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PARADISE GARDEN

THE SATIRICAL NARRATIVE OF A GREAT EXPERIMENT

BY
GEORGE GIBBS

AUTHOR OF THE YELLOW DOVE, ETC.

I have considered well his loss of time
And how he cannot be a perfect man
Not being tried and tutored in the world.
—TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM A. HOTTINGER

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"'Love!' he sneered ... 'I thought you'd say that.'"

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THE GREAT EXPERIMENT

It might be better if Jerry Benham wrote his own memoir, for no matter how veracious, this history must be more or less colored by the point of view of one irrevocably committed to an ideal, a point of view which Jerry at least would insist was warped by scholarship and stodgy by habit. But Jerry, of course, would not write it and couldn't if he would, for no man, unless lacking in sensibility, can write a true autobiography, and least of all could Jerry do it. To commit him to such a task would be much like asking an artist to paint himself into his own landscape. Jerry could have painted nothing but impressions of externals, leaving out perforce the portrait of himself which is the only thing that matters. So I, Roger Canby, bookworm, pedagogue and student of philosophy, now recite the history of the Great Experiment and what came of it.

It is said that Solomon and Job have best spoken of the misery of man, the former the most fortunate, the latter the most unfortunate of creatures. And yet it seems strange to me that John Benham, the millionaire, Jerry's father, cynic and misogynist, and Roger Canby, bookworm and pauper, should each have arrived, through different mental processes, at the same ideal and philosophy of life. We both disliked women, not only disliked but feared and distrusted them, seeing in the changed social order a menace to the peace of the State and the home. The difference between us was merely one of condition; for while I kept my philosophy secret, being by nature reticent and unassertive, John Benham had both the means and the courage to put his idealism into practice.

Life seldom makes rapid adjustments to provide for its mistakes, and surely only the happiest kind of accident could have thrown me into the breach when old John Benham died, for I take little credit to myself in saying that there are few persons who could have fitted so admirably into a difficult situation.

Curiously enough this happy accident had come from the most unexpected source. I had tried and failed at many things since leaving the University. I had corrected proofs in a publishing office, I had prepared backward youths for their exams, and after attempting life in a broker's office downtown, for which I was as little fitted as I should have been for the conquest of the Polar regions, I found myself one fine morning down to my last few dollars, walking the streets with an imminent prospect of speedy starvation. The fact of death, as an alternative to the apparently actual, did not disconcert me. I shouldn't have minded dying in the least, were it not for the fact that I had hoped before that event to have expounded for modern consumption certain theories of mine upon the dialectics of Hegel. As my money dwindled I was reduced to quite necessary economies, and while not what may be called a heavy eater, I am willing to admit that there were times when I felt distinctly empty. Curiously enough, my philosophy did little to relieve me of that physical condition, for as someone has said, "Philosophy is a good horse in the stable, but an arrant jade on a journey."

But it seems that the journeying of my jade was near its ending. For upon this morning, fortune threw me into the way of a fellow who had been in my class at the University, who was to be my *deus ex machina*. No two persons in the world could

have been more dissimilar than "Jack" Ballard and I, and yet, perhaps for that reason, there had always been a kind of affinity between us. He was one of the wealthiest men in my class and was now, as he gleefully informed me, busily engaged clipping coupons in his father's office, "with office hours from two to three some Thursdays." Of course, that was his idea of a joke, for it seems quite obvious that a person who gave so little time to his business had better have kept no hours at all. He greeted me warmly and led me into his club, which happened to be near by, where over the lunch table he finally succeeded in eliciting the fact that I was down to my last dollar with prospects far from encouraging.

"Good old Pope!" he cried, clapping me on the back. "Pope" was my pseudonym at the University, conferred in a jocular moment by Ballard himself on account of a fancied resemblance to Urban the Eighth. "Just the man! Wonder why I didn't think of you before!" And while I wondered what he was coming at, "How would, you like to make a neat five thousand a year?"

I laughed him off, not sure that this wasn't a sample of the Ballard humor.

"Anything," I said, trying to smile, "short of murder—"

"Oh, I am not joking!" he went on with an encouraging flash of seriousness. "Five thousand a year cool, and no expenses—livin' on the fat of the land, with nothin' to do but—"

He broke off suddenly and grasped me by the arm.

"Did you ever hear of old John Benham, the multi-millionaire?" he asked. I remarked that my acquaintance with millionaires, until that moment, had not been large.

"Oh, of course," he laughed, "if I had mentioned Xenophon, you'd have pricked up your ears like an old war horse. But John Benham, as a name to conjure with, means nothing to you. You must know then that John Benham was for years the man of mystery of Wall Street. Queer old bird! Friend of the governor's, or at least as much of a friend of the governor's as he ever was of anybody. Made a pot of money in railroads. Millions! Of course, if you've never heard of Benham you've never heard of the Wall."

I hadn't.

"Well, the Benham Wall in Greene County is one of the wonders of the age. It's nine feet high, built of solid masonry and encloses five thousand acres of land."

Figures meant nothing to me and I told him so.

"The strange thing about it is that there's no mystery at all. The old man had no secrets except in business and no past that anybody could care about. But he was a cold-blooded proposition. No man ever had his confidence, no woman ever had his affection except his wife, and when she died all that was human in him was centered on his son, the sole heir to twenty millions. Lucky little beggar. What?"

"I'm not so sure," I put in slowly.

"Now this is where you come in," Ballard went on quickly. "It seems that inside his crusty shell old Benham was an idealist of sorts with queer ideas about the raising of children. His will is a wonder. He directs his executors (the governor's one of six, you know) to bring up his boy inside that stone wall at Horsham Manor, with no knowledge of the world except what can be gotten from an expurgated edition of the classics. He wants him brought to manhood as nearly as can be made, a perfect specimen of the human male animal without one thought of sex. It's a weird experiment, but I don't see why it shouldn't be interesting."

"Interesting!" I muttered, trying to conceal my amazement and delight.

"The executors must proceed at once. The boy is still under the care of a governess. On the twelfth of December he will be ten years of age. The woman is to go and a man takes her place. I think I can put you in. Will you take it?"

"I?" I said, a little bewildered. "What makes you think I'm qualified for such an undertaking?"

"Because you were the best scholar in the class, and because you're a blessed philosopher with leanings toward altruism. A poor helpless little millionaire with no one to lean on must certainly excite your pity. You're just the man for the job, I tell you. And if you said you'd do it, you'd put it over."

"And if I couldn't put it over?" I laughed. "A growing youth isn't a fifteen-pound shot or a football, Ballard."

"You could if you wanted to. Five thousand a year isn't to be sneezed at."

"I assure you that I've never felt less like sneezing in my life, but—"

"Think, man," he urged, "all expenses paid, a fine house, horses, motors, the life of a country gentleman. In short, your own rooms, time to read yourself stodgy if you like, and a fine young cub to build in your own image."

"Mine?" I gasped.

He laughed.

"Good Lord, Pope! You always did hate 'em, you know."

"Hate? Who?"

"Women."

I felt myself frowning.

"Women! No, I do not love women and I have some reasons for believing that women do not love me. I have never had any money and my particular kind of pulchritude doesn't appeal to them. Hence their indifference. Hence mine. Like begets like, Jack."

He laughed.

"I have reasons for believing the antipathy is deeper than that."

I shrugged the matter off. It is one which I find little pleasure in discussing.

"You may draw whatever inference you please," I finished dryly.

He lighted a cigarette and inhaled it jubilantly.

"Don't you see," he said, "that it all goes to show that you're precisely the man the governor's looking for? What do you say?"

I hesitated, though every dictate of inclination urged. Here was an opportunity to put to the test a most important theory of the old Socratic doctrine, that true knowledge is to be elicited from within and is to be sought for in ideas and not in particulars of sense. What a chance! A growing youth in seclusion. Such a magnificent seclusion! Where I could try him in my own alembic! Still I hesitated. The imminence of such good fortune made me doubt my own efficiency.

"Suppose I was the wrong man," I quibbled for want of something better to say.

"The executors will have to take their chance on that," he said, rising with the air of a man who has rounded out a discussion. "Come! Let's settle the thing."

Ballard had always had a way with him, a way as foreign to my own as the day from night. From my own point of view I had always held Jack lightly, and yet I had never disliked him—nor did I now—for there was little doubt of his friendliness and sincerity. So I rose and followed him, my docility the philosophy of a full stomach plus the chance of testing the theory of probabilities; for to a man who for six years had reckoned life by four walls of a room and a shelf of books this was indeed an adventure. I was already meshed in the loom of destiny. He led me to a large automobile of an atrocious red color which was standing at the curb, and in this we were presently hurled through the crowded middle city to the lower part of the town, which, it is unnecessary for me to say, I cordially detested, and brought up before a building, the entire lower floor of which was given over to the opulent offices of Ballard, Wrenn and Halloway.

Ballard the elder was tall like his son, but here the resemblance ceased, for while Ballard the younger was round of visage and jovial, the banker was thin of face and repressive. He had a long, accipitrine nose which imbedded itself in his bristling white mustache, and he spoke in crisp staccato notes as though each intonation and breath were carefully measured by their monetary value. He paid out to me in cash a half an hour, during which he questioned and I replied while Jack grinned in the background. And at the end of that period of time the banker rose and dismissed me with much the air of one who has perused a document and filed it in the predestined pigeonhole. I felt that I had been rubber-stamped, docketed and passed into oblivion. What he actually said was:

"Thanks, I'll write. Good afternoon."

The vision of the Great Experiment which had been flitting in rose-color before my eyes, was as dim as the outer corridor where I was suddenly aware of Jack Ballard's voice at my ear and his friendly clutch upon my elbow.

"You'll do," he laughed. "I was positive of it."

"I can't imagine how you reach that conclusion," I put in rather tartly, still reminiscent of the rubber stamp.

"Oh," he said, his eye twinkling, "simplest thing in the world. The governor's rather brief with those he doesn't like."

"Brief! I feel as though I'd just emerged from a glacial douche."

"Oh, he's nippy. But he never misses a trick, and he got your number all O.K."

As we reached the street I took his hand.

"Thanks, Ballard," I said warmly. "It's been fine of you, but I'm sorry that I can't share your hopes."

"Rot! The thing's as good as done. There's another executor or two to be consulted, but they'll be glad enough to take the governor's judgment. You'll hear from him tomorrow. In the meanwhile," and he thrust a paper into my hands, "read this. It's interesting. It's John Benham's brief for masculine purity with a few remarks (not taken from Hegel) upon the education and training of the child."

We had reached the corner of the street when he stopped and took out his watch.

"Unfortunately this is the Thursday that I work," he laughed, "and it's past two o'clock, so good-by. I'll stop in for you tomorrow," and with a flourish of the hand he left me.

Still dubious as to the whole matter, which had left me rather bewildered, when I reached my shabby room I took out the envelope which Ballard had handed me and read the curious paper that it contained.

As I began reading this remarkable document (neatly typed and evidently copied from the original in John Benham's own hand) I recognized some of the marks of the Platonic philosophy and read with immediate attention. Before I had gone very far it was quite clear to me that the pedagogue who took upon himself the rearing of the infant Benham, must himself be a creature of infinite wisdom and discretion. As far as these necessary qualifications were concerned, I saw no reason why I should refuse. The old man's obvious seriousness of purpose interested me.

"It is my desire that my boy, Jeremiah, be taught simple religious truths and then simple moral truths, learning thereby insensibly the lessons of good manners and good taste. In his reading of Homer and Hesiod the tricks and treacheries of the gods are to be banished, the terrors of the world below to be dispelled, and the misbehavior of the Homeric heroes are to be censured.

"If there is such a thing as original sin—and this I beg leave to doubt, having looked into the eyes of my boy and failed to find it there—then teaching can eradicate it, especially teaching under such conditions as those which I now impose. The person who will be chosen by my executors for the training of my boy will be first of all a man of the strictest probity. He will assume this task with a grave sense of his responsibility to me and to his Maker. If after a proper period of time he does not discover in his own heart a sincere affection for my child, he will be honest enough to confess the truth, and be discharged of the obligation. For it is clear that without love, such an experiment is foredoomed to failure. To a man such as my mind has pictured, affection here will not be difficult, for nature has favored Jerry with gifts of mind and body."

Everywhere in John Benham's instructions there were signs of a deep and corroding cynicism which no amount of worldly success had been able to dispel. Everywhere could be discovered a hatred of modern social forms and a repugnance for the modern woman, against whom he warns the prospective tutor in language which is as unmistakable as the Benham Wall. It pleased me to find at least one wise man who agreed with me in this particular. Until the age of twenty-one, woman was to be taboo for Jerry Benham, not only her substance, but her essence. Like the mention of hell to ears polite, she was forbidden at Horsham Manor. No woman was to be permitted to come upon the estate in any capacity. The gardeners, grooms, gamekeepers, cooks, house servants—all were to be men at good wages chosen for their discretion in this excellent conspiracy. The penalty for infraction of this rule of silence was summary dismissal.

I read the pages through until the end, and then sat for a long while thinking, the wonderful possibilities of the plan taking a firmer hold upon me. The Perfect Man! And I, Roger Canby, should make him.

CHAPTER II

JERRY

With Ballard the elder, to whom and to those plutocratic associates, as had been predicted, my antecedents and acquirements had proven satisfactory, I journeyed on the twelfth of December to Greene County in the Ballard limousine. A rigorous watch was kept upon the walls of Horsham Manor, and in response to the ring of the

chauffeur at the solid wooden gates at the lodge, a small window opened and a red visage appeared demanding credentials. Ballard put the inquisitor to some pains, testing his efficiency, but finally produced his card and revealed his identity, after which the gates flew open and we entered the forbidden ground.

It was an idyllic spot, as I soon discovered, of fine rolling country, well wooded and watered, the road of macadam, rising slowly from the entrance gates, turning here and there through a succession of natural parks, along the borders of a lake of considerable size, toward the higher hills at the further end of the estate, among which, my companion told me, were built the Manor house and stables. Except for the excellent road itself, no attempt had been made to use the art of the landscape gardener in the lower portion of the tract, which had been left as nature had made it, venerable woodland, with a well-tangled undergrowth, where rabbits, squirrels and deer abounded, but as we neared the hills, which rose with considerable dignity against the pale, wintry sky, the signs of man's handiwork became apparent. A hedge here, a path there, bordered with privet or rhododendron; a comfortable looking farmhouse, commodious barns and well-fenced pastures, where we passed a few men who touched their caps and stared after us.

"It's lucky you care nothing for women, Canby," said Mr. Ballard crisply; "this monastic idea may not bother you."

"It doesn't in the least, Mr. Ballard," I said dryly. "I shall survive the ordeal with composure."

He glanced at me, smiled and then went on.

"Except for the presence of Miss Redwood, who goes today, the new regulation has been in force here for a month. The farmers and gamekeepers are all bachelors. We have an excellent steward, also a bachelor. You and he will understand each other. In all things that pertain to the boy he is under your orders. Questions of authority where you differ are to be referred to me."

"I understand. I am not difficult to get on with."

My employer had described to me thoroughly but quite impersonally all the conditions of his trust and mine, but had made no comments which by the widest stretch of imagination could be construed into opinions. He gave me the impression then as he did later that he was carrying out strictly the letter of his instructions from the dead. He had a face graven into austere lines, which habit had schooled into perfect obedience to his will. He might have believed the experiment to which he was committed a colossal joke, and no sign of his opinion would be reflected in his facial expression, which was, save on unimportant matters, absolutely unchanging. Nor did he seem to care what my own thoughts might be in regard to the matter, though I had not refrained from expressing my interest in the project. My character, my reputation for conscientiousness, my qualifications for the position were all that seemed to concern him. I was merely a piece of machinery, the wheels of which he was to set in motion, which would perform its allotted task to his satisfaction.

The road soon reached an eminence from which Horsham Manor was visible, a fine Georgian house set handsomely enough in a cleft of the hills, before which were broad lawns that sloped to the south and terminated at the borders of a stream which meandered through a rocky bed to the lake below. Wealth such as this had never awed me. John Benham with all his stores of dollars had been obliged to come at last to a penurious philosopher to solve for his son the problem of life that had baffled the father. So intent was I upon the house which was to be my home that I caught but a glimpse of the fine valley of meadow and wood which ended in the faint purplish hills, beyond which somewhere was the Hudson River.

It was evident that our arrival had been telephoned from the lodge at the gate, for as the machine drew up at the main doorway of the house a servant in livery appeared and opened the door.

"Ah, Christopher," said my companion. "Is Mr. Radford about?"

"Yes, sir. He'll be up in a minute, sir."

"This is Mr. Canby, Christopher, Master Jeremiah's new tutor."

"Yes, sir, you'll find Miss Redwood and Master Jerry in the library."

We went up the steps while the aged butler (who had lived with John Benham) followed with the valises, and were ushered into the library, where my pupil and his governess awaited us.

I am a little reluctant to admit at this time that my earliest impression of the subject of these memoirs was disappointing. Perhaps the dead man's encomiums had raised my hopes. Perhaps the barriers which hedged in this most exclusive of youngsters had increased his importance in my thoughts. What I saw was a boy of ten, well grown for his years, who ambled forward rather sheepishly and gave me a moist and

rather flabby hand to shake.

He was painfully embarrassed. If I had been an ogre and Jerry the youth allotted for his repast, he could not have shown more distress. He was distinctly nursery-bred and, of course, unused to visitors, but he managed a smile, and I saw that he was making the best of a bad job. After the preliminaries of introduction, amid which Mr. Radford, the steward of the estate, appeared, I managed to get the boy aside.

"I feel a good deal like the Minotaur, Jerry. Did you ever hear of the Minotaur?"

He hadn't, and so I told him the story. "But I'm not going to eat *you*," I laughed.

I had broken the ice, for a smile, a genuine joyous smile, broke slowly and then flowed in generous ripples across his face.

"You're different, aren't you?" he said presently, his brown eyes now gravely appraising me.

"How different, Jerry?" I asked.

He hesitated a moment and then:

"I—I thought you'd come all in black with a lot of grammar books under your arms."

"I don't use 'em," I said. "I'm a boy, just like you, only I've got long trousers on. We're not going to bother about books for awhile."

He still inspected me as though he wasn't quite sure it wasn't all a mistake. And then again:

"Can you talk Latin?"

"Bless you, I'm afraid not."

"Oh!" he sighed, though whether in relief or disappointment I couldn't say.

"But you can do sums in your head and spell hippopotamus?"

"I might," I laughed. "But I wouldn't if I didn't have to."

"But *I'll* have to, won't I?"

"Oh, some day."

"I'm afraid *I* never can," he sighed again.

I began to understand now. His mind was feminine and at least three years backward. There wasn't a mark of the boy of ten about him. But I liked his eyes. They were wide and inquiring. It wouldn't be difficult to gain his confidence.

"Are you sorry Miss Redwood is going?" I asked him.

"Yes. She plays games."

"I know some games, too—good ones."

He brightened, but said nothing for a moment, though I saw him stealing a glance at me. Whatever the object of his inspection, I seemed to have passed it creditably, for he said rather timidly:

"Would you like to see my bull pup?"

It was the first remark that sounded as though it came from the heart of a real boy. I had won the first line of entrenchments around Jerry's reserve. When a boy asks you to see his bull pup he confers upon you at once the highest mark of his approval.

I only repeat this ingenuous and unimportant conversation to show my first impression of what seemed to me then to be a rather commonplace and colorless boy. I did not realize then how strong could be the effect of such an environment. Miss Redwood, as I soon discovered, was a timid, wilting individual, who had brought him successfully through the baby diseases and had taught him the elementary things, because that was what she was paid for, corrected his table manners and tried to make him the kind of boy that she would have preferred to be herself had nature fortunately not decided the matter otherwise, and chameleon-like, Jerry reflected her tepor, her supineness and femininity. She recounted his virtues with pride, while I questioned her, hoping against hope to hear of some prank, the breaking of window-panes, the burning of a haystack or the explosion of a giant cracker under the cook. But all to no purpose.

So far as I could discover, he had never so much as pulled the tail of a cat. As old John Benham had said, of original sin he had none.

But my conviction that the boy had good stuff in him was deepened on the morrow, when, banishing books, I took him for a breather over hill and dale, through wood and underbrush, three miles out and three miles in. I told him stories as we walked

and showed him how the Indians trailed their game among the very hills over which we plodded. I told him that a fine strong body was the greatest thing in the world, a possession to work for and be proud of. His muscles were flabby, I knew, but I put him a brisk pace and brought him in just before lunch, red of cheek, bright of eye, and splashed with mud from head to foot. I had learned one of the things I had set out to discover. He would do his best at whatever task I set him.

I have not said that he was a handsome boy, for youth is amorphous and the promise of today is not always fulfilled by the morrow. Jerry's features were unformed at ten and, as has already been suggested, made no distinct impression upon my mind. Whatever his early photographs may show, at least they gave no sign of the remarkable beauty of feature and lineament which developed in his adolescence. Perhaps it was that I was more interested in his mind and body and what I could make them than in his face, which, after all, was none of my concern.

That I was committed to my undertaking from the very beginning will soon be evident. Before three weeks had passed Jerry began to awake and to develop an ego and a personality. If I had thought him unmagnetic at first, he quickly showed me my mistake. His imagination responded to the slightest mental touch, too quickly even for the work I had in mind for him. He would have pleased me better if he had been a little slower to catch the impulse of a new impression. But I understood. He had been starved of the things which were a boy's natural right and heritage, and he ate and drank eagerly of the masculine fare I provided. He had shed a few tears at Miss Redwood's departure and I liked him for them, for they showed his loyalty, but he had no more games of the nursery nor the mawkish sentimentality that I found upon the nursery shelves. I had other plans for Jerry. John Benham should have his wish. I would make Jerry as nearly the Perfect Man as mortal man could make God's handiwork. Spiritually he should grow "from within," directed by me, but guided by his own inner light. Physically he should grow as every well-made boy should grow, sturdy in muscle and bone, straight of limb, deep of chest, sound of mind and strong of heart. I would make Jerry a Greek.

Perhaps these plans may seem strange coming from one who had almost grown old before he had been young. But I had made sure that Jerry should profit by my mistakes, growing slowly, built like the Benham Wall, of material that should endure the sophistries of the world and remain unbroken.

I worked Jerry hard that first winter and spring, and his physical condition showed that I had no need to fear for his health. And when the autumn came I decided to bring him face to face with nature when she is most difficult. I was a good woodsman, having been born and bred in the northern part of the state, and until I went to the University had spent a part of each year in the wilderness. We left Horsham Manor one October day, traveling light, and made for the woods. We were warmly clad, but packed no more than would be essential for existence. A rifle, a shotgun, an ax, and hunting knives were all that we carried besides tea, flour, a side of bacon, the ammunition and implements for cooking. By night we had built a rough shack and laid our plans for a permanent cabin of spruce logs, which we proposed to erect before the snow flew. Game was abundant, and before our bacon was gone our larder was replenished. I had told Radford of our plans and the gamekeepers were instructed to give us a wide berth. Jerry learned to shoot that year, not for fun, but for existence, for one evening when we came in with an empty game bag we both went to our blankets hungry. The cabin rose slowly, and the boy learned to do his share of work with the ax. He was naturally clever with his hands, and there was no end to his eagerness. He was living in a new world, where each new day brought some new problem to solve, some difficulty to be surmounted. He had already put aside childish things and had entered early upon a man's heritage. There are persons who will say that I took great risks in thus exposing Jerry while only in his eleventh year, but I can answer by the results achieved. We lived in the woods from the fifteenth of October until a few days before Christmas. During that time we had built a cabin, ten feet by twelve, with a stone fireplace and a roof of clay; had laid a line of deadfalls, and rabbit snares; had made a pair of snowshoes and a number of vessels of birch bark, and except for the tea and flour had been self-supporting, items compensated for by the value of our labors.

In that time we had two snows, one a severe one, but our cabin roof was secure and we defied it. Jerry wanted to stay at the cabin all winter, a wish that I might easily have shared, for the life in the open and the companionship of the boy had put new marrow into my dry bones. I had smuggled into camp three books, "Walden," "Rolf in the Woods" and "Treasure Island," one for Jerry's philosophy, one for his practical existence and one for his imagination. In the evenings sometimes I read while Jerry whittled, and sometimes Jerry read while I worked at the snowshoes or the vessels of birch bark.

"In the evenings sometimes I read while Jerry whittled."

In those two months was formed the basis of Jerry's idea of life as seen through the philosophy of Roger Canby. We had many talks, and Jerry asked many questions, but I answered them all, rejoicing in his acuteness in following a line of thought to its conclusion, a procedure which, as I afterward discovered, was to cause me anxious moments. "Walden" made him thoughtful, but he caught its purpose and understood its meaning. "Rolf in the Woods" made his eyes bright with the purpose of achievement in woodcraft and a desire (which I suppressed) to stalk and kill a deer. But "Treasure Island" touched some deeper chord in his nature than either of the other books had done. He followed Jim and the Squire and John Silver in the *Hispaniola* with glowing eyes.

"But are there bad men like that now out in the world, Mr. Canby?" he broke in excitedly.

"There are bad men in the world, Jerry," I replied coolly.

"Like John Silver?"

"Not precisely. Silver's only a character. This didn't really happen, you know, Jerry. It's fiction."

"Fiction!"

"A story, like Grimm's tales."

"Oh!" His jaw dropped and he stared at me. "What a pity!"

I had wanted to stir in him a knowledge of evil and chose the picturesque as being the least unpleasant. But he couldn't believe that old John Silver and the Squire and Benn Gunn hadn't been real people. The tale dwelt in his mind for days, but the final defeat of the mutineers seemed to satisfy him as to the intention of the narrative.

"If there are evil men in the world like those mutineers, Mr. Canby, it must be a pretty bad place to live in," was the final comment, and I made no effort to undeceive him.

CHAPTER III

JERRY GROWS

It is not my intention to dwell too long upon the first stages of my tutorship, which

presented few difficulties not easily surmounted, but it is necessary in order to understand Jerry's character that I set down a few facts which show certain phases of his development. Of his physical courage, at thirteen, I need only relate an incident of one of our winter expeditions. We were hunting coons one night with the dogs, a collie and the bull pup, which now rejoiced in the name of Skookums, already mentioned. The dogs treed their game three miles from the Manor house, and when we came up were running around the tree, whimpering and barking in a high state of excitement. The night was dark and the branches of the tree were thick, so we could see nothing, but Jerry clambered up, armed with a stout stick, and disappeared into the gloom overhead.

"Do you see him?" I called.

"I see something, but it looks too big for a coon," he returned.

"What does it look like?"

"It looks more like a cat, with queer-looking ears."

"You'd better come down then, Jerry," I said quickly.

"It looks like a lynx," he called again, quite unperturbed.

It was quite possible that he was right, for in this part of the Catskill country lynxes were still plentiful.

"Then come down at once," I shouted. "He may go for you."

"Oh, I'm not worried about that. I have my hunting knife," he said coolly.

"Come down, do you hear?" I commanded.

"Not until he does," he replied with a laugh.

I called again. Jerry didn't reply, for just then there was a sudden shaking of the dry leaves above me, the creaking of a bough and the snarl of a wild animal, and the sound of a blow.

"Jerry!" I cried. No reply, but the sound of the struggle overhead increased, dreadful sounds of snarling and of scratching, but no sound of Jerry. Fearful of imminent tragedy, I climbed quickly, amid the uproar of the dogs, and, knife in hand, had got my feet an the lower branches, when a heavy weight shot by me and fell to the ground. Thank God, not the boy!

"Jerry!" I cried again, clambering upward.

"A-all r-right, Mr. Canby," I heard. "You're safe, not hurt?"

"I'm all right, I think. Just—just scratched."

By this time I had reached him. He was braced in the crotch of a limb, leaning against the tree trunk still holding his hunting knife. His coat was wet and I guessed at rather than saw the pallor of his face Below were the sounds of the dogs worrying at the animal.

"I—I guess they've finished him," said Jerry coolly sheathing his knife.

"It's lucky he didn't finish *you*," I muttered. "You're sure you're not hurt?"

"Oh, no."

"Can you get down alone?"

"Yes, of course."

But I helped him down, nevertheless, and he reached the ground in safety, where I saw that his face at least had escaped damage. But the sleeve of his coat was torn to ribbons, and the blood was dripping from his finger ends.

"Come," I said, taking his arm, "we'll have to get you attended to." And then severely: "You disobeyed me, Jerry. Why didn't you come down?"

He hesitated a moment, smiling, and then: "I had no idea a lynx was so large."

"It's a miracle," I said in wonder at his escape. "How did you hang on?"

"I saw him spring and braced myself in time," he said simply, "and putting my elbow over my head, struck with my knife when he was on me—two, three, many times—until he let go. But I was glad, very glad when he fell."

I drove the dogs away, lifted the dead beast over my shoulder and led the way to the dog cart, which we had left in the road half a mile off, reaching the Manor house very bloody but happy. But the happiest of the lot of us, even including Skookums, the bull pup, was Jerry himself at the sight under the lamplight of the formidable size of his dead enemy. But I led Jerry at once upstairs, where I stripped him and took account

of his injuries.

His left arm was bitten twice and his neck and shoulder badly torn, but he had not whimpered, nor did he now when I bathed and cauterized his wounds. Whatever pain he felt, he made no sign, and I knew that by inference my night-talks by the campfire had borne fruit. Old Christopher, the butler, to whom the Great Experiment was a mystery, hovered in the background with towels and lotions, timidly reproachful, until Jerry laughed at him and sent him to bed, muttering something about the queer goings on at Horsham Manor.

This incident is related to show that Jerry had more courage than most boys of his years. Part of it was inherent, of course, but most of it was born of the habit, learned early, to be sure of himself in any emergency. There was little doubt in my mind that there was some of the stuff in Jerry of which heroes are made. I thought so then, for I was proud of my handiwork. I did not know, alas! to what tests my philosophy and John Benham's were to be subjected. All of which goes to show that in running counter to human nature the wisest plans, the greatest sagacity, are as chaff before the winds of destiny. But to continue:

The following summer Jerry gave further proofs of his presence of mind in an accident of which I was the victim. For while trudging with Jerry along a rocky hillside I stepped straight into the death trap of a rattlesnake. He struck me below the knee, and we were a long way from help. But the boy was equal to the emergency. Quite coolly he killed the snake with a club. I fortunately kept my head and directed him, though he knew just what to do. With his hunting knife he cut my trouser leg away and double gashed my leg where the fangs had entered, then sucked the wound and spat out the poison until the blood had ceased to flow. Then he quickly made a tourniquet of his handkerchief and fastened it just above the wound, and, making me comfortable, he ran the whole distance to the house, bringing a motor car and help in less than an hour. There isn't the slightest doubt that Jerry saved my life on this occasion just as the following winter I saved him from death at the horns of a mad buck deer.

You will not wonder therefore that the bond of affection and reliance was strong between us. I gave Jerry of the best that was in me, and in return I can truly say that not once did he disappoint me.

In addition to the woodlore that I taught him, I made him a good shot with rifle and revolver. I had men from the city from time to time, the best of their class, who taught him boxing and fencing. I had a gymnasium built with Mr. Ballard's consent, and a swimming pool, which kept him busy after the lesson hour. At the age of fifteen Jerry was six feet tall and weighed one hundred and sixty-five pounds, all bone and muscle. In the five years since I had been at Horsham Manor there had not been a day when he was ill, and except for an occasional accident such as the adventure with the lynx, not one when I had called in the services of a doctor. Physically at least I had so far succeeded, for in this respect Jerry was perfection.

As to his mind, perhaps my own ideals had made me too exacting. According to my carefully thought out plans, scholarship was to be Jerry's buckler and defense against the old Adam. God forbid that I should have planned, as Jack Ballard would have had it, to build Jerry in my own image, for if scholarship had been my own refuge it had also done something to destroy my touch with human kind. It was the quality of sympathy in Jerry which I had lacked, the love for and confidence in every human being with whom he came into contact which endeared him to every person on the place. From Radford to Christopher, throughout the house, stables and garage, down to the humblest hedge-trimmer, all loved Jerry and Jerry loved them all. He had that kind of nature. He couldn't help loving those about him any more than he could help breathing, and yet it must not be supposed that the boy was lacking in discernment. Our failings, weaknesses and foibles were a constant source of amusement to him, but his humor was without malice and his jibes were friendly, and he ran the gamut of my own exposed nerve pulps with such joyous consideration that I came to like the operation. He loved me and I knew it.

But nothing could make him love his Latin grammar. He worried through arithmetic and algebra and blarneyed his French and German tutors into making them believe he knew more than he did, but the purely scientific aspects of learning did not interest him. It was only when he knew enough to read the great epics in the original that my patience had its reward. The Iliad, the Odyssey, the Aeneid held him in thrall, and by some magic eliminated at a bound the purely mechanical difficulties which had fettered him. Hector, Achilles, Agamemnon, Ulysses—Jerry was each of these in turn, lacking only the opportunity to vanquish heroic foes or capture impregnable cities.

I had not censored the Homeric gods, as Jerry's father had commanded, and my temerity led to difficulties. It began with Calypso and Ulysses and did not even end when Dido was left alone upon the shores of Carthage.

"I don't understand it at all," he said one day with a wrinkled brow, "how a man of

the caliber of Ulysses could stay so long the prisoner of Calypso, a woman, when he wanted to go home. It's a pretty shabby business for a hero and a demigod. A woman!" he sneered, "I'd like to see any woman keep me sitting in a cave if I wanted to go anywhere!"

His braggadicio was the full-colored boyish reflection of the Canby point of view. I had merely shrugged woman out of existence. Now Jerry castigated her.

"What could she do?" he went on scornfully. "She couldn't shoot or run or fight. All she did was to lie around or strut about with a veil around her head and a golden girdle (sensible costume!) and serve the hero with ambrosia and ruddy nectar. I've never eaten ambrosia, but I'm pretty sure it was some sweet, sticky stuff, like *her*." There is no measure for the contempt of his accents.

"She could swim," I ventured timidly.

"Swim! Even a fish can swim!"

I don't know why, but at this conversation, the first of Jerry's maturer years in which the topic had been woman, I felt a slight tremor go over me. Jerry was too good to look at. I fancied that there were many women who would have liked to see the flash of his eye at that moment and to meet his challenge with their wily arts. In the pride of his masculine strength and capacity he scorned them as I had taught him. I had done my work well. Had I done it too well?'

"What are women anyway?" he stormed at me again. "For what good are they? To wash linen and have white arms like Nausicaa? Who cares whether her arms were white or not? They're always weeping because they're loved or raging because they're not. Love! Always love! I love you and Christopher and Radford and Skookums, but I'm not always whining about it. What's the use? Those things go without saying. They're simply what are in a fellow's heart, but he doesn't talk about them."

"Quite right. Jerry. Let's say no more about it."

"I'm glad there are no women around here, but now that I come to think of it, I don't see why there shouldn't be."

"Your father liked men servants best. He believed them to be more efficient."

"Oh, yes, of course," and then, suddenly: "When I go out beyond the wall I'll have to see them and talk to them, won't I?"

"Not if you don't want to."

"Well, I don't want to."

He paused a second and then went on. "But I *am* a little curious about them. Of course, they're silly and useless and flabby, but it seems queer that there are such a lot of 'em. If they're no good, why don't they pass out of existence? That's the rule of life, you tell me, the survival of the fittest. If they're not fit they ought to have died out long ago."

"You can't keep them from being born, Jerry," I laughed.

"Well," he said scornfully, "it ought to be prevented."

I made a pretense of cutting the leaves of a book. He was going too far. I temporized.

"Ah, they're all right, Jerry," I said with some magnificence, "if they do their duty. Some are much better than others. Now, Miss Redwood, for instance, your governess. She was kind, willing and affectionate."

"Oh, yes," he said, "she was all right, but she wasn't like a man."

I had him safe again. Physical strength and courage at this time were his fetish. But he was still thoughtful.

"Sometimes I think, Roger" (he called me Roger now, for after all I was more like an elder brother than a father to him), "sometimes I think that things are too easy for me; that I ought to be out doing my share in the work of the world."

"Oh, that will come in time. If you think things are too easy, I might manage to make them a little harder."

He laughed affectionately and clapped me on the shoulder.

"Oh, no, you don't, old Dry-as-dust. Not books. That isn't what I meant. I mean life, struggles against odds. I've just been wondering what chance I'd have to get, along by myself, without a lot of people waiting on me."

"I've tried to show you, Jerry. You can go into the woods with a gun and an ax and exist in comfort."

"Yes, but the world isn't all woods; and axes and guns aren't the only weapons."

"But the principle is the same."

He flashed a bright glance at me.

"Flynn told me yesterday that I could make good in the prize ring if I'd let him take me in hand."

(The deuce he had! Flynn would lose his engagement as a boxing teacher if he didn't heed my warnings better.)

"The prize ring is not what you're being trained for, my young friend," I said with some asperity.

"What then?" he asked.

"First of all I hope I'm training you to be a gentleman. And that means—"

"Can't a boxer be a gentleman?" he broke in quickly.

"He might be, I suppose, but he usually isn't." He was forcing me into an attitude of priggishness which I regretted.

"Then why," he persisted, "are you having me taught to box?"

"Chiefly to make your muscles hard, to inure you to pain, to teach you self-reliance."

"But I oughtn't to learn to box then, if it's going to keep me from being a gentleman. What is a gentleman, Roger?"

I tried to think of a succinct generalization and failed, falling back instinctively upon safe ground.

"Christ was a gentleman, Jerry," I said quietly.

"Yes," he assented soberly, "Christ. I would like to be like Christ, but I couldn't be meek, Roger, and I like to box and shoot—"

"He was a man, Jerry, the most courageous the world has ever known. He was even not afraid to die for an ideal. He was meek, but He was not afraid to drive the money changers from the temple."

"Yes, that was good. He was strong and gentle, too. He was wonderful."

I have merely suggested this part of the conversation to show the feeling of reverence and awe with which the boy regarded the Savior. The life of Christ had caught his imagination and its lessons had sunk deeply into his spirit, touching chords of gentleness that I had never otherwise been able to reach. His religion had begun with Miss Redwood and he had clung to it instinctively as he had clung to the vague memory of his mother. No word of mine and no teaching was to destroy so precious a heritage. He was not goody-goody about it. No boy who did and said and thought the things that Jerry did could be accused of prudery or sentimentalism. But in his quieter moods I knew that he thought deeply of sacred things.

