.

Little could he make of all the strife about him. All of which he was sure was that this was the Dragon's Field, and he, a Son of the Dragon, had been guided to it to fulfil a destiny his forefathers had begun in the Yangtze Valley when with the "Hairy Rebels" they had waged such war as this. The flying death all about him that now and then claimed toll of one of his own kind was but a part of it; but all the time he grew to

hate his humble work and long for a part, a real part, in the fighting that raged ahead, where an unseen enemy, of whom he grew to think as his own, hurled destruction among them. Often he spoke of this to the gang under him, imbuing them with the spirit of the Dragon's blood that, eager to fulfil its destiny, once more boiled within him.

Then one day the storm grew more furious. The thunder was a continual roll, and both from the front and rear flew the whining lightning bolts, spewing out death and destruction. Many a coolie fell, his dust buried under the dust of this fierce foreign land, never to be returned and mixed with that of his own Flowery Kingdom. Now and then came "stink pots," filling the air with such foul vapors that men coughed out their lives in the putrid fumes. The breath of the Dragon, fresh from his awful mouth, was wrapped about them in hot wrath.

Past them the soldiers streamed, foul with fight, their hot guns spitting viciously back into the rolling, pungent gray fog that followed them malignantly. Confusion reigned, and in that confusion a perfect riot of death. On all sides the soldiers fell, blighted by the Dragon's breath. The coolies crouched in the heaped up ruins of their newly dug ditches, knowing not which way to turn; bereft of leadership since the Foreign Devil who commanded them was gone, buried beneath a pile of earth where a giant cracker had fallen.

Suddenly Kan Wong noticed that there were no more soldiers save only those who lay writhing or in still, twisted heaps upon the harrowed ground. The coolie crowd huddled here alone, clutching their futile picks and shovels, groveling in helpless panic. Disaster had overtaken them. The Dragon was upon them, and they were unprotected. All about them in scattered heaps lay discarded equipment, guns, even the sharp-barking, death-spitting, tiny instrument that the soldiers handled so lovingly and

so gently when it was not in action. But those who manned the weapons had passed on, back through the thick curtain of smoke that hung between them and the comparative safety of the rear.

Kan Wong's eyes were ahead, striving to pierce the pungent veil that hid the enemy. Suddenly his keen eyes noted them—the strange uniforms and stranger faces, ducking forward here and there through the hell of their own making. The blood of the Dragon within him boiled up, now that the enemy was really near enough to feel the teeth and claws of the Dragon's whelps. This was the hour for which he had lived. This was the Taiping glory come again for him to share. Reaching down, he picked up the rifle of a fallen soldier, fondled its mechanism lovingly for a moment, and then, cuddling it tenderly beneath his chin, his finger bade it spit death at the misty gray figures crawling through the gray fog in front. . . .

When the magazine was exhausted he filled it with fresh clips and turned with the authority he had always wielded, and a new one that they instantly recognized, upon his shivering countrymen.

"What are ye?" he yelled with withering scorn. "Sons of pigs who root in the dung of this Foreign Devil's land, or men of the Dragon's blood? Are ye the scum of the Yangtze River or honorable descendants of the Hairy Rebels? Would ye avenge your brothers who have choked to death in the breath of the stink-pots that have been flung among us? Will ye let escape this horde of Foreign Devil enemies who have hurled at us giant crackers that have spit death, now that they are near enough to feel how the Dragon's blood can strike? Here are the Dragon's claws!" He waved his bayoneted gun aloft. "Will ye die like men, or like slinking rats stamped into the earth? All who are not cowards—come!" He waved the way through the smoke to the gray figures emerging from it.

The Chinaman is no coward when once aroused. Death he faces as he faces life, stoically, imperturbably. The coolies, reaching for the nearest weapons, followed the man who showed the Dragon's blood. Many of them understood the use of arms, having borne them for New China. Death was upon them, and they went to meet it with death in their hands.

Kan Wong dragged up an uninjured machine gun, the crew of which lay dead about it. Fitting the bands of cartridges as he had seen the gunners do, he turned the crank and swung it round on its revolving tripod. Before its vicious rain he saw the gray figures fall, and a great joy welled up in his breast. He signaled for other belts and worked the gun faster. Round him the coolies rallied; others beyond the sound of his voice joined in from pure instinct. The gray figures wavered, hesitated, melted back into the smoke, and then strove to work around the fire of the death-spitting group. But the Dragon's blood was up, the voice of the Dragon's son cheered and directed the snarling, roused whelps to whom war was an old, old trade, forgotten, and now remembered in this strange, wild land. The joy of slaughter came savagely upon them. The death that they had received they now gave back. In the place the white men had fled, the yellow men now stood, descendants of the Taipings, as fierce and wild as their once Hairy brothers.

Meanwhile, behind them the retreating line halted, stiffened by hurried reinforcements. The officers rallied their men, paused and looked back through the smoke. The line had given way and they must meet the oncoming wave. Quickly reforming, they picked their ground for a stand and waited. The moments passed, but no sign of the victors.

"What the hell is up?" snarled one of the reinforcing officers. "I thought the line had given way."

"It has," replied the panting, battle-torn commander. "My men are all back

here; there's no one in front but the enemy!"

"What's that ahead, then?" The sharp bark of rifles, the *rat-a-tat* of machine guns, the boom of bursting grenades, and the yells, groans, screams, and shouts of hand-to-hand conflict came through the curtaining smoke in a mad jumble of savage sound.

"Damned if I know! We'd better find out!" They began moving their now rallied men back into it.

Suddenly they came upon it—a writhing mass of jeans-clad coolies, wild-eyed, their teeth bared in devilish, savage grins, their hands busy with the implements of death, standing doggedly at bay before gray waves that broke upon them as a sullen sea breaks and recedes before a jutting point of land.

With the reinforcements the tide turned, ebbing back in a struggling, writhing fury, and soon the ground was clear again of all save the wreck that such a wave leaves behind it. Once the line was reestablished and the soldiers holding it steadily, the coolies, once more the wielders of pick and shovel, returned to the work of trench repairing, leaving the fighting to those to whom it belonged.

The officers were puzzled. What had started them? What had injected that mad, fighting spirit into their yellow hides? What had caused them to make that swift, wild, wonderful stand?

"Hey, you, John!" The commanding officer addressed one of them when a lull came and they were busy again at the

tumbled earth. "What you fight for, hey?"

The coolie grinned foolishly.

"Him say fight. Him heap big man, alle same have Dlagon's blood. Him say fight, we fight, *sabc?*" And he pointed to Kan Wong—Kan Wong, his head bleeding from a wound, his eyes glowing with a green fury from between their narrow lids, his long, strong hands, red with blood other than his own, still clutching his rifle with a grip that had a tenderly savage joy in it.

The officer approached him.

"Are you the man who rallied the coolies and held the line?" he asked shortly.

Kan Wong stiffened with a dignity to which he now felt he had a right.

"Me fight," he said quietly—"me fight, coolie fight, too. Me belong Dlagon's blood. One time my people fighting men; long time I wait."

"You'll wait no longer," said the officer. He unpinned the cross from his tunic and fastened it to the torn, bloody blouse of Kan Wong. "Off to the east are men of your own race, fighting-men from China, Cochin-China. That is the place for a man of the Dragon's blood—and that is the tool that belongs in your hand till we're done with this mess." He pointed to the rifle that Kan Wong still held with a stiff, loving, lingering grip.

And so, on the other side of the world, the Son of the Dragon came to his own and realized the dreams of a glory he had missed.



YOU may say what you please about Bolshevism, but it certainly has been a tremendous aid to conversation.

Her Groove

By Ethel Watts Mumford

"**B**UT, my dear, good woman!" The little old maid, primly seated on the re-covered sofa, looked the Reverend Mr. Paul in the face, with eyes at once weary and stubborn.

"I'm tired of being a 'good woman'!" she replied in a hushed, sick-room voice.

"Don't, don't!" he ejaculated. "You of all women! Thank God, you couldn't be anything else *but* a good woman!" Mr. Paul fairly bristled truculent approval of her maiden past.

"Yes," she agreed sadly. "I am afraid I *am* too old now."

The elderly adviser paled.

"I can only account for your extraordinary conduct," he quavered, "on the ground of demoniac possession. I refuse to believe that one so exemplary can seriously speak as you are speaking or contemplate such actions."

Miss Peck refolded her long hands precisely, almost as if invisible fingers creased and turned them, like putting old lace carefully away.

"I'm sorry," she said meekly, "that I told John anything about it. I ought to have gone over to the city and *writ* back, but somehow I felt as if John, bein' my brother an' the head of the family, I shud speak to him. I might have known he'd go to you."

"Of course he came to me." Mr. Paul's withered-apple visage wrinkled in indignation. "Have I not always been the devoted friend of every member of your family—your father, your dear mother; those sainted women, your aunts? He would have neglected his duty if he had *not* come to me."

Miss Peck set her narrow lips.

"Thank you; but there isn't the slightest use arguin'. You're not looking at the rights of the case—leastways, not at *my* rights. I took care of Mother and Aunt Sue and Sister Emma till the Lord took 'em, an' I don't believe the Lord intends me to take up John's cross for him, an' nurse his wife and children so's he can let Martha go and only keep one servant.

"All my life I've been in somebody else's groove—I ain't never found my own. Now, I just want to do somethin' it's a human pleasure *to* do. I've wanted what was live an' pretty, an' all I ever had was a cat. I wanted young people when I was young, an' I never cud have 'em, because there wuz always them as it wuz my plain duty to do for. An' the money I inherited from Grandpa Steele I had to spend on keepin' the household goin'; because they said, bein' an unmarried woman, I hadn't but myself to spend it on.

"Oh, I know John's been countin' on gettin' me to housekeep for Eliza, an' my income'll come in handy, an' mebbe with me puttin' in *my* money on the livin' expenses, *he* cud spare enough of his for an automobile. Well, *he's* lookin' to better *himself*, an' I'm lookin' to better *myself*, an' *them* two ain't one!"

"Your brother very properly and very generously offers you the shelter of his home." Mr. Paul looked with an appraising eye at the spacious parlor and its old-fashioned but once costly furniture. "And you could rent this place to summer folks for three or, maybe, four hundred dollars."

She nodded acquiescence at that.

"Mr. Smith says six, on account of the shade trees an' garden. I've told him to go ahead and rent, for, as I said to John, I'm thinkin' of bein' gone some time. I know there's a groove for me somewhere, an' I'm goin' to find it."

"And your brother has a right to know *where* you are going." The Family Friend was suddenly dragged back to the consideration of the enormity of Miss Peck's avowed intentions. "You, an unmarried woman!"

The ghost of a smile trembled on the virgin lips.

"I'm goin' to jine a friend—a *woman* friend—an' Mr. Smith is my lawyer, an' if John wants to find out about my health or—or happiness, or anythin' brotherly like that, why, Elisha will be in touch with me 'count of my rents an' such." The bitterness and irony deepened in her voice. "I'm leavin' to-night on the eight-thirty, an' thank you for yer visit. Good-by."

She rose, and, perforce, he rose also.

"It shall not be said that I allowed you to stray unwarned!" he rumbled.

She glanced at him—was it coquet-tishly? Mr. Paul could hardly believe his eyes.

"Why, if you're thinkin' of comin' over to Providence with me, it *wud* look better to take the mornin' train."

"What!" exclaimed the outraged shepherd.

"Well, I don't know what's to hinder." She appeared to consider the situation judicially. "I'm some over twenty-one, and I can pay my own way. An' if John wants a guarden appointed for me, all I says is, 'Let him try.' *You* forget, an' John forgets, that I've been put upon an' kept down in somebody else's groove, an' shoved about all my life, an' now I'm just bulgin'. *So*, if you care to set in the parlor, why, you're welcome to set, but you'll have to excuse *me*, for I'm goin' to my own room to finish my packin'." A faint flush had mantled her pale cheeks;

her faded eyes snapped unwonted fire.

Mr. Paul looked helplessly at the hallway and the shining newel post. It was obviously impossible for him to pursue this recalcitrant maiden to her bedroom, yet to permit such a dismissal was to accept humiliation.

"I hope—I pray," he groaned, "that you will not live to look back upon this hour as the dark turning-point of your life! I have warned you."

"Tell Martha"—Miss Peck's voice reached him from the upper landing—"that she needn't worry about Thomas. I've bought a cat basket, an' I'm taking him with me."

The hall door slammed.

Miss Elizabeth laughed out loud. The sound shocked her. Instinctively she shot a glance at the doors down the hall—the doors that for so many weary years had opened and closed to the tyrannical orders of the two warped and vampirish women who had drained her youth and sapped her life. The silence was reassurance. She was free, with no regrets and no self-reproaches—free!—to indulge herself, to be herself. A neat new suitcase lay on the bed; over the walnut footboard spread her best blue foulard and her black straw hat with the buttercup clusters, that had been universally criticized as "unsuitable"—even before custom had demanded respectful black. She hated black. It might be a sin, but crape she abominated. She was determined not to put on mourning. The town could call shame to her; she would be too far to hear. She meant to wear gay colors and frequent cheerful places. The word "appropriate" should no longer exist in her bright lexicon. Before the mirror she fluffed her faded hair, loosening it from its prim coil.

She would wear silk underwear, she decided. She had seen it advertised, and she loved the caressing touch of silk. She meant, in her orgy of extravagance, to put herself quite beyond the pale of propriety. Wholesale, sinful waste it

was to be. It included a bottle of Mary Garden perfume. All her practical, everyday belongings were neatly stored in the attic. The new suitcase would contain only what necessities could not be dispensed with, for her entire wardrobe was to be new.

Having completed her toilet, closed the bag, made a tour of inspection of each speckless chamber, she picked up the purring cat from its accustomed cushion, soothed its reluctant introduction into the shining traveling basket, secured all windows and doors, locked the kitchen door on the outside, and, without a sigh or a backward glance, walked calmly down the village street. Boldly flaunting the blue foulard in the place of expected weeds, she deposited the keys in the office of Mr. Smith, promised to write as soon as settled, committed what appeared to be a major operation in concealing the large roll of bills which her lawyer counted out on the worn rosewood table, and betook herself to the Commercial House for her last meal in Mayfield.

Eight o'clock found her installed in the train, answering with matter of fact gentility the questions of the friends gathered to see her off. John had not appeared, and she began to hope against hope that her departure was to be mercifully ignored by her indignant relative. But such an easy evasion was not to be hers. John Peck had timed and planned his appearance. He blustered in just as the cars shocked together with the first jar of departure. Snatching up the new suitcase, he sent it flying through the open window, narrowly missing the heads of the assembled villagers gathered on the platform. Instinctively Miss Peck snatched the cat-basket to her breast, as her brother seized her roughly by the arm and jerked her from the seat with the intention of rushing her down the aisle and off the train.

But not for nothing had she foreseen this day and assured herself a protected

escape. As her resisting little body was propelled toward the platform, the conductor and Mr. Elisha Smith, attorney-at-law, arose to interfere, and they were not without a sympathetic understanding of Miss Peck's feelings.

"Upon what authority?" demanded the lawyer.

"John Peck, get off this train," snarled the conductor. "You ain't got no call to interfere with your sister. She's free, white, and twenty-one, ain't she?" He reached up to the bell cord, and the train jarred to a stop. "Put him off, will ye, Eli?" he growled. "This train's goin' somewhere, and she's on her way."

Protesting and furious, John Peck was hustled to the ties. The guard gave the signal, the train moved on.

Flustered and red, her neat bonnet rakishly awry, Miss Peck sank again into the red velvet seat.

"Well, Thomas," she laughed excitedly, "we're off." She laughed again, the words had such a sportive sound. She repeated them as she stroked the wild-eyed cat. "We're off!"

With unabated relish, she traveled through the night, changed at a musty junction, and eventually arrived at her destination in the pale dawn hours. She sat in the station waiting-room, wondering at its immensity, at the people, at the number and speed of the trains, at the news depots, the restaurants, the cab stand. It was all new and of absorbing interest. At half past seven, when she judged it would be safe to assume that the day was well started for everyone, she called a cab, consulted a newspaper clipping, and directed that she be driven to the hotel. Arrived at its carven portals, she was dazed by its magnificence. A liveried doorman possessed himself of Thomas's basket, and she entered the halls of splendor. She was quite self-possessed, however, when she stepped up to the desk, and with assurance sharpened by anxiety, demanded to see "Miss Margot Fontaine."

The red-eyed night clerk, who was not yet off duty, looked at her and chuckled as he glanced at a board covered with mystic signs: "Left word not to be called till eleven-thirty."

"Is she sick?" inquired the elderly ingénue.

"Not so's you could notice it," the clerk replied. "Stoppin' here?" he inquired.

"Of course I am," Miss Peck snapped back.

"Sign there." He whirled the register at her. "Front?" he called.

"If you please," she agreed, with lofty detachment.

"Please what?" inquired the mystified clerk.

"A front room," she retorted. In the glow of her deliverance from bondage she almost hoped a "front" room was extra-expensive.

The clerk stifled a laugh, and tossed a key to the grinning bellboy. "Four thirty-six," he ordered. "Any baggage, Miss?"

"I'm going out to buy some this noon," she assured him with dignity.

A desk telephone rang. He picked up the receiver. "Oh, three sixty-one—yes. Hold on a minute," he called after the new arrival. "It's Miss Fontaine—wants her coffee in her room. All right. Say, tell Miss Fontaine that Miss Peck—Miss Elizabeth Peck, of Mayfield—is here to see her. . . . Yes, I'll hold the wire. . . . Tell her to come right up? All right. . . . Front, show the lady to three sixty-one, and tell the floor maid to make up four thirty-six. Elevator to the right, Miss."

Both Thomas and his owner suffered from the sudden ascension. Had a stomach been permissible in an unmarried lady, Miss Peck would have clutched hers in squeamish terror.

She had hardly recovered from the shock when the bellboy knocked on a numbered door, which was opened by a negro maid. A flutter of blue chiffon, a

tousle of brown curls, and a flash of lace cap buried itself on Miss Peck's lean bosom. In her emotion Thomas was forgotten, and his basket bumped to the floor, while the old maid's yearning arms closed over the slim shoulders that strained close to her.

"Mary Allen! Well, well, Mary Allen!" she repeated over and over in a voice grown suddenly husky and sweet.

The girl threw back her head, tossing aside the concealing frills and curls and revealing a face the loveliness of which the faint traces of the last night's make-up seemed to enhance rather than mar.

"How good of you to come. How did you find me? I—I thought of going over to Mayfield to surprise you, but I couldn't, on account of the theatre. We're here only three days, and we're giving five performances." The words tumbled from her lips as she led Miss Elizabeth into the room, drew up a chintz armchair and climbed back into bed. "Oh," she continued, her face growing pink with earnestness, "I'm so *glad* you did come. I felt so mean that I hadn't written you. You don't know—it makes all the difference in the world. But, tell me all about yourself. How did they let you off?"

"They didn't," said Miss Peck, suddenly reverting to her defiant manner. "John threw my bag out of the car window. Lucky it wasn't Thomas—oh, where is Thomas?"

The broadly smiling maid laid the basket on the bed.

"Thomas!" exclaimed Mary Allen, *alias* Margot Fontaine. "Not old Tom!"

"No, but the dead spit of him. It's his great-grandson, and very tame and affectionate, but just a mite nervous."

The girl dumped the offended feline on the bed and exclaimed in admiration:

"Oh, Mattie, look!"

"Here's yer coffee, Miss." The servant set the tray on the bed. "This is sorter early fer you-all. Yer better take it while it's hot."

A frown darkened the girl's bright face.

"I couldn't sleep," she explained. "I was worried and—and—restless. Oh, I'm so glad you came." Her eyes sought the older woman's face adoringly. "Tell me the worst," she burst out. "How short are you going to stay with me? When do you *have* to go back—the very last minute?"

"I'm never going back at all," said Miss Peck. "If you don't mind, Mary, I'll travel with you awhile, if I won't be in the way. I made up my mind when I seen the paper, sayin' you was here in the 'Glory Hallelujah' company, but I didn't know how I could make it, so I didn't send no word."

"What! Have you eloped for good? How wonderful!" Miss Fontaine bounced with delight.

Miss Peck put away her hands again with her lingering folding gesture. "Yes," she said, "I sorter cleaned up on what I seen was my duties. We all got our just burdens, but there's them that's unjust. Mr. Paul wrestled with me, and John tried to shanghai me, but I seen no reason to give up. I told 'em I hadn't ever found my real groove in life, but I meant to find it. I don't see why it ain't possible to do right, and what you *want* to, at the same time. I notice the *men* seems to manage it."

"Did they know you were coming to me?" demanded Mary Allen.

"Sakes, no!" Miss Peck shivered at the thought. "That *wud* have finished it! Why, my dear, since you've been a play actress, your name ain't mentioned 'cept by the real *bad* boys." Miss Peck laughed, an amused, tolerant laugh.

But Mary Allen's face flamed.

"Well, I like *that*!" she exclaimed; then her eyes grew troubled. "What's become of Cousin Hilda Safford?" she inquired after a moment's pause.

"Why, after you went, she married Lef Taylor. They live in the old Taylor mansion up Ridge Street."

"Has she ever asked for me?" said Mary, her voice lowered.

"No. But you've got no call to keep *her* on your feelin's, Mary. If ever a woman nagged a girl into takin' the bit in her teeth, your Cousin Hilda nagged you. It was just jealousy, Mary, because you're purty. And, Mary"—she paused to feast her eyes on the tousled vision of beauty before her—"if she could see you now, she'd up and *die*." Miss Peck sighed a sigh of utter content. "It just *rests* me to look at you. I don't know what the Lord put into me to make me love purty young things so, but I do. All my life I've loved 'em—flowers an' people an' cats, an' silks an' satins, an' babies, an' pictures an' gold frames. Why, Mary dear, it's that strong in me that I've passed the Fish House at night—that was before the town went dry—and just seen the lights through the windows shining on all that bar-glass an' blue an' green an' yellow bottles, an' heard that big music-box goin', an' I've just *longed* to be a man an' go in there an' see it all an' hear it. Mary, do you know, in all my life I've never had any *fun*? I've never had a laugh that didn't have a bite in it!"

Mary put out a smooth, beringed hand.

"Miss Elizabeth, I wonder—I wonder did you need me as much as I needed you? You—you've had the courage to see straight, to fight your way against your environment, because you saw you were 'in wrong.' Oh, Miss Elizabeth, I've got to do that, too! I know you don't understand, but never mind that, not now, at least. If John threw your wardrobe out of the window we've got to go shopping, haven't we? I'll get right up." She was already kicking her slim feet into the worn blue satin mules at the foot of the bed.

In a daze of happiness, Miss Peck watched the erstwhile Mary Allen grow in beauty under Mattie's skilful fingers. Such shining boots with white kid tops, and such a simple tailored suit of blue,

with sudden sophisticated dashes of color, such artfully plain hair under its tilted turban! It was all perfection—enhanced by the faint perfume of powder and aromatic essences. The toilet that consumed an hour and a half seemed to complete itself with magical rapidity to the fascinated eyes of Miss Peck. Thus and so would *she* dress, from patent leather tip to feather tip, from pink crêpe de Chine to gray fox fur, she, whose life had been buckramed in chaliases, prints and astrakhan cloth.

Mary caught up a diamond wrist watch from the dressing-table and absently shook back her cuff. Then she changed color and put down the trinket as the telephone rang.

"See who that is," she ordered.

"How *very* purty." Miss Peck picked up the watch with awe. It was so small and seemingly fragile. "Eleven o'clock," she exclaimed. "My, Mary, you must use shorter hours than we do down to Mayfield!"

"It's Mr. Robert wants to see you, Miss." Mattie almost whispered the message. "Says he's on his way up."

Mary hesitated, then shut her lips firmly.

"All right, Mattie. Carry those things into the alcove and pull the curtains." She tossed a pair of pink satin corsets into an open trunk and closed the lid. Then she turned again to her visitor. "It's Mr. Thomas—he wrote the play. He's been traveling with the company so that he can make what changes he wants before we strike a big town. He—he—wants me to have the lead in the new piece he's working on."

There was a knock on the door, followed almost instantly by the entrance of a tall, well groomed man, remotely threatened by the forties. His deeply lined face was attractive, but for a twist of bitterness in his thin lips that was belied by the shrewd gentleness of his eyes. He started as his glance noted the newcomer.

"I beg pardon," he said, as if conscious and somewhat ashamed of the abruptness of his entrance.

"Oh, good morning, Robert." Miss Fontaine's voice was thin and clear as glass. "This is Miss Peck—my very dear friend; in fact, my only friend in what used to be my home town. She's come to me to be my companion."

"Oh," he said noncommittally.

Miss Peck's heart warmed toward the man who appreciated Mary Allen.

"Mary's sweet enough to say as I can travel with her, an' not be in the way," she beamed. "I'm sorter huntin' for my groove, you see. I've never been out of Mayfield before, and I've never been so happy, either."

"Miss Peck"—Mary sought and found her gloves—"was good to me always, when I needed goodness. When I ran away she stood by me and helped me. And when I needed money she scrimped herself and sent it to me. She's my good angel, Mr. Thomas." Her dark-lashed eyes met his with a swift look of meaning.

"Angels are very necessary sometimes—in *our* business." There was a touch of irony in his voice, and a quick response to the challenge of her look. Then he turned courteously. "I shall be delighted to include you, Miss Peck. We had planned, Miss Fontaine and I, to take a little run into the country before the matinée. You'll come, of course."

"Of course," said Mary quickly. Miss Peck was puzzled at the ring of defiance in the tone.

The author's keen eyes were traveling covertly over every detail of the new companion's face and figure. He looked as if he wanted to sneer. And yet, the kind, tired eyes smiled reluctantly. Miss Peck felt flustered, as if somehow she needed to explain her presence.

"I ran away, too," she stated boldly.

"Indeed? When?" he inquired politely.

"Why, just now. I don't know as I'd have had the courage if I hadn't helped

Mary when she run off. But I remembered, and I kept telling myself that Mary was all right. *She'd* found her groove, and why shouldn't I? You see, Mr. Thomas, you don't know what it is to be brought up a woman. Everything's your *duty* if you're a woman; an' lots of duties that wouldn't grind so hard if they was shared, get laid onto some *one* woman in the family, an' after a while you only got courage enough to keep those crosses goin'. An' then, you can't believe how hard it is to step out *without* a burden, an' look for what rightfully you've hankered after. I'm sure it ain't wrong to do your duty and be happy, too, if you can find it to do."

Miss Peck stopped short. Her sudden burst of confidence to a stranger appalled her, but his sympathetic, attentive silence drew her on.

"I don't think Mr. Thomas quite understands women." Mary's voice was again brittle and thin. "He—he's perhaps a little cynical. He doesn't know how hard it is—to—to *be* a woman. I think he's always thought that because I ran away from—you wouldn't call it 'home,' Miss Elizabeth, would you?—that—that— Oh, well, let's be going." She turned away helplessly.

But Miss Peck was too startled at the last suggestion.

"Why, she just couldn't stay in Mayfield. Why Mr. Thomas, Mary Allen always was a heart of gold. It was just that she was pretty an' so full of life that there was them who should have been her friends that weren't. Why, for meanness, Hilda Safford hasn't got her like, an' Hilda Safford was Mary's guard-*een*. Oh, Mr. Thomas, you mustn't think because she tuck to play actin' that there was any *bad* in her. Why, I know how hard she worked an' starved." She stopped again and looked, puzzled, at the man before her. "Why," she murmured, "I thought it was just us poor, ignorant countries who held by them ideas. I didn't think there was city folks so plum'

foolish—but—well—I guess now as we two run-aways can take care of each other—that is, if you're sure I won't be in the way?"

Mary put a shaking arm about her friend's shoulders.

"You're just a—a dear!" she whispered.

Mr. Thomas smiled whimsically.

"Well, people, let's get out. Don't forget, Margot, you've got to stop at the theatre and see Marslo. They're changing the curtain in the second act, and the new costumes for the third act interpolated song came last night.

She nodded absently as she preceded them into the hall. Miss Peck glowed. This was more exciting than pink silk underwear. The theatre, in the morning, when only theatre people were allowed! It amazed her that Mary Allen seemed rather bored.

As they walked down the dingy alley to the stage door, Miss Peck experienced all the thrills of a conspirator. Fire escapes, freckled scenery, men in overalls rushing stiff banks of artificial flowers, the chill of housed, stale air—here was adventure at last!

In the darkling depths of the stage a piano sounded, a loud voice cried an imperative "Now, all together," and a burst of girlish voices rose in a swinging rag-time tune.

"That's a hummer, that new number." The playwright nodded his satisfaction. "And I had to fire Cottlin, almost, to make him rehearse it. Run along, Margot, and get it over with. Don't take all day."

In a blind daze of happiness Miss Peck followed in the wake of the star, but hung back shyly as, with businesslike directness, Miss Fontaine buttonholed a stout and protesting gentleman. Miss Peck glanced over her shoulder and gave a little gasp of delight. Was this Heaven?

A long, windowless room was illuminated by a brilliance of electric bulbs,

that shone and glittered on spangles and tulle, satins and sequins, reds, blues, greens—all the colors of the rainbow in prismatic showers. In the far corner a half-dressed girl stood before a kneeling colored woman, who deftly adjusted a too voluminous costume to the contours of the prospective wearer. The girl was pretty, with a coarse picturesqueness that fitted well with the parrot brilliance of her surroundings.

Miss Peck sighed with delight. Here at last was beauty, light, color, youth, all the things she had worshiped from afar with such longing. The shine of the artificial light on bare necks and arms, the gloss of rippled hair, with its keen high lights, the contrast of the maid's brown profile against the lemon yellow of a tinselled cape—it was Romance.

"You lookin' for Miss French?" the colored attendant inquired. "She ain't here yet. Blamed if she hasn't got the pip most of the time," she grumbled. "This show'll ditch if they don't get a wardrobe woman as sticks on the job."

"I'm here with Miss—Miss Fontaine," Miss Peck murmured.

The woman glanced at her surprised, nodded acceptance, and turned to thread a needle from an orange spool.

"Oh, there you are!" It was Mary's voice behind her. "I thought I'd lost you. What are you doing in the chorus dressing-room?"

"Oh," gasped Miss Peck, "ain't it beautiful? Ain't it *beautiful*!" I—I cud just set here forever an' see all them pretty things. I'd just like to tech 'em all with my fingers."

Mary Allen's face flickered with amusement and sobered to sympathetic earnestness.

"Why, I do believe you were born to be a wardrobe woman. Why, Miss Elizabeth, perhaps it's your groove!" She looked into her companion's ecstatic face, and her own saddened with memories. "And what a *friend* you'd be to them, Miss Elizabeth. Why you'd be a God-

send, you would, you and your dear, big goodness. I—we'll have to think about that. Why, you—you'd *mother* them all!"

With a tramping of feet on the stairs and giggles at the door, the released chorus entered the dressing-room with a shy greeting to Miss Fontaine—blondes, brunettes, redheads, Pickford curls, and Dutch bobs; tall and "pony," glittering in their new "feature" costumes. Their young stir and bustle was like the noisy chattering of birds. If a contented hen could smile, her expression would doubtless duplicate that on Miss Peck's face.

Regretfully she turned, threading her way amid the maze of "props" to the stage entrance, with its mail rack and the cubby of the guardian of wonderland. But even as she turned into the narrow entry, the door opened with a vicious slam. Silhouetted against the light, tall, gaunt, and menacing, stood John Peck.

"Well!" His voice boomed in the echoing hall. "So, here's where you are! Disgracin' me, disgracin' yourself! Oh, it didn't take me long to find ye, when I heard that Mary Allen was here, masqueradin' as 'Miss Fontaine.' I come in on the first train this mornin', and the hotel, they sent me here. And lemme tell you, I'll have no more of this!"

Mary Allen pushed past her friend and faced the intruder.

"John Peck," she ordered sharply, "go away and leave us alone." She glowed. "Miss Elizabeth's coming with me, and you'll not interfere with her—do you understand!"

"I won't, won't I?" he jeered. "Let me tell you, *Miss Fontaine*—Mary Allen as was—let me tell you that I'll prove in court that you ain't no fit companion for my sister, no, nor any respectable female woman. Oh, you needn't think we don't hear *nothin'* down our way—you an' your writer man—travelin' round the country with ye. Why, the first reporter I asked at the *News* office, told me what everybody was a sayin'. I

guess we'll hev no more of your lip, Miss Fontaine. And as fer you, Elizabeth Peck, go get yer darned Tom-cat, an' go home, where ye belong!"

Mary fell back a few short paces.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Oh!"

Miss Peck recovered her voice with a snap.

"Me nor my cat will have nothin' more to do with you, John Peck—never, for what ye dare to say against Mary Allen. Neither me, nor my friends, nor my cat, nor my money, is none of yours!"

"Thank you, Miss Peck." A calm voice behind them spoke, and Robert Thomas stepped forward. With a courteous inclination he passed the two women. "Mr. Peck," he drawled, "I want to explain something, and I'll see that that explanation is in every paper to-morrow. Miss Fontaine, or Miss Allen—I don't in the least care which, has done me the honor to consent to become my wife. I think, in view of your very enlightening insults, the sooner the better."

Mary, with a sudden, choking gasp, turned and buried her face on Miss Peck's shoulder. Her whole body was tense, and the hands that clutched her friend's thin arms were shaking.

"And now that *that's* understood, Mr. Peck, I'll add that your sister will be our very welcome guest. And I'll remark that if you importune her in any way, it will be the worse for you!"

John Peck laughed.

"Ye can tell all that to the marines," he jeered, "but I'll take that fool woman outer your clutches, if I hev to hev her judged incompetent."

"John Peck, John Peck!" Miss Elizabeth's voice rang with menace. "If you don't git, an' git quick, I'll sue you for every red cent you ever borrowed from me, I will; an' I know about yer bank account, John, the one you keeps on the quiet over to Boston. An' what's more, when some as I know of finds out about that there Boston account, I guess you'll

learn to pay yer honest dues, an' leave them that's only askin' to live honest in their own groove, *alone!*"

A look of blank amazement settled on John Peck's face. His clenched hands relaxed and began to fumble nervously at his pockets. He moistened dry lips, cleared his throat, and stepped back.

"You can go to perdition!" he croaked. "Yer no sister of mine."

He heaved his broad shoulders through the narrow doorway, and the clack of his retreating steps sounded in the alley.

Robert Thomas turned. The hand that he laid on Mary's heaving shoulder was very gentle.

"I guess you were right," he said softly. "I've—my vision has been wrong—about women."

The girl turned to him with a sob.

Miss Peck smiled benignly on them both, with the sweetness of one who knows no guile. Then her lips twitched; her rusty laugh broke out.

"My!" she ejaculated. "Weren't it just Providence that I guessed right? I've always been certain he was miserin' over to Boston—but I didn't *know* till I saw his jaw plumb fall off."

Giggling and nudging, like a boarding school released, the show girls began to riot down the chute. The turbulent stream sobered respectfully as it bubbled past the author and the star, and broke again into ripples of talk and laughter as young feet danced down the hard flagstones to the street.

Miss Peck sighed happily.

"Ain't they sweet—ain't they just *sweet*? I wonder how all their mothers can do without 'em. My! It must be lonesome when they go." She sighed again. "Law, it jest *rests* me to look at 'em. 'Pears like I found my groove."

The playwright turned toward her, the light of sudden understanding in his eyes.

"As I live!" he exclaimed, "I've got you—I'm on. I'll be hanged if you aren't the Mother Superior of the Chorus! That's what—the Mother Superior!"

A LEAF FROM LIFE'S NOTEBOOK

By Lillian Bennet-Thompson

LIKE a statue he stood there, silent, motionless, while the traffic surged and roared behind him and a steady stream of pedestrians poured by in front. He was very tall—over six feet—with a pair of enormous shoulders and long, powerful-looking arms. On the palms of his huge hands were great yellow callouses, showing in striking contrast to the whiteness of the skin. It seemed strange that one who had so evidently performed heavy manual labor should have skin so white and smooth.

His face, with its rugged, irregular features, might have been carved out of stone, so expressionless it was. His back was braced against a lamp-post, and in one hand he held a slender sheaf of lead pencils.

His hat was pulled well down over his forehead; he seemed to be looking fixedly at the ground. But the eyes beneath the lowered lids were sightless, and the skin about the empty sockets—skin pasty-white with that waxy, hospital pallor—was thickly sprinkled, almost pitted, with powder marks. It was as if he wore a blue-black mask over the upper part of his face.

Occasionally someone in the busy, hurrying throng would stop and press a coin into his hand; and then he would hold out the pencils and murmur: "Two for five"; but no one ever took one. It was not the pencils they wanted, nor did they dream that the vender would have given much had they bought his wares.

How could they know of the storm of shame and humiliation that raged in his soul, how suspect that every penny bestowed in kindly charity inflicted a deeper hurt than had the blast at the powder mill which had robbed him of his sight?

Charity! That was it. He was nothing now but a beggar, a parasite, subsisting upon the bounty of others. He whose splendid strength had been his one pride, he who was tireless, whose iron muscles had rejoiced in the performance of mighty feats, was as helpless as a little child. Oh, the degradation of it!

And yet—he must live; he must have food and clothes, and a roof to shelter him.

Even now, he could hardly realize that there could be no more light for him, that this thick, impenetrable darkness must endure forever. In the hospital, when they had told him that he would be blind, he had still hoped against hope. Surely when the bandages were taken from his eyes, he would be able to see. It could not be possible that his sight was quite gone; it would come back gradually. It was only when day had followed day, and week had followed week, that his bewildered mind finally grasped the appalling truth. Blind, totally blind, forever!

Hopeless, despairing, he had wanted to die—had tried to die; but the strength that had been his pride and joy mocked him now. He was too vitally alive to die; he must live on—and, since he could not work, he must beg.

And so he stood there, while the traffic surged and roared behind him and a steady stream of pedestrians poured by in front—stood there motionless, silent, with a stolid, impassive face, and a heart full of bitter, gnawing pain.

The Charlatan

A NOVELETTE

By Henry Payson Dowst

I

"O^F course kickin' doesn't get me anything," said Strickland bitterly, "but I can't help telling you it's the mistake of your life."

He leaned forward and caught at a hand which the girl snatched away hastily.

"No," said Anna Polenka softly. "No, it doesn't help you a bit with me to knock Steve. You ought to be a better loser, Joe."

The porch was narrow and rather close to the street, but screened by a mass of some thickly-leaved, heavy-growing vine that spread fanwise from post to post. The air of the summer night was hot and leaden. Anna could hear the thready notes of a cheap phonograph down the street, grinding ragtime from a defective record.

"I suppose so," agreed Joe. "Still, I hate to see you throw yourself away on a fellow that—that—"

"You better be careful," warned Anna. "Where did you get your license to pan Steve Rivers? He's got five hundred dollars saved up in the bank. That's more than you can say. And he has a good job too."

"Listen, Anna," Joe said. "You can call me a bad loser if you like. I made a game fight and lost out. I wish I could say it was to a better man. There's lots of fellows in this world might make you a better husband than me, and I wouldn't blame you. But Steve Rivers is a—

well, he just ain't fit for you. I know him better'n you do, I guess. There's things about him I wouldn't tell you. All I got to say is, throw me down if you want to, but, for God's sake, don't marry Steve; because if you do, you'll regret it as sure as I'm standing here."

Joe had begun to move toward the porch steps.

"I always liked you, Joe; honestly," said Anna. "I liked you sometimes so much I wasn't sure whether I'd take Steve or you. I hoped we'd part good friends; but we can't if you don't behave nice. I know it's hard for you; but you'll get over it. I wouldn't wonder if, in time, you'd be glad I decided to marry Steve. You'll see lots of girls nicer than I am—prettier and everything. Then you'll forget about how much you cared for me, or else wonder how you could ever have been so foolish. So be a good boy, and don't spoil it all by knocking the man that won out."

"But you don't understand," began Joe argumentatively; then he stopped short and made a hopeless gesture. "Aw, what's the use? A man that would try to argue with a woman's a fool." He turned and clumped heavily down the steps to the sidewalk, and was gone without even the formality of a good night. Anna stood and watched him through the chinks between the leaves of the screening vine. Then she sighed and went gloomily into the house and up to her room to bed.

Anna Polenka's father was a laborer

in the Tudbury mills, a thrifty immigrant from one of those far lands beyond the central empires of Europe. In the thirty years of his residence in America, he had managed to save from his wages enough money to pay for the little home in which he and his family lived. Of seven children, Anna was the youngest. All the rest were married, and Radizlov Polenka had already been presented with several grandchildren. Anna helped her mother about the house, and worked as stenographer in the office of Mr. Gilchrist, manager of the Tudbury mills.

The girl was beautiful—dark, with large, round eyes in which seemed at times to dwell the mysteries of an unplumbed soul. Her hair, black and shining, she had tortured into the latest fashionable wave. Her lips, a carnation red, smiled to show an amazingly white set of absolutely perfect teeth. She possessed rich coloring, an almost olive darkness of skin, as clear and smooth as satin, with warm tints of pink. Her figure, not yet fully formed, was roundly slender, graceful as waving grass, firm as a young sapling of beech.