But this conversation with Jerry had warned me that the time was approaching when the boy would want to think for himself. Already in our nature-talks some of his questions had embarrassed me. He had seen birds hatched from their eggs and had marveled at it. The mammals and their young had mystified him and he had not been able to understand it. I had reverted to the process of development of the embryo of the seed into a perfect plant. I had waxed scientific, he had grown bewildered. We had reached our *impasse*. In the end we had compromised. Unable to comprehend, Jerry had ascribed the propagation of the species to a miracle of God. And since that was the precise truth I had been content to let the matter rest there.

But there was another problem that our conversation had suggested: the choice of a vocation. The proposition of the misguided Flynn had made me aware of the fact that I was already letting my charge drift toward the maws of the great unknown which began just beyond the Wall without a plan of life save that he should be a "gentleman." It occurred to me with alarming suddenness that the term "gentleman" was that frequently applied to persons who had no occupation or visible means of support. Nowhere in John Benham's instructions was there mention of any plan for a vocation. Obviously if the old man had intended Jerry for a business career he would have said so, and the omission of any exact instructions convinced me that such an idea was furthest from John Benham's thoughts. It remained for me to decide the matter in the best way that I could, for determined I was that Jerry, merely because of the possession of much worldly goods, should not be that bane of humanity and of nations, an idler.

At about this period Mr. Ballard the elder came down to Horsham Manor on one of his visits of inspection and inquiry. He brought up the subject of his own accord.

"What do you think, Canby, what have you planned about Jerry's future?"

I told him that my only ambition, so far, had been to make of Jerry a gentleman and a scholar.

"Yes, of course," he nodded. "That's what you are here for. But beyond that?"

"Nothing," I replied. "I am following my instructions from Mr. Benham. They go no further than that."

He frowned into the fire.

"That's all very well as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. Jerry is now eighteen. Do you realize that in three years he comes into possession of five million dollars, an income of over two hundred thousand a year; and that in seven years, at twenty-five, the executors must relinquish the entire estate?"

I had not thought of the imminence of this disaster.

"I was not aware, Mr. Ballard," I said. "At the present moment Jerry doesn't know a dollar from a nickel."

He opened his eyes wide and examined me as though he feared he had not heard correctly or as though it were blasphemy, heresy that I was uttering.

"You mean that he doesn't know the value and uses of money?"

"So far as I am aware," I replied coolly, "he has never seen a piece of money in his life."

"All wrong, all wrong, Canby. This won't do at all. He had his arithmetic, percentage and so forth?"

"Yes. But money doesn't interest him. Can you see any reason why it should?"

Again the frown and level gaze.

"And what had you planned for him?" he asked. He did not intend to be satirical perhaps. He was merely worldly.

"I thought when the time came he might be permitted to choose a vocation for himself. In the meanwhile—"

"A vocation!" he snapped. "Isn't the controlling interest in a transcontinental line of railroad vocation enough? To say nothing of coal, copper and iron mines, a steel mill or two and a fleet of steamers?"

He overpowered me for the moment. I had not thought of Jerry as being all these things. To me he was merely Jerry. But I struggled upward through the miasma of oppressive millions and met the issue squarely.

"There is nothing in John Benham's advice which directs any vocational instruction," I said staunchly. "I was to bring the boy to the age of manhood without realization of sin."

"A dream, Canby. Utopian, impossible!"

"It has not proved so," I replied, nettled. "I am merely following instructions, Mr. Benham's instructions through you to me. The dream is very real to Jerry."

Mr. Ballard gazed into the fire and smiled.

"The executors are permitted some license in this matter. We are entirely satisfied with your work. We have no desire to modify in the slightest degree the purely moral character of your instruction or indeed to change his mode of life. Indeed, I think we all agree that you are carrying out with rare judgment the spirit if not the actual letter of John Benham's wishes. Jerry is a wonderful boy. But in our opinion the time has come when his mind should be slowly shaped to grasp the essentials of the great career that awaits him."

"I can be of no assistance to you, Mr. Ballard," I said dryly.

"We think the time has arrived," he went on, passing over my remark as though it hadn't been uttered, "for Jerry to have some instruction from one versed in the theory, if not the practice, of business. It is our purpose to engage a professor from a school of finance of one of the universities to work with Jerry for a part of each summer."

I did not dare to speak for fear of saying something I might regret. Thus far he was within his rights, I knew, but had he proposed to take Jerry into the cafes of Broadway that night, he couldn't have done my plans for the boy a greater hurt. He was proposing nothing less than an assault upon my barriers of idealism. He was going to take the sentient thing that was Jerry and make of him an adding machine. Would he? Could he? I found courage in a smile.

"Of course, if that is your desire," I managed at last, "I have nothing to say except

that if you had asked my opinion I should have advised against it."

"I'm sorry, Canby," he finished, "but the matter has already been taken out of your hands."

Youth fortunately is the age of the most lasting impressions. Dr. Carmichael, of the Hobart School of Finance of Manhattan University, came and went, but he made no appreciable ripple in the placid surface of Jerry's philosophy. He cast stone after stone into the lovely pool of Jerry's thoughts, which broke the colorful reflections into smaller images, but did not change them. And when he was gone the pool was as before he came. Jerry listened politely as he did to all his masters and learned like a parrot what was required of him, but made no secret of his missing interest and enthusiasm. I watched furtively, encouraging Jerry, as my duty was, to do his tasks as they were set before him. But I knew then what I had suspected before, that they would never make a bond-broker of Jerry. I had but to say a word, to give but a sign and bring about an overt rebellion. But I was too wise to do that. I merely watched the widening circles in the pool and saw them lost in the border of dreamland.

Jerry learned, of course, the difference between a mortgage and an insurance policy; he knew the meaning of economics, the theory of supply and demand, and gained a general knowledge which I couldn't have given him of the general laws of barter and trade. But he followed Carmichael listlessly. What did he care for bonds and receiverships when the happy woods were at his elbow, the wild-flowers beckoning, his bird neighbors calling? Where I had appealed to Jerry through his imagination, Carmichael used only the formulæ of matter and fact. There was but one way in which he could have succeeded, and that was through the picture of the stupendous agencies of which Jerry was to be the master: the fast-flying steamers, the monster engines on their miles of rails, the glowing furnaces, the sweating figures in the heat and grime of smoke and steam, the energy, the inarticulate power, the majesty of labor which bridged oceans, felled mountains and made animate the sullen rock. All this I saw, as one day Jerry should see it. But I did not speak. The time was not yet. Jerry's understanding of these things would come, but not until I had prepared him for them.

CHAPTER IV

ENTER EVE

This memoir is not so much the history of a boy or of a man as of an experiment. Therefore I will not longer delay in bringing Jerry to the point where my philosophy and John Benham's was to be put to the test. I have tried to indicate in as few phrases as possible Jerry Benham's essential characteristics, the moral attributes that were his and the shapeliness and strength of his body. I have never set great value on mere physical beauty, which too often reacts unpleasantly upon the character of its owner. But looks meant nothing to Jerry and he was as unconscious of his striking beauty as the scarlet poppy that nods in the meadow.

At the age of twenty, to which point this narrative has arrived, Jerry Benham was six feet two inches in height and weighed, stripped, one hundred and eighty-two pounds. His hair was brown, his eyes gray and his features those of the Hermes of Praxiteles. His skin, naturally fair, was tanned by exposure to a ruddy brown, and his body, except for the few white scars upon his shoulder, relics of his encounter with the lynx, was without blemish. He was always in training, and his muscles were long and closely knit. I can hardly believe that there was a man on the Olympian fields of ancient Greece who could have been prettier to see than Jerry when he sparred with Flynn. He was as agile as a cat, never off his balance or his guard, and slipped in and out, circling and striking with a speed that was surprising in one of his height and weight. "Foot-work," Flynn called it, and there were times, I think, when the hard-breathing Irishman was glad enough at the call of "time."

Flynn's own reply when I reproved him for the nonsense he had put into Jerry's head about the prize ring will show how Jerry stood in the eyes of one of the best athletes of his day. "He's a wonder, Misther Canby. Sure, ye can't blame me f'r wantin' to thry him against good 'uns. He ain't awake yet, sor, an' he's too good-nachured. Holy pow'rs! If the b'ye ever cud be injuced to get mad-like, he'd lick his weight in woild-cats—so he w'ud."

There were times, as you may imagine, when I felt much like Frankenstein in awe of the creature I had created. But Jerry fortunately couldn't be "injuced to get mad-like." If things didn't happen to please him, he frowned and set his jaws until his mood had passed and he could speak his mind in calmness. His temper, like his will, was under perfect control. And yet I knew that the orderly habit of his mind was the result of growth in a sheltered environment and that even I, carefully as I had trained him, had not gauged his depths or known the secret of the lees which had never been

disturbed.

At the age of twenty, then, Jerry had the body of a man, the brain of a scholar and the heart of a child. Less than a year remained before the time appointed when he must go forth into the world. Both of us approached that day with regret. For my part I should have been willing to stay on with Jerry at Horsham Manor indefinitely, and Jerry, whatever curiosity he may have felt as to his future, gave no sign of impatience. I knew that he felt that perhaps the years to come might make a difference in our relations by the way he referred to the good years we had passed together and the small tokens of his affection which meant much from one not greatly demonstrative by habit. As Jerry had grown toward manhood he did much serious reading in books of my selection (the Benham library having been long since expurgated), and I had been working steadily on my Dialectics. We did our out-of-door work as usual, but there were times when I was busy, and then Jerry would whistle to the dogs and go off for his afternoon breather alone. There had never been a pledge exacted of him to keep within the wall, but he knew his father's wish, and the thought of venturing out alone had never entered his mind. Perhaps you will say that it was the one thing Jerry would want to do, being the thing that was forbidden him, but you would not understand as I did the way Jerry's mind worked. If as a boy Jerry had been impeccable in the way of matters of duty, he was no less so now. He had been trained to do what was right and now did it instinctively, not because it was his duty, but because it was the only thing that occurred to him.

And so, upon a certain day in June while I was reading in my study, Jerry went out with a rod and fly-book bound for the silent pools of Sweetwater, where the big trout lurked. My book, I remember, was the "Dialogues of Hylas and Philonous upon the Reality and Perfection of Human Understanding," and before Jerry had been long gone from the house I was completely absorbed in what Fraser in his preface calls "the gem of British metaphysical literature." But had I known what was to happen to Jerry on that sunny afternoon, or conceived of the dialogue in which he was to take a part, I should have regretted the intellectual attraction of Berkeley's fine volume which had been the cause of my refusal to accompany the boy.

I find that I must reconstruct the incident as well as I can from my recollection of the facts as related by Jerry in the course of several conversations, each of which I am forced to admit amplified somewhat the one which had preceded it.

It seems that instead of making for the stream at its nearest point to the eastward, Jerry had cast into the woods above the gorge and worked upstream into the mountains. His luck had been fair, and by the time he neared the point where the Sweetwater disappeared beneath the wall his creel was half full. He clambered over a large rock to a higher level and found himself looking at a stranger, sitting on a fallen tree, fastening a butterfly net. He did not discover that the stranger was a girl until she stood up and he saw that she wore skirts, short skirts, showing neat leather gaiters. She eyed him coolly and neither of them spoke for a long moment, the girl probably because she was waiting for him to speak first, Jerry because (as he described it) of sheer surprise at the trespass and of curiosity as to its accomplishment. Then the girl smiled at Jerry.

"Hello!" she said at last.

Jerry advanced a few steps, frowning.

"I suppose you know," he said quickly, "that you're trespassing."

She glanced up at him, rather brazenly I fancy, and grinned.

"Oh, really!" Her eyes appraised him and Jerry, I am sure, felt rather taken aback.

"Yes," he went on severely, "you're trespassing. We don't allow any females in here."

Her reply was a laugh which irritated Jerry exceedingly.

"Well, I'm here," she said; "what are you going to do about it?"

"Do about it?" Jerry advanced two or three paces and stood looking down at her. In our first conversation he told me that she seemed absurdly small, quite too insignificant to be so impudent. In our second conversation I elicited the fact that he thought her skin smooth; in our third that her lips were much redder than mine.

When he got near her he paused, for she hadn't moved away as he had expected her to and only looked up at him and laughed.

"Yes, *do* about it," she repeated.

"You—you know I could—could throw you over the wall with one hand," he stammered.

"Perhaps, but you wouldn't."

"Why not?'

"Because you're a gentleman."

"Oh, am I?"

"Yes. Or if you aren't you ought to be."

He frowned at that, a little puzzled.

"Where do you come from?" he asked.

"I can't see how that can possibly be any business of yours."

"H-m. How did you get in here?"

"I followed my nose. How did you?"

"I—I—I belong here."

"It's an asylum, isn't it?" she asked quite coolly.

"N—no." Jerry missed the irony. "Not at all. I live here. It's my place. You—you're the first woman that ever got in here, and I can't imagine how you did it. I—I don't want to be impolite, but I'm afraid you'll have to go at once."

The sound of her laughter was most disconcerting. Jerry had no lack of a sense of humor and yet there was nothing that he could see to laugh at.

"That's very amusing," she said. "A moment ago you were going to throw me over the wall and now you're afraid you're impolite."

Jerry found himself smiling in spite of himself.

"I—I don't suppose I really meant that," he muttered.

"What? Throwing me over the wall or being polite?"

He looked rather bewildered, I think, at the inanity of her conversation. Jerry wasn't much given to small talk.

"I'm sorry you don't think I'm polite. I—I'm not used to talking to women. They're too fussy about trifles. What does it matter—"

"I don't call throwing a female visitor over a wall a trifle," she broke in. "And it isn't quite hospitable. Now is it?"

Jerry rubbed his head and regarded her seriously.

"Now that you mention it, I don't suppose it is. But nobody asked you. You just came. Didn't you see the trespass signs?"

"Oh, yes, they're all about," she said carelessly, as she picked up her tin specimen-box and turned away. "I didn't mean to stay. I followed a butterfly. He came in the iron railings, where the stream goes through the wall. I crawled under where the iron is bent. If you're afraid of women you'd better have it fixed."

"Afraid!" It was one word that Jerry detested. "Afraid! That's funny. Do you think I'm afraid of *you*?"

"Yes," she replied, eyeing him critically. "I rather think you are."

"Well, I—I'm not. It would take more than a woman to make *me* afraid."

Something in the turn of the phrase and tone of voice made her turn and examine him with a new interest.

"You're a queer boy," she said.

"How—queer?" he muttered.

"You look and act as though you'd never seen a girl before."

If he had known women better he wouldn't have believed that she meant what she said. As it was, her wizardry astounded him.

"How can you tell that?"

She was now regarding him wide-eyed in amazement.

"It's true, then?" she gasped.

"Yes, it's true. You're the first girl that I remember having seen. But what difference does that make? Why should I be afraid of you? You couldn't hurt a flea. You can talk pretty well, but talk never killed anybody."

She seemed stricken suddenly dumb and regarded him with an air which to anyone but Jerry would have shown her as discomfited as he.

"Do you mean that you've lived all your life a prisoner inside this wall and never seen a woman?" she asked incredulously.

"That depends upon what you mean by prisoner," said Jerry. "If having everything you want, doing everything you want is being a prisoner, I suppose that's what I am."

"Extraordinary! And you've had no curiosity to go out—to see the world?"

"No. I'm going soon, but I don't care about it. There isn't anything out there half as good as what I've got."

"How do you know if you haven't been there?"

"Oh, I know. I've heard. I read a great deal."

Jerry told me (in our second conversation) that he wondered why he still stood there talking to her. He supposed it was because he thought he had been impolite enough. But she made no move to go.

"What have you heard?" she asked again. "I suppose you thought that a girl had horns and a tail."

Unconsciously his gaze wandered down over her slim figure. Then he burst into a sudden fit of laughter.

"You're funny," he said.

"Not half as funny as I would be if I had them."

"You might have a tail twisted under your dress for all I know. What do girls wear skirts for?"

"To keep them warm. Why do you wear trousers?"

"Trousers aren't silly. Skirts are."

"That depends on who's in them."

He was forced to admit the logic of that. Skirts might be silly, but she wasn't. She interested him, this strange creature that talked back, not in the least like Miss Redwood. The jade! Jerry did not know their tricks as I did. She was reading him, I haven't a doubt, like an open book. It was a pity. I hadn't yet prepared Jerry for this encounter. The girl had moved two or three paces away when she paused again.

"What's your name?" she asked suddenly.

"Jerry."

"That's a nice name. I think it's like you."

"How—like me?"

"Oh, I don't know—boyish and rather jolly, in spite of being Jeremiah. It *is* Jeremiah, isn't it?"

He nodded.

"I was sure of it. It was Jeremiah who wanted to throw me over the wall, but it was Jerry who didn't. Which are you really? If you're Jerry I'm not afraid of you in the least. But if you're Jeremiah, I must go at once."

He smiled at her.

"Oh, that's all right. You needn't hurry. I wouldn't hurt you. You seem to be a very sprightly sort of a creature. You laugh as though you really meant it. What's your name? I've told you mine."

"Una."

"H-m. That means 'first'."

"But not the last. There are five others—all girls."

"Girls! What a pity!"

She must have glanced around at him quickly, with that bird-like pertness I discovered later. He was declaring war, himself defenseless, and was not even aware of it.

"You're not flattering. A pity! Why?"

"It's too bad if you had to be born why some of you couldn't have been boys. You'd have been a fine sort of a boy, I think."

"Would I really?" she said. "A better sort of a boy than I am a girl?"

He shrugged his shoulders, oblivious of the bait for flattery.

"How should I know what sort of a girl you are? You seem sensible enough and you're not easily frightened. You know, I—I rather like you."

"Really!"

He missed the smile and note of antagonism and went on quickly:

"You're fond of the woods, aren't you? Do you know the birds? They like this place. And butterflies—I'd like to show you my collection."

"Oh, you collect?"

"Of course—specimens of all kinds. Birds, eggs, nests, lepidoptera—I've got a museum down at the Manor. Next year you'll have to come and see it."

"Next year!"

"Yes. You see—" Jerry's pause must have been that of embarrassment. I think he realized that he had been going it rather rapidly. I didn't hear this part of the dialogue until our third conversation. "Well, you see, I'm not supposed to see any—any females until I'm twenty-one. Not that I've ever wanted to, you know, but it seems rather foolish that I can't ask you down, if you'd like to come."

Can you visualize a very modern young woman during this ingenuous revelation? Jerry said that close, cool inspection of her slate-blue eyes (he had, you see, also identified their color) rather disconcerted him.

"I'm sure I should be delighted to come," she said with a gravity which to anyone but Jerry would have made her an object of suspicion.

Jerry shook his head.

"But I—I'm afraid it wouldn't do. I've never given my word, but it's an understanding—"

"With whom?"

"With Roger. He's my tutor, you know."

"Oh, I see. And Roger objects to—er—females?"

"Oh, yes, and so do I. They're so useless—most of them. You don't mind my saying so, do you?"

"Oh, not at all," she replied, though I'm sure her lips must have been twitching.

"Of course, you're different. You're really very like a boy. And I don't doubt you're very capable."

"How—capable?"

"You look as if you could do things—I mean useful things."

At this she sank on a rock and buried her face in her hands, quivering from head to foot. Jerry thought that she was crying.

"What's the—?"

She threw out her arms, leaned back against a tree, her long suppressed merriment bubbling forth unrestrained.

"Oh, you'll be the death of me," she laughed, the tears running down her cheeks. "I can't stand being bottled up another minute. I can't."

Jerry was offended.

"I don't see what there is to laugh at," he said with some dignity.

"You don't—that's just it, you don't, and that's what's so funny."

And she laughed again.

"What's funny?" he asked.

"You—!"

"I'm not half as funny as *you* are, but I don't laugh at you."

"Y—you w-would if you didn't p-pity me so much," she gasped between giggles.

"I don't pity you at all. And I think you're extremely foolish to laugh so much at nothing."

"Even when I'm laughing at y-you?"

She had taken out her handkerchief and now composed herself with difficulty while Jerry's ruffled dignity in silence preened at its feathers. She watched him furtively,

I'm sure, between dabs with her handkerchief and at last stopped laughing, got up and offered him her hand.

"I've made you angry," she said. "I'm sorry."

He found that he had taken her hand and was looking at it. The words he used in describing it were these: "It was small, soft and warm, Roger, and seemed alive with vitality, but it was timid, too, like a young thrush just fallen from its nest." So far as I could discover, he didn't seem to know what to do with her hand, and before he decided anything she had withdrawn it abruptly and was turning away.

"I'm going now," she said calmly. "But I've enjoyed being here, awfully. It was very nice of you not to—to throw me over the wall."

"I wouldn't have, really," he protested.

"But you might have had me arrested, which would have been worse." She opened her tin box. "It's your butterfly, of course. You can have it, if you like."

"Oh, I wouldn't take it for anything. Besides, that's no good."

"No good?"

"No, common. I've got loads of 'em."

Her nose wrinkled and then she smiled.

"Oh, well, I'll keep it as a souvenir of our acquaintance. Good-by, Jerry." She smiled.

"Good-by, Una. I'm sorry—" he paused.

"For what?"

"If I was cross—"

"But you weren't. I shouldn't have laughed."

"I think I like you better when you laugh than when—when you're 'bottled up'."

"But I mustn't laugh at *you*. I didn't mean to. I just—couldn't help. You've forgiven me, haven't you?"

"Of course."

She had taken up her hat and now walked away upstream. Jerry followed.

"Will you really come next year?" he asked. "I—I should like to show you my specimens."

"Next year! Next year is a long way off. You know, I don't belong here. I'm only visiting."

"Oh!"

She clambered down into the bed of the stream toward the iron railing. Two of the bars, as he could now see, were bent inward at the bottom.

When she reached the railing she turned and flashed a smile up at him.

"You'd better tell Roger about the broken fence."

"Why?"

She thrust her net and tin box through the bars and then slipped quickly through the opening.

"Why?" he repeated.

She stood upright and laughed.

"I might come in again."

Jerry, I think, must have stood looking down at her wistfully. I cannot believe that the psychology of sex made any matter here. Youth merely responded wordlessly to youth. Had she been a boy it would have been the same. But the girl was clever.

"I think I will," she said gayly. "It looks very pretty from out here."

"I—I can't invite you," said Jerry. "I should like to, but I—I can't."

"I could come without being invited," she laughed.

"But you wouldn't, would you?"

"I might. I didn't hurt you, did I?"

"No," he laughed.

"Then I don't see what harm it would do. I'm coming."

No reply.

"I'm coming tomorrow."

No reply. This was really stoical of Jerry.

"And Jerry—" she called.

"Yes, Una—"

"I think you're—you're *sweet*."

There was a rustle among the leaves and she was gone.

Thus did the serpent enter our garden.

CHAPTER V

THE MINX RETURNS

That afternoon when Jerry returned to the Manor he gave me a superficial account of the adventure—so superficial and told with such carelessness that I was not really alarmed. The second conversation in the evening after dinner aroused my curiosity but not my suspicion. I was not in the habit of mistrusting Jerry. The intrusion of the stranger was an accident, not likely to occur again. It was only after our discussion had taken many turns and curiously enough had always come back to the pert intruder that I realized that Jerry's interest had really been aroused. Late at night over our evening reading the boy made the comments upon the visitor's appearance, her voice and the texture of her skin. He had been quite free in his opinions, favorable and unfavorable alike, and it was this very frankness which had disarmed me. The incident, as far as Jerry's story went, ended when the visitor crawled under the railing. I am not sure what motive was in his mind, but the events which followed lend strong color to the presumption that Jerry believed the girl when she said that she was coming back and that at the very time he was speaking to me he intended to meet her when she came.

I had decided to treat the incident lightly, trusting to the well-ordered habits of Jerry's life and the number of his daily interests to put the visitor out of his mind. I did not even warn him, as I should have done had I realized the imminence of danger or the necessity of keeping to the letter as well as the spirit of John Benham's definite instruction, for this I thought might lay undue stress upon the matter. And in the course of the morning, nothing further having been said, I was lulled into a sense of security.

In the afternoon Bishop Berkeley's book called me again and it was not until late that I realized that the boy had been gone from the house for four hours. His rod, creel and fly-book were missing from their accustomed places but even then I suspected nothing. It was not until the approach of the dinner hour when, Jerry not having returned, I began to think of yesterday's visitor.

After waiting dinner for awhile, I dined alone, expecting every minute to hear the sound of his step in the hall or his cheery greeting but there was no sign of him and I guessed the truth. The minx had come in again and Jerry was with her.

The events which followed were the first that cast the slightest shadow over our friendship, a shadow which was not to pass, for, from the day when Eve entered our garden, Jerry was changed. It wasn't that he loved me any the less or I him. It was merely that his attitude toward life and toward my point of view had shifted. He had begun to doubt my infallibility.

It was this indefinable difference in our relations which delayed Jerry's confession, and not until some days later did he tell me how it all happened. He didn't think she would really come back, he said, and I chose at the time not to doubt him, but the fact was that he made his way directly upstream after leaving the house, and catching no fish, sat down on a rock near the iron grille. That the girl returned was not Jerry's fault, he said, because he didn't ask her to. But the fact that he was there awaiting her when she arrived shows that the wish was the father to the thought with Jerry. He had been sitting there alone fifteen or twenty minutes "listening for bird calls," as he explained it and had already identified twenty distinct notes when he heard the twenty-first.

It was human. "Hello, Jerry," it said.

It came from the iron railing, behind which the female Una was standing, grinning at him. He got up and walked toward her.

"Hello!" he returned.

"You didn't think I'd come, did you, Jerry?" she asked, though how she could have arrived at that conclusion with the boy sitting there waiting for her is more than I can imagine.

"No, I didn't," he replied, already learning to prevaricate with calm assurance. "Are you coming in?"

"I will if you ask me to."

"I can't do that," he laughed. "You know the rules. But I don't see what I could do to stop you."

"*Please* invite me, Jerry."

"No, I won't invite you. But I won't put you out if you come."

"*Please!*"

"Why do you insist?"

"Because—I think you ought to, you know. Just to make me feel comfortable."

"You seemed very comfortable yesterday."

"I think you're horrid."

"Horrid! Because I won't break my promise?"

"But you've made no promise."

"It's understood. See here. I'll turn my back and walk away. If you come in it's not my fault."

"You needn't bother. I'm not coming." She turned and made as though to go.

"Una," he called. "*Please.* Come in."

She reappeared miraculously, her vanity appeased by Jerry's downfall, bobbed through the bent irons, and rose smiling decorously as Eve must have smiled when she watched Adam first bite the apple.

"Thanks," she laughed, clambering up the rocks. "It's awfully nice of you. I knew you would. I couldn't have come else."

"It doesn't really make much difference, I suppose," said Jerry dubiously.

"What doesn't?"

"Whether I ask you or whether you just come."

"I wouldn't have come if you hadn't."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive. I was just passing this way and I saw you sitting here. I hadn't the slightest intention of coming in. Of course, when you *invited* me, that made things different."

He laughed and motioned to a rock upon which she sank.

"Tell me," he said, "how you happen to be up here in the mountains alone. You don't belong around here. You didn't know about the wall, or about me, did you?"

"Of course not; not yesterday. But I do now. I asked last night."

"Who did you ask?"

"The people I'm staying with."

"And what did they tell you?"

"They weren't very polite. It doesn't do to ignore one's neighbors. They said you were a freak."

"What's a freak?"

"Something strange, unnatural."

"And do you think I'm strange or unnatural?" he asked soberly.

She looked at him and laughed.

"Unnatural! If nature is unnatural."

"What else do they say?" Jerry asked after a thoughtful pause.

"That your precious Roger is a dealer in magic and spells; that you've already learned flying on a broomstick and practice it on nights when the moon is full; that you're

hideously ugly; that you're wonderfully beautiful; that you live in a tree; that you sleep in a coffin; that you're digging for gold; that you've found the recipe for diamonds; that you've—"

"Now you're making fun of me," he laughed as she paused for lack of breath.

"I'm not. If there's anything that you are or aren't that I haven't heard, I can't imagine what it is. In other words, Jerry, you're the mystery of the county. Aren't you glad?"

"Glad? Of course not. It's all such utter rot."

"Of course. But doesn't it make you *feel* mysterious?"

"Not a bit."

"Doesn't it ever occur to you how important a person you are?"

"How—important?"

"To begin with, of course, you're fabulously wealthy. You knew that, didn't you?"

"Oh, I suppose I've got some money, but I don't let it worry me."

"Do you know how much?"

"No, I haven't the slightest idea."

"Not that you've got millions—*millions*!"

"If my millions are as impalpable as my broomstick they won't hurt me much," he laughed. And then soberly: "Say, Una, you seem to know a lot more about me than I know about myself."

"I think I do," she returned. "For instance, of course, you couldn't guess that half the match-making mammas of the county are already setting their caps for you."

He looked bewildered at that, I'm sure.

"Do you know," he said, "that I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about."

"Of course," she laughed. "I forgot. They want to marry you to their daughters."

"Marry! Me! You're joking."

I think he must have seemed really alarmed.

"I'm not. The fat, the small, the lean and the tall. They're all after you. The moment you poke your nose outside the gate next year, they're all going to pounce on you and try to carry you off."

"But I can't marry them all," he said aghast. "Besides I don't want to marry anybody. And I'm not going to."

She couldn't restrain herself now and burst into wild peals of merriment, while Jerry watched her, uncertain whether to be angry or amused. At last he decided to smile.

"You seem to have a lot of fun with me, Una, don't you?"

"I don't mean to. But the picture of you trying to escape the engulfing flood of mammas is too much. I've got to laugh, Jerry. I can't help it."

"Laugh, then. I don't think it's so funny, though."

"But it is. Because I'm sure you'd be too polite to refuse them—any of them."

"Polite! I won't be polite. Just because I'm nice to you isn't any sign. I—I'll send 'em all packing. You'll see."

"Oh, you're brave enough now, but wait—wait!" She bent over, clasping her knees, still shaking with merriment.

"Why, Jerry, you couldn't be impolite to a woman any more than you could *fly*. You'd do just whatever she said."

"I wouldn't. They're idiots, the lot of 'em. What's the use? What do girls want to get married for, anyway?"

She glanced up at him quickly. Then at the glimpse she had of Jerry's sober profile her wide gaze dulled and then sought the earth before her. It was true then what she believed of him. A child—this gorgeous creature that shaved its face!

"I suppose it's because they—they haven't anything else to do," she stammered.

"There's plenty for every woman to do without marrying, or there ought to be. They can work like men, or clean their houses, or raise their children."

At this point the girl was seized with a sudden fit of coughing and her face was purple.

"What's the matter?"

"I—I just swallowed the wrong way," she gasped.

"Here, I'll pat you on the back. All right now?"

"Y-yes, better, thanks." But she held her fingers before her eyes and still struggled for breath. In a moment when she raised her head, there were traces of a smile, but she was quite composed.

"Then you—you don't believe in marriage as an institution?" she asked with some hesitation.

"No. I can't see the use of it. We're all animals like the wild folk, the beasts of the field, the birds. They get along all right."

"Birds mate, don't they?" she put in.

"Oh, yes, but they don't need a minister to mate 'em. They just hop about together a bit and then start their nest. It's simple as rolling off a log."

"That's what humans do, as you say; they just hop about a bit and then get married."

"But marriage doesn't make 'em any happier, does it? I'm sure I wouldn't want to be tied down to one woman as long as I lived. Suppose I changed my mind or suppose she did."

"You wouldn't change your mind if you loved a woman."

"Love!" he sneered. "There you go. I thought you'd say that."

"You don't believe in love, then?" she asked.

"It seems to me that there's a lot of sentimental rubbish written about it. What's the use of talking so much about a thing that's as plain as the nose on your face? Love means loyalty, friendship, honor and everything that's fine, but when the classic poets begin writing reams of rot about it, it's time—it's time somebody was sensible."

"Poor Jerry," she laughed. "I'm so sorry for you."

"Why?"

"Because when you fall, you're going to fall so very hard."

"How—fall?"

"Fall in love. You will, some day. Everybody does. It's as sure as death or taxes."

"Everybody! *You* haven't, have you?"

"Oh, dear, no. Not yet. But I suppose I shall some day."

Jerry regarded her in silence for a moment.

"I didn't think you were a bit slushy."

"I'm *not* slushy," indignantly. "I *hate* slushy people. Where did you get that word?"

"Roger. He hates 'em too."

"Your Roger doesn't like women, does he?"

"No. He's very wise, Roger is. But sometimes I think he's prejudiced. I'd like you to know Roger, I really would."

She gazed straight before her for a moment deliberating and then:

"I hope you don't mind if I say so, but I think your Roger must be a good deal of a fossil."

"A fossil. Now see here, Una—I can't have you talking about Roger like that."

"He is. I'm sure of it. All theorists are."

"He's not. He's the broadest fellow you ever knew."

"Nobody's broad who ignores the existence of woman," she returned hotly. "It's sinful—that sort of philosophy. It's against nature. We're here—millions of us, working as hard as men do, earning our own way in the world, active, live intelligences, writing books, nursing in hospitals, cleaning the plague-spots out of the cities, influencing in a thousand ways the uplift of that coarser brute man and besides all this practicing a thousand acts of self-abnegation in the home. Keeping man's house, cooking his food, bearing his ch—"

She stopped abruptly and bit her lip.

"Bearing his—what?" asked Jerry.

"Burdens," she blurted out. "Burdens—all sorts of burdens," she finished weakly.

"I suppose there *are* things that women can do," said Jerry after a moment. "Of course, I don't know much about it. But—"

"Well, it's time you did," she broke in again. "It may be beautiful here—inside these walls—an unbroken idyl of peace and contentment, but it isn't life. It's just existence, that's all. If I were a man, I'd want to do a man's work in the world. I wouldn't want to miss an hour of it, childhood, boyhood or manhood. I'd want to meet my temptations and conquer them. It's selfish, the way you live, unreal, cowardly."

"See here, Una—"

"I mean it. You've got me started and I can't help it. If I say anything that hurts, you'll have to put me out. But I'm going to tell you what I think."

"You're rather bewildering. But I'm not a coward. I don't want you to say that. If you were a man, I'd give you a thrashing," he said quietly.

Their glances must have flashed fire. Jerry's face was red, I'm sure, and his fingers were twitching to get hold of something, but the girl didn't flinch. Jerry told me afterward that he found his anger softening strangely as he looked at her and in a moment they were both smiling. The girl spoke first.

"I've gone too far, Jerry. Forgive me."

"Of course," he said awkwardly. "I suppose you've got a right to your opinions. But it isn't very pleasant to be told that one's life is a failure."

"I didn't say that," she put in quickly. "You haven't failed, of course. You've missed something, but you've gained something too." Her words trailed slowly again and her gaze sought the deep woods. "Yes," she repeated softly and thoughtfully, "I'm very sure you've gained something."

"What have I gained?"

There was a long pause before she replied.

"Simplicity," she said carefully. "Life, after all, nowadays, is so very complex," she sighed.

But when he questioned as to what she meant, she waved him off. "No, I've said enough. I didn't intend to. Don't let's talk any more about what I think. Let's talk about what *you* think, what you read, what you do. People say you live in the woods most of the time—do you? Where? How?"

"In a cabin. We built it. Would you like to see it? It's not far. I'll make you a cup of tea."

As the reader will perceive, in these two conversations, lasting perhaps two hours, this slip of a girl, in mere idle curiosity, had touched with her silly chatter the vital, the vulnerable points of Jerry's philosophy of life. Fate had not been fair to me or with him. Less than a year; remained of Jerry's period of probation. In December the boy was to go out into the world. And through an unfortunate accident due to a broken iron, a chaos of half-baked ideas had come pouring through the breach. If I said that my labors of ten years had been useless or that the fruition of John Benham's ideals for his son were still in doubt I should be putting the matter too strongly, but I have no hesitancy in confessing that the appearance of the girl had at least put them in jeopardy. She had turned his mind into a direction which I had carefully avoided. He must think now and ask questions that I could not be ready to answer. By this time it must be well understood that I have no love for women, but I will do this girl the credit of saying that in a general way she saw fit to respect Jerry's artlessness. I think that the sex instinct, so ready with its antagonisms, its insinuations, its alternate attacks and defenses, was atrophied as in the presence of a phenomenon. She was modern enough, God knows, but she had some delicacy at least and was impotent before the splendor of Jerry's innocence.

What they said on the way to the cabin must have been unimportant. I suppose Jerry told her about his routine at the Manor and something of what I had taught him of woodcraft, but I think that she was very reticent in speaking of herself. No doubt her unceremonious visit to our domain and the unusual intimacy of their conversation had made it seem necessary to her to preserve her incognito, or perhaps it was coquetry, which no woman, however placed, is quite without. As far as I have been able to learn, they were as two children, the girl's mind as well as her actions, in spite of her sophistication, reflecting the artlessness of her companion. The damage that she had done, as I was afterwards to discover, was mainly by the force of suggestion. She assumed the absurd premises of modernity, drew her own

preposterous conclusions and Jerry drank them in, absorbed them as he did all information, like a sponge.

CHAPTER VI

THE CABIN

Having decided upon a course of action, I lost no time in setting forth, following the Sweetwater to the wall and then, not finding Jerry, making as though by instinct for the cabin. Perhaps I may be pardoned for approaching the place with cautious footsteps. I was justified, I think, by the anxiety of the moment and the fear of a damage that might be irreparable. I am sure that the somber shade of old John Benham guided me upon my way and made light my footsteps as I crept through the bushes and peered through the window of the cabin.

There upon the floor, before the hearth, in which some fagots were burning, sat Jerry and the minx, as thick as thieves, oblivious of the fall of night, wrapped in their own conversation and in themselves. I am willing to admit that the girl was pretty, though from the glimpses I had of it, her profile gave no suggestion of the classical ideals of beauty, for her nose made a short line far from regular and her hair, though carelessly dressed, was worn, in some absurd modern fashion with which I was unfamiliar. And yet in a general way I may say that there seemed to be no doubt as to her comeliness. She was quite small and crouched as she was upon the floor before the fire she even seemed childish—quite too unimportant a creature to have made such a hullabaloo in this small world of ours.

Nevertheless I felt justified in keeping silence and even in listening to their conversation.

"You didn't mean it," I heard Jerry ask, "about all those girls' mothers, did you?"

She laughed.

"Of course I did. You're a catch, you know."

"You mean, they want to catch *me*? Nonsense. I don't believe you."

"It's true. You're too rich to escape."

"If that's the way marriage is made I don't think much of it."

"It isn't always like that." She smiled. "People aren't all as rich as you are."

"It's queer," he said after a pause. "I've never thought of myself as being different from other people. If money makes one man more desirable than another then money sets false standards of judgment. The people here I like for what they are, not for what they have. That's all wrong somehow, Una. It makes me think crooked."

"I suppose I'm talking too much. You don't have to believe what I say," she said slowly.

"But I want to know and I want you to talk. You've stirred something deep in me. You somehow make me think I've been looking at everything sideways without being able to walk around it. Roger knows what he's about, of course, and I suppose he has reasons of his own, but I'm a not a child any longer. And if he does not care to tell me the whole truth, I've got to find out things for myself from somebody else." And then, turning upon her suddenly: "You aren't lying to me, are you?"

"Do you think I would?" she asked.

"No, I don't. But I thought you might say queer things, just as a joke."

She shook her head. "No," she said calmly. "I laughed a little at first, because I didn't understand, but I'm quite serious now."

"You said Roger was a fossil. I know what a fossil is. That wasn't kind."

"But it's true," she repeated warmly. "He might keep things from you, but he has no right to misrepresent women."

"*Are* women as fine as men?" he asked.

She looked around at him.

"Why shouldn't they be? I think they're finer. Your Roger wouldn't agree with me. I've told you the kind of things they do—that men can't and won't do. You may believe me or not as you choose. Some day you'll find out."

"But I want to find out now. I want to find out everything."

She smiled into the fire.

"That's a great deal, isn't it?" she said.

He went on soberly:

"You see, I don't want you to think I'm an idiot and I don't want you to think Roger is narrow-minded. If you only knew him—"

"I'm sure he has a long nose, sandy hair, grayish? watery eyes and spectacles."

"There. I knew you hadn't a notion of him. He's nothing like that."

"Well, what *is* he like?"

"Why, I've never thought. But he isn't like that. He has a beautiful mind. I think that is what matters more than anything. What do looks count for? I would rather think fine thoughts than be the handsomest person in the world."

He might have been the handsomest person in the world but he wouldn't have been aware of it. Through the window I saw the girl search his bent head quickly and then peer into the fire smiling. But Jerry did not know what she was thinking about and went on slowly:

"You've said some things that make me believe I ought to know more about women and their work. I didn't know that they ever did the sort of things you tell me of. It's strange I don't know, but I've always been pretty busy in here and I've never really thought much about them. What did you mean by 'the plague-spots of the cities'?" he asked. "Surely there can be no such a disease as the plague in a modern city when science has made such progress."

She smiled.

"Moral plague-spots, Jerry, civic sores." She paused.

"I don't understand."

"You will in time. The world isn't all as beautiful as you think it is. There are men and women with diseased minds, diseased bodies that no medicine can cure. There are hospitals and homes for them, but there never seems to be enough money or skill or civic righteousness to make such people well."

"How do you know all this?" he asked in wonder.

"I've always been interested in social problems. I can't abide being idle."

"Social problems! And do you mean that you go among these diseased people and try to make them well?"

She nodded.

"I begin to understand," he said slowly, "why you said you thought I wasn't doing my work in the world. It's true. I've been sheltered from evil. Things have been made easy for me. And you"—he burst forth admiringly—"I think you're very wonderful. Perhaps some day I can help. You'll let me help, won't you?"

"Oh, would you, Jerry?" she cried.

"I don't see any reason why I shouldn't. I shall be twenty-one in December. I can do what I please. The executors want to make me a business man—to go to board meetings and help run some companies my money is in. But I don't want to. Finance makes my head tired. I've been working at it some. Seems like awful rubbish to me. They want me to make a lot more money. I suppose I've got enough to get along on. I don't want any more than I've got. I'd much rather do something useful."

She laughed.

"Useful! I'm afraid your executors have different ideals of utility."

Jerry sighed.

"Of course, I've got to go through with the thing for awhile. But I—I'd rather give you my money to cure the plague spots."

"Not all of it, Jerry," she cried, "but would you, some of it? Just a very little?"

"Of course—as much as you like. You can do a lot more with it than I can."

In my hiding place, I didn't know whether to be alarmed or amused. She had done well. Jerry was already giving her his twenty millions. She was a capital missionary. It seemed about time I made my entrance, so I coughed, then walked through the door and faced them.

"I beg pardon for intruding," I said dryly, "but the fact is that it's almost if not quite bedtime."

They got to their feet in some haste, Jerry red as a turkey-cock, the girl, I think, a little pale.

"Is it—*is* it Roger?" stammered Jerry. "I hadn't the slightest notion—" And from his appearance I could readily believe him. "Is it dinner—bedtime? Why, of course, it *must* be." He shuffled his feet awkwardly and looked from me to the girl. "This is—Una, Roger. We've been talking."

"So I should suppose," I remarked, aware of the cool and rather contemptuous glances that the young lady was sending in my direction. "It's too bad that I interrupted. I hope that Miss—er—"

"Smith," sniffed the girl.

"Quite so. I hope that Miss Smith will forgive me. We are a little unused to visitors and of course—"

"I'm going at once," she said, moving a step or two, but seeing that I stood in the door, hesitated.

"I don't want you to go yet, please," said Jerry, recovering his coolness amazingly. "I want you and Roger to know each other. I've been telling her all about us, Roger. She's awfully interested. She just happened in, you know. It's all been very agreeable."

"I don't doubt it in the least," I remarked. "Of course, you have settled all the affairs of the nations between you."

"Oh, not quite that," laughed Jerry uneasily. "But we did have a talk, didn't we, Una?"

"I'm sure I—I hadn't the slightest idea how late it was," said the girl stiffly, fingering at her hair.

"Time passes so quickly when one is amused or interested," I said.

"I was thinking, Roger, how nice it would be if Una would come to dinner at the Manor."

"Oh, no, thanks—not now. I must be going."

"Couldn't you? I'll show you my specimens. Then we could send you on in the machine afterwards."

"No—no, thanks."

"Doubtless the friends of Miss—er—Miss Smith will be worried about her."

She shot a malevolent glance at me.

"Not at all. I'm accustomed to doing exactly as I please."

"But I couldn't think of letting you go through the forest alone. It's fully half a mile beyond the wall to the highroad."

"Thanks, but I won't bother you at all. If you'll let me pass—"

But Jerry had caught her by the arm.

"Roger's right," he said quickly. "I didn't think. Of course you can't go alone. I—"

"If you'll leave it to me, Jerry, I'll see that the lady reaches the highroad in safety. I would suggest that you go at once to the house. I will join you later."

"But—"

"Will you do as I ask?"

Our glances met in a level gaze. There was a moment of rebellion in Jerry's, but it flickered out.

"I think I know best, Jerry," I said quietly.

"Yes, but I don't want her to think—"

"Please don't worry about me," said the girl. "I'm accustomed to looking out for myself." She brushed by me quickly and before I could restrain her, was merged into the shadows of the trees. But Jerry was after her in a hurry while I followed.

"Please go with Roger," I heard Jerry say when I came up.

"I don't need a *keeper*!" she flared at him.

"Una!"

"Go, Jerry," I said again.

He paused but the girl went on, so I followed quickly, and wisely, it seemed, for she

wandered blindly and would have been lost in a moment.

"If you'll follow me," I ventured, "you will find the way out much more quickly. Otherwise you will probably scratch your face."

I'm sure by the sound of her feet in the dry leaves and her hurried breathing behind me that she would have liked to scratch *my* face. But she didn't. I think she realized for the first time that without my guidance she would probably spend the rest of the night in the woods.

"I'm sorry to have been obliged to be so unceremonious," I said at last over my shoulder. No reply. But I wasn't in the least daunted. I had made up my mind that she shouldn't venture in again.

"It's rather lucky you weren't seen by any of the gamekeepers. You might have spent the night in the lockup."

Still no reply.

"You see, the trespass rules here are very strictly enforced. It's too bad you didn't know about them. They've been in force for ten years. This is the first time, I think, that a woman has been inside the wall."

"I—I'm a stranger," she gasped. "I'm only visiting here."

"Of course, that explains it. I couldn't imagine your having ventured in otherwise."

We had come to an opening where the trail was wider and I slowed my pace so that in a moment she walked beside me. She forged ahead at once, but I kept my place.

"Since you're interested in sociological questions, Miss—er—Smith, perhaps—"

"You listened?" she asked scornfully.

"I did," grimly. "I listened for at least ten minutes."

"I'm sure you're quite welcome," she gasped.

"Since you're interested in sociological questions," I repeated, "perhaps you may be interested in educational ones."

"I'm not."

"That's not consistent, for sociological problems can hardly be solved without the aid of—"

"Oh!" Her pent-up temper exploded. "I didn't come in here to—to listen to a dissertation on—" Rage choked her and she couldn't go on.

"I should be very much interested to learn what you *did* come in for."

"You're a beast!" she flashed at me.

"Come now, you don't mean that. As a matter of fact, I'm merely a mild-mannered person of studious instincts hired to carry out a most valuable experiment in comparative psychology."

"I have no interest in your experiments."

"Or the object of them?" I put in quickly. She found that difficult to answer.

"You must admit that my inquiry is natural," I went on suavely. "Since Jerry has just promised to give you his entire fortune, it seems to me only fair that his executors—"

"Will you be silent?" she cried, stopping suddenly. "It seems that I'm at your mercy. You will at least have the decency to let me go in peace."

She broke away, running aimlessly. I followed rapidly, my conscience hurting, but my purpose relentless.

"This way," I said coolly. "You've left the trail."

"I don't care," she gasped. "Leave me."

"I can't do that. You see, I promised Jerry. But I will lead the way if you like. The stream is not far."

I set out again and I heard her trudging behind me. If she had stuck me in the back with a hatpin, I shouldn't have been surprised. But she was more tractable now.

"How are you getting on?" I asked as I neared the Sweetwater. But she wouldn't reply. Her sentiments toward me, I am sure, were too deep for words.

"Where did you come in?" I asked again.

"The iron railing—at the stream," she mumbled.

"Oh! It must be repaired at once."

"You needn't bother," she said scornfully, "so far as I am concerned."

"That's very kind of you. Ah, here we are."

We went carefully over the rocks and in a short while the dim bulk of the wall rose before us. I descended, preceding her, found the opening and went through it.

"You're not going any further with me," she commanded in a suppressed tone. "I forbid it."

I rose on the other side of the grille and dusted my knees.

"I should be sorry to disobey your commands," I said firmly, "but the dangers of the woods at night—"

"Oh! How I abominate you!"

"Really? I am sorry."

But she followed me through the aperture and I led the way down a path, which seemed fairly well worn, alongside the wall.

"Of course, your real name isn't Smith," I began again in a moment. And then after waiting in vain for a reply: "Are you staying with the Laidlaws? The Carews? The Van Wycks then? You won't tell me? Oh, very well, I'll inquire."

My threat brought her to her senses.

"You wouldn't do that!" she said in an agonized tone, catching me by the arm.

"I'm quite capable of it," I replied, stopping beside her.

"I—I beg of you not to do that."

"*Am* I a beast?" I smiled.

"No, no—not a beast. I'm sorry."

"Why do you wish to remain unknown?"

"I—I had no business coming. No one knows. It was mere—mere feminine curiosity." She turned away, "Does *that* satisfy you?" she cried.

"I think it does," I said more gently. "And you'll not return?"

"No—no, never."

"Good. I ask no questions. You stay out. It's a bargain."

She led the way now silently, and I hurried after her, a little sorry for my own part in the matter, but still jealous for our violated sanctuary. She had force, this girl, and not a little courage. Modern she was, if you like, but very spirited and human. When we reached the highroad I paused.

"If you wish, I will go on with you."

"Our paths separate here."

I offered her my hand.

"Forgive me," I said gently. "I am only doing my duty."

But she turned quickly and in a moment was running down the road where the night soon swallowed her.

Women are queer animals. She might at least have given me her hand.

CHAPTER VII

JACK BALLARD TAKES CHARGE

On my way back to the Manor house I thought deeply of a way to make the best of the situation. That Jerry was a philosopher seemed for the moment to be a matter of little importance, for the portion of his conversation in the cabin which I had overheard was an indictment both of my teaching and my integrity. His eyes, thanks to the gabble of this mischievous visitor, were now open. He would want to know everything and I found myself placed in the position of being obliged to choose between a frankness which would be hazardous and a deception which would be intolerable. The time had suddenly come for generous revelations. I had labored all these years to bring Jerry to manhood, armed with righteousness and a sound

philosophy, equipment enough according to my reading of his character and the meaning of life, to make him impervious to all sophistry and all sin. The conversation that I had overheard did nothing to weaken my faith in the Great Experiment which in my heart I felt already to be an unqualified success, but it notified me of the fact which had almost escaped me, that Jerry was no longer a boy but a man in years as well as body and intelligence and that his desire for worldly knowledge was not to be thwarted.

And yet the prospect seemed far from pleasing to me. It was the beginning of the end of our Utopia. Upon the threshold of the world Jerry was eager for that which I had scorned. Our paths would separate. The old relation would be no more.

I went home slowly and I think some sign of my weariness and perplexity must have been marked upon my features as I entered the hall where Jerry with sober countenance awaited me. There was nothing for it but to talk the thing out. I did not upbraid him nor he me. We understood each other too well for that.

Then followed the flood of eager questions from a mind topsy-turvy. I answered him slowly, deliberately, and gave him in some detail his father's thesis on education, explaining how and why I happened to be in sympathy with it and pointing out by the results attained the wisdom of our plans.

"Results!" he cried. "What results? In what respect is my education better than another man's? I know my Latin, and my Greek, my French, my German. I'm a good history scholar, and what you've taught me of philosophy,—the inside of books—all of it. But life, Roger,—you've starved me—starved me! If I were a babe in arms I couldn't know less—"

"You'll know life in time, Jerry, see it through a finer prism."

"I want to see it as it is, in the raw, not beautiful when it is not beautiful. I want the truth—all the truth, Roger, the rough and the ugly where it *is* rough and ugly. You say you've made me a man, taught me to think fine thoughts, given me a good mind and a strong body, but all the while you were sheltering me, saving me—from what? What good are my mind and body if they aren't strong enough to be put to the test of life and survive it?"

He was much agitated.

"I have no fear to put you to any test—today, tomorrow," I said quietly.

"Then put me to it—out there." With a wave of his arm he cried: "I must see for myself, think for myself."

"You shall, Jerry, soon. Will you be patient a little while longer?"

He controlled himself with an effort and bent forward in his chair, bringing his head down into his hands.

"It's hard. I feel like a coward, a coward—not taking my share—"

"Ah," I said suddenly, "*she* called you that?"

"Yes. If she had been a man I should have thrashed her. But in a moment I knew that she had spoken the truth."

"But Jerry, a coward is one who is afraid. How could you be afraid of something you didn't know about?"

"But I know now. She told me very little, Roger, but I've guessed the rest."

He went on in this vein for awhile and at last grew calmer. And the result of it all was a promise on my part to answer more frankly all his questions, to subscribe to two newspapers and some magazines, and to begin on the morrow a course of reading which would prepare the way for his contact with the world. He seemed satisfied and at last went to bed with his old cheery "Good night, Dry-as-dust."

After all, I had gotten out of it well enough. Only a few months remained for him within the wall and with the exception of the newspapers, my plans for him were really little changed. I may as well confess at once that my delay in broadening his point of view was selfish. I had made such a beautiful thing that I was as proud of it as any painter of his masterpiece. Until the present moment I had been true to my own ideals. What was to follow must be a concession to convention.

But I entered frankly enough into the new scheme of things and set Jerry a course in modern fiction in books carefully chosen and before the summer was gone and the autumn far advanced Jerry had read at least a shelf-full of volumes. He went through them avidly and asked few questions. Love between the sexes he now accepted as a matter of course, but he hadn't the slightest conception of what it meant and told me so. He had passed the morbid age between boyhood and manhood, his head in the air, his gaze upon the stars, and what he read now did not trouble him.

And as the months flew by without the expected revelation, I breathed more freely. His heart was so clean that the suggestion of forbidden things made no impression upon it. He already accepted suffering, sin, disease, as part of the lot of a too complex society, but he made few comments upon his reading and these were perfunctory. He was so free from guile that I actually believe he could have been given access to any library without fear of contamination.

In November Jack Ballard arrived for a visit of a few days and announced that his father had bought a house in New York which was to be ready for occupancy after Jerry's birthday. As Jack is to occupy a prominent place in these pages, I may as well announce at once that at this time he had reached the age of thirty-five, had kept most of his hair, was slightly inclined to corpulency, and wore gay cravats which matched his handkerchiefs, shirts and socks, the "sartorial symphony," as he described it. He still kept office hours from two to three on Thursdays and refused all efforts on the part of his father to make him take life other than as a colossal joke. He had not married, though I do not doubt that there were many who would have nabbed him quickly enough.

In his previous visits to Horsham Manor Jack had, at no little cost, repressed his speech into accord with my teachings, and Jerry was very fond of him. They fished, swam and sparred by day, and in the evenings Jack told stories of hunting in foreign countries to which Jerry listened wide-eyed.

But now, it seemed, his visit had a purport. There was just a suggestion of swagger in Jack's manner at the dinner table where, to Jerry's surprise, he wore a jacket and a fluted shirt.

At the boy's comment, Jack inhaled deeply of his cigarette (another operation which Jerry always regarded with a certain awe) and stated the object of his visit, which was nothing less than that of sartorially equipping Jerry for the fray.

"To be well-dressed, my boy," he said gayly, "is to show the finishing touch of a perfect culture. Without well-fitting garments no man is complete. I am going to clothe you, Jerry, from the skin out. That's my privilege. I shall be the framemaker for Roger's *magnum opus*. And not over my dead body shall you wear after December twelfth a tartan-cravat." (Jerry fingered at the gay bit of ribbon at his neck.) "If you will remember, our friend Ruskin said that the man who wears a tartan-cravat will most surely be damned."

As you will observe. Jack Ballard exactly defined sophistication, root and branch. But his sophistries were always colorful and ornamental and of course Jerry laughed.

"I'll take your word for it, Uncle Jack," he said. "But you know I rather like color."

"Of course, in a rainbow, my boy. But in a cravat—no! The cravat is the chevron of gentility. You shall see. Symphonies in browns and gray-greens! I'll make you a heart-breaker."

"Why do you put such rubbish in his head, Ballard?" I said testily.

"Because he's got quite enough essential matter there already," he laughed. "For ten years you've been packing him with facts. I have a feeling that if one only shook Jerry a little, he would disgorge them all—dates of battles, maxims, memorabilia of all sorts, a heterogeneous mess. He's full to the brim, I tell you, and ready to explode. Suppose he did! How would you like to be hit in the midriff by an apothegm of Cicero, or be hamstrung by the subjunctive pluperfect of an irregular French verb?"

Jerry was laughing immoderately, though I admit such blackface pleasantry appealed little to my sense of humor. But I found myself smiling. "Surely you don't expect to avert this catastrophe by providing Jerry with a new cravat?" I urged.

"That is precisely what I *do* expect," he said. "You've had your fling at him, Pope. I'm going to have mine. Tomorrow a tailor will arrive, also a haberdasher and a bootmaker. Jerry will be measured from top to toe. The mountain is coming to Mahomet."

"Let's be sure no mouse is born," I said dryly.

"Six feet two of country mouse," he roared. "Oh, Pope, don't you worry. We'll show you a thing or two, won't we, Jerry?"

The tailor, the haberdasher and the bootmaker came, saw and measured, while Jack sat in the background, with a sheaf of plates of men's clothing in his lap, and gave directions. Jerry must have felt a great deal like a fool during the operation for I'm sure he looked one. But Ballard had his way and not until night did he leave us to peace and our own devices.

The time for the boy's emergence approached, alas, too quickly. A change had come over the spirit of Jerry's dreams. I saw that he was eager to go. It seemed that he already stood on tiptoe peering forth, eager, straining at his leash. And since he was

no longer content at Horsham Manor, I reasoned, with regret, that the sooner he went the better. I had done all I could for him. His destiny was now in the lap of the gods.

Everything had been carefully arranged. The Ballards, elder and younger, were to take him to the new house in town where Christopher would look after him. At first Jerry would not listen to the arrangement. I had for so long been his guide and philosopher I must continue his friend. He wanted me with him in New York. But to this I demurred. Much as I disliked the thought of separation, I had made up my mind that he must go alone, cut adrift from all moral support. I had wished to go away, for having saved practically all my salary for ten years I was now independent, but at Jerry's insistent pleading we compromised. For the present I would stay on at the Manor and finish my book.

Jerry's birthday dinner was an impressive affair. With the two Ballards came the five solemn co-executors of John Benham's will—Mr. Stewardson, Mr. da Costa, Mr. Wrenn, Mr. Walsenberg and Mr. Duhring. And these, with Jerry, Radford, Flynn, the boxer, and myself made up the company. Jerry had insisted on having Flynn and no amount of urging could dissuade him. Flynn was his friend, he said, more his friend than Mr. Wrenn, Mr. Duhring or indeed any of the others whom he barely knew by sight. And so Flynn came.

The elders were solemn and significant, Jerry, at the head of the table, wearing for the first time his new finery (under the hypnotism, as he confessed in a whisper, of the vast expanse of white shirt-front), trying to look as though he were enjoying himself. Radford and I were mere onlookers. Flynn was acutely miserable. Had it not been for Jack Ballard I fear the conversation would have degenerated into a discussion of the merits and possibilities of Jerry's many "companies." But every time that that danger threatened the irrepressible Jack demolished it with an anecdote. He wasn't going to have Jerry's bud nipped so early, as his own had been, by the frost of finance. By the time we had reached the roast, and the champagne, the plutocrats seemed to realize that the occasion was a birthday party and not a board meeting.

Over the port there were speeches, toasts by the plutocrats, one by one, to the newly risen Railroad King, while Jerry grasped the arms of his chair, a ballet dancer's smile on his lips, trying to look happy. But when Jack got up he laughed genuinely.

"Gentlemen, I've known our host of this evening almost since he was born. I have watched with solicitude the rearing of this infant. I am his fairy godfather. I got Canby. Thanks to my wisdom, Jerry has now safely emerged from the baby diseases, and confronts the world in a boiled shirt. He has kindly consented, I think, against the advice of his tutor, to permit me to put the finishing touches on his education.

"Jerry has already been proposed at three excellent clubs, to two of which he has been elected today. I have warned him against the insidious cocktail and the deadly cigarette" (here Jack puffed at one vigorously) "and have advised him that ladies were designed by their Maker for purely ornamental purposes. I am not sure that he has taken my word for it and will probably propose to verify my statement according to his reading of aesthetics. I wish him all success in the purely scientific side of his investigations.

"As to his career, gentlemen, I warn you that he will choose it for himself. If you don't believe me, I will ask you carefully to examine the breadth and squareness of his chin. In proposing Jerry Benham's health, a superfluous proceeding at the best, I don't think I can pay him a higher tribute than in saying that in addition to being both a scholar and a gentleman, he is also the best heavyweight boxer I have ever seen, in the ring or out of it, and that anyone who expects to make him do anything he does not want to do, will be a subject for commiseration—or the coroner. Gentlemen, Jerry Benham!"

Having discharged this bombshell into the ranks of the plutocrats, Jack sat down. Of course, everybody laughed, and while they were laughing Flynn awkwardly got up, perspiring profusely, first shooting his cuffs and then fingering at his neckband. "Misther Ballard's right, gents. He's right. I don't know much about books, but if Masther Jerry's as good at edjication as he is wid his fists, then all I've got to say is that he's *some* perfessor. I've been workin' wid him on an' off these four year an' all I'd loike to say to you, gents, is just this: Don't crowd him, *don't crowd him*, gents, because he's got an uppercut like a ton o' coal."

Flynn sat down amid applause and Jerry rose, flushing happily. I think what Flynn had said pleased him more than all that had preceded it.

"My friends," he said quietly, "I am glad to see you here and hope that I may prove worthy of your good opinions. I'm grateful to you and Mr. Ballard, Mr. Stewardson, Mr. da Costa, Mr. Walsenberg, Mr. Wrenn and Mr. Duhring for all that you've done for me in here, but I want you all to know that it's to Roger Canby that I owe my greatest debt, to Roger Canby, my tutor, brother, mother, father,—friend."

They wanted me to speak. I could not. But Jerry understood.

In the library after dinner I overheard part of a conversation between Ballard the elder and Mr. Duhring.

"What's all this rubbish of Jack's, Harry, about Jerry having a square chin. Do you think he'll be difficult to manage?"

Henry Ballard smiled.

"Jack can't resist his little joke. I'm afraid I've spoiled that boy outrageously."

"Yes, I rather think you have," said the other dryly.

CHAPTER VIII

JERRY EMERGES

In hearing from Jack Ballard's own lips the story of Jerry Benham's first appearance in Broadway I was forcibly reminded of the opening cantos of the Divine Comedy where Dante follows the shade of Virgil into the abyss of hell. I had not let Jerry know of my presence in New York, for I believed that he would have wanted me with him and did not care to be placed in a position to refuse him. Indeed I can give no reason for my visit except the very plausible one that, my work going badly, I felt the need of a change. Jack was much amused at my sudden appearance one morning at his apartments, but welcomed me warmly enough, giving the pledge of secrecy I demanded.

"Oh, it's been perfectly ripping," he said, when we were seated, fairly bubbling over with delectable reminiscences. "He's like a newly-hatched chicken, all fluffy and clean, a little batty-eyed and groggy but intensely curious about everything."

"Has he asked any questions?"

"Millions of 'em, like balls from a Roman candle. He shoots 'em at every angle and some of 'em hit."

"You've taken him about?" I asked.

"Yes, but he doesn't exactly comprehend the meaning and purposes of his clubs. I took him in one of them, the most select, on several afternoons. The same fellows were always sitting around a window looking out, others, older ones, were asleep in armchairs. I didn't offer him anything to drink and we sat there, watching the chaps in the window and listening to their talk. The conversation was not brilliant."

"'Do these gentlemen do this all the time?' asked Jerry softly.

"'Yes, almost all the time.'

"'Don't they ever get tired of looking out of the window?'

"'They don't seem to. It's restful to watch other people working.'

"'But don't they *do* anything else?'

"'Not much. They're rich.'

"'And the others, the old gentlemen asleep in the chairs, are they rich too?'

"'Yes, rich too, but tired.'

"'Tired of being rich?'

"'Perhaps.'

"'I see.'

"He was quiet for a long while and then: 'What a horrible waste of opportunity!'

"I thought this was the psychological moment to put in my brief for the governor.

"'It certainly is. Luckily you've got a career waiting for you.'

"'But if riches only lead to this, Uncle Jack, I'm pretty sure I'd much rather be poor.'

"'There isn't much chance of your getting *that* wish,' I laughed.

"'Well, I could give my money away,' he said. I looked at him quickly, for his tone was very earnest.

"'That won't do, my boy. Indiscriminate giving may be very injurious.'

"'I can't understand that.'

"A few nights later a beggar touched his arm as he passed. The man said he was hungry and looked it. Jerry gave him his pocketbook. The fellow glanced at the pocketbook and then at Jerry as though he thought the boy was crazy and bolted without a word. Jerry watched him out of sight. 'Might at least have said "Thank you,"' he murmured. He didn't speak of giving away money for awhile.

"A night or two later he had an experience of another sort. It was after the theater, the least noxious play I could discover on the bills. Two women met us in a dark cross street. I saw Jerry stop and stare at one of them. That was unusual. I urged him to go on but he stopped and listened.

"'In an awful hurry, ain't you, dearie?' one of the girls asked.

"'Why, no, not at all,' says Jerry, politely taking off his hat. And then as her appellation struck him: 'I think you must have mistaken me for someone else.'

"The girl was a little puzzled.

"'Aw, yer stringin' me,' she said.

"'Stringing?' asked Jerry.

"'Cut it out. You know what I mean well enough'. Come along,' and she moved a pace away.

"Jerry followed. 'I'd be glad to come if I can be of any assistance.'

"'Assistance,' laughed the girl.

"'Did you hear that, Geraldine?'

"And with that they both burst into roars of laughter.

"Jerry's ignorance of things made him keenly sensitive to ridicule.

"'I think you're very impolite,' he said with dignity.

"'Aw, go chase yourself,' said Geraldine and vanished into the shadows with her companion.

"That interview took a lot of explaining. In fact, all the way to Jerry's house the mystery of the girls' behavior hung like a cloud over him. 'Do you know, Jack,' he said as we were parting, 'I think that girl was mad—quite mad.'"

"Couldn't you have prevented that meeting?" I asked.

"I didn't try. Besides, Jerry is a persistent chap. When I asked him why he stopped, he said it was because the girl looked like somebody he was hunting for."

"Who? I can't imagine."

"He said her name was Una Smith."

"Oh, yes. The minx who slipped into Horsham Manor. I told you about her. But her name isn't Smith."

"Jerry has been looking for her." He laughed. "He thought at first, he said, he'd see her on the street, but was surprised to find the city so large. He was a little disappointed. But I think he's forgotten. There's safety in numbers."

"Then he doesn't know anything yet?"

"Bless your heart! I'd no more think of teaching Jerry filth than I would my own sister. But by the Lord Harry, he's an inquisitive cuss. He's learning that life isn't all beer and skittles, has felt the skinny talons of poverty on his elbow and has heard a truck-driver swear in the approved New York manner. That in itself was a liberal education. The worst of it was that the chap happened to be swearing at Jerry."

He chuckled at the memory.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Jerry jumped over the wheel, caught the man by the collar of his coat and threw him into the street. He was a big 'un too."

Ballard lingered provokingly in the narrative, which was interesting me greatly.

"And then?" I asked.

"The fellow rose, covered with slime, looking vicious.

"'What did you mean taking God's name in vain?' says Jerry sternly.

"'I'll show you, you—'

"He came in with a rush, grimy fists flying. Jerry feinted just once, side-stepped and

caught him prettily on the point of the jaw. The blow was beautifully timed, and the fellow dropped like a log."

"And then?"

"A crowd was gathering and so we ducked—I slipped Jerry into a hotel entrance near by and out we went by another way." Ballard paused in the act of lighting a cigarette. "You see, he's already giving battle to society. A walk abroad with Jerry is an adventure which may end in metaphysics or the jail. But it won't do, Roger, tilting at wind-mills like that. He can't make New York like Horsham Manor—at least not all at once."

"He'd try that if he could," I laughed.

"It will be a slow business, I'm afraid. New York is quite contented to be exactly what she is. And the women!" He emitted a tenuous whistle. And then, "I don't suppose it ever occurred to you, Pope, that all these years you've been sheltering the Apollo Belvedere."

"He *is* good looking. Thank God he doesn't know it."

"He will in time. It's really a shame the way the women stare at him on the street. He's never through blushing when he isn't asking questions.

"'What do those women look at me for?' he asks. 'Nothing queer about me, is there?'

"'Oh, no,' I reply. 'They look at everybody like that. It's a characteristic of the sex, curiosity. You don't mind, do you?'

"'Oh, I suppose not. I rather like it when the pretty ones do. How red their cheeks are and their lips! It must be much more healthful in the city than I had supposed.'"

"Rouge?" I asked.

"Yes, of course. Even the flappers do it. It takes good eyesight to tell 'em from the dowagers nowadays."

"And Jerry doesn't know the difference?"

"I think he's beginning to. A few days ago I met an old girl I know, Mrs. Warrington, walking with Marcia Van Wyck; you know, the heiress, who has the big place up near Horsham Manor—father, mother both dead. Spoiled all her life. Lives with a companion, you know,—poor relation. They stopped us—mere curiosity—not to talk to *me*, bless your heart, but to see Jerry. It seems they'd heard we'd turned him loose, and guessed who my companion was. We talked awhile and Marcia asked us to call. When they went off. Jerry turned to me in a stage whisper:

"'Jack, that lady has paint on her face.'

"'Woman, not lady,' said I. 'This is Fifth Avenue. The ladies of New York are only to be found on Broadway and the Bowery,'

"He looked bewildered but his other discovery interested him the most.

"'But I say she had paint on her face,' he repeated.

"'How could you tell?' I asked innocently.

"'It was streaky. I saw it.'

"'Possibly. But it isn't polite to notice such things.'

"He was silent a moment. And then: 'I think the other, the girl, Miss Van Wyck, is very beautiful. I think I should like to call on her, Jack.'

"So you see, Pope, he's looking up. Marcia *is* pretty. She has been out three seasons but she takes good care of herself. I've never liked her much myself—a little too studied, you know, and quite ultra-modern."

"You think Jerry was impressed?" I asked. There may have been a deeper note of interest in my query than I intended, for Jack burst into laughter.

"There you go. Your one chick is a duckling now, Pope, old boy. You'll have to let him swim if he wants to. The water's deep there, too—very deep. Marcia knows her way about."

"It would be a pity if she made a fool of him," I ventured.

He only smiled.

"It would, of course. Perhaps she will. But Jerry's got to cut his eye teeth. And he might as well cut 'em on Marcia as anybody else. But there's no danger of her marrying him for his money. She's almost if not quite as rich as he is. Half the young bloods in town are after her. It's rather flattering to Jerry. She gave me the impression yesterday of rather liking him."

"Oh, you called?"

"It was something of a command. When a girl rolls her eyes the way she did at Jerry and says that he must come to see her, there's nothing for him but to go. Besides, they're neighbors up in the country, you know. I went with him. I had an idea what we were in for, but Jerry didn't, naturally. She expected us and the butler led the way past the drawing-room into the lady's particular sanctorum, a smallish room in a wing of the house all hung in black damask, with black velvet rugs and ebony chairs. Marcia's blonde, you know, and gets her effects daringly. I must admit that she looked dazzling, like a bit of Meissen or Sevres in an ormolu cabinet. She was lolling on a black divan smoking a cigarette and put out her slim fingers languidly. That's her pose—condescension mixed with sudden spasms of intense interest. She extended her fingers to be kissed—she had learned that nonsense in Europe somewhere—and so I kissed 'em. They were dry, cool, very beautifully tinted, with the nails long and highly polished and had the odor, very faintly, of jasmine. Jerry kissed 'em too, looking extremely foolish."

"He would," I growled. "The hussy!"

Ballard shook with laughter.

"Oh, that's rather rough, Pope. She's merely the product of a highly sensitized *milieu*. Because I don't like girls of that stamp doesn't argue her unlikable. I've never heard a word against her except that she has much attention from men. And with her money and looks that's natural enough."

"What happened?" I put in shortly.

"Oh, she was very languid at first and a little formal, thawing effectively as she drew Jerry out. You see she had a little the advantage in knowing his history.

"'I'm very flattered that you should have come so soon,' she said, comprehending us both in her level gaze. 'Will you smoke, Mr. Benham? No? You haven't succumbed yet to all of the amiable weaknesses of human nature. They're very mild. *Do* change your mind. There! I knew you would,'

"Jerry fingered the thing and lighted it as though it might have been the match of a blunderbuss.

"'I've been wondering for a great many years, Mr. Benham, what you could be like,' she went on in a tone which is more nearly described as a purr than anything else. 'You know, our places up in Ulster County are almost adjoining. At times I've been tempted to scale your wall. It looked so very attractive from outside. But they told me you kept a private banshee, trained to visit those you didn't like. You don't, do you?'

"Jerry laughed. 'The nearest thing I've got to a banshee is my dog Skookums. But he's blind in one eye and his teeth are gone, and he's too lazy even to wag his tail. Besides I don't see why I should set him on *you*!

"She laughed, showing a row of rather small but even teeth.

"'They say you don't like girls. Tell me it isn't so, Mr. Ballard'—she appealed to me.

"I saw the way the wind was blowing but I chose to humor her.

"'I am sure he adores the very ground you walk on,' I said politely, 'especially when you look like a figure on an Etruscan amphora.'

"She smiled slowly. 'You *can* say nice things, can't you, Mr. Ballard? But that doesn't quite exculpate Mr. Benham.'

"'I'm sure,' said Jerry very gravely, 'that you're the most beautiful creature I've ever seen!'

"Her fishing prospered. Her eyelashes lowered so that we both could see how long they were and when she raised them again and looked at Jerry her eyes were opened wide.

"'That is the greatest compliment I've ever received in my life,' she said evenly. 'I hope you mean it, Mr. Benham.'

"'I shouldn't have said it if I didn't think so,' said Jerry quickly.

"Something in the positive way he spoke pleased her again for she smiled bewitchingly, effacing me completely. I think we're going to be very good friends,' she said, moving up on the divan a little nearer to him. 'Of course, it takes more than the aesthetic appeal to bring two sensible people together,' she murmured. 'It is not the eye which must catch the reflection, but the mind. You've thought a good deal—and studied? Men are so vapid nowadays.' She sighed. 'I hope some day you will think I'm clever enough for you to talk to me about things.'

"She was playing up to him, you see, I think that Jerry is the most extraordinary male

animal that has ambled into her vision this winter.

"'I'd be glad to. Of course you're different from anything I ever saw before,' said Jerry. 'I've always thought of nature as the most beautiful thing in the world. Now I seem to be just as sure that art is.'

"That rather took her aback, but she didn't turn a hair.

"'You think all this—superfluous?'

"'Not superfluous, perhaps. Merely artificial.'

"'Am I artificial?'

"'Yes,' bluntly! 'I don't understand it at all. But it's singularly effective. It's like night with only one star visible—'

"'The more visible,' I put in, 'for being Venus.'

"She looked at me slantways. 'I'm sorry you said that, Mr. Ballard. Venus is not my goddess. Diana—'

"'The Huntress,' I broke in again.

"'Pallas Athene, the guardian and guide of heroes,' she countered neatly.

"'I'm glad you don't like Venus, Miss Van Wyck,' put in Jerry quickly. 'She made a lot of trouble, just because she was pretty. Diana—she *was* the right sort, no sentimental rot for her.'

"'Of course. Sentiment *is* rot and so sloppy.'

"Jerry laughed ingenuously. 'That's a good word,' he said. 'Imagine Diana being sloppy.'

"'Women aren't nearly as sentimental as they used to be. As a woman's weapon hysteria has gone to the dust heap. Women are learning independence. You believe in women thinking for themselves, don't you?'

"'Of course,' said Jerry. 'But they don't, do they?'

"'*I* do. It's one of my gospels to be self-sufficient. Don't you believe me?'

"'I'd like to, you're so lovely to look at. I'd like to think you were perfect in everything.'

"He refreshed her. Her artificialities one by one were falling away from her like discarded garments. And yet I was not sure that it wasn't artifice that was discarding them. She was very clever. I might have guessed it, had I noticed earlier the volumes by Freud and Strindberg on the little ebony side table."

Ballard paused a moment to light a fresh cigarette.

"Bah!" I muttered contemptuously.