This vividness of color, the red and olive tints, the black and glossy hair, were not racial; for many of her father's nationality were blond. Like the occasional American-bred girl of the dark type, the Slav girl was a throwback to some remote ancestral tribe, a drop of whose swarthy blood had lived down through the generations, at last to burgeon forth in her warm cheek.

Anna was, however, as much an American as the other children with whom she had grown up in that small manufacturing town. Her habits, her speech, her mode of thought had been molded by environment. She knew but few phrases of the native tongue of her parents, and used them seldom. In the public schools she associated with girls and boys whose parents were of all the races that go to make up our polyracial nationality.

The Polenka home was small, commonplace, and comfortable; a cheap two-story house, not very well built, but quite like the other houses in the same neighborhood. It had been last painted white, with trimmings of giddy yellow, which time had mercifully subdued. The narrow front piazza sagged somewhat, its supporting posts settling deeper and deeper into the ground as years went by. At the back, Polenka had a small garden plot, in which he annually raised a variety of kitchen vegetables and a few flowers. Behind some lengths of drooping wire netting, a dozen hens lived their uninteresting, if useful, lives.

The interior aspect of this dwelling was consistent with its exterior. The furniture was cheap, much worn, uninspiring. The carpets were faded with age and lacked nap in many spots. On the walls hung pictures lithographed in contrasting colors, framed in oak, sometimes dingily ornamented with silver-gilt. At the windows were coarse lace curtains, quite clean and in fair repair. The air of the house was usually permeated with some odor of homely cooking. On Mondays the smell of soapsuds filled the rooms; on Friday the aroma of fried fish impinged upon one's nostrils.

Not so long ago this house had been full of children; but since the last of Anna's unmarried sisters had been taken to wife by Jim Broom, who kept the meat market half a block up the street, only Polenka, his wife, and Anna remained.

"It ain't bad—" Polenka said, removing his heavy boots and curling his tired toes by the kitchen fire—"it ain't bad to have a little peace and quietness, eh?"

"Not so much work," agreed his wife, "but God knows it's lonesome. Often I wish some of 'em was back."

"We gave them a good home long as they stayed with us," said Polenka complacently. This was true. There had never been a day, even when his family

had been at its numerical peak, when Polenka had not seen that all had enough to eat, warm clothes, good beds. He had done well.

"I hope Anna'll keep the fellows away from her a while," said Mrs. Polenka. "Not much chance, I guess; but she's different."

"Yes," said Polenka. "I'd miss her the worst of any of 'em. She's different; that's true. She's got brains, Anna has. Maybe she'll marry some rich feller."

"You can't tell. She's odd. She reads books, lots of books. She don't much go to movies, like the others do. Often I look at her and wonder what is she's thinking of, she's so quiet."

"A good girl," said Polenka, lighting his pipe.

"A good girl," repeated Anna's mother. "If she does marry, I hope she gets a husband that will treat her nice. If he didn't, I'd be sorry for her."

"Maybe some one would need to be sorry for the husband," replied Polenka grinning.

That night when Joe Strickland had gone angrily away, Anna climbed the stairs to her room. Under even her light tread, the stairs creaked dismally. The night was hot and the house stuffy.

Anna disrobed slowly, sitting on the edge of her bed. Her dresses, hanging on chairs or on hooks along the wall, some snapshots of her friends, an infirm tennis-racket tied with a bow of blue ribbon over the bureau, three or four school flags—these gave the room a certain individuality. Anna had shared it with her most recently married sister. The furniture was of ash, with a great deal of the varnish gone. Such as it was, there was enough. On the rocking chair lay a cushion, a trifle dingy, embroidered with the letters standing for Tudbury High School.

When Anna lighted the gas and took off her clothes and put on her nightgown, she surveyed the room with a queer mixture of emotions.

In spite of the fact that this had been her bedroom for some years, she had never cared much for it. Vaguely there stirred within her a sense of the commonplaceness of this room. She had never been contented in it. Her sister, who had married Jim Broom, was now living in a house that differed from the Polenka domicile only in the matter of newness. Anna did not want to marry a man who would give her nothing better than this. Her mother regarded her daughter's room as bordering upon the luxurious; but Anna was sure that, if she chose the right husband, there were elegancies to which she might reasonably aspire, and of which her mother had but slight conception.

A phonograph playing the latest dance record did not satisfy Anna's craving for melody. A lithograph of a very red cow drinking green water out of a brook on the banks of which pink daisies grew in wild profusion, was somehow lacking. Having been brought up on this sort of thing, the girl should have become habituated to it; but she never had.

She was filled with discontent. She felt both ungracious and ungrateful, and would not for the world have allowed her parents to know she was anything but perfectly happy. Nevertheless, she did not intend to marry into another home like her father's.

Joe Strickland was a freight clerk at the Tudbury railroad station. He was not only clerk, he assisted at certain times of the day in unloading cars of commodities, a task which wore callouses on his hands and sometimes tore his clothes. Joe was good-looking, jovial, rather domineering; and his pay was three dollars a day. To Anna Polenka, three dollars a day meant a small rented house, cheaply furnished and garishly ornamented, like her own or that of her sister.

Joe loved her, of course. But Steve Rivers, who worked in the Tudbury National Bank, got twenty-five dollars a

week and had, he said, a savings account of five hundred dollars. Steve was, then, a man of substance and prospects. He had made a start in life. If she married Steve, they could go to board at the Tudbury House, have a room and a bath of their own, and eat in the dining-room, where they would be waited on by young ladies in starched white aprons.

There was some class to that.

Anna had liked Joe Strickland enough to wish he had the bank job and that Steve were the freight clerk. That would make things ever so much better. But of course she was fond of Steve, and when they had been married a while she would love him very heartily, especially if his twenty-five a week grew to fifty and they could expand their one room and bath at the Tudbury House into a suite to include a "Parlor."

Life was rather a complex affair, Anna thought as she turned off the gas and crept into bed. From another room along the corridor, she heard her father snoring. She hoped Steve would not snore.

Lying there in the dark, thinking about the future, she had a little heartache, which she mistakenly diagnosed as a headache. She hoped she hadn't been mean to Joe Strickland; but it certainly wasn't very generous of him to pan Steve Rivers just because Steve had certain things which Joe lacked. It would have been a lot nobler of Joe to say something magnanimous about his successful rival. Anna was quite sure she should have wept a bit if he had; and this would have been mournful and romantic and fascinating.

II

In spite of her parents' hope that she would "keep the fellows away from her a while," Anna Polenka was before long the wife of the opulent Steve Rivers, and went to live at the Tudbury House. Thus was realized her ambition to be

waited on by the starched-aproned goddesses of the Tudbury House dining-room, and to avoid the fate of other girls who wedded commonplace husbands and lived in shoddy, building-and-loan-association homes.

Poor Anna! The fulfilment of her dream was hardly less evanescent than the vision itself. The sojourn of Mr. and Mrs. Rivers among the small-town splendors of the Tudbury House lasted but three or four months. The five hundred dollars Steve had said he had saved up proved to be a myth; and his salary of twenty-five dollars a week was quite inadequate to support his wife and him in the style to which they wished to become accustomed.

Having been served with notice to vacate the room and bath, the couple went to live in the paid-for dwelling of Radislov Polenka, laborer.

"I'm glad to have Anna back. She helps me so much around the house and no longer now am I so lonesome," Mrs. Polenka told her husband.

"Sure," Polenka agreed. "If they pay regular the board money, it ain't so bad. But you want to watch out; not for nothing am I going to take care of them, with Steve earning in the bank bigger pay than I have ever made. The two of them should save."

"If they wasn't in debt. That Steve's got no idea about money. At the hotel they owed over two hundred dollars when they left, and paying that up will take forty weeks if they give five dollars a week."

"And Anna with two diamond rings, big as strawberries! And clothes and hats—! Where you think they got such things, eh?"

"Easy payments. More debts. If the bank knew it, maybe they'd fire Steve. They have to be careful who they hire, handling other people's money."

Mrs. Polenka sighed. Anna, the youngest, flower of the Polenka brood, who had displayed the best mind of all,

who had given promise of the brightest future, was married to a ne'er-do-well. He had fooled Anna and all the rest, with his bank job and his big talk and his lies about thriftily saved assets.

"Too bad she didn't marry Joe Strickland," said Polenka, sucking at his pipe. "A good boy. I hear he's gone away; but some day he amount to something, sure enough."

"Too bad. Maybe Steve learn a lesson from this and turn over a new leaf. He'd better. It ain't alone him and Anna he's got to support."

"What?"

"Sure. Anna told me yesterday."

"Young fools! Well, I hope Steve keep his job. If he does, all right. No more diamond rings, no more fine clothes. But children is a good thing sometimes. You know how it was with me, before I got married." The man puffed his pipe, thinking back across the years.

"Yes," said his wife. "A good thing you married right and got a family to support. You steadied down pretty quick, I'll say that for you."

"You take credit that you made a man of me, eh?"

"If Anna made so good a man of Steve, she would do well," said Mrs. Polenka.

But Anna did not do as her mother had done. Probably it was because she had inferior material to work on. Steve Rivers did not improve under responsibility. Instead, he went utterly to pieces. He was not the stuff of which men are built.

One night Steve failed to appear at supper. Next day it transpired that the bank missed some thousands of dollars in currency. The sensation created by news of this defalcation spread quickly throughout the little city.

Anna stormed, almost theatrical in her distress. That unsatisfied mystery in her black eyes now became a sombre light of pain and protest. How she had planned and schemed to get away from

this atmosphere of boiled cabbage and shabby carpets, this barren life of commonplaces; and the means she had taken to escape it had only thrown her back upon it, chained her more inexorably to it.

She had been as grossly betrayed as any deceived woman could be, married or not. A crimsoning shame flamed in her cheeks when she thought of going out into the streets of Tudbury, where her old friends would look askance at the wife of a felon, in quite as unbearable a manner as that in which they would have regarded the dupe of some village Lovelace.

But when Anna's spirit crept back from the blur of pain into the consciousness of that new being in the bend of her arm, she realized suddenly that here was the beginning of life for her. This realization was as yet chaotic, amorphous, intangible; but it was there. She knew it meant fight, not alone for herself, but for the boy. With what weapons was she to make war against an adverse fate? She doubted not they would be ready to her hand.

Anna Rivers was a good girl, large of heart, possessing a soul of fundamental strength. The things life made her do in order to beat fate at its own game were done because Anna had, if anything, too much imagination. She was an essential strategist, an opportunist; and that she should take any unreasoned step was quite out of line with her nature. True, she had made a mistake in choosing a husband on this basis; but she must adhere to that philosophy of life which had come down to her with her olive skin and sombre eyes. Making a mistake of judgment does not invalidate the principle of judgments. It was simply that she must try again.

Having regained her strength, she devoted herself for a time to the care of her child and to those simple tasks which were her share of the burden of house-keeping.

"Funny," said Mrs. Polenka. "I'd be feeling terrible, with all that's happened." This to her husband, in one of those intimate after-supper kitchen colloquies, when Anna was upstairs putting little Stanley (her father insisted that the name was Stanislaus) to bed.

"Do you want to feel terrible?" asked Polenka mildly.

"No, I don't want to, but seems I ought to, with the disgrace of that Steve and all. But with Anna and the baby here, I don't remember when I been so contented. We get along good."

"Well, you got a right. Something is coming to you, to pay for all you been through. If you can get any comfort, I guess you're welcome to it. Anyhow, we can't blame Anna. It ain't her fault she's unlucky."

"She's talking about a job."

"Maybe it would be a good thing to take up her mind. Only, she shouldn't think I ain't willing to take care of her."

"To-morrow she goes to see Mr. Gilchrist at the mills. She thinks maybe he will take her back."

"She's got courage, anyhow. Let her try it, if she wants to. I suppose she'd feel more independent."

Mr. Gilchrist was only too glad to have Anna back in his office. She was efficient and knew his work.

"It seems like old times, Anna," he said, "to see that shiny black head of yours around here. I'm sorry for—for your troubles, child; but I'm certainly glad to have you with me again."

Anna smiled.

"That's nice of you," she said. "Honest, it does seem good to be back. I was a little fool, Mr. Gilchrist. Now I've got to pay; but people like you make it easier for me. All the girls are good to me, and none of them said a word about—about anything. A few bad people don't make a bad world, do they?"

"No, Anna, they only make us appreciate the good ones."

"That's right, Mr. Gilchrist. You

want to dictate? Maybe you'll have to go easy with me a few days till I get back my shorthand. I guess I'm rusty."

For a while Anna Polenka settled into something like the routine of her pre-marital days—getting up, going to work, coming home again, the same as of old. Mrs. Polenka took care of the baby while Anna was away. The child was a plump, lusty little thing, dark like Anna, growing splendidly.

Anna's acquaintances said she was not much changed from the old days. They did not mark the deepening of those mysteries in her dark eyes which they had never been quite able to understand. She was a little sobered by experience. Still only eighteen years old, she was mature in voice, in figure. Her touch had a certain accuracy; her decisions were prompt and firm.

"Anna's more efficient than ever," said Mr. Gilchrist. He was a fatherly soul, white-haired and rather benevolent, a business man of the old school, who believed the employer ought to keep in personal touch with as many of his employees as possible. Machinelike efficiency had never been introduced into the Tudbury Mills; yet they made money.

In the mill office, they called Anna Miss Polenka. This was by her especial request. She wanted to be back on the old basis as far as possible. It is not to be thought, however, that Anna was contented. Like a frog trying to climb out of a well, she had taken a one-foot jump and fallen back two feet. But she could see the clouds drifting across the blue disk of sky above the well's mouth. She was sitting quietly on a bit of driftwood, contemplating these clouds and watching how pleasantly the sun burnished their silvery edges. They looked very far away. It was no use making another desperate leap for freedom. Better to wait quietly for a while. Fate might some day lower a bucket, in which she could steal a free ride to daylight.

III

"AND if," dictated Mr. Gilchrist, "we find it possible to get sufficient cars, we shall arrange to make the shipment on or about— Why, Miss Polenka—Anna child—what's the matter?"

Anna had ceased to take notes. She was gazing with a curious fixity at a shiny paper weight on her employer's desk. It was a globe of heavy glass, lined with quicksilver—a spherical mirror, in fact, which gave forth distorted reflections of everything. Anna had seen it hundreds of times, for Gilchrist had kept it on his desk for years.

Now, however, she was regarding it like a person hypnotized. Her usually full-colored cheeks were pale olive; her lips were parted, her eyes wide-open and staring.

"Anna, Anna!" persisted Gilchrist. "Pay attention; I'm dic— Say, you're not ill or anything?"

The girl held up a warning hand.

"Don't," she said. "Please—it's Donald."

"Donald," repeated Gilchrist. "Donald? What about Donald?"

Donald was his son, a boy of about eighteen.

"It turns and turns and turns," said Anna. "No; it's wheels. And there's something—a tree—a telegraph-pole—Oh!"

She stopped, and seemed to try to tear her gaze from the silvered globe.

Her employer showed marked impatience.

"What the devil?" he grumbled. "The child's gone crazy. Say, Anna, this is business hours; no time for rehearsing private theatricals."

"It is Donald, it is! He's all white, and covered with dirt, and there's blood—blood on his face—"

"What's that?" cried Gilchrist. "What are you saying? What sort of rigmarole—"

"Wheels and wheels and wheels, and

blood, and a telegraph pole, and a little white house with windows broken out and nobody living in it—and a mail box in front. Oh, what's that name? Brightman—Brinkerman—"

"Brinkerson—Brinkerson!" cried Gilchrist. "That'll be the old Brinkerson place where the family all died of diphtheria two years ago. Good Lord! Here, Miss Kennedy, Miss Gates, come here, quick! Miss Polenka's fainted. Get her into the rest room and call Doctor White. I've got to go!"

He clapped on his hat and left the office on the run. Out into the factory yard, he rushed, shouting for someone to open the garage doors and the big gates in the enclosure fence. In five minutes he was stopping before the home of his own family physician.

"You'll think I'm loony," he shouted, "coming here and kidnaping you this way—wild goose chase and all that."

They went tearing through the suburbs of Tudbury, defying all the local anti-speed ordinances.

"Most uncanny thing that ever happened to me. Don't believe in any such rot; but, my God! suppose it should be true! Suppose Donald had been hurt! Say, Doc, how far would you call it to that old deserted Brinkerson place?"

"Matter of thirteen miles."

"Promise, if nothing comes of this, you'll never tell a human being," said Gilchrist. "Fancy my losing my head, all on account of the crazy vaporings of a girl. I guess her troubles have upset her mind, poor young one. Nice little thing, too. She's the one that Rivers married and deserted—you remember. Then came back to me—mighty spunky little thing."

Gilchrist, excited, incredulous, wild with anxiety, kept his foot on the accelerator, and the runabout bounced madly along the country road.

"Of course there's nothing to it. . . . Great Scott! There's Brinkerson's,

and— God, Doc! The girl told the truth!"

In a small town like Tudbury, you can't keep a thing like that dark. Anna said she didn't remember what happened, except that as Mr. Gilchrist dictated, she found herself looking at the shiny paper weight; and then she felt rather drowsy, and thought she wasn't really paying careful attention to her employer's dictation. Then, next thing she knew, she was on the couch in the first-aid room, and the girls were rubbing her hands and holding smelling-salts to her nose.

But Mr. Gilchrist said that Donald's life had undoubtedly been saved by the prompt arrival of the doctor at the scene of the accident. The boy's car had thrown a shoe, and, swerving, crashed into the telegraph pole. He was terribly hurt; but he would be well again in time. But if he had been allowed to lie there in the road until picked up by some chance passer-by, he would assuredly have died.

All this amazed Anna Polenka no less than it amazed her friends; and the repute of her exploit was a source of some embarrassment, because people came to her to ask for the benefit of her occult power for all sorts of reasons. Anna said she had no occult power; she didn't understand it any more than they did. She wanted to be let alone. She was not seeking publicity.

Privately, however, she became exceedingly curious. She wanted an explanation, and there was no one whom she could ask. She sought enlightenment in books, and was at once led into a literary labyrinth from which, as long as she lived, she never escaped. The bibliography of the occult is endless, bottomless, and without horizon. But Anna was a good reader. In an infinite haystack of opinion, propaganda, theory, doctrine, and experience she found, here and there, an occasional needle of truth.

And, likewise, she learned that all who professed to exercise occult powers, who

claimed to tell fortunes, or in any way elucidate the unknown, were regarded as charlatans and humbugs.

Meanwhile, she went her way, pursuing the even routine of existence to all outward seeming; but, having learned that, for certain types of mentality, it is possible to induce self-hypnosis through the fixed contemplation of some shiny object, she stealthily possessed herself of a glass ball, and in the privacy of her room sought, through its means, to adventure into the unknown. The result was a period of unconsciousness lasting some time, which frightened her mother into a spasm and left Anna with a twenty-four-hour headache and a feeling as if she had been doing hard manual labor without rest.

However, there were times when she became what the books called "highly psychic." These came at irregular intervals. The manifestations were as quixotic as they were spasmodic.

She was invited to supper in the home of a neighbor. Directly in front of her stood a silver-plated sugar bowl. Anna suddenly touched the hand of little Molly Finney, who sat next her, and announced in sepulchral tones that Molly must be kept from school next day. The schoolhouse caught fire on the morrow and some of the children had narrow escapes.

This is only one instance of a score. But when Sadie Sadlowitz came one evening to the Polenka house and asked if Anna wouldn't please "go into a trance" and tell her why Moe Feingold had stopped keeping company with her, Anna gazed in vain into the crystal depths; and Sadie went home declaring that she didn't see nothing wonderful about Annie Rivers, and she for one would bet them stories about her being a clear voyn't was all bunk, so there now.

But the result was far different when Mrs. Irving van Sicklen, from the "select" part of Tudbury, came to Anna's home in a limousine and told the girl

a touching story of domestic infelicity. Mrs. van Sicklen was lovely, gentle, good as an angel. Anna Polenka knew what it meant to have a husband ill-treat one, and her heart went out in sympathy to her visitor. In the subdued light of the Polenka parlor she sat and held Mrs. van Sicklen's hand and talked softly to her. But the crystal would yield nothing. Yet the woman was so insistent, so distressed!

Heavy-hearted, Anna went through the motions of what she had learned to call a "sitting." She couldn't bring herself to disappoint her visitor; and so, with some hesitation, but using her native shrewdness and adroitness, she patched together a demonstration that warmed Mrs. von Sicklen's chilled heart.

"I see some sort of crowd," said Anna. "This woman—she's medium to dark-complexioned—"

"Dark," said Mrs. van Sicklen.

"Hush," said Anna. "You mustn't talk. He met her some place where there were lots of people—a reception. I can see people dancing—"

"At a theatre party."

"It's the people on the stage that are dancing," said Anna hastily. "I get it now. But he—he doesn't really care for her. She's too—too shallow. She—she'd never hold him; she isn't like you."

"That is true," said Mrs. van Sicklen. "She has no depth—she's just pretty."

"Don't you notice it," said Anna. "Pretend you don't care. This is—is only a passing—er—phase."

Out of the books she had picked up the patten naturally, and made it her own.

"I see a lot of paper—paper, paper, paper. Do you write?"

"A little—poems and songs—"

To herself, the girl said: "That was a long shot. Landed, though."

Then, to her client: "Keep writing; it will lead to something. Perhaps it means fame—perhaps not. It will—will calm your mind. You have talent."

And so it went. At the end of half an hour, Mrs. van Sicklen arose, reassured, happy, confident.

"Oh, Miss Polenka," she said, "I can't tell you how much you've helped me! You will forgive my intrusion into your home, won't you. I was in such distress."

Anna looked about at the shabby hangings, the cheap furniture, the garish wall paper. Home!

"It's nothing," she said. She felt like a burglar. "Honestly, it was just between us, Mrs. van Sicklen. I know how a woman feels. It's sympathy between two people like you and me, people who have suffered."

"You mean, it's the sympathy that makes the psychic manifestation possible? Of course. But I thought you went into a trance."

"Oh, no; not always. It's the vibrations, you know. People that are strongly psychic vibrate in harmony; and that makes it unnecessary to employ the more radical methods." Anna was mentally grasping in the air for the right words—and actually getting away with it.

"It's wonderful," said Mrs. van Sicklen. "Let me pay you."

"Oh!" cried Anna, her cheeks flaming. "Oh, please, please don't! I couldn't take it, really. I never could let you—"

"I have taken your time," persisted the lady. "I shall not feel that I can come again if I am not to make it right with you."

She laid some crisp banknotes on the table and departed. Anna, quite dumfounded by this unexpected development, wondered afterward if she had been decently polite.

Then she looked at the money. There was as much as she earned at the factory in a fortnight. And she wasn't entitled to it, because she had fooled Mrs. van Sicklen cleverly, adroitly—

Well, Mrs. van Sicklen had fixed her own price. If the sitting hadn't been

worth the money, she wouldn't have left it. She was the best judge of what it meant to her.

Anna picked up the bills. They represented new clothes for little Stanley and a dressing sacque her mother had said she couldn't afford, and a big glass jar of smoking tobacco for her father.

She tucked the money into her dress and went up to her room. There, beside her bed in his little crib, lay Stanley, pink and warm, *her* baby; *her* little boy. What was to be his future? He was her responsibility. Steve Rivers had unloaded it all upon her. Life was holding out the hand of a tax collector and saying: "Here, young woman! Pay up!"

Then, simultaneously, fate was advancing the money with which to pay.

Anna leaned over the crib and listened to the gentle baby-breathing, caught the baby-warmth of the tiny, sweet body. He was so delicate, so fragile, with his soft cheeks, and dark-fringed eyelids, and rumpled hair there on the pillow. One tiny rose-leaf hand was upthrown beside his head, a hand that clutched at the heart of Anna Polenka.

"God!" she said to herself. "If I'm clever enough, how can I help it? Shall I let him grow up like I did? When I have a chance to give him things, is it right to pass it by? If I could only see into that globe and find out what's best. I can tell the others, but I can't do anything for myself."

She undressed and lay down in the bed, thinking and thinking. After a while she cried into her pillow.

"You little cheat!" she called herself. "You little faker; charlatan; humbug! You'll never get away with it."

Finally she fell asleep; but it was not before she had made a decision.

IV

As you walk along Fifty-fifth Street, approaching Fifth Avenue from the west, you pass rows of tall houses of brown-

stone, with high front stoops. Many of these houses possess a certain distinction, giving evidence that their dwellers are of more than average prosperity.

Up the steps of one of them on a crisp Sunday afternoon in autumn, trotted a young man, carrying a bulky kit bag. He rang the bell and awaited impatiently the answer to his summons. Presently a maid came and swung back the grilled iron door, admitting him into the white-painted vestibule.

"Why, it's Master Stanley," said the maid.

"Is Mother at home?" he demanded, passing on into the hall.

"Yes, sir; and she'll be surprised to see you. She wasn't expectin' you for another week."

"I'll go to my room, Nora; and you can tell her I've come."

He bounded up the stairs and sought his room on the third floor. It was a big, comfortable apartment, furnished and decorated in boyish taste, though with a degree of luxury. Through an open door he caught sight of a white porcelain bathroom.

"Gee!" mused the new arrival. "That's inviting. It's good to get back. Dear little Mumsy! She always has everything so spick and span."

He felt travel-worn and dusty, having come from more than halfway across the continent. Hastily he disrobed, and after a shower and rubdown, got into fresh things. Standing before his dresser, adjusting his tie with meticulous exactness, he heard a knock.

"Come in," he called.

The door opened, and a woman entered. She was a beautiful woman, vital, glowingly alive. In her smooth cheeks, delicately olive, were the lovely tints of youth. Her hair, jet black, shone in lustrous waves.

But the wonder of her beauty lay largely in her dark eyes, richly brown, and now shining with the light of welcome.

"Stanley, dear!" she cried; and instantly she was in his arms.

"Mumsy, little Mumsy! I'm so glad to see you! My, aren't you a wonder! You look about twenty-five. No one could believe you were the mother of a great cub like me."

It was true. The woman seemed the personification of eternal youth. She retained a sweet girlishness of expression, and years had not impaired the slenderness or grace of her figure. She was clad in a gown of some dark material, silken and rather clinging. At sight of her one instantly recognized in her garments a nice feeling for fashion, that took from prevailing modes those effects which best suited her and somehow improved them by her adaptation.

"You are a wonder," cried Stanley, holding her at arm's length. "None of the *débutantes* have anything on you for looks, Mumsy girl."

"Don't be silly, dear. I'm thirty-eight."

"No one would believe it."

"Nora said you had come. I was reading——"

"Yes; I told her to tell you. I wanted to freshen up a bit. They let me off the bridge job a week sooner than I'd expected, so I hustled East to surprise you. Let's sit down and get things up to date. How've you been?"

"Fine, as always, dear boy. Tell me, did you make good? And do you like your profession? Is it going to keep you interested?"

"Marvelous! Most interesting profession in the world. Yes, I think I did make good. I'm to report downtown at the firm's New York office for a new assignment right away. They're even talking of sending me to China on a big railroad construction job."

"Oh, honey! So far? When you've got back?"

"Orders are orders, old dear. Besides, think of the experience! It's great, be-

ing sent all over the world. The firm's so decent to me, too. I'm the only twenty-year-old engineer they have, and they hand me responsibilities some of the older chaps would give their shirts for."

"It's splendid, Stan, splendid. I'm so proud of you! But if you go to some far-away place—well, I think I'll close the house and leave town. I think I'll buy a little farm and have some chickens, and just live a peaceful, old-lady existence back in the country."

"Don't be absurd, Mumsy. Still, that farm idea isn't so bad. When I come back, maybe I'll have a wad of money, so I can settle down with you and be your farm superintendent. As an engineer, I could at least lay out a water supply and keep your fences in repair."

"Small hope of that, boy. You'll never be contented to settle down—until you marry; and I hope that won't be so very soon."

"How are you getting on, Mumsy? I've nearly a thousand dollars saved from my salary that I've no use for. Do you have money enough for everything you want?"

Mrs. Gage looked sharply at her son.

"Why, Stanley, what an idea!"

"Well, I didn't know. Living costs a lot, and I was a big expense to you while I was in technical school. I've sometimes wondered if the money Father left was enough. You won't have to worry after another year or two, because I'll probably be making barrels one of these days. Just now I'm not much help; but I want you to know I realize how splendid you've been, and that I do feel a lot of responsibility, especially if——"

"How you talk, Sonny mine! There isn't the slightest need of your worrying about me. I've plenty, dear."

She spoke with such emphasis that the boy was quite convinced. But in her soul the beautiful Mrs. Gage knew that things were not as she had pictured them. Stanley's education had cost her thousands of dollars. The Fifty-fifth Street

house was a big expense. Yet she loved the comfort of it, and shuddered when she thought of giving it up.

There were bills unpaid that were past due. Her credit was still unimpaired, but she knew that unless payments were made before long, this condition would not hold.

Anna Gage was, in truth, a creature made for luxury. To lie blissfully late in the morning, to arise and bathe in perfumed water tempered to perfection by an assiduous maid, to breakfast daintily—these things were a habit grown strong from indulgence.

Somewhere in her memory awoke at times the picture of a shabby house, ill-painted, cheaply furnished; of a room from whose ashwood chairs large patches of varnish had scaled; of a home where comfort went hand in hand with cheapness—a good home, it was true, owned outright by grace of endless payments to the building-and-loan association.

But such pictures always made her cringe. Well, she had been generous. Never a month went by without a check, mailed in a letter full of affectionate messages. Anna Gage's conscience was easy on that score.

She patted her son's big, capable hand, as they sat together on a wicker *chaise longue*, her warm cheek resting against his shoulder, her eyes full of a proud light as she realized the manly strength in the boy's face. Suddenly she sprang to her feet and confronted him. He looked up at her, wide-eyed, a little startled.

"Why, Mumsy!"

"Money!" cried Anna Gage. "What's money? Nothing, Stanley, nothing, except a means to an end; and with me that end has always been you."

She dropped on her knees in front of him and put up her arms about his neck.

"Boy, boy," she cried, "thank you, thank you, for being what you are! Thank you for all you've done to justify my love and my faith in you. I'm so

proud of you, so very proud of you. And you know, you're all I've got. Don't talk about money. Money's done a lot for us—but if I could have accomplished the same thing by taking in washing, I'd have done it cheerfully; and I'd have been happy and proud of my success, Sonny boy!"

To Stanley, there was something embarrassing about this unexpected show of emotion. He had never seen his mother this way before. He didn't understand it, not knowing what lay behind it all. Words came with difficulty, and he felt the best he could do was to tuck her face down against his collar and stroke her hair and call her the loving diminutives that had always passed current between them.

"It's been splendid of you," he kept saying. "Splendid! I know you would do anything for me; but pretty soon it'll be my turn. And if you want to live on a farm, you shall have just the grandest farm in Westchester County or Long Island or anywhere. I'll buy it for you."

V

THE dwelling of Mrs. Gage was a model of taste. The rooms were of good size, cheerful, artistically homelike. There were pictures excellently chosen—not in profusion, but more than making up in character what they lacked in numbers. The rugs on the floors were soft and rich, the furniture dainty, graceful, yet sound and substantial. There were no heavy, shrouding draperies, but, instead, hangings that rather inclined to fluffiness, indescribably feminine, and for that reason, as charming as they were appropriate to Anna Gage.

But there was one room in the Gage home which differed radically from all the others—Anna's study.

It was in the middle of the house, and had no windows. Most of the furniture was of heavy, dark wood, in many

cases elaborately carved. In the centre stood a great flat-topped desk, as solid as a mountain, and seemingly as antique. There were no pictures, for the walls were covered with dark-hued tapestries.

The only light in this apartment came from a curious, pierced metal lamp suspended from the ceiling by chains; and this lamp was so arranged that its rays fell mostly upon the desk top. When Anna Gage sat at this desk, one saw her face, quite vividly lighted against a background of half-penetrable gloom.

There were books on the desk and in cases near by, old books, many of them bound in leather already tattered, faded, like the integuments of a mummy. It was quite possible to read a book lying on the ancient desk; but in any other part of the room, the types were quite indiscernible.

In the exact center of the desk stood a globe of some translucent substance, perhaps four or five inches in diameter. This globe seemed to possess a certain iridescent, opaline quality, like a vast pearl, but with more vivid fires. It had about it something of "aliveness"; one could not think of it as mere inert solid. In it the rainbow colors seemed to ebb and flow, to swirl and sweep, like some restless, molten liquid; yet if you looked close, you could not detect this motion. It was an impression, fantastic, disturbing, and quite intangible.

Faintly, throughout the room, wafted an odd, mysterious odor, subtly sweet, suggesting a delicately fragrant smoke. Yet there was no censer, no occult-looking tripod or altar, no suggestion of Oriental rite or shrine. The odor came and went in gentle waves, now very noticeable, now almost imperceptible.

Anna Gage sat at her desk and slowly turned the leaves of a book. She looked very beautiful, very alluring, and there, in the carefully arranged light, the mystery in her great sombre eyes was deepened and enhanced.

A knock preceded the entrance of Miss

Brooks, the secretary, who laid a slip of paper on the desk. Miss Brooks was comely, simply dressed, the exemplification of absolute silence, absolute circumspection.

"She may come in," said Anna.

Presently a young woman entered. She was weeping; more than that, she was frightened.

"Sit down, my dear," said Anna kindly. "You came from Mrs. Bird?"

"Yes, Miss—I mean, Missis."

"What did Mrs. Bird tell you?"

"I went to her an' towld her I—heered iv a Mrs. Gage that give people advice, and did she know you. An' she said she did; an' she give me the note to you, so I come."

"Let me see your hand, please."

The visitor extended a reddened palm, at which Mrs. Gage looked intently.

"I see," she said.

"Yis, ma'am," replied Maggie.

Anna picked up the iridescent globe and set it on a little silken cushion quite close to the edge of the desk.

"Now, Maggie," she said, "look in there very carefully and tell me what you see."

Maggie shrank back.

"Oh, I don't dare; I don't dare." Nevertheless, she managed to fix her gaze on the colorful depths.

Anna laid a light hand on the girl's forehead.

"What do you see?"

Maggie's eyes widened; her mouth opened.

"My God!" she breathed. "It's Dinny!"

"Anything else?"

"He's walkin', walkin', walkin'. An' thim that's wit' him is follerin' him, an'—"

"The woman—what is she doing?"

"There's no woman—glory be, there's no woman at all, at all!"

Anna Gage snatched away the globe and began to talk gently, kindly; and the excitable Maggie made reply. None of

these replies was without its significance. At the end of half an hour, the girl arose.

"An' may God bless you, ma'am, for the comfort you've been to me this day," she said. "An' how much do I owe you?"

"Hush," said Anna. "Run along now, and stop worrying."

"But I want to pay you."

"Put an extra dollar in the poor box at mass next Sunday. Please give Mrs. Bird my love, and ask her not to say anything about sending you here. You know I don't do these things for money."

The girl went away marveling, one of the fortunate few who gained admittance into that dim chamber.

When she had gone, Anna gazed long and deeply into the globe; but its opaline currents only swirled meaninglessly before her eyes, telling her nothing. It had always been so. That strange clairvoyance which she had at times been able to exercise for the benefit of others had never enabled her to see into her own life's mysteries.

"Poor Maggie," she mused. "Poor, gullible creature. A little hypnotism, a little sympathy, a little shrewd adroitness— Lord help me! What a cheat I am!"

Miss Brooks entered with a card.

"Yes," said Anna. "I'll see her."

Far different from the previous caller was Mrs. Torville Oxnard. She swept into Anna's study with a sort of assurance that was dangerously close to condescension.

"My dear!" she cried. "How well you're looking!"

Instantly in Mrs. Gage's manner appeared a certain restraint.

"Thank you; I'm quite well."

"I've called on such an important matter," said Mrs. Oxnard; "and it's so very intimate too." She seated herself beside Anna's desk. "I really must have your advice. You've always helped me so wonderfully."

Anna surveyed the woman coolly. She was rather splendid, in a striking way.

Her garments were costly; on her hands was a fortune in jewels. Anna knew that her visitor was receiving the largest alimony of any woman in New York.

"It's about—"

"Don't!" cried Anna sharply. "You mustn't tell me. I don't want you to tell me. You've no right to take a comparative stranger into your confidence, Mrs. Oxnard. I can't accept that responsibility."

"Then, how are you going to help me, if I don't tell you?" Plainly, the recital of her case was something to which she had looked forward.

"Your hand," said Anna simply.

She examined the lines intently, and meanwhile her mind was working with the precision of a clock. She caught up the globe.

"Quick," she cried; "but not a word, not a word! If you speak, the spell will be broken."

She placed a hand on the brow of her visitor, and Mrs. Oxnard bent her gaze hungrily on the beckoning liquid fires within the sphere. Then, too, her eyes widened, and she would have spoken; but Anna laid a finger on her half-parted lips.

"That's enough," said Mrs. Oxnard, as Anna suddenly snatched aside the crystal. "Heavens! What a revelation!" She arose. "Most extraordinary!" she said. "Amazing! You grow more wonderful every day, my dear! I can't tell you how much you've helped me in the last two years—going through that awful trouble with me as if you'd been my sister. I do so wish you'd let me do something for you. Can't I send you a check?"

"Send a check for whatever you like to the Mount Magdalen Home for Destitute Girls. I can't take anything; I've more than enough. If I can help my friends, I'm only too delighted."

Mrs. Oxnard, with many protestations of gratitude, and promises to send the check, made her adieu. She had scarcely

gone when Miss Brooks presented herself once more.

"It's the collector from the butcher," she said quietly. "He's asking for a check."

"Oh, Brooksy, what shall I do?" said Anna. "My bank account is down to almost nothing, and I shan't have a remittance from the estate for another week. Be a nice girl and wheedle him for me, will you? And have him send up some ducks; I'm simply crazy for duck. Do it for me, Brooksy—then you'll be a duck, too."

The discreet Miss Brooks withdrew, silent, unsmiling. Anna did not know, or care, by what method she persuaded the butcher to increase still further the amount of her indebtedness; but there was the desired duck for dinner that night.

Anna Gage, being made ready for bed with the deft assistance of her maid, pondered the problems of life, which were now mainly financial.

"Well," she thought, "I've been in a hole before and pulled out. I guess this one won't be any exception."

In another fifteen minutes she was sleeping the sleep of beauty in a fairy bed, overhung with a canopy of satin, daintily figured with scenes from a certain Shakespearean classic, the theme of which was mainly concerned with the adventures of a justly famous goddess.

VI

MR. ABNER BROWNELL, millionaire, clubman, turfman, speculator—he was called all these things by turn in the society columns of the various Sunday papers—sat in his office not far from Wall Street and read the morning *Times*. The market was quiet. The "raids," in which Mr. Brownell was quite deeply interested, were doing almost nothing. The country was prosperous, dividends were being paid with tiresome monotony, labor was tractable.

"The devil!" mused Abner Brownell. "A chap might as well shoot craps with the office boy as try to get any fun out of this market."

He lighted a cigarette, placed his feet on his desk, and occupied his mind in trying to decide whether he would take a night train for the New Brunswick moose country, or a coastwise ship for Cuba and the big Havana cattle show, where he knew there would be some excellent racing.

The telephone claimed his attention. "Who is it?" he demanded lazily.

"Mrs. Gage," replied the girl on the desk.

"All right. Hello, Anna Gage. How are you?" A pause. "I can't believe it. Things down here are as quiet as the place where Mr. Gray wrote his 'Elegy.'" More pause. "Who is it, Belcher and that crowd, do you suppose? Just like 'em. I didn't think they'd have the nerve, so soon after—" Still further pause.

"If you'd ever fooled me before, I wouldn't stir; but you've been such a brick— Doesn't seem possible anything should start in this market. . . . You say you feel it very strongly? Well, Anna, you know me! I was just bewailing the fact that things were so dull. Awfully obliged. Here's where I get busy. See you in a day or two. Good-by, Anna."

The languid Mr. Brownell was from this moment transformed into a demon of energy. In a twinkling, the placid atmosphere of his office was charged with the crackling currents of a tense activity. The telephone became excessively busy. Office boys scurried madly. Clerks tore around like wild animals in cages. Brokers began to come in for orders and go out again.

Abner Brownell sat in his private office and glued his eye on the ticker tape as it came chattering from beneath its glass housing.

"By George, the little woman was just in time!" he cried softly. "She certainly did hit it, bless her heart! Another two

hours, though, and I'd have lost the chance of a lifetime."

He began pouring orders into one after another of five or six telephones. His face flushed with excitement. He became hoarse with much shouting. Always he returned to the ticker to read the vibrant message of its purple-splashed ribbon.

When the market closed that afternoon, he chuckled as he put on his hat and went out to the street, where his town car waited.

"To the Uptown Club," he said.

Brownell was a big man, somewhat spectacular, exceedingly good-looking, and a famous *bon-vivant*. His hair was just beginning to gray. His eyes, keenly blue, revealed a shrewd intelligence, which was well supported by the squareness of his jaw. Under the close-clipped mustache one saw, however, a mouth that lacked something of the jaw's invincible strength. It was a mouth that might express a hint of the sensual; or, if one saw it at its best, a kindness that belied the cold, pale light in the blue eyes. Luxurious living had made Abner Brownell a little overweight, and marked his face with a ruddiness the meaning of which was unmistakable.

Brownell dined with a couple of friends and a stranger to whom they introduced him, a giant of a man, with the unmistakable stamp of executive ability in his high forehead, his firm mouth, and dominant nose.

"Oh, yes," said Abner, "I've heard of you, Strickland. You're the boy who put C. W. & K. on its feet, eh? You've a nice property, I hear."

"We've a pretty good little road," said Strickland modestly.

"Little road! Huh! I don't call a couple of thousand miles of the best double-tracked right of way in the West so very little; and they tell me you did it all, Strickland. Just cleaned out that gang of crooks, and made a real railroad of it. Some job!"

"We pay a dividend once in a while," said Strickland, shrinking from so much eulogy.

After dinner, Strickland's friends took him off with them to a theatre. Brownell stayed at the club, and read the evening papers. The excitement on the Exchange had been so unusual that the news of it began under three-line heads on the first page.

"Some clean-up!" he chuckled.

He ordered a drink, which he didn't need, having had plenty with his dinner and before.

Darn it, a club was a poor sort of place when you were lonesome! Everyone seemed to have an appointment. Brownell became exceedingly restless. Across his vision floated a pair of dark brown eyes, in which dwelt an alluring mystery, sometimes, he thought, a bit pathetic. What was it about Anna Gage that baffled a chap so?

He had known her now for three or four years, and from time to time at his request she had exercised for his benefit that extraordinary clairvoyance of hers. She was a fascinating personality. Always she had held him at arm's length; but at this moment he became aware that she attracted him more than anybody else in the world had ever done in his life. He called a taxi, first dropping down at a writing desk and scratching something hastily on a strip of paper bound with other similar pieces in a small book. This strip he tore out and thrust negligently into a side pocket.

Twenty minutes later, he ran up the steps of the Fifty-fifth Street house and was admitted by the trim maid, who showed him into a dainty reception room.

Presently Anna came in, looking extraordinarily beautiful, her dark eyes shining with friendliness.

"It was good of you to come so soon," she said. "I read in the papers how things went in the Street to-day. It was as I said, wasn't it?"

Lord! If she wouldn't be so confoundedly impersonal.

"This is a business call," said Brownell. "Do you transact business here, or in your—private office?"

"Mercy!" said Anna. "I'm not in business. But if you want to go into the study, it's all right." Nevertheless, she looked at the man sharply before leading the way to the inner room, where the hanging light was burning, making a round spot of brilliance in the centre of the room. Here she dropped into her accustomed seat, and her caller took the chair by the side of her desk.

He pulled the check from his pocket and laid it before her. She picked it up and read the amount, then looked at Brownell. Her eyes were wide with surprise.

"But I can't accept it," she said. "It's too much."

"Five per cent.," said Brownell. "I cleaned up a cool million to-day. The tip was the best you've ever given me."

"I'm awfully glad," said Anna. "But fifty thousand dollars—oh, I couldn't!"

"How did it happen, anyhow?" demanded her caller. "You don't know Belcher or any of those chaps?"

"It was one of the best manifestations I've ever had—truly. I got up much earlier than usual this morning, and although I hadn't thought of you for months—"

"Thanks," said Abner.

"—Your name kept coming into my mind, and I could see your face; and somehow I knew there was a message. So I came in here and looked into the globe, and there I saw something—I can't describe it, but I realized what it meant; and I got you on the 'phone."

"Wonderful!" said Brownell incredulously. "Anna, you're a marvel. You're more than welcome to your commission. That ought to set you up in business for quite a while."

"I know," said Anna, contemplating the check. "I wish I might—"

Now the wine that Abner Brownell had taken, and the sense of his big winning in the Street, and the extraordinary lure of Anna Gage's beauty, combined at this moment to make him very incautious. He got up suddenly and leaned across the desk, there in the circle of light from the hanging lamp.

"Anna—" he said huskily—"Anna, if there's anything I own that you want, you can have it. You're the most beautiful thing in New York City, and I've simply got to have you."

"Why, Mr. Brownell!" cried Anna, startled, and realizing but hazily the full import of his words. "You mustn't say such things! You and I have been such good friends . . . and Mrs. Brownell comes to see me. You've been so generous, so kind. Oh, I didn't think you were that sort of man!"

"That sort of man! That sort of man! Good Lord, Anna, there's only one sort of man, and that's the man who's human. You're too beautiful for us all! We simply can't stand it. We'd be more than angels if we could. And I'm no angel!"

He stretched out a hand and touched her arm, but she drew back. The man sprang around the table and caught her, crushing her in his arms.

"I love you," he said. "I can't help it. I'm mad about you!"

Before he could kiss her, she managed to wrench herself free. She was both frightened and angry.

"Don't be absurd!" she warned, trying to conquer her excitement. Anna abhorred dramatics, not realizing that she was herself the personification of drama. "You'd better go away. I think you've been drinking too much. Your success downtown has gone to your head. Don't do anything else that you'll be sorry for to-morrow."

"Sorry! You don't know me. Why should I be sorry? Come, Anna, cut out the theatricals."

"That will do," said the woman very coldly. "It isn't theatricals. I'm only

learning the kind of man you are, when you call a decent objection to being insulted theatrical."

"Oh, piffle!" returned the man, with foolish impatience. "You're no innocent kid; you're a woman. You're not maintaining an establishment like this one on what the ravens brought Elijah. You've done me several good turns, and I'd like—"

"And to show your appreciation, you come here and humiliate me," interrupted Anna. "You have formed a high estimate of your friend Mrs. Gage. Well, I'm going to be generous with you. You're not in your right mind. You're drunk — inexcusably and offensively drunk. Go away now. To-morrow you'll have remorse, and I certainly hope you have it as you deserve. And don't come back to me for advice, because I'm never going to help you again."

Anna turned and went out of the room hastily, leaving Brownell gaping into the darkness. He stood by the desk, swaying a little. Yes, he guessed he must be pretty full. He picked up the opaline globe and contemplated it solemnly. Queer, streaked-looking thing! He replaced it.

"Guess I've made an ass of myself," he muttered thickly. "Guess I'm a damn fool! Ought to be shot!" He found his hat and left the house, shedding maudlin tears of self-pity.

In her own room, Anna sat by the window, opened to admit the fresh, cool air, which she badly needed, for her face was burning with shame and excitement. The miserable significance of this incident spelled itself across her aching brain.

It could not have happened if Abner Brownell had respected her. The taint of a questionable profession, no matter how adroitly practiced, was inevitable. And, coupled with that fact, were her extraordinary beauty and her inescapable sex-consciousness. The man had revealed to her not his own unsupported

estimate, but an opinion that must be fairly general.

She was, then, an object of question, of speculation, among men like Brownell. She was a beautiful faker, about whom things might be asked that were not asked about women who led lives of perfect convention, hedged in with protections and domesticities.

Anna reviewed, as dispassionately as she could, her career since coming to New York. At the start she had almost starved. She had never charged a fee for her advice; but people had been generous with gifts. She had managed this very adroitly; and as she had worked her way toilsomely upward, her caution had increased. For years, she had declined these gifts, except in one class of cases.

Men of wealth came to her constantly, seeking from the occult that which their own sagacity sometimes failed to supply. Anna was able to give them advice of immense value—at least, they thought so. When they believed their successes to be due to her help, they rewarded her. These rewards she felt they could well afford to give. Five hundred, a thousand, two or three thousand dollars—such sums were forthcoming from these clients; and upon this revenue alone she lived.

It was a precarious way of subsisting. Still, it sufficed. It would have been ample if Anna's living had been on a more economical scale. But she loved beautiful things, luxuries, servants. She delighted in the association of people who moved in the more exclusive circles. She entertained at her home many who professed friendship for her. She sparkled in conversation, made a charming dinner companion, attracted clever persons who appreciated her brilliancy.

That there were times when, as at present, her bills were overdue, did not greatly worry her. Something would soon happen to change this condition. She always had faith in the future.

Things would come out right, because they always had done so.

But now, in a flash, she comprehended the dangers by which she was beset. At the very best, she was a charlatan. Only a portion of her "revelations" were truly psychic. More often than not she depended on her ability to draw lightning conclusions, to read the thoughts of her clients through a chance word, the dilation of an eye, the shadow of a corrugated brow. Her intuitions were amazing.

She wondered, with shame, if she had not unduly emphasized her personality in her dealings with men. Would they have been as liberal if she had been ugly? Had she fooled them more than she intended, and had this been possible because her beauty cast a spell over them?

Something in the palm of her clenched hand forced itself to the surface of her consciousness—a crumpled bit of paper; Brownell's check. It was enough for her to live on for two or three years. With her bills paid and the rest banked, she could be secure, comfortable, complacent. Then, there was Stanley. Suppose he should want a little capital for some business venture? It was for Stanley she had struggled all these years; for him she had made herself a mountebank and a polite humbug, sacrificing her self-respect. Fifty thousand dollars!

With trembling but determined fingers, she tore the check into tiny flakes. Then she went and scrubbed her hands with hot water and soap.

"I don't know," she thought, "how I'm to pay the grocer; but it won't be with Abner Brownell's money!"

VI

"If you're not able to make up your mind," said Abner Brownell, "why don't you take a little advice?"

"I don't get you," rejoined Strickland. "What sort of advice? I've employed

the best lawyers, interviewed the most expensive men I could find."

Brownell laughed.

"I don't wonder you fail to grasp my meaning," he said. "The big speculator and Strickland, the Western railroad man, had come to be rather good friends. First meeting at the club, later in offices in and about Wall Street, they found they had many acquaintances in common, shared many interests. Brownell admired the vigorous, two-fisted type represented by Strickland, and the latter appreciated Brownell's nerve, his sportsmanship, and the keen intuitions that had made him a successful operator in big fields.

"You'll think I'm crazy," went on the speculator, "but I want you to take what I say rather seriously. You won't be sorry. You've reached a place where you don't know just whom to trust. You can get backing from either of two crowds of bankers for your new extensions. Question is, which crowd will give you the best deal, and is one or the other of them likely to slip something over on you? Isn't that the way you feel?"

"Exactly, Brownell. I've exhausted all the usual channels for obtaining information. I can't pin a thing on either group; yet I'm not absolutely convinced that I oughtn't to go back West and raise my capital locally. If these Wall Street buccaneers once get their hooks into a property, it's next to impossible to shake them loose."

"Yet you know the money is here, and if you can make the right deal, you'll get your capital quicker and cheaper in New York than anywhere else in the country."

"True. But I'm not sure I can make the right deal."

"Then you should see Mrs. Gage."

"Who the devil is Mrs. Gage, and why should I see her? Has she got forty or fifty million—"

"Nonsense. She's poor. She's a

friend of mine—or was. I'm afraid I'm rather in her bad books just now. Anna Gage is the most remarkable woman in New York, and the cleverest. Go and see her."

"But, Brownell, what does a woman know about railroads?"

"Nothing. But you go and see her. Here, give her this."

Brownell scribbled a hasty note, thrust it into an envelope.

"I won't seal this," he said, "but if it's all the same to you, I'd as soon you didn't read it. Just go up to Fifty-fifth Street and see Mrs. Gage. If she doesn't help you, I'll buy you the finest Rolls Royce you can get in the city."

Anna Gage, late the same afternoon, sat in her study reading, or seeming to read, by the light that shone above her great carved desk, a big, leather-bound book. In reality, the words printed on the faded yellow page were quite meaningless to her, for she was contemplating her own soul.

Once, she reached out and took the opal globe in her hands, seeking to plumb its mysterious, milky depths for some symbol of her future; but she saw nothing but those cryptic whorls of iridescent liquid smoke, that seemed never at rest, wreathing and coiling within the sphere, as pale inner fires glow beneath the surface of a great pearl. So, sighing, she put the baffling thing from her.

Miss Brooks brought her a note, and when she recognized the handwriting of the superscription, she was tempted to drop it unopened into her wastebasket. But curiosity for the time held its own against her sense of outraged decency. Besides, the envelope was unsealed.

As she read the contents, frankly apologetic, she suddenly gave a little gasp.

"It can't be," she breathed. "No, it isn't possible!" Pondering, she sat a moment in deep thought. Then: "Very well, Miss Brooks," she said.

The secretary's back was no sooner turned than Anna Gage pulled open a

drawer of her desk and took from it a white veil, silken, but sufficiently concealing, which she threw hastily over head and face. It was a device she seldom used, holding it to be but a part of that charlatanism which she had learned to despise.

Thus it was that Joe Strickland found her in that sombre chamber, a swathed figure of mystery. Instantly his matter-of-fact mind was touched with suspicion. To himself he said:

"What kind of flummery has that chap steered me up against? A swell fortune-teller, looks like. Hope it hasn't some blackmailing scheme behind it."

The figure at the desk indicated a big chair, and he sank into it with a gingerly, sheepish air.

"You wanted to see me?" asked the lady. "I am Mrs. Gage."

"Well, I don't exactly know that I did. Brownell said I ought to. Maybe you can tell me why he thought so. I haven't an idea."

"The same Joe," thought Anna, viewing the heavy features, the clumsily powerful shoulders, the large shapeliness of brow and temple. "The same blunt old Joe Strickland."

Aloud she said: "Mr. Brownell has written me a note, simply saying that he is sending you here. He does not tell me anything about your errand."

"He said I ought to ask your advice," said Strickland.

"I see. May I look at your palm?"

The man extended a huge hand with about as much enthusiasm as a child who seeks to determine the dangers of a live caterpillar.

"Oh!" he said. "You're a palmist."

"No. This is not a profession with me. I sometimes give advice to my friends, or the friends of my friends. I am doing this as a favor to Mr. Brownell—to whom I owe no favors."

"He said he didn't guess he stood very strong with you," said Strickland. He hoped the woman would talk some more;

there was a quality in her voice that pleased him strangely. It was to him like some long forgotten tune of his boyhood, coming to life in his consciousness. She was apparently studying his hand through the folds of her veil.

"Too bad," he blurted, "when you let a lady read your palm, if you aren't allowed to see her face."

"For the present I don't wish you to see me too plainly," said Anna. "It might interfere with the psychic vibrations."

Could it be that Strickland sensed a note of mirth in that voice?

"Well," he demanded, "what you finding out about me?"

"Many things. You have been successful. You have to do with iron, stone, things that are hard and swift and powerful. Machinery of some kind—no, there are shining bands of steel, two of them, lying parallel—rails!"

"You mean you see those things in my hand?"

"No; I'm not looking at your palm. My eyes are closed. And I'm dreaming—dreaming of a little mill town a thousand miles away, and a small house on a humble sort of street, a house with a narrow piazza and vines."

"What—what are you talking about?" The man's voice was low and tense.

"About you, and—a girl—a girl with black hair and dark eyes and an odd, foreign-sounding name—Pol, Pol—Polen—Polenta—*Polenka!*"

"My God!"

"You loved her, didn't you? And she treated you badly?"

"Loved her? I worshiped her. I did then, and I do now. I've never let it die. I've never seen a girl or woman since that I'd cross the street for. I'm that way—stick to things, once my mind's made up. Go on; what's the rest of it? I was going to ask you about what I should do to raise money for my railroad, but—"

"I was coming to that," said Anna. She picked up her opaline globe.

Strickland leaned forward.

"No, no," she said. "Don't you look. Close your eyes—close them tight."

She stripped off her veil and plunged her eager gaze into the swirl of weaving fluid. And there she saw many things—queer shapes, faces, odd characters as mystic as the hieroglyphs of Rameses. But they were as clear as the words in a child's primer.

Not for a long time had such revelations come to Anna Polenka. She had even imagined herself to be losing that psychic insight for which she had of late so often substituted the ordinary shrewd logic of a sagacious mind. Those visions seen by her consultants, conjured up by their own emotions, spurred by a little of Anna's hypnotic will power—they were as nothing to this. She breathed quickly, her heart beating faster and faster.

"Don't look," she said. "Don't open your eyes. Listen. I may forget much of this. You are in an atmosphere of bad influences. You are in danger of great losses. You musn't trust any of the people who want to associate with you, here in New York. You are in need of an enormous sum of money, but if you secure it here, you will pay too dearly. Go back where you came from—back into the West, where people know and understand and sympathize with your ambitions. There are many, many more things that I could tell you, but I—I'd rather not—to-day. Perhaps I can never tell you. But please be guided by what I have said."

She looked up now, her eyes dazed, like those of one who issues from darkness into a strong light.

"What was I saying?" she asked vaguely. "Did I tell you what you wished—"

"Anna!" cried the man. "Anna Polenka!"

She had forgotten to replace her veil. "Joe," she said softly. "Joe Strickland, isn't it? I knew it must be. Now

you understand how I knew about the house, and the . . . girl . . ."

"Anna," said Strickland, "what are you doing here, playing this faker game—"

"Don't, Joe," she cried pitifully. "Please don't! That's the one thing you could say to hurt me most—because, it's true!"

"Brownell said you were the most remarkable woman in New York, and the cleverest."

"But not the most honest, did he? Yet—what did I tell you about your railroad? Was it money you wanted? I don't remember just what I saw in the globe—I seldom do."

Joe looked incredulous.

"You said to go back home and get my money there. I think it's good advice, whether it's what you call 'psychic' or not. I'm going to follow it. I've always felt suspicious of those chaps I've been dickering with." Then, after a pause. "Say, Anna, what ever became of Steve Rivers?"

"Dead, ten years ago."

"Who's this Gage?"

"There isn't any; never was. I took the name because I wouldn't use Rivers any more. I brought up my boy—"

"Your boy?"

"He's twenty now. He's an engineer. He's made good, Joe, even at his age. And he's all I've got and all I've worked for and all I have to look forward to. He's going to China in a few days, Joe. I guess you don't know what that means."

Never had Anna Polenka's usually discreet lips been open as they were at this moment, never her tongue so loosened. All the hardships, the struggles, the heartaches and humiliations of those twenty years came surging forth, and she recounted many of them to the listening man.

"Well," he said, "all I've got to say is, you've had a darned tough time. I always told you that Steve was a bad lot, though. See what a pile of trouble you'd

have saved yourself if you'd married poor Joe Strickland."

"That's not kind, Joe."

"I suppose not. Well, you know what I said a few minutes ago? I've always loved you—love you to-day as much as ever. You've fought your battle and won it. It isn't for me to quarrel with the weapons you use. I guess they were the ones God gave you, and you'd have been a fool not to use them. Now will you go back West with me?"

"I know you, Anna; you like the easy things of life. You wanted 'em when you were only a kid. I don't blame you—didn't then. I could have given them to you, after a little, but you didn't think so. All right, you've tried your way. Try mine. I'll guarantee it to work."

He stopped, and looked into the great dark eyes with a hopeful confidence.

"Let's understand each other," said Anna Polenka. "Don't think me cold-blooded, Joe. I'm fond of you, and always was. I did make a mistake when I gave you up for Steve. But, in spite of the problems I've had to solve, in spite of my love of luxury and the things money will buy, in spite of the fact that I've been what you call a humbug—at least partially—and what some others might call something of an adventuress, *I'm a good woman!* People can say what they know to be true of me—I'm something of a mystery, even to my best friends, and perhaps to myself as well—but they can't say I'm not good, Joe.

"So, when you say you want me to go back west with you, just what do you mean? Don't think I've hardened, Joe dear! I haven't! But, oh, Joe Strickland, I've had to protect myself so long—"

Strickland got ponderously to his feet and picked Anna up bodily, setting her on her own big, carved desk.

"For goodness sake, Anna!" he growled. "Is that the kind of man you think I am? Well, I'll tell you right now, you don't have to protect yourself from

me; because if you're a good woman, I'm a good man, and I'm proud of it!"

He gathered her into his arms and kissed her with considerable violence.

"I've been waiting twenty years for this," he said. "You can't blame me if I seem a trifle enthusiastic, eh?"

VII

IN spite of the precautions with which Anna surrounded herself in order to guard against intrusion, there was hardly a day on which some stranger did not ring her bell.

These usually came armed with a card or note of introduction from one of her previous consultants, all of whom she had implored to be discreet; and as her "manifestations" of psychic talent were not generally thought to be her means of livelihood, her acquaintances were inclined to respect her right of privacy. Nevertheless, Anna was inevitably something of an institution; and she was never surprised when people wholly unknown to her sought admission to her house.

Mr. Edgerly Raydon was one of these. He presented a note from that Mrs. Oxnard whose domestic infelicities had led her to seek Mrs. Gage's assistance. This was within a day or two after the appearance of Joe Strickland.

During this time, Anna had been living in a cloudland of happiness. She had won. No more for her the subtle deceits of a profession she had practiced under cover of subterfuge and social fiction. She had come through fire, purified. She had brought up her boy and made of him a useful, competent citizen, one of whom she could be proud. And now she was considerably less than forty, beautiful, charming, in the very prime of her life, with everything good to look forward to.

So, her heart filled with song, she had notified the discreet and taciturn Miss Brooks that her services would not be

required after another fortnight. She had begun to make arrangements for leaving her house. If she and Joe wanted to spend a winter in New York, they could go to a hotel. Anna informed the agent that she would like to find someone to take the lease off her hands.

It was now definitely decided that Stanley would sail for China within a fortnight. There was infinite comfort now in the thought that she would be with Joe, and other scenes, building a new and, she hoped, permanent circle of acquaintances.

Such thoughts as these drifted cheerfully through Anna's pretty head, until the hour when Mr. Edgerly Raydon crossed her threshold. At first, she thought of sending him away; but she disliked to disappoint Mrs. Oxnard, if he were a friend of that much-alimoned lady.

Instead of having the man shown into her study, however, she greeted him in the reception room. She hoped she might persuade him not to insist upon a "séance."

Raydon was a dapper individual, clad fashionably in morning coat with the correct braided edges, furbished forth with a gardenia, and armed with a flexible walking stick of pale bamboo.

From behind spectacles of heavy tortoise shell, peered out a pair of shifty eyes. His hair, not too abundant, and well whitened, was parted in the middle from brow to collar, and brought straight forward over his ears. His nose, sharp and predatory, overhung a mustache and beard carefully trimmed to a scrupulous square and, like his hair, parted in the middle.

Advancing as Anna entered the room, he extended a ceremonious hand, and murmured:

"Mrs. Gage? Charmed, I'm sure!"

Instantly Anna felt herself go cold all over. If she had been a cat, her fur would have stood up and crackled with galvanic sparks. Very distantly she re-

turned Mr. Raydon's greeting and sank into a chair. Her black eyes were fixed on her caller's face with a kind of uncanny fascination.

"It seems to me," he went on, "that we have met before. I think you will not have forgotten."

"I don't—remember— Why—" Panic took possession of Anna Polenka. "Steve!" she cried hoarsely. "Steve! I thought you were—"

'Dead, eh? Well, I'm not. I'm not a bit dead. I'm very much alive."

"But—"

"But *why* am I alive? What right have I to be alive? Well, I was in that railroad accident; and I was reported killed. That's all. When I found I was supposed to be dead, I changed my name. It was a very nice way out, considering the trouble I'd had with the bank. And the bulls stopped hunting for me. That was the best part of it."

"What—what are you—"

"What am I going to do? Is that what you want to know, Anna? I've come here to discuss it with you. It's largely up to you. A fellow ought to talk these things over with his wife, don't you think? I believe in harmony in the family, perfect agreement, and all that."

"But you can't—I'm not—"

"Oh, yes, I can, and you are. You bet you are. You're just as much my wife as you ever were. So I'm thinking of coming and taking up my residence with you. You have plenty; I'm rather low in funds just now. I often am; then again, I often have it to burn. Depends on circumstances. I should say that you and I might work together very nicely, so that we'd both have money all the time."

"Why—I don't understand—you."

It was curious, this halting, ineffectual method of expressing or attempting to express herself. Steve's reappearance was a tremendous shock. It was crushing, stupefying. She could hardly sense it. That rosy, pink-cloudy dream of the

last day or two— Little fool! How could she expect to get off scot-free, after years of deluding people? It was preposterous!

"People are very confidential with you," went on Steve. "They tell you things. You can tell 'em to me. When two people know a thing, it may remain a secret, but of course it's much more fragile, so to speak. Or, let's say, it's more escapable, if you get what I mean. I suppose that quite a lot of people would go to considerable expense to be assured that their secrets didn't escape. It's quite an art to make them see it and all that, but—"

"Steve Rivers!" screamed Anna. "You go away! You leave this house! What do you take me for? A thief? A black-mailer? I don't care if you are my husband—I won't have you around. I won't let you come into my house. You don't dare prove you're Steve Rivers. You told me yourself you changed your name to escape the law. Well, if you're Rivers you won't escape it. You'll go to prison—"

"Hush, Anna," said Steve soothingly. "Don't get excited. That wouldn't help you any. I don't expect to live here as Mr. Rivers, and require you to become Mrs. Rivers. You and I simply marry—you become Mrs. Edgerly Raydon. I think we'd make a very nice couple."

"No, no, nothing of the kind can be done," cried Anna. "I won't, I won't!"

"But suppose you don't? There's Stanley—my Stanley, by the way. Haven't you any feeling for a father? Well, you wouldn't want Stanley to know you've been spoofing him about the Gage estate, and all that rot, would you? You wouldn't want Stanley to know you'd been living the life of an adventuress, and God knows what else—"

"Stop!" cried Anna furious, desperate, driven into a frenzy of rage and fear. "Don't you dare say such a thing!"

"Well, what would dear Stanley say if he knew you'd been accepting money

from men—I think I could give him the names of several—to live on? What reason would anyone suppose could possibly lead wealthy men to give a young and fascinating woman presents of five hundred, a thousand, three thousand dollars?"

"Oh, my God!" wailed Anna, covering her face with her hands, and groaning under the lash. "Don't, Steve, for the love of Heaven, don't."

"Oh!" went on Steve coolly, "that isn't all. Of course all your fine friends would be greatly interested to know that you're the bunk. It would make a splendid Sunday feature—'*Wealth, Siren Fools Society with Phoney Psychics.*' That has sort of a catchy jingle, eh? And what would our little son think of it?"

Rivers paused to contemplate the effect of his words.

"It would be very easy to put people wise," he said. "I've managed to keep in touch with your activities for a couple of years now. That cook you fired three weeks ago was a clever girl; I got her from one of the slickest private detective agencies in town. Then there have been others—the cook was only one. It's cost me something; but I guess it will be worth it.

"You can be proud to announce that you're marrying Edgerly Raydon. I'm rather well known about this town; and no one's got anything on me, either. I've kept 'em all guessing for a good many years. There's been many a day I've worn a darn' stylish overcoat over my undershirt and a false dicky collar. But I got away with it. I'm something like you, only not so clever. I'm a good bridge player, and I've been pretty lucky with the horses. But I'm a useful chap, too. I've found out a lot of things about a good many people, and that sort of information is always worth money if you know where to locate your market. That's why you and I ought to—"

"Please, please!" begged Anna. "I can't stand it; it's too horrible."

"Well," said her visitor, "you take twenty-four hours to think it over. I'll drop in again to-morrow. It's really the only thing to do, you know. I dare say we should get on like old boots, once we became reacquainted with each other. We've such a lot in common, it seems to me. Goo'-by. See you again."

Anna Polenka Rivers stood by her great carved desk and contemplated the cryptic globe.

"You're a cruel, cruel thing," she said aloud. "You've always given up freely for others, but you've never told me anything. Why didn't you warn me? Why didn't I know this was going to happen?"

She thought of Joe Strickland, felt again his kisses on her lips, kisses she had generously returned.

"And I was another man's wife! Lord pity me! I told him I'd marry him; and I can't! All these years I've clung to respectability. All these years I've trained my boy to reverence what is right and good. And now, unless I take that beast back, and live with him, and help him with his blackmailing schemes, I become an unworthy mother, whom he'll hate, hate, *hate!* Why shouldn't he hate me? I've done nothing but deceive and cheat him all his life. He'd better have known exactly who he was from the first, and just what sort of woman his mother was. It wouldn't be so hard for him."

Again she gazed into the milky depths.

"Monster!" she cried. "What harm have I ever done a soul that I should be treated like this?"

It would be but a short time before Steve Rivers would return for his answer. Anna had her decision to make.

"All I can do," she reasoned, "is to take him back. It will break Joe's heart; but I can't help it. The man's my husband. I can't have Joe. I'll have to take Steve and do the best I can. Maybe I can keep him from disgracing us. Maybe I can make something of him.

That's my only salvation. It's a terrible thing to have to face. I could give him up to the authorities for the bank robbery; but what good would it do? All the miserable business would come out. I'd only bring the house down around my own ears."

She slumped down in her chair, dropped her head into the crook of her arms, and wept bitterly. At length she sat up, wiped her eyes, and looked about her.

"If I can keep him from disgracing us!" she repeated over and over. "For Stanley's sake, I must—I *must!*"

Suddenly she arose, and seizing the globe, held it high above her head. At one side of the room was a fireplace, half hidden in the gloom; and this was equipped with a pair of huge wrought-iron fire dogs.

Anna Polenka began to swing the globe up and down, up and down, each time swaying further back.

"I'm through with you," she said. "You never helped me any. I've seen men weep at the things you showed them; I've heard women thank God for you. I've seen you give the world's best gifts to everyone—all but Anna Polenka. Now I'm through."

She hurled the heavy globe across the room. With a jingling crash, it struck one of the great andirons and fell in a thousand scintillant fragments on the floor—fragments that lay and glinted out of the darkness at Anna Polenka with the effect of a thousand sinister feline eyes. With a shriek, she turned and fled the room.

IX

In the reception room, Anna ran into Joe Strickland.

"Why, honey," he inquired, "what's all the excitement? I thought I'd drop in and see if you'd found someone who would sublease the house. You know

we've got to be starting West pretty soon."

"Joe, Joe, I'm not going. I can't."

"What's that? Not going? What do you mean?"

"Something awful has happened. I tried to 'phone you last night, but they told me at the hotel you were out of the city. Why didn't you let me know? Oh, never mind; it doesn't matter. Joe, our romance is over."

"But, Anna girl—"

"Steve's come back."

"No!"

Anna nodded sadly.

"Where is he? I'll find him and wring his skinny, worthless neck. Then I guess he won't stand in our way."

"Oh, Joe, you know you can't do a thing like that! There's no way out of it. He's coming here to live, and I can't help myself!"

"He is *not* coming here to live!" roared Joe. "He may be coming here to die; but not to live! Not if I get my hands on him."

Anna smiled sadly at the big man's vehemence.

"There's a messenger boy coming up the steps," said Joe.

"Go and let him in—that's a dear."

Joe secured the message and returned to the reception room.

"You know it's no use trying to make me think you're going to stand for that dog," he sputtered. "There are a thousand ways we can put a spoke in his wheel. Why, I'll hire seventeen different lawyers to—"

"Joe, that wouldn't help. He'd do all his harm while you were making your plans."

Anna was fumbling at the envelope Joe had taken from the messenger. When she read the enclosure the man saw the color leave her face.

"Oh!" she said, in a little gasping sob.

"Oh! Read it, Joe dear!"

Strickland took the message and read:

DEAR ANNA:

I've got cold feet. I don't want to come back to you, after all. I thought I was putting over something clever, but since talking with you, I've changed my mind. You and I together would be sure to make a mess of things, because you hate me. The plan I had in view would never work out.

Then, I've discovered you're poor. I thought you were well fixed, but I was told last night that you can't pay your butcher. I have to have money, or I'm unhappy. So do you. We should both be miserable all the time if we tried to live together.

I'm going to play my fatal beauty against some widow lady with coin and a loving disposition. Steve Rivers is dead, and you and Edgerby Raydon haven't any interest in each other.

In the last twenty years, I've been associated with all sorts of people, and some of 'em have standards. Most of them are sports; and I've doped it out that persecuting a woman you've already harmed as I've harmed you isn't exactly a sporting proposition. Also, I remember now that I loved you once, and I can't get out of my head the way those big, black eyes of yours looked yesterday when you were crying. I can kick a dog or steal a baby's candy, but there's a limit even to my talent for plain and fancy cruelty.

Let me suggest that you go back home and quietly apply for a divorce from that man Rivers, on the ground that he deserted you twenty years ago and may not be dead.

So help me God, Anna, I'll never bother nor threaten you again! I know you won't put much faith in that promise just yet; but you'll find it's a perfectly good, reliable, hole-proof promise, guaranteed for a lifetime.

I wish you the best of luck, and hope you'll wish me the same.

Penitently,

EDGERLY RAYDON.

"Do—do you believe him, Joe?" asked Anna. "Don't you think he'll come back to annoy us later? Can he possibly mean to let me alone?"

"Most likely. But if he ever gets messy again, I'll deal with him. Mean-

while, we'll have that divorce thing fixed up right away, honey."

"But Stanley mustn't know—"

"If a woman named Rivers, in a distant State, divorces the husband who deserted her, how's Stanley ever going to know it's you? Besides, he'll be in China."

"Some day," said Anna, "when he gets a little older and wiser, I'm going to tell him the truth. And so long as I live, I'm never, never going to delude another human being, not even myself! And I guess that for twenty years I've fooled myself worse than I have anyone else!"

"Nonsense," said Joe. "Your conscience should be clear. Think what a wonderful mother you've been to that boy! And think what a wonderful wife you're going to be to me."

He gathered her suddenly into his arms, and sat holding her as if she were a child. For a moment she lay there, weeping a little. Then she sprang away.

"You musn't, Joe," she said. "I'm a married woman. Wait until I get my divorce. Then we'll be married as soon as you like."

The man looked a trifle crestfallen.

"Gracious! You *are* a straightlaced little thing. Think of the twenty years I've waited. So much love I've missed—and it's all charged against you."

"Well," said Anna Polenka, relenting the merest fraction, "if it's as bad as that, maybe I ought to make just the tiniest payment on account."

"Absolutely," said Joe Strickland, and made the collection on the spot.

MAY WIND

By Morrie Ryskind

I HAVE been blind to life for oh! so long—
 Unseeing and unheeding—and unknowing.
 To-day, a May wind sang its magic song:
 And then I saw that there were green things growing.

BALLADE OF LOST FACES

By Richard Le Gallienne

FAIR is the face we call our own,
And fair the faces on the street.
Ah, but they leave the heart alone,
Speeding to trysts on happy feet,
Remotely fair, for others sweet;
And, with a sudden touch of frost,
We think of those we used to meet—
The faces we have loved and lost.

Once they, as these, as brightly shone.
Under their laces the same beat
Of eager pulses hurrying on—
O why such haste! O why so fleet!—
To leave the story incomplete;
Dreams, are ye worth the ache you cost?
No loveliest face can e'er repeat
The faces we have loved and lost.

The friends, the comrades, we have known,
So brave and laughing once to greet,
They too are dim and ghostly grown,
Chap-fallen they, and most discreet;
Their jests are long since obsolete,
Their goodness on the four winds tossed,
And fallen cold their generous heat—
The faces we have loved and lost.

Envoi

Prince, there upon thy mercy seat,
Shall some great day of Pentecost
Summon them from their winding-sheet—
The faces we have loved and lost?

Consider the Moving Staircase

By Cleveland Moffett

IF you observe the men and women on a moving staircase you will see that some stand still and let the apparatus carry them comfortably to the top, while others stride up the steps even while they are in motion, thus gaining a few seconds—but wasting precious strength. I have seen a red-faced man carrying a heavy bag, or a tired mother with a baby, restlessly, wearily pushing on up to save those few unimportant seconds. Why?

For no particular reason except that this is the American way. And it is a foolish way. We devise an admirable mechanism for relieving the over-burdened human machine, then we refuse to use it! A moving staircase is an eloquent sermon on our national unwillingness to rest.

We know that our human machines are driven by nervous energy stored up somehow in the brain (probably by a chemical action) while we sleep and rest; but we do not dwell enough upon the fact that a brain depleted of its nervous energy is as ineffectual as a storage battery depleted of its electricity. This is literally true. We can do nothing, we are nothing, without a rested and replenished brain. Health, happiness, love, work, patriotism, every form of physical, mental, and spiritual achievement depends upon a rested and replenished brain.

Therefore, men and women have no higher duty, especially after forty-five, when the life forces begin to wane, than to see that they get sufficient rest. In many cases rest is more important than exercise. We often exercise too much but we seldom rest too much.

I am a golf enthusiast. I play golf on Sundays and enjoy it, but I am beginning to think that, from a purely physical point of view, it may be a mistake. God probably knew His business when He gave us one day in seven in which to rest.

What do doctors prescribe in the presence of almost every ailment? A rest cure! A few days in bed! Breakfast in bed! All day Sunday in bed! A complete change and rest! They order the change because they know there is more chance that a patient will really rest if he is away from his ordinary worries and excitements. It is the *rest* that cures. *With a few exceptions, any disease that can be cured at all, can be cured by rest, together with the right attitude of mind.*

But we Americans will not rest. We must be always under pressure, always forcing ourselves up some moving staircase. We telephone needlessly. We write letters needlessly. We make appointments needlessly. An unoccupied evening is a tragedy, a lonely day in the country, a disaster. Quick! Call up So-and-so! Get out the automobile! Golf! Bridge! Poker! Set the Victrola going! Dance the fox-trot! When does the next train leave for town?

No wonder we break down shockingly (as compared with more restful people) in middle life and die ten or fifteen years before our time. American cities abound in tired, discouraged, ineffectual men and women, full of pains and apprehensions, who might be restored to serenity and usefulness if they would learn to rest.

Rest? How?

In the first place, Americans must learn to sit still. We waste untold millions in vital power in simply crossing and uncrossing our legs, in wriggling our bodies, in drumming with our fingers, in darting hither and thither. *Sit still!* Suppose the barber does keep you waiting five minutes? What if the train is half an hour late? Don't rush frantically for a newspaper and read the same old dispatches for the fourth time. Sit still and rest. Relax! Let the nervous energy reservoir of your brain fill up a little. That five minutes or half an hour of respite from strain is a blessing, not an exasperation. It may be worth hundreds of dollars to you. It may save you from heart failure or apoplexy.

In the second place, Americans must learn not only to sleep enough at night (eight or nine hours) but to sleep at odd times, to take little naps during the day. There are tales, probably not true, of great men who have managed to get

along with four or five hours' sleep a day.

Napoleon!

Well, who wants to imitate Napoleon? He was fat and died of cancer twenty years before his time.

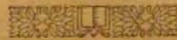
Edison!

As a matter of fact, Edison replenishes his brain by frequent naps, some of them long naps. He has mastered the precious art of sleeping at any time, in any place.

The greatest woman in the world, Sarah Bernhardt, told me that for years she has cultivated this habit of taking naps during the day, five or ten minutes, as opportunity offered. Often, during arduous rehearsals, she would lie down on a rug for a snatch of sleep, saying as she did so:

"Go right on with the scene. Wake me in fifteen minutes."

And so, despite the loss of one leg, she is actively in the game to-day, touring the world at seventy-four, still holding thousands enthralled by her art, because she has learned to rest.



SYMPATHY

By Annie Crim Leavenworth

THE dewy, blue eyed violets,

They smiled at me to-day.

They've not been here the whole long year

That he has been away.

But now that he is coming home,

Their fairy faces glow.

The dewy-eyed blue violets—

I wonder if they know!

Dregs

By Elizabeth Burgess Hughes

ROSEMARY had sent for him. That was the one predominant fact in a world of predominant facts. Rosemary wanted—*him!*

He sat staring at the bit of paper, a scrawl from the attending physician:

Mrs. Magnan will hardly last the night. She keeps asking for you. I think you had better come.—Parnell.

And there was an address. To him it had something of the appearance of a message written in a foreign tongue, yet inexplicably legible. It jerked away the veil that he had carefully hung between present and past, and showed the crouching nakedness of those sick, wounded years. He had put a curtain thickly between them and him, and left them there to decay of their own spiritual gangrene. But now—Rosemary, helpless and dying, had taken away the screen of her own accord. She wanted to see him.

On the hearth a little fire whispered to itself; the room was very still. This quiet, shabby room where he had spent so many lonely hours—it symbolized the failure of his own life; and it had witnessed the slow atrophy of his soul, of all that gave a man vitality and the courage to face his morrows. It had not babbled, as a friend might have done; but sometimes in the shadows he seemed to see lurking ghosts of his own youth, hear echoing laughter, gay badinage, even a sharp, whispered question from the man that was . . .

Should he go? After all, it would be a kindly thing to do. Possibly she would have come to him had he been dying and

asked for her. He was not quite sure of that, though. He was never quite sure of anything any more.

But he would go. Oh, yes; one did not refuse the requests of the dying. As he rose, searching for his hat and cane, the mockery of the situation struck him, and he laughed out. That quick, shrill mirth in the silent room had the crude sound of merrymaking over a grave. He hushed, shocked and ashamed.