He looked over at me thoughtfully. "You may sneer, Pope, my boy," he commented. "But this sort of thing has come to stay. The infants are imbibing it with their bottles —self-expression, self-analysis and all that."

"But this girl is dangerous," I remarked.

"I imagine she is," he said calmly. "At any rate, she's going to prove or disprove your precious hypothesis."

"I'm not afraid for Jerry," I growled. "No chameleon will change *his* color. What else did she say?"

"She was very much pleased at Jerry's compliment.

"'Someone has taught you to be very polite,' she said with a smile.

"'Polite?' asked Jerry. 'Merely because I was hoping you weren't flabby?'

"'Well, I'm not flabby,' she smiled indulgently. 'I hate flabby people.'

"'I don't see any reason why a woman should be different from a man,' Jerry went on. 'Men don't cry, why should women? I've always thought the Greeks were right. To me there's only one sin the world and that's weakness.'

"You'll pardon me, Pope, if I say that he sounded very much like you," he laughed. "He had the preaching tone, the assertiveness. It was most amusing. Imagine the paradox, this babe, an ascetic and this worldling, a sybarite, meeting upon a common ground! For I really believe she was sincere about her self-sufficiency. Whatever her tastes, she's no weakling."

"But she's trivial, a smatterer, a decadent—"

"And handsome," laughed Ballard. "Don't forget that."

"Mere looks will never ensnare Jerry."

"I hope not, but she'll teach him a thing or two before she's through with him."

I was silent for some moments, and then: "What else do you know of this girl?" I asked.

"Nothing. I've painted you the picture as well as I could. The conversation that followed was unimportant. Her remarks became guarded and later descended to the mere commonplace."

"She *is* dangerous," I said.

"I've warned Jerry. He laughed at me."

"When was this call?" I asked.

"The day before yesterday."

"And where is Jerry today?"

"I have a notion that he is spending the afternoon with Miss Marcia Van Wyck," he said with a smile.

CHAPTER IX

FOOT-WORK

I should very much like to have been present while Jerry made some of his visits to the house of the girl Marcia in order to have heard with my own ears what she said to Jerry in those first few weeks of their acquaintance. Some of it, a very little, I did learn from Jerry's letters to me, but much more from Jack Ballard, who visited the lady upon his own account and supplied the missing links in my information as to the growing friendship. But the nature of Jerry's feelings toward her I can only surmise by my knowledge of the character of the boy himself through which I tried to peer as with my own eyes, at the personality of this extraordinary female. That she was more than ordinarily clever there was no reason to doubt; that she was attractive to the better class of young men in her own set was beyond dispute; that she was thoroughly unscrupulous as to the means by which she attained her ends (whatever they were) seemed more than probable. Perhaps she did not differ greatly from other young female persons in her own walk of life, but I would have been better pleased if Jerry's education in the ways of the world could have proceeded a little more slowly. It seemed to me as I compared them, that the girl Una, who had called herself Smith, brazen as she was, would have been a much saner companion. I could not believe, of course, that either of them could sway Jerry definitely from the path of right thinking, but I realized that the eleven years during which Jerry had been all mine were but a short period of time when compared to the years that lay before him. From the description I had of her, the Van Wyck girl was not at all the kind of female that I thought Jerry would like. She was an exotic, and was redolent, I am sure, of faint sweet odors which would perplex Jerry, who had known nothing but the smell of the forest balsams. She was effete and oriental, Jerry clean and western.

But, of course, I had not met the girl and my opinion of her was based upon the merest guesses as to her habits and character. She seemed to be, according to Ballard, essentially feminine (whatever he meant by that) and in spite of her protestations to Jerry as to her self-sufficiency and soundness, to have a faculty for ingratiating herself into the fullest confidence of the young men who came into her net.

In looking over the above, it occurs to me that I may be accused of prejudice against or unfairness to this girl of whom I really knew so little, for if I do not tell the truth, this work has no value. But upon consideration I have decided to let my opinions stand, leaving my own personal point of view to weigh as little or as much as it may in the mind of my reader. To say that I was jealous of Jerry's attentions to any young woman would be as far from the truth as to say that I was not jealous for his happiness. But as several weeks went by and Jerry did not appear at the Manor, his notes meanwhile becoming more and more fragmentary, I found a conviction slowly growing in my mind that my importance in Jerry's scheme of things was diminishing with the days. One afternoon just before the dinner hour I was reading Heminge and Condell's remarkable preface to the "Instauratio Magna" of Bacon, which advances the theory that the state of knowledge is not greatly advancing and that a way must be opened for the human understanding entirely different from any known. In the midst of my studies Jerry rushed in, flushed with his long drive in the open air, and threw his great arms around my neck, almost smothering me.

"Good old Dry-as-dust! Thought I'd surprise you. Glad to see me? Anything to eat? By George! You're as yellow as a kite's foot. Been reading yourself into a mummy, haven't you?"

It was good to see him. He seemed to bring the whole of outdoors in with him.

I took him by the shoulders and held him off from me, laughing in pure happiness.

"Well. What are you looking at? Expect to see my spots all changed?"

"I think you've actually grown."

"In four weeks? Rubbish! I think I've contracted. If there's anything to make a fellow feel small it's rubbing elbows with four million people. Good old Roger! Seems as if I'd been away for a lifetime. Then again it seems as if I'd never been away at all, as if New York was all a dream. Well, here I am, like Shadrach, past the fiery furnace and not even scorched. It's a queer place—New York—full of queer people, living on shelves, like the preserves in a pantry. Great though! I'm getting to understand 'em a little, though they don't understand me. I suppose I'm queer to them. Funny, isn't it? 'Old fashioned,' a fellow called me the other day. I didn't know whether to hit him or take him by the hand. I think he meant it as a compliment. I had been polite, that's all. Most people don't understand you when you say, 'Thank you' or 'Excuse me.' They just stare, and then dash on. I used to wonder where they were all going and why they were rushing. I don't now. I rush like the rest of 'em, even when I've got nothing to do of a morning but to buy a new cravat. By Jove, I'm rattling on. Is dinner ready?"

It was. We dined on Horsham Manor's simple fare, but Jerry ate it as though he had never been away. And when dinner was over we adjourned to the library and talked far into the night. I observed for one thing, that he was now smoking cigarettes with perfect facility. I made no comment, but could not help recalling the fact that it was in this, too, that Eve had tempted and Adam fallen. He ran on at a great rate, but said little of the girl Marcia, or indeed of any women. I think he hadn't been able to forget my attitude toward them, and in the light of his new contacts considered himself vastly superior to me in experience of the world. But the mere fact that he now avoided mention of the Van Wyck girl advised me that his thoughts of her were of a sort which he thought I could not possibly comprehend.

He told of some of the things already mentioned, with humor and some bewilderment. He had made it a habit to go and walk the streets for awhile every day when he could mingle with the crowds and try and get their point of view. He hadn't gotten very far yet, but he was learning. He knew the different parts of the city and chose for his walks the East side by preference. He had seen filth and squalor on one avenue and on the next one elegance and wealth. The contrasts were amazing.

"Something's wrong, Roger," he said again and again. "Something's wrong. It doesn't seem fair somehow. I'm sure the people on one street can't all be deserving and those on another all undeserving. The Fifth Avenue lot, the ones I associate with in the clubs, are all very well in their way, but they seem to waste a lot of time. They don't produce anything, they're not helping to keep the world together. The real workers are elsewhere. I've seen 'em, talked to some of 'em. They've got vitality that the other chaps haven't. Flynn's friends are *great*. I've been sparring with 'em—some pretty good ones, too."

"How did you manage?"

"All right. You know, Flynn always said I gave promise of being a pretty good boxer, so I've been working a little in the afternoon at his gymnasium. I had to, Roger, to keep in shape. There are all sorts of chaps there, mostly professionals. You know he's training this new middleweight, Carty, for a fight next March. I didn't like to put on the gloves with any of 'em, but Flynn insisted."

Jerry paused and I saw a smile growing slowly at the corners of his lips. I knew that smile. Jerry wore it the day Skookums disobeyed orders and had the encounter with the skunk.

"You had a good go of it?" I asked.

He nodded.

"You see, there was a big Jew named Sagorski, 'Battling' Sagorski they call him, hanging around the place. He's a 'White Hope.' He's been sparring partner of one of the champions and he thinks a good deal of himself. Flynn doesn't like him a great deal—some dispute about a debt, I believe. I was sparring with Flynn, Sagorski watching.

"I heard someone make a remark and then Sagorski's voice sneering. Flynn dropped his hands and turned.

"'Ye always c'ud talk, Sagorski,' said he. 'But talk's cheap. I'll match the bye again ye

six rounds, fer points, double or quits, the same bein' the small amount that's been hangin' betune us the little matter of a year.'

"Sagorski was up in a moment, smiling rather disdainfully. 'Yer on,' he growled.

"They fixed us up, seconds, timekeepers and all, and we went at it. He was a good one and strong but slow, Roger. You know, Flynn's lighter than I am, but lightning fast. Sagorski gave me more time, but he had a good left and an awful wallop with his right. Flynn had warned me to look out for that right and I did. The first round was slow. Each of us was feeling the other out. I landed a few and got one in the ribs. The second round went faster. I avoided him by ducking and side-stepping, but he kept boring in, still smiling disagreeably. I didn't like that smile. He wanted to knock me out, I think, for he made several vicious swings that might have settled me, but I got away from them and kept him moving.

"'Wot's this, sonny?' he sneered at last, 'a foot race?'

"But he didn't make me mad—not then. I kept hitting him freely, not hard, you know, but piling up points nicely for Flynn. He couldn't really reach me at all and was getting madder and madder. It was funny. I think I must have let up a little then, for I think it was in the fourth round he got in past my guard and swung a hard right on my nose. The blow staggered me and I nearly went down. Anyway, Roger, it made me angry. It seemed a part of that ugly smile. I saw red for a moment and then I went for him with everything I had, straight-arms, swings, uppercuts—everything. I think I must have been in better shape than he was, for by the time the round was ended he was groggy.

"When we came up for the next I heard Flynn whispering at my ear, 'Finish him, Masther Jerry. If you don't, he'll put ye out.'

"I didn't need that warning. I sparred carefully for a minute, feeling out what he had left. He swung at me hard, just grazing my ear. Then I went after him again, feinted into an opening and caught him flush on the point of the chin."

He paused for breath. "I didn't want to, you know, Roger, but Flynn was so insistent—and, of course, having started—"

"'You bored in, that th' opposed might beware of thee,'" I paraphrased.

He laughed.

"Yes, I bored in. There was nothing else to do. Flynn didn't say much, but he was pleased as punch. It took ten minutes to bring the fellow around. I was bending over Sagorski, wetting his face, and as he looked up at me I told him I was awfully sorry. What do you think he said?

"'Aw, you go to hell!' Impolite beggar, wasn't he?"

"You have been at least catholic in the choice of companions," I remarked, with a smile, recalling Flynn's prediction about Jerry's weight in wild cats.

"Oh, yes. All sorts of people. I think on the whole I understand the poorer classes best. They do swear, I find, horribly at times, but they don't intend harm by it. I doubt if they really know what it means. 'Hell' is merely an expletive like 'Oh' or 'By Jove' with us chaps. Funny, isn't it?"

"That truck-driver didn't think so," I said.

"That was my first week. I know a lot more now. I've felt sorry about him."

"You needn't," I laughed.

And after a pause:

"And down town, Jerry," I inquired. "How are things going there?"

His expression grew grave at once.

"Oh, I've been going to the office pretty regularly, but it's slow work. I don't understand why, but I don't seem to get on at all."

"That's too bad," I said slowly. "You must get on, old man."

"Yes, I know, but it comes hard. It seems that I'm frightfully rich. In fact, nobody seems to know how rich I am. I've got millions and millions, twenty—thirty perhaps. So much that it staggers me. It's like the idea of infinity or perpetuity. I can't grasp it at all. It's piling up in new investments, just piling up and nothing can stop it."

"You don't want to stop it, do you?"

"But if it was only doing some good—When I see the misery all about—"

"Wait a bit. You're putting the cart before the horse, my boy. There's no sin in being rich, in piling it up, as you say, if you're not doing anybody any harm. Have you ever

thought of the thousands who work for you, of the lands, the railroads, the steamships, the mills, all carrying and producing—producing, Jerry, helping people to live, to work? Isn't it something to have a share in building up your country?"

"But not the lion's share. It's so impersonal, Roger. My companies may be helping, but I'm not. I want to help people myself."

"That's just what I'm getting at. The more money you make, the more people you can help," I laughed. "It's simplicity itself."

"In theory, yes. But I see where it's leading me. If I go on making money, where will I find the time to give it away? It seems to be a passion with these men getting more—always more. I don't want to get like Ballard or Stewardson. And I *won't!"*

He snapped his jaws together and strode with long steps the length of the room.

"I *won't*, Roger," he repeated. "And I've told 'em so."

I remained silent for a moment, gazing at the portrait of John Benham on the wall opposite me. He had a jaw like Jerry's, not so well turned and the lips were thinner, a hard man, a merciless man in business, a man of mystery and hidden impulses. The boy was keen enough, I knew, when it came to a question of right and wrong. There was some ancient history for Jerry to learn. Did Jerry already suspect the kind of man his father had been?

"You're sure that you're right?" I asked quietly.

"Positive. It's all very well to talk about those my money helps, but it harms, too. If anything gets in the way of Ballard's interests or mine, he crushes 'em like egg-shells. My father—"

Jerry hesitated, repeated the word and then paced the floor silently for a moment. I thought it wise to remain silent.

"Oh, I know what it all means to those men. Power! Always! More power! And I don't want it if it's going to make me the kind of man that Henry Ballard is, blind to beauty, deaf to the voice of compassion, a piece of machinery, as coldly scientific in his charities as he is in the—"

"But that's necessary, Jerry," I broke in. "A man of Henry Ballard's wealth must plan to put his money where it will do the most good—"

"Or where it will magnify the name of Henry Ballard," he said quickly. "Oh, I don't know much yet, but I'm pretty sure that kind of thing isn't what Christ meant."

He threw out his arms in a wide gesture. "Roger, I've talked to some of these poor people. There's something wrong with these charity organizations. They're too cold. They patronize too much. They don't get under the skin."

"You haven't wasted a great deal of time," I remarked when he paused.

He smiled. "Well, you know, I couldn't sit in a club window and watch the buses go by."

"Have you declared these revolutionary sentiments to your executors?" I asked after awhile.

He threw himself in an armchair and sighed.

"I suppose I ought to say that Mr. Ballard has been very patient with me. He was. I told him that I didn't want any more money, that I had enough. I think I rather startled him, for he looked at me for a long while over the half-moons in his glasses before he spoke.

"'I don't think you realize the seriousness (he wanted to say enormity but didn't) of your point of view. There's no standing still in this world,' he said. 'If you don't go ahead, you're going to go back. That's all very well for you personally if you choose to remain idle, but it won't do where great financial interests are involved. I want to try to make you understand that a going concern moves of its own momentum. But it's so heavy that once you stop it, it won't go again. The thought of abandoning your career is in itself hazardous. I hope you will not repeat the sentiments you have expressed to me elsewhere. If the street heard what you have just said there would be a fall in your securities which might be disastrous.'

"'But other people would benefit, wouldn't they?' I asked.

"He glared at me, speechless, Roger, and got very red in the face. 'And this,' he stammered at last, 'is the fine result of your Utopia. Ideals! Dreams! My God! If your father could hear you—he'd rise in his grave!'

"I'm just what he made me,' I said coolly.

"He stared at me again as though he hadn't heard what I had said.

"'Do you mean that you're going to abandon this career we've made for you, the most wonderful that could be given mortal man?' he asked, though his tone was not pleasant.

"I did owe him a lot, you see. He's true to his own ideals, though they're not mine. And I was very uncomfortable.

"'I hope you won't think me ungrateful, Mr. Ballard,' I said as calmly as I could. 'In some ways you've been very like a father to me. I want you to understand that I appreciate all that you and the other co-executors have done for me. I've been very happy. But I want you to know, if you don't know it already, that I'm very stupid about business. It bewilders me. I'll try as hard as I can to please you and will do my best at it, but you can understand that that won't be very much when my heart isn't in it. I don't want to see the Benham securities fall, because that would hurt you, too. I'll keep silent for awhile and do just what you want me to do. But I don't want any more money. The responsibility, the weight of it, oppresses me. I'm too simple, if you like, but I don't think I'll change.'

"'And what,' he asked slowly when I stopped, 'what do you propose to do with all this money we've kept together for you?'

"His voice was low, but his face was purple and he snapped his words off short as if their utterance hurt him.

"'With your permission, sir,' I said quietly, 'I expect to give a great deal of it away.'

"Roger, he couldn't speak for rage. He glared at me again and then, jamming his hat on his head, stalked stiffly out. Oh, I've made a mess of things, I suppose," he sighed, "but I can't help it. I'm sick of the whole miserable business."

I made no comment. I had foreseen this interview, but it had come much sooner than I had expected. I felt that I had known Jerry's mind and what he would do eventually, but it was rather startling that he had come to so momentous a decision and had expressed it so vigorously at the very outset of his career. It was curious, too, as I remembered things that had gone before, how nearly his resolution coincided with the one boyishly confessed to the female, Una Smith, in the cabin in the woods last summer. At the time, I recalled, the matter had made no great impression upon me. I had not believed that Jerry could realize what he was promising. But here he was reiterating the promise at the very seats of the mighty.

The subject was too vast a one for me to grasp at once. I wanted to think about it. Besides, he didn't ask my advice. I don't think he really wanted it. I looked at Jerry's chin. It *was* square. For all his sophistries, Jack Ballard was no mean judge of human nature.

CHAPTER X

MARCIA

Jerry came down to the breakfast table attired in tweeds of a rather violent pattern, knickerbockers and spats. He wore a plaid shirt with turnover cuffs, a gay scarf and a handkerchief just showing a neat triangle of the same color at his upper coat pocket. This handkerchief, he informed me airily, was his "show-er." He kept the "blow-er" in his trousers. At all events, he was much pleased when I told him that the symphony was complete.

"The linen, *allegro*, the cravat, *adagio con amore*, the suit—there's too much of the *scherzo* in the suit, my boy."

"*Con amore?*" he asked, looking up from his oatmeal.

"Yes," I said calmly, for not until this moment had I guessed the truth. "*Con amore*," I repeated. "I could hardly have hoped, if Miss Marcia Van Wyck had not come to the neighborhood, that you would have done me the honor of a visit."

It was a random shot, but it struck home, for he reddened ever so slightly.

"How did you know? Who—who told you?" he stammered awkwardly.

"I think it must have been the cravat," I laughed.

"It *was* a good guess," he said rather sheepishly (I suppose because he hadn't said anything to me about her).

"She was tired of town. She's opening Briar Hills for a week or so. Awfully nice girl, Roger. You've got to meet her right away."

"I shall be delighted," I remarked.

"She knows all about you. Oh, she's clever. You'll like her. Reads pretty deep sort of stuff and can talk about anything."

"An intellectual attraction!" I commented. "Very interesting, and of course rare."

"Very. We don't agree, you know, on a lot of things. She's way beyond me in the modern philosophies. She's an artist, too—understands color and its uses and all that sort of thing. She's very fine, Roger, and good. Fond of nature. She wants to see my specimens. I'm going to have her over soon. We could have a little dinner, couldn't we? She has a companion, Miss Gore, sort of a poor relation. She's not very pretty, and doesn't like men, but she's cheerful when she's expected to be. You sha'n't care, shall you?"

"Yes, I shall care," I growled, "but I'll do it if you don't mind my not dressing. I haven't a black suit to my name."

"Oh, that doesn't matter. Very informal, you know."

The motor was already buzzing in the driveway and he wasted little time over his eggs.

"Fix it for tomorrow night, will you, Roger?" he flung at me from the doorway as he slipped into his great coat. "Nothing elaborate, you know; just a sound soup, entrée, roast, salad and dessert. And for wines, the simplest, say sherry, champagne and perhaps some port."

"Shall you be back to luncheon?" I inquired.

"No; dinner, perhaps. G'by!" And he was down the steps and in the machine, which went roaring down the drive, cut-out wide, making the fair winter morning hideous with sound. I stood in the doorway watching, until only a cloud of blue vapor where the road went through into the trees remained to mark the exit of the Perfect Man.

I turned indoors with a sigh, habit directing me to the door of the study, where I paused, reminded of Jerry's final admonitions. Dinner—"nothing elaborate," with an entrée, salad, and wines to be got for two women, Jerry's beautiful decadent who loved nature and ornithology, and the "not very pretty" poor relation who didn't like men but could be "cheerful when she was expected to be." Damn her cheerfulness! It was inconsiderate of Jerry to set me to squiring middle-aged dames while he spooned with his Freudian miracle in the conservatory. Strindberg indeed! Schnitzler, too, in all probability! While I invented mid-Victorian platitudes for the prosaic, "not very pretty" Miss Gore—Bore! Bore—Gore! Bah!

I gave the necessary orders and went in to my work. I merely sat and stared at the half-written sheet of foolscap on the desk, unable to concentrate my thoughts. I am a most moderate man, a philosopher, I hope, and yet today I felt possessed, it seemed, of an insensate desire to burst forth into profanity—a fine attitude of mind for a contemplative morning! My whole world was turned suddenly upside down.

But out of chaos cosmos returned. I had given up the thought of work, but at last found satisfaction in a quiet analysis of Jerry's narration of the night before. What did one female or two or a dozen matter if Jerry was fundamentally sound? Sophistry might shake, blandishment bend, sex-affinity blight, but Jerry would stand like an oak, its young leaves among the stars, its roots deep in mother earth. Marcia Van Wyck, her black damask boudoirs, her tinted finger tips, her Freud, Strindberg and all the rest of her modern trash—there would come a day when Jerry would laugh at them!

I think I must have dozed in my chair, for I seemed to hear voices, and, opening my eyes, beheld Jerry in my Soorway, a laughing group in the hall behind him.

"'Even the worthy Homer sometimes nods,'" he was quoting gayly. "Wake up, Roger. Visitors!"

I started to my feet in much embarrassment. "Miss Van Wyck, Miss Gore—Mr. Canby," said Jerry, and I found myself bowing to a very handsome young person, dressed in an outdoor suit of a vivid, cherry color. I had no time to study her carefully at the moment, but took the hand she thrust forward and muttered something.

"I feel very guilty," she was saying. "It's all my fault, Mr. Canby. I've been simply wild for years to see what was inside the wall."

"I hope it will not disappoint you," I said urbanely.

"It's very wonderful. I don't wonder Jerry never wanted to leave. I shouldn't have gone—ever. A wall around one's own particular Paradise! Could anything be more rapturous?"

("Jerry!" They were progressing.)

The tone was thin, gentle and studiously sweet, and her face, I am forced to admit, was comely. Its contour was oval, slightly accented at the cheek bones, and its skin

was white and very smooth. Her lips were sensitive and scarlet, like an open wound. Her eyes, relics, like the cheek bones, of a distant Slav progenitor, were set very slightly at an angle and were very dark, of what color I couldn't at the moment decide, but I was sure that their expression was remarkable. They were cool, appraising, omniscient and took me in with a casual politeness which neglected nothing that might have been significant. I am not one of those who find mystery and enigma in women's reticences, which are too often merely the evasions of ignorance or duplicity. But I admit that this girl Marcia puzzled me. Her characteristics clashed —cool eyes with sensual lips, clear voice with languid gestures, a pagan—that was how she impressed me then, a pagan chained by convention.

As I had foreseen, when she and Jerry went off to the Museum, I was left to the poor relation. She was tall, had a Roman nose, black hair, folded straight over her ears, and wore glasses. When I approached she was examining a volume on the library table, a small volume, a thin study of modern women that I had picked up at a book store in town. Miss Gore smiled as she put the volume down, essaying, I suppose, that air of cheerfulness of which Jerry had boasted.

"'Modern Woman,'" she said in a slow and rather deep voice, and then turning calmly, "I was led to, understand, Mr. Canby, that you weren't interested in trifles."

"I'm not," I replied, "but I can't deny their existence."

"You can. Here at Horsham Manor."

"*Could*, Miss Gore," I corrected. "The Golden Age has passed."

I didn't feel like being polite. Nothing is so maddening to me as cheerfulness in others when I have suddenly been awakened. Her smile faded at once."

"I didn't come of my own volition," she said icily. "And I will not bother you if you want to go to sleep again."

"Oh, thanks," I replied. "It doesn't matter."

She had turned her back on me and walked to the window.

"Would you like to see the English Garden?" I asked, suddenly aware of my inhospitality.

"Yes, if you'll permit me to visit it alone."

That wasn't to be thought of. After all she was only obeying orders. I followed her out of doors, hastening to join her.

"I owe you an apology. I'm not much used to the society of women. They annoy me exceedingly."

She looked around at me quizzically, very much amused.

"You consider that an apology?" she asked.

"I intended it to be one," I replied. "I have been rude. I hope you'll forgive me."

"You *are* a philosopher, I see," she said with a smile. "I am sorry to annoy you."

"Y—you don't, I think. You seem to be a sensible sort of a person."

She smiled again most cheerfully.

"Don't bother, Mr. Canby. We're well met. I'm not fond of meaningless personalities —or the authors of them."

She really was a proper sort of a person. Her conversation had no frills or fal-lals, and she wasn't afraid to say what she thought. Presently we began speaking the same language. We talked of the country, the wonderful weather and of Jerry, to whom it seemed she had taken a fancy.

"You've created something, Mr. Canby—a rare thing in this age—" she looked off into the distance, her eyes narrowing slightly. "But he can't remain as he is."

"Why not?" I asked quickly. "Knowledge of evil isn't impurity."

"It will permeate him."

"No. He will repel it."

She smiled knowingly.

"Impossible. Society is rotten. It will tolerate him, then resent him, and finally," she made a wide gesture, "engulf!"

"I'm not afraid," I said staunchly.

"You should be. He's in danger—" She stopped suddenly. "I mean—" She paused

again, and then said evenly, "It seems a pity to me, that's all."

"What's a pity?"

"That all your teaching must end in failure."

"H-m! You haven't a very high opinion of your fellows."

"No, men are weak."

"Jerry isn't weak."

"He's human—too human."

"One can be human and still be a philosopher—"

"No."

"But he knows the good from the bad."

"Oh, does he? And if the bad is masquerading? It is always. You think he would recognize it?"

She was speaking in riddles, and yet it seemed to me with a purpose.

"What do you mean, Miss Gore?"

"Merely that such innocence as his is dangerous."

It was an unusual sort of a conversation to be engaged in with a woman I had known but twenty minutes. I think she felt it, too. There was some restraint in her manner, but I realized that her interest in Jerry was driving her, if against her better judgment, with a definite design that would not balk at trifles.

"You seem to know a great deal about Jerry," I said at last. "Who has told you?"

"My eyes are tolerably good, Mr. Canby, my ears excellent."

I would have questioned further, but Jerry and the Van Wyck girl at this moment came out on the terrace. Jerry was laughing.

"Caught in the act," he cried, as they came down to join us. "There's hope for you yet, Roger."

Marcia came and thrust her arm through Miss Gore's. "Isn't it wonderful to be the first woman in the Garden of Paradise?"

Miss Gore nodded carelessly.

The girl was so radiant in her air of possession that I couldn't help speaking.

"But you're not," I said.

Marcia's narrow eyes regarded me coolly and then looked at Jerry inquiringly, and when she spoke her voice was almost too sweet.

"Please don't rob us of our poor little halos, Mr. Canby," she said. "Do you mean that there have been other women, girls—in here before?"

I can't imagine why Jerry hadn't told her that. She seemed to know about everything else. "Yes, one."

"Jerry!" reproachfully. "And you said I was the first girl you'd ever really known!"

He smiled, though he was quite pink around the ears.

"You are really. Er—she didn't count."

"I shall die of chagrin. Her name, Mr. Canby," she appealed.

I hesitated. But Jerry, still red, blurted out:

"Una Smith. But Roger says that couldn't have been her name."

"But why shouldn't it be her name? She had nothing to be ashamed about, had she?"

"Of course not. She just slipped in through a broken grille. She was a stranger around here—I just happened to meet her and—er—we had a talk."

The boy seemed to be quite ill at ease. What did he already owe this girl Marcia that such an innocent confession made him uncomfortable?

"Una—Una—Smith," the girl was repeating. "This is really beginning to be fearfully interesting. Una," she turned quickly, her eyes widening. In the bright sunlight they seemed very light in color, a dark gray shot with little flecks of yellow. "Of course," she exclaimed. And then, "When was this—er—intrusion, Jerry? Last July?"

"I think so."

It was Jerry's turn to be surprised.

"She was brown-haired, smallish, with blue eyes? Quite pretty?"

Jerry nodded.

"Wore leather gaiters and carried a butterfly net?"

"You know her, Marcia?" he broke in.

"Of course. Jerry, I'm really surprised—also a trifle disillusioned—"

They moved off down the path toward the lake, Jerry talking earnestly. I watched them for a moment in silence, wondering what crisis I had precipitated in Jerry's affairs.

Beside me I heard the deep voice of Miss Gore.

"You see? He's already madly infatuated with her."

"Yes, yes," I replied, still watching them. "And she?"

Miss Gore shrugged her thin shoulders.

"I don't know. She won't marry him. I doubt if she will ever marry."

"Thank God for that," I said feelingly. She looked up at me quickly.

"You don't like Marcia?" she asked.

"No." I realized that I had gone too far, but I stood firm to my guns.

I was surprised that she didn't resent my frankness. Instead of being angry she merely smiled.

"Mr. Canby, it is difficult for many of us who live in the world to realize the effect of luxury and over-refinement upon society! We live too close to it. Mr. Benham is an anachronism. I would have given much if he had not become interested in Marcia. She is not for him nor he for her. But I think it is his mind that attracts her—"

"Rubbish!" I broke in. "Has he no face, no body?"

She smiled at my impetuousness. Strangely enough, we were both too interested to resent mere forms of intercourse.

"It's true. She has a good mind, but badly trained. His innocence fascinates, tantalizes her. I've watched them—heard them. She toys with it, testing it in a hundred ways. It's like nothing she has ever known before. But she isn't the kind you think she is. I doubt even if Jerry has kissed her. To Marcia men are merely so much material for experimentation. She has a reputation for heartlessness. I'm not sure that she isn't heartless. It's a great pity. She's very young, but she's already devoured with hypercriticism. She's cynical, a philanderer. You can't tamper with a passion the way Marcia has done without doing it an injury. You see, I'm speaking frankly. I don't quite understand why, but I'm not sorry."

I bowed my head in appreciation of her confidence. This woman improved upon acquaintance.

"You care for her," I said soberly. "I should have been more guarded."

"Yes, I care for her. She has many virtues. She gets along with women and I can understand her attraction for men. But she has confessed to me that men both attract and repel her. Sex-antagonism, I think the moderns call it—a desire to tease, to attract, to excite, to destroy. She uses every art to play her game. It is her life. If any man conquered her she would be miserable. A strange creature, you will say, but —"

"Strange, unnatural, horrible!"

She smiled at my sober tone.

"And yet she is acting within her rights. She asks nothing that is not freely given."

"Women are curiously tolerant of moral imperfections in those they care for. Your Marcia is dangerous. I shall warn Jerry."

But she shook her dark head sagely.

"It will do no good. You will fail."

We walked slowly toward the house and I tried to make her understand that I was grateful for her interest. She was not pretty, but, as I had discovered, had some beauties of the mind which made her physical attractions a matter of small importance.

As we neared the terrace, a thought came to me and I paused.

"You know who the girl Una is?" I asked.

"Yes," she nodded, "but her name isn't Smith."

"I was aware of that. Would you mind telling me who and what she is?"

She remained thoughtful a moment, fingering the stem of a plant.

"I don't see why I shouldn't. Her name is Habberton, Una Habberton. She was visiting the Laidlaws here last summer. Her family, a mother and a lot of girls, live in the old house down in Washington Square. They're fairly well off, but Una has gone in for social work—spends almost all of her time at it—slumming. I don't know much about her, but I think she must be pretty fine to give up all her social opportunities for that."

I smiled.

"She may have another idea of social opportunity," I said.

"Yes—you're quite right. I used the wrong words. One is not accustomed in Marcia's set to find that sort of thing an opportunity."

"Miss Van Wyck knows her?" I asked.

"Yes. Marcia is on a committee that provides money for this particular charity. They know each other. She came over to Briar Hills one night with Phil Laidlaw. Marcia saw her several times in our fields with her butterfly net. You see, her name is unusual. Marcia guessed the rest."

"Thanks," I said. "I hope you've forgiven me for my churlishness. I should like to know you better if you'll let me."

She turned her head toward me with a motherly smile.

"I don't care for the society of men," she said amusedly. "They annoy me exceedingly."

CHAPTER XI

THE SIREN

Something went wrong with Jerry's afternoon, for not long after lunch I heard his machine in the driveway. But I didn't go out to meet him. I knew that if there was anything he wanted to say to me he would come to the study door. But I heard him pass and go upstairs. I hadn't been able to do any work at my book since yesterday morning, and the prospect of going on with it seemed to be vanishing with the hours.

The astounding frankness of Miss Gore had set me thinking. As may be inferred, I did not understand women in the least and hadn't cared to, for their ways had not been my ways, nor mine theirs. But the woman's revelations as to the character of her cousin had confirmed me in the belief that Jerry had gotten beyond his depth. I think I understood her motives in telling me. I was Jerry's guardian and friend. If Miss Gore was Marcia's cousin she was also her paid companion, her creature, bound less by the ties of kinship than those of convention. I suppose it was Jerry's helplessness that must have appealed to the mother in her, his youth, innocence and genuineness. Perhaps she was weary treading the mazes of deception and intrigue with which the girl Marcia surrounded herself. Jerry wasn't fair game. All that was good in her had revolted at the maiming of a helpless animal.

For such, I am sure, Jerry already was. How much or how little the unconscious growth in the boy of the sexual impulse had to do with his sudden subjugation by the girl it was impossible for me to estimate. For if the impulse was newly born, it was born in innocence. This I knew from the nature of his comments on his experiences in the city. Knowledge of all sorts he was acquiring, but, like Adam, of the fruit of the tree he had not tasted. And yet, even I, stoic though I was, had been sensible of the animal in the girl. Her voice, her gestures, her gait, all proclaimed her. Miss Gore had spoken of a psychic attraction. Bah! There is but one kind of affinity of a woman of this sort for a beautiful animal like Jerry!

It was bewildering for me to discover how deeply I was becoming involved in Jerry's personal affairs. With the appointed day I had turned him adrift to work out in his future career, alone and unaided, my theory of life and his own salvation. And yet here, at the first sign of danger, I found myself flying to his defense as Jack Ballard would have it, like a hen that had hatched out a duckling. I reasoned with myself sternly that I feared nothing for Jerry. He would emerge from such an experience greater, stronger, purer even, and yet, in spite of my confidence, I found myself planning, devising something that would open the boy's eyes before damage was

done. I was solicitous for Jerry, but there were other considerations. Jerry wasn't like other men. He had been taught to reason carefully from cause to effect. He would not understand intrigue, of course, or double dealing. They would bewilder him and he would put them aside, believing what he was told and acting upon it blindly. For instance, if this girl told him she cared for him, he would believe it and expect her to prove it, not in accordance with her notions of the obligation created, but in accordance with his own. There lay the difficulty, for he was all ideals, and she, as I suspected, had none. There would be damage done, spiritual damage to Jerry, but what might happen to Marcia? Jerry was innocent, but he was no fool, and with all his gentleness he wasn't one to be imposed upon. Flynn had understood him. He was polite and very gentle, but Sagorski, the White Hope, knew what he was when aroused. I wondered if Marcia Van Wyck with all her cleverness might miss this intuition.

Dinner time found the boy quiet and preoccupied. If he hadn't been Jerry I should have said he was sullen. That he was not himself was certain. It was not until he had lighted his cigarette after dinner that he was sure enough of himself to speak.

"What made you talk of Una to Marcia, Roger?" he asked quietly.

"I didn't," I said coolly. "*You* did, Jerry. And if I had, I can't see what it matters."

"It does a little, I think. You see, Marcia knows who she is. Una gave a false name. She wouldn't care to have people know she had come in here alone."

This was a reason, but of course not the real one. It wasn't like Jerry to mask his purposes in this fashion. I laughed at him.

"If you'll remember, Jerry, I mentioned no names."

"But why mention the incident at all?"

"Because to tell the truth," I said frankly, "I thought Miss Marcia Van Wyck entirely too self-satisfied."

He opened his eyes wide and stared at me. "Oh!" he said.

And then after the pause:

"You don't like Marcia?"

"No," I replied flatly, "I don't."

He paced the length of the room, while I sat by a lamp and ostentatiously opened the evening paper.

"I hope you realize," he said presently, with a dignity that would have been ridiculous if it hadn't been pathetic, "that Miss Van Wyck is a very good friend of mine."

"Is she?" I asked quietly.

"Yes—I'm very fond of her."

"Are you?" still quietly.

"Yes." He walked the floor jerkily, made a false start or so and then brought up before me with an air of decision. "I—I'm sorry you don't like her, Roger. I—I should be truly grieved if I—I thought you meant it. For I intend some day to ask her to be my—my—wife."

It was as bad as that? I dropped pretense and the newspaper, folding my arms and regarding him steadily.

"Isn't this decision—er—rather sudden?" I asked evenly.

"I've loved her from the first moment I saw her," he exclaimed. "She is everything, everything that a woman should be. Amiable, charitable, beautiful, talented, intellectual." He paused and threw out his arms with an appealing gesture. "I can't understand why you don't see it, Roger, why you can't see her as I see her."

I was beginning to realize that the situation was one to be handled with discretion. He was in a frame of mind where active opposition would only add fuel to his flame.

"I'm sorry that I've grown to be so critical, Jerry. You forget that I've never much cared for the sex."

It seemed that this was just the reply to restore him to partial sanity, for his face broke in a smile.

"I forgot, old Dry-as-dust. You don't like 'em—don't like any of 'em. That's different. But you *will* like Marcia. You *shall*. Why, Roger, she's an angel. You couldn't help liking her."

I smiled feebly. My acquaintance with decadent angels had been limited. I turned the

subject adroitly.

"Have you discovered who Una is?" I asked.

"No. Marcia wouldn't tell me. She only laughed at me, but I really wanted to know. She *was* a nice girl, Roger, and I'd hate to have her shown in a false light. Not that Marcia would do that, of course, but girls are queer. I think she really resented our acquaintance. I can't imagine why."