When he opened his door he perceived, in some haunting, subconscious fashion, that the night was beautiful, wonderfully clear and crisp and pure. What an evening it was! Swinburne leaped to the lips, and one thought of the garden of Epicurus, processions of houris in Valhalla, a rudder set for the heart of the sunset, pale pink orchids, red wine in a crystal goblet. . . . Yet he was going to see Rosemary, who was done with it all. Laughter and love and sun and stars, and the cold lilies and warm red roses that she had adored. . . . It hardly seemed possible. She was life itself, resurgent, effervescent, deathless. . . . *Rosemary* done with the things of earth? He could not believe it! Suddenly the thought came to him that he did not want to see her like that.

But the old habit of considering Rosemary's wishes paramount reasserted itself, and he walked quickly onward. For a year he had not known where she lived. He could have asked, but any news of her always brought a sick, deadly sinking of the heart that left him weak and upset. Though, without trying, he had heard a great deal!

But he had lived on, somehow, continually conscious of his hurt, like a man with a limb removed. No matter how hard he fought the feeling, he knew that she had gone too deeply into his life ever to be pulled up and cast aside.

The streets were full of hurrying people, each intent on his own affairs, as if there were no deathbeds in the world. Was there any other by chance going to say good-by to a Rosemary who had forgotten him long ago, and remembered only when the light grew dim?

He reached the house of the doctor's address, and hesitated a moment before it. It was a big house, gray and quiet. Massive stone balustrades guarded the balconies, and two bronze lions crouched at the steps. He did not think it was the sort of house a woman like Rosemary would choose; it was too solid and unornamental.

But when he had rung the bell and had been admitted by a shadowy servant, who seemed to vanish from the foreground without effort, he understood. The house was the cocoon shell of a gorgeous butterfly. What a wonderful vision it presented, crowded with beautiful things from many lands and centuries! Long vistas showed him antique rugs, old Flemish paintings, perfumed incense burners, heavy Cordovan leather hangings covering the walls, hand-carved seats, evidently from old monasteries and cloisters; huge lanterns of antique Italian verd swung by brass chains from the frescoed ceilings.

Yes, Rosemary had loved beauty and mystery and wealth. Here were the tangible evidences of them. He stood and waited, awkwardly fumbling with his hat, beside a table inlaid with onyx intaglio, his feet on a Kermanshah stretched along the polished wood. He had never been in possession of more than one thousand dollars at any time in his life, the grim thought struck him here in the midst of luxury. Any one of these beautiful things represented a fortune.

The soft-footed servant came back to say the doctor requested that the gentleman be brought upstairs to the sick room. Unostentatiously he relieved the gentleman of his hat and led the way up the stairs, between massive dark balustrades. Every step showed Magnan further exclusive largeness of detail. Well, whatever may have been Rosemary's inner life, certainly she had made a fine setting for herself, he reflected. And then he was standing on the threshold of such a bedroom as he had never even dreamed of, looking across at the woman in the lace-draped bed. The doctor sat beside her; a rigid nurse in white stood opposite him. A rosy light seemed diffused from no tangible source, but it was shaded from the patient's eyes.

That figure on the bed filled his vision, became abruptly the one thing in the lovely, scented place. Rosemary! . . .

The doctor beckoned him without a word, then nodded to the nurse. She withdrew quietly. Magnan went breathlessly over to the bed, looked down.

"She'll not recognize you—now. Been unconscious for an hour or so. I doubt if she rallies. But I thought perhaps you'd want to come." The doctor hesitated a little; he understood, and even his hardened perception felt the trembling tragedy of the gaunt, shabby man before him.

The face on the pillows was beautiful. A heavy, lustrous mass of dark hair swept away from a forehead creamy and clear-cut as a pearl; the long, black lashes showed startlingly against the colorless cheek, outlined as cleanly as the curved, narrow brows. Rosemary's features were ideally perfect, like some old cameo carved by a master who loved Greece. Nobody who loved her ever forgot Rosemary's mouth—that warm, delicious mouth with its wonderful curves, its little trick of smiling one-sidedly. Oh, Rosemary . . . *Rosemary!*

He was down on his knees now, by the bed, and Doctor Parnell rose.

"We've done about all we can," he said gravely. "I'll leave you here. If you want me you can call this number. The nurse will be in the house, and I won't be far away. I'll be back in the morning."

Magnan nodded. He was scarcely conscious of the doctor's presence, but he gathered that they were leaving him alone with Rosemary. He was to watch the night with her.

Presently he heard the door close, and he stumbled to his feet and got into the chair the doctor had vacated. Rosemary lay like one dead. Except for her rapid breathing and pounding pulse, one might have believed her dead. He sat and looked at her, and went over many things in his mind. How beautiful she was, dying there in her rosy, canopied bed! How like her the room was, in its expensive, fastidious beauty! The sheen of silver on her dressing-table seemed to blend, an insistent note, with the fragile loveliness of it all—gleaming, striking, yet in harmony with the rest.

He recalled the little two-roomed flat where they had begun housekeeping. It was cheap and tawdry and uncomfortable, but to him it had seemed a Paradise. Rosemary was only seventeen then. She was the eldest of eleven children. They were very poor, and she had never known anything but crowded poverty. But she had hated it with that blind revolt that often exists with almost no standards of comparison. He knew now that she had married him only as a first step away from the teeming disorder of her home.

Soon the little flat bored her; she wanted to get away from it. Magnan was young, willing, and hard-working, but he wasn't what is known as a "manager." He couldn't make money.

But there were a great many other men who could. And Rosemary was the sort of woman who, properly dressed, could set a whole restaurant or theatre to gaping and questioning. It was a long time, though, before she was properly dressed. She had a passion for clothes, but a

grocer's clerk, at eighteen dollars a week, always fearful of losing his "job," could scarcely gratify this passion. He plunged himself head over ears into debt one winter to buy her a French hat she craved. That was the winter she met Carpenter.

There is a striking similarity in the autobiographies of the Rosemarys of this world. Carpenter was twenty-two, a rich man's son, with nothing to occupy him but having a good time. He made a vocation of that. Magnan never knew how they happened to meet. But was Rosemary really so much to blame for finding Carpenter's magnificent limousine and a warm, scented, music-stirred café, with its excitement and rich food, more to her taste on a cold night than the bare little flat, heated only by a cooperative furnace which was simply a joke? She was like an orchid dropped by mistake in a slum alley—Magnan realized that. But what could he do?

He did a great deal, as it happened, when gossip first brought the affair to his notice. He was sick and disheartened and in a brutish mood. He did all the things he should not have done—if he wished to hold Rosemary. He stormed, swore, threatened, insinuated unspeakable things, ordered her never to see Carpenter again. His was the violence of the meek: once aroused, it is to be feared. But Rosemary, her red lips sneering, sat in silence till he had finished. Then she shrugged and turned her back upon him.

After that she was clever enough to conceal her movements till a friend—one of the kind who "feels it his duty"—told Magnan that she was meeting Carpenter regularly at a certain rather dubious tea-house. Crazy with jealousy, Magnan went to the place, found them together—and shot Carpenter dead.

The jury acquitted him, for the unwritten law backed him with irrefutable evidence. But it had mattered little to him which way the verdict went, now that Rosemary was no longer his. Owing to Carpenter's prominence, the scandal

was blown far and wide. He felt himself a marked man.

Looking back, he knew now that Rosemary had never loved him and that she *had* loved Theron Carpenter. After all, she wasn't much more than a child, and Carpenter was the first attractive man she had ever known. There had been times when he wanted to beg her forgiveness! . . . And there were other times when he could have torn her limb from limb and been glad. . . .

All this had been fifteen years ago. Rosemary was thirty-three now, and more beautiful than she had been then. Strange that in fifteen years one hadn't forgotten. That is a long time to remember—anything.

He bent closer to her, looking into the expressionless white face. The accident that was costing her life had occurred when one of Tomlinson Wayne's drunken chauffeurs had pitched them over a precipice. Wayne was a multimillionaire, and the greatest politician of his time, skillful, brilliant, unscrupulous. More than once Magnan had heard it whispered that Rosemary was the power behind the throne. Doubtless she was the power behind many thrones. Her record since his acquittal had been one long history of *outré* triumphs.

Rosemary had indeed come a long way from the grocer's clerk with his Saturday night pay envelope. The greatest men of the day had been proud to be tied to her chariot wheels. She was another of the du Barrys, Pompadours, with which history is dotted—a woman of many lovers, but preserving inviolate her own individuality. She had become cold, ruthless, powerful; she, his little, soft Rosemary, the ignorant high-school girl he had married, had developed into a person to be reckoned with, lovely but hard and determined, clever enough to wrest from life everything that she desired. Strange that after such a career there should be watching now at its end only the grocer's clerk to whom she had given

herself in the beginning. . . . He puzzled over this, somewhat stupidly.

The night crept on. Once he saw Rosemary lift her hand, then it fell back lifelessly on the coverlet. She had wonderful hands, small, smooth, exquisitely molded. So many middle-class women have hands that betray them. But *had* Rosemary been of the middle class? In station, yes—she couldn't help that; but the soul of a Catherine of Russia had been born in her. He had not understood her, but since she had gone out of his life he had read a great deal, and tried gropingly to grasp the meaning of things. She recalled to him now the great, deliberate, agnostic mistresses of kings, who smiled down from a great height on their lowly beginnings. . . . All personal feeling had died out of his heart, all rancors, all old hates. He only *remembered*.

It must have been one or two o'clock in the morning when suddenly she stirred, moaned, began softly to babble, to toss about on the bed. At first he could make out nothing she said. Then with difficulty he caught the words "Bob" and "home." He was Bob—and presently he knew that Rosemary was whispering incoherently of their first days together. His heart leaped into his throat—stood still. She—this marvelous sinner who had broken every rule, yet who somehow commanded people's admiration—was murmuring of the little flat with the window in the air-shaft and the crippled furnace!

"So cold!" she muttered; and he tried to draw the gorgeous rose-wool puff about her. But he knew she was thinking of those dreary rooms.

"Forgive—" she began once; and he comprehended the reason she had asked him here. She felt that she had wronged him. Well, she had; but perhaps he had wronged her, too. One can't keep an orchid with the treatment under which a sunflower thrives.

The tears were running frankly down

his face by now, and suddenly he leaned over her and began to talk. All the pent-up tenderness for the woman who had betrayed him swept into his tremulous tones. He told her that he had long ago forgiven her, that she had never had anything really to fear from him, that he had loved her and known all the time that he was not good enough for her.

Her broken babbling ceased at his voice. She lay inertly, her eyes open. He wondered if she could understand what he was telling her. He went on talking, quietly enough, but in his tones throbbled everything he had ever felt for her. . . . She seemed to be rallying, reviving; her pulse had quieted somewhat, her flesh felt cooler to the touch. But he knew that it was only that astonishing flare of energy that often comes just before the end.

And then it happened. She lifted her body suddenly, almost with a spring. Her hair slipped down about her face, and she tossed it away with a quick, shaky movement. Her lacy gown showed the fine white slope of her shoulders, her splendid throat, her wonderfully molded arms. That horrible turtle-turn of Wayne's machine had crushed out her life, but it had taken little of her beauty. Her eyes stared about the room, then came to rest on him. They were sane and clear. She was conscious and she recognized him.

And in that moment Magnan knew the truth. He read those wide eyes as if he had been a clairvoyant. He saw gleaming there—*hate!* Hatred of the years that had followed Carpenter's death; hatred of his weakness that could not hold her in the little flat; hatred of his jealousy, which had taken away all her chance of being a happy woman, an ordinary woman; hatred for his part in this rich house and all that filled it; hatred of—*him!*

That flash of recognition went instantly. She dropped back weakly to the bed, and lay huddled there, eyes closed. When she opened them they were no longer clear, but clouded with the mist of delirium.

For what seemed a century Magnan sat on in a stupid silence, watching her face. The blow of that revelation had left him temporarily without feeling. He heard a clock strike three, then the half-hour. . . . He buried his face in his hands.

Out of the silence Rosemary's golden tones came as electrifyingly vivid as lightning. He sucked in his breath sharply at that abrupt cry; his face went gray. She was holding out her hands, her face convulsed with repentant entreaty. She was trying to beg something.

"Forgive . . . forgive!"

He dropped down beside her, trembling. The centuries seem to whirl past him as he listened. Could he make her see that he had long ago forgiven her?

"Forgive me—*Theron!* Forgive—"

The dawn, unhealthily yellow—an ugly, pale yellow, like badly peroxidized hair—stole through the lace draperies. The doctor and the nurse entered the sick room almost simultaneously.

The nurse looked at the face on the pillow, touched the pulse, turned to the doctor in astonishment.

"She's sleeping *naturally!* She'll be conscious when she wakes. I don't understand it, Doctor. She's past the crisis—*she's better!*"

But Doctor Parnell was looking keenly at the night watcher, who sat stiffly silent, his head on his breast. The doctor bent down to him, made a quick examination.

"*H'm!*" muttered the doctor. "Heart failure."

Magnan was dead.



SHE LOVES ME!

By Hale Merriman

SHE loves me!

Until last night I never guessed, never dreamed that she *cared*.

She has always been so apparently indifferent, so casual.

But last night I discovered that she has loved me all the time—that it was all a mask—maidenly shyness. She confessed it.

It came about in this way:

I was just reading over the evening papers when there came a timid rap upon the door of my bachelor apartment. Kato, my Japanese servant being out, I answered the door myself.

She shrank back as if contemplating flight when she saw me—covered her face with her hands.

Alarmed, as well as astonished, I drew her into the room.

She melted into my arms, clung to me passionately, kissed me.

She spoke in broken sentences. She could endure it no longer. She loved me so! It was stronger than pride, greater than maidenly reserve.

It was like a flame that scorched and seared and consumed her and would not be satisfied. Would I be kind to her, merciful?

She was lovely. . . . I have always coveted her. My fragmentary phrases mingled with her own. Our lips clung. Kisses turned to wine upon them.

I would have asked her to marry me long ago, but I am such a penniless beggar!

But she loves me for myself alone. Having compromised herself by appearing unchaperoned at my apartments, she suggested that we be married at once. Before the midnight bells rang out over the city, we had been made one forever.

By Jove, the wonder of it! That queenly creature loves me for myself alone!

How glad I am. . . . Otherwise—

—She might be disappointed when she finds out that it was not her newly acquired husband but a cousin of the same name who inherited the fortune mentioned in the afternoon papers.

The Marriage of Jones

By Holly Edwards

CHARACTERS

GENERAL BOB JONES, a young soldier of fortune.

WONG, his Chinese servant.

VIOLET HOPE, a girl from Home.

SCENE:—*A room in the house of General Bob Jones, in a Chinese city. Doors at right and left, window at back. Small table, with papers and writing materials, right centre. Taboret at back, holding brandy decanter and glasses. High-backed armchair beside it at left. Two chairs right and left of table, right centre.*

The whole room is typically Chinese, but strewn about are various articles which proclaim the nationality of the owner. A small American flag is draped over one of the doors.

At the rise of the curtain, the stage is empty. Almost immediately, Wong enters, right. Evidently he has been drinking, for he is none too steady on his feet. He looks cautiously around and goes to taboret. Takes up decanter and pours some of the brandy into a glass. As he starts to drink, General Bob Jones enters, left. Bob sees Wong, strides across stage, seizes him by the shoulder and whirls him around. Snatching the glass from Wong's hand, he sets it down on taboret.

BOB (*angrily*)

You thieving Chink, you, how many times have I told you to keep away from that brandy? If you don't let that decanter alone, I'll skin you alive and nail your yellow hide to the door!

WONG (*in a conciliatory voice*)

Mister Bob no get mad. Wong celebrating Chinese Lepublic Day. Wong flee man now—all same Melican. Do as like. Celebrate.

BOB (*giving him a shake*)

Well, you needn't celebrate with my brandy. You can't do as you like with

that. If you want to Fourth of July, go out in the street and yell and shoot off firecrackers with the rest of the maniacs. They'll be at it pretty soon.

WONG

Yes. Palade—fireworks. Make heap hell of a noise. Mister Bob no get mad.

BOB

I will if you don't hustle up and cook my breakfast. And see if you can do a decent job for once in your life. Your blamed old government hires me to come over here and reorganize the army, and then you try to kill me with your poison-

ous cooking. Get a move on, now; these early drills give me an appetite like a shark. (*He unbuckles his belt, turns to taboret, lays belt and revolver down on it.*) Is there any mail for me?

WONG

One. (*Crosses to table right centre, takes up a letter, and hands it to Bob, who looks at the address.*)

BOB (*in disgust, throwing letter down on table again.*)

This isn't for me, you fool. It's for the Reverend Algernon Jones, that psalm-singing hypocrite of a missionary!

WONG

So? His name like yours. Have same ancestors, maybe?

BOB

I should say not! If I had, I wouldn't admit it. Thank Heaven, he's no relative of mine! If he were I'd feel obliged to assassinate him for the honor of the family. When I think of the real missionaries out here, the earnest workers who are doing good, hampered by that spineless dub of a grafter, I'm tempted to kill him, anyway. And I'll bet the people that sent him here think he's a tin saint. Gee, he's a slick one! I may be a soldier of fortune, but I'm hanged if I'd stoop to the things he does.

WONG (*nodding wisely, although he has not understood the half of what Bob has said*)

Soldier no stoop. Soldier palade. (*Hopefully.*) All soldier palade to-day, Mister Bob?

BOB (*emphatically*)

They do not! My command stays in barracks. There'll be quite enough noise without 'em. (*Wong looks greatly disappointed. Bob turns and picks up letter from table again, studying the address.*) A girl's handwriting—and postmarked San Francisco—home! Probably it's from the woman who's coming out to marry Algy Jones. I'm sorry for her—but she can't amount to much if she'd pick him for a husband. (*He sighs prodigiously.*) Heigh-ho! I wish some of

the girls I used to know would write to me. I'd give a year's pay to see just one girl from home. (*He stands for a moment with bowed head, his eyes fixed unseeingly on the letter. Then he tosses it back on the table, recovering himself with a jerk. He speaks suddenly and loudly.*) Wong, what the devil are you waiting for? (*The glass which Wong has just started to raise again to his lips falls to the floor with a crash.*) Confound you, you yellow heathen!

WONG (*spreading out his hands with an ingratiating smile*)

Mister Bob no get mad. Chinee free now. (*With somewhat uncertain defiance.*) Do as like!

BOB

I shouldn't advise you to try it around here! Now get a move on. I'm going to get cleaned up, and after breakfast you take that letter over to Algy. (*He speaks the name with ironic emphasis. He crosses and exits, right. Wong watches him cunningly and then turns back to the taboret. Takes another glass, fills it, and sits down in armchair, slipping low, so that his head is out of sight. There is a knock on door left. Wong does not hear. Another knock. Still Wong pays no attention. The door opens, and Violet Hope enters. She is a very pretty girl, with yellow hair and big blue eyes. She stands just inside the doorway, looking into the room.*)

VIOLET (*clasping her hands ecstatically*)

And so this is Algy's home—my home to be! I wonder where he is—dear, dear Algernon! (*Wong's round face appears over the back of the chair.*) Oh, there's his servant! (*Wong wriggles out of chair and stands up.*) Is Mr. Jones in?

WONG (*moving toward her with rather unsteady steps*)

Mr. Jones dlessing.

VIOLET

Please tell him I'm here. (*She closes the door behind her and moves down to centre of room.*)

WONG

Who I tell him?

VIOLET (*with pleasant smile*)

I'm Miss Violet Hope, the young lady he's going to marry, you know.

WONG (*slowly and mystifiedly*)

Mister Jones mally?

VIOLET

Yes, of course. Hasn't he told you?

WONG (*looking around, as if unable to believe his ears*)

No. No—he no tell Wong.

VIOLET

Well, of course, it doesn't matter. Tell him I'm here, please. (*She turns to table, and sits down in chair at left of it. Wong watches her interestedly, turns away, and picks up the glass he has set down. He looks from her to the door through which Bob has gone, starts for it, then apparently thinks better of it and sits down in armchair again.*) Why, here's my letter! (*She picks up letter from table and turns it over in her hands.*) And unopened! That must be the reason Algy didn't meet me; he didn't know what time I'd get here. Well, it doesn't matter now; I'm here, and as long as he has me, he won't need the letter. (*She tears open the envelope, takes out enclosure, and reads aloud.*) "Dearest Algernon: When you receive this, I shall be on my way to you. For the first time in twelve years, we shall look upon each other's faces. I wonder if you will know your little Violet? I so long to be with you, to stand by your side and help you in your great missionary work. It gives me a strange feeling to know that in such a short time we shall be married—that I shall be Mrs. Jones. Be sure to meet me on my arrival." (*She stops reading, sighs, and looks around.*) Of course he didn't know what time I was to arrive. And this is his home! What a pretty room this is! (*She turns and sees Wong, who is standing by the armchair.*) Why, haven't you gone yet? Hurry, please! (*She turns back to table. Wong starts toward door*

right.) Dear Algernon, out here all alone, working so hard to raise up the heathen! (*Wong catches his foot in a rug and falls to floor with a crash. Violet runs to him.*) Oh, are you hurt?

WONG (*blinking up at her gravely*)

No fall. Just sit down to lest.

VIOLET

Oh!

BOB (*yelling off-stage*)

You yellow devil, what are you doing in there? (*Violet starts and looks apprehensively toward door right. Enter Bob, coatless, the collar of his shirt turned in, drying his hands on a towel.*) Wong, what, the hel—hello! I beg your pardon; I had no idea anyone was here.

(*Wong stumbles to his feet and goes out hurriedly, door right.*)

VIOLET (*going forward timidly*)

Here—here I am!

BOB (*stammering in surprise*)

Yes—yes, er—so I see. It's very nice and—and all that, you know.

VIOLET (*appealingly*)

Don't you know me?

BOB (*much taken aback*)

Know you? (*Stares at her, then speaks with great cordiality.*) Why—why, yes, of course. Know you? Well, I should say I do! (*Aside.*) I mean I'm going to!

VIOLET

And aren't you glad to see me?

BOB (*with enthusiasm*)

You bet your life I am! (*Aside.*) And that's no lie! She's a peach—but who the dickens is she, anyhow? I ought to know her, I suppose.

VIOLET (*timidly*)

You—you don't act as if you were—so—so very glad.

BOB (*getting flustered*)

Why—why to tell you the truth, I—I don't know how to show you how glad I really am. What would you do in my place?

VIOLET (*very much embarrassed, blushing*)

Why, I—I—I—if you'll please turn

your head, I'll—I'll show you. (*He turns his head, and she goes slowly up to him. She hesitates an instant, then stands on tiptoe and kisses him behind the ear. He whirls, instantly, his face the picture of amazed bewilderment.*)

BOB

Well, what do you think of that! (*He stares at her, while his amazement changes to delight.*) Why—why how stupid of me not to know that that was the thing to do under the circumstances! But I didn't know that you'd like it. (*He sweeps her into his arms and kisses her again.*) Do you? (*Violet nods shyly, hiding her face against his shoulder.*) All right; I'll take the same. (*He kisses her again, several times. Wong's face appears at door left, instantly to vanish again.*)

VIOLET (*sighing*)

Oh, dear, I'm so glad I'm here at last!

BOB

So am I! (*He leads her to chair and sits down on arm of it, holding both her hands in his.*) I never was so glad of anything in my life! But you must be hungry. I'll bet you haven't had breakfast. Have you?

VIOLET

No. I—

BOB

Well, we'll have it right away. I was just waiting— (*Raising his voice and calling.*) Wong! (*Wong enters, right. Bob speaks without looking around.*) Where's that breakfast, Wong? Isn't it ready?

WONG

Mister Bob no get mad.

BOB

I want you to hurry up. Serve it for two, do you hear? (*Wong goes out.*)

VIOLET

Do tell me about your work. I've been so anxious to talk it over with you. Do you hold exercises every day or just once a week?

BOB

Every day. I have to drill the lazy

beggars every morning, or they'd forget everything I've taught 'em.

VIOLET

Oh, how dreadful! But surely they're not all so bad. You must have some promising material, haven't you?

BOB (*enthusiastically*)

I should say I have! I've got one division that can ride and shoot and swear like Yankees.

VIOLET (*horrified*)

They swear?

BOB (*cheerfully*)

First English they learn. I expect they get it from me.

VIOLET (*more horrified*)

From you? Surely you don't use profanity?

BOB (*laughing*)

Hah! Don't I, though! It's the only way to make these Chinks obey orders. But I'll make good Christian soldiers of 'em yet—if I don't kill 'em first.

VIOLET (*uncertainly*)

That is so different from the methods at home—but I suppose you have to be more stern with the heathen. You must tell me more so that I shall understand. I'm so anxious to help you with your work. I want to help you to teach this great army.

BOB (*in amazement*)

What? You want to help me drill the army? Are you a militant suffragette?

VIOLET

Oh, no, no! But I had a class in the Mission Sunday School, you know.

BOB (*staring at her blankly, and then bursting into laughter*)

Well, believe me, this is no Sunday School job! (*He keeps looking at her. Speaks as if struck with a sudden thought.*) Do you know, you look mighty good to me?

VIOLET (*a little primly*)

I try to be.

BOB

What? You try to be—?

VIOLET

Good. But I feel so useless. I want

to be of some active help—to do some good in the world.

BOB

You have. You've done me a lot of good already. How did you happen to come here?

VIOLET

They directed me here from the station.

BOB

Well, they sure sent you to the right place.

VIOLET

Yes, of course they did. Everyone seemed to know Mr. Jones. (*Shyly.*) But, dear—when is the ceremony to be? Have you arranged everything?

BOB (*surprised*)

Ceremony? What ceremony?

VIOLET (*with pretty embarrassment*)

I mean—our wedding ceremony.

BOB

Great Scott, but you do go some, girlie! (*Looks down at her uncertainly, then suddenly makes up his mind.*) But I believe I like it! I'm game if you are!

VIOLET

Game? What game?

BOB

The matrimonial game. We'll talk it over and decide just what we want to do, then I'll send Wong for the Reverend Algernon, and he—

VIOLET (*interrupting*)

The Reverend Algernon? Algernon what?

BOB

Jones, The Reverend Algernon Jones, bless his heart! Shall we—

VIOLET

Why, his name is the same as yours!

BOB (*scornfully*)

What? Do I look as though my name were Algernon?

VIOLET (*in distress*)

But why—why—you're my Algy, aren't you?

BOB

I'm yours, all right, but Algy—my dear girl—

VIOLET (*jumping up and backing away from him in dismay*)

Aren't you the Reverend Algernon Jones?

BOB

Nit, not, no. In other words, nothing doing! I'm General Bob Jones, Commander-in-Chief of the Chinese forces stationed in the city. And I—

VIOLET

Oh! (*Her voice rises hysterically.*) Oh, you horrid, hateful man! You've deceived me! You—

BOB (*interrupting vehemently*)

I did nothing of the sort! You came here and kissed me and told me you were going to marry me. I didn't deceive you at all. What did you come here for if you didn't like me?

VIOLET

I—I came out here to marry Algy. I—he—

BOB (*interrupting again*)

What made you say you were going to marry me, then?

VIOLET

I—I didn't!

BOB (*firmly*)

You did. And you asked me when, too.

VIOLET

But—but I thought you were Algy.

BOB

Thought I was Algy! Don't you know him when you see him?

VIOLET

No. I haven't seen him since I was a little girl. We've just written to each other.

BOB

You mean he proposed to you—made love to you in letters? Is that it?

VIOLET

Yes.

BOB (*disgustedly*)

If that isn't just like Algy! Well, believe me, little girl, I've got the correspondence-school method beat by a city block. (*Starts toward her.*) Just let me show you—

VIOLET (*starting away with a cry*)
Oh, no, no, no!

BOB (*reproachfully*)

You didn't run and scream a little while ago.

VIOLET

But I thought you were Algy.

BOB

Algy be— Look here, you haven't seen Algy. When you do, you'll scream louder and run harder.

VIOLET (*defensively*)

Algy is a good man—a noble man.

BOB

Oh, but his *face!* I'm no prize-contest beauty, and I'm not good, but—

VIOLET (*interrupting*)

I'm a stranger in the city, and I don't know where Mr. Jones lives; but I must ask you to send for him at once.

BOB

Oh, I say! Look here, little girl, I don't want to send for Algy. (*Speaks seriously and earnestly.*) I want you to marry me—honestly, I do. I'm not such a bad sort of chap, and I've fallen for you good and hard. You liked me well enough until you found out my name wasn't Algernon. Good Lord, I'll change it, if you'll change your mind!

VIOLET (*refusing to look at him*)

Will you send for Mr. Jones?

BOB

But, listen—

VIOLET

If you won't, I'll go to him myself. (*She starts toward door, left.*)

BOB (*imploringly*)

If you'd only listen to me—just a minute! (*Aside.*) I can't let her go to that boob—a girl like her! But how am I going to stop her? (*There is a sudden tumult outside. The street echoes with shouts, the explosions of firecrackers, the sound of drums and banging of metal on metal.*) That confounded celebration!

VIOLET

Oh, what's that? (*She looks frightened and rushes to window at back.*)

Is it a boxer uprising, or another revolution?

BOB

Why, it's— (*He stops abruptly, a light breaking over his face. Speaks aside.*) The very thing! (*To Violet.*) You can't go now! It's a mob! Quick—let me bar the door! (*He rushes to door left and locks it.*)

VIOLET

Oh, save me, save me! (*She runs to him in fear.*)

BOB (*grandiloquently*)

Have no fear. They shall not harm you.

VIOLET (*hiding her face on his shoulder*)

You won't let them kill me, will you?

BOB

No one shall touch you, except over my dead body!

VIOLET

Oh, you're so brave! But what shall we do? What shall we do?

BOB

Let me think, dear. (*Aside.*) Damn it, what shall I do? (*He gets a sudden inspiration.*) If I can only get a message to my troops!

VIOLET (*hysterically*)

Oh, don't leave me!

BOB (*holding her tight*)

You bet your sweet life I won't! (*Suddenly recollecting the rôle he has assumed.*) I mean, never, so long as we both live. I'll send a trusty messenger. (*Calling.*) Wong! (*Still with his arm about Violet, he stoops over table, picks up pen and writes hurriedly. Reads, aside.*) "To Colonel Sing:—Parade your troop past headquarters at once. R. Jones, General Commanding." (*Wong sidles in, door right. He is more unsteady than before and blinks at Bob with drunken gravity.*) You loafer! (*Releases Violet, goes up to Wong and shakes him by the shoulder.*) What do you mean by getting in this condition?

WONG (*smiling foolishly*)

Mister Bob no get mad. Wong celebrate.

BOB

Go out and send a coolie to Colonel Sing with this note. Then go around the back way and pound like blazes on that door over there. Understand?

WONG

Wong go. Mister Bob no get mad.

(Bob unfastens door left, and Wong lurches out, Bob accelerating his progress with a kick. Bob locks door behind him and returns to Violet.)

VIOLET

Will he do it?

BOB *(darkly)*

I can't tell. He may be one of the rioters. *(Violet gives a little cry and sways toward him. He puts his arms about her. Speaks majestically.)* But I will save you. Keep close to me. *(Takes revolver from the taboret.)* I will defend you with my life!

(The noise without is steadily increasing. Violet shrinks close to Bob.)

VIOLET

Oh, I'm so frightened!

BOB

Courage! I am here.

VIOLET

Oh, you're so brave—so noble—*(There is a sudden pounding on the door. Violet screams and buries her face on Bob's shoulder. He grins ecstatically.)* Oh, what's that?

BOB

The mob. They're trying to get in. But be brave—I will hold them at bay. *(He strides to door, flourishing revolver.)* Beware! The first man who enters forfeits his life. *(Leans forward and speaks through panels of door.)* Good work, Wong! Go at it, old boy!

(The noise increases, growing steadily louder and more menacing. There are violent thuds on the door.)

VIOLET

Oh, don't let them get in!

BOB *(over his shoulder)*

Courage, sweetheart! *(Through the door to Wong.)* Easy, Wong—easy! That's enough! You'll have the door

down! *(The noise keeps on getting louder. Bob rushes back to Violet, who throws herself into his arms.)*

VIOLET *(in hysterical terror)*

Oh, can't you drive them away?

BOB

I'll do my best. If we can only hold out until the troops come! *(There is a thunderous crash on the door. Bob rushes back to it.)* The first man in this room dies like a dog. *(Through the door.)* Wong, you fool, cut it out! I tell you, you'll have the door down!

VIOLET

Oh, oh!

BOB *(hurrying back to her)*

Don't be frightened, sweetheart. I'm here with you.

VIOLET *(sobbing)*

Yes, you are here.

BOB

I'll take care of you—always, if you'll let me. Will you?

VIOLET

Yes, yes! Only, don't leave me—don't!

BOB

Never! And you love me? Say you do! *(A tremendous crash comes on the door. Violet screams wildly and throws her arms around his neck.)*

VIOLET

Oh, can't you stop it?

BOB *(savagely glaring at the door)*

No, confound it, I can't! *(He forgets his heroic rôle, throws down his revolver in disgust, and starts toward the door, which is beginning to tremble. Violet picks up the revolver, waving it wildly. There is another crash, and the door splinters in. With a scream, Violet shuts both eyes, points the revolver anywhere but at the door, and pulls the trigger. There is a loud explosion; simultaneously the panels of the door give way entirely and Wong falls into the room. He has an ax in one hand and a bunch of firecrackers in the other.)*

VIOLET *(rushing to Bob)*

Oh, I've killed a man—I've killed him,

but I've saved your life! (*She clings to him.*)

BOB (*furiously*)

Yes, you've shot a damn' bad cook!

(*They go toward Wong, who opens his eyes and winks feebly and with inebriated gravity at Bob.*)

WONG

Mister Bob no get mad. Wong pound like hell.

VIOLET

Oh, isn't he dead?

BOB (*disgustedly*)

No, worse luck; only drunk as a lord.

(*Sound of bugles off—drums and martial music.*)

VIOLET

The troops! We are saved!

BOB (*holding her in his arms*)

But you don't want to go now, do you?

VIOLET (*shyly*)

I—I must. Unless—you send—for—for Algernon.

BOB

What? You're going to turn me down, after all? You still want to marry him?

VIOLET

No-o.

BOB

Then what—

VIOLET

To—to marry—us, dear.

WONG (*scrambling to his feet and waving the firecrackers*)

Hooray! Celebrate! Mister Bob no get mad!

QUICK CURTAIN



MAY DUSK

By Clinton Scollard

THE dusk is weaving at its loom

Of shadows, purple-dyed;

The attar of the lilac bloom

Drifts down the twilight-tide.

Illusive veils of vapor wreath

The meadows wide outspread;

While rhythmically the young leaves breathe

In slumber overhead.

Drowsy with dreams the night birds croon,

And o'er the hills afar

Rises the lovely Dian moon

With her Endymion star.

The Dark Pool

By Mary Barratt

SHE stood before the mirror, with uplifted hand tucking in a strand of hair, then dropped it to smooth an already creaseless gown. The face looking back at her was very girlish. Suddenly she realized this, drew closer, as if surprised. She was, in fact, very young, hardly more than a girl; but she had felt so much a woman. She blushed. Even then, half-consciously, she was aware that the blue of the dress, setting off the ivory of her shoulders and neck and the pale pink of her cheeks, was becoming. A teasing thought leaped into her mind, unexpected, unwelcome. She ought to have felt this way the day she had stood before the glass at home, waiting to go downstairs to the strains of the wedding march—and she had not felt so at all. She had merely felt numb and unready. And now, in a tranquil twilight, three years from that other twilight hour when she had married Monning and had come to spend her first summer here at the bluffs, for the first time she felt as she should have felt then! . . . It was an absurd fancy. She tried to laugh it off, but her own voice sounded unnatural. All she could think of, somehow, was the casual, low refrain of Fresner, saying: "Do drop in and see the new water color to-morrow—and we'll have tea brewed over the fireplace, and talk." Surely it was a simple invitation; it might be even matter-of-fact, and yet—The disks of pink in her cheeks widened.

Downstairs, in the large summer living-room, she saw her husband, his head bent over papers on the desk drawn into a corner. Through the window the low-

ering sun caught the streaks of gray in his hair. He looked so old just then, before he glanced up. The twelve years' difference in their ages seemed present and potent. Looking at him, she couldn't help but recall the girlish vision her dressing-table mirror had given back. How old he was, and how young she was!

He turned from his papers and smiled placidly, not without a gentle affection. "Going for a stroll?" he remarked as if to a child.

By this time she was toying absently with some sprays of blazing-star in a vase on the piano.

"I guess so," she returned languidly, readjusting the tall stems. Then, with a level glance at Monning, she added frankly: "Hendry Fresner has a new sketch. I am going to drop in to see it, and take a cup of tea."

"That's good. Nice young chap, Fresner." He turned to his scattered sheets on the desk. "Dinner's at eight, I suppose?"

Why did he always put a fact of routine as a question?

"Yes, I suppose so," she murmured; and, dissatisfied with her tone, walked over and dropped a hand lightly on the gray-streaked head. "The sun will be going down then. We'll dine on the piazza and watch it."

He seemed almost embarrassed. . . . What a funny fellow!

"Good!" he approved, and was engrossed once more in the papers.

She went out—across the veranda, over the terraced lawn, down to the bluff which overhung the misty river. The

pungent aroma of pines filled her nostrils. There was a bite to the air; she breathed it in deeply and her head went up. She walked briskly, thinking of the tea "brewed over the fireplace." She was singularly eager.

Gradually her pace slackened. Why was she eager? Why did she feel like this? She was not interested in Fresner's new water color—not especially. Tea had no particular charm for her. These were facts, and she admitted them candidly. She would rather walk. Trying to analyze the thing, she remembered his words, conventional in themselves, yet somehow heightened by—she didn't know what—a tensility in his tone, perhaps a dull glow in his tanned face. She saw again the lighting of his gray eyes below the high, smooth forehead, the straightly brushed-back brown hair. She shivered slightly, walking there on the bluff over the river. Possibly it was the air—she should have worn a wrap. The fall of the water over the dam made a gurgling music in her ears, rather chilling. Yes, she would prefer to walk. . . . She would walk rapidly, returning to dinner the better for the exercise. Fresner could hardly expect her.

She halted abruptly. There, directly before her, was his cabin, built of logs and perched almost perpendicularly above the river. In her self-absorption she had not reckoned on the path she was taking. She should have turned into another. Now she could almost reach out and touch the old bronze knocker on the door.

Fascinated, she gazed at that door, at the play of firelight through the squares of windowpane. She took a step backward, hesitated. Had she said she would come? But, then, certainly she could change her mind! She would return home at once. . . . She started precipitately. The dry branches crackedled under her feet.

Then the door swung open, and Fresner's voice was calling out cheerily:

"I say, you've lost the track, haven't you, Mrs. Monning?"

She stopped, looking furtively over her shoulder at the slender but stalwart young form now advancing the short space between them.

"No, no"—hurriedly. "I was just—walking."

"Oh!" The tone dropped from eagerness to disappointment. "I heard you, and hoped you were coming in."

It seemed the natural action for her to put out her hand. He held it briefly, and an odd consciousness of the touch went through her. "I hoped," he was adding, "that you were really going to keep your promise."

"Did I promise?"

"The water color," he amplified hastily.

"Yes—I was coming, wasn't I?" She avoided his eyes.

"And now?"

"Variable woman!" She tried a laugh.

He did not join her.

"I'm sorry. And the kettle was over the logs!" His voice seemed faintly husky.

She hesitated. The twilight was still broad; dinner would not be served for more than an hour, generally a dull hour for her unless. . . . Besides, she had said she would drop in, and to escape now would be awkward. . . . She yielded. They were going back together, his hand lightly on her arm.

She said something pleasant, and now laughed quite freely. He joined her in a subdued tone. . . .

The logs burned merrily. The firelight raced cozily along the walls and ceiling. Meeting and mingling with the sunset glow, it made mutable frescoes of light and shade. The pictures, candlesticks, bric-à-brac, took on a hazy, warm indefiniteness. The kettle sang.

He drew up a low reclining chair for her, and she relaxed, stretching out her tiny feet toward the warmth, letting

them touch the andirons. It was homy and comfortable. The fresh glow from walking in the crisp outside air showed in her cheeks. Her eyes were bright. She was like a healthy girl, enjoying the creature comforts of the neat cabin. Fresner dropped onto a furred skin at her feet. She chattered, and he listened. And, while she talked gayly on, all the time she was thinking to herself:

"What a little fool I am! He is just a youngster himself, hardly older than I, and it is perfectly natural that I should be glad to drop in and cheer him up. Isn't he young and—yes, handsome! I might be a twin sister. It's just youngness that makes us happy together. I have been getting too old. I have been entertaining ridiculous fancies. There was never anything simpler and more harmless and innocent in the world."

After awhile a silence settled on them. Then, breaking it, she exclaimed:

"But how stupid of me! The water color!"

"Yes, to be sure—the water color."

The light was now poor, for which he apologized. She went up to the picture, and he put a finger on her arm to guide her to a better view. She could sense the touch and his nearness, rather than feel it tangibly. She withdrew for a more distant scrutiny.

"It is beautiful," she murmured sincerely. "It is the Arrow Bend, just as we saw it that evening of the picnic, when the sun was setting and the moon rising at the same time."

"Yes," he replied a little awkwardly. "It was that which I tried to reproduce. I hoped—I am glad you recognize it."

He swung about and began the preparations for tea. She moved curiously about the room, looking at him now and then. How stalwart, how lithe, how free, he was!

She thought she heard something outside—a branch slapping the window,

doubtless—but a momentary alarm went over her. Why? She was annoyed at her pointless nervousness, and glad of his summons to the small table he had pulled up, with the cups white upon it.

She had again settled luxuriously into the easy chair. He filled a cup and held it out to her. She lifted her hand to take the cup, and for a second their fingers touched. His appeared to tremble slightly. Then suddenly the cup tottered. He made a fruitless effort to balance it, and she jumped to her feet, laughing as the frail china was shattered on the hearth.

In rising, involuntarily she had thrust out her arms. Fresner had reached out to steady her. They met in an uncalculated embrace, fleeting, flitting. Simultaneously both stepped back, flushing scarlet. But the area before the fireplace was restricted, and they were still close to each other. Fresner's lips were a straight, tense line. His eyes held hers. Then—he had impulsively caught her hand in his, was leaning toward her, gazing into her eyes, breathing hard. Her own breath was inexplicably rapid. A little clock on the mantel chimed.

"Marcia," he cried hoarsely, his hands a vise about hers, "it's no use. I've tried hard. I've fought against this moment, but all the time I think I knew it had to come. Oh, I *knew* it, Marcia dearest, because—because I love you!"

She felt lax, terrified, immovable, a new panic beating at her temples.

"Hendry, you mustn't—say that," she heard herself pleading vaguely.

"If I have—hurt you—" He struggled with the words.

"You haven't hurt me," she whispered. "But we don't know what—"

Slowly, strongly, irresistibly, he was drawing her to him. She felt his breath warm upon her face, his cheek for a dizzy moment against her cheek, and then, very slowly, tenderly, his lips upon her lips, lingeringly, meltingly . . . while the room whirled before her closed eyes.

Everything seemed unreal and far, far away.

A log crackled in the grate. She started back wildly.

"Wh-what are we doing?"

"It was only the fire, dearest."

He extended his arms to her again, was about to encircle with them the ivory softness of her shoulders. With hands uplifted, she pushed him from her, at first gently, then feverishly, fiercely.

"No, no! Don't!" Her pulses were beating a tattoo at wrists and temples. Her eyes were large and bright and hard. He saw, and shrank away.

"Forgive me," he faltered hoarsely. "Heaven knows I tried. Heaven knows how I've fought, Marcia."

"There is nothing to forgive," she said slowly. "I came here; I let you do this; I—practically invited it. Oh, yes, I did! I ought to have known better, Hendry Fresner! I did it myself, but I don't know why. I don't know why!" She was crying bitterly, like a schoolgirl. "No," she resumed after a brief pause, during which she had gained control of herself once more, "it isn't a matter of forgiving, but—how I *hate* you!"

He said nothing. His head drooped. She moved deliberately across the room, reached the door. He was still standing with downcast face. A wave of innate honesty, a candor not to be denied, swept over her.

"I do not—hate—you," she murmured softly, and fled into the deepening twilight.

The young man stood transfixed where she had left him, looking down dully at the shattered teacup.

For a time Marcia went on blindly, heedless of direction. Stinging emotions battled in her, confused, painful. Gradually, however, with the walking and the sharp air, confusion ebbed, and her thoughts began to come more coherently, like a portentous pageant. . . .

She was bad. She was vile. She had married Monning when she was nine-

teen, without really loving him. That was bad. She didn't know now exactly why she had married him. He was good, tender. He loved her; their life had seemed happy. All the time—all her brief young life, indeed—she had been good and strong and honest; and now, to-night, in one flitting, maddened, irrevocable moment, she had let Fresner hold her to him, and had let his lips meet hers, had let the kiss sink into her soul, polluting it. She had allowed it, and for a flashing second she had not cared. She had been conscious only of a dim and dizzy unreality. She had not meant that this should happen. It was simply the degrading pulse of young life—but *it had happened*. Another instant, and she would have snatched herself back, never to let anything like that happen again. But it was too late. She had sunk, in that one minute, to the depths. In her very, very young heart she felt the weight of sin, heavy, and saw herself soiled for always.

Now she knew, with a vast hopelessness, that it was herself whom she hated. Could she ever look at her husband again? Possibly; she didn't know. But she did know that never, never again could she stand the scorching reproach that her own mirror would send back to her.

She had reached the edge of the bluff. She stared down at the deep purple waters of the river, swirling below the dam; at the deep, tranquil pool beyond the swirl. It was so quiet. . . . There was a path nearby, and, with swift resolution, she followed it, half stumbling, hungrily, to the water's edge.

The sun had set. Darkness was already in the valley, the plush curtain of early night. A breeze, sweeping a film of mist before it, ran cold along the bank. She shivered. The fir trees moaned, chill also. The pool below her, so very near, seemed warm and still by contrast. She looked steadily, fascinatedly, into the placid expanse of the river, and at the

same time into the black and troubled pool of her own soul. A quiver ran through her body, in its incongruous blue dinner gown. She stared fixedly at the river before her, and her spirit grew calmer as her strange courage rose. How quiet, how peaceful, how obliterating, that velvet mass of the river! Very slowly she moved nearer the edge. . . .

A voice above, hallooing—steps—the swinging light of a lantern! For a moment she had the odious vision of Fresner searching for her even here! But, no, it was her husband's call.

She had paused too long. He was upon her.

"Oh, there you are, my dear. Such a scare! I was afraid you had gotten lost, or slipped, or something. Dinner's waiting, you know. Really, I don't think it's exactly safe to come here after sundown."

How could she look at him? Why had she never felt the possessing strength of him before? Why had she not thought of him—then? What—what wild and frenzied thing, what selfish bewitchment, had entangled her?

"You are all right, dear?" he asked fearfully, when she did not speak.

"Yes, yes, quite all right," she heard a voice which must be her voice saying evenly.

They went up the path together, his arm about her, strengthening; she was

walking as one newly awakened from an exhausting dream.

At the top of the path, a man's form! Marcia drew closer to her husband.

"Hello! That you, Fresner?"

"Yes. I—I heard you calling, and you frightened me from my frugal bachelor supper." The words came strained for all their attempt at lightness.

"I say, you *are* a lonely bachelor, aren't you? And bachelors, when they're young, are always hungry, aren't they? Marcia, why don't we ask Fresner to share our dinner with us?"

"I'm afraid I really—"

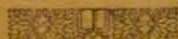
"Tut, tut!" the older man cut in. "When Marcia insists, you have to come. And you insist, don't you, Marcia?"

"Yes," said Marcia faintly, "of course." Then she added more firmly: "You'd better come, Mr. Fresner, because I think we'll be going back to town soon. The days are getting cold."

"Why," exclaimed Monning, "the fall is the best time of the year here, my dear!"

"Oh, you'll both stay, I'm sure," Fresner put in. "It's we young 'uns—bachelors, Monning—who fly away. I'm leaving myself this week."

They walked on in the darkness, Marcia held close to Monning's strong arm. Down below she could hear the river swirling over the dam. It was swirling and swirling. . . .



THE war is over. Still you've got to admit that, in its way, it was a pretty good war as long as it lasted.

THE peace conference is busy turning swords into plowshares. Experts have discovered that you can hit a much heavier blow with a plowshare than with any standard-sized sword.

CHANSON DE CABARET

By Archibald Sullivan

HE watched her from the table white,
Go flashing through the crimson light,
On little satined feet so slight.

He saw the dancers row on row,
Pass through the maze they called "the show,"
And rainbows from the "spot" turned low.

At some brief signal or command,
She came to him—held out her hand,
They swept to meet the swimming band.

"I am so very tired," she said,
But faster still the music sped,
And globes winked wildly over head.

He thought he held some flying thing,
A girl upon a wild bird's wing,
A circling ruby that could sing.

Her slender body flew around,
Like thistle fluff on windy ground,
And Pampas grasses all unbound.

"I am so tired of whirl and rush."
Her feet grew still and, oh, the hush,
As she was lifted from the crush.

Asked God: "Oh, you, from sound of drum,
And noise that makes my stars stand numb,
For what small pittance have you come?"

"What ease from crashing glass by hours,
A paper world with tinsel flowers,
Confetti playing rain in showers?"

Then she who danced raised up her head,
With stammering weariness and said:
"Dear God of Heaven—just a bed."

A Night at Jacqueminot's

By Elmore Elliott Peake

I

AS Valentine Kemp eased his car up to the horse block of the Post home a slight, graceful girl, with auriferous streaks in her corn-colored hair, strode swiftly down the door-walk, pulling at her glove. As she sank into the seat beside Kemp he saw that her lashes were wet.

"Father any better, Shirley?"

"The doctor—thinks so," she answered brokenly. "But he—he looks so awful! And he can't move!"

They stopped at the little railroad station. When the train drew in, a modish young woman in lavender-gray from top to toe, with a black traveling-bag at her side, descended to the platform. For an instant her eyes flicked the group of bystanders, with that assured air which comes with learning one's way about the world. Then she spied the objects of her search.

"It's so good to see you both again!" she exclaimed in a resonant, musical voice, after embracing her sister Shirley and giving her gloved hand to Valentine Kemp.

As the trio edged toward the automobile Aline Post greeted several acquaintances, opposing their gravity with a persistent cheerfulness that probably provoked comment later. This cheerfulness, however, soon vanished. On the short ride to the house, along streets familiar to her from childhood, a rebellious expression clouded her handsome face and narrowed the line of her scarlet lips, as if she resented such a homecoming.

But at the touch of her mother's arms she slaked like lime.

"Poor little Mother! Poor little Mother!" she crooned huskily. Then, after a moment: "Did you telegraph for Randall too?"

"No. I doubted if the poor boy had the money for his fare home. Doctor Barrows says your father will live, though he'll never walk again. He's been asking for you for hours. I believe I'd go right in. You must be prepared for a great change," she added, with quivering lips.

Aline Post knelt beside her paralyzed father's bed and covered one of his cold, nerveless hands with her own. He did not speak or smile, merely fixed his lustrous eyes upon her with that detachment, that other-worldliness, which haunts the face of those who have stood on the brink of the dark river and strained their vision for a glimpse of the misty farther shore. But at last his lips moved—futilely at first.

"Daughter!" It was a wavering, piping note. "You have come to help me—in my battle with the phantoms of death?"

"Yes, Daddy. And we'll win. The doctor says so."

For half a minute he seemed to weigh and sort her words, laboriously, painfully.

"Yes, I'll live—a while. Not too long, I hope—for your mother's sake and yours. The earth is for the living, the grave for the dead. There is no place between for the half-living, half-dead."

"Yes, there is, Daddy, yes, there is—"

in the bosom of love!" she cried eagerly, with her transfigured face close to his.

"Forgive me!" he murmured, and wearily closed his eyes.

When sure that he slept, she slipped noiselessly away.

II

THE two sisters undressed in Aline's old room, now Shirley's, with its sloping ceiling and dormer windows. Shirley was pretty enough, but, side by side with Aline, she was eclipsed by the other's dusky, Hebean beauty, of a ripeness, a fullness, an amplitude throughout which registered her twenty-seven years. And as she moved about, unpacking, in her sleeveless nightdress of rose pink, the younger sister's eyes glowed with pride and devotion.

"There's a rainbow rag for you, Peggy," remarked Aline, tossing over a pale blue blouse of Georgette crêpe. After extricating herself from Shirley's grateful arms, she continued: "These gloves are for Mother—gray instead of black. We are not going to let her make up for a grandmother's part yet. I bought these things a week ago, on the strength of landing that soloist's position in the Summerfield Methodist Church."

"Is it a swell church?" asked Shirley.

"Not a bit. It's downtown in a grimy boarding-house district. It's rich, I've heard; but the rich members live miles away and don't come often. They run it as a kind of mission."

"You probably see enough of swells in those millionaires' homes you sing in," observed Shirley enviously. "How do they treat you, Allie? I mean, what is their social attitude?"

"Entirely lacking," answered Aline humorously. "They rank me somewhere between the doorman and the butler."

"Like fun! But tell me something about it. Where do you stand, for instance, when you sing?"

"In an alcove—behind palms or box-trees—on a landing—a mezzanine floor—any old place that is sufficiently out of the way."

"What's a mezzanine floor?"

Aline answered this and forty other questions as she continued her unpacking.

"I wish I could go to the city instead of learning to teach school," sighed Shirley, curling up in a Morris chair. "Anyway, I don't see how I'm going to stay at Normal any longer—now." Her delicately penciled brows suddenly arched in a spasm of pain at thought of the stricken father below.

"We'll manage somehow," said the other, rather soberly. "And, little sister, I'd sooner see you scrubbing floors in Carthage than holding down a city job—at your age. You're altogether too pretty."

"I'm not half as pretty as you. Besides, what's that got to do with it?"

"Never mind. Now crawl in and go to sleep while I write a letter."

When Shirley sank to her knees at the bedside and bowed her burnished head her sister's hands suddenly became still. How often she herself had knelt in that same spot, on that same old fluff rug! Was it only two and a half years before? Or was it in some previous state of existence which her soul had long since sloughed off?

Sitting at the little desk which had been her father's high school commencement gift to her, she reread a letter from her brother Randall, dwelling on the last paragraph:

If you can possibly let me have twenty dollars, Sis, send it at once. I know you still think I'm sporty; but, believe me, I have learned my lesson, and I need this money bad. But don't send a draft. I should have to cash it at our bank, which is the only one in town, and I don't want them to know I'm getting money from home. It's none of their business.

Aline sat for some time with her hand over her eyes, as if in deep thought, her heavy black plait caressing her snowy

shoulder. Then she wrote a letter, and in it enclosed two ten-dollar bills.

She snapped off the light and crept quietly into bed. But Shirley proved to be still awake.

"Don't you say your prayers any more, Al?" she asked, in softest accusation.

Aline was silent a guilty instant.

"I seem to have been praying all day, Peggy."

"You mean for Father?"

"For him—and Randall, you, and Mother—all of us, including Valentine Kemp."

"Oh, I've been thinking, ever since I got his telegram last night, how good he has always been to our family."

Presently Shirley's hand stole over to her sister's neck.

"That isn't all, either, Allie," said she momentarily. "Val loves you! He as good as told me so one Friday afternoon when he was bringing me home from Sheldon in his car."

"You mustn't believe everything a man tells you, little one," admonished Aline. "Val's an old bachelor who would shy at matrimony like a wild horse of the plains at a bridle."

"Old!" sniffed Shirley. "He must be all of thirty-five."

III

THE subject of this pillow talk dropped in the next morning, and announced that he was driving over Tylersville way to attend a sale of Holstein cattle.

"Come along," he entreated Aline. "The country is decked out with apple-blossoms like a bride."

Shirley shot her sister a knowing glance.

Their route lay along the river road, where the migrating prothonotary warblers shot between the willows like shuttles of gold. A shower that had fallen in the night still gemmed the earth's succu-

lent robes of green. As the car spun effortlessly along, a blessed relaxation, such as she had not experienced for months, stole over Aline. It was as if the vigor of the car were being transfused to her veins.

Or maybe, she reflected, it was the vigor of the man driving the car. Poverty had never prodded him as it had her. The comfortable world in which he lived was his by inheritance. Yet he was no drone. Mastery was in his blood; and she smiled, betwixt admiration and something deeper, to see him perch on a fence, after reaching the Tenney stock-farm, light a cigar, and buy a thousand dollars' worth of cattle before timider men had selected a single animal. The act exemplified his pet axiom that to know what you want is the first long step toward getting it.

On the way back they stopped at Haymeadow Creek to gather marsh marigolds.

"Sweet old place!" murmured Aline, as they sat down in the shade to rest a moment. "The Sunday-school had a picnic here years ago. The boys rigged a swing on a tree and swung Pearl Rivers so high that she fell out and dislocated her shoulder. It took an hour and a half to get a doctor from town. With your smoke-wagon you could do it in—how many minutes?"

"Twenty-five," answered Valentine. "I recall the incident, though I wasn't present. If I am not mistaken, it was your brother Randall, then a kid of ten or so, who gave Pearl her unfortunate rise in the world. By the way, has he struck his gait yet?"

"I don't know, Val," she answered softly. "He has a position that pays him sixty a month. He has been on my mind ever since he was expelled from college. I have always fancied that had something to do with Father's first stroke."

"I had a letter from him the other day," continued Kemp. "He wanted to

borrow fifty dollars. I didn't mention it to your folks, but I thought you ought to know. I let him have it."

"You shouldn't have!" she exclaimed with a flush. "You—you will probably never get it back."

"Probably not. Still, we don't know. He said he needed clothes, and I preferred to believe it. It won't do to let a youngster of his temperament get the idea that he has no friends."

"But, Val," she faltered, "I mailed him twenty dollars only this morning, in response to an urgent appeal."

"I'm sorry to hear that." He plucked a culm of grass, and after a moment added earnestly: "Allie, you have a staggering load to bear."

"Yes," she assented simply. "But I suppose shoulders were made for loads."

"Not a woman's—for that kind of load," he protested. "I might as well speak the rest that's in my mind. Allie, I once asked you to marry me. I loved you. I thought you loved me. But you pleaded something about a career and said no."

"Yes." Her voice was humble. "I had my dream."

"It wasn't your fault that it didn't come true."

"It was nobody's fault, I suppose. I had a year of the best instruction before Father failed. That was enough to have put me on the bottom rung of the ladder if I had had the voice."

"You have a magnificent voice, if I'm a judge," he declared.

She smiled at his valiant championship.

"You are not a judge, Valentine. I have just a practical, workaday voice—good for the thing I am doing, or for the lyceum and Chautauqua stage."

Again he was silent a moment.

"Was I no judge, either, when I thought you loved me?"

With drooping lashes and a faint suffusion of her downy cheeks, she fingered a spray of the waxy, yellow blooms.

"You were warmer then, as we kiddies used to say in playing hide and seek." She laughed shyly and vouchsafed him a peep into a pair of shining, violet eyes.

"So if no career had stood in the way—" He let her divine the rest.

"I should have settled down to making pancakes for you of a morning? Oh, I might. You can never tell what a girl will do."

"Then, why not do it now, Aline?" he asked. "Let's cut this Gordian knot and be happy together. If we love each other and want each other, why not bend circumstances to our end? I know, of course, that you can't abandon your family. I am simply asking to be allowed, as your husband, to get under that burden—if I may speak so without offense. You understand? I'd make a settlement upon you. You would have your private income, to take the place of your present earnings. And it would be the sweetest privilege of my life," he added pleadingly.

For a moment she fumbled the flowers with tremulous fingers.

"I believe you, Val. But I couldn't—oh, I just couldn't!" she exclaimed with emotion. "I have no false sentiment about accepting money from you. That would be rating your money above your love. It's my folks of whom I'm thinking. Don't you see, my dear one, the position in which it would put them? They can eat my bread cheerfully, but another's, even yours, might choke them."

"They would tell you to marry me," he urged.

"Yes. That's one reason why I can't. I must be as generous, as quick for sacrifice, as they."

As with the knights of old, an obstacle in Kemp's path usually but heightened his spirit. But here was one against which his lance was of no avail. For an interval he gazed with moody eyes across the shimmering marsh.

"So it means, does it, that you and I

must continue to tramp the road of life with leagues between us?"

She took his hand, with a sad little smile.

"For a time, at least. Maybe, some day at sunset we shall by chance or kind fate pause at the same wayside inn and thenceforth go on together."

"Is that a pledge?"

"Yes."

"And will you seal it?"

She took his cheeks between her palms and, bending forward, kissed him—as solemnly, as chastely, as if the greenwood were a cathedral and the tree under which they sat an altar.

IV

THE Reverend Gordon Hughes sat in his study in the rear of Summerfield Church. A drizzle of rain misted the windows over, and the gloomy room seemed a reflection of his soul. It was one of those moments when the sin and woe of the little world to which he ministered weighed too heavily upon him. In the past hour—an hour reserved for the purpose—he had received three callers, all women and all seeking solace. He hoped no more would come. But just as a neighboring tower-clock tolled five, the usual signal for his release, the bell again whirred and he admitted Aline Post.

Though he had never seen her outside the choir-railing, Gordon Hughes had more than once been acutely conscious of his soloist's rare beauty—and he was under forty and still fancy free. But now, confronted by her unexpectedly, in the wake of the plain faces of his recent callers, he was fairly startled by the delicate coloring and texture of her olive skin and the clean, sharp chiseling of her nose and mouth. Her free, sure stride; the proud uplift of her shoulders; the gleam of a tapering arm through gauze—these things were like the sudden

vision of a beautiful moth where only bats were accustomed to flit.

"I scarcely know why I am here, Doctor Hughes," she began, with visible agitation. "You will doubtless think it strange. But I know that you set aside this hour for people who are in trouble. I am in trouble. I thought you might help me."

"I shall certainly do my best," he assured her. "Just telling one's troubles is often a help."

"I can't tell you everything, but—my father is an invalid, and I support the family. I have a wayward brother who is also an expense to me. I am not in need of money," she added quickly, "at least, not in any way that you could help me. I didn't come for that."

She paused, crushing her meshed purse in her hands, as if summoning resolution.

"Since coming here, two years and more ago, I have had my share of struggle and heartache, and I have survived them. But recently something very distressing happened—it's a very personal matter—and I seem to have lost my nerve. This great city is crushing me. Sometimes, about six o'clock, when the roar of traffic is the loudest and the crowds are thickest, it seems as godless and as cruel to me as an arena of wild beasts. It frightens me."

The minister's fine face was luminous with sympathy.

"Perhaps you have overworked."

"I have worked hard, and I don't sleep well," she admitted.

"Life at one time or another presses a good deal of bitter fruit to the lips of most of us," said he kindly. "I feel sure, though, that with one of your courage the crisis will soon pass. But tell me a little more of yourself, if you will."

"My profession," said she, after a moment, "is singing at social functions in well-to-do homes, I have been successful. But in trying to analyze this evil that has befallen me, I have wondered if I haven't paid too big a price for success."

"In just what way?—if you don't mind saying."

"The use of men, for one thing," she answered, in a low voice.

The pastor discreetly dropped his eyes and shifted a paperweight on his desk.

"In these big homes," she explained, "I get no social recognition, of course. I am simply a hireling, like a cook. But if a woman has looks and a taste for dress—and without them she can't succeed in my business—she often attracts the attention of young men. She receives cards and flowers. Occasionally she is clandestinely approached by these young men in the homes of their mothers and sisters. She is offered entertainment—motor rides, dinners, theatres—above all, a good word in quarters where it will help her professionally. You will understand that to accept these attentions is playing with fire."

"I can easily believe it," murmured Doctor Hughes.

"Yet if a woman is strong—and skillful—she comes to no harm, in the conventional sense. I have used these men. I have been a good fellow, as they call it. I have drunk wine with them—smoked cigarettes—danced in restaurants. It was that or nothing, you understand. One is permitted to be good, in an elementary way, but not prudish. By all this I profited financially. In every other way I have lost. My self-respect has suffered. I am leading a double life. I am doing what I know appears evil to others. Doubtless many people think me—impure. Above all, I am deceiving my family. If my mother or sister could see me some night—" Her throat filled.

Hughes gazed at his fair suppliant with supreme interest.

"This is certainly very distressing!" he exclaimed. "Just how necessary are these young men to your livelihood?"

"Without them I should make less money, and I don't see how I could make less and still keep afloat."

"Society is a tree that bears its most

perfect fruit and its ugliest galls side by side—at the top," he murmured, drumming softly upon the table. "I suppose it has been so ever since the first man acquired two loinskins to his brother's one. Frankly, Miss Post, you put me in a quandary. I could tell you that you are a sinner; but I don't believe it. Of course I don't approve of a woman's drinking wine or smoking cigarettes. But the issue is this: you are selling something that is very precious to you, like a girl who sells her hair. Is it justifiable? The truth is—and we can't dodge the fact even though we hate it—necessity knows no law."

"I thank you, at least, for not handing me a stone and calling it bread," said she, with a plaintive smile.

"I wish I had the bread, though," he exclaimed wistfully. "There is One, you know, whom we can lean upon when we are faint. Millions do lean upon Him daily, my dear. Others, I must admit—and some of the most finely attuned—find it difficult."

"There is one other matter," said she, after rising to go. "If your music committee knew what I have told you today I presume my place in your choir would be vacant."

"I will assume the responsibility for your staying," he assured her. "Meanwhile, I shall not forget you. I am going to pray over this matter. And perhaps you will come to see me again."

"Perhaps," said she, accepting his hand.

V

A BAD quarter of an hour followed for the pastor of Summerfield. Doubts of the wisdom of his course assailed him. Yet the next Sunday, when Miss Post's mellow, throbbing contralto voice, in Gounod's "Green Hill Far Away," fell upon the congregation like rain upon a parched land, he leaned back in his tall pulpit chair, with closed eyes, and was thankful

that he had not chilled her with the cold admonitions of a formalist.

Several weeks passed, however, without her calling again; and, in spite of his promise, Hughes allowed her to pass to the back of his mind. His new duties as a Vice Commissioner made heavy drafts upon his time, and there came a day when he was forced to abandon his personal service hour in order to attend a meeting of the committee on which he served. When he returned he found Miss Post's card under his study door.

He thrust it into his pocket, ate a hasty dinner, prepared a prayer meeting topic, conducted his service, and then, at a little after nine, set out for Jacqueminot's, which place the committee had arranged that afternoon to inspect.

The temple which André Jacqueminot, once a pastry-cook of Bordeaux, had erected for the worship of Epicurus, nestled between the feet of two skyscrapers. When the committee reached it, at nine-thirty, its marble façade, wet from a passing shower, glistened under the flare of arcs. Closed motors halted at short intervals before the mouth of the tarpaulin tunnel which led from curb to entrance. Silk hats, fillets of aigrettes, white shoulders, flashed past the side opening left for pedestrians.

In the great main room—reputed to be a reproduction of the salon of a Venetian *palazzo*—waiters swiftly threaded their way through a maze of crowded tables. A bluish haze of tobacco smoke hung like an aureole about the massive chandeliers. The clack of tongues, laughter, the clink of china and silver, smote the ear in a ceaseless broadside of sound that rose and fell in rude rhythm.

The cabaret stage was a solid, permanent structure with an imposing proscenium arch of white and gold, symbolical of the elaborate performances that had contributed to Jacqueminot's fame. Hughes and his colleagues sat down at a table, reserved in advance, which was near the stage. They had timed their

arrival for an act which was creating something like a sensation—Mademoiselle Hyacinthe in her "South Sea Idyl"—and in a few minutes this divertissement was heralded by the throb of tomtoms, with which the orchestra gradually blended a weird, barbaric air that irresistibly quickened the pulse.

The curtain rose. Through a screen of gauze, which produced a curious, illusive effect, the audience saw a background of palms, a blue lagoon, a crescent strip of sand, and, shambling about on the sand, a pair of apes. In the centre sat the Eve of this tropical Eden, her long black hair draping her naked arms and shoulders, and her knees peeping through a filmy mantle of green. She began to sing:

"For I'm the Queen of the Pawpaw Islands,
Where men are very, very rare,
And leaves are all I need to wear.
Yet when leaves grow old and storms blow
bold,
Such clothes are an awful care—
Oh, an awful, awful care!"

Daylight faded; the moon rose; the jungle awoke. Cockatoos screamed, monkeys howled. But suddenly silence fell. The tapestry of vegetation parted. A woman's face showed, followed presently, after cautious glances to right and left, by an arm, a foot, and then her whole figure, which glowed in the pallid light like an ivory statue. She stepped to the water's edge; she flung herself in with a splash; and when the grimacing apes appeared she drove them away with shells.

The scene faded from the eyes of the spectators. When it appeared the queen was again clothed in her Pawpaw Island finery. Now a pandemonium in the jungle announced the dreaded storm, which ere long burst with a shriek and a roar. The palms bent like strung bows. The queen crouched in terror, her hair fluttering like a banner, and once more she began to sing. The dining-room lights were extinguished for fifteen seconds. A spectral, greenish glare flooded

the stage. The storms' profane hands fell upon the queen's umbrageous garb. Singly, by twos, by threes, the leaves flew from her like frightened swallows, threatening her with nudity. Then, at last, as she bowed her head and masked her face with her hair, darkness fell.

The lights in the dining-room flared up. For an instant there was a silence—a silence punctuated by a smoldering eye or a reddened cheek here and there. Then came a crash of applause.

"Is this America or Babylon?" asked one of the commissioners, turning to Hughes.

But the minister, with his eyes still fixed upon the stage, seemed not to hear. No one, in the illusive lighting, aided by the gauze screen, could have recognized the performer's face. But her voice was the voice of the "Green Hill Far Away."

VI

THREE days later, while Hughes was still turning the incredible things over in his mind, Valentine Kemp appeared in his study.

"I am trying to trace a young woman named Aline Post," he began at once, after introducing himself. "Happening in the city, I called at her apartments this morning, only to learn from the janitor that she had not occupied them for several days. None of her effects have been removed. Last Monday evening, the last time the janitor saw her, she left an order for a bottle of milk the next morning. I have come to you rather than the police, remembering that she sang in your church."

Hughes rather nervously shuffled the sheets of his sermon. He scented tragedy.

"You are a friend of Miss Post's?" he asked, sparring for time.

"Lifelong, and of her family's. If anything has happened to her, it vitally concerns me."

"Nothing has happened that I know of," said Hughes—which was not quite true. "At least, her disappearance is news to me. However, I know of a channel through which we may possibly find her."

They took a taxi for Jacqueminot's. On the way, each conscious of a charged atmosphere, and Hughes loath to reveal what had come to him almost as a confession, little was said. But at sight of the great arched entrance to the famous restaurant Kemp shot his companion an inquiring glance.

"Miss Post has been singing here," explained Hughes.

"You're sure of that?" exclaimed Kemp incredulously. "I—I know this place."

"Quite sure." In the vestibule the minister paused and added: "If you'll wait here, I'll look up the proprietor."

"Why not both of us?"

"It is best for me to go alone, I think." Hughes' manner was embarrassed. "There are certain complications. If you will trust me, I'll speak more frankly when I return."

The salon, in which nothing was served before two o'clock, was dusky and stale and, without the glare of artificial light, a bit tawdry. Carpenters pounded on the stage. Chairs were piled on tables, and half a dozen charwomen, with mops and buckets, moved cheerlessly about. One of these, speaking broken English, directed the minister to the offices, on the second floor.

André Jacqueminot, though not everybody knew it, had long been dead. His present successors were Hogg & O'Halloran, and it was to Hogg's sanctum that Hughes was led by an attendant.

The man looked his name. He was a huge, dropsical caricature of his species—purple-cheeked, red-eared, rheumy-eyed, with a bull neck swathed in triple rolls of fat. He sat as close to a desk as his Gargantuan paunch would permit, and at sight of his caller—whom he

seemed instinctively to recognize as an alien—he paused in his work, spread his puffy hands over a plush waistcoat, and waited, breathing visibly and audibly.

He did not trouble himself to return Hughes' salutation, and at the minister's inquiry his eyes lit hostilely between their inflamed lids.

"This ain't a kindergarten," he grunted asthmatically. "We don't keep tabs on our girls. If young men want 'em, they ketch 'em at the alley entrance."

"May I ask if Miss Post played here last night?"

"What's it to you?" demanded Hogg cunningly.

"Never mind that," answered Hughes, pricked to anger. "You will learn in due time if necessary."

The note of authority in his voice seemed to rouse the proprietor to a sense of prudence.

"No, she didn't," he answered.

"And you wish me to understand that you don't know where she is now?"

"If you want to know so bad, she's at the police station, corner Chestnut and Williams. They nabbed her Monday night, after the show."

Hughes recoiled. It was Monday night's performance that he had witnessed.

"And you have left her all this time—abandoned her—made no effort to bail her out?" he demanded indignantly.

Hogg's face went a shade darker.

"What the hell is it to you?" he bleated in an angry falsetto. "You bet we don't bail none of those bare-legs out. They take their chances with the cops when they come to us. Now git out!"

Hughes, with an angry red in his cheeks, held his ground a moment. Then, realizing the futility of further words, he turned away.

"Mr. Kemp, this is a painful duty," he exclaimed upon regaining the vestibule, touching his handkerchief to his brow. "To be frank, there are some things which Miss Post, rather than I, must ex-

plain to you. I regret to tell you that she was arrested here Monday night."

Valentine went white.

"Arrested! For what?" he faltered.

"Presumably for appearing in an immoral cabaret act. She is now at the police station. I can easily bail her out, as a member of the Vice Commission, which is one of my functions, in the case of—of girls whom there is yet a hope of redeeming. I may say for your comfort, Mr. Kemp, that my faith in Miss Post's morality is just as strong as yours, and for that reason I will have her case struck from the docket. She has suffered enough already—and will suffer more when she learns that you are here."

"Perhaps she'd better not learn it," suggested Valentine, turning a pair of sick eyes upon the passing traffic.

"No—if you will excuse me. Perfect candor is the better way—the only way. But, to make it easier for both of you, I should suggest that you go to her apartments and await her there. I will not accompany her, but will prepare her, of course, for your presence there."

VII

How long he waited in Aline's little flat, to which the janitor doubtfully admitted him, Valentine Kemp never knew. Over and over again his eyes made the round of a bowl of withered violets, a statuette of Venus with the Apple, a cozy-corner with green tapestry, hanging lamp, and tête-à-tête; through an open door, the brass rail of a bed, with a pair of white stockings hung over it; and, still farther on, the white tile of a bathroom. From the look upon his face they might have been mementos of the dead.

Then the outer door suddenly opened, and Aline stepped within. She at once placed her back to the door, in the attitude of an animal at bay, and transfixed

him with hollow, tragic eyes. He leaped forward.

"Aline!" he cried. "Tell me that this is all a nightmare!"

"I can't," she answered in a dead voice and with an ashen face. "It's true. I'm a jail-bird. Last night I slept in a cell with three fallen women."

"But—but why?" he pleaded.

"Because, like them, I sold myself."

"Tell me the truth, Allie!" he commanded sharply. "Don't tear my hurt with allegory."

"I tell the truth," she answered, with the frigid calm of despair. "I sold myself to men—to be fondled by their eyes."

For a moment he gazed into her woeful face.

"You mean that you appeared in an—
an immoral performance?"

"Yes."

"This is preposterous. You are not yourself. Sit down, take off your hat—collect yourself—and tell me just what happened."

She listlessly unpinned her broad-brimmed, flowered hat, dropped it on the table, and sank into a chair he placed for her.

"Now tell me why you did this—if you did do it," he prompted.

"To save Randall. He stole two thousand dollars—took a package of currency from the vault. When the theft was discovered he telegraphed me. I went to Benton. The officers of the bank wanted to prosecute him. I went down on my knees to them—literally. I told them it would tumble his paralyzed father into the grave. Finally they relented, on the condition that I make good the loss."

"And not a word to me!" exclaimed Valentine reproachfully.

"I intended to at first. But it is not easy to brand your brother as a thief—or beg money from a man you have refused to marry. The shortage, with what Rannie had left, was only twelve hundred dollars, and the president of the

bank gave me six months in which to pay it. So I resolved to swing it myself."

She gazed out of the window with mournful, leaden eyes.

"I had written a song called 'The Queen of the Pawpaw Islands'—innocent enough in itself. I offered it to several vaudeville singers. I could have gotten two hundred dollars for it; but that wouldn't have gone far, and one night, when I was at a theatre, it occurred to me to make a cabaret act of it and produce it myself. I wrote an orchestra score, designed costumes, sketched the scenery, and went to Jacqueminot's.

"The managers, after hearing my voice, agreed to give the thing a stage trial with the orchestra. When I was through, Hogg—that unspeakable Hogg!—laid his hot, swollen hand on my shoulder and said: 'Fine, girlie, fine! But you'll have to take off some clothes.'

"I'd blush to repeat his words, but all my blushes are gone. I refused. But when he added: 'Take 'em off, girlie, and we'll make it a hundred a week,' it seemed as if I could see the threatening maw of the penitentiary close, leaving Rannie a free man. I consented.

"I went down to that place night after night, as my spirit, in some loathsome dream, might go down to the pit of hell. There were twelve or fifteen girls in the troupe, and not a decent one in the lot. They smoked, they drank, they swore. They came and went in costly motor cars. They wore jewels. Their most coveted honor was to be introduced to a new man by one of the proprietors.

"I had to run the gauntlet myself. Notes and flowers poured in, from gray-beards as well as youths. But I fought them off, and the only gleam of sunshine that ever struck through the murk was the hundred dollars I received every Sunday night, which I always mailed the next morning to Benton. Six hundred dollars I sent. Then the crash came."

She shuddered, and lifted her hand to her throat as if to quell a nausea. Then she cried out:

"Oh, Valentine, don't despise me!"

With misty eyes, he crossed over to her chair and laid his hand upon her bowed head.

"Despise you!" he murmured, with a twisted smile. "I honor you—I worship you!"

After an interval he continued:

"Allie, I know you haven't forgotten that delectable inn you told me about last May—that inn on the road of life where you hoped we might meet some day at sunset."

"It's sunset—for me," she moaned. "But I see no inn."

"May not this be it, in disguise—as so many blessed havens are?" he asked tenderly.

"I'm so dusty and bedraggled that I'm not fit to enter."

"At any inn on the King's Highway, all are welcome. There is an attendant to bathe and anoint the feet of the weary. And the Lord of the inn has fresh apparel for them."

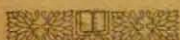
She gave a sob and clung to his hand.

"But I had expected to meet you joyously, with courage in my heart and a staff in my hand—a meet companion for the journey."

"This is sunset, remember," said he. "A night of rest and refreshment intervenes. At sunrise all will be different."

She lifted her dark eyes, glistening with tears, and peered into his searchingly.

"I had forgotten there would be a sunrise, sweetheart. There wouldn't be—if you hadn't come."



FORSAKEN

By Will Thompson

TEN lakhs of gold has my loved one in his palace;
 Two golden thrones in his Summer Island Palace;
 Peacocks and boys, and a caravan of dresses;
 Three lotus-lakes, which the morning sun caresses.

Sad is my heart, sad and lonely in its palace;
 Gone is my love from his Summer Island Palace;
 Past like the wind, which its fickleness confesses,
 Scattering the rose, which the morning sun caresses.

THE JOKE

By Manchester Willdy

I HAVE always prided myself upon being able to laugh as heartily as anyone, when the joke is on me. And I have never believed in doing things by halves. So when I found a note lying upon my wife's dressing table I read it.

It was a dulcet bit of foolishness, reeking with love and sentiment, and written by my wife; it was addressed to "My own darling Bill."

Rapidly I named over the "Bills" of our acquaintance, seeking to name the guilty one, for of course I must hunt him out and kill him immediately; also my wife.

There were but three persons who could be suspected, and after inquiring on the phone learned that two of these were out of town, so there was no further doubt left in my mind as to who was the scoundrel.

Not in the least nervous in the face of the terrible thing I was about to do, I searched out one of my hunting knives, put a razor edge on it, and then got into my heaviest motoring coat, for the note had directed "Bill" to meet her at our summer house across the lake.

Even as I let myself into the cottage, and heard my wife coming to meet me, I ran a finger along my knife's edge and waited dispassionately.

As she ran to my arms I drove the blade into her soft flesh up to the hilt! Stupidly she looked up at me.

"Why—Bill," she sobbed, "you've killed me!"

Then I saw the joke and began to laugh. I had entirely forgotten, you see, that my name is "Bill" too.

I have always prided myself upon being able to laugh as heartily as anyone, even when the joke is on me!

A Sign of Death

By Margaret E. Sangster

SOMEWHERE across a bleak pile of boxes and crates a dog howled and was answered by the whine of another dog. And then everything was still again.

The Contortionist spoke.

"It's Taylor's Trained Terriers," he said, trying to keep the utterly foolish little quaver out of his voice. "It's Taylor's Trained Terriers."

The Snake Charmer moved nearer to him and laid her strong, muscular hand on his arm. The hand was trembling.

"My mother used to say that when a dog howled it was a sign of death," she told him. "Well, God knows I ain't afraid of death. . . . An' there's been times, when a new snake wanted t' cut up, that it's been pretty close." In the dim light of the flickering lantern she regarded the hand that trembled; regarded it with a detached sort of interest. "God knows I ain't afraid of death," she finished shakily. "But to have it come sudden, this way, in th' night—" The first dog howled again, and more insistently. The Snake Charmer's fingers dug into the Contortionist's arm.

"Why don't Taylor shut that beast up?" she questioned half plaintively. "It's fierce just now ter have t' listen to it!"