"Nor I," I said shortly. "She doesn't *own* you, does she?"

He looked up at me with a blank expression.

"No, I suppose not," he said slowly.

I followed up my advantage swiftly.

"It's rather curious, Jerry, this attraction Miss Van Wyck has for you. A moment ago you were chivalrous enough in your hope that Una's identity would not be discovered. Was this chivalry genuine? Were you sorry on Una's account or on your own? I really want to know. You liked Una, Jerry. Didn't you?"

"Yes, but—"

"She seemed a very interesting, a fine, even a noble creature. The thought of a girl doing the sort of things she was doing made you reproach yourself for your idleness —your cowardice, I think you called it. Now what I'd like to discover is whether you've quite forgotten the impression she made—the ideal she left in your mind?"

"Of course not. My ideals are still the same. I've tried to tell you that I'm going to put them into practice," he muttered.

"You've forgotten the impression made by Una herself; what reason have you for believing that you won't forget the ideals also?"

"There's no danger of that. She merely opened my eyes. Anyone else could have done the same thing."

"Ah! Has Miss Van Wyck done so?"

"Yes. She's very charitable. But she doesn't make a business of it like Una. She has so many interests and then—" He paused. I waited.

"Roger," he went on in a moment, "I thought Una wonderful. I still do. But Marcia's different. Una was a chance visitor. Marcia is a friend—an old friend. She's like no other woman in the world. You will understand her better some day."

"Perhaps," I said thoughtfully. After that Jerry would say no more. Perhaps he thought he had already said too much, for presently he took himself off to bed. At the foot of the stairs he paused.

"By the way, Roger, we'll be five instead of four for dinner tomorrow."

"Who now?"

"A friend of Marcia's, Channing Lloyd, a chap from town. He came up today."

That admission cost Jerry something, and it explained many things, for I had heard of Channing Lloyd.

"Ah, very well," I said carelessly and shook out my paper.

"Good-night, Roger."

"Good-night, Jerry."

The boy was changed. It may not seem a serious thing to you, my precocious reader, who number your flirtations among the trivial affairs of life. Calf love, you will say, is not a matter worth bothering one's brains about. You will class that ailment perhaps with the whooping cough and the measles and sneer it out of existence. But I would remind you that Jerry's mind and character were quite mature. I had schooled them myself and I know. If Jerry had fallen in love with Marcia Van Wyck who proposed to play at her game of "pitch-farthing" with so fine a soul as Jerry's, the thing was serious, serious for both of them. His attitude toward the girl in his conversation tonight reminded me that affairs had already progressed a long way. She had come to Briar Hills, flattering Jerry, of course, that they could be alone, intriguing meanwhile with Channing Lloyd, a wild fellow, according to Jack Ballard, who at thirty could have unprofitably shared his omniscience with the devil. A fine foil for Jerry!

At dinner, the following night, we made a curious party. Marcia Van Wyck, radiant in pale green, with her admirers one at either hand; Channing Lloyd, dark, massive, well-groomed, with a narrow smile and an air of complete domination of the table; Jerry at the other side, rolling bread-pills and forcing humor rather awkwardly; Miss

Gore, solemn in black satin—all of them elegant and correct in evening clothes, while I in my rather shabby serge sat awkwardly trying to hide the shininess of my elbows. From my position at one end of the table I had an excellent opportunity to study the company. I saw in Lloyd, I think, the attraction for Marcia. His looks, his topics, his appetites were animal and gross. He drank continuously, smoked after his salad, and monopolized the guest of the evening to the complete exclusion of the others. Fragments of their talk reached me, of which I understood a little—Greek to Jerry. Miss Gore sat calmly through it all, leading Jerry into the conversation at propitious moments and out of it when it threatened incomprehension.

There is a kind of charity of the dinner table and ballroom finer, I think, than the mere kindness of giving, finer because it requires discretion, nobler because it requires self-elimination. The more I saw of Miss Gore the more deeply was I impressed by her many amiable qualities. She had an ear for Jerry, but aware of my complete elimination by the rowdy upon my left, found time to relieve the awkwardness of my situation and contribute something to the pleasure of what for me would otherwise have been a very unenjoyable repast.

But when dinner was over, to my great surprise, I found myself alone with the girl Marcia. I have no very distinct notion of the means by which she accomplished this feat, remembering only hazily that we all ambled over to the conservatory, where a particular variety of orchid seemed to interest the girl. And there we were, I explaining and she listening, the others off somewhere near the entrance to the gymnasium, where I heard Lloyd's voice in bored monotone. I was quite sure in a moment that she hadn't managed to get me there to talk orchids, and I felt a vague sense of discomfort at her nearness. I have given the impression that her eyes were cold. As I looked into them I saw that I had been mistaken. In the dim light they seemed illumined at their greater depth by a hidden fire. She fixed her gaze upon my face and moved ever so slightly toward me. You may think it strange after what I have written when I say that at this moment I felt a doubt rising in me as to whether or not I might have done this girl an injustice, for her smile was frank, her air gracious, her tone friendly.

"Oh, Mr. Canby," she said in her even voice, "I've wanted to tell you what a wonderful thing it is that you have created—to thank you for Jerry. He's a gift, Mr. Canby, refreshing like the rain to thirsty flowers. You can't know what meeting a man like Jerry means to a woman like me. I don't think you possibly can."

"What does it mean to you?" I asked.

"It means a new point of view on life, a thing scarce enough in this day when all existence is either sordid or vicious. I had reached a Slough of Despond, Mr. Canby, weary of the attainable, not strong enough or clever enough or courageous enough to defy criticism and obey the small voice that urged. I was sick with self-analysis, filled to the brim with modern philosophies—"

"I understand," I broke in with a smile, which seemed to come in spite of me. "There's no medicine for that."

"Yes, Jerry. I—I think he's cured me—or at least Pm well on the road to recovery. Nobody could be mind-sick long with Jerry letting daylight in."

"Daylight, yes. You found it startling?"

"A little, at first. I felt the way I look sometimes at dawn after dancing all night, my tinsel tarnished, my color faded. All my effects are planned for artificial light, you see."

Her frankness disarmed me.

"I'm thanking you for Jerry," she went on, "but I can't help knowing that Jerry is what you've made him; that his ideals, his simplicity, his purity are yours also."

If she had baited her hook with flattery there was no sign of premeditation in the gentleness of her accents or in the friendly look she gave me. Could it be possible that this was the person in whom I had seen such a menace to Jerry's happiness?

"I have merely taught Jerry to be honest, Miss Van Wyck," I replied. "I ask no credit of him or of you."

"But if it pleases me to give it to you," she said softly, "you surely can't object."

"No, but I don't ask laurels I don't deserve. Jerry is—merely himself."

"Plus, Mr. Roger Canby—purist and pedagogue," she laughed. "No, you can't get out of it. Jerry reflects you; I think I actually recognize inflections of the voice. You ought to be very glad to have laid so strong an impress on so fine a thing."

Just then I heard the raucous laugh of Channing Lloyd from the distant lawn, which reminded me with a startling suddenness that this slender creature who spoke softly of ideals and purity could choose a man like this fellow for an intimate. I noticed, too,

the delicate odor which rose from her corsage of which Jack Ballard had spoken, something subtle and unfamiliar.

I straightened and looked out through the open window, steeling myself against her.

"I am glad you think him fine," I said dryly. "No doubt he compares very favorably with other young men of your acquaintance."

"You mean Mr. Lloyd, of course," she said quickly.

I was silent, avoiding her gaze and her perfume.

"I'm afraid you don't understand me, Mr. Canby," she said softly. "I'm sorry. Any friend of Jerry's ought to be a friend of mine."

"I should like to be, of course, but—"

I paused. This woman, against my will, was making me lie to her.

"But what—? Am I so—so unpleasant to you? What have I done to earn your displeasure?"

"Nothing," I stammered. "Nothing."

"Is it that you fear the contamination of the kind of culture I've been bred and born in? Or the effect of my familiarity with doctrines with which you're not in sympathy?"

Was she mocking? Her voice was still gentle, but I had a notion that inside of her she was laughing. It was as though, having failed to win me, she was beginning to unmask. I peered into her face. It was guileless and wore the appealing expression of a reproachful child.

"You do not understand," I said. "I fear nothing for Jerry. He is strong enough to stand alone. I hope you know just how strong he is, that's all."

She was a little puzzled—and interested.

"I hope I do; but I wish you would explain."

I turned toward her quickly.

"I mean this. You and he are very different. He cares for you, of course. It was to be expected, because you're everything that he is not. Whatever you are, Jerry will be serious. And you can't bind the characters of two strong people together without mutilating one or the other, or perhaps both. Jerry will believe everything you tell him and continue to believe it unless you deceive him. He's ingenuous, but I hope you won't underestimate him."

She fingered the leaves of a rose, but her eyes under their lids were looking elsewhere.

"How should I deceive him, Mr. Canby?" she asked, her voice still unchanging.

"Perhaps I put it too baldly. But I'm not in the habit; of mincing words. Jerry is no plaything. I'll give you an instance of how much in earnest he is." And then briefly, but with some sense of the color of the thing, I gave her a description of Jerry's bout with Sagorski. She listened without looking at me, while her slender fingers caressed the rose leaf, but beneath their lids I saw; her eyes flashing. When I had finished I turned to her with a smile.

"That's the kind of man that Jerry is—harmless, docile and most agreeable, but let him be aroused—"

I paused, letting the paralipsis finish my suggestion.

She was silent a moment, finally turning to me with a laugh that rang a little discordantly against the softness of her speech.

"Jerry wouldn't beat *me*, would he, Mr. Canby?"

"I'm sure I haven't the least means of knowing," I replied.

"You are merely warning me, I see. Thanks. But I'm afraid you give me credit for greater hardihood than I possess. On the whole I think I'm flattered."

She snipped a bud and put it to her lips as though to conceal a smile, and then passed me slowly.

"Come, Mr. Canby," she said. "I think it's time we joined the others."

It was. The night was cool, but I was perspiring profusely.

CHAPTER XII

INTRODUCING JIM ROBINSON

Of course, I had made an enemy of the girl and to no purpose. I had felt her physical attraction, and I knew that only by putting myself beyond its pale could I be true to my own convictions as to her venality. She was the kind of woman to whom any man, even such a one as I, is fish for her net. A girl may whet her appetite by coquetry and deprave it by flirtation, setting at last such a value upon her skill at seduction that she counts that day lost in which some male creature is not brought into subjection to her wiles. As I thought over the conversation later in the privacy of my bedroom I began to realize that instead of good I had only done harm. For a warning, such a futile one as I had given would only inflame a girl like Marcia, and the suggestion of danger was just the fillip her jaded tastes required.

It was not long before I had a confirmation of my mistake in judgment. A week passed, a week of alternate joys and depressions for Jerry, during which he spoke little to me of the girl. The night after the dinner at the Manor he had upbraided me for telling Marcia the story of his bout with Sagorski. He had not cared to tell her of that event, he said, because he thought it too brutal for the ears of a girl of her delicate and sensitive nature. The next night he spoke of it again, but this time without reserve. It seemed that Marcia was very much interested in his feats of physical strength and hoped that Jerry would permit her to watch him when he sparred. Of course, he didn't see why she shouldn't watch him when he sparred if she was really interested in that sort of thing, but it was curious how he had misjudged her tastes; she seemed so ethereal, so devoted to the gentler things of life, that he had not thought it possible she could care for the rugged art he loved, which at times, as I knew, verged upon the brutal. I mentioned with a smile that there remained in all of us, women as well as men, some relics of the age of stone.

"Of course," he assented cheerfully, "I knew she wasn't namby-pamby. It's rather nice of her, I think, to take so much interest."

A few days after that Jerry left me and I knew that Briar Hills was closed again.

The events which were to follow came upon me with startling unexpectedness. Scarcely two weeks had passed since Jerry's departure and I had hardly settled back into my routine at the Manor, where I was trying again to take up the lost threads of my work, when a message came over the wire from Jack Ballard asking me to come down to New York to visit him for a few days. I inferred from what he said that he wanted to see me about Jerry, and, of course, I lost no time in getting to the city and to his apartment, where I found him before his mirror, tying his cravat.

"Pope, my boy, I knew you'd come. Just itching for an excuse anyway, weren't you? But you needn't look so alarmed. Jerry's all right. He hasn't even run off; with a chorus lady or founded a home for non-swearing truckmen."

"Well what *has* he done?" I asked.

"Not much—merely engaged to become one of the principals in a prize fight in Madison Square Garden."

"Jerry! I can't believe you."

"It's quite true. Sit down, my boy. Have you break-fasted yet?"

"Hours ago at the Manor."

"Just reproach! But the early worm gets caught by the bird, you know. I never get up —"

"Tell me," I broke in impatiently, "where you heard this extravagant tomfoolery?"

"From the extravagant tomfool himself. Jerry told me yesterday. I'm afraid there's no doubt about the matter. The articles of agreement are signed, the money, five thousand a side, is in the hands of the stakeholder—one Mike Finnegan, a friend of Flynn's, who keeps a saloon upon the Bowery."

"Preposterous! It hasn't come out, the newspapers—"

"They're full enough of it as it is. Jerry's opponent is a very prominent pug—an aspirant for the heavyweight title, no less a one than Jack Clancy, otherwise known as 'The Terrible Sailor, Champion of the Navy.'"

"But your father—the public—! It will ruin Jerry—ruin him—"

"Wait a bit. Fortunately Jerry's anonymity has been carefully kept. At Flynn's gymnasium he's called Jim Robinson, and it's as Jim Robinson, Flynn's wonderful unknown, that he will make his public appearance."

"But a name is a slender thread to hang Jerry's whole reputation on. He'll be recognized, of course. This thing can't go on. It must be stopped at once," I cried.

"Exactly," said Ballard coolly over his coffee cup. "But how?"

"An appeal to the boy's reason. He must be insane to do such a thing. It's Flynn who's put him up to this."

"I think not. If I understand Jerry correctly, he urged Flynn to make the match. He's quite keen about it."

I paced the floor in some bewilderment, trying to think of a reason for Jerry's strange behavior, but curiously enough the real one did not come to me.

"I can't imagine how such an ambition could have got into his head," I muttered.

Ballard struck a match for his cigarette and smiled.

"The nice balance of Jerry's cosmos between the purely physical and the merely mental has been disturbed—that's all. Liberty has become license and has gone into his muscles. What shall we do about it? Flatly, I don't know. That's what I asked you down to discuss."

I took a turn or two up and down the room.

"Your father—the executors—know nothing of this?"

"Phew! I should say not!"

"They could stop it, I suppose."

"I'm not so sure," he said quietly. "If the boy has made up his mind."

I sank in a chair, trying to think.

"The executors mustn't know. Jack. We'll keep the thing quiet. We've got to appeal to Jerry."

"That's precisely the conclusion I've reached myself. I've asked him to come this morning. He may be in at any moment."

I looked out of the window thoughtfully toward the distant Jersey shore.

"This isn't like Jerry. He's a fine athlete and a good sportsman—for the fun he gets out of the thing. But he has too good a mind not to be above the personal vulgarity of such an exhibition as this. His finer instincts, his natural modesty, his lack of vanity—everything that we know of the boy contradicts the notion of a personal incentive for this wild plan. Does he know what he's doing—what it means—the publicity—?"

"He thinks he's dodging that. Nobody knows him in New York except a few fellows at the clubs, he says."

"But has he no consideration for *us*—for *me*?" I cried.

"Apparently his friends haven't entered into his calculations."

"I repeat, it isn't like him, Jack. Somebody has put this idea into his head."

I stopped so abruptly that Ballard regarded me curiously.

"Somebody—who?"

I paced the floor with long strides, my fingers twitching to get that pretty devil by the throat. I knew now—it had come in a flash of light—Marcia. Jerry listened now to no one but Marcia; but I couldn't tell Jack.

"Somebody—somebody at Flynn's," I muttered.

He regarded me curiously.

"But the boy is immune to flattery. There isn't a vain bone in his body. I confess he puzzles me. But I think you'll find he's quite stubborn about it."

"Stubborn, yes, but—"

My remark was cut short by a ring of the bell, immediately answered by Ballard's man, and Jerry entered. He was, I think, attired in one of Jack's "Symphonies," wore a blossom in his buttonhole, swung a stick jauntily, and altogether radiated health and good humor, greeting us both in high spirits.

"Well, fairy godfathers, what's my gift today?" he laughed. "A golden goose, a magic ring, or a beautiful Cinderella hidden behind the curtain?" and he poked at the portiere playfully. "But you have the appearance of conspirators. Is it only a lecture?"

"I've just been telling Roger," Jack began gravely, "about your fight with Clancy, Jerry."

I saw the boy's jaw muscles clamp, but he replied very quietly.

"Yes, Uncle Jack. He objects, I suppose."

"Not object," I said quickly. "It's the wrong word, Jerry. You're your own master, of course. We were just wondering whether you hadn't undervalued our friendship in not asking our advice before making your plans."

Jerry followed a pattern in the rug with the point of his stick.

"I wish you hadn't put it just that way, Roger."

"I don't know how else to put it. That's the fact, isn't it, Jerry?"

"No. I don't undervalue your friendship. You know that, Roger, you too. Uncle Jack. I suppose I should have said something about it. But I—I just sort of drifted into it. I think walloping Sagorski spoiled me—made me rather keen to have a try at somebody who had licked him. Clancy's almost, if not quite, the best in his class. I'll get well thrashed, I guess, but it's going to be a lot of fun trying—and if nobody knows who I am, I can't see what harm it does."

I couldn't tell what there was in his tone and manner that made me think he was playing a part not his own. I was not yet used to Jerry out in the world, but as compared with the Jerry of Horsham Manor, he didn't ring true.

"You can't keep people from knowing, Jerry," I said. "Your picture will be on every sporting page in the United States."

"Oh, we've fixed that with a photographer. Flynn had a picture of a cousin of his who is dead—young chap—looked something like me. They're faking the thing."

The boy was getting a new code of morals as well as a new vocabulary.

"You can't hide a lie, Jerry."

"I'm not harming anybody," he muttered.

"Nobody but yourself," I said sternly.

"I don't see that," he growled, clasping his great fists over his knees.

"It's the truth. You'll harm yourself irrevocably. The thing will come out somehow. Jim Robinson isn't Jerry Benham. He's the New York and South Western Railroad Company, the Seaboard Transportation Line, the United Oil Company—"

"I'd get Clancy's goat in the first round if he thought I was all that, wouldn't I?" Jerry grinned sheepishly, while Jack Ballard fought back a smile.

"If you won't consider your own interests, what you must consider is that you've no right to jeopardize the property interests of those who have put their money and their faith behind these enterprises which you control. You're already in a responsible position. You're making yourself a mountebank, a laughing-stock. No one will ever trust you in a position of responsibility again."

"I'm sorry, Roger, if you think things are as bad as that," said Jerry coolly. "I don't. And besides, I'm too far in this thing to back out now."

There was no shaking his resolution. We pleaded with him, argued, cajoled, ridiculed, but all to no purpose. Jack painted a picture of the crowd in the Garden, the cat-calls, the jeers, imitated the introduction of past and present champions, and Jerry winced a little, but was not moved. Finding all else unavailing, I fell back upon our friendship, recalling all Jerry's old ideals and mine. He softened a little, but merely repeated:

"I can't back out now, Roger. They'll think me a quitter. I'd like to please you in everything, but I can't, Roger, I can't."

Jack Ballard was so incensed at this obstinacy that he swore at the boy, flung out of the room and disappeared.

With a sober expression Jerry watched him go out and then rose and walked slowly to the window. I looked at him in silence. I knew his manner. Confession was on the tip of his tongue, and yet he would not speak. But I waited patiently. Finally the silence became oppressive, and he swung around at me petulantly.

"I can't see what's the use of making such a lot of fuss over the thing," he muttered. "It seems as though because I have a lot of money I've got to be fettered to it hand and foot. I'm not going to be a slave to a desk. I've warned you of that. You wanted me to be a great athlete, Roger, and now when I'm putting my skill to the test you rebel."

"An athlete—but a gentleman. There are some things a gentleman doesn't do."

"A gentleman," he sneered. "I hear of a lot of things a gentleman must not do.

Perhaps I don't know what the word means. In New York a gentleman can get drunk at dances, swear, treat people impolitely, and as long as he comes of a good family or has money back of him nobody questions him. So long as I treat people decently and do no one any harm I'm willing to take my chances with God Almighty. With Sailor Clancy fighting is a business. With me it's a sport. He hasn't had many good matches. I've given him a chance to make five thousand dollars and gate receipts. Who am I hurting? Surely not Clancy. Not Flynn. His gym is so full of people we've had to get special training quarters. I've hired a lot of people to look after me, rubbers, assistants—why, old Sagorski worships the very ground I walk on. Who am I hurting?" he urged again.

"Yourself," I persisted sternly.

He laughed up at the ceiling.

"Good old Roger! You haven't much opinion of my moral fiber, after all, have you? My poor old morals! They'd all be shot to shreds by now if you had your way. I don't drink, steal, cheat, lie—"

I rose, shrugging my shoulders, and walked past him.

"I'll say no more except that I hope you know I think you're a fool."

"I do, Roger," he laughed. "You've indicated it clearly."

At the fireplace I turned, laying my trap for him skillfully.

"You've told Marcia?" I asked carelessly.

"Yes," he said. "You see, Marcia—" he bit his lip, reddened and came to a full stop, searching my face with a quick glance, but he found me elaborately removing a speck of lint from my coat sleeve.

"Yes, Jerry. Marcia—?" I encouraged innocently.

For a fraction of a minute he paused and then went on, blurting the whole thing in his old boyish way.

"You see, Marcia's very broad-gauge, Roger. She's really very much interested in the whole thing. It was a good deal of a surprise to me. It began when she heard about my bout with Sagorski. She was awfully keen about my gym work—you remember—at the Manor that night. She thought every man ought to develop his body to its fullest capability. I had Flynn out one night at Briar Hills. I didn't tell you about that—thought you mightn't understand—and we sparred six fast rounds. She kept the time and thought it was great. It was like going to a vaudeville show, she said, only a thousand times more exciting. She tried to make Lloyd do a turn, but he wouldn't, though I'd have liked to have mussed him up a bit. Well, one thing led to another and we had a lot of talks about education—you know, the Greek idea. It seemed that my work with you was just in line with her whole philosophy of life." (God bless his innocence—*her* philosophy and *mine*!) "The whole scheme of modern life was lopsided, she said, all the upper classes going to brains and no body and all the lower classes all to body and no brains. Conflict in the end was inevitable. The unnatural way of living was weakening the fiber of the governing powers the people of which intermarried and brought into the world children of weak muscular tissue. She doesn't believe in marriage unless both the man and the woman have passed rigid physical tests as to their fitness."

"What tests?" I asked interestedly.

"Oh, I don't know. A woman who bears a child ought surely to have the strength to do it. You and I have never talked much about these things, Roger, and the miracle of birth, like the miracle of death, must always be an enigma to us. But I think she's right, and I told her that if she was ever going to have any children she ought to have a gym built both at Briar Hills and in town for herself and begin getting in shape for it right away."

"And what did she say to that?" I asked trying to keep countenance.

"Oh, she laughed and said that she wasn't thinking of having any children just yet."

This, then, was the type of after-dinner conversation that took place between them. I began more clearly to understand the fascination that Jerry had for her—to understand, too, her growing delight in the splendid, vital, innocent animal that she had chained to her chariot wheel.

"Go on, Jerry," I said in a moment. "She wants you to typify the new race—"

"Exactly. To spread the gospel of physical strength among my own kind—to prove that mind, other things being more or less equal, is greater than matter."

"I see," I said thoughtfully. "Then it *was* Marcia's idea, wasn't it?"

He hesitated a moment before replying.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. But I've been pretty keen about it from the beginning. You must admit that it's interesting in theory."

"The superbeast versus the superman," I commented. "Your mind is made up then—irrevocably?"

"Yes."

I had not known Jerry all these years for nothing. I shrugged my shoulders and sank into my chair again. "Then, of course, there's nothing for it but to try to keep the thing out of the papers."

He took up his hat and stick gayly. "Oh, they'll never guess in the world. When I go down to Flynn's I get into an old suit Christopher got for me down on Seventh Avenue—a hand-me-down, and when Marcia goes she wears—"

"Ah—Marcia goes—?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes in the afternoons. She wears the worst-looking things—her maid got 'em somewhere. She watches me work. They call her my 'steady.' It's great sport. She's having more fun than she ever had before in her life, she says. I'd like you to run down this afternoon. You know the place. It will liven up your dry bones. Come along, will you?"

"Perhaps," I said helplessly, looking out of the window.

CHAPTER XIII

UNA

Jerry's destiny was indeed in the lap of the gods. Whatever may have been my hope, during his visit to the Manor, of opening his eyes, I now confessed myself utterly at a loss. He was dipping life up by the ladle-full and yet curiously enough thus far had missed the vital, the significant fact of existence. I supposed that it was because the history of his early years was known to but few and that the men with whom he came into contact, nice enough fellows at the clubs, friends of Jack Ballard, had taken his worldliness for granted. He had missed the filthy story perhaps, or if he had heard it, had ignored its point and turned away to topics he understood. Business, too, had taken some of his time and Marcia had taken more. The clubs, I had inferred, had not greatly interested him. Flynn, his other crony, was no scandal-monger and the habits of the years at Horsham Manor would still be strong with him at the gymnasium. As I have said before, Jerry hadn't the kind of a mind to absorb what did not interest him.

It must be obvious, however, that I was greatly concerned over Jerry's venture into pugilism. I tried to view the Great Experiment as from a great distance, as across a space of time looking forward to the hour when Jerry would emerge scatheless from all his tests both material and spiritual. But Jerry's personality, his thoughts, his sensibilities bulked too large. There was no room for a perspective. To all intents and purposes I myself was Jerry, thinking his thoughts, tasting his enthusiasms and his regrets. But I think if he had married a street wench or engaged in a conspiracy to blow up the Capitol at Washington I could scarcely have been more perturbed for him than I was at finding how strong was the influence that this girl Marcia exercised upon his actions. His fondness for her was the only flaw I had ever discovered in Jerry's nature. He could speak of her spirituality as he pleased, but there was another attraction here. I had felt the allure of her personality, a magnetism less mental than physical. Physical, of course, and because incomprehensible to Jerry the more marvelous. I had looked upon the boy as a perfect human animal, forgetting that he was only an animal after all. Marcia, the woman without a heart, whose game was the hearts of others! Bah! No woman without a heart could hold Jerry. If passion danced to him in the mask of a purer thing, Jerry's honesty would strip off the disguise in time. The danger was not now, but then, and even then perhaps more hers than his.

I waited long for Jack Ballard, but he did not return and so I went out into the streets and walked rapidly for exercise down town in the general direction of Flynn's Gymnasium over on the East Side, where I proposed to meet Jerry later in the afternoon. I had kept no record of the time and when my appetite advised me that it was the luncheon hour, I looked at my watch. It was two o'clock. I sauntered into a cross street, finding at last a quiet place where I could eat and think in peace. "Dry-as-dust!" I was. Twelve years ago I had railed at the modern woman and learned my lesson from her. But now—! The years had swept madly past my sanctuary, license running riot. Sin stalked openly. The eyes of the women one met upon the streets were hard with knowledge. Nothing was sacred—nothing hidden from young or old.

And men and women of wealth and tradition—I will not call them society, which is far too big a word for so small a thing—men and women born to lead and mold public thought and conduct, showed the way to a voluptuousness which rivaled tottering Rome.

And this was the world into which my sinless man had been liberated!

I smiled to myself a little bitterly. It was unfortunate that out of all the women in New York, Jerry should have fallen in love with the first hypocrite that had come his way, a follower of strange gods, cold, calculating, too selfish even to be sinful! Eheu! She was getting on my nerves. Analysis—always analysis! I could not let her be. She obsessed me as she had obsessed Jerry—a slender wisp of a thing that I could have broken in my fingers and would still, I think, unless reason returned.

I paid my bill and would have risen, but just at that moment through the door beside my table entered, to my bewilderment, Jerry himself and a girl. I was so amazed at seeing him in this place that I made no sound or motion and watched the pair pass without seeing me and take a table beyond a small palm tree just beside me, and when they were seated my amazement grew again, for I saw that his companion was the girl Una—Una Habberton who had called herself Smith. Their appearance at this moment together found me at a loss to know what to do. To get up and join them would interfere with a tête-à-tête which, whatever its planning, I deemed most fortunate; to get up and leave the room without being observed would have been impossible, for Jerry faced the door. So I sat debating the matter, watching the face of the girl and listening to the conversation, aware for a second time that I was playing the part of eavesdropper upon these two and now without justification. And yet no qualm of conscience troubled me. Brazen she may have seemed at Horsham Manor, but here in New York in her sober suit and hat she seemed to have lost something of her raffish demeanor, and there was a wholesomeness about her, a frankness in her smile, which was distinctly refreshing.

It was not until several days later that I heard from Jerry how they had happened to meet. It seems that after leaving Ballard's apartment Jerry had gone home, attired himself in his old suit and made his way to meet Flynn, with whom he had an appointment to go down to Finnegan's saloon to attend to some final details of his match with Clancy. This business finished, the party came out upon the street, Jerry, Flynn, Finnegan (in his shirt sleeves) and Clancy's manager, Terry Riley. In the midst of a brogue of farewells Jerry fairly bumped into the girl. He took off his hat and apologized, finding himself looking with surprise straight into Una's face. She started back and would have gone on, but Jerry caught her by the arm.

"Una!" he said. "Don't you know me?"

"Yes, Jerry. Of course, but it seems so strange to see you—here—" She paused. "To see you down here—in the Bowery."

"It is, isn't it?" he stammered. "But I—I'll explain in a minute—if you'll let me walk with you."

She looked him over with a sober air, her gaze passing for a moment over his soft hat pulled down over the eyes, his rough clothing, the cigarette in his fingers (he hadn't really begun rigid training yet), and then shrugged.

"Of course, I can have no objection," she said coolly.

Jerry threw the cigarette away.

"I suppose you think it's very curious to see me down here at Finnegan's," Jerry repeated.

No reply.

"I've been there on—er—a matter of business—with—with Flynn. He's my athletic instructor, you know. It's a sort of secret. I—I'm supposed to belong up town."

"Oh, *are* you?" Still, I think, the cool, indifferent tone.

"You know I—I'm awfully glad to see you. I've been hunting for you ever since I came out of the—the asylum—you know."

It must have pleased her that Jerry should have remembered her phrase.

"Really!" her tone melting a little. "It's pleasant to be—remembered."

She turned and again searched him slowly with her gaze, smiling a little.

"How long have you been in New York?"

"Oh, ages—almost two months."

"And in that time," she said quizzically, "the Faun has learned the habit of saloons and cigarettes. You've progressed, haven't you?"

"Oh, I say, Una. That's not quite fair. I don't make a habit of saloons, and a cigarette once in a while doesn't hurt a fellow if his wind and heart are good."

"And *are* your wind and heart good?" she asked with her puzzling smile.

"Now you're making fun of me. You always did though, didn't you? You know it's awfully fine to hear you talk like that. Makes it seem as if we'd just met by the big rock on the Sweetwater. You remember, don't you?"

"Yes, I remember," she replied.

He eyed her sober little profile curiously. She seemed strangely demure.

"I don't think you're very glad to see me," he said. "I thought perhaps you would be. There were so many things that we began to talk about and didn't finish. I've thought about them a good deal. I really want to talk to you about them again. Couldn't we—er—go somewhere and—Have you had lunch yet? Can't we find a place to get a cup of tea?"

She turned toward him and their eyes met. When her gaze turned away from him she was smiling.

"Yes. I'd like a cup of tea," she said after a moment of deliberation.

He didn't very well know this part of the city, but he remembered a restaurant he had once gone to with Flynn, the very one, it seems, where I had taken refuge. And there they were, looking at each other across the table, the girl, as Jerry expressed it, a little demure, a little quizzical, possibly a little upon the defensive, but friendly enough. If she hadn't been friendly, he argued, most properly, she wouldn't have come with him.

"I can't seem to think it's really you," Jerry began after he had given his order. "You're different somehow—soberer and a little pale."

"Am I?"

"Yes, I can't think just how I expected you to look in New York. Of course, you wouldn't wear leather gaiters, or carry a butterfly net. There aren't any butterflies in the Bowery, are there?"

"No—no butterflies." She paused a moment. "Only moths with singed wings."

She examined him furtively, but he was frankly puzzled.

"Moths—! I don't think I understand."

"Yes—moths—I—I spend a good deal of my time at the Blank Street Mission."

"And what is that?"

She gazed for a moment at him wide-eyed.

"A home—a refuge," she went on haltingly, "for—for women in trouble. They're the moths—bewildered by the lights of the town—they—they singe their wings and then we try to help them."

"It's great of you, Una."

"And what do you do with *your* time?" she broke in quickly. "Whom have you met? Is the riddle of existence easier for you in New York than at Horsham Manor?"

"No," he blurted out. "I don't understand it at all. I'm always making the most absurd mistakes. I'm fearfully stupid. Do you ever use rouge, Una?"

The suddenness of the question took her aback, but in a second she was smiling in spite of herself.

"No, I don't, Jerry. But lots of girls do. It's the fashion."

"I know, but do you approve of it?"

"It's very effective if not overdone," she evaded.

"But do you approve of it?" he insisted.

"There's no harm in it, is there? I'd wear it if I wanted to."

"But you don't want to."

"No. Why do you want to know?"

But he didn't seem to hear her question.

"Do you drink cocktails? Or smoke cigarettes?"

"No. I don't like cocktails. Besides they're not served at the Mission. We think they

might create false notions of the purposes of the organization."

He didn't laugh.

"But surely you smoke cigarettes!"

"No, I don't smoke. I don't like cigarettes."

"But if you liked them, *would* you smoke?" he questioned eagerly.

"What a funny boy you are! What difference does it make what I do or don't do?"

"Would you smoke, if you liked to?" he still insisted.

She was very much amused.

"How can I tell what I'd do if I liked to when I don't like to?"

"Do you approve of them then—for women, I mean?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"Just because I'd like to know what you think of such things—because you seem to me to be so calm, so sane in your point of view. You always impressed me that way—from the very first, even when you were making fun of me."

"Why do you think I'm sane?" she asked amusedly.

"Because there's no nonsense about you. There are a lot of things I'd like to talk to you about—things I don't quite understand—if you'd only let me see you."

"You're seeing me now, aren't you?"

"Yes. But I can't talk about them all—at once."

"You've made a pretty good start, I should say."

Jerry laughed. "I have, haven't I? That's the way I always do when I'm with you."

"Always?" she inquired, raising her brows with a show of dignity. "Do you realize that I have only met you once—twice before in my life—and then *most* informally?"

"I feel as if I'd known you always."

"But you haven't. And I'm beginning to think I don't know you at all."

"But you do, better than anybody almost. It was awfully good of you to come here with me today—after my meeting you the way I did. I ought to apologize. Girls don't like to go with fellows when they come out of saloons, but I wasn't drinking, you know."

"Oh, weren't you?"

"No," he said hastily. And then to cover a possible misconception of his meaning, "But of course I *would* drink, if I wanted to. I don't see any difference between having a drink at Finnegan's and having it in a club uptown."

She regarded him for a moment in silence and then,

"You do belong to some of the clubs, then?"

"Oh, yes. The Cosmos, the Butterfly and several others—" He broke off with a laugh. "You see, I'm supposed to be something of a swell"—

"You don't look much of a swell today," she said with a glance at his clothes. "And Finnegan's, though exclusive for the Bowery, is hardly what might be called smart. I *am* curious, Jerry. Curiosity is one of my besetting sins—otherwise I'd never have gotten inside your wall. I've been wondering what on earth you could have been doing in Finnegan's saloon."

Jerry sipped at his tea and was silent. The girl's eyes still questioned good-humoredly and then, still smiling, looked away. But Jerry would not speak. A coward she had once called him. Was it that he feared her sober judgment of this wild plan of his? Did he see something hazardous in the conservatism of her calm slate-blue eyes that would put his new mode of thought, his new habit of mind to tests which they might not survive?

"I—I said it was on business of Flynn's," he evaded at last. "He's a very good friend of mine. It wouldn't interest you in the least, you know," he finished lamely.

"Possibly not," she said calmly. "I hope you'll forgive my impertinence."

He felt the change in her tone and was up in arms at once. "Don't talk in that way, Una. I'd let you know if there was any possible use." He paused and then decidedly, "But there isn't, you see. Won't you take my word for it?"

She laughed at his serious demeanor.

"You know I *am* a curious creature, unduly so about this. But you *do* seem a little like the Caliph in the Arabian Nights, or Prince Florizel in London. You aren't a second-story man, are you? Or a member of a suicide club?"

He gazed at her in perplexity and then laughed. "You're just as real as ever, aren't you?"

"Real! I should hope so. But *you* aren't. The first time I see you, you're a woodland philosopher, living on berries and preaching in the wilderness; the second time, you're merely a caged enthusiast without a mission; the third time you're Haroun al Raschid, smoking cigarettes at Finnegan's. I wonder what you're going to be next."

He felt the light sting of irony, but her humor disarmed him.

"I'm not going to be anything else," he said slowly. "And I'm not an enthusiast without a mission. I may have been then, but I'm not now. You don't just understand. I'm pretty busy in a way, learning the ropes, business, social and all the rest of them, but I'm not idle. I'm learning something all the time, Una, and I'm going to try to help —I can, too."

"Do you really mean that?" she asked incredulously when he paused.

"Yes, I mean it. I want to try to help right away, if you'll let me. See here, Una—" He leaned across the table in a sudden burst of enthusiasm. "I don't want you to think that I've ever said anything I don't mean. I said up there at Horsham Manor that I wanted to help you in your work, and I'm going to prove it to you that whatever your doubts of me I haven't changed my purposes. You didn't believe me when I said I'd been hunting for you. You don't have to, if you don't want to, but you'll have to believe me now when I tell you that I want to set aside a fund for you to use—to administer yourself. Oh, you needn't be surprised. I've got more money than I know what to do with. It's rotting in a bank—piling up. I don't want it. I don't need it, and I want you to take some of it right away and put it where it will do the most good. You've got to take it—you've got to, if only to prove that you don't believe me insincere. I'm going to start giving money now and if you don't help me I'll have to ask somebody else. I'd rather have you do it, personally, than work through some big charity organization, that would spend seven or eight dollars, in overhead charges, before they could distribute one. That kind of charity is all very well and does fine work, I suppose, but I want to feel that I'm helping personally—directly. I'll want to pitch in down here some day and do what I can myself. You've got to do it, Una—let me give you some money to start with right away, won't you?"

He paused breathless awaiting her reply. Her face was turned toward me during the whole of Jerry's rather long speech and I watched the play of emotion upon her features. She had been prepared, I suppose, from the appearance of Jerry's companions at Finnegan's, to find her woodland idyl shattered, and she followed Jerry word by word through his boyish outburst, incredulously at first, then earnestly and then eagerly. She had an unusually expressive countenance and the transition I observed was the more illuminating in the light of my previous knowledge of their acquaintance. Jerry was enthroned again, panoplied in virtues.

"You almost take my breath way," she said at last. "It's very bewildering," she smiled. "But are you sure you're—" she paused. "I mean, isn't there someone else to be consulted?"

"No," he cried, I think a little triumphantly. "No one, I'm my own master. I can do as I please. How much do you want, Una? Would five thousand help? Five thousand right away? And then five thousand more the first of each month?"

She started back in her chair and gazed at him in an expression of mingled incredulity and dismay.

"Five thou—!"

"And five thousand a month," Jerry repeated firmly.

"You can't mean—"

"I do. See here. I'll show you."

He felt in his pockets, I suppose for his check-book,—but could not find it. Naturally! It evidently wasn't a habit of the pugilist Robinson to carry about in his hand-me-down suit a check-book carrying a bank balance of forty or fifty thousand dollars. He was rather put out at not finding it and felt that she must still consider his magnificent offer somewhat doubtfully.

"Well, I'll send it to you tomorrow. You'll see if I don't."

The boy was uppermost in him now and I saw the gay flash of her eye which recognized it—the enthusiast of Horsham Manor who wanted to help cure the

"plague spots."

"I knew it," she laughed at him. "I knew you'd be somebody else if I only waited long enough. Now you're Prester John and Don Quixote rolled into one. You propose by the simple process of financing the operation to turn our slums into Happy Valleys, our missions into gardens of resurrection. It's a very beautiful purpose, Jerry, quite worthy of your colorful imagination, but the modern philanthropist doesn't wed his Danae with a shower of gold. He's discovered that it's very likely to turn her head."

"But if it's wisely given—" he put in peevishly.

"Oh, wisely! That's just the point."

"It ought not to be so difficult."

She smiled at him soberly.

"Charity isn't merely giving money, Jerry," she said. "Money sometimes does more harm than good."

"I can't see that."

"It's quite true. We try to keep people from being dependent. What you propose is a kind of philanthropic chaos. If I used your money as freely as you would like, it wouldn't be long before half the people in my district would be living on you—giving nothing—no effort, no work, no self-respect in return. You don't mind if I say so, but that sort of thing isn't charity, Jerry. It's merely sentimental tomfoolery which might by accident do some good, but would certainly do much harm."

Jerry's eyes opened wide as he listened. She was frank enough, but I couldn't help admitting to myself that she was quite wise. Jerry was discovering that it wasn't so easy to help as he had supposed. Whatever he may have thought of her theories of social science, he made no comment upon them.

"Then you won't let me help you?" he asked quite meekly, for Jerry.

"Oh, no," she smiled coolly. "I didn't say that. I was merely trying to show you what the difficulties are. We're very glad to get voluntary contributions when we're sure just what we can do with them. I know of several cases now—"

"Yes," eagerly. "Whatever you need—"

"But five thousand—"

"Couldn't you use it?" eagerly.

She paused and then smiled brightly across the table at him.

"I'll try to, Jerry."

"And the five thousand a month?" he urged. "Oh, you don't know, Una. It isn't a third of my income even now and later I've got more—so much that I'm sick thinking of it. You've got to use it, somehow. If you can't help the women, use it on the men, or the children—"

"We might add a day nursery—" she murmured thoughtfully.

"Yes, that's it—a day nursery—wonderful thing—a day nursery. Add two of 'em. You must. You've got to plan; and if your organization isn't big enough to handle it, you must get the right people to help you."

He reached across the table, upsetting a teacup, and seized her hands in both of his. "Oh, you will, Una, won't you?"

She withdrew her hands gently and looked at him, on her lips a queer little crooked smile.

"What are you now? The philosopher, the enthusiast or the Caliph? You're very insistent, aren't you? I think you must be the Caliph—or the Grand Cham!"

"Then you agree?" he cried.

"I'll try," she said quietly.

Jerry gave a great gasp. "By Jove," he said with a boyish laugh. "I can't tell you what a relief it is to get this off my mind. I know I ought to be down here helping, but I—I can't just now. Uncle Jack—that's Ballard Junior—says I've got a place in the world to keep up and a lot of rubbish about—"

"That's very right and proper—of course," she said, gathering up her gloves.

He noted the motion.

"Oh, don't go yet, Una. There are a lot of things I'd like to ask you."

"I think I will have to go."

"But you'll let me see you and talk to you about things, won't you?"

"Of course, I'll have to make an accounting of your money—"

"Oh, yes—the check. You'll get it tomorrow."

"But, Jerry—"

"Your address, please," he insisted with a stern and business-like air.

The moment was propitious. They would certainly see me when they got up, so when their heads were bent together over the slip of paper the waiter brought, I quietly rose and, braving detection, went out of the door.

CHAPTER XIV

JERRY GOES INTO TRAINING

Outside the restaurant I changed my plans. I decided not to go to Flynn's that afternoon, for I wanted Jerry to understand how little I was in sympathy with his prize fight. And after the first day he no longer insisted on my going with him. But he came to Ballard's apartment and we had several talks in which, after one final and fruitless effort to dissuade him from his fight, I gave up and we talked of other things.

It was not necessary for me to tell Jerry that I had overheard his interview with Una Habberton. And when he spoke of the incident, I encouraged him to talk until I learned just how much—and how little—the meeting meant to him. The impression, the rather unique impression she had first made upon the clean, fair surface of his mind, remained indelibly printed: the first female creature he had seen and talked with, a youthful being, like himself, with whom he could talk as he talked with me, without care or restraint,—a creature of ideals, humor, and a fine feeling for human companionship which she did not hesitate to share; a friend like Skookums or me, but of an infinitely finer grain, with a gentler voice, a smoother skin and softer eyes, better to look at; in short, more agreeable, more surprising, more sympathetic, more appealing. This chance meeting, I think, merely confirmed the previous impression, reasserting an early conception of femininity with which the charms of Marcia Van Wyck could have nothing in common. He must have compared them, but with different standards of comparison, for each in Jerry's mind was *sui generis*. The glamour of Marcia, her perfumes, her artistry, the lure of her voice and eyes, her absorbing abstractions and sudden enthusiasms—how could Una's quaint transitions compare with such as these? And yet I am sure that he judged Una Habberton not unfavorably in Marcia's reflected glamour, for he spoke of the character in her hands (thinking of Marcia's rosy nails) and the radiancy of her smile (thinking of Marcia's red lips). And whatever he may have thought of her personal pulchritude or the quiet magnetism of her friendliness, there was no room in his mind just now for the merely spiritual. If Una had a place in his heart, it was where the ebb and flow were quiet, not in the mid-stream of hot blood. But Jerry kept his word. His check for Una's day nursery went forward on the day following their meeting and Jerry found time in the intervals between Marcia, business and the gymnasium to call upon Una and talk over in a general way the great project in which their interest was involved. I heard little of these few meetings, for after a short visit with Ballard, during which we discussed Jerry's plans in despair, I went back to the Manor to resume my much neglected work.

It was now March. I missed Jerry as I knew I should miss him always at this season when it had been our custom to fare forth in search of woodland adventure and the early signs of spring. I wondered if Jerry in the city could be feeling the call of the wanderlust as I did. I managed to work a few hours of each day, but my habit of concentration seemed to fail me, and my thoughts kept recurring unpleasantly to the ruin Jerry was courting both for his reputation and his spirit. Clean as he was, he couldn't play too long with pitch and not be defiled. I heard one day that Briar Hills had just been opened and I pricked up my ears. Aha! It couldn't be long now before the bird would come homing.

The notice of this home-coming reached me in the form of a wire.

"Will arrive with party tomorrow. Have six bedrooms prepared for guests. Will explain when I see you."

Six bedrooms! A house party—in the very midst of his training! I couldn't understand. A fine hope surged in me. A house party—guests! Could it be that something had happened to change his plans? Had he given up his bout with Clancy? I could hardly

restrain my impatience and tried to get Jack Ballard on the telephone. He had left town. It was very curious; for somewhere in me vague misgivings stirred. What if—!

The morrow brought the painful solution of my uncertainties. For toward four o'clock of the afternoon there was a roaring of automobiles in the drive which brought me to the study window, from which vantage point I saw Jerry dismounting from the car in front with three other men, Flynn, Christopher and a large colored man, while from the other car, a hired machine, by the look of it, four other figures descended—all unloading suit-cases upon the terrace steps—a motley crowd in flannel shirts and sweaters, with cropped heads, thick necks and red hands, all talking loudly and staring up at the towers of the house as though they expected them to fall on them. This then was Jerry's house-party—! Thugs, cut-throats, apaches—his pugilist friends from Flynn's!

"This then was Jerry's house-party—!"

Jerry hurried along the terrace and met me at the hall door, where he burst into unseemly laughter. I suppose at the expression of dismay which must have been written upon my countenance. He seized me by both hands and led me indoors.

"There wasn't any use wiring you the truth, Roger. I didn't want to make you unhappy any sooner than I had to. Are you upset?"

"Nothing can ever upset me again," I said with dignity. "It's your house. I can move out."

"But you won't, Roger," he clapped an arm around my shoulders and walked me into the study. "We're not going to bother you. But we just had to get away from town for some road work—and it's devilish conspicuous anywhere near the city, people watching, reporters and all that sort of thing."

He turned, for the dismayed servants had come out and stood in a row in the hall aghast at the appearance of the visitors who stood awkwardly shifting their feet in the main doorway, their suit-cases and bundles in their arms, awaiting directions.

"Take those things upstairs—show 'em, Christopher," says Jerry. "You show 'em to their rooms, Poole. And when you're washed up, Flynn, come down here again."

Over his shoulder I watched the hulking devils go past in sheepish single file with furtive glances at me. When they had passed out of sight, Jerry explained rapidly.

"You see, Roger, we had to do it. There was no other way. I needed some running badly and there wasn't a chance for it—without the whole thing coming out in the papers."

I smiled ironically. "And you think you've chosen a way to avoid publicity by bringing these"—I restrained myself with difficulty—"these *gentlemen* here? Don't you know

that every paper in New York will have a man here writing the thing up?"

"No, they won't. They can't get in. I stopped at the Lodge as I came by and gave my orders."

"But they'll know that Jim Robinson and Jerry Benham are the same."

Jerry winked an eye and laid a finger along his nose.

"No, they won't, old Dry-as-dust, for the very simple reason that he isn't."

"I don't understand."

"Well, you see, I'm Jim Robinson and *you* are Jerry Benham."

"I!" I gasped.

"Precisely. You are Jerry Benham, patron of the manly art—Mæcenas, friend and backer of Robinson aforesaid, whom you've invited to Horsham Manor to complete his training."

"Preposterous! These—these bruisers" (I let go now) "think I'm *you*?"

"No, dear Roger, not I, who am Robinson, but Jerry Benham, multi-millionaire and king of good fellows. Flynn knows the truth, of course, but he's shut as tight as a clam. He won't talk, for his own interests are involved."

"You expect me to play the part of good fellow," I broke out when I had sufficiently recovered from the shock of his information. "You expect me to entertain this motley aggregation of assorted criminals as Jerry Benham! Well, I won't, and that's flat."

"Now, Roger, don't be unreasonable," he said with a cajoling smile. "They're a pretty decent lot, really. Sagorski—the big chap with the fuzzy hair, he's not half bad when you know him; and Carty, the one with the cauliflower ear, his fight comes off inside of a week. We're helping him out, too, you see—good food, clean air—bully fellow—a little too finely drawn just now and a bit irritable—"

"I see. A bit irritable—so am I—"

"And then," he went on, "the other big fellow is Tim O'Halloran, my chopping block, has a nasty left—and is a demon for punishment. The little fellow is Kid Spatola, an Italian, one of my handlers, the bootblack champion. Oh, they're a fine lot, Roger—You'll get to like 'em. Nothing like being thrown with chaps a lot to know what they're like—inside of 'em, I mean."

"Quite true," I remarked with desperate calmness. "And who, if I may ask, is the colored gentleman in the yellow sweater?"

"Oh!" said Jerry pleasantly. "That's Danny Monroe, my rubber. He's the best masseur outside of Sweden, knows all the tricks; wait until you see him rubbing me down."

"I shall try to possess my soul in patience until then," I said. "Have you designated which of the spare rooms these gentlemen are to occupy?"

"Ah, don't be stodgy, Roger," he said. "They'll all be in the wing. They won't bother you. I'm counting on you to help. Just try, won't you? It will only be for about three weeks."

I gasped and sank into the nearest chair. Three weeks in which this gang of hoodlums must be fed, looked after and entertained. I was helpless. Radford, the superintendent, had gone for a lengthy visit to relatives in California.

"I hope you have their criminal records—also a private detective to watch the silver," I murmured weakly.

"No, I haven't," Jerry retorted. "I'm not afraid of any of them. It's rather narrow, Roger, to think, just because a chap goes into pugilism as a business, that he isn't straight. You've taught me that one man is as good as another and now you're—you're crawling. That's what you're doing—crawling."

I was indeed, crawling, groveling. I strove upward, but remained prostrate.

"How could you do such a thing, Jerry?" I remonstrated feebly.

He patted me on the back—much, I think, as he would have patted Skookums in encouragement.

"Oh, be a good sport, Roger. You *can* be when you want to, you know. We won't bother you. We'll be in the gym or on the road most of the day, and in bed at nine sharp."

"What do you—want me to do?" I stammered at last.

"Why nothing," he said, his face brightening. "Just to be Jerry Benham for awhile. It isn't such a lot to ask, is it? Just make believe you're pleased as punch to have 'em

around—come and watch me work" (he had the jargon at his tongue's tip) "and show some interest in the proceedings. You *are* interested, Roger."

"I'm not."

"You don't want to see me licked, do you?"

I sighed. The affair was out of my hands.

"What shall you want to eat?" I asked meekly.

"Oh, beefsteak, lots of it—and other things. Flynn will tell you." He folded his arms and gazed down at me contentedly. "Thanks, old man," he said gratefully. "I knew you would. It's fine of you. I won't forget it."

"Nor will I," I said. Jerry only laughed. D—n the boy. It was rank tyranny.

Flynn and Sagorski were already down the stairs. I eyed them malevolently, but rose and went to the kitchen to give the necessary orders. There I found the force of servants in executive session and my appearance was the signal for immediate notice from the entire lot. I hadn't foreseen this difficulty which immediately assumed the proportions of a calamity. They stated their objections, which may well be imagined, most respectfully but in no uncertain terms. They could have endured Mr. Flynn, Mr. Carty and Mr. Sagorski, but they balked at Mr. Danny Monroe. I had balked at him, too, but I didn't tell them so. The upstairs maids (we had chambermaids now) absolutely refused to consider any of my arguments in rebuttal and were already pinning on their hats, when Jerry, who had gotten wind of the mutiny from Christopher (poor Christopher!), came running and planting himself in their very midst, demolished their objections with a laugh and an offer of double wages. They smiled at a joke he made, weakened, finally unpinned their hats and took up their aprons. I have never in my experience seen such an example of the blandishment of wealth.

Peace restored and the orders given, which included a pledge of secrecy as to Jerry's real identity and mine, I made my way to the gymnasium with Jerry in a valiant effort to "be a good sport" and to appear as "pleased as punch" at the invasion of my sanctuary by Jerry's Huns. Carty and Flynn were having a fast "go" of it on the floor, with Monroe, the Swedish negro, keeping time, while from beyond came sounds of howling where "Kid" Spatola and Tim O'Halloran were sporting like healthy grampuses in Jerry's—my—marble pool. Jerry made the introductions gayly and O'Halloran splashed a greeting, while Spatola eyed my rusty black serge critically (Spatola was the Beau Brummel of the party as I discovered later) nodded, and then did a back flip-flap from the diving board.

But unwelcome as they were to me, they were not nearly so unpleasant in a state of nature as they had been in their clothing, for when considered as sentient beings they left much to be desired; as healthy human animals, I had to admit that they were a success, and having conceded the fact that they were animals and Horsham Manor was for the present a zoo, the rest was merely a matter of mental adjustment. I played my part of host, I fear, with a bad grace, but as manners held no high place in their code of being, my deficiencies passed unnoticed.

Was this triumph of matter over mind nature's cynical reply to my years of care and study in bringing Jerry to perfect manhood? Had I erred in giving importance to the growth and development of Jerry's body? Or was it, as Jack Ballard had said, merely that the nice adjustment of mind and matter had been suddenly disarranged? How far was this muscular orgy to carry him? And where would it end? After Madison Square Garden—what?

Dinner found me no nearer a solution and I sighed as my glance passed the length of the table, along the row of villainous faces to where opposite me Jim Robinson grinned cheerfully over his plate. It was quite wonderful to see these Vandals eat—beefsteak, bread, vegetables, eggs, milk—everything put before them vanished as if by magic, while Poole and Christopher with set and scornful faces hurried to the pantry, bearing in their empty dishes the mute evidence of the gastronomic miracles that were being performed beneath their very eyes. For my part I confess that I was so fascinated in watching the way in which Sagorski used his knife and fork and the dexterous manner in which he dispatched his food in spite of such a handicap that I ate nothing. They talked in mono-syllables and grunts for the most part, and when really conversing used language which I found it most difficult to understand. Their dinner finished, they rose, stretching and eructating in true Rabelaisian fashion.

"A stroll in the Park, byes, now. And then—the feathers," said Flynn, passing the chewing gum.

"A fine lot, ain't they, Mr. Benham?" said Jerry to me as they filed out.

"Extraordinary," I replied, with a fictitious smile, "most extraordinary."

He grinned at me and followed them.

It was not until the next day in the hour between road and gym work that I managed to get Flynn aside. He had thus far succeeded in avoiding me, but I caught him by the arm as he was passing, dragged him into my study and shut the door.

"See here, Flynn," I said with some warmth, "it's not my affair to interfere with any of Mr. Benham's plans. He's his own master now and can do what he pleases, but you and I have always been good enough friends, and I should like to know just how much or how little you've had to do with getting the boy into this match at the Garden—"

He looked at me quizzically for a moment and then grinned.

"Ye've got a right to ask me that, Mr. Canby. An' I'll give ye a fair answer. I had nothin' to do wid it, sor—honor bright—" He paused and grinned again. "Mind ye, I'm not sayin' I'm sorry he's doin' it, for I won't lie to ye. I'd like to see him lick Sailor Clancy an' I'm doin' my best to help him to it. But for havin' a hand in puttin' Masther Jerry up to the game ye can count me out. 'Twas Masther Jerry himself, sor. He got it into his head someway an' there was no gettin' rid of it. I made the match for the bye because he wanted it—an' that's a fact—nothin' else."

He looked me in the eye and I knew that he told the truth.

"What chance has Jerry of winning, Flynn?" I asked.

"Ah, there ye've got me, sor. Jerry's a rare one, he is, and plucky—and quick as any man of his weight in the wor-rld—but Clancy is a good 'un, too—young, strong as a bull an' expayrienced. Fought steady for three years, an' winning, sor. He'll have the confidence—but Masther Jerry is a wonder. He'll have a chanct, sor, more than an even chanct, I'd say, if he don't waste nothin'."

"Waste nothing?"

"He's got to land, sor—every time and waste no whiffs on nothin'."

"I see."

Flynn was eyeing the door impatiently. He was a busy man and had no time to answer foolish questions.

"There's no chance of getting out of it?" I asked.

"None, sor. He couldn't quit now. Ye wouldn't want him to, would you, sor?" he finished in a reproachful tone, which just missed being disagreeable.

I opened the door and he lost no time in getting to the gymnasium.

That next afternoon in the midst of the work out, I had another surprise, for a wagon arrived from the station and in it were Marcia Van Wyck and Miss Gore, the latter dragged against her will to play a part she little cared for. I happened to meet them in the hall, where, since none of the pugilists were present, Marcia put aside subterfuge, nodded coolly and asked for Jerry. She wore the badly fitting suit her maid had procured for her and chewed gum incessantly. I looked anxiously at Miss Gore, but it seems that even her martyrdom stopped at that. I led the way to the gymnasium where Jerry and the irritable Carty were resting between rounds. The girl nodded to Jerry, who waved his glove, and took one of the chairs by the ring-side, the obedient Miss Gore next her.

"What round?" she asked masticating leisurely.

"Third," said Flynn with his gaze on his watch, "Time!"

And they went at it hammer and tongs. From my chair beside Miss Gore I watched the girl. Her hands were clasped over her knees as she leaned forward, her eyes glowing, watching the swift motions of the two men as they moved backward and forward. Miss Gore wore the fixed smile of the perpetually bored. She watched Jerry and Carty exchanging their blows, with a sphinxlike air as though inspecting half-naked men dancing around each other was her usual afternoon's employment. She was admirable, accepting her lot in life with a philosophy which had in it something of the stoic. Only when Carty landed on Jerry's lip and the blood showed did she wince.

"You—approve of this?" she whispered, then to me.

"No. I'm helpless," I returned.

"You know?"

"Yes. It's madness. She made him do—"

"Sh—" she warned, for the round had ended, and Marcia turned toward her. But I knew that she understood.

"You're a good sport, Mr. Benham," said Marcia to me, assuming her role with an air

of enjoyment, "havin' the boys up here to train. Jim's comin' fast, ain't he?"

I nodded uncomfortably.

Her eyes twinkled mischievously. "You might of sent your honk-honk to the train for us though. Cost us a dollar from the station. What d'ye think of that? Don't like the ladies, do you, Mr. Benham?" she laughed.

"I'll be glad to send you back," I said quickly enough.

"Oh, there ain't a doubt of that, I'm sure. Nice house you've got—gym an' all. You might ask us to stay awhile. Won't you, Mr. Benham?"

She was very much amused at the awkwardness of the situation.

"I'm afraid I haven't any more room," I replied stiffly. How I hated that girl! The sight of blood had inflamed me. I believe I could have throttled her where she sat, but fortunately Flynn called "Time" and the bout went on.

It was to be war between us two from this moment. I knew what she meant. She had accepted my challenge and was defying me. Since I had not been able to dissuade Jerry from his fight, she was sure of her power. He was her creature now, to do with as she chose, I watched her furtively during the next round. She was silent, her gaze fixed upon Jerry, her eyes gleaming. There was something morbid in her suppressed excitement—something strange and unnatural in the fascination of her attention. She chewed gum constantly and was utterly absorbed, driven, it seemed to me, by some inner fire which she made no effort to control. She was primitive, savage. When Jerry's blows landed, her lips parted and she breathed hard. I think at this moment he was the only man for her, her mate in savagery, the finest human beast in the world. When the round ended I moved away. I had seen enough.

Later, while the men were being rubbed down, Miss Gore, leaving Marcia with Flynn, came out to me on the terrace, where I had gone alone for a breath of clean air. I was utterly absorbed in my misery and I did not hear her step. Her deep voice just at my ear startled me.

"Well, Mr. Canby," she said softly. "Your dream-castle totters."

I glanced up at her quickly, but she still smiled.

"It has fallen," I groaned.

"No—not yet," still cheerfully. She paused a moment, and, leaning her elbows on the balustrade, looked out down the valley.

"All will be well," she said at last slowly.

Our glances met. "I have that presentiment," she added.

"Based on what?" I said bitterly. "A man who can inspire such a passion as this is no more than a beast—"

"Or no less than a man," she muttered quickly. "You forget that Jerry is what you've made him—"

"Not this—the body the servant—not the mind—"

"The mind will survive," she put in evenly. "It must. The whole thing is hypnotic. He will pass out of it soon."

"And she—?"

She shrugged lightly. "I don't know. I've never seen her like this before. I think if Jerry were to seize her by force and carry her away today—now—she couldn't resist him."

"Ah—!"

"But he won't. He treats her as though she were a flower, caresses her with his eyes, touches her petals timidly—"

"Bah! I could crush her—"

She smiled indulgently.

"She is a strange creature. Love is an enigma to her. That's why she follows this mad whim for Jerry—she doesn't mistake it for love, she knows too much—but it's a fair imitation."

"It is morbid, unhealthy."

"Perhaps, but like other diseases, will pass."

"Leaving Jerry sick?"

"He will recover."

A calm fell upon me. Was she right after all? What reason had I to lose faith in Jerry when this woman, almost a stranger to me, believed in him? I turned and laid my hands quietly over hers.

"Thanks," I stammered. "You're very kind." And then realizing the silly impulsiveness of my action, straightened for fear that she might misunderstand. Without moving from her position, she turned her head and smiled at me quizzically. If her eyes hadn't been kind I would have thought she was laughing at me.

CHAPTER XV

THE UNKNOWN UNMASKED

The three weeks of training passed quickly and Carty had won his fight, a favorable augury for the camp of Flynn. Jerry worked hard, too hard it almost seemed for flesh and blood to endure, but he seemed tireless. He had lost weight, of course, and his face was haggard and drawn, but he ate and slept well and though a little irritable at times, seemed cheerful enough. Marcia came frequently, always with Miss Gore, and the word was passed around that Jim Robinson's "chicken" was staying in the village. I think Jerry's wooing prospered. There were no Channing Lloyds at Briar Hills now. To all appearances the girl was with him heart and soul and when Jerry rested on the terrace in a reclining chair wrapped in blankets, Marcia sat beside him, talking in subdued tones. Sometimes I heard their voices raised, but whatever their differences they were not such as to cause a breach between them. They were hardly ever entirely alone and for purposes of endearment the terrace was not the most secluded spot that could have been found. Flynn's word was law and his eye constantly watchful. If he had been paid to make Jerry win this fight, he was going to earn his money, he said, and anyone who interfered with the training would be put out and kept out of the grounds. Whatever her own wishes, the girl recognized Flynn's authority, and came and went at fixed times which could not interfere with the rigid rules. Jerry rose at five and took to the road with Flynn on horseback and either O'Halloran or Sagorski afoot. When he came in he had his shower, rubdown and then breakfast. After a rest, Flynn boxed four or five rounds with him, after which came rope jumping, and exercises with the machines to strengthen his arms and wrists. In this way the morning passed and after the midday meal came the real work-out of the day with his training-partners, where real blows were exchanged and blood often flowed. Jerry had improved immeasurably. Even I, tyro as I was, could see that his encounters with these professionals had rubbed off all signs of the amateur. He had always been a good judge of distance, Flynn had said, but he had been schooled recently to make every movement count—to "waste nothing." In spite of myself, the excitement of the game was getting into my blood. If for the while Jerry was to be a beast, why should he not be the best beast of them all? Stories came to us from the camp of the Terrible Sailor, who was training down on the Jersey shore. He was "coming" fast, they said, and was strong and confident. The newspapers followed him carefully and sent their reporters to Horsham Manor, one of whom, denied entrance at the Lodge, climbed over the wall and even reached the gymnasium where Jerry was boxing with O'Halloran, to be put out at my orders (as Jeremiah Benham) before he got a fact for his pains. The result of this of course was an account full of misstatements about the millionaire Jeremiah Benham and his protégé which brought a protest in the mails from Ballard the elder who, fortunately for Jerry, hadn't gotten at the truth of the matter.

Once or twice I had been on the point of going to Ballard's office and making a clean breast of Jerry's plans, hoping that Clancy might be bought off and the match canceled. But I could not bring myself, even now, to the point of betraying the boy. I am not a fatalist by profession or philosophy, but Miss Gore had made me pause and I had resolved to see the thing through, trying to believe as she believed that Jerry could only be toughened to the usages of life by the rigor of circumstance. And so I was silent.

On the morning of the great event I found myself, instead of properly censorious, intensely eager for the night to come. Jerry had been brought secretly to town the day before in a closed machine and was resting under the care of Flynn at Jerry's own house uptown. It was at Jerry's request that Jack Ballard and I stayed away from him, and so the day passed slowly enough in speculations as to the possibility of overtraining and as to Jerry's ability to stand punishment. Of his pluck there was no question between us. Both of us had had too many proofs of it to doubt, but there was always the chance of the unlucky blow early in the battle which might mean defeat where victory seemed the only thing possible. I believed that Jerry would win. I think that I actually believed him to be invulnerable. I knew that Flynn was confident, and that Sagorski, Spatola and O'Halloran had put their money on him. Of

course he would win. There was no man in the world who could stand up against Jerry when he meant to do a thing. No one knew better than I what victory meant to Jerry. Money, championship laurels—of course they were nothing. However much or little Marcia's theories as to the superman meant to Jerry, he was committed to her—and she, I suspected, to him. His laurels were in the touch of her rosy fingers, the flash of her dark eyes, the gleam of her small white teeth when she smiled. Those were his reward, all that he had worked for—all that he prized. She expected him to win. He couldn't lose.

The day passed slowly. I visited the gymnasium with Jack. Flynn was still with Jerry, but confidence reigned. There was a story going the rounds of the press that Clancy had gone stale, that he had strained a tendon, that he had broken a finger, that his mother had just died.

"Buncombe!" said Jack, who knew the game. "They want to worry the odds down a bit. He's fit as a fiddle. You can be sure of that."

The early afternoon papers contained the first hint that Jim Robinson was not what he was supposed to be. A heading on the sporting page caught my eyes. I have kept it among my papers and give it verbatim.

PUGILIST SOCIETY MAN
JIM ROBINSON, THE HEAVY WEIGHT, A
MASQUERADER.

I read the type below hurriedly:

A story is going the rounds that Jim Robinson, the heavyweight, who goes against Sailor Clancy in the principal event at the Garden tonight, is not Robinson at all, but a well-known society man and millionaire. From the hour when this match was made in May last there has been a mystery attached to the personality of this fighter never before heard of in Fistiana in New York. Flynn, his backer and trainer, could not be found to deny or affirm the rumor, and his sparring partners at Flynn's Gymnasium, of course, denied it, but every circumstance, including the size of the purse, now believed to be five thousand dollars, would indicate that Flynn's Unknown, unless a well-known Westerner in disguise, is a man of more than usual ability—or else a millionaire sport, bent on enriching the hard-fisted sailor, who thinks he sees a chance of picking up some easy money besides his share of the gate. Whoever Jim Robinson is, we welcome him cordially.

But we also warn him that New York is tired of ring fakes and that nothing but a good mill will justify the prices asked.

I showed the thing to Ballard, who read it through eagerly, his lips emitting a thin whistle.

"Ph-ew! They're getting 'warm,' Pope. Somebody's leaked."

"But who—?"

"May be the management—to draw the crowd." And then, looking at the front page, "That's only the twelve o'clock edition. Perhaps—"

He paused and rang the bell (we were at his rooms again), instructing his man to go out on the street and buy copies of the latest editions of all the afternoon papers.

"It would be the deuce if they followed that up."

He walked to and fro while we waited impatiently. And in a short while our worst fears were realized, for when the papers came we saw the dreadful facts in scare heads on the first page of the yellowest of them. I give the item here:

JEREMIAH BENHAM—PRIZE FIGHTER.
MULTI-MILLIONAIRE SEEKS LAURELS IN RING.
FLYNN'S MYSTERIOUS UNKNOWN REVEALED
IN PERSON OF MILLIONAIRE SPORTSMAN.

Jack Ballard swore softly, but I read on over his shoulder, breathlessly:

> The latest mystery of the prize ring has been revealed by a reporter of the *Despatch*, who proves here conclusively that the so-called Jim Robinson, matched to fight Sailor Clancy in the big event at the Garden tonight, is no less a person than Jeremiah Benham, son of the late John Benham, Railroad and Steamship King. Last month it will be recalled that this paper sent a reporter up to Horsham Manor, the magnificent Benham estate in Greene County, where the so-called Jim Robinson was finishing his training at the invitation of Mr. Benham, who was supposed to take a warm sportsman's interest in the ring. Horsham Manor, one of the wonders of the State, is surrounded, as is well known, by a wall of solid masonry, and much secrecy was observed in the training of the so-called Robinson, all visitors being denied admittance at the lodge gates.

> The reporter, however, managed to gain admittance and reached Mr. Benham's gymnasium, a palatial affair, fully equipped with all the latest paraphernalia, where the so-called Robinson was boxing with one of his partners. But a person who represented himself to be Mr. Benham immediately gave orders to have the reporter shown out of the grounds.
>
> The life of the younger Benham has been shrouded in mystery, but this morning after some difficulty the reporter succeeded in finding the photographer who made the picture of Robinson printed herewith, who at last confessed that it was faked. Further investigation among members of an uptown club revealed the fact that Jeremiah Benham has just passed his twenty-first year and could therefore not be the slender, rather crusty, sandy-haired gentleman impersonating the owner of Horsham Manor, who was at least thirty-five.

"Slender—rather crusty!" muttered Ballard. "You! D—n the fellow!"

> In order to verify the suspicion [I read on], the *Despatch* reporter went to the office of the New York and Southwestern Railroad and obtained without difficulty from several sources a description of the person of Mr. Benham, which coincides in all particulars with the so-called Jim Robinson, whom the reporter saw at work at Horsham Manor.
>
> There is no Jim Robinson, except in name. The opponent of Sailor Clancy in tonight's fight is no less a person than young Jerry Benham, multi-millionaire and sportsman. It is a matter of regret, since Mr. Benham chose, for personal reasons, to hide his identity under another name, that the *Despatch* could not keep the matter secret, but the *Despatch* is in the business of supplying news to its patrons, news not presented in other journals, and so important an item as this, of course, could not be suppressed.

The murder was out. We searched the other papers. Nothing.

"A beat!" muttered Jack. "I'd like to show the fellow what a beating is."

Jack Ballard was merely angry. I was bewildered into a state of helplessness. What should we do? What *could* we do? The damage was done. Telling Jerry wouldn't help matters and might unnerve him. We disconnected the telephone and dined at the apartment, making a pretense of eating, nervously awaiting the hour when we should go to the Garden. We had reached the coffee, of which we were much in need, when there was a ring at the bell and Ballard Senior came into the room, a copy of the *Despatch* in his hand.

"Have you seen this?" he snapped.

"We have," said Jack with an assumption of calmness.

"It's a lie?"

"No. It's the truth."

The old man raged the length of the room and turned.

"Do you mean that you've let this thing go on without trying to stop it—without letting me know—"

"We did try to stop it. There was no use in letting you know. Jerry's mind was made up."

"Jerry! The fool is ruining himself—and us. The thing must be stopped—at once."

Jack smiled coolly. "I don't see how you're going to do that."

The father stamped the length of the room again. "I'll show you. Where is Clancy?"

"I don't know. You'll find him at Madison Square Garden about ten."

"But where is he now?" he snapped.

Jack shrugged. "I don't know."

"Well, you must come with me. I've got to find him."

"What are you going to do?"

"Buy him off. This match can't take place."

"Do you mean that?" asked Jack with a smile.

"Did you ever know me to waste words?—Come!"

However lenient Henry Ballard had been to his son, at that moment the parental word was law, and Jack obeyed, taking up his hat and gloves, and laying a pink ticket

on the table.

"Yours, Pope. I'll see you later."

And they went out hastily, the old man from beginning to end having ignored me completely. I sank in a chair, my gaze shifting from the ticket to the brandy bottle and cigarettes. I wanted to do something—I didn't know what. I hadn't drunk or smoked for twelve years, but that' night I did both. The brandy steadied, the cigarette quieted my nerves. I sat there alone over the half-cleared dinner table, resolutely impelling calmness. The ticket stared at me, a symbol of Jerry's destiny.... My thought shifted curiously to the placid Miss Gore. Whatever Fate had in store for Jerry, this phase of his life would pass as she had said, the mind would survive. Something told me that tonight would mark a turning point in Jerry's career—how or what I could not know, but for the first time I realized how deeply I was committed to Jerry's plans. I wanted the bout to take place. I wanted to see it—win or lose I was committed to it and to Jerry.

It had grown dark outside. I rose, slowly putting the ticket in my pocket, and went out. The night was sultry. It would be hot there in the ring—but it would be hot for both of them. Muscle for muscle and tissue for tissue, Jerry could stand what another could. I glanced at my watch. It was now nine. The preliminary bouts would be beginning, but I had no interest in these. I walked down town, purposely delaying my steps, but found my footsteps hurrying in spite of me, and it was only half after nine when I entered the building.

I remembered a six-day bicycle race that I had witnessed there years ago, but I was not prepared for the sight of the crowd that had gathered under the enormous roof. The match had been well advertised and the article in the *Despatch* must have lent an added spice to the attraction. The heated air was already a blue fog of tobacco smoke, through which beyond the glare of the ring, tiny spots of light flared and disappeared like glow-worms—where in the gallery the smokers lighted their tobacco. As I entered I scanned the crowd. Eager, stupid or brutal faces, the washed and the unwashed, the gloved and the ungloved, cheek by jowl, all talking, smoking, cheering, jeering or waiting calmly for the expected thrill. They had paid their money to see blood, and as I found my seat I realized the inevitableness of Jerry's appearance. He could not disappoint these people now.

My seat was in a box, in the second row of boxes, the first row being just back of the press seats which were along the sides of the ring. In this vast crowd I would be lost to Jerry and I was thankful not to be directly under the ring where the sight of my anxious face might have diverted him. A bout was in progress now, of six rounds, between two lightweights, a rapid affair which drew to a conclusion none too quickly for me. The final bout was to take place at ten, but I knew from the long intervals between these preliminaries that the hour would be much later. I thought for a moment of going out and walking the streets for awhile, but realized that I should be even more unhappy there than here; so I sat quietly absorbing the scene, listening to the conversation of my neighbors in the next box, who seemed to have their money on the sailor. One of their comments aroused my ire.

"What's this goldfish their feedin' to the sea lion? Say, that story ain't straight about young Benham bein' Robinson?"

"Sure thing. Clancy will eat him alive—*eat him alive*," the man repeated, slowly and with unction.

I glanced at the speaker. Squat, stout, heavy jowled—with a neck that pushed over the back of his collar—a follower of the ring, smug, assertive, confident. A prophet? I was not ready to admit that.