The Contortionist looked down at the leg that stretched, so curiously distorted, in front of him. It had hurt most horribly when he had tried to move it, and so he had stopped trying. Moving it had never hurt before; moving his legs and his strangely supple body was the

Contortionist's profession. He wondered, as a queer numbness crept up over him, why he had never before thought of putting that curiously distorted pose into his act. It was so grotesque, so unbelievable!

"Didn't you know?" he answered almost casually. "Taylor was smashed up trying to get old Jerry out in time. Old Jerry was the first dog he ever had." He stopped, for the numbness was creeping up—and up.

A little ballet dancer came walking by almost stealthily. She carried a pair of pink silk tights under her arm, and two pink satin, heelless slippers dangled, by their ribbons, from one hand. She laughed foolishly, shrilly, as she saw the Contortionist and the Snake Charmer sitting together in the light of the flickering lantern.

"Funny time fer a wreck, what?" she babbled. "Never been in a wreck before! Ever'thing went *smash!* But I grabbed my tights an' my slippers. This is my first job, I told myself, an' I had ter buy them tights an' them slippers myself. They say ever'body goes after what they love best—an' I saved my tights an' slippers." Quite suddenly she pointed a slim hand at the Contortionist. "What yer sittin' so funny for?" she questioned. "This ain't show time!"

The Contortionist looked up at her with wan eyes. His lips were rather blue.

"I reckon," he said slowly, "that it's broke—my leg!"

"Ain't that funny?" half-screamed the little ballet dancer. "Ain't that funny?"

You with a broken leg, an' they've been billin' you all over th' country as a boneless man! Ain't that funny." All at once she crumpled down on the ground, a limp little figure with a blur of pink clasped to her heart.

Somewhere across the bleak pile of crates and boxes the dogs began to howl again. The Contortionist's head drooped forward. But the Snake Charmer was looking straight ahead at nothing.

"Oh, God!" she said.

He knelt on one side of her, and the painted grin on his face was fixed and staring and hard. One full white sleeve was torn away from his arm, and blood shone redly through the place where the tear was. The great black pompons on his coat hung dejectedly. He was the Clown.

She was the girl who ever since she was a tiny child had worked on the very highest trapeze. She it was who every night had done a marvelous leap for life that began very near the white top of the tent and ended in a slimly strung net very near the sawdust-covered ring. And now she lay silently, she who had been such a laughing, proud little thing; lay with her head flung too far back and her eyes widened reproachfully at the sky.

He stood on the other side of her—tall and pale, his rather weak chin quivering. He had caught her every night when she came whirling toward him through space, her two small hands out-flung. It was typical of him that he still looked rather carefully dressed, that the scratch on his chin had a strip of court plaster laid across it. He was her partner; together they had been known as the Flying Follettes. He had found himself wondering half-unconsciously who would take her place now that she—

The Clown was speaking.

"Why didn't you save her?" he was asking hoarsely. "You was *there!* I wasn't. I was in th' wash-room, tryin'

out a new make-up, in front of a hand mirror when th' crash came. But you—damn you!"

The carefully dressed youth looked down at the limp figure of the other Flying Follette.

"I couldn't," he muttered helplessly. "I couldn't!"

The Clown raised his hopeless eyes.

"Like hell you couldn't!" he choked. "I heard! You jumped—"

The carefully dressed youth raised a shaking hand to the strip of court plaster on his chin.

"She yelled t' me," he muttered, "t' jump. How'd I know there wasn't only a little time? How'd I know that she was goin' ter fall three feet—and land on her head? Many's th' time she's jumped a hundred an' come up, laughin'-like, out o' th' net! How was I ter know?"

Somewhere beyond them, in the darkness, a gruff voice began tonelessly to tell the story to one of the reporters who had come up with the ambulance from the city.

"We didn't know what hit us," the voice kept complaining. "We was all in our berths when it come. Yes—" in answer to a low inquiry; "they say it was a collision. . . . Yes, a good many of us was killed. . . . You seen th' show in the city last night—just four hours ago?"

There was another low inquiry, and then:

"Th' girl that did th' high trapeze work?" rasped the voice. It had lost some of its tonelessness. "She's—gone. She landed on 'er head. . . . That damn' partner of hers"—suddenly and shrilly the voice rose—"he crowded in front of 'er an' jumped from th' window. She let him! If *she'd* only jumped first. But she was crazy about him."

Across the body of the girl the Clown and the carefully dressed youth looked steadily at each other, even as they listened. It was the youth who spoke first.

"That's the Knife Thrower," he muttered. "He's new wit' us. He don't understand."

The Clown reached out a hand that trembled under its vivid grease paint.

"He's been here long enough t' love her, too," he snarled. Suddenly his voice broke in a great strangling sob.

"It ain't fair," he choked; "it ain't fair! It should've been you!" He was speaking to the carefully dressed youth, but his painted hand was touching, very gently, a lock of the brown hair that fell over the girl's forehead—a lock of hair that stirred, like some live thing, in the night breeze.

"Yes." The voice from the shadows was toneless again. "Yes, if you want me to I'll take you around an' introduce you to some of th' rest. An' then I must go an' hunt up m' knives. I was polishin' 'em when th' smash came, an' they've got scattered—some. I gotta find 'em. They're part of my job—those knives. I couldn't throw straight, I reckon, with any others." The voice stopped abruptly, and the listeners heard footsteps going off—halting, bewildered footsteps.

It had come suddenly—the wreck. The circus train had been going smoothly, so smoothly that one could try out make-ups in a wash-room and polish knives in a crowded compartment. Some of the performers were sleeping in their berths, and the animals in the rear cars were very quiet; one of the band was drawing faintly pleasant music from an old accordion. . . . And then the crash came.

There had been cries, the calling of names, curses, and, more often, the murmur of a prayer. There had been a scrambling for loved possessions, for necessities, for the foolish little trifles that people, in a moment of emergency, *do* remember. There had been screams of pain—and of tear.

Some of the cars had settled down gently. Some had turned over. Some had crashed to the ground. Boxes, heavy

boxes, had whirled through the air to fall in chaotic piles. And they lay where they had fallen. It seemed as if it had happened years ago—and yet only an hour had passed.

The Clown was staring at the girl on the ground. He seemed quite to have forgotten the other man.

"Oh, kiddie, kiddie," he whispered to her, "couldn't you know—couldn't you guess how I cared? How I couldn't do my back somersault when you was up in th' roof fer fear that you'd fall an' I wouldn't be able to get t' you quick enough? Couldn't you guess why I hung around; why I always was actin' like I would 've blacked yer lil' boots fer you? Couldn't you guess—"

The Youth on the other side of her interrupted almost jealously.

"She cared fer *me*," he said, and his voice shook. "She didn't never even see—you! She was goin' ter marry *me*. . . . My God, she was gonna marry *me*!"

All at once the Clown was laughing with a strangely hollow mirth.

"That's why yer jumped first, ain't it?" he asked, with a strained sort of sarcasm—" 'cause she was gonna marry you? Y' dirty— I'd like ter have somethin' in my hands to kill yer with—that's what I'd like!"

Off somewhere behind a pile of crates and boxes one of the Trained Terriers howled with a long-drawn-out hopelessness. The carefully dressed youth shivered and touched the plaster on his chin nervously.

"It's a sign of death—that," he muttered, "ter have a dog howl. I always knowed it. It's a sign of death!"

The Clown rose stiffly from his kneeling position. As he rose his foot struck against something that might have been a stone. He kicked it savagely, and it shot into the air and fell to the ground with a musical little clatter. The Clown stooped half-dazedly to pick it up.

It was a dagger that he picked up, a long, straight, sharp dagger; the sort

of blade that the Knife Thrower had been wont to polish lovingly every night between shows; the sort of knife that could be tossed straight and true to any mark. The Clown took it in his hand with a short hard laugh.

"It's one o' *his*," he said in a low voice, "one o' the ones he lost!"

Across the body of the girl the youth who had been one of the Flying Follettes raised apprehensive eyes.

"Where'd you get it?" he half gasped. "What 're goin' ter do with it?"

The Clown rubbed a finger meditatively across the sharp blade. It cut through the skin, and he stared almost stupidly at the bright red stain that crept out through the grease-paint. He did not seem to hear the question.

The youth was backing away from him, away from the girl; away, into the shadows.

"What—what 're you goin' to do with it?" he stammered again. It was as if he spoke against his will.

The Clown looked up from his cut finger—looked full into the handsome, weak face. And then suddenly all of the madness of a mad night leaped into his eyes.

"I said," he remarked in a voice that might almost have been a pleasantly conversational voice—"I said that I'd like ter have somethin' in my hands so as I could kill yer. That's what I said. An' now—now I got it!" With infinite care he stepped over the still body of the girl.

He was a fantastic figure, there in the lantern-cut darkness, a fantastic figure with an unearthly grin painted redly across a chalklike face, and a white suit trimmed with dangling, black pompons. But to the youth there was nothing fantastic about him. There was only a picture of horror—stark horror—in the clumsy garments and the glaring paint. The youth stood, quite frozen with fear, unable to take his gaze from the advancing menace.

"My God!" he almost screamed. "My

God, you *wouldn't!* Why—she loved me! She *wanted* me ter go first. An', anyway, I didn't know! My God, you wouldn't. . . !"

"Wouldn't I, though?" The Clown's face was very near the face of the other. "Wouldn't I—just!" With a sudden lithe movement one of his hands shot out, fastened itself on a carefully tailored collar.

"I'm goin' ter kill you!" he said softly, "but—"

The carefully dressed youth was trying to free himself from the firm hand—the hand that was so terribly grotesque in its grease-paint. As he struggled he talked, in choking little gasps.

"They'll hear you," he jerked out. "Th' Snake Charmer's just aroun' that pile o' crates. So's th' Contortionist. There's others—near. They won't let you—"

"They ain't near enough," said the Clown softly, "an' they'll never know what happened ter you. This here wreck has put so many good folks out that one sneakin' li'l rat won't matter—much." He laughed and raised the knife.

Suddenly from out of the darkness there came the sound of small hands clapping. As still as some carven group the two men stood—stood and waited. Then:

"Who's there?" asked the Clown briskly. The knife was still raised high in his hand.

One scarcely associates a child with a circus, except in the rôle of an onlooker. But the child who stepped out into the flickering lantern light was a very real part of this particular circus, and he had been forgotten, quite, since the time of the wreck. A little, very blond kiddie he was, with wide eyes and a short, quivering upper lip. He was the wardrobe woman's tiny son, and he was at once the pet and the dear responsibility of the troupe. Quite unconcernedly he spoke to the Clown.

"We givin' a show here!" he ques-

tioned, with a strange little air of hurt. "Y' might 've woke me up. I never seen a show right out in th' open like this, 'ithout a tent or anythin'. An' you knew it. Y' might have woke me up!"

The Clown gulped once to steady his voice before he answered. Then:

"Where 've y' been, Billy?" he questioned, very gently.

"I was in th' berth," the child answered. "I was asleep. An' then somepin' jerked an' I woke up. An' you was all gone, except Mother. She was on th' floor asleep, an' I *couldn't* wake her up. She must 've been tired ter sleep on th' floor. An' so I knew you was givin' a show out 'n th' open. An'"—he reverted suddenly to his original small complaint—"you might 've woke me up."

The Clown spoke again.

"Y' say yer mother's asleep, Billy?" he questioned.

The Child was staring wide-eyed at the carefully dressed youth.

"Y' look scared," he remarked, with a quaint little air of knowledge, "but there ain't no reason ter be scared! He's"—one chubby forefinger pointed to the Clown—"he's done it all afore. He uster practice in front of *me*. An' *she*"—he nodded toward the girl on the ground—"she used to laugh. What"—he was struck by a new idea—"what's she sleepin' out here for, on th' ground? Is she awful tired, too, like Mother?"

The Clown's hand loosened on the well tailored collar that he was holding. Quite suddenly and disconcertingly he was remembering a certain burlesque duel in which he, in his grease-paint and pompons, had downed a dapper opponent. He had rehearsed in front of little Billy, for he had realized that if it made Billy laugh other little boys would laugh, too. His business, after all, was the business of merrymaking and buffonery, so that little boys might chortle and cheer and envy him. . . . He had rehearsed in front of little Billy, and *she*, coming out of the dressing-room, had often paused

to laugh with that soft, throaty chuckle of hers that was like a dim little forest brook where the water just barely seemed to. . . .

The small boy was still speaking to the carefully dressed youth. His words came hazily to the Clown as from a great distance.

"You're 'fraid 'at th' knife 'll slip, ain't you?" he was questioning. "But there's nothin' ter worry 'bout. It ain't even a real knife, mos' likely. He's only foolin'. Y' see, he's a clown, an' clowns never mean nothin'. You've been 'ith us long enough ter know what a clown *is!*" (Was there contempt in the little boy's voice?)

Somehow, perhaps half against his will, the Clown released the well-tailored collar. In a nearly mechanical way he dropped the knife into the pocket of his baggy white trousers. After all, it *was* only a make-believe knife—the little boy had said so! The Clown found himself wondering if the whole thing weren't some absurdly impossible dream—the darkness of the night, and the wreck, and the girl who lay at his feet. He raised a hand dazedly to his forehead and felt something warm and damp upon it. He lowered his hand, still dazedly, and saw that blood still dripped from a cut finger.

"I reckon"—the little boy's voice came blithely through the stillness—"I reckon I'd better go 'n try and wake up my mother now. I reckon we'd better wake her"—he pointed to the girl—"wake her up, too. It'll be time fer her act, and mother'll maybe have ter help her with her dressin'. *There's always'*—the little boy's tone was plaintive—"another show!"

All at once the Clown was speaking in a voice that was calm, though a bit soulless. He was speaking to the carefully dressed youth.

"Take that kiddie away" he said, "an' *don't* take him back to his mother. I'll go 'n look after her—in a while." His

voice faltered, and when he finally spoke again it was to the little boy. "You're right, Billy kid," he said, "you're right. I'm a clown. An' clowns never mean nothin'.

Like someone who was also moving through a dream, the carefully dressed youth took the hand of the little boy. But the little boy kept right on talking.

"In my story book," he told them impartially, "there was a Sleeping Beauty. She slept all th' time, she did. She was a princess, but I bet she wasn't any prettier than *she*"—his chubby free hand indicated the girl who lay on the ground—"is. There was a prince, too. Know how he woke 'er up? *He kissed her.* My—"

And suddenly the Clown was kneeling again beside the still body, his painted face buried in the crook of his arm. He began to cry with great, terrible, wrenching man-sobs.

The Snake Charmer looked wearily at the Contortionist. It occurred to her

that he had been very still—and for a long while. Her firm hand slipped along his arm until it touched his limp wrist. And then quite sharply she spoke to the little ballet dancer, who was just struggling up from the ground.

"You better go 'n hunt fer a doctor," she said. "I heard that some 've got here. He's"—she jerked her head toward the Contortionist—"he's pretty bad. . . . You leave yer slippers an' tights here; I'll take care of 'em fer you!"

The little ballet dancer crept off, like a small, obedient wraith, and was lost in the darkness. The Snake Charmer sighed.

From somewhere across a bleak pile of boxes a dog howled and another dog whined as if in answer. The Snake Charmer's sigh turned to a half-shudder.

"When th' doctor comes," she said aloud, "I'll go 'n see if I can find anythin' that I kin give them dogs ter eat. . . . They must be hungry!"



HAWTHORN ABLOOM

By Mary Morsell

THE hawthorn hedge is all abloom,
And oh, I would away,
For every spring must have its love
And every year its May.

Every spring must have its love
While earth and I are young
And there are paths for wandering,
And love songs to be sung.

So come, sweet Pan, my lutanist,
And let us on our way,
For every spring must have its love,
And every year its May.

The Eighth Devil

By Roger Hartman

I

WHEN the Eighth Devil broke into Laurence Raeburn's soul, he entered without an invitation, and the premises were very far indeed from being swept and garnished to receive him. There was no room for any devil at all in Raeburn, and least of all for the Eighth, who is worse than the other seven put together, because, when he dies, he never dies alone, but always kills something else.

Raeburn knew a great deal about the Eighth Devil and detested him more than he hated all the rest. He despised Jealousy, in concrete and abstract, more bitterly than cowardice or cruelty or meanness or little, whispering lies. It stood at the top of the list of traits which Raeburn thanked his gods he did not possess. He had seen it at close quarters and seen it often, and he hated it on thoroughly practical grounds.

His father had been wholly charming, except for the Eighth Devil that dwelt deep in him, waiting each chance to wipe out all the man's noble qualities and turn him, in a breath, from a pleasant, kindly gentleman into a raging, hateful cad. Raeburn had grown up in enforced contemplation of the degenerative power of jealousy on human fibre, and he had learned to loathe it as the son of a drunkard comes to hate alcohol. As his own character took shape before him, as he came consciously to choose between good and evil as his formative processes unfolded, he put down jealousy as the cardinal sin, the most despicable vice.

Raeburn's mother had something to do with that, of course. Not that she discussed his father with him, dissected the older man's soul for the edification of his son. Amy Raeburn couldn't have stooped to that disloyalty, even for her boy's sake. She was the rare type of woman in whom pride and loyalty combine to produce the sort of passionate self-respect that refuses to take cognizance of weakness in the object of its love. Amy Raeburn would have died on the rack before she would have criticized anything Kent Raeburn did or left undone—even to her son—most of all, indeed, to the son who was Raeburn's as much as hers. She taught the boy, by force of proud example, indeed, that whatever his father did was right in her sight, taught him that kind of pride which turns its back on the defect of a loved one and its face steadily outward toward a hostile world. Between mother and son there had never been a whisper of comment on the father that did not tend to strengthen the boy's admiration for the man.

Yet, in those silences, those tacit avoidances, Larry Raeburn learned to envision jealousy for what it was, to detest it all the more because it marred and stained an idol, to set his teeth grimly on the determination that, whatever depth of ignominy might open before him, his feet should never descend into that particular pit. He never forgot the look he had sometimes surprised in his mother's eyes after one of those stormy interviews, the rumble of which carried through closed doors to his outraged ears—his father's voice, raised and roughened and intoxi-

cated with blind rage, his mother's calm, dispassionate answers in the lulls of the storm. He remembered, too, glimpses of Kent Raeburn's face after those periodic debauches of emotion—the friendly, smiling eyes glazed and dilated, the sun-browned cheeks puffed and reddened, the sensitive lips distorted. . . . It was like drink, like a gentleman whose cups have wakened and brought to the surface the brute and the cad. Larry Raeburn had reason to hate the thought of jealousy, to shun the first hint of its presence in himself.

There had been one plain-spoken interview on the topic between father and son. Larry was a man grown then, and his mother had been dead for three years. His father, with the touch of death graying his face, had managed to lift the veil of a man's reserves for a brief moment, that his son might look past it into the hell inhabited by the jealous—that self-heated pit of torture and degradation into which he had descended.

"It's a disease, Laurence; a disease and a vice in one. It's progressive. Every time one yields to it makes the next attack worse and hastens it, too. You may have inherited it—"

Larry Raeburn could not help the emphatic shake of his head. It was unthinkable that he should have inherited the faintest taint.

"You think so, because you haven't faced the situation yet. You can't be jealous, in my way, unless you care, care like the devil. You don't care that way. When you do, you'll understand what I've been through. But if you keep a grip on yourself, if you don't yield the first time—"

"I won't." Larry spoke quickly. He hated the topic. His father was dying, and he wanted a different memory of these last days.

They never recurred to the subject. Kent Raeburn died, and his son followed him to his place at Mount Hope, conscious of a sudden solitude, a feeling that

he was alone in a world of enemies with none to stand at his back.

He went on with his life, however, almost as if there had been no change. The same old, sun-enfiladed Georgian house, the same familiar servants, the same ordered routine, provided a slow anodyne for the consciousness of loss. He was distracted, too, by the sudden need to step into Kent Raeburn's place in the business in which, till now, he had been a rather condescending lieutenant. The job of management impressed him with a tardy respect for his father. Kent Raeburn had made it seem easy to keep the ramified structure in order; his son found it an absorbing, exigent affair. Gradually, however, he fitted himself for the new demands upon him, acquired something of his father's seemingly casual ease in controlling his affairs. There was a little leisure again—evenings when the pressing problem of some business issue did not provide him with mental occupation, occasional holidays, a steady widening of his horizon so that he became conscious once more of its emptiness, began to feel the need of human contacts to replace, in some measure, those that had sufficed.

He had few friends and no intimates. College had failed to bring him the usual array of happy comradeships; later years had been dedicated to business and books. He belonged only to his father's old club for which his name had been proposed the day of his birth, and to a rather indiscriminate college alumni association which maintained the semblance of a club. He never visited either. If he had formed the usual commonplace friendships, he might have schooled himself better against his unsuspected weakness. The congenitally jealous can feel almost the same hot hatred of sharing a good friend that maddens them at the hint of sharing love. But Larry Raeburn never tested himself.

He had shunned what social outlets opened before him. Empty chatter over

other people's dinners did not attract him. Dancing was a silly waste of time. He had an associated antipathy for these things, growing out of the ease with which they had precipitated those ugly quarrels between his parents. Nearly always his father's banked fire of jealousy had burst into flame after some dinner-party or dance. Larry, without realizing why, kept away from them. In the natural course of things, he should have grown old slowly without changing his ways, a self-sufficient bachelor, wrapped in business and books. Yet, when he woke on his thirtieth birthday, a sudden terror came on him, a cold, shuddering horror of age and loneliness, of the total extinction which childless men face as the years draw down. He saw his life suddenly as if it belonged to another man, as if it were a finished, completed object.

"I've got to do something," he told himself, as he dressed. "I'll be old before I know it—old and alone. This won't do."

The thought lingered with him through the day, an undertone below his shrewd processes of business meditation. It came home with him to his empty house that night, stared at him across his silent dinner-table, followed him into the library and intruded itself before the page of the October book he tried to read.

"Old and alone," it warned him; "old and alone . . . old and alone!"

He put down the book and paced the room restlessly. He mustn't let this wood grow on him; why, thirty was almost boyhood! It was all nonsense. If he were fifty, now. . . . He had a sudden flashing picture of himself at fifty, and the cords of his throat tightened. Old and alone. . . .

It drove him out, at last. It followed him, mercilessly, as he walked briskly away from the sombre silence of the digested backwater in which he lived, seeking instinctively the meretricious company of lights and crowds. He walked

along a thronged pavement, glaring with the unreal luminance of multiplied incandescents, a deep score between towering walls against which complex electric advertisements shrieked and capered for the casual eye. There was no comfort in the roar of traffic, the pressure of alien shoulders, the snatches of speech, the laughter and frowns that were no affair of his. Rather, the spectacle of so much in which he had no smallest share aggravated his self-pity. He let himself be buttonholed by a sidewalk ticket-seller, a gross, repellent, presumptuous animal who pawed him affectionately and yammered about a seat he would sell at a dead loss—"because it's you, brother!"

It shamed Laurence Raeburn to realize that the fellow's affectation of interest in him was actually welcome. He was pleased to find himself an object of even such attentions. The reaction intensified his sudden consciousness of his loneliness. A man who was pleased because a smirking speculator fawned on him—! But he had already bought the seat, and an inborn sense of thrift forbade his wasting the price of it. He glanced at the bit of card, looked along the stuttering signs, and identified the theatre to which it promised admittance. He hardly ever went to such affairs, but it would be better than nothing, perhaps. He moved deliberately toward the sign. Afterward, he was able to convince himself that he had been vaguely conscious of an inner, unexplained excitement, as if he neared a crisis in life. It is absurdly easy to confuse coincidence with destiny. The best and the shrewdest of us fall into that same error.

"Just think," sighs the waitress, ecstatic over a twenty-five cent movie and an intricate confection of syrups and fruits, "if you hadn't of come to my table that day, we wouldn't ever of knew each other! It looks like we was meant to—"

It is the most human of all fallacies, this sentimental *post hoc propter hoc*.

We can smile over it in others, but rarely observe it in ourselves. For instance, if I myself had not missed my train by insisting on getting exactly the magazine I wanted, I shouldn't have— But that *was* destiny, of course. We were following Laurence Raeburn down a dim aisle, escorted by a girl in a colonial uniform, to a seat in the mathematical centre of the twelfth row. He quailed at the glare of the ponderous man in the aisle seat, whose shirt-bosom creaked as he rose to let the late-comer pass. Hating himself, Raeburn slid by several silken knees, muttering an inanity of excuse. Without removing his overcoat, he dropped into his vacant chair, eager to be inconspicuous. Something soft collapsed under him, and a voice at his side exclaimed in wordless consternation. His ears burned as he rescued the muff and mumbled an abject apology. A sniff silenced him. He slouched in his seat, trying to catch the thread of the play. The stage was practically dark, except where a celluloid fire endeavored to look like a real one. He was intrigued, instantly, by the actor's voice that came out of the shadows—a pleasing, eager, earnest voice, talking breathlessly, making the sort of love that a man makes only once in his life—none of your usual rounded periods of stage courtship, but the stumbling, slovenly speech of a man who has forgotten to listen to himself, who has forgotten everything in the universe except the girl who listens.

Raeburn found himself artlessly hoping the girl would be nice about it. He liked the invisible actor and wanted him to get whatever it was he could ask for like that. For a moment, it was curiously real. Then the lights went on and a crowd of shouting practical-jokers debouched on the stage, clamoring over the prank by which the man with the nice voice had been lured to the point of proposal on some silly wager. The unreality of it alienated Raeburn's interest. He looked carefully at the girl beside him,

her face visible in the glow of the footlights. He managed this without turning his head, and his oblique eyes were fairly trapped by hers—so fairly that for an instant the two glances clashed and clung accusingly. Then she smiled, and he had an absurd sense of relief.

"Why, it's Mr. Raeburn!" She spoke under her breath, as if his presence were a remarkable phenomenon of nature. Raeburn recognized her now. He knew her father and mother remotely, and he had seen her too, perhaps a dozen times in his life. What was her name, now? Bess or Tess or Jess? Some ridiculous diminutive, anyway. No, Les, that was it. Short for Leslie, probably, or some other exotic name. Just like Mrs. Paulding to choose something fanciful.

"How do you do, Miss Paulding?" He had resumed a whispered apology when she silenced him with a sharp *h's's't* as faces turned impatiently toward the disturbance. He relapsed into abashed silence, but now, instead of following the counterfeit glimpse of life on the stage, he studied her, protected by her frank absorption in the play. She was certainly charming. Odd that he hadn't noticed that curve of the cheek, or the way the lashes lay along it. Pretty teeth, too . . . and that trick of opening her mouth when she laughed . . . little bars of light in her hair. . . . He was suddenly aware of a monstrous desire to lift his fingers to the softly lustrous mass of it.

The curtain fell and rose and fell. Then lights and an annoying orchestra, which dimmed suddenly into a remote background as she turned to him.

"How did you get that seat?" she demanded abruptly, her eyes lighted and alert. "It's the *strangest* thing."

He told her, wondering a little, and was informed, breathlessly, that the ticket he had bought had been dropped on the pavement as her father left their car. He had meant to turn it in at the window, because the fourth member of the party hadn't been able to come.

Wasn't it queer that things should happen the way they did? Raeburn had a sense of the intervention of destiny. If he hadn't come out, if he'd come a different way, or a moment later, or sooner, if somebody else had bought that found ticket, if . . . oh, there were a thousand of those ifs! . . . He managed to talk, not too clumsily, after exchanging smiles and nods with her father and mother. The Pauldings let them alone. Raeburn didn't dream that Mrs. Paulding was discussing, with an amused husband, the possibility of further developments from this chance meeting. But he accepted, with grateful humility, the direct consequence of her speculations, in the form of an invitation to join them at supper when the play was over.

Also, he learned that the name wasn't Leslie, after all, but Lester. For some reason this seemed a tremendous affair. Lester . . . Lester . . . Les . . . it suited her amazingly, he thought, his respect for Mrs. Paulding suddenly lifting. He was thankful that she had a name quite to herself. There would have been a repugnant touch of the commonplace in anything less individual. He sat beside her in the car, conscious of remote perfumes, of soft, filmy fabrics, of something infinitely fragile and precious. A boy's love, at thirty, is a desperate thing; it has the intensity and heat with which the diseases of infancy attack the non-immunized adult. Laurence Raeburn was going through the emotional reactions normal to eighteen. They would have done him no violence in the elasticity of youth, but they rent him now with an exquisite agony. At supper he could not tear his eyes from the girl. She managed to glorify her bit of salad, to make her single glass of wine seem a holy thing.

Nothing softens a woman so quickly as the sort of worship that looked out of Larry Raeburn's eyes at Lester Paulding. Not even the artful evasions of the practiced wooer can accomplish so much, or

so swiftly. Lester Paulding knew that this man was her dog; she liked him because he surrendered so abjectly and so instantaneously. It ministered to her pride, and she was susceptible to attack from that quarter which would have found her armed and fortified from any other. There was the insidious finger of Coincidence, counterfeiting destiny, too. . . . She was familiar with the casual, flippant, almost cynical attentions of very sophisticated, very young men, who made a joke of nearly everything serious and could be serious only about a joke; men who told her carelessly that her dress was stunning or that she didn't dance badly. There had been, of course, in her own salad period, a few intense, short-lived affairs which had taught her not to wear her emotions on her sleeve. It was a distinct novelty to feel, instantly, the rapt, sober fascination of a man ten years older than she, a man with the repute of a recluse, as far as feminine affairs were concerned. She was flattered and a little awed and a great deal pleased.

She was nice to Laurence Raeburn, therefore, but she took pains not to be too nice. And, to temper her warmth toward him, she used the inevitable device of referring casually to other men, letting him know that she was popular, letting him infer that there was a great deal of competition. Something stabbed Raeburn with a hot, sickening thrust at every light mention of Jimmy Doane or Phil Breck or Tommy Saulsbury. He might have guessed what the first of them portended, but he did not. He was in no condition of mind to think clearly. He only knew that a red film swam before his eyes at her words conjured up unflattering portraits of the men she named, that something twisted in his soul like the savage turn of a notched blade in a fresh wound.

"He's jealous," diagnosed Lester Paulding happily. And she proceeded to probe delicately to make sure. It de-

lighted her to discover anything so naive, so elemental, in a man who seemed attracted to her. Tommy Saulsbury, to whom she had been provisionally engaged for an experimental fortnight or two, had been tiresomely unexcited when Dick Phelps, also in a tepid fashion, had proposed to her. She remembered, indeed, that he had construed it, in some intricate process of masculine logic, as a compliment to himself. Something told her that Laurence Raeburn would not have taken it so. She was a little frightened at a revealing flash in his deep-set gray eyes, and, inevitably, attracted by the hint of danger. All in all, if Destiny had really played with their two lives that night, had dropped that pasteboard where only that fat, oleaginous speculator might find it, had led Raeburn straight to the curbstone angle where he waited for his prey, she could scarcely have managed it better.

Laurence Raeburn went home in the clutch of a nascent passion that shook him as a tree in a tempest. And Lester Paulding sat quite a long time in front of her dressing-table, studying herself through his eyes and smiling softly at the reflection.

Incidentally, her mother annoyed her father, for the better part of a conjugal post-mortem lasting a full hour, by a truly feminine assumption that it was all over but the ceremony. He did not believe anything of the sort, but he had a paternal glow of satisfaction that a fellow like Raeburn should show so much interest in his "little girl." He had been observing his daughter's friends with a growing distaste for their precocious sophistications. It comforted him to entertain a vision of Les safely married to a man like Raeburn—clean and honest and steady, a fixed quantity, whose future could be forecast accurately.

Raeburn displayed an unexpected capacity for action. He knew only one way of getting what he wanted—and he used that way with a kind of ferocity.

On their third meeting he told Lester quite bluntly that he loved her, and he made it so different from the casual declarations of her experience that she took him soberly, instead of tormenting him with evasions.

"I—I think I care, too, Laurence," she told him. "I don't know. It's quite different from anything—"

She saw his eyes flame redly.

"Do you mean that—that you've been interested in anybody else?" His voice choked, and his big, steady hand closed till the knuckles whitened.

She was thrilled.

"Not—not in earnest, Laurence." She was amazed to find herself on the defensive. "Of course I've liked loads of people, but never—"

His face cleared slowly.

"Then, you—you'll take me?" He was abject again, the suppliant, the suitor. She felt her power return.

"I'll have to think. I—I must be sure, you know." She watched him out of a corner of a lowered eye, anticipating the next move. She meant to let him kiss her—once. But he held back unaccountably. Her pride prodded her. It wasn't in nature for a provisionally accepted suitor to show self-control. She let her hand touch his and swayed ever so lightly toward him. Still he kept himself rigid, aloof, though she felt his wrist tremble. She laughed deep in her throat.

"Aren't you going to help me—decide?" she whispered, and lifted her blank eyes very innocently to his. He swept her roughly into his arms, a crude, clumsy embrace, as unstudied as the kiss that hurt her lips. She struggled a moment, sighed, and relaxed. It was wonderful to be really loved, after all. This was quite different.

He released her suddenly, abashed, apologetic.

"Forgive me, dear. I—I—"

She drew in a deep breath, her fingers rising to her hair, her cheeks very pink.

"You couldn't help it, any more than

I could. I—I think I've decided, Laurence. If you want me—"

"If!" His voice shook. Again her sense of power warmed her.

"Then, I think, some day—"

"To-morrow?" He had her hands again, his eyes burning into hers. She laughed delightedly. He was wonderful, she told herself.

"You absurd person! Months and months, at least."

He broke into disjointed pleadings, which she parried cleverly enough. But he beat her down steadily, day by day. She was alarmed, when he had gone, to find that she stood bound to marry him in a month. It frightened her, when she was alone, but the idea thrilled, too. She hadn't expected anything like his old-fashioned intensity. She had looked forward to marrying some agreeable young man who would be quite casual about the whole thing. This sudden blast of passion tempted her even more than it dismayed her. She saw in it only the reflection of herself, her power over a man far older than she, a man who mattered, who had arrived.

Her mother felt it necessary to weep a little at the news, but, though she argued mostly against losing her baby, she was very careful not to quarrel with the date arranged for the loss. Paulding patted Lester's cheek and hugged her lightly, but she knew that he was fighting a stubborn sorrow below his obvious relief.

"I'll hate giving you to anybody, Les—but Raeburn's about the best there is. He—you'll always know what he is and where he is. I'll feel safer."

As for Larry Raeburn, locked in his bedroom, he was looking straight down into hell. She had meant that he should kiss her; that was why she had touched his hand, why she had come close to him like that, why she had challenged him with that mischievous speech. Somebody had taught her to do those things; somebody had kissed her—perhaps many

somebodies. She was a woman to bring a world of men to her feet. The fire she had lighted in him she must have kindled in every other man who had looked upon her. How many of them had held her—kissed her? . . . He started to his feet.

"God!" The word came through his teeth. "Dad was right! I've got the same cursed thing in me that wrecked him. I never guessed—"

He seized his mind relentlessly, as a strong man may sometimes, and forced back the blur of red rage, of explosive suspicion.

"It beat Dad," he whispered, "but it's not going to beat me. I'll fight it out to a finish right here."

He went to bed, at last, reassured. It was a hideous thing, but you could strangle it, if you leaped at it the instant it showed its ugly face over your shoulder. He'd settled it, once for all. There wasn't any room in Laurence Raeburn, waiting, swept and garnished, for the Seven Devils. His doors were barred and bolted, and he stood on guard behind them.

But the Eighth Devil, retreating a little, laughed to himself. He didn't need an empty place or a welcome. Let the poor fool think he had won! It would make things easier, when the time came.

II

AND so they were married and wholly resolved to live happily ever afterward. Lester made a bride more ravishly adorable than even Raeburn's forevisions had painted for him. Her mother had managed everything so there wasn't a jarring note about the quiet little wedding at Saint Godfrey's or the charming little breakfast that followed. The October day had been the distilled essence of Indian Summer; there was a sky like a hollow pearl and the faint, keen breath of burning leaves on the waft of a gen-

ial wind. People had said exactly the right things and left the wrong ones unspoken. The presents had exceeded Lester's notion of her due. Laurence had acted beautifully, so that she was conscious of a new sort of pride in him and in herself because he adored her so tremendously and obviously. All in all, it was a perfect beginning for a perfect life.

The wedding journey went well, too, and those intricate processes of mutual adjustment which upset so many promising beginnings proved that this marriage was solidly founded in love and truth, for all Lester's inclination to take the light view of weighty matters and the ponderous view of frivolous concerns. Laurence Raeburn managed to wake the self-centred girl to some reflected glow of his own white flame. If she did not reach his levels, she climbed near enough to let him think her feet beside his own. There was no rift, no flaw, no regret, no hint of a quarrel. They came back to the old, mellow Georgian house as near to perfect happiness as two human beings may safely come.

Even after she had been settled in her own home for months, so that the novelty of managing a household to suit herself had had time to wear away, the thrill of being able to charge whatever pleased her fancy, of feeling the half-envious eyes of her old friends paying tribute to her luck, Lester Raeburn was still contented, mildly pleased with herself and with life. Just when the Eighth Devil found his opening, she could not have told, but it must, indeed, have been a very gradual affair. Probably it began in that inevitable process of "settling down" which must follow every romance, the gradual reversion to levels after the heights, the let-down of emotion from tensity to placidity.

There is a considerable gulf between twenty-three and thirty, at the best of it. There was a wider temperamental chasm between these two. Lester want-

ed lights and laughter, the flow of merry speech, the flash of wits, the hint of admiration in other eyes. She wanted to see a good many plays, to go to more dances and dinners in a month than Laurence Raeburn had attended in his lifetime. She was very much the normal young woman of her day, utterly abandoned to the cult of the "good time," while her husband, even among men of his generation, was already settled in a habit of practical self-sufficiency. He had room in his life for Lester, but no need of others. Having her, he would have been utterly content to live on a desert island provided it were well supplied with books and possessed a convenient, well-appointed office to occupy him between ten and five. Slowly, as they reverted to their respective levels, they drew apart. This was no tragedy for Laurence Raeburn, at the first of it. He realized no defect, so long as Lester was in his house when he came home to it, opposite him at dinner, across the wide, book-laden table in the library afterward. But it was suffocating for the girl. And the sharp, flaming quarrel that broke the growing tension took Raeburn utterly by surprise.

It subsided, of course, in mutual apologies and tears and kisses and concessions. Raeburn rebuked himself for not having realized the difference in age and taste, for having taken it for granted that this placid existence suited Les as well as it satisfied him. Readily enough he promised better things for the future. They patched up a damply affectionate truce and began all over again. But it was only a few weeks before they repeated the outburst. And, in a groping effort to strike back at him for a curtly bitter comment on the intellectual vacuity that requires light opera to fill it, Lester found her weapon. She spoke angrily.

"Very well. I've given you your chance. You want to sit here, night after night, drowsing over your stupid books. You don't consider me. I'm to

knit, I suppose, or go to bed. Very well. You aren't the only man on earth. Nor the only one who ever took an interest in me. I shan't have to amuse myself—long."

The stabbing gleam of his eyes frightened her. She thought that his clenched hand was about to strike her, and drew back from its menace in sudden terror, staring at his contorted, furious face.

"Who is he?" The words choked him. "Tell me—who is he?"

She saw at once that his fury was centred on the mythical third person, and her fear sank as quickly as it had risen, a malicious sense of her power quickening in her alert brain. He was madly jealous, after all—jealous as she had fancied he was, long ago. She held her fire, thinking quickly. Then:

"Don't be silly, Laurence. You act like *Othello*. There isn't anybody in particular, of course. I meant that if you wouldn't consider me, I'd find somebody who would. I still mean that."

He had himself under control again, but the effort shook him, and the toxins of rage were poisoning him as he struggled for calm speech.

"Les, don't ever try that tack again. I—you don't understand what it means to be jealous. I—"

She shrugged her shoulders coldly, secretly delighted at the confession of the word.

"It's thoroughly despicable—I quite understand that," she said primly. "It's a beastly, horrid, ungentlemanly vice. I'm surprised that you should admit it."

He hesitated, groping for words. Her adjectives were just, he knew. There was nothing less admirable than his sort of jealousy. But if she deliberately provoked it, he foresaw that no effort of his own will could prevent outbreaks like those to which he had listened, disgusted and terrified, as a boy. It occurred to him, in the midst of his abasement, that his mother had painfully avoided other men always, had schemed cannily to give

his father no flimsiest foundation for his rages. Suppose she had tried, instead, to torment him! . . . He had a quivering realization of averted tragedy. A man thoroughly jealous is mad; he may do unspeakable things.

"I have fought it—hard," he said quietly. "Suppose I inherited a craving for drink? You wouldn't put temptation in my way, would you? You'd help me fight it. Help me fight this, Les. I need your help."

She had a vague consciousness of deep waters, but her mood was hostile. She shook her head stubbornly.

"That's a coward's excuse. The woman tempted you! I wonder if there's any contemptible thing men do for which they can't manage to blame some woman. I don't care to talk about this, Laurence. I'm going to bed."

She expected him to follow, and it piqued her that he let her go without protest. In her room she reflected soberly on the discovery.

"One thing: it gives me a tremendous power over him." She smiled at the thought. "I mustn't overdo it, though."

The Eighth Devil crept up to the fire and grinned joyously as he warmed his hands.

III

LESTER RAEBURN had found her touchstone. It was chance only that she found it so soon, for the knowledge of that hereditary flaw in her husband must have come inevitably with the years. She knew now that she held an insidious power over the man's soul; it was as though he were a drug addict, one utterly given to some rare and potent intoxicant of which she held all the world's supply, to give or to deny as seemed good to her. At first she found it a little dismaying, like being married to *Doctor Jekyll* and finding that it involved marriage, too, to *Mr. Hyde*. The comparison struck her fancy; Stevenson had

described amazingly the transformation which her drug could work in Laurence's calm and restraint. She must be very careful never to excite him in public, she told herself as she contemplated the future. He was perfectly capable of making horrible scenes. She detested scenes; she had been carefully bred to detest nearly everything that was frankly real. Life had made her a tissue of elaborate concealments and inhibitions, a fabric of manners and conventions, no less conventional because they called themselves the opposite of convention. She said once, with a shrug of her white shoulders, that emotions were *raw* affairs—impossible unless properly prepared, disguised, spiced, and sauced. It was a rather apt expression of the whole cult and creed of that world in which she had been formed.

She used her weapon sparingly at first, and always cleverly. She did not fall into the error of letting Raeburn see her reasoning. Always she contrived to kindle that sudden flame of blind fury in him as if without intention. Once it was no more than a letter which she burned with rather more care than seemed necessary—a letter that bore a club monogram, made horribly visible for an eternity of a second as the flames blackened the creamy paper. There had been a brief, awful clash over her refusal to answer his hoarse demands for instant explanation, confession. In the end, as she had counted on doing, she shamed him into abject apology, self-abasement. It was a conquest that she used to extract no bigger concession than acceptance of an invitation at which he had rebelled.

Again, she had recourse to the simple device of sending herself orchids, without a card, and cooing over them so that Laurence could see and hear, affecting not to be aware of his proximity. She humbled him again, aloof, contemptuous, inwardly charmed at this new proof of her power and of his devotion.

"Really, Laurence, I don't understand

myself. I should have thought that I couldn't ever forgive this—this vulgar vice. If you had seen your face—! You looked like a murderous navvy. . . . Yes, I suppose I forgive you. But this can't go on. If I'm to live my life never knowing when the most trivial act or speech will precipitate a drunken flood of billingsgate—"

"Help me, then. You're my wife. It's a fight—a fight against a common enemy, trying to ruin our lives. God knows I don't minimize the ugliness of it. If it seems hideous to you, what do you think it seems to me? Why, Les, it—it's like a real physical poison. I ache with it now. Help me, dear—don't madden me with denials, with that disdainful refusal to answer. Calm me as quickly as you can by explaining."

Her lips curved.

"Thanks. I don't feel that my duty goes quite so far. A gentleman—"

He made a gesture of impatience.

"A gentleman is no different from any other beast when the devil slips into his soul. It's a condition we've got to face, Les—not an ideal."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, let's not talk about it. I—I want to forget, please. You said . . ."

It was easy enough to collect her indemnity now. She levied it relentlessly, to the uttermost farthing.

Sometimes she saw that he controlled the first demoniac impulses. The veins stood out on his forehead, and his face reddened blotchily, his wrists quivering as his will strained against their muscles, but his lips stubbornly sealed. On these occasions, generally, she contrived to give the needed extra fillip to his taut nerves, to aggravate the slight foundation of his suspicions until the storm burst on them both. It was refreshing, she discovered. There was a kind of exhilaration in the rapier-play of her cold, contemptuous intelligence against the savage bludgeonings of his frenzy. She enjoyed fencing with him till she wore

him down, brought him to his knees, spent, shamed, remorseful.

Gradually, too, she found a certain pleasure in the process of reconciliation. He was abject, always, after the fury passed, a humble suppliant, begging for a crumb of forgiveness. It brought back something of the mildly pleasing thrill of his first desperate devotion. She felt herself imbued with a sense of power, of regality, a Cleopatra whose casual gesture might mean life or death. She came, in time, to "stirring him up," as she described it in her thought, for the mere satisfaction of the postludes. She used his jealousy as the most convenient means of kindling the old, humbled attitude which the normal man loses in the usage of marriage, and the normal woman never ceases to regret.

She became very clever at it, with practice. It was amusing to plan a new scheme of attack, when life bored her. Sometimes she plotted out her ideas as she lay awake, waiting for elusive sleep; she amused herself with premeditations when a journey wearied her or someone kept her waiting at an appointed tryst. Thus there was the simple matter of igniting a cigar at the grate when Raeburn had spent a rare evening away from home, so that the library was heavy with the strong odor when he came in. She knew that he would detect it instantly, for his detestation of cigar smoke in the house was one of his few stubborn foibles. When he had regained his self-control she disdainfully pointed to the charred stub inside the fender and told him, truthfully, that she had thrown it into the fire herself. It had dropped on the floor, and she had stepped on it. How had it come there? She shrugged. No doubt one of the servants had accidentally let it fall from the tray. Wasn't it the brand he kept for his guests?

So, again, she tortured him with the cruder expedient of the late homecoming, letting him pace the floor while dinner waited and refusing to answer his

peremptory demand for explanations until they had run the usual emotional gamut and reached the abject stage of self-abasement. Then she condescended to tell him truthfully enough that she had been delayed at her mother's, and suggest that he verify her statement over the telephone.

She had no pity for him. To her view, his tantrums were no more than vulgar lapses into crude, debasing suspicion, mere plunges, of his wilful choice, into the mire. If he suffered—and she was skeptical about this—it was his own fault, and richly merited. She had no difficulty in justifying herself to herself. He deserved to be teased, she argued inwardly, because he yielded to an utterly unworthy passion on such scanty provocation. It lay, according to her view, wholly within her husband's power to control his temper. If he chose to give it free rein, that was his affair. Meanwhile, the process of vivisectioning his emotions amused her, and the aftermath afforded her a gentle echo of honeymoon days not unpleasing, for, through it all, she was fond of him, as fond as a thoroughly self-centred woman may be of anyone. She would have called it love. Certainly it was as near love as she could come.

She observed, with a lazy amusement, that he made some progress in self-control, as usage hardened him under her subtle provocations. He no longer flamed at the first spark. It needed a constantly increasing degree of care to bring him to the point of explosion. The little hints which had maddened him at first no longer roused him. She might challenge him with letters, with flowers, with elaborately timed tardinesses, and find him good-humored, levelly placid. Even stronger stimuli lost their effect, she discovered. He watched her dance brilliantly with Reppelier Stokes, notoriously a loose sort, without even commenting on the circumstance as they drove home. She ventured, at last, to

speak of it, disguising her reference under a thankfulness wholly insincere.

"Larry dear, you're ever and ever so much better about—about your jealousy. I—I 've been meaning to thank you."

He smiled lazily.

"Pure mental science, Les. I've been giving myself regular baths in it, building up resistance on a solid fact-foundation. You see, if I *know* it's absurd to suspect, and keep telling myself so, when there's nothing suspicious in evidence, it helps me over the bad moments when some little circumstance might set me off. I know you aren't a bit interested in anybody else; I know exactly who your friends are and how you spend your time. And I know you, too. That's the main thing. When I'm sane, I know that you're everything that's honest and clean and fine. I keep that right in the front of my mind, all the time. And when I see red, I can snatch at the truth and hold on tight till I've battered the devil back into his den. See?"

She saw rather too clearly. He was curing himself, after all, by this re-entrance scheme of undermining suspicion before it existed. He was settling down to a stodgy, middle-aged certainty of her that would certainly end by killing the instinct of jealousy in him. And she didn't want it killed; she had come, by now, to think of it as the one sure way of keeping alive the devotion on which she had learned to lean so heavily. Jealousy, of Larry Raeburn's sort, was distinctly a matrimonial asset. It meant that life couldn't relapse to the dead monotone of humdrum, take-it-for-granted placidity; there would be stimulating heights and giddy depths, so long as he did not utterly stamp out the madness.

It was her fault, of course. No wonder he was sure of her. She had made it absurdly evident, all along. She had been particularly careful never to give him the least real foundation for the suspicions she had so laboriously inspired. Her fear of a possible public scene had

kept her from risking the innocent friendships with other men in which most of the married women she knew were continually beguiling their boredom. Naturally his suspicions were absurd when he sat down deliberately to examine them. She veiled her eyes so that he might not see the disappointment in them.

"I'm glad you're so sensible, Larry. I've tried terribly hard to avoid even the appearance of evil—always. It—it's my reward."

He kissed her. It was a husbandly kiss, a tolerant, friendly affair, as passionless as a potato. And she watched him submerge contentedly in a ponderous book. Her brain was busy with a new idea.

"He mustn't be too sure of me—ever," she told herself. "I've got to change that—right away. It—it ought not to be too difficult."

The Eighth Devil hugged his sides.

IV

FROM the day of that latest discovery, Lester Raeburn began to cultivate very carefully the semblance of evil. She had cleverness, of sorts, and used it to excellent effect in her preliminary meditations on ways and means. A duller woman would have lessened suspicion by dividing it; Lester centred on one man, and she chose him rather cleverly as being the most likely type to enrage Larry, a man whom he disliked personally and whose habit and view and personality were all diametrically opposite to his own.

Murray Jessop was a careful idler; he shunned effort in all shapes as sedulously as some men avoid temptation. He drifted, but he was exceedingly thoughtful about the current that carried him, taking indolent pains to be sure that it should not drag him into rapids or over falls. He played with life in warm, friendly shallows, resigned to leaving to

more energetic men the good things to be gained only at the price of effort, to having for himself only what drifted within his reach. He was exactly the sort of man to attract Laurence Raeburn's severest contempt—a drone, a non-producer, no less a parasite because he had inherited enough money to maintain him in sloth. Morally, to be sure, Jessop was not particularly reprehensible, simply because sinning, for the most part, demanded an effort he was not willing to exert. He had no purple history, and yet there were few husbands who would have surveyed with philosophic calm his intimacy in their houses.

Yet Raeburn contemplated without comment the spectacle of a growing friendliness between Lester and Jessop. If he doubted his wife, he contrived to keep the question at bay; his new self-control proved equal to the steadily increasing strain Lester put upon it. He went his ways methodically, as always, his even humor untroubled, so far as Lester could see. Slowly she tried him farther, obtruding on his observation evidences of interest in Jessop which, a few months before, would have wakened him to instant fury. He was perversely dense, or more perversely complaisant. She could not prod him into even mild objection.

Scarcely realizing that it was only the reflex of her annoyance, she slipped easily into an intimacy with Murray Jessop which had had no place in her plans. The quiet, indolent fellow fitted admirably into the fabric of her life. He gave no trouble; he was never exigent, never sulky, never difficult, and, within limits, he was to be counted on for amusement. She began to rely on him heavily—more heavily than she knew—as Raeburn drifted back into absorption in his business and left her, more and more, to her own concerns.

And yet, through it all, her attitude toward her husband changed steadily toward the side of a deeper attachment

than before. Having taken him for granted, from the first, she had been inclined to hold him cheaply; now, as she became unwillingly aware that her power over him was weakening, her fondness intensified into something very much like love. He was hers; she had a right to his devotion; she wanted it, wanted those glowing recrudescences of the early fires, wanted him as he had been. . . . His seeming inattention to Jessop's intrusions only persuaded her that she had not gone far enough. He might have conquered his besetting vice a little; he had learned how to control those facile rages that had flung him abashed and humbled at her feet when the fury was spent, but below the surface, waiting his moment, was her ancient ally, ready to spring to her aid when she found the right appeal.

The more she contemplated the new status of her life and its relations, the more certain it seemed to her that she was on the right track in using Jessop as the means of kindling the old fire in Laurence Raeburn. She had not gone far enough along that path; that was all. Very cautiously she went farther, watching Laurence shrewdly for some hint of her success.

"Murray's going to take me out to Northport this afternoon—Lotta Judson's you know. You don't mind, do you, dear old boy?"

He shook his head.

"Not a bit. Sorry I can't get away, but—"

"But you don't like Lotta," she cut in, striving to make her eagerness a shade suspicious. "I don't want you to be bored, you know."

He grinned amiably and lapsed into his paper. She was angry—thoroughly angry. Was he merely stupid, or didn't he care? What had happened—what could have altered him so radically that he could look on unstirred while his wife pointedly flirted with a man like Murray Jessop?

She meditated soberly on the problem.

She could use a little more pressure, perhaps. There were ways. . . . She planned shrewdly. If she gave him something unmistakably damning to consider . . . he might explode, but she could always fall back on the truth, always tell him that she had been trying to help him conquer his weakness by building up his powers of resistance.

So it happened, quite naturally, that Murray Jessop was gently persuaded into something like a display of ardor. He wasn't utterly immune to deft stimulation, and Lester Raeburn could be remarkably provocative when she chose. Jessop would have laid no siege to her or any other woman, but he took what the lazy little gods he worshiped were benign enough to put within reach. He kissed her, with rather more earnestness than was characteristic of him, just as Raeburn came in. Lester, tense and braced for the scene, listened desperately for the first roaring blast of her husband's rage. She felt as if she must scream unless he broke the tension. Turning a little, with Jessop's lightly confident arm still about her, she caught her breath. Laurence had gone out, without a word. Jessop had not even known of his presence!

In some fashion she got rid of him, not too brusquely. She hadn't finished with him yet. She saw as he left that he was puzzled, but she had no thought to waste on his private bewilderments. Larry was the only man who mattered—Larry who had watched another man kiss her without lifting a finger to interfere! She found him in his room, prosaically comfortable in dressing-gown and loose, rather slovenly slippers.

"Larry—I—I know you saw what happened just now—"

He nodded, his eyes mildly amused.

"Yes," he said quietly, "I'm quite sure that you know I saw it. You timed it very nicely, didn't you?"

She stared. This wasn't Larry Raeburn—it couldn't be the man who had

been instant to flame into fury at the faintest breath of suspicion. What had happened to him? Why didn't he fly into his old passion of reproach?

"You—you don't think— You know I—?" she stammered clumsily, groping for the right phrase.

He laughed softly.

"Yes, I know you, Les. I know that Murray Jessop never kissed you before and never will again, until you devil him into it, as you did to-night. I know you're technically as innocent as any woman ever was. Don't disturb yourself in the least, please. It's quite all right. I understand—everything."

"Larry!" She let her hands fall on his shoulders. "What's come over you? You act as if—as if you didn't care!"

"Do I? That's odd, you know. Because I don't care—I don't care a single tinker's damn what you do or say, Les. You won't make any trouble for yourself. I'm perfectly certain that neither Murray Jessop or any other man will ever interest you enough to make you lose your balance. And if it amuses you to play with that sort of pets, play all you please. . . . Ah-h!" He yawned politely behind his hand. "Don't fret—I'm not a bit annoyed."

She stood still, utterly at a loss.

"But—but you talk as if you didn't care—about me!" she complained. "It isn't faith that makes you so complaisant—it's sheer disinterest!"

"Oh, that's rather strong." He yawned again. "I'm getting over some of the follies of my youth, of course. For instance"—his eyes narrowed suddenly—"for instance, it isn't possible, any longer, for a woman to tear my soul to pieces just for her amusement. You've cured me of that, at last. I owe you a good deal for that service. Jealousy is a detestable vice. I'm done with it, thanks to you."

"I don't understand." It was almost a wail. "Larry, Larry, don't you care any more? Don't you love me?"

He smiled thinly as he replied:

"I'm very grateful to you. It took me a long time to discover that you were playing with me—that you deliberately provoked me into those fits of fury for the fun of seeing me blaze and the satisfaction of making me crawl to you afterward. You faked those early experiments—the letters and the flowers and that infernal affair of the cigar and all, just as you've been faking this last business with Jessop—for the sheer pleasure of watching me go mad. I didn't understand until this Jessop affair began. Then it dawned on me. No, Les, I don't care. You've cured me of being jealous. And you've cured me of caring enough to be jealous. Let it go at that."

He was very nice to her, of course. Nobody could have been kinder about comforting her, calming her passion of tears and entreaties. But he might have been a doctor, impersonal, aloof. She

realized, at last, that she had lost him. Perhaps it served her right to stare before her into barren, desolate years. Laurence Raeburn thought so, at least, as he tiptoed away from her door, with the sound of her sobs following him.

"I've got to be mighty careful," he soliloquized as he turned his key. "She mustn't ever suspect me. It isn't safe for her to think she has that power over me still. But if she'd been a little later. . . ."

He took an ugly, blunt revolver from the deep pocket of his dressing-gown and placed it carefully in a dresser drawer. As his eyes caught his image in the glass, he fancied he got a glimpse of something infinitely evil, baffled, drawing back.

The Eighth Devil, cheated, was retreating. But Laurence Raeburn knew that he was not beaten. Oddly enough, he was rather glad. For when the Eighth Devil dies, he never dies alone. Love dies with him. . . .



THE BURNING BUSH

By Edwin Justus Mayer

I THINK it was one spring a burning bush
 Flamed sudden in the green hills of my youth,
 And a great voice spake out of it the truth
 Of Beauty and fell still. A holy hush
 Succeeded it. There was not any noise
 Of singing birds or rivers or of flowers
 Stirring in birth, but all the level hours
 Were very silent, as when nuns rejoice.

New breath of a new Spring, how many Springs
 Have been since then? Since wild my dark eyes sighted
 The amazing Bush with awe and frenzy lighted;
 And since my ears heard great imaginings
 Voiced in eternal tones? I do not know:
 The years are filled with blinding, deafening woe.

IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS

By Frank H. Williams

OH, that ecstatic thrill; oh, that sweet shiver up the spine; oh, that delicious gulp in the throat! Do you remember that splendiferous day, fellers, when you bet your best girl a box of candy against a kiss and *you won your bet?*

And that evening, before going to collect, you dolled up with your best red necktie, and brushed your hair back from your ears, and put on the good old fawn gloves with the smell of gasoline still clinging to them from the big cleaning. And your nose looked sorta red, so you dabbed it with a bit of your sister's powder and then rubbed it off for fear it might show and *SHE* would think you were a sissie. When you went to her house *SHE* was out on the front porch with her father and her mother and her sisters and her brothers and her cousins and her uncles and her aunts.

She just wouldn't go for a walk around the block, and she positively refused to go with you to the back yard to look at the grape arbor in the moonlight, and she turned up her pretty, stubby little nose when you suggested going to the drug store for an ice cream suddy. And you gloomily wondered if she were going to renege on the bet, and you looked at her with a meaning look in your face, while she blankly returned your gaze without a sign of comprehension, and her dad, noting your strange appearance, asked you if your face hurt. Her mother looked at your fawn gloves and snickered, and you felt yourself getting red, and your hands were large and hot, and you put them behind you and tried to take off the gloves, but they simply wouldn't come!

Oh, boy, how you fidgeted and wished you'd stayed home. You got so restless that one of the aunts, an old maid who was sweet on the widower who had just gone by without paying much attention to her, said: "For goodness' sake, keep still if you haven't the St. Vitus' dance." At that you colored up again like a cerise sunshade.

Finally the family ambled into the house, one by one and very, very slowly. You hitched closer and closer to *HER* and she looked at you shyly and didn't move away. Then she lifted up her pretty face a little as you took a firm grip on your courage and—and gave her a quick little peck on the cheek. At that you heard a loud laugh and you looked around shamefacedly and there was her father! And he said:

"That wasn't much of a kiss, Mehitabel. Give little Horace a nice big kiss!"

Whereupon you just naturally nearly passed away with mortification and, jamming your hat down to your ears, hurried away without once looking back. You kicked yourself all around the block and upstairs to your room and then you swore you were through with women for good. "Little Horace," indeed!

Say, fellers, weren't those the good old days?

"The Play's the Thing"

By An Insider

"MY SOUTHERN MOLLY-O"

ALL the Mollies come either from Dixie or Ireland, and right off the bat I'll confess to a weakness for the South and for Southern Mollies with that fine sense of humor which characterizes Miss Isabelle Lowe. Those writing gentlemen whose names are quoted on Eighth Avenue ash cans, and in Sixth Avenue "L" stations would never begin a critique this way, I know; instead of mentioning the lady first, or the play, they mention—and star—themselves. But after seeing "The Melting of Molly" at the Broadhurst Theatre, I've just got to speak up and say that I like Isabelle Lowe. And she is no Aphrodite of Melos, either!

With that off of my chest, I shall get to work. The program states that Messrs. Lee and J. J. Shubert present "The Melting of Molly," a new musical comedy by Maria Thompson Davies from her novel of the same name by arrangement with— But, really, it is too much—much too much! Everybody but the undertaker had a hand in fashioning Molly, and he was left out because she is far from being a dead one. Indeed, she seems to possess nine lives, like a cat, for her career, in the theatre, at least, has been lengthy and varied. First she was presented without music, as a straight comedy, and with a big "name" in the lead; then she was tried out minus the name and with a charming young actress—who promptly died or got married. Then one person wrote the "book" and

another person added tunes, and "Molly" became a musical comedy.

But the end was not yet, for the first attempt at syncopating "Molly" was thrown into the discard, and, as finally seen in New York, Sigmund Romberg is responsible for the melody, Edgar Smith for the libretto, and Miss Lowe for much of its success.

Hailing from Virginia, *Molly's* surname, of course, is Carter. We first meet the *Carters* under the trees of their fine old home, where *Molly* is waiting to say *au revoir* to her lover, *Alfred Bennett*, who is sailing for London on a diplomatic errand. *Alfred* believes in repose. His farewell kiss, on *Molly's* brow, is as ice-bound as Behring Strait. He loves the ethereal, the spirituelle. I can well believe he walked down Piccadilly with a lily in his hand, like the gentleman in Gilbert and Sullivan. Slim, correct, is *Alfred*, and while *Molly* weeps at his departure, she is perfectly satisfied that he has done her a great honor in engaging himself to her. Even while there is *John Moore*. *John* is in love with *Molly* himself, but the *Carters* would have had none of him, even if *Molly* hadn't loved *Alfred*, for *John* is only a poor young doctor, a poor young country doctor, a poor young country doctor in Virginia! But *John* appreciates the hot biscuits which *Judy*, the Carter "mammy," bakes, which shows his good sense, for I am told, on the side, that *Judy* is some cook. *Molly* thinks so, too, but *Alfred Bennett* whis-

pers indigestion, and passes up the biscuit. So *Alfred* leaves for London, with *Molly* promising to wait for him, and with *John* loving her—in vain, as they say in books.

Four years pass. *Alfred*, now a great personage, is still in London, while the Carters have become addicted to that famous indoor sport of dodging bill collectors. There are bills everywhere, and no money, for with the death of *Molly's* father, his fortune seems to have taken wings. *Judy* is still with the family, and while she still bakes, we first see her ridding the house of the collectors with the aid of a broom. *Mrs. Carter* confides to her old friend, *Judge Wade*, that something must be done, but she will not let him help her, and she doesn't know what that something is to be. Now she regrets that *Molly* didn't marry *Alfred Bennett* before he went to London, for *Alfred* has never returned to marry *Molly*, nor has he sent for her to join him in England; and he has become quite a wealthy man.

"Yes, it would have been better if they had married four years ago," decides *Mrs. Carter*; "for as *Molly* is to-day—"

Then *Molly* appears. Worry and poverty have failed to leave their marks on *Miss Molly*. Nero fiddled while Rome burned, and *Molly* fattened while the Carters starved. There is no money for the butcher, but *Molly* appears calmly munching chocolates. *Molly* is fat!

Her kid sister, *Dot*, who has been decorated of late in *Molly's* made-over clothes, finds the old wedding gown that *Molly* got four years ago in which to marry *Alfred*, and *Dot* wants it for a dress for herself. But *Molly*, while fat, is sentimental, and she insists she is saving the old gown for her wedding with *Mr. Bennett*, though, as practical *Dot* points out, the garment isn't half big enough for the *Molly* of to-day.

When *Judge Wade* suggests a lodger, *Mrs. Carter* promptly faints, but *Molly* thinks they will take one in, thank you.

The *Judge* points out that he knows a most excellent young man, a doctor, who, while waiting for his sanitarium to be finished, is anxious to secure home-like accommodations in the neighborhood. *Molly* says they will take him in, and the *Judge* departs to find the fellow.

Of course, when he appears, he is none other than *Molly's* other beau, *John Moore*. He is now *Doctor Moore*, and a successful health and beauty specialist, with many interesting patients. But he still loves *Molly*. *Molly* says that she didn't know their lodger was to be he, and she is afraid he cannot stay. When *John* asks if she really dislikes him so much, *Molly* shakes her head, and the thing is settled, even to the breakfast menu. He pays for a month in advance, so that it begins to look as if the Carters were to be once more on intimate terms with the butcher. *Mrs. Carter* insists that a lodger, a man in the house, is the very thing they needed—after she hears of *John's* success, and his continued interest in *Molly*—and everything is lovely, when a bomb is exploded in their midst.

After four years, *Alfred Bennett* decides that he wants to marry *Molly*. He wants to marry *Molly* in the little white gown she prepared before he went to London; he speaks of her as his "dainty lily"—but *Molly* confesses openly she more nearly resembles a cauliflower! As for the little gown, of course it won't half meet. Yet *Alfred* is coming, in a few short months, to wed the "lily maid" he left behind!

Mother and sister are in despair; *John* insists that *Molly* is just right, and that if *Bennett* really loves her, he won't care a hoot whether she is plump or lean. But the Carters know better—they know *Alfred*, the exquisite, the ethereal. Even *Judy* recalls that he wouldn't eat her biscuits, and offers *Molly* some anti-fat pills, with herself as a testimonial. This isn't encouraging, with *Judy* tipping the scales at two hundred or more, and *Molly* decides she must start in to reduce.

"For you'll never get into the old gown, *Molly*, unless you melt," says *Sister Dot*.

"Then I'll melt!" announces *Molly*, even as you and I.

When he sees that she is in earnest, *John* says he will take her in hand, and throwing away *Judy's* medicine, tells *Molly* to come to his new sanitarium. He promises to get her back in shape, the old shape, in time to meet her elegant lover from London. But . . . she must diet—which makes for an amusing finale to the act, when afternoon tea is brought in, with hot, rich cakes, straight from *Judy's* kitchen, and *John* keeps the confection from *Molly* and allows her only tea, minus cream and sugar.

In the next act we visit the famous sanitarium, with a lot of pretty young women in gym togs, the whole resembling a scene from a Keystone film. The athletic instructor is played by Miss Vera Roehm, a striking-looking young woman, who gives an excellent boxing exhibition, and effectively "talks" a song. Here in the sanitarium we find *Molly* at work, and she has begun to melt, judging from the trim figure she presents in her gym suit. *John* comes in, as much in love as ever, but *Molly* remains true to her "memories." To be sure, I'm not a lady, but just the same, I can't understand how *Molly's* "memories" of *Alfred Bennett* were so thrilling that one needs must be hugging them always to one's breast. Quite the contrary. And I particularly loathe cold potato!

Judge Wade has provided the necessary money for *Molly's* trousseau and everything, apparently, is going well, when news is brought that *Alfred* can't get to America, after all, and that he wants *Molly* to marry him by proxy and come to join him in London.

"Can it be done?" demands *Mrs. Carter*, with visions of *Molly* being "wished back" on her hands, I suppose.

The *Judge* assures them gravely that a marriage by proxy is perfectly legal. Poor *Molly*, who has rolled, starved, and

what not for her wedding, has only one word to say—her husband by proxy must be *John*. Which, to a mere man's way of thinking, is very hard on *John*. No wonder he protests. But *Molly* wants it so, and, after all, he loves *Molly*, and so he consents.

The last act takes us back again under the trees on the lawn of the Carter house. It is *Molly's* wedding day, and she has married *Alfred*—sort o' through *John*, y' know. *Alfred*, with his secretary, *Miss Chester*, has arrived directly after the ceremony, finding at the last moment that he could manage the trip and escort his bride back to England. When *Molly* appears, you'd expect to find her very happy and everything, with *Alfred* in America, but the truth must be published—*Molly* is mad, fighting mad, when she shows herself to the bosom of her family. She is wearing the little white dress of four years ago, and while it is tight, and she has been warned to be careful in it, she has, thanks to *John Moore*, melted herself away to almost her old weight. Though she doesn't act at all, at all, like a "lily maid," a "lily on its straight, slim stem." If *Molly* is a lily, then she is of that variety known as tiger.

Molly walks in to tell her family just where she, and they, get off at. She will never go back to England with *Alfred Bennett*. She doesn't care if she is married to him; she will divorce him! Surely there is some law— When she thinks of how she has starved herself and worked! All these years she has hugged to her breast sweet memories of her youthful lover, her spirituelle lover! They try to calm her nerves, *Mrs. Carter* pointing out the value of *Bennett's* social position, but the rest of them secretly feel that *Molly* has been handed a raw deal, and gladly leave her to *John*.

Then *Alfred*, the ethereal, appears with his secretary, and lo and behold, *Alfred* is now the size of the baby elephant in the zoo! He must weigh a ton—at least, three hundred pounds. He tells *Molly*

she may kiss him, which she doesn't do, thank Pete, and then he sets in to eat all the food in sight, and to talk about all the food in Europe. As *paté de foi gras* and caviar disappear as if by magic, *Molly* says that now she understands the food shortage in London. *Alfred* eats and eats, until even the audience feels a little faint; a restaurant next to the theatre would starve to death because one simply couldn't eat after seeing *Mr. Bennett* stuff himself on the stage. When *Judy* appears with a plate of hot biscuits, which *Alfred* had scorned in younger days, he promptly takes over the plate and eats at least a half dozen of its contents. A sauce, a roast, and an entrée have been named for him in London; he speaks glowingly of the gastronomic delights of Rome. And he eats. How he eats! All the time poor starved *Molly* watches him, listens to him! It is more than human nature can stand, and finally *Molly* . . . speaks.

Molly says something. In spite of mother, sister, friends, *Molly* tells *Alfred Bennett* just what she thinks of him, just how she waited, trusted, starved . . . for the sake of an exquisite, ethereal lover who has returned looking for all the world like Wilhelmstrasse of yesteryears. As she lays down the law, she forgets the old dress, her own increased waistline, and friendly warnings; with every move a button flies off, until she stands half out of her gown. *Alfred*, blandly eating at first, finally reaches the conclusion that *Molly* isn't such a "lily on a slender stem" as he thought. When she insists that she won't return to London with him, that she doesn't love him, anyway, there is a momentary pause. Then *John* comes forward with the announcement that *Molly* doesn't have to go to London with *Alfred Bennett*, for the good reason that she isn't his wife! He, *John*, had the forethought to sign his name, and not *Bennett's*, to the marriage papers, which makes *Molly John's* wife and not *Alfred's*. But not to be robbed of a life partner, *Alfred* de-

cides to marry his secretary, *Miss Chester*, who, I am satisfied, will feed him into the grave in a year.

Charles Purcell is featured as *John Moore*, though the honors go to Isabelle Lowe, who plays *Molly*. This is said without disparagement to Mr. Purcell, who is a pleasing actor and a fine singer, as those of you who have seen his work in "Maytime" know. It is simply that "Molly" is a woman's play, and Miss Lowe is clever enough to seize each and every opportunity.

Isabelle Lowe came from the hinterland, and it is whispered that she served a long apprenticeship in stock. So did Fay Bainter, now one of the most popular of Broadway's stars. Much has been made of the fact that Miss Lowe can act, and in truth her denunciation of *Alfred Bennett* in the last act of "Molly" is as fine a piece of work as has been seen on the legitimate stage. A comedienne, almost a character comedienne, this young woman has a soft, pleasing voice, and a droll little trick of screwing up her face, which the average leading lady would regard with horror, since it is fatal to one's personal beauty. But Miss Lowe is no mere beauty. She has a genuine sense of humor, and while I have a horror of too solid flesh, I think she looked her loveliest when most plump.

Second honors of the performance go to Mrs. Charles G. Craig for her characterization of *Judy*. Mrs. Craig is, of course, the best known delineator of the old Southern mammy on the American stage, and she lends real strength to "Molly" in what is the chief comedy rôle of the little musical play. The real secret of Mrs. Craig's charm and success is that hers is the real negro character, while her imitators are merely stage darkies. Her famous aprons, especially the one with the goslings, are much in evidence in "Molly," while to see her in the gym, rolling with her "young missie" is, as they say down home, alone worth the price of admission.

Charles Purcell ranks third for his work as *John Moore*.

Alfred Bennett is played by Robert Bentley, and his secretary is the smart Alison McBain. The real worth of legitimate artists in musical comedy is further proven by the excellent work of Maude Turner Gordon as *Mrs. Carter*, and of Frank Kingdon as *Judge Wade*.

Dot Carter, the younger sister, is impersonated breezily by Gloria Goodwin, of piquant face and nimble legs. Incidentally, Miss Goodwin wore the best looking clothes in the show, all of her costumes bespeaking an up-to-the-minute smartness. Her partner, *Tom Morgan*, was played by Ted Lorraine, a clever dancer, who scored strongly with a tuneful number.

Marjorie Dunbar Pringle boasted the voice among the women principals, but, unfortunately, she lacked personality. A decidedly clever bit was given by Edgar Norton as a silly-ass Englishman, *St. Clair McTabb*. Personally I have never met an Englishman quite as silly as this gentleman, but he was amusing and created much favorable comment. Of the two dancers, each called Gladys, Miss Miller is both clever and pretty. Which is also true of the chorus. Here are some really pretty girls, but on two occasions their attractiveness was lost because of the unbecoming costumes. The blue and white costumes, with the hats topped with "wings" of the same material, were decidedly ugly; nor were the jockey suits

good. The settings were excellent, with the Carter house and lawn especially attractive.

We have come to associate Sigmund Romberg's name with pleasant melodies, and he has provided a charming score for "The Melting of Molly." The theme, probably called "Darling," is of a haunting sweetness that places it easily in the class with his "Sweetheart" of "Maytime" fame and his "Mother Song" in "Her Soldier Boy." Also, I like *Molly's* song, "Dear Old Gown," which, by the way, was fitted to some clever lyrics. The "Lodger" number, reminiscent of the "Letter Song" in "The Chocolate Soldier"—in idea, not in melody, that is—was charmingly given by Mr. Purcell and Miss Lowe, while of more "popular" strain is "Floating Down a Moonlight Stream," with a sort of zither accompaniment.

Given a real idea to work with, the Messrs. Shubert, with the aid of the Romberg music, and the clever artists gathered together, have scored a pronounced success. "The Melting of Molly" has both rime and reason, as well as a leading lady who can act, one who isn't afraid to sacrifice her personal appearance in the interest of her work. It is a smart show, and will be enjoyed by smart audiences.

Though she is far from being a cat, let us be thankful that "Molly" has so many lives, and that at last she has come up smiling.



SELF-PRESERVATION is the first law of vanity-cases.

MOST women have the vote. So now they can stay comfortably at home on Election Day without feeling that they're being cheated out of anything.

AN ASSYRIAN GARDEN

By Brian Padraic O'Seasnain

PRINCESS AJAVIDA:

“ONE hour in that far long ago,
The Emperor came to my door
Flying his enemies by night.
I hid him, for his wounds were sore.

“I hid him in my little house.
Outside the roses blossomed slow;
In their sweet sheltering he forgot
Empire and friend and foe.

“One sun-gold hour, within the heart
Of my warm, high-walled garden, we
Spoke, lowly-voiced, of little things—
Of life that sang in field and tree,

“Of life—and something more—our eyes
Met, and my heart spoke suddenly.
Ah, there within my garden walls,
Heaven had come to me!

“They found him when the roses fell.
Their foam-sprayed, driven horses came
Down through the garden. A red yell
Burst like a sudden flame!

“He kissed me once and softly said:
‘Beloved, what a little thing
Is death!’ and turned with lifted head.
They slew him, marvelling.

“The red blades spilled his life, but I
Found a last drop within the bowl.
I held him in my arms to die;
And his unstricken soul

“Found breath to say one word. I bent.
He called my name with a last cry.
The watching soldiers rose and went.
There is no bride more proud than I!”

The Handwriting Detective

A Department

Conducted by Louise Rice

In this Department, Louise Rice, the famous Graphologist, will reveal the characteristics shown in the handwriting of those of our readers who send in specimens, and will explain the reasons for her deductions. Each specimen of handwriting submitted must be accompanied by the coupon printed at the end of this article. To those who do not desire their reading published, Mrs. Rice will mail a personal letter, on our receipt of twenty-five cents in coin or stamps for each specimen submitted.

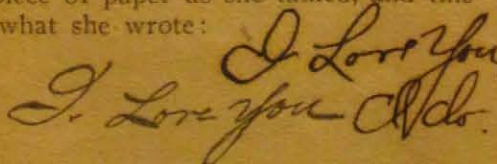
I BLEW into the editorial rooms of LIVE STORIES the other day—first time in years. The girl at the telephone was new; she didn't know that I used to walk right in.

"Tell 'em the Handwriting Detective is on the job," I said.

She did that very thing, with a worried look. But even so, I had to wait, for several of the authors whom you know very well, were before me. And, while I waited, the pretty telephone girl—do they ever have anything but a pretty telephone girl in an editorial office?—carried on a conversation that interested me. She called a number and then said:

"Yeah. . . . Listen, Carrie, I saw him last night, and he—oh—I don't know—he's so quiet that you never can tell—"

She was absent-mindedly scribbling on a piece of paper as she talked, and this is what she wrote:

A handwritten note in cursive script that reads "I Love you" on the first line and "I do." on the second line. The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and somewhat slanted.

Now, I swear that my mother raised me not even to peep at the market list of anybody, but since I've been a hand-

writing expert—for years and years—(fact, I assure you, although, of course, I don't look it!) I just can't make my eyes behave whenever I see anybody using a pen.

For a bit of handwriting, especially when it's done absent-mindedly, is like a searchlight suddenly turned upon a dark landscape, said landscape being a human being, whose face, hands, clothes, and manner of speech are often no more real indication of the thing within than the aforesaid landscape is indicative of what minerals lie beneath it. Oh, yes; I know that people think you can tell an honest man by his eyes, and a lot of other things about estimating character, but you ask any detective and he will tell you that criminals have the straightest, most unflinching eyes in the world. And did you ever know one of those wide-eyed, baby-faced girls so that you were really well acquainted with her? 'Nough said!

Well, here was my pretty little telephone girl, demure and sedate, with a cool eye and a cooler voice and a well-marked chin. In the now popular crook play she would instantly be cast for the

wise young working girl who has a heart of gold, but does not forget that Harold's check-book will be more useful as a life-long companion than honest John's goodness. And right there is where the stage director would be all wrong. Because the telephone girl at the busy wire of LIVE STORIES would cheerfully chuck Harold's check-book into the extraordinary place known as the middle of next week, for one smile from honest John. I'll tell you how I know it.

Look at those sudden spurts of the pen. Look how the last stroke in that "I" in "love" thickens—thickens! Why, that girl is just a bundle of emotions, impetuous, ardent, counting a kiss as worth more than a lobster supper. It's a sure sign, that thickening of the horizontal strokes. So I smiled a little as I heard her telling Carrie how very indifferently she had answered "him" when he said something that—and then I went in to see the lady editor.

The editorial room of this magazine was arranged by a person of exceeding wisdom. What you see is a slender figure in wonderful blue, and a blond head, and a classic profile, and blue curtains of the same blue as the dress, and a jar of pink roses. Feminine—my! I'm a breezy sort of a person, myself, and the effect of that room and that personality was to make me suddenly conscious of my hands and feet. She looked frail and ideal and dreamy and I thought how hard it must be for her to do anything except sit among cushions (of the right color) and dream of some golden knight. She was finishing a letter as I went in, and you know I said I couldn't make my eyes behave under those circumstances. Well, I looked. And I got a shock. This is a piece from that letter.

Answering question of trust

Please note those compact letters, that well regulated "t" bar, that cautious capital "M." Observe that the tops of the letters are angular and that the bottoms are round. The "t" bar showed me temper and temperament severely kept under control. The "M" showed me somebody who wanted to be selfish, but despised herself for it; the compact letters showed me a shrewd, level head; but that angularity at top and roundness at bottom screamed aloud of a cautious, exacting, contradictory, intensely subtle and devious mind—the kind of a mind capable of standing off and calmly watching the worst agonies of the heart which beats below it. Not at all the dream lady—very much not!

I told her some of that. She looked at me with her impenetrable blue eyes, and I knew that that brain was estimating me and my talk about handwriting. She was new, too, since my time.

And then the business manager came in. I knew him years ago and thought that I thoroughly understood him—honest, kindly, shrewd, far seeing—but it happened that I had never seen his handwriting. He sat down at his desk and wrote for me the first two words that came into his mind.

"I suppose I'm giving myself away sadly," he remarked with a smile.

"You said something," I slangily agreed. Look at those two words:

John Topics

Do you see it, as I did? Here is the companion soul to the ardent, unselfish, and warm-hearted telephone girl! Oh, with differences, of course. Time and experience and mental training have done a great deal to differentiate the young girl and the mature man, but here, also, is one to whom a check-book is less important than a smile. And he's the business manager, and famous for the way he holds down his job.