After the third bout three women and three men, following an usher, passed along the aisle just in front of me. I recognized her instantly in spite of the dark suit, large hat and heavy veil, for her walk betrayed her. One of the women was Marcia Van Wyck. Followed by the gaze of the men nearest them, they went to a box in the second tier just around the corner of the ring where I could see the girl distinctly. The other women of the party or the men I did not recognize, but Marcia attracted the attention of my neighbors.

"Some dame, that," said one of them admiringly. "Know her, Charlie?"

"Naw," replied the stout man. "Swells, I reckon, friends of the goldfish."

As the bout on the boards proceeded and the attention of those nearest her was diverted, the girl settled into her seat and coolly removed her veil, watching the fight calmly, now and then exchanging a word with her companions. She *was* beautiful, distinguished looking, but in this moment of restraint, cold and unfeeling almost to the point of cruelty. She looked across the space that separated us, caught my gaze and held it, challenging, defying—with no other sign of recognition—and presently looked away.

The preliminaries ended, there was a rustle and stir of expectation. Men were rushing back and forth from the dressing rooms to the ring and whispering to the master of ceremonies between his introductions of various pugilists in a great variety of street clothes, who claimed the right to challenge the winner of the night's heavyweight event. I had heard many of their names during the past three weeks at the Manor, and knowing something of the customs of the ring, was not surprised to see Tim O'Halloran and Sagorski. It was a little free advertising which meant much to these gentlemen and cost little. O'Halloran grinned toothlessly, at the plaudits that greeted his name, shuffled his feet awkwardly and bobbed down. Sagorski was not so popular, but the crowd received him good-naturedly enough, and amid cries of "Clancy" and "Bring on the Sailor" the Jew ungracefully retired.

I glanced at the girl; she was smiling up into the faces of these men as at old acquaintances. If there was any regret in her—any revulsion at the vulgarity of this scene into which she had plunged Jerry Benham—she gave no sign of it. It seemed to me that she was in her element; as though in this adventure, the most unusual she had perhaps ever attempted, she had found the very acme, the climax of her experience.

When the introductions were finished, the hubbub began anew. Had Henry Ballard succeeded in buying Clancy off? I hoped and I feared it. Men came from the dressing-rooms and whispered in the ear of the announcer who sent them back hurriedly. The crowd was becoming impatient. There were no more pugilists to introduce and the man in the ring walked to and fro mopping his perspiring brow. At last when the sounds from the crowd became one muffled roar, he clambered down through the ropes and went himself to the dressing-rooms, returning in a while with the referee of the match whom he presented. The new referee looked at his watch and announced that there was a slight delay and begged the crowd to be patient a few moments longer.

But when the moments were no longer few and there were no signs from the dressing-room doors the people in the rear seats rose howling in a body. There were cries of "Fake" and "Give us our money" and the man in the ring, Diamond Joe Gannon, held up his hands in vain for silence. For awhile it looked as though there would be a riot. Had Ballard Senior succeeded?

Suddenly the howling was hushed and merged into shouts of acclaim. "Good boy, Kid! Here he comes," and, rising with the others, I saw coming down the aisle from the dressing-rooms "Kid" Spatola, the bootblack champion. He carried a bucket, sponges and towels and after a word with the clamorous reporters clambered up into the ring, followed by a colored man, in whom I recognized Danny Monroe, the Swedish negro. He wore suspenders over his undershirt and carried several bottles which he placed in the corner of the ring beside the bucket. The eyes of the crowd were focused upon the door from which Spatola had emerged. I saw two figures come out, one grim and silent who made his way toward the street doors, the other who came quickly down the aisle—Ballard Senior and Jack. The latter questioned an usher and was shown directly to my box, by his prominence investing both himself and me with immediate publicity. I felt the gaze of our neighbors upon us, but Jack seated himself coolly and lighted a cigarette.

"What happened?" I questioned in a whisper.

"They're going to fight," he returned.

"Your father—?"

He smiled a little. "Mad as a hornet. Jerry blocked the game."

"How—?"

"Dad offered Clancy five thousand and his share of the gate money to quit."

"Clancy refused?"

"He was very white about it. He sent the message over to Jerry."

"And Jerry?"

"The boy doubled any amount dad offered if Clancy would go on. Clancy stands to win fifteen thousand. Dad quit. I told him Jerry had made up his mind. He realizes it now."

"Fifteen thousand! Clancy will work for it."

Jack smiled grimly. "I think Jerry wants him to."

The boy was mad—clean mad.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FIGHT

But the madness of the moment had gotten into my blood and Jack's. The fight was going to take place. We were glad of it. We felt the magnetism of the crowd, the pulse of its excitement, and, as impatient as those around us, eagerly awaited developments. The seconds and trainers had hardly clambered into Clancy's corner when Clancy himself, followed by Terry Riley, appeared and leaped into the ring. The crowd roared approval and he bowed right and left, waving his hands and nodding to acquaintances whom he recognized at the ring-side. He wore a pale blue dressing-gown and though broad of shoulder seemed not even so tall as Sagorski, but he had a bullet head which at the cerebellum joined his thick neck, without indentation, in a straight line and his arms reached almost to his knees—gorilla of a man—a superbrute. I caught a glimpse of Marcia watching him intently, and tried to read her thoughts. She examined him with the critical gaze which she might have given a hackney at a horse show.

Jerry's appearance with Flynn a moment later was the signal for another outburst from the crowd—not so long a greeting nor so prolonged a one as that which had greeted Clancy, but warm enough to make the boy feel that he was not without friends in the house. His face was a little pale but he smiled cheerfully enough when he reached the ring. He shook hands with Gannon, whom he had met at Finnegan's, and then, with a show of real enjoyment, with Clancy—conversing with a composure that left nothing to be desired.

The crowd, like Jack and me, was comparing them. Jerry's six feet two topped the sailor by more than two inches, though I believe the latter would have a few pounds of extra weight.

"Big rascal, ain't he?" the sportsman in the adjoining box commented.

"Yep," grunted the stolid one. "But too leggy. Clancy'll eat him alive—*eat him alive*," he repeated with more unction than before.

"Maybe," said the other, "but I want to be shown. There was another leggy feller—the freckled one."

"Fitz—but Fitz was a *fighter*."

"Well, I like his looks—good-lookin' feller, ain't he?"

"Aw! This ain't no beauty parlor. He's got a glass jaw, I'll bet. 'S a goldfish, I tell you. The sea lion will eat him alive—*eat him alive*!"

I don't know why the reiteration of this phrase of the fat man irritated me, but it did exceedingly, and I turned around and glared at him, a sharp retort on the tip of my tongue. Ballard's fingers closed on my arm and I was silent. But the fat man's glances and mine had met and held each other.

"What's the matter, perfessor?" he asked testily. "Friend of yours, eh? Oh, well—no harm done. But if you'd like to back your judgment with a little something—say fifty —"

But I had already turned my back on the fellow.

In the ring the men had thrown aside their dressing-gowns and the opposing seconds were examining the bandages upon their hands. Clancy wore bright green trunks, which if his name had failed would have betrayed his lineage, and his great chest and arms were covered with designs in tattoo. Jerry wore dark trunks. And as his wonderful arms and torso were exposed to view, a murmur of approval went over the audience. In spite of his training in the open his skin was still very white beside the bronzed figure of his adversary, but the muscles rippled smoothly and strongly under the fair skin—and bulked large at thigh and forearm as he moved his limbs. It was not the strong man's figure nor yet, like Clancy's, the stocky, thickly built structure of the professional fighter's, yet it was so solid, so admirably compact that his great height was unnoticeable. I could see from the expressions upon the faces of those about me and the calls from the seats behind us, that Jerry's appearance had already gained the respect of the crowd, some members of which were already hailing him by his first name. "Good boy, Jerry," they cried, or "All right, old boy. You've got the goods—but look out for his right."

Even the stout person beside me was silent and I heard nothing more about the goldfish. Fortunately for him, and for me, I suspect, for had he repeated his phrase, I might have brained him with a chair.

The preliminary conferences at an end, the principals took their corners, fresh ones not used in the preliminaries, Jerry luckily with his back toward the box in which the Van Wyck girl was sitting. If their glances had met, I did not notice. For all that I

knew. Jerry might have been unaware that she was in the house. He did not look around in a search for her and seemed totally absorbed in his instructions from Flynn, who stood outside the ropes just behind him whispering continuously in his ear, Jerry nodding from time to time and glancing across the ring to Clancy's corner, where the superbeast was sprawled, his long arms extended upon the ropes. Spatola and the black Swede were seeing to Jerry's gloves and looking over every detail of the corner with careful eyes.

The referee called the two men to the center of the ring and gave them some final instructions, to which they nodded assent, and they had hardly returned to their corners when the gong clanged, stools and paraphernalia were whipped out of the ring, the seconds and trainers crouched outside and the fight was on. As the men came together the disparity in their sizes became less marked for, while Clancy was the shorter, he made up by his huge bulk what he lacked in height. He was a dangerous man, but there was no timidity in Jerry's eyes and he came forward sparring carefully, gliding backward and forward feeling out the other man's length and speed. Clancy's left grazed Jerry's ear and the boy countered lightly. His color was rising now and his eyes were sparkling. It was good, it was a game he loved. The moment of stage fright had passed. He had forgotten the crowd. His foot-work was fast and made Clancy seem almost sluggish by comparison. That was the danger. Would he waste himself too early? Ten rounds! Not too long for Jerry, if the other didn't land dangerously and more often than he. Clancy played for the head, and caught the boy fairly on the jaw, but got a blow in the ribs that made him grunt. Jerry did most of the leading, ducking a vicious swing of Clancy's right, that made the Sailor look foolish, and brought a roar of delight from the crowd. Clancy grinned cheerfully and came on, stabbing with his long left arm at Jerry's head, but getting only his trouble for his pains. At the close of the round the honors were even, and both were smiling in their corners.

"He's got the science," said the optimist next door, "a pretty piece o' work—very pretty."

"Just you wait, Petey," said the stout man, while behind us an Irishman shouted, "Get them green tights workin', Clancy."

The second round was clearly Jerry's. Even the stout man admitted it. Clancy's famous crouching pose met with mishap early in the round, for Jerry by fine judgment twice evaded the advancing left arm and straightened Clancy with terrific upper cuts, the kind that Flynn had said were like tons of coal. At the end of the round Clancy realized, I think, that his opponent was well worth considering seriously, for when he came to the center of the ring again, his face washed clean, he wore a solemn expression curious and respectful, but villainously determined. He began boring in, as the phrase is, leading constantly and taking what came. He hit Jerry hard, always when the boy was going away, however, and caught some well-judged ones in return. He swung a hard right which caught Jerry napping and sent him against the ropes, but before he could follow up the advantage the boy had slipped out of danger. They exchanged blows here, toe to toe, and the crowd howled with delight. Here was a mere boxer who wasn't afraid to take what he gave. In the exchange Jerry profited, for Clancy, lunging with his right and missing, fell into a clinch where Jerry gave his ribs a fearful beating. At the end of the round both were breathing hard, but the crowd was cheering, Jerry.

I find myself slipping into the phraseology of the sporting page, and little wonder when for weeks the boxer's terms were the only phrases I had heard. I hope I will not be blamed for dwelling with too great a particularity upon this affair, which, whatever its merits as a test of strength and skill, was nothing less than a contest in brutality.

During the minute of time Monroe and Spatola rubbed Jerry vigorously and when the gong clanged, though still breathing hard, Jerry was ready for Clancy's rush. He had been prepared for this by Flynn, who knew the fighter's methods. For before the seconds were well out of the ring Clancy had crossed toward Jerry's corner, planning by sheer bulk and viciousness to sap some of Jerry's strength. But Jerry avoided the rush, stinging Clancy's stomach with a terrific blow as he got out of danger. With the whole of the ring back of him he stood up and shifting suddenly got inside of Clancy's guard with his right on the jaw, which, catching the Sailor off his balance, sent him to the ropes, where he sank to the floor. He took a count of six leisurely and was up again smiling and fighting hard. Jerry's lip was cut in this exchange, but at least during this round Clancy rushed no more. They were both landing freely now, Jerry apparently willing to take his share of punishment in order to make a good showing. I heard Jack Ballard muttering at my ear. This was a mistake; I wondered if Flynn knew it. With his skill, Jerry could have kept away and cut the man to ribbons. But he was no slacker; this was no boxing tournament, as Jerry afterwards explained, but a fight, which meant pugnacity as well as skill.

But the crowd appreciated his efforts. They were ring followers and knew "science" when they saw it, but more than skill they loved "sand" and more than "sand,"

aggressiveness. With the beginning of the seventh round the honors had all been with Jerry. He had scored the first blood and the first knock-down and Clancy's rushes had proved unavailing. The professional's lip was swollen, one eye was nearly closed, and his ribs were crimson from the terrible beating Jerry had given them. Though his face was not so badly punished as Clancy's, Jerry had not gotten off unscathed. He was grim, determined, and cuts at the lip and eyes made him no handsomer than he should have been. But he was breathing more easily than Clancy, and, though he had lost much of his speed, he still seemed able to avoid his opponent at will and to hold him off with his straight left arm. Six rounds in which science had been more than a match for all Clancy's bull strength and ring experience! That in itself was something of an achievement, but Jerry was still further to show his strength, for in this seventh round Clancy went to the floor twice, the first time by a clean blow to the jaw through a beautiful opening that Jerry planned deliberately, feinting for the body, bringing a lead which Jerry half-ducked and then side stepped, throwing all the weight of his body into a blow with his right, timed and aimed with beautiful precision.

The crowd were on their feet, silent. They thought that the end had come, for at the call of *three* Clancy had not moved, Flynn and Spatola were already above the level of the ring clinging to the ropes and Jerry stood breathing heavily, his arms at his sides watching the prostrate man. At the count of *six* Clancy was on one elbow, *eight* found him on his knees struggling to his feet. He swayed a little, but rose and fell into a clinch which saved him. The referee tore the men apart and Jerry at once assumed the aggressive, making the weary Clancy move warily. But one of Jerry's left-hand blows caught him again, and he went half through the ropes.

It was here that Jerry earned the wild applause of the crowd by an act of magnanimity that was nothing less than Quixotic. But it was like Jerry. He wanted to take no unfair advantages. He bent forward, lifting the upper rope, and helped Clancy into the ring. There the round ended in a roar of cheering that did my heart and Jack's good to hear.

But the thing was foolhardy. The man was not done yet, as Jerry was to find out in a moment. I saw Flynn frowning and protesting in Jerry's ear, for the boy had been set for a knockout and the bout in all probability would have been ended. Jerry listened, his arms stretched out along the ropes, smiling up at the glaring electric lights. He was breathing convulsively and Spatola swung his towel furiously, fanning the heavy air into the boy's gasping lungs. He had had all the advantage so far and with good generalship could still win on points if he fought his own battle and not Clancy's. But would he? I knew what Flynn was saying to him, what he was warning him against. I had heard the warning often in the bouts at the Manor. Failing in science and skill Clancy would "slug" (Flynn's word, not mine), trusting to the prodigious length of his arms, taking the punishment that came to him, biding his time and the possible lucky blow which would turn the tide in his favor.

I glanced at Clancy's corner. There was anxiety there. I think during the seventh round, Clancy had seen his fifteen thousand going a-glimmering and Riley was no less emphatic than Flynn. There were but three more rounds—three rounds in which the Sailor could regain his lost ground and the heavyweight laurels that seemed to be slipping from him.

When the gong clanged, it was immediately to be seen that Clancy's whole plan of battle had changed. From some hidden sources in that great hulk of a body he drew new forces of energy. You will see the same thing in any wild beast of the jungle, a hidden reserve of nervous power and viciousness, most dangerous apparently when nearest extinction. He was ugly—his jowls shot forward, his brow lowering, his long arms shooting like pistons—a jungle beast at bay. Jerry stopped his progress again—again—with straight thrusts and uppercuts, but the man only covered up, crouched lower, and came on again. Once he caught Jerry in the stomach and I saw the boy wince with pain; again he reached Jerry's head, a terrific blow which would have sent him to the floor had Jerry not been moving away. And all the while Jerry's blows were landing, cutting the man, blinding him, but still he came on. Was there no limit to the amount of punishment that he could endure? Jerry's blows were not the leads of a boxer, but fighting blows, and Clancy's face and body would bear testimony to their strength for many a day, but he always came on for more—a superbeast that as long as breath came and blood flowed, was untamed and unconquerable. Jerry was tiring now and throwing discretion to the winds was trying for a knockout. Two swings he missed by mere wildness and weariness of eye, and Flynn's voice rose above the wild clamor of the of the crowd. "Keep him off, Jerry—keep him off!" But Jerry did not hear or did not choose to hear, for he no longer avoided Clancy's blows or his advances, standing his ground and slugging wildly as Clancy was doing. Jack Ballard saw the danger and sprang to his feet seconding Flynn's advice, but he could not be heard above the roar of the crowd. It was a wild moment. A chance blow by either man would end the battle then. I was no longer Roger Canby, ex-tutor and philosopher, but a mad mother-beast whose cub was fighting for its life. "Keep him off, Jerry," I yelled hoarsely again and again, but the boy still stood, his toe to

Clancy's, fighting wildly. Three times they fell into clinches from sheer exhaustion to be pried apart by the referee, only to go at each other again. This was no test of skill, but of brutality and chance. I think that Jerry was mad—brute mad, for, though Clancy's blows were now reaching him, he didn't seem to be aware of them. His face was distorted with rage—animal rage. When the gong clanged at the end of this round, the eighth, they still fought even when Gannon thrust his bulk between them.

The crowd sank back into their seats gasping. It was a long while since New York had seen a fight such as this.

"What d' I tell you, Charlie?" whispered the optimist next to me hoarsely.

"By—, he's good an' no mistake," confessed the fat man.

"He's got the Sailor goin'."

Jack Ballard and I were in an agony of apprehension, watching the faces of the excited men in Jerry's corner, who were trying to warn him before it was too late. But we could see that Jerry was stubborn, for when Flynn pleaded with him he shook his head. Spatola and the negro massaged him furiously, adding their anxious pleas to Flynn's, but Jerry would not listen. He was taking the foul air in huge gasps, his eyes closed, fighting for recuperation.

When the ninth round opened the men were both groggy and stumbled to the center of the ring like two blind men groping for each other, swinging wildly and moving slowly. Each was intent upon a knockout. Twice each swung and missed rights, avoiding the blows by remnants of their craft and cleverness. Twice they stumbled into clinches and were torn apart by the pitiless Gannon. In the in-fighting (a technical term) Jerry I think must have been struck—I did not see the blow, but it must have been a terrific one—for his knees sagged and his hands dropped to his sides while his mouth gaped open painfully. At the cries from his corner Clancy drove a vicious blow, but Jerry weakly managed to avoid it. But he couldn't raise his arms. Jerry was hurt, grievously hurt. In a moment they were raised again, but he could not seem to see his mark and his swings were wild. In agony I rose, my arm in Ballard's, ready for the worst. Clancy straightened, tried to collect what remained of his scattered wits and strength, poised himself and with a terrible blow, struck Jerry at the point of his chin.

He went down with a crash, his head striking the floor, and remained motionless. Over him, one hand restraining Clancy, Gannon counted. Jerry's figure writhed upon the floor, twisting upon its head struggling to rise and then relaxed. The fight was over.

A curious hush had fallen over the great hall. Here and there Clancy's friends were shouting in glee, but the great mass of the crowd, those whom Jerry had won by his skill and pluck, seemed bewildered. The end had come too suddenly for them to realize what had happened and how it had happened. The match was his. He had won it. It had only been a question of rounds. And then, "Chance blow in the solar-plexus," someone was saying.

It is curious how many and how lasting are the impressions that can be crowded into a second of time. I clambered out of the box with Jack Ballard toward the ring, fearful of the blow to Jerry's head upon the boards, and as I pushed my way through the bewildered crowd, I caught just a glimpse of Marcia Van Wyck's party. They were all standing up in their box, looking toward the ring. A man beside her made a remark at the girl's ear. I saw her turn and flash a bright glance up at him and had a glimpse of her small white teeth. She was laughing. This is just an impression of a momentary glimpse, but it means much. In this situation is the psychology of the real Marcia. Jerry, her man-god, her brute-god, lay prone at her feet a quivering mass of bruised flesh, beaten and broken mind and body, and she could smile.

Tingling with rage at this incident, which I thanked God Jerry had not seen, I fought my way behind Jack to the aisle to the dressing-room, whither willing hands had carried the boy. All around us we heard the encomiums of the crowd.

"Luck," one said, "mere luck."

"It's all in the game. But Benham's the better man."

"Lucky for Clancy that Jerry mixed it. Could 'a cut the Sailor to pieces."

"Some fight—what?"

"The best in years. The boy's a wonder."

All this from hardened followers of the ring. The door to the dressing-room was jammed and a force of policemen was keeping back the people. Our anxious queries were passed along to the doorway.

"He's coming around all right," said the sergeant. "Now move along there, gents. No admittance here."

But Jack and I awaited our chance and when Sagorski poked his head out of the door he saw us and the sergeant let us through.

It was a very crestfallen group that greeted us. Flynn and the negro, Monroe, were working over Jerry, who lay on a cot-bed near the window. He had recovered consciousness and even as we entered he raised his head wearily and looked around. His face was battered and bruised, and his smile as he greeted us partook of the character of his injuries. But he was whole and I hoped not badly hurt. Youth and strength, the best of medicines, were already reviving him.

"Well, Roger," he muttered dully, "I'm licked."

"Luck," I said laconically. Jack Ballard had clasped his big congested hand, "Proud of you, Jerry, old boy! You ought to have won. Why the Devil did you let him coax you into close quarters?"

"I thought—I could stand—what he could," grunted Jerry.

"Not the lucky blow. He had it. If you'd stood him off—"

"I came here to fight—" said Jerry sinking back on his mattress wearily.

I think his mind was beginning to work slowly around to the real meaning of his defeat, not the mere failure of his science and skill, but the failure of his body and mind as against the mind and body of a trained brute, whom he had set his heart on conquering. I knew as no one else there knew what the victory meant to him, and the memory of the brief glimpse I had had of the Van Wyck girl's face when he lay in the ring inflamed me anew. I know not what—some vestige of my thought reached him, for he drew me toward him and when I bent my head he whispered in my ear,

"Marcia—was there?"

I nodded.

"She stayed—saw—?"

"Yes."

He made no sound, and submitted silently to the ministrations of his trainers.

Flynn was philosophical.

"The fortunes of war, Misther Canby. 'T'was a gran' fight, as fine a mill as you'll see in a loife time—wid the best man losin'—'S a shame, sor; but Masther Jerry w'u'd have his way—bad cess to 'm. You can't swap swipes wid a gorilla, sor. It ain't done."

"He beat me fairly," said Jerry sitting up.

"Who? Clancy? I'll match you agin him tomorrow, Masther Jerry," and he grinned cheerfully, "if ye'll but take advice."

"Advice!" sighed Jerry. "You were right Flynn—I—I was wrong."

"I wudden't mind if it wasn't for thinkin' of that fifteen thousand."

"I think he earned it," laughed Jack.

Jerry sat up on the edge of the bed and stared around, one eye only visible. The other was concealed behind a piece of raw meat that Flynn was holding over it.

"You lost something, Flynn?" he asked.

"A trifle, sor."

"And the Kid and Tim?"

"*And* Rozy and Dan—all of us a bit, sor. But it don't matther."

"Well," he said with a laugh. "I'll make it up to you, all of you, d' you hear? And I'm very much obliged for your confidence."

It didn't need this munificence on Jerry's part to win the affection of these bruisers, but they were none the less cheerful on account of it. As Jim Robinson he had won their esteem, and all the evening they had stood a little in awe of Jerry Benham, but before they left him that night he gave them a good handshake all around and invited them to his house on the morrow. Between the crowd of us we got him into street clothes and a closed automobile in which Jack and I went with him to his house uptown.

CHAPTER XVII

MARCIA RECANTS

Thanks to the formidable size of Jerry's training partners, we had managed to avoid the reporters at the Garden, and when we reached Jerry's house we gave instructions to the butler to admit no one and answer no questions. Christopher, now Jerry's valet, we took upstairs with us and got the boy ready for bed. As the telephone bell began ringing with queries from the morning newspapers, I disconnected the wire and we were left in peace. A warm bath and a drink of brandy did wonders both for Jerry's appearance and his spirits, and at last we got him to bed. But he could not sleep, and so we sat at his bedside and talked to him until far into the night, Jerry propped up on his pillows, his bad eye comically decorated with a part of his morning's steak.

By dint of persuasion and a promise to stay all night at last we got the boy to sleep and went to bed. I think Jack was rather glad to be beyond the reach of the parental ire, and my own wish was to be near Jerry now, to help him on the morrow to readjust his mind to his disappointment, and do what other service I could to save him from the results of his folly.

The morning papers brought the evidences of it in vivid scare heads upon their first pages and detailed accounts of the whole affair, written by their best men, who gave Jerry, I am glad to say, the credit that was his due, calling him "the new star in pugilistic circles," "the coming heavyweight champion," and the yellowest of them, the one that had unmasked Jim Robinson the afternoon before, came out with an offer to back Jerry Benham for five thousand dollars against Jack Clancy or any other heavyweight except the Champion. Jerry read the articles in silence, a queer smile upon his face and at last shoved the papers aside.

"Nice of those chaps, very, considering the way I've treated 'em, but it's no go. I've finished."

Jack had ventured out to brave the storm and I sat quietly, scarcely daring to hope that I had heard correctly.

"I'm done, Roger," he repeated. "No more fights for me. I staked everything on science and head-work. I failed. He got me—somewhere that hurt like the devil—and I saw red. I don't remember much after that except that I was as much of a brute as he was. I failed, Roger, failed miserably. The fellow that can't hold his temper has no business in the ring."

His voice was heavy, like his manner, weary, disappointed, and as he threw off his dressing gown I saw that his left arm was hideously discolored from wrist to shoulder.

"Does it hurt?" I asked.

"What? Oh, my arm. No. But I'm sore inside of me Roger, my mind I mean. To do a thing like that, and fail—that's what hurts. Because I hadn't will enough—"

"You're in earnest, then," I asked, "about not fighting again?"

"Yes. I'm through—for good." And then boyishly, "But I didn't quit, Roger, did I?"

"I think any unprejudiced observer will admit that you didn't quit," I said. "Clancy, I'm sure, knows better than anybody."

"Good old Clancy. He *was* a sight—but he squared things. I saw that knockout coming, but I couldn't move for the life of me. My arms wouldn't come up. By George—that *was* a wallop! Oh well," he sighed, "the better man won. I'm satisfied."

I helped him into his clothes and we went down to breakfast. He examined his letters quickly and put them aside with an air of disappointment, and then asked if there had been any telephone calls, seeming much put out when I told him my reasons for disconnecting the instrument.

"Oh, it doesn't matter—Beastly nuisance, those reporters—" He looked over at me and grinned sheepishly. "Nice morning reading for Ballard, Senior! It *was* a rotten trick to play on him, though. He didn't deserve all this. I wouldn't wonder if he didn't speak to me now. I deserve that, I think. He cost me ten thousand cold. I'm in disgrace. I'll never be able to square myself—never."

When he got up from the breakfast table he caught a glimpse of his face in a mirror. "I *am* a sight. The lip is going down nicely, but the eye! Looks like an overripe tomato against a wall. Pretty sort of a phiz to go calling on a lady with."

"You're going visiting?"

"Yes, Marcia and I are going up to the country together. You'll have to go along."

"Thanks," I said, "but I've some matters to attend to here."

"I say, Roger," he went on quickly examining himself anew in the mirror; "I've got to get hold of Flynn. There's a chap in the Bowery who makes a business of painting eyes." And he went off to the telephone where I heard him making the arrangement.

With Jerry restored to partial sanity my duty at the town house was ended. Reporters still came to the door, but were turned away, and, seeing that I could be of no further use, I made my adieux and took my way downtown.

If no man is a hero to his valet, surely no boy can be a hero to his tutor, and I may as well admit that glorious as Jerry's defeat had been, I had ceased to reckon him among the perfect creations of this world. Nowhere, I think, have I hailed Jerry as a hero. I have not meant to place him upon a pedestal. At the Manor, before he came to New York, he did no wrong, because the things that were good were pleasant to him and because original sin—*Eheu!* I was beginning to wonder! Original sin! John Benham had ignored its existence and I had thought him wise. What was original sin? And if its origin was not within, where did it originate and how? If the boy had already been inoculated with the germ of sin, was he conscious of it? And did he yield to it voluntarily or unconsciously or both? And if unconscious of sin, was he morally responsible for its commission? These and many other vexed theological questions flitted anxiously through my mind and brought me to a careful scrutiny of Jerry's acts as I knew them. To engage in a prize fight, whatever the prize, whether money or merely the love of woman, if a venial, was not a mortal sin. To be sure, anger was a mortal sin and Jerry had yielded to it. Such fighting as Jerry had done, was not and could not by dint of argument become a part of any philosophy that I had taught him. He had sinned. He would sin again. As Miss Gore had said, my dream castle was tottering—it *had* tottered and was falling. Jerry, my Perfect Man, at the first contact with the world felt the contagion of its innate depravity and corruption. The more I thought of Jerry's character, his ingenuous belief in the good of all things, the more it seemed to me that it was only a question of the strength of Jerry's spiritual health to resist the ravages of spiritual disease. You see, already I had thrown my philosophy to the winds. For where I had once planned that Jerry should go through fire unscorched, it was now merely become a question of the amount of his scorching.

I bade Jack good-by, after hearing of the bad quarter-hour he had spent with Ballard, Senior, downtown, and made my way to my train for Horsham Manor in no very happy frame of mind. Had I known what new phase of Jerry's character was soon to be revealed to me, God knows I should have been still more unhappy. Jerry was not at the Manor when I arrived there. For some reasons best known to Marcia Van Wyck and himself it had been decided to stay for awhile longer in town, and it was not until over a month later that Jerry arrived bag and baggage in his machine with Christopher. He greeted me cheerfully enough, but I was not quite satisfied with his appearance. The marks of his fight with Clancy had almost, if not quite, disappeared, and while he had taken on much of his normal weight, he had little color and his eyes were dull. He smoked cigarettes constantly, lighting one from another, and on the afternoon and evening of the day of his arrival, sat moodily frowning at vacancy, or walked aimlessly about, his mind obviously upon some troublesome or perplexing matter. I could not believe that Clancy's victory had cast this shadow upon his spirit, but I asked no questions. He ordered wine for dinner, a thing he had never done before at the Manor, save on a few occasions when we had had guests, and drank freely of both sherry and champagne, finishing after his coffee with some neat brandy, which he tossed off with an air of familiarity that gave me something of a shock. He invited me to join him and when I refused seemed to find amusement in twitting me about my abstemious habits.

"Come along now, just a nip of brandy, Roger. 'Twill make your blood flow a bit faster. No? Why not, old Dry-as-dust? Conscientious scruples? A dram is as good as three scruples. Come along, just a taste."

"Brandy was made for old dotards and young idiots. I'm neither."

"Oh, very well, here's luck!" and he drank again, setting the glass down and drawing a deep breath of satisfaction. And then with a laugh. "An idiot! I suppose I am. Good thing to be an idiot, Roger. Nothing expected of you. Nobody disappointed."

"You're talking nonsense," I said sternly.

"Nonsense! I differ from you there, old top," he laughed. "The true philosophy of life is the one that brings the greatest happiness. Self-expression is my motto, wherever it leads you. I fight, I play, I smoke, I drink because those are the things my particular ego requires."

"Ah! You're happy?"

"'Happiness,' old Dry-as-dust, as our good friend Rasselas puts it, 'is but a myth.' I have ceased listening with credulity to the whispers of fancy or pursuing with eagerness the phantoms of hope. They're not for me. To live in the thick of life and take my knockouts or give them—Reality! I'm up against it at last,—real people, real thoughts, real trials, real problems—I want them all. I'm going to drink deep, deep."

He reached for the brandy bottle again, but I whisked it away and rose.

"You're a d——d jackass," I said, storming down at where he sat from my indignant five feet eight.

His brow lowered and his jaw shot forward unpleasantly. "A jackass," I repeated firmly, still holding the neck of the brandy bottle.

He glared at me a moment longer, then he slowly sank back into his chair, his features relaxing, and burst into a laugh.

"Roger, you improve upon acquaintance. All these years you've concealed from me a nice judgment in the use of profanity. A d——d jackass! Hardly Hegelian, but neat, Roger, and most beautifully appropriate. A jackass, I am. Also as you have remarked, an idiot. You see, there's no argument. I admit the soft impeachment. But I won't drink again just now; so set the brandy bottle down like a good fellow and we will talk as one gentleman to another."

I saw that I had brought him for the moment to his senses, and obeyed, sitting resolutely silent with folded arms, waiting for him to go on. He took a pipe from his pocket rather sheepishly, then filled and lighted it.

"You *are* a good sort, Roger," he said at last, with an embarrassment that contrasted strangely with the bombast of a moment ago. "I—I'm glad you did that. I think you're about the only person in the world I'd have taken it from. But I haven't drunk much. I couldn't get to be much of a drunkard in three weeks, could I?" He smiled his boyish smile and disarmed me.

"But why drink at all?" I asked quietly.

"Oh, I don't know. It's such an easy way to be jolly. Everybody does it. You can't seem to go anywhere without somebody sticking a glass under your nose. It's part of the social formula. There's no harm in it, in reason."

"Jerry," I said sternly. "You've begun wrong. I don't know whether it's my fault or not, but you seem to be hopelessly twisted in your view of life. You're floundering. Of course it's none of my business. I've done what I was paid to do, and you've got to work things out in your own way. If you want to drink yourself maudlin, that's your privilege. I can move out, but while I'm here in this house I'm not going to sit idly by while you make a fool of yourself."

He puffed on his pipe a moment in silence, eyeing the table leg.

"I *am* a fool," he said soberly at last. And then after a pause, "I don't know what the trouble has been exactly, unless I've taken people too literally; and that's your fault, Roger. White with you was always white and black was black. You taught me to say what I thought and to believe that other people said what they thought. That was a mistake."

"You forget," I said, "that I wasn't brought here to teach you worldliness. But you can't say that I didn't warn you against it."

He had gotten up and now paced the room with long strides.

"Futile, Roger! Absolutely futile. In my heart even then, I think, I believed you narrow. You see, I'm frank. A few months in the world hasn't changed my opinion. But I do want to think straight." And then with a sigh as he paused alongside of me, "It's very perplexing sometimes."

I knew what he was thinking about and whom, but he would not speak.

"You have thought me narrow, Jerry, because I laid my life and yours along pleasant byways and ignored the beaten track. I've never told you why the world had grown distasteful to me. I think you ought to know. It may be worth something to you. The old story, always new—a girl, pretty, insincere. I was just out of the University, with a good education, some prospects, but no money. We became engaged. She was going to wait for me until I got a good professorship. But she didn't. In less than a year, without even the formality of breaking the engagement, she suddenly married a man who had money, a manufacturer of gas engines in Taunton, Massachusetts. I won't go into the details. They're rather sickening from this distance. But I thought you might like to know why I've never particularly cared to trust women."

"I supposed," he said, thoughtfully, "it might have been something like that. Women *are* queer. You think you know them, and then—" He paused, confession hovering on his lips, but some delicacy restrained him.

"Women, Jerry, are the flavoring of society; I regret that I have a poor digestion for sauces. I hope yours will be better."

He laughed. "Poor Roger; was she *very* pretty?"

"I can't remember. Probably. Calf love seldom considers anything else—prettiness!

Yes she was pretty."

"How old were you?"

"Older than you Jerry—and wiser."

He was silent. Once I thought he was about to speak, but he refrained, and when he deftly turned the topic, I knew that any chance I might have had to help him had passed. I understood, of course, and I could not help respecting his delicacy. Jerry was in for some hard knocks, I feared, harder ones than Clancy had given him.

He went to bed presently and I sat by the lamp alternately reading and thinking of Jerry, comparing him with myself in that long-distant romance of my own. They were not unlike, these two women, pretty little self-worshipers, born to deceit and chicanery, with clever talents for concealing their ignorance, hiding the emptiness of their hearts with pretty tricks of coquetry. But Marcia was the more dangerous, a clean body and an unclean mind. A half-virgin! I would have given much to know what had recently passed between Marcia and Jerry. If there was any way to bring about a disillusionment—

As though in answer to my enigma, at this moment Christopher came down from Jerry's room on his way below stairs. I stopped him and taking him into my study closed the door.

"You're very fond of Master Jerry, Christopher?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, sir, Mr. Canby."

"So am I, Christopher. I think you know that, don't you?"

"Why, yes, sir. You've been a father to 'im, sir. Nobody knows that better than me, sir."

"We'd both go through fire and water for him, wouldn't we, Christopher?"

"Oh, yes, sir; an' if you please, sir, what with these prize fighters at the Manor an' all, I rather think we 'ave, sir."

I smiled.

"A bad business, but over for good, I think, Christopher. But there are other things, worse in a way—"

I paused, scrutinizing the man's homely, impassive face.

"Did Master Jerry do much drinking before he went into training, Christopher?"

"A little, what any gentleman would, out in the world, sir."

"You've noticed it since the fight?"

He hesitated. Loyalty was bred in his bone.

"Yes, sir."

"You know, Christopher, that I've spent my life trying to make Jerry a fine man?"

"You 'ave, sir. It's a pity—the—the drink. But it can't 'ave much of a 'old on 'im yet, sir."

"Then you *have* noticed?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did he begin?"

He paused a moment.

"I think it was the day after the fight, that very night, to be hexact, sir."

"I see. The night after the fight. He spent the evening out and when he came home, was he intoxicated?"

"Not then, no, sir. But 'e'd been drinkin', just mildly lit—in a manner o' speakin' sir, not drunk, but gay and kind o' sarcastic-like; not like Master Jerry 'imself, sir."

"Had he been with some other gentlemen during the evening?"

"No, sir. 'E 'ad been callin' on a lady, but stopped at 'is club on the way around—"

"What lady?"

"I—I—"

"You may speak freely, Christopher. Miss Van Wyck?"

"I—I think so, sir. They 'ad an appointment."

"I see. And did he drink again that night?"

"A few brandies—yes, sir. Ye see, sir, it got to him quick-like—breakin' training so suddent."

"I understand. And you put him to bed."

"Yes, sir, in a manner o' speakin' I did, sir."

"When did you notice his drinking again?"

"Not for some days, sir."

"And what then?"

"The same thing happened again, sir."

"I see." I paced the floor silently, my inclination to question further struggling against my sense of the fitness of things. Was not Christopher, after all, a friend as well as a servant, a well-tried friend of Jerry's clan? "Did you connect the fact of Master Jerry's drinking with his visits to the lady I have mentioned, Christopher?" I asked in a moment.

He paused a moment scratching his head in perplexity, and then blurted forth without reserve.

"I'm glad you've spoken, Mr. Canby. I'm not given to talkin' over Master Jerry's private affairs, sir, but it's all in the family, like, though I wouldn't 'ave Master Jerry know—"

"Master Jerry will not know."

"Well, Mr. Canby, if you'd ask my hopinion, sir, I'd say that this young lady—sayin' no names, sir—is doin' no good to Master Jerry. She's always got 'im fussed, sir, an' irritable. 'E's not like 'imself—not like 'imself at all, sir. Why, Mr. Canby, I'm not the kind as listens behind keyholes, sir, but one night last week when she comes to the 'ouse in New York to visit 'im—"

"Ah, she came to the house?"

"Yes, sir, alone, sir, at night; a most unproper thing for a nice girl to do, sir, if I must say it, Mr. Canby. I couldn't 'elp 'earin' in the next room, or seein' for the matter of that. Master Jerry is out of 'is 'ead about 'er, an' no mistake, sir. I could 'ear 'is voice soft-like an she indifferent, leadin' 'im on, a-playin' with 'im, sir. Seemed to me like she was sweet an' mad-like by turns. She's a strange one, Mr. Canby, an' if the matter goes no further I'd like to say, sir, that I've no fancy for such doin's in a lady."

"Nor I, Christopher. You heard what she said?"

"I couldn't 'elp, some of it. 'Twas about the fight, sir. 'But you lost,' says she again and again when 'e speaks to 'er soft-like. 'You lost. You let that ugly gorilla'—them's 'er words, sir, speakin' o' Clancy—'you let that gorilla beat you, you, my fightin' god.' I remember the words, sir, 'er hexact words, sir, she said them again and again. Queer talk for a drawin' room, Mr. Canby, in a lady's mouth, an' Master Jerry talkin' low all the time and tellin' her he loved 'er—not darin' even to touch 'er 'and, sir, an' lookin' at her pleadin' like; 'im with his soft eyes, 'im with 'is great strength an' manhood, like a child before 'er, not even touchin' 'er, sir, with 'er temptin' and tantalizing." He broke off with a shrug. "'Tis a queer world, sir, where them that calls themselves ladies comes a visitin' gentlemen alone at night, an' goes away clean with a laugh on their lips. A gentleman Master 'Jerry is, sir, too good for the likes o' her." The man paused and looked toward the door with a startled air. "I 'ave no business sayin' what's in my mind, even to you, Mr. Canby. You'll not tell 'im, sir?"

"No. I'm glad you've spoken. You've said nothing of this—to anyone?"

"I'd cut my tongue out first, sir," he muttered, wagging his head.

I led the way to the door and opened it.

"I like her no better than you, Christopher. Something must be done—something—It's too bad—"

"Good night, sir," he said.

"Good night, Christopher."

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO EMBASSIES

There was something particularly brutal to me in hearing this estimate of Marcia Van Wyck's visit to Jerry through the lips of a servant. And yet I felt no remorse at encouraging the confession. Good Christopher was not brilliant, and only the most obvious of things impressed him, but he had seen, and like me, had judged. And his judgment was even more damning than mine, for Christopher was an amicable person, who doddered along, accepting life as it came, too weary for enmities, or too well trained to show them. It must have been at the cost of a severe wrench to his habits and traditions that he had dared to speak so freely. Good old Christopher! Ten years of the monastic life had narrowed your vision and mine, but they had made that vision singularly clear.

During that night in my hours of wakefulness before sleep came, I studied Jerry's infatuation from every angle. I feared for him. The moment of awakening was approaching, and then? Whatever the hidden weaknesses in his moral fiber, thus suddenly subjected to strain, he was not one to be lightly dealt with by man or woman. He was gentle, soft, if you please, childlike with those he loved, but there was dangerous mettle in him not to be tampered with by trickery or guile. Christopher had shown me with his uncompromising bluntness what I had merely suspected; the girl loved danger and saw it in Jerry's eyes, fascinated by the imminence of peril that lurked in his innocence. A strange passion, calculating, cold, abnormal. And Jerry loved this girl—adored her, as though she were a sacred vessel, a fragile thing, that would break in his fingers! I began to hope that he would break her (and to fear it), crush her and discover her emptiness.

The morrow brought a resolve to visit Briar Hills. Except for the afternoons when Jerry fished, he went there daily. He was delighted at my wish to accompany him. We drove over in the motor in the flush of the afternoon, Jerry blithe again, I silent, wondering at the inexhaustible springs of youth, forgetting that it was merely May and Jerry on his way to the woman he loved.

The house was full of guests for the week-end, but Marcia Van Wyck, with an air of hospitality that quite took me aback, welcomed me warmly, confessed herself much honored by this mark of my attention and took me to see her garden. Oh, she was clever. Spring flowers, youth, grace, the sweetness of the warm, scented paths, her symbolic white frock to set the scene for innocence. But I understood her now. Two could play at her game.

"It was wonderful of you to come, Mr. Canby," she purred. "So kind, so neighborly."

"It's really a great pleasure, I'm sure," I said with a show of gallantry. "A lovely spot! Blossoms. I wondered where you got them for your cheeks."

She flashed a quick glance at me, wholly humorous.

"For that speech, you shall have a bud for your lapel." And she plucked and fastened it, her face very close to mine. She gave me a moment of intense discomfort which was only half embarrassment. She had planned well. She was a part of the purity and sweetness of this lovely summer garden. Guile and she were miles asunder.

"Thanks," I muttered, smelling the blossom with some ostentation.

"Then we're going to be friends?" she queried archly.

"I'm not aware that we were ever anything else," I replied easily.

"Come now, Mr. Canby. You know we haven't always understood each other. I'm sure each of us has been frightfully jealous of the other. Isn't it so?"

"Jealous! I? Of you, Miss Van Wyck?"

"Don't let's misunderstand again. I'm frightfully cheerful this afternoon. It mightn't happen again for weeks. I couldn't quarrel with fate itself. You did want Jerry to carry your doctrines out into the world with him, didn't you?"

"I'm not aware—"

"And I discovered him far too stodgy to endure. It wasn't so much that your philosophy and mine differed as the difference they made in Jerry. And so we clashed. I won."

I was silent.

"Didn't I, Mr. Canby?" she persisted, in her gentlest tone.

"Jerry is out of my hands, Miss Van Wyck," I managed coolly.

"And in mine?"

"Yes, in yours," after a pause.

She laughed softly.

"What do you suppose I'm going to do with him?"

The glamour of youth in a garden, her rare humor and the cloudless day—I had managed well so far, but she pressed me hard. Jerry was no chattel to be bandied carelessly. I felt my body stiffening.

"Jerry is very sweet, Mr. Canby," she went on with that softness of voice that I had grown to understand. "He does anything, everything that I ask him to. It really is a great responsibility. Human judgment is so fallible, especially a woman's. Suppose I asked him to become a nihilist or President, or even both."

D—- the vixen. She was making game of me. But I struggled to hold my temper, taking her literally.

"Nihilism? Political or moral, Miss Van Wyck? To one of your means, the first would be inconvenient; to one of your affections, the other dangerous."

She flashed a narrow glance at me. "*Touchée.* I like the thrust from cover, but I can parry. Suppose that I said that I would relinquish Jerry."

"I'm not sure that you can," I replied coolly.

Our glances met again. She knew that I read her.

"Nothing is impossible to intelligence. I could send him away tomorrow, today—"

"But he would come back."

"You frighten me," she said, shuddering prettily.

"That is precisely what I wish to do," I went on stolidly.

"Threats!"

I shrugged. "You underestimate him, that's all."

"Perhaps. You know, Mr. Canby, that you improve vastly on acquaintance. If you were younger—" She paused and looked at me slantwise.

"Ingenuous, handsome, a fighting god—!"

I could have bitten out my tongue the moment I had spoken the words, and the dark look she shot at me as she flashed around gave a measure of her latent deviltry.

"Jerry told you that!" she said in tones half-suppressed.

"No."

"He did."

"No. But I know. I haven't watched for a month for nothing. I'm not a child, Miss Van Wyck."

"What are you?" she taunted.

"A prophet. Jerry is no woman's plaything. Let him be. You don't know him as I do. I warn you."

She suddenly went into a fit of laughter, meant to ruffle my dignity.

"Off with my head! If you knew how much you remind me of the *Queen* in 'Alice in Wonderland'!"

"I'm sorry you won't take me seriously."

"I can't," she laughed again. "You're too absurd to be tragic."

"Perhaps we had better be going toward the house," I remarked.

She moved slowly along, her back eloquent of disdain. But she paused for a moment to let me join her.

"You see? I've tried. You won't be friendly."

"My advice is friendly—"

"I never follow advice. We're enemies. It is written."

I shrugged. Impolite I may have been, but there was no use mincing matters. My preposterous embassy had failed. As we neared the house she left me on the lawn and turned to where Jerry and the others were moving toward the tennis courts.

"You'll find Miss Gore upon the veranda," she smiled over her shoulder with careless gayety. She was extraordinary. But I'm sure that never before had I hated the girl as at that moment. Thoughtfully I made my way to the veranda and Miss Gore.

"Well," she said cheerfully as I sank into a chair, "you are friends again?"

"No."

"It's really too bad. I think you take life too seriously, Mr. Canby."

"Perhaps." I remained silent. She worked at her embroidery frame for a moment as though to attune herself to my mood and then:

"Briar Hills can't hope for a visit which hasn't an ulterior purpose. What is it?"

As usual she wasted no words and smiled benignly, a comfortable motherly smile at once quizzical and forgiving.

"I *did* want to see you," I put in awkwardly. "It has been a long time—"

"I'll spare you the necessity for explanations. You're here to tell me that Jerry is drinking and to find out why. Isn't that so?"

I could only stare at her in wonder at her intuitions, and made some remark which she chose to disregard.

"As I predicted, the disease is passing," she said quietly, "but it's leaving Marcia first. Three weeks ago Jerry was a god to Marcia. Last week she showed signs of disenchantment. This week she is plainly bored."

"I guessed as much. But why?"

She shrugged her shoulders expressively, but having gone so far I was not there to waste words.

"I know. Her idol fell in Madison Square Garden, a bone-and-muscle idol, Miss Gore."

She remained silent, examining her embroidery with a critical eye.

"You know that that is true," I asserted.

"Idols are as easily made as shattered for Marcia. She may adore him again next week."

"I hope not. It would be a pity."

"I agree with you," she said quietly. "It would be a pity."

I said nothing for a moment, watching her slim fingers weaving to and fro.

"I have just warned her," I said.

The fingers moved slowly, then stopped and lowered the embroidery frame to her lap. Her wide gaze was full upon me.

"You—what?"

"I warned her."

"Against what?"

"Against Jerry."

She straightened and a sound came from her throat.

"You—"

She gave a short laugh. "You'll pardon me, Mr. Canby, but I was on the point of calling you a fool."

"I warned her," I muttered. "Jerry isn't like other men. She's playing with fire."

"And don't you know that that is the very worst thing you could have done, for Jerry—for her?"

"I hadn't meant to do exactly that. She angered me."

"She would. Her idea of existence isn't yours. And if you don't mind my saying so, I think you're wasting your time on the possible chance of making Jerry appear ridiculous to her, to us all. Your guardianship is hardly flattering to his intelligence or his character. You can't help matters. Whatever the crisis, it is bound to come, the sooner the better for Jerry and for her. My good man, can't you *see*?"

I had realized my futility already, and it was not pleasant to have it shown me through another's eyes. Nor did I relish her calling me her "good man," but curiously enough when she had finished I made no reply. And so I sat meekly, Miss Gore resuming her embroidery.

"It is a pity that he cares for no other girls. There's Margaret Laidlaw, pretty, attractive, feminine, and Sarah Carew, handsome, sportive, masculine. One would think he'd find a choice between them and they both like him. But no, he has eyes in his head for Marcia only. A moment ago when he was talking to them, his gaze was on the flower-garden. Has he never cared for any other women? Who was the girl who got inside the wall last year, Mr. Canby?"

Una! I had forgotten her. But I shook my head.

"I meddle no more, Miss Gore. I've learned a lesson. Jerry must work out his own salvation."

"It's merely a suggestion. Think it over."

After awhile I rose, pleading the need of exercise and begging her to make my excuses to Marcia, I set out for the Manor. But instead of taking the longer road to the lodge gate, when I reached the wall I turned to the left into the footpath along which I had come that night with the girl Una, reaching the Sweetwater and crawling under the broken grille to the rocks where she and Jerry had met. I sat for awhile on the brink of the stream, watching the tangling reflections in the tiny current. Una! Somehow the place reminded me of Una Habberton, a sanctuary for quiet thoughts; the pools below me, her eyes reflecting the clear heavens; the intonation of the rill, her voice; the cheerful birdnotes, her joy of life; the dignity of the tall trees, her sanity. Less than a year ago I had turned her out of this garden, fearing for the boy the first woman he had seen, and to my ascetic mind because a woman, a minx. I eyed the broken grille regretfully and then suddenly rose and started hurriedly toward the Manor, the new thought drumming in my mind.

A fool's mission? Perhaps, and yet I resolved to take it. I put some things into a bag and, telling Christopher that Jerry wasn't to expect me home that night, I caught an evening train to the city.

It was not difficult to reach her by telephone, for I found her at the house in Washington Square. She did not recall my voice or my name, and only when I said that I had been Jerry Benham's tutor, did she remember. It was a personal matter, I explained, having to do with Mr. Benham, and at that she consented to see me. I left the telephone booth at the hotel perspiring freely, aware for the first time of the awkwardness and delicacy of my undertaking. But I dined and changed into my blue serge suit, one that I had bought upon the occasion of my last visit to town, and at half past eight presented myself in the Habberton drawing-room. In the moments before she appeared, I sat ill at ease, my eyes taking in every detail of the well-ordered room, the cool gray walls, the family portraits, the old-fashioned ornaments upon table and mantel, aware, in spite of myself, that I was warm at the collar, impatient for the interview to begin, yet fearful for it.

I was watching the folding doors at the end of the room when she startled me by appearing silently almost at my elbow. The lights were dim, but I could see that her face wore no smile of greeting and as I rose she did not offer me her hand.

"Mr. Canby," she said politely, indicating a chair, "won't you sit down?"

"Er—thanks," I said. My throat was dry. I hoped she would not make it too difficult for me. Meanwhile I saw her eyeing me narrowly as though the possibility had just occurred to her that I might have come to ask for money. She waited a moment for me to speak, but I found it difficult to begin.

"Mr. Benham sent you to me?" she asked at last very coolly.

"Er—not exactly," I stammered. "Mr. Benham did not send me, but I—I'm here in his interest."

"Yes?"

The rising inflection on the monosyllable could hardly have been called encouraging.

"The circumstance of our first meeting," I ventured again with an assumption of ease that I was far from feeling—"its duration was so brief that I feared you wouldn't remember me."

Her neck stiffened ever so slightly.

"You surely did not come here," she said icily, "merely to discuss the circumstances of our first meeting."

"N—no, not at all, at least, not altogether, Miss Habberton. But I—I couldn't help hoping—" here I tried to smile—a ghastly one at best—"I couldn't help hoping that you had managed to forgive me for performing a very unpleasant duty."

"If you will please come as quickly as possible to the object of your visit—"

"I—I will. If you'll be a little patient with me."

She averted her head, but said nothing.

"I think you know, Miss Habberton, that I've given the last eleven years of my life to Jerry. He has been like a younger brother to me and I have done what I could to develop him physically, mentally, morally, to successful manhood. I had hoped under ideal conditions to produce—"

"I fail to see, Mr. Canby—"

"Please bear with me a moment longer. I think you may have realized last year what Jerry was. You saw him then, a creature with the body and intelligence of a man and the heart of a child. He was what I had made him. From my point of view he was flawless, as nearly perfect as you will find a man in this—"

"Without temptations," she put in quickly, the first encouraging sign of her interest.

"I had built my hopes as I had built his body and mind and character, sure that contact with the world would only refine and strengthen him."

She shook her head. "You do not know the world as I do. It was a dream. I could have told you so then, last summer."

"You—you have seen the papers—the accounts of—?"

"I don't see how I could very well help seeing them," she said smiling. "He began his battle with the world bravely at least."

"My only hope is that you haven't misjudged him in that affair. All his life he has cared for boxing—"

"I can't see what difference my judgment of him can make one way or the other. He has done much, is doing much for the people I'm interested in. Of course, you know of that. But as to his private life—that is something with which, of course, I can have no concern."

"I am sorry to hear you say that. I thought perhaps that as a friend—"

"Mr. Benham understands my interest in him, I think," she paused and averted her head, one small foot tapping the floor impatiently. "I cannot see where this conversation is leading us. I beg that you will be explicit."

"I was counting on your interest, for he values your good opinion more I think than that of anyone in the world."

Her foot ceased tapping and she bent forward, one elbow on her knee, her head lowered thoughtfully.

"What do you want, Mr. Canby?" she asked abruptly.

"Your help."

"Mine!"

"Yes, your help. Jerry needs it—"

"He did not ask—?"

"No. I haven't consulted Jerry—"

"Then I—"

"Please listen. If Jerry's future means anything to you, you will do what you can. Jerry has—has gotten into bad company—he is slipping, Miss Habberton—slipping down. I don't know whose the fault is, his father's for his idealism, or mine for my selfish delight in the experiment of his education, but Jerry is failing us. You see, I'm telling you all. I have given up. A dream, you have called it. It was a dream; but I can't see him fail without an effort to help him. When a man centers all his hopes in life on one ambition, its failure is tragic. You see I'm humble. It has cost me something to come to you. I hope you understand what it means."

My appeal had reached her, for I think she realized how seldom such a person as I could be moved to emotion.

"But I—how can I help?" she asked.

"Will you listen and not think me visionary? Jerry cares for you. To him you have made a different appeal from that of any other woman in the world. You were the first. You stirred him. You may not be aware. In his mind you stand for everything that is clean and noble. In his heart, I know—I have not studied Jerry all these years for nothing—he has a shrine there—for you, Miss Habberton. You will always be Una, the first. I hope you will forgive me and believe me. It is necessary that you should."

She smiled at me gently.

"You are very much in earnest, Mr. Canby. I can forgive much to one of your sincerity. But doesn't it seem to you a curious conversation?"

"I had hoped you cared enough—"

"And if I did, do you think anything would give you the right to come to me without Mr. Benham's permission and speak of—"

"You must let me finish," I demanded. "You are kind, charitable. Trying to save people from themselves is your life work. I merely bring you a soul to save, a friend in danger. Can you refuse, refuse him? Jerry is drinking. It has not been for long, but he is in trouble. He has gotten beyond his depth—a woman—Oh, don't misunderstand me! It is mental, a strange attraction, weird, Jerry doesn't understand at all. He's bewitched, but she is slowly brutalizing him, his mind I mean. Don't you understand?"

"Yes, I think so," she muttered. "It is not a new situation. But I—no friend, man or girl, could avail in a case like that." She paused a moment clasping and unclasping her hands. I waited.

"Who is this—this woman?" she blurted out at last.

I hesitated.

"A lady. You—you put me at a disadvantage."

"What is her name?" she insisted.

"Marcia Van Wyck," I muttered.

"Marcia! Surely—" She stopped. A look of bewilderment came over her face, ending with a frown of perplexity.

"No," she murmured. "He wouldn't understand Marcia. I—" And then with a gasp, "And you want *me* to interfere? Mr. Canby, I—"

"Just a moment, please. I ask nothing that you cannot do. I have thought of a plan. We are alone at the Manor. I ask you to meet Jerry as you met him there last summer along by the Sweetwater. I am going to arrange to have him fish up the stream on Saturday afternoon. Will you come, Miss Habberton, come to the wall and meet him there inside the broken grille? I know his mind. It is curiously affected by facts of association. It is the only thing. I have—"

The words died on my lips as she rose, her slim figure straight in its sudden dignity, and I knew that I had failed.

"Your proposal is preposterous, Mr. Canby," she said coolly, moving toward the door.

"You refuse?"

"Of course. I am sorry if Mr. Benham has failed, is failing his friends, but the thing that you suggest is impossible." She put out her hand in token of dismissal.

"And you won't reconsider? Let me come to see you tomorrow, the next day. Is it so much that I ask?"

"Good night, Mr. Canby."

"You do not care enough?"

"Good night."

I bowed over her fingers silently.

Then I took up my hat. There was nothing left to do.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PATH IN THE WOOD

Had I not been obsessed with the desire at all costs to divert the unhappy tide of Jerry's infatuation, I must have known that no girl such as Una Habberton could lend herself as accessory to a plan like mine. I had had evidence enough that she cared for Jerry in a tender, almost a motherly way, and while I had been unsuccessful in my mission, I now saw no reason to change my opinion. Indeed, in my hotel room that night, the more I thought of the interview the more convinced I was that whatever modesty deterred her, it was the very fact of her caring so much that made the thing impossible to her. Her air of indifference, carefully assumed, had not hidden the rapid rise and fall of her breast at the confession of my fears. The inquietude of her manner, the curiosity which had permitted me to finish my story, were proof convincing that her interests in Jerry were more than ordinarily involved, and the more I thought of her attitude the more I wondered at my own temerity.

A brazen minx I had once thought her, but tonight in her plain white frock and sober conventional surroundings she seemed to show something of the quiet poise of a nurse or a nun. She seemed to exemplify the thought that the ideal woman is both wood-nymph and madonna. By contrast to the Nietzschian intriguer I had left that

morning at Briar Hills, she was a paragon of all virtues. Nietzsche! The philosopher of the sty! Freud, his runt!

When, the following morning, I found Jack Ballard in his apartment at eleven (as usual fastening his cravat) I told him of the unfortunate end to my ventures, but he only laughed at me.

"My dear Pope," he said, "you are suffering from a severe attack of paternomania. If you don't mind my saying so, you're making a prodigious ass of yourself and of Jerry. If I were the boy, I'd pack you out bag and baggage. Imagine it! Put yourself in his place. Would *you* like any meddling in your little affairs of gallantry?" And he laughed aloud at his joke. I scowled at him, but passed the absurd remark in dignified silence.

"If it *were* an affair of gallantry!" I said at last, "I could forgive him that, and her. But this—it's mere milk and water and he thinks it's the nectar of the gods. The pity of it!"

"A pity, yes. But who is responsible? Not Jerry, surely. He's what you've made him," Jack paused expressively. "Does he—?" he began and paused. I read his meaning.

"No," I said.

"Um! Knowledge will come like a thunderclap to Jerry. Then—look out!"

I agreed with him.

"But Jerry's amatory ventures are none of your business, Pope," he went on. "Let the boy go the limit. He has got to do it. It won't hurt him. I told you that Marcia would help him cut his eye-teeth. She's doing it in approved modern fashion, without instruments or gas. He'll recover. Let 'em alone. I'll tell you what to do. Just put your precious dialectics in cold storage awhile—they'll keep; nobody'll thaw 'em out unless you do—and take a trip to 'Frisco."

"Frisco or not, I meddle no more."

"Frankenstein!" he laughed again. "The monster is getting away from you."

"If you're going to be facetious—"

"There are times when nothing else is possible. This is one of 'em. Brace up, old boy. All's lost but hope and that's going soon. You go home and take a pill. You're yellow. Perhaps I'll come up for the week-end for Marcia's party, you know,—if you'll promise to have the beds well-aired. I'm sure they're reminiscent of Jerry's pugs. Going? Oh, very well. Love to Jerry. And remember, old top, that a man is as heaven made him and sometimes a great deal worse."

This was the comforting reflection I took with me to the train that afternoon. But I was now resigned. I had done what I could and failed. The only thing left, it seemed, was to reconcile myself to the situation, seek a friendship with Marcia and await the *débâcle*.

I made, of course, no mention of the object of my visit to New York and Jerry gave me no confidences. He went to town Tuesday and Wednesday, returned tired and sullen. And the next night after a long period alone in the study in which I had managed at last to get my mind on my work, I found Jerry in the dining-room quite drunk with the brandy bottle beside him. He was ugly and disposed to be quarrelsome, but I got him to bed at last, suffering myself no graver damage than a bruised biceps where his great fingers had grasped me. Jack Ballard's remark about Frankenstein was no joke. That night a monster Jerry was; from the bottom of my heart I pitied him.

I argued with Jerry in the morning, pleaded with him and threatened to leave the Manor, but he was so contrite, so earnest in his promises of reformation that I couldn't find it in my heart to go. I proposed a trip to Europe, but he refused.

"Not now, Roger," he demurred. "I've got to stay here now. Just stick around with me for awhile, won't you, old chap?"

"Will you stop drinking?" I asked.

"Brandy?"

"Everything."

"H—m. You're the devil of a martinet."

"Will you?"

It was the supreme test of what remained of my influence over him. His head ached, I'm sure, for he looked a wreck. I watched his face anxiously. He went to the table, took a cigarette from the box and lighted it deliberately. Then turning, faced me with a smile, and offered his hand.

"Yes," he said. "Old Dry-as-dust, I will."

"A promise? You've never broken one, Jerry."

"A promise, Roger. I—I think I'm getting a little glimmering of sense. A promise. I'll keep it."

"Thank God, for that," I said, in so fervent a tone that the boy smiled at me.

"Good old Roger! You're a brick," he said. "Friendship, after all, is the greatest thing in the world." He turned his head and walked to the window and looked out, assuming an air of unconcern which I knew hid some deep-seated emotion. I, too, was silent. It was a fine moment for us both.

He turned into the room after awhile with an air of gayety.

"We're going to have a party, Roger."

"Ah, when?"

"Marcia's giving a dance tomorrow night, people from all over, and I'll have a few of 'em here in the afternoon—for tea out at the cabin. Sort of a picnic. Some of 'em are bringing rods to try the early fishing. Rather jolly, eh? I'll tell Poole and Christopher —"

I confessed myself much pleased with this arrangement and thanked my stars that Una had refused me. It was the day I had wanted her. Indeed, since Jerry's promise, life at the Manor had suddenly taken a different complexion. A new hope was born in me. Jerry would keep that promise. I was sure of it.

I will come as rapidly as possible to the extraordinary happenings of that Saturday afternoon, which as much as any other event in this entire history, portrays the mutability of the feminine mind. I had gone out to the cabin to see that everything was in order, and Jerry was to follow later, while a few of the men fished up stream, Marcia and some of her guests driving in motors to the upper gate, cutting across to the cabin through the woods. Christopher had cleared the cabin and he and Poole had brought the eatables and set a table. The two days that had passed since Jerry had given me his promise had been cheerful ones for the boy. I had not seen Miss Gore, but for aught I knew Marcia Van Wyck might have been adoring Jerry again. I did not care what her mood was. All would come right, for Jerry had given me a promise and he would not break it. The arrangements within the cabin having been completed, I went outside and wandered a short way down the path toward the stream, sat on a rock and became at once engaged in my favorite woodland game of counting birdcalls. Thrushes and robins, warblers, sparrows, finches, all engaged in the employment that Jerry had described as "hopping around a bit," or chirping, calling, singing until the air was melodious with sound. The birdman's surprise, a new note differing from the others, a loud clear gurgling song, brought me to my feet and I went on down the path listening. It was different from the note of a wren which it resembled, that of a Lincoln sparrow, I was sure, a rarity at the Manor, only one specimen of which Jerry possessed. But midway in my pursuit of the elusive bird I saw movement in the path in front of me and I caught a glimpse of leather leggins and a skirt. In a moment all thought of my Lincoln sparrow was gone from my head. At first I thought the visitor one of Jerry's guests, but as she approached, butterfly net in hand, I saw that it was Una Habberton. So great was my surprise at seeing her that I stood, mouth open, stupidly staring. But she was laughing at me.

"You're a nice one," she was saying. "Here I am a trespasser through the grille and not a soul to greet me."

"You came," I muttered inanely.

"Obviously; since here I am. It's Saturday, isn't it?"

"Yes. But—" I paused.

"But what?"

"You said you wouldn't come."

"Oh," she laughed. "I merely changed my mind—my privilege, you know. I was a trifle stale. I thought it would do me good. But you don't seem in the least glad to see me."

I was—delighted. Joy was one of the things that made me dumb.

"I was just trying to realize—er—Won't you sit down? On a rock, I mean. Jerry's somewhere about. He'll be along in a minute."

The possible effect on Una of Jerry's guests, who also might be along in a minute, was just beginning to bewilder me.

"He's fishing?"

"He was to meet me at the cabin. He'll be along presently. It will be a wonderful surprise. Suppose we hadn't been out here at all?"

"I was prepared to go all the way to the house. Nice of me, wasn't it? You know I promised Jerry some day I'd come to see his collection."

"He'll be delighted—Ho! There's his whistle now." I sounded the familiar call on my fingers and moved toward the cabin, but she stopped me.

"You're not to leave me, Mr. Canby, or I'll go."

"Why?"

"A chance meeting would have been different. This is premeditation. Don't leave me. Do you hear!"

I nodded and when Jerry came in sight I called him. He appeared in the path, a basket of wine in one hand, a fishing rod in the other.

"Hello, Roger," he shouted and then paused, setting the basket down.

"I didn't know—"

"A surprise, Jerry!"

"Why, it's Una!" he cried. "Una! What on earth—?"

"I was butterflying, and wandered through." She laughed. "I told you to have that railing mended."

"The necessity for that is past," he laughed gayly. "Oh, it's jolly good to see you."

He took her by both hands and held her off from him examining her delightedly.

"It seems like yesterday. I'm not sure it isn't yesterday that you broke in and I was going to throw you over the wall. Imagine it! You! You're just the same—so different from the sober little mouse of Blank Street. I believe you have on the very same clothes, the same gaiters—"

"Naturally. Do you think I'm a millionaire?"

Three was a crowd. I would have given my right hand to have transported the cabin and all the gay people expected there to the ends of the earth. In a moment the woods would be full of them. I was at a loss what to do, for when they came the bird would take flight, but Jerry seemed to have forgotten everything but the girl before him. It was a real enthusiasm and happiness that he showed, the first in weeks.

"So you expected to slip in and out without being caught, did you?" Jerry was saying. "Pretty sort of a friend, you are! You might at least have let a fellow know you were going to be in this part of the world; where are you staying?"

"I don't see how that's the slightest concern of yours," she said demurely.

"The same old Una!" cried Jerry delightedly. "Always making game of a fellow. Do sit down again and let's have a chat. It seems ages since I've seen you. How's the day nursery coming on? Did you get the last check? I meant to stop in and see the plans. I couldn't, though," he frowned a little. "Something turned up. Business, you know."

"Jerry *is* busy," I put in mischievously, as I sat down beside them. "He worked Tuesday and Wednesday this week."

"Aren't you afraid of injuring your health, Jerry?" she asked sweetly. "I hope you're not working *too* hard."

He frowned and then burst into laughter.

"Roger's a chump. He sits staring at a sheet of foolscap all day and thinks he's working. I do work, though. I'm reorganizing a railroad," he finished proudly.

"How splendid! I'm sure it needs it. Railroads are the most disorganized and disorganizing—"

"And I'm engaged in a freight war with a rival steamship company. It's perfectly bully. I've got 'em backed off the map. We're carrying stuff for almost nothing and they're howling for help." He had taken out his pipe and was lighting it. "I'm going to buy 'em out," he finished. "But you don't want to hear about *me*. What are—"

"I do. Of course"—and she exchanged a quick glance with me. "Of course, I see a little about you in the papers—your interest in athletics—"

"Oh, I say, Una," he cried, flushing a dark red. "It's not fair to—"

"I'm fearfully interested," she persisted calmly. "You know it's actually gotten me into the habit of the sporting page. 'Walloping' Houligan and 'Scotty' Smith, the Harlem knock-out artist, are no longer empty names for me. They're real people with jabs and things."

"It's not kind of you—"

"I've been waiting breathlessly for your next encounter. I hope it's with 'Scotty.' It would be so much more of an achievement to win from a real knock-out artist—"

"Stop it, Una," he cried painfully. "I forbid you—"

"Do you mean," she asked innocently, "that you don't like to discuss—"

"I—I'd rather talk of something else," he stammered. "I've stopped boxing."

"Why?" wide-eyed. "The newspapers were wild about you. It *was* a fluke, wasn't it—Clancy 'getting' you in the ninth?"

"No," he muttered sullenly, "he whipped me fairly."

"Really. I'm awfully sorry. When one sets one's heart upon a thing—"

"Will you be quiet, Una?" he cried impetuously. "I won't have you talking this way, of these things. I—I was jollied into the thing. I mean," with a glance at me, "I never thought of the consequences. It—it was only a lark. I'm out of it, for good."

"Oh!" she said in a subdued tone, her gaze upon a distant tree-trunk. "It's too bad."

Whatever she meant by that cryptic remark, Jerry looked most uncomfortable. Her irony had cut him to the quick, and her humor had flayed his quivering sensibilities. That he took it without anger argued much for the quality of the esteem in which he held her. Another person, even I, in similar circumstances, would have courted demolition. Secretly, I was delighted. She had struck just the right note. He still writhed inwardly, but he made no effort at unconcern. I think he was perfectly willing that she should be a witness of his self-abasement.

"I was an idiot, Una, a conceited, silly fool. I deserve everything you say. I think it makes me a little happier to hear you say it, because if you weren't my friend you'd have kept quiet."

"I haven't said anything," she remarked urbanely. "And of course it's none of my affair."

"But it *is*," he was insisting.

I had risen, for along the path some people were coming. Jerry and Una, their backs being turned, were so absorbed in their conversation that they did not hear the rustle of footsteps, but when I rose they glanced at me and saw my face. I would have liked to have spirited them away, but it was too late. I made out the visitors now, Marcia, Phil Laidlaw, Sarah Carew and Channing Lloyd. I saw a change come in Jerry's face, as though a gray cloud had passed over it. Una started up, butterfly-net in hand, and glanced from one to the other of us, a question in her eyes, her face a trifle set.

"Oh, here you are," Marcia's soft voice was saying. "It seemed ages getting here."

Jerry took charge of the situation with a discretion that did the situation credit.

"Marcia, you know Miss Habberton—Miss Van Wyck."

"Of course," they both echoed coolly. Marcia examining Una impertinently, Una cheerfully indifferent.

"Miss Habberton and I were after butterflies," said Jerry, "but she has promised to stop for tea."

"I really ought to be going, Jerry," said Una.

"But you can't, you know, after promising," said Jerry with a smile.

The introductions made, the party moved on toward the cabin, Miss Habberton and I bringing up the rear.

"I could kill you for this," she whispered to me and the glance she gave me half-accomplished her wish.

"It isn't my fault," I protested. "I didn't know they were coming until yesterday—and you know you said—"

"Well, you ought to have warned me. I've no patience with you—none."

"But, my dear child—"

"I feel like a fool—and it's your fault."

"But how could I—?"

"You *ought* to have known."

Women I knew were not reasonable beings, but I expected better things than this of Una. I followed meekly, aware of my insufficiency. I felt sorry if Una was uncomfortable, but I had seen enough of her to know that she was quite able to cope

with any situation in which she might be placed. Marcia with Jerry had gone on ahead and I saw that, while the girl was talking up at him, Jerry walked with his head very erect. The situation was not clear to Marcia. I will give her the credit of saying that she had a sense of divination which was little short of the miraculous. It must have puzzled her to find Una here if, as I suspected. Jerry made her the confidante of all his plans, present and future—Una Habberton, the girl who had ventured alone within the wall, the account of whose visit had once caused a misunderstanding between them. The thought of Una's visit I think must have always been a thorn in Marcia's side, for Jerry's strongest hold on Marcia's imagination was nurtured by the thought that she, Marcia, was the first, the only woman that Jerry had ever really known. And here was her forgotten and lightly esteemed predecessor sporting with Jerry in the shade!

In the cabin we made a gay party. Una, I am sure, in spite of her cheerful pretense with Phil Laidlaw, had a woman's intuition of Marcia's antagonism. Jerry joined and chatted in Una's group for a moment, but I could see that he had lost something of his buoyancy. I watched Marcia keenly. Though absorbed apparently in the pouring of the tea, a self-appointed prerogative which she had assumed with something of an air—(meant, I am sure, for Una)—her narrowly veiled eyes lost no detail of any happening in Una's group, and her ears, I am sure, no detail of its conversation. Subtle glances, stolen or portentous, shot between them, and Jerry, poor lad, wandered from one to the other like some great ship becalmed in a tropic sea aware of an impending tempest, yet powerless to prevent its approach.

Una Habberton, I would like to say, had recovered her composure amazingly. Phil Laidlaw was an old acquaintance whom she very much liked and in a while they were chatting gayly, exchanging reminiscences with such a rare degree of concord and amusement that it seemed to matter little to either of them who else was in the room. But Una, I think, in spite of this abstraction, missed nothing of Marcia's slightest glances. She said nothing more of going. It seemed almost as though, war having tacitly been declared, she was on her mettle for the test whatever it was to be. I had not misjudged her. She knew Marcia Van Wyck, and what she did not know she suspected, and by the light of that knowledge (and that suspicion) had a little of contempt for her.

CHAPTER XX

REVOLT

I sat in my corner sipping tea. Being merely a man, middle-aged and something of a misogynist into the bargain, I was aware that as an active, useful force in this situation, I was a negligible quality. But it is interesting to record my impressions of the engagement. It began actively, I believe, when Marcia called Jerry from Una's group and appeared to appropriate him. Jerry looked ill at ease and from the glances he cast in the direction of Channing Lloyd, and the sullen way in which he spoke to Marcia, I think that all was not well with this ill-sorted pair.

I think that Channing Lloyd had for some time been a bone of contention between them and it required little imagination on my part to decide that his presence here today at Marcia's request had broken some agreement between them. Mere surmise, of course, but interesting. Marcia was stubborn and showed her defiance of Jerry's wishes by retaliation at Una's expense. But by this time other people who had come in from the fishing had joined Una's group by the window where the intruder seemed to be oblivious of Marcia and quite in her element. Indeed for the moment Marcia was out of it and her conversation with Jerry having apparently reached an *impasse*, she rose, leaving the tea-table to Christopher's ministrations and advanced valiantly to the attack.

Una promptly made room for her on the window sill, a wise bit of generalship which forced the enemy at once into polite subterfuge.

"It's *so* nice to see you, Una dear. How did you manage to escape from all your tiresome work at the Mission?"

"I could do it very nicely this week-end," said Una cheerfully. "Why