"How do you do it?" I asked, after I had explained to him that now I knew the real inwardness of him. "I thought that financial geniuses had to be cold and rather unfeeling, even though they were kind and honest."

"Why?" he asked me.

Well—I don't know, do you? Only, it's a way that we get into thinking. I—even I—ahem!—who have had those years and years I mentioned of "reading" character in handwriting, and getting surprised by what I read—even I find it hard not to expect people to be what they look like or what their work appears to make of them. But, when you come to think of it, why should the ability to handle money successfully do away with the ability to love hard, or to be enthusiastic over a sunset? The business manager blushed clear up into his hair, when I got that far and said he guessed he'd better get to work.

By that time most of the office force was sauntering into the blue room, with scraps of paper which they implored me to read:

"There are a good many," I remarked, with a glance at the clock.

"I tell you what you do, you write this all up, just as it really happened," said the blond and blue editor, "and include all these. Come on, each of you, and give your specimen to the handwriting lady."

But they didn't do that. They mixed 'em. I had seen them slyly slipping the papers from one to the other. So I don't know which is which, except that everybody in the editorial rooms was there, from the president to the office boy. I have no means of knowing whether it is a man or woman about whom I am talking. Bearing in mind the fact that the personality is no indication whatever of the real elements of character, I'll wager there'll be a good deal of surprise and some laughter when those people read, with you, what I've written about them. For Graphology,

8—T. S.

which is the name by which this science is known, is really a serious and painfully accurate affair. It jabs right through that surface *you* that you like so much, down to the real *you* which may be far less pleasing, but is almost invariably far more interesting. It is not guess-work on my part, you know; I do not use intuition, or "go into the silence" or employ anything but a fairly active mind which has been trained to recognize and estimate the thousands of variations on the one hundred and fifty well-known formations used by the Occidental nations in writing.

The writer of Specimen Four is one

with the Kaiser

to whom extremes of thought, feeling and expression are natural. Contrast the loose and breezy "t" with that firm and self-possessed "t" in Number Two. And note that the "K" spreads out expansively. Observe the upward slant of the writing. Here is an individual with ardor and impatience, and love of luxury, and a quick imagination, and a fair degree of sensuousness, and not enough will power to control all that. To know about how much, and what kind of will power people possess, look at their "t" bar, always. It need not be long or unusually strong, but it must have a certain sweep and power or be close and compact if it is to indicate will power. And the need for will power is all the greater, of course, the more intricate and interesting the character. So whoever this is, whether successful, happy or otherwise, he is really in need of some intensive self-cultivation. But I'd like to meet that one—I'm going to make them tell me who it really is.

The writer of the specimen numbered five is as opposite from number four

Undoubtedly, you can see

as it is possible for two human beings to be. This person is fearful of everything, and cautious and reserved and introspective. Do I have to explain to any thoughtful reader why I know that? Isn't that the instinctive estimate you would make of this minute, tortuous bit of writing? And your instinct as to handwriting is frequently correct, for Graphology is based upon a long, long line of instinctive reasonings, reduced to a system. Why, away back in 1620 Camillo Baldo—but you don't want to hear that, do you? Anyway, there are a lot of famous names among the graphologists of the centuries since Camillo first began the serious investigation as to the meaning of the utter individuality of every individual's "fist." To return to the specimen. Anybody who writes that little, cramped hand needs to get out in the world and breathe some new air; he needs to learn to laugh—no humor in this specimen at all. On the other hand, and quite obviously, without even a suggestion from the science of Graphology, there is the capacity for taking infinite pains. If, to that element, more courage and initiative were added, the character of this writer would promise a good deal for work requiring close and accurate attention.

Number Six. Nice girl, that! Now

And the town has gone

I'm guessing, for there is no such thing as telling sex in handwriting. I know of no better argument for the complete equality of the male and female than this one thing—stripped down to the revealing chirography, men and women are not marked by a single distinguishing mark. Just the same, I think she's a nice girl! There is sometimes a "something" about a bit of handwriting which suggests that which we rather vaguely call feminine, and a person who has examined—oh, some million or so of specimens, can

sometimes be right in finding that something. Aside from that, however, the character, as revealed, would fit any young person of normal instinct, good heart, and fair brain development. As for its being a youthful hand, of that, at least, I can be sure. After middle age is reached, it is very difficult to say approximately how old a writer is. I've known people of eighty who wrote as firm a hand as those of fifty—but youthfulness shows in the unformed nature of the letters, just as it shows in the unformed features of the face. In Number Six there is too much imagination and too much lack of forcefulness, but that is true of all nice young people. It's a good fault.

If you want to see the evidences of maturity in a hand which has some resemblance to Number Six, look at Number Seven. The difference is plain

The greatest day

enough; anybody can see it, but it is almost impossible to describe. It is like the very slight differences which exist between the face of a boy of twenty and that of a man of thirty. There are no lines, as later in life, no real change that can be seized upon, and yet—exactly! Well, here is a person, too, with imagination and some lack of forcefulness—but that is a more serious fault here than it is in Number Six. It is in need of instant correction—or rather, of instant attention. The correction will take a long time. Each of these people is affectionate, in that gentle, sincere, and tender way which makes one fond of home, and tender and pitiful to weak things, and a little sentimental. My, if they really understood each other, and if Six were that nice girl that I suspected and Seven—well, anyway they could be friends, couldn't they, if they were *two* nice girls?

Number Eight has some family resemblance to Six and Seven, which is the reason I put it in here, to show you how carefully a graphologist must judge.

My best regards

The resemblance is superficial. Note that there are no similar letter formations. This particular specimen is a baffling one, and I have a suspicion that the personality is one of much reserve. Not that personality is accurately reflected in writing, but that element of being, like sex, is sometimes hinted at, as it were, to an experienced eye. Note the suave, attenuated small letters which are perfectly distinct, and yet have their outlines cut down to the utmost simplicity. People who use that kind of a hand are more highly developed mentally than they are physically or spiritually. Not that any lack of physical health is indicated, but that the writer's interests are not fixed upon matters which concern only the body. Neither is the spiritual nature greatly encouraged to function. This is a person of clear, accurate, rapid thinking power, who is not credulous, who is what is known as "hard headed," and who has very clearly defined ideas and convictions. An interesting personality, I am sure, but not especially magnetic, except upon a deliberate intention of being so, or on those rare occasions when the emotions are stirred. That there is a capacity for deep and serious affection is indicated by the sloping of the writing rightward, and you can see that this specimen is inclined very sharply.

Speaking of affection, if you want to know how loving your sweetheart is, look at this matter of which way his handwriting leans. Roughly speaking, we may estimate that the upright hand represents the zero mark in emotionalism, from which each slight deviation rightward marks a step onward. Handwrit-

ing which all but lies down upon the line represents the limit—the hysterical and neurotic.

An illustration of this unemotional type is found in Number Nine. Not,

It was simply

you will observe, that the handwriting is really placed at the zero mark, but that the effect of the writing makes it seem upright. This effect is partly due to the formation of the letters, which are plain and unobtrusive. This person lacks imagination; note the closeness of the dot of "i" to the letter, which is a sure sign of a practical and literal mind. This writer does not believe in fairies, you may be sure—in fact, doesn't believe in much of anything which cannot be demonstrated in words of few syllables. People of this type are very useful to the world; it is they who keep us sane and practical, and who provide us with steady and reliable and conscientious workers.

I don't know about Number Ten—

I was a lovely singer

really I don't. Once in a while an honest graphologist comes across a specimen either intentionally disguised, or written when the hand was very tired, or in sickness, or in a fit of rage, which it is almost impossible to decipher. This is one of those. If I "read" the specimen the way surface indications point, I'd say—inconstant, uncertain temper, disposition to be moody, some imagination, a dry sort of humor, affections intense but unreliable—but I have a feeling that the specimen has been "doped." Maybe not. But if not, then it is a most unusual specimen indeed and I should need a hundred or so more words before I should be willing to stand by my diagnosis.

After struggling with that, it is a relief to turn to Number Eleven. Here,

please send to our office

if you please, is a thoroughly consistent character. Notice that all the letter formations are similar in type; that the "t" bar is nicely adjusted to the relative strength and size of the letter, that the size of the capital is in proportion—and a lot of other things which you can see if you look carefully! Now I'll "read" that character for you, and you can guess pretty easily how it's done, by this time. I estimate this person as having passed into mature years—not necessarily over forty, mind you—for Graphology does not recognize mere years. It merely recognizes facts, and you know perfectly well that some people are old at forty and some are still quite young, but all have passed beyond the stage where they are likely to change greatly in temperament. Well, this person will assuredly not change. Whether man or woman, the ideals, the attitude of mind, the tastes, the emotions are all firmly outlined. The joining of the words shows a mind, which is not only logical in its operations, but which forces the impress of its conclusions upon the heart and soul. Many people, you know, can think accurately and see very clearly a

chain of reasoning, but are quite powerless to rule themselves thereby. This person's mind does that ruling well, but it could not have been always so. There are evidences of impetuosity and illy governed impatience, and of pride and of passions, now overcome.

The last specimen, you will notice, has a more pronounced pen pressure than any of the others. This one fact

The World Was

is indicative of a keen interest in the material and physical world, but, in addition to that, we have the almost upright writing, the heavily formed letters, and the inflated loops on the letters, all of which show a nature which is emphatically of this world. I'd say that it would be a matter of prime importance to this person as to whether a steak were tender or not; that the possession of money would confer the greatest happiness, and, next to that, the possession of health. I'd expect this person to be righteous and decent, but to have only a perfunctory interest in religion—and I'd be sure that he—there, I'm guessing again—because maybe this is that sweet, Madonna faced girl that I particularly noticed! You never can tell 'em by how they look, you see—but as to how they write—that's a different matter.

THIS COUPON entitles the sender to one graphological reading. If the sender does not desire the specimen and reading published, twenty-five cents in stamps or silver should be enclosed.

Address:

THE HANDWRITING DETECTIVE,
LIVE STORIES,
35-37 West 39th Street,
New York, N. Y.

The next article by Mrs. Rice will appear in the June number of LIVE STORIES, on sale May 1st.

White Treasure

By Cyrus Townsend Brady

A THREE-PART STORY—PART I

I

IT was warm and still under the trees. The rude, ill-defined trail wound steadily upward through virgin forest. The girl quickened the pace of her horse. She was tired of the monotony of the pine woods, and was anxious to get to the open crest of the foothills of the coast range. Presently she reached her high goal, and with a sigh of relief, drew rein, dismounted, and walked forward to the brink of the hill. She stopped on the highest point and surveyed the enchanting prospect as she had often done. Silently she reveled in its color; she noted again with keen pleasure the green of the mighty forest, the silver of the shallow river, the gold of the bordering sand, and, far beyond all, the deep blue of the tossing sea. The scene lacked nothing but life, and as she stared, life came.

The primeval loneliness was disturbed by human figures. Though they were far beneath her, she could see them quite easily with the naked eye. She made out six men coming from the forest and moving down the clearing on the brink of the precipice overlooking the river. One obviously was a white man; she could not place the others. Their brown heads were covered with brilliant hued caps; they wore short, gaudy jackets and shorter trousers; their brown feet and legs were bare, and around each

man's middle a broad and glistening sash of many colors was twisted. She had never seen a Malay, she knew nothing of the sarong which was his distinctive girdle; but that the men were foreign and semi-savage she could not doubt.

She fixed her gaze upon them. She had never before seen a soul there. As far as she knew, that lonely shore, that shallow river, were unsettled and unvisited. Her curiosity was aroused by their unexpected presence and she surveyed them with a vivid and curious interest. She was conscious of a vague feeling of resentment, as if these strangers had suddenly profaned a shrine of her own, though she could lay claim to no proprietorship in that strip of no man's land along the shore.

Suddenly her interest quickened into an intensity of horror. Battle and murder and sudden death invaded the peaceful solitude with appalling abruptness. She stood stunned for a second, and then, leaning forward, screamed half in terror, half in warning. Her voice was lost in the intervening distance. Her breath coming short, her heart beating furiously as the battle was waged below her, she could only stand and stare, an unconscious spectator, judge, and, as it happened in the end, guerdon of the conflict!

For one instant, the white man's long continued watchfulness was abated. Of that solitary moment of faltering vigi-

lance Po-Yanpen took prompt advantage. His knife flashed in the sunlight as he leaped at the back of his master. Happily, Fortune, in complaisant mood, overlooked the lapse of the American. As he struck at the engineer the Malay tripped and fell. Such was the force behind the blow that the assailant, unable to recover himself, pitched down at the other's feet, his curved kris burying itself in the earth.

The American sensed his danger instantly. He turned and kicked the half-risen Po-Yanpen with such violence that he drove the Malay's body over the cliff and into the river below. At the same time, he whipped out his revolver and fired point blank at the other four coming at him. He missed Wan-Aman, to whom Po-Yanpen's leadership had fallen, but he accounted for the next man, who went down with a bullet in his brain. Before he could fire again, Wan-Aman and the other two were upon him. His revolver was knocked from his hand and followed Po-Yanpen's body down the cliff. Wan-Aman cut him deep in the shoulder. The fourth Malay struck him over the head with a heavy ax, while the last one darted in from the side, seeking an opportunity to use his short dagger.

Thus menaced on all sides, though he had accounted for two of his mutinous and murderous crew, and was weaponless before the other three, the engineer resorted to the offensive, characteristic of his temper and race. Before the man with the dagger could deliver a second cut, the engineer felled him with a terrific blow of his fist, and then, sustaining a second stab from the kris, the white man leaped at Wan-Aman. The now thoroughly frightened Malay strove to grapple with him, but the American lifted him up, and by a wrestler's trick loosening his grip, hurled him senseless to the rocks. The American then picked up Wan-Aman's kris and made for the only one of the quintette of villains still

upon his feet. This fellow was made of sterner stuff. He braced himself for the shock and met it bravely. Two knives flashed in the air and the ring of blade on blade penetrated the dull ear of the Malay who had been knocked down. He grasped the American by the heel and the three men went down together and rolled on the earth, confusedly fighting and striking.

The woman on the high hill saw all this clearly. From the first leap of the striking traitor, against which she strove to warn the man of her race with that futile cry, to the last struggle in that confused mêlée, she had missed nothing. Silent still, she watched with fixed look the white man rise triumphant at last only to stagger and crash down, apparently helpless, and lie still by the side of the men he had conquered against such odds.

So sudden had been the attack, so swift the battle, that only the presence of the bodies on the clearing convinced her of the reality of the same. When it was over, she could have cried aloud.

For a moment or two she considered what to do. Her instinct was to fly, to ride back to her camp and bring help. But she discarded that idea as soon as it was formed. For one thing, it would take time. The white man had been alive a moment since. He might be alive now. If she waited, he might die. She must go to him.

She stared again but could detect no movement among the slain. They were all apparently dead or dying. With intent look she searched wood and bank and shore. No others appeared. She had, she thought, no interruptions to fear. She would go down to give what assistance she could, to find out what it was all about. She turned, called to her horse, mounted, and rode rapidly down the mountain side through the trees, picking her way skilfully over the trailless declivities and through the woods.

When the white man got the mastery over the two remaining villains, and wresting the kris from the last survivor, held him down with one hand while he thrust the Malay through the heart, he was utterly unconscious of his wounds, his weakness, his loss of blood. It was not till the engineer got to his feet that he realized his helplessness. He took a step or two, brushing the blood from his eyes, and then fell. He summoned all his resolution as he went down and barely managed to keep from fainting. He lay still for a moment, suffering agonies, and then nerved himself for a final effort. He got to his hands and knees, bound his handkerchief about his head, and, disregarding the other wounds, sufficiently serious to have incapacitated a less resolute man, he set himself to getting rid of the bodies of the four Malays. With incredible effort and slowly, with long pauses, he managed to roll them off the cliff and into the river. He knew he had come in at flood tide and that a sufficient time had elapsed for the tide to have turned, so that the bodies would be carried out to sea with the river current and the ocean ebb. He did not want any dead men about in case he should be rescued. Their bodies might give rise to awkward questions.

His painful and wellnigh impossible task accomplished, he sought to go down to the brink of the river, where his vessel, a square-rigged, decked-over Malayan kapal, was hidden in the trees that bordered a little creek. But that was beyond him. He realized that he could scarcely expect succor on that lonely coast—its loneliness having recommended it as his landing place—and that if he were to get help, he must go for it. But further progress was impossible. He tried to crawl along the cliff toward the descent up which he had come, but his slow advance soon stopped. Despite his iron determination, strength of body, mind, and will all gave way at once, and he pitched down, burying his face in the

earth. This time it appeared that he was out for good.

He was conscious of nothing. He did not hear the footfalls of a horse crashing through the undergrowth, treading down fallen branches. Even the cessation of sound as the horse was stopped made no impression upon him. He did not know that the girl, white faced but resolute, had dismounted and had drawn her pistol, a light automatic her guide had insisted upon her carrying everywhere. With her other hand, she took the flask of whisky, also a requisite insisted upon, from the pocket of her jacket, and, thus doubly armed, stepped forward.

She could see him clearly as she came through the underbrush. At the first sight of the open, she stopped amazed. Had she not seen six men engaged in deadly struggle? Yet there was but one before her! Where were the others?

She could not answer the question, nor did it trouble her long. She noted that the one body left was that of the white man. Naturally her sympathies were all with him. He was of her race. He had been the subject of a cowardly attack and he had contended triumphantly against overwhelming odds. These were reasons enough.

With sudden fear, she ran toward him, bent down, and, by exerting all the strength of her vigorous young arms, turned him onto his back. As she dropped her unnecessary weapon, she lifted his head and put the flask to his lips. Then she took a good look at him. His face was that of a young man; the full, dark beard did not disguise its rugged strength. His lips were white, his face lined and bronzed by toil and exposure, so that she deemed him older than he would have appeared under different circumstances. His hair was matted with blood, which had also run down his cheeks and into his beard, and which was still flowing. Her hands, as she supported his shoulder, came in contact

with more blood, at which she shuddered, but did not release her hold.

Obviously he was in desperate case. She managed to force a few drops of liquor between his teeth, whereat he opened his eyes a moment, lifted his head a little, and muttered between his clenched teeth words which she caught, bending eagerly to listen.

"That damned—Po-Yanpen—betrayed—water—"

Then his eyes closed again and his head fell back upon her arm. She laid him down gently, picked up her Stetson hat and ran down the declivity toward the river. Fortunately, she soon came upon a little spring trickling from the rocks. She was so intent upon her purpose that she did not note certain dark objects being swept out to sea by the current. She filled the hat, which held water perfectly, so close was its texture, and ran back to the unconscious figure. Then she paused uncertainly. She had no first-aid packet or other material for dressings with her. Her hesitation was but momentary. She tore off the riding jacket, and then took off her linen waist. She did not stop to cover her bare arms and shoulders with the coat, but set immediately to wash and bandage the man's wounds, especially those in his head and shoulders.

She was rewarded by a complete return to consciousness as she stanching the flow of blood and ministered to him. She was so busy over him that at first she did not notice his prolonged stare. When she became aware of it, she realized her appearance and, with a blush almost as crimson as the blood stains on the bandages, she laid his head down and resumed her jacket, buttoning it up to her throat. Then she spoke to him.

"I saw it all," she began. "You were splendid! How do you feel now?"

The man had not ceased to stare. He could find no words at first. The woman gave him another swallow of water and whisky and then he spoke.

"Are you angel or—" he whispered brokenly in bewilderment.

"Only a woman. What became of those men? Why did they attack you?"

But the man closed his lips and made no answer. The woman waited a moment and then went on:

"You can tell me all about it when you feel better. Now I am going to my camp to get help for you. Are you afraid to stay here alone?"

The man smiled faintly.

"I'm afraid of nothing—after all I've gone through," he answered. "You see—" Then his lips closed again.

"Exactly," said the woman. "I'll drag you under the shade of this tree, leave you this flask and this automatic, and be back in two hours with horses, a wagon or a litter and help—"

"The flask only. Keep your gun. You might need it."

"Why? Are there any more of those—" she began apprehensively, but he cut her short.

"So far as I know—you and I are the only living beings—in this world," he said.

She nodded, and then with an exhibition of strength surprising in one of her somewhat slight build, she dragged him into the shade of the nearest trees and made him comfortable. As she rose to go, he feebly detained her.

"You have—have saved my life—doubtless. Your hand," he said. When she gave it, he pressed it to his lips. "I may not be here when you come back, and that is for—thank you and—good-by."

She completely misunderstood him. She looked at him anxiously indeed as she withdrew her hand and turned away.

"You'll be all right. I'll hurry back," she said. "Keep up your courage."

He watched her mount and ride off; when he lost sight of her, he listened till all sound of her going died away. No one must find him there. He must disappear as completely as the Malays had, though not in the same way.

He was a strong man, and a heavy draft from the well-filled flask gave him a certain temporary vigor. Her bandaging had been well done. The flow of blood was stopped. He did not try to walk; he must husband his strength. But he could crawl. Slowly he made his way to the shore. She had said two hours. He must make it in one. At all hazards, he must be away before she returned. And she would return quicker than she had promised; instinctively he realized she was that kind of a girl.

He had lost count of time when he reached the side of the boat in the creek. There lay his hardest task. He had to lift himself up and scramble aboard. He had scarcely strength to cast off the mooring. How he managed to hoist a scrap of canvas he could never tell. The current and the ebb both acted for him. The boat drifted out of the creek and was carried over the bar. The wind caught the rag of sail, and in a few moments the little vessel was rising and falling in the gentle waves of the mighty sea. Then, and not till then, did he faint dead away. He lay on the deck in a state of coma from which at first even the sudden deluge of rain, which came squall-like across the hills toward the ocean did not arouse him.

In less than an hour and half the girl was back. With her were some of the men guides, packers and servants from her camp in the woods. The promised wagon was waiting on the nearest road, the men bore a rude litter hastily improvised. The woman led them unerringly to the clearing.

No one was there! The oldest guide looked at the woman inquiringly and a little incredulously. She could give no explanation. She was as much bewildered as the others.

"Air you sure you seen it all, jes' as you tole us, Miss?" he asked searchingly.

"Of course," answered the girl. "Do you think me a child? I saw, I tell you, and you know my waist was gone."

"You sartin'ly couldn't a' drempt that away," answered one of the others.

"I didn't. Look about. Search. He may have crawled away—" she began.

But the guide stopped her.

"Remember that squall o' rain that come down on us on the trail? It fell here, too, an' washed out every sign. Can't follow no trails now, Miss."

"It hasn't washed out this," answered the girl, plucking Po-Yanpen's kris from the ground and holding it up triumphantly.

"Ain't never seed no knife like that a-one," said the old frontiersman, glancing at it. Then, examining it critically, he passed it on to others equally ignorant.

"But I guess you did see something," he continued. "We better take a good look around."

A search, lasting for hours, revealed nothing further, but the woman would not give it up until the approach of night made it necessary to return to her camp. She rode off full of the mystery, and but for the strange curved knife which she carried, thinking that she might have imagined it all.

Three days later the big freighter *Cambodia*, bound out from Seattle for Yokohama, via Honolulu, picked up a wounded, delirious castaway, alone on a small dismasted and water-logged boat which the experienced among her officers decided had been originally a large square-rigged Malayan proa, or prau, popularly known as a kapal. There was no water and no food in the boat, nothing of value, in fact, and the man in his fevered condition could give no coherent or intelligible account of himself.

From his ravings they could gather nothing definite. He babbled of angels and devils, and of each without rhyme or reason.

II

BARBARA LEMOYNE was not alone in her realization of Longfield's peculiar attractiveness. To a handsome face and a

graceful person were added brilliant wit and an irreproachable manner. The details sound effeminate, but there was no lack of strength and power about the man. He was an up-to-date "Admirable Crichton," who bore himself so easily, and was so unconscious of his qualifications that this perfection did not irritate. Women liked him better than men did. Perhaps men would have been more strongly drawn to him if he had not so obviously preferred womenkind. There was a little mystery about him, despite his frankness, which women sensed vaguely to the enhancement of his attractiveness.

Longfield had come to San Francisco with unexceptionable letters and had been received everywhere. With all doors open he had chosen to enter Barbara LeMoyne's more frequently than any other. Longfield was sometimes accused of being too entirely regulated, too conventional. Barbara LeMoyne was different. And the opposite attracted. Although her fine face was lacking in some of the attributes of classic beauty, it was none the less charming. She just escaped the perfection in which Longfield, who realized it all very well, reveled. Her mind was as good as his, but again different. She rejoiced in the odd, the unusual. Possessed of sufficient means to gratify her own inclinations she had the courage to gratify them. One of her friends, a crusty old bachelor, had carved on the chimney breast of his hunting lodge these words:

"This is my house; here I do what I damn please!"

The spirit of the rude phrase was her own. She did much as she pleased with life. Happily a certain native American rectitude kept her from depths others might have sounded, and presently society, which had at first marveled and then frowned, and next fought, came to accept her. She became the fashion, but without imitators. She lived her life and society was glad to share it on her own terms when she permitted that privilege.

She was a perfect representative of the imperfect, that is to say, the unconventional. Why she chose so to be she never explained. Mystery, in a woman, is at first attractive although it tends to become unbearable.

Longfield's experience with women had been great and varied. But amid the outward differences he had discovered a rooted sameness. That Barbara LeMoyne was really different, inwardly and spiritually different, appealed to him—not the spiritual side, Longfield cared little about that. And despite himself he loved her.

He had loved her from the moment he came upon her in the North Woods, neither expecting the other. She was camping there for pleasure, seeking in the wildness escape from convention which, however much she disdained it, she could not continually flout. He was seeking—well, certainly not a woman. The unexpected meeting added piquancy to the situation.

When he returned to San Francisco he awaited her coming with an eagerness he had never before experienced, though he had waited for many women in different parts of the world, and not a few had waited for him. He had presented his letters, had called properly, and encouraged by her welcome, he had become an habitu  of her domicile. He would not have believed it possible that he could care so much for anyone. But he could not be sure that she returned his passion.

As for her, she found herself wondering just how great was his appeal. Did she care as he did? Could she care? Did she wish to? She hesitated and was not lost because of her incertitude. She deliberated and could come to no conclusion. In some things she was the most practical of her sex. Whence came Longfield? From his conversation he had been everywhere, and therefore that gave her no clue. What was he doing in San Francisco? For the matter of that, what had he been doing up in the North

Woods when that equally unexpected meeting took place? Why did he linger on, her frequent visitor?

A less clear sighted person would have answered that she was the polestar of his attraction, but although she was too much a woman not to realize his growing passion she knew it was not that alone. At times he thought it was only she, but he was aroused from that temporary self-deception by the arrival of Keene.

It was weeks after he had been landed by the *Cambodia* at Honolulu for hospital treatment that Christopher Keene set foot in San Francisco. He was completely recovered from his wounds, no scar was visible. The deep cut on the head was concealed by his hair. He had shaved off his mustache and beard. Some of the signs of exposure and hardship which Barbara had noticed had disappeared. The long weeks in the hospital had cleared his complexion. There were some things written in his face which would never be erased, but much of his youth had returned.

When Longfield and Keene stood side by side it would be difficult to secure a greater contrast. In no way was Keene handsome. He did not barely escape it, like Barbara LeMoyné; he had no claim to it whatever. His features were harsh, he was even a little forbidding in his ruggedness. But he was strong, clear-eyed, firm mouthed. He was good to look at because one could see courage and determination and honesty in his personality. There was no apparent mystery about him.

No mystery? Certainly no outward and visible one—yet within! The man was a prey to anxiety and disappointment so great as to be almost unbearable. Yet such was his control that no outward evidence of the inward struggle was visible.

Longfield possessed that genius for repression also, but with a difference. Longfield buried his secrets, whatever

they were, as a blade is sheathed in velvet. Keene hid his under a granite rock. One saw instinctively that the velvet hid something. The granite rock only lay where it had been cast by nature and gave no sign of what it hid, or even that it hid anything.

As it happened, the secrets of both men concerned the same thing. Though they knew it not, they were engaged upon the same quest. And in the pursuit of it they were to come in contact with the same woman. But Barbara LeMoyné was quite unconscious of that fact. Longfield had a great advantage, for when she at last met Keene she supposed she had never before seen him. Yet she was vaguely conscious that he reminded her of something or somebody. The reminder was so faint, however, that she presently forgot it.

Keene was seeking a woman—a woman he did not know, whose name he had never heard; a woman whom he felt sure he could not recognize even should he find her. That she had been at one time on the Pacific Coast; that she was young and efficient; that she had the whitest neck and arms; that she had helped him—these made up the totality of his recollection. Not much on which to build a hope. Few facts on which to base a search. Yet he must find her.

He did not love her. Oh, no. But through her, and through her alone, could he achieve a certain design to which he had given himself wholeheartedly. In the attempt to bring about that ideal he had suffered and struggled amazingly. He had performed the incredible. Through difficulties inexpressible, over unknown lands, and across trackless seas with a single comrade of his race he had reached his goal. Step after step of the journey had been marked with the blood of men. He had lost his best friend on the way. And now, failing the discovery of the woman, or a miracle, he was halted on the verge of success. Miracles did not happen in

Keene's hard, adventurous career, so that to find the woman was his only recourse. Unwittingly she had his secret. Whether she concealed it in scabbard or under rock he must have it.

For Keene had forgotten where it was his Malays had attacked him! That blow on the head had done just that, nothing more. Everything else was clear to him. He could trace the whole terrible journey. Every desperate endeavor, every infinite hazard, every obstacle, natural and human, was etched upon his brain. He knew how, when the Russian Revolution occurred, he and young Seymour had fled from Baku, where he represented a great American corporation. He recalled the idea that had come to him as he drove his motorboat across the wind-lashed waters of the Caspian. He knew how, with Seymour's devoted backing, he had fought with the rude miners of the Urals, matching his cunning and wit and strength against theirs.

He could vividly recall the incredible route the Germans, who had gotten wind of his design just too late, had forced him to take by closing to him the ordinary routes. It would have been comparatively easy to have taken the trans-Siberian railway to Vladivostok. But that way was barred by the German influence. He laughed as he thought how he had outwitted them; how he had packed his precious cargo across the mountains, down the sea, over the desolate plateau of Turkestan via the ancient Oxus River, and into China, over the fearful horrors of the Baraghil pass.

He remembered how he had toiled up the historic Indus with an ever-changing set of bearers, spurred to terrific feats of progress in the wild Himalayas by the stern admonition and desperate energy of their master. Man after man had died. The way he had come was blazed with corpses, but he had kept on. And yet by each body, bleaching in the sun or freezing amid the snow, lay a weight of

precious cargo, to bring which no price had been too great to pay. What he had perforce left behind had been invaluable, but what he managed to carry on was enough.

From the Indus, he had crossed the mountains by ways never before trod of men, until he reached the head waters of the sacred Brahmaputra. From there on, his progress had been easier. He recollected the hot, feverish crawl along the east shores of the Bay of Bengal, the crossing of the Malay Peninsula, the careful avoidance everywhere of Europeans. He had escaped again and again from the network of spies and agents of Germany, who had been warned that he had been held back from the trans-Siberian Railway, and that he must eventually arrive somewhere on the Indian Ocean or the Pacific littoral. They had picked up his trail only to lose it and him when he embarked for that long voyage across the Pacific, from the perils of which even a spirit as hardy as that of Drake or Magellan might have shrunk. He had, in default of anything else, decked over and rebuilt a Malay kapal for the cruise—a vessel to make a real sailor laugh, yet it had served!

His design was temporarily to conceal his treasure somewhere on the shore, to take his Malay crew down to San Francisco, ship them back to Singapore, and then choose his own time and his own way to dispose of it.

On that voyage the greatest of calamities had befallen him. Young Seymour, so brave, so gallant, so faithful, had at last succumbed to the strains and the hardships that had almost broken down the rugged Keene himself. Keene remembered how they had buried the young man in the fog into which they had run a few days' sail from the Pacific Coast. He had said what prayers he could remember and improvise, as he launched into the dull gray sea the body of his faithful friend and fellow-workman in the great adventure, while the

Malays stood about, watchful and silent.

The fog had prevented him from getting an observation before he made that landing. He did not know upon what part of the shore his keel had grated. And then came the mutiny, the battle on the river bank. Po-Yanpen and Wan-Aman, taking advantage of his natural feeling of elation at the success of the achievement and the consequent failure of that eternal vigilance which is not only the price of success in high adventure, but of life also, had struck him down. Seymour had not been there to divide the watch.

He remembered everything up to the moment in which the cupidity of the semi-savages, who only reasoned that what had been hidden with such care must be valuable, had struck with sudden desperation to secure it. After that, he could recall only a ministering woman. But the place of it all had gone from him utterly. Rack his brains as he might, nothing but her presence came to him. A face seen dimly, unrecognizable, a white neck, two white arms, a kissed palm—God! It was maddening. She *must* be found. She must tell him. She must show him the way.

III

ALTHOUGH Keene had not lived in San Francisco for years he had kept up his membership in the Scholastic Club. Most of the men he had known in former days were gone, but some remained, and naturally he found there his only acquaintances. He made the club his home while he replenished his shattered finances from some early and fortunate investments and decided upon his next move. He considered and discarded many plans, and he rapidly regained his former health and energy. Finally he decided either to charter a launch and go up the coast examining every inlet or river mouth in the hope that one of them would quicken his recollection, or to go

inland, search for her camp and take his departure from it. Certainly women such as she would be rare and perhaps not so difficult of discovery. He had an indefinable feeling that she was no rude daughter of the wilds, but the educated, refined product of the city. For that reason he went about San Francisco constantly on the alert, scrutinizing every woman with his somewhat bold and very direct glance in the hope that happy chance might provide him with a clue. And of course in vain. The long arm of coincidence did not stretch that far. He met no one who in the least degree suggested her.

And he was in a great hurry, too. Time was vital. He could not wait. His country's need and his own desire for active service, which few could render better than he, made every hour of the utmost importance.

Longfield, also, was in a hurry. He was on the point of leaving San Francisco, despite the rather halting progress of his love affair, because of the pressing nature of his business. He did not wish to go. He had an energetic and capable man's horror of loose ends. He liked to finish every task, and with Barbara LeMoyne still unwon that endeavor could in no way be considered completed. But his superiors were imperative. After all, a little absence might be useful in enabling him to decide upon the depth and permanence of his feelings. His was a hazardous profession, for all its seeming quiet, but if he loved her after he parted from her he would manage somehow to come back. He had already done good service to his cause. He would be entitled to some consideration. His trunks were packed; he was ready to make his farewells to her and go when he met Keene at the club. That meeting and a cablegram he had just received changed his plans.

He had been properly introduced at the Scholastic Club and had made many friends. As it happened, until the cable

came he had never met, or even seen Keene, who kept mainly to himself. After the wire, which he carefully burned after he had read it, Longfield went out of his way to seek the man.

It was not difficult to strike up an acquaintance. One morning Keene missed the check that should have come with his order and spoke to one of the passing graybeards who had replaced younger servants, called to the front:

"Boy, bring me the chit."

Longfield was sitting near, reading and covertly watching. The slightly unfamiliar word gave him an opening. He rose and approached the engineer.

"Pardon me," he said, "but that form of address sounds good to me and I take the liberty of introducing myself. My name is Longfield—"

Keene glanced at him quickly, was attracted by the engaging frankness of the man, and seeing no reason for withholding the information, answered:

"My name is Keene; Christopher Keene."

"And you've lived in the East?"

"So many years that I'm almost a stranger at home."

"My case exactly. Though I have met so many charming people since I came West that it is hardly fair to say I am a stranger. I've lived in the East, too—" and by the East both men knew that New York was not meant, but the great Oriental land of mystery and charm across the Pacific. "It does me good to meet some one who knows what's out there. Did you come across recently?"

"On the last T. K. K. boat," was the answer, which was quite true, though of course she had only picked up Keene at Honolulu. "And you? How long since—"

"I think it was about six months ago that I left the Over-Seas Club at Hong-Kong," interrupted Longfield.

"I know the Over-Seas well," said Keene in turn, and reminiscing over common acquaintances and common ex-

periences the two men spent half a morning together. They were ill-sorted physically, yet perhaps because of their very difference they got along amazingly, as well as any two men, each resolved upon maintaining an impenetrable reserve upon certain matters, could get along. It is significant that most of the advances came from Longfield, who used every effort and every art to ingratiate himself with the other.

Miss LeMoyné found Longfield unusually agreeable about this time. There was an air of excitement about him, a foreshadowing of some coming triumph, which increased her interest in him. She began to consider him seriously. Yet really, save in so far as making the acquaintance of Keene was involved, he had made little real progress. For Keene made no attempt to get at Longfield's secret; did not apparently know, or, if he knew, care whether Longfield had a secret or not. And, while he talked freely of his own career and adventures, and exchanged all sorts of reminiscences with his new and agreeable friend, Keene easily avoided committing himself as to the more recent episodes of his career, and his present pressing affairs.

For one thing, certain little happenings had given Keene pause in the acquaintanceship which had been verging on intimacy. One morning one of the Scholastic's attendants had committed some venial fault of service. Longfield's eyes had suddenly flashed with passion. He had half risen from his chair in ill-restrained fury when he caught Keene's surprised glance. His face had smoothed at once and he had passed off the dereliction with some pleasant, pardoning word. And then the conversation had flowed on. But Keene had seen and he could not forget. Men who lived as he did in momentary peril are accustomed to note even trifles. That was the beginning of his suspicion of Longfield.

It only needed such a beginning to make him wary. And further, to disguise that wariness with an appearance of open reciprocity that promised much. He began to study Longfield, finding him not quite so admirable. Why, he could not say. There was nothing on which he could put his finger except that sudden outbreak of passion, which, to Longfield's credit, had been so entirely and promptly controlled.

There was, Keene noted, a peculiar nicety of pronunciation of certain words, an elaboration of lip movement, which reminded him of something or somebody; what or whom he could not decide. So he watched, and although he found out nothing, his suspicions grew. Longfield, from Keene's point of view, would bear watching, must be watched. On Keene's motion they became more friendly than ever. That was a great satisfaction, indeed, to Longfield. He sent not only a cablegram across the Pacific, but many wires to his superiors on the eastern seaboard, promising success if he were given time and a free hand.

His love affairs prospered extremely. Barbara LeMoyné had all but consented. It was foolish for a man engaged in his engrossing and very risky pursuit to encumber himself with a woman, and love affairs had been tabooed when he received his appointment, but he was human. She appealed to him as no other woman ever had or could. He took the bit in his teeth at last and offered himself to her. A decision thus forced upon her, she found herself strangely reluctant to make it. Why, she could not tell.

At any rate, she asked for time. She told him that she was giving a dinner to a number of her friends and at that dinner she would announce the engagement if she desired or decided to enter into it. With that he had to be content.

It was a large dinner party, and he asked her if he might bring to it a friend, a new acquaintance, indeed, but the most

congenial man he had met in San Francisco.

"Indeed," he said, "if your decision is as I hope and pray it may be, you will see a great deal more of him. I shall require his assistance, perhaps, in case—"

"Bring him by all means," she answered quickly, cutting off this approach to claiming her, "and remember that you are to say nothing till I give the word. The announcement, if any, must come from me!"

"I hear and obey." Perhaps it was the old world flavor of those words which made it not inappropriate for him to kiss her hand in an old world way, as he left her.

The fact of the matter was that Longfield was uneasy when Keene was out of his sight. And Keene felt something the same way.

"You will come, will you not, my friend?" Longfield concluded in a way that Keene felt was a little odd. Where had he seen those curious lip motions?

"The fact is," continued Longfield smoothly, "I rather expect that Miss LeMoyné, who gives the dinner, will have an important announcement to make concerning herself and me that evening."

His words and manner left no doubt as to the character of the expected announcement. Keene hastened to congratulate him, remarking in conclusion:

"But I am not even acquainted with the young lady. Her friends—"

"But you are my friend, is it not so? And I very much wish it."

Keene consented. He thought he would like to observe Longfield in society, and in the presence of the loved woman. It would give him a new view, and in a multiplicity of views, like counselors, was wisdom.

Afterward he would dismiss Longfield from consideration, for he was going north by rail and scour the coast on horseback. He had gotten the latitude and longitude of the point at which he had been picked up by the *Cambodia*. He

had made a careful study of wind, tide and sea. He had perused the weather bureau reports for the days involved, and the coast survey maps of the shore.

Thus he had something to go on. If he could not find the woman he might yet find the place of his buried treasure without her.

The second installment of this story will appear in the June Number of LIVE STORIES, on sale May 1.



GOOD-BY

By Edna Valentine Trapnell

THIS is good-by—and yet—and yet
 Throughout the space of all my days,
 I shall not utterly forget
 Your lips, your eyes, your quiet ways.

And never shall a summer pass,
 Sun-shot and silvered with the moon,
 But that the wraith of one that was
 Shall haunt me like an olden rune.

The days flit by on gray moth wings;
 Beneath them memory lies deep;
 They drift like leaves from other Springs
 Across the dream we might not keep.



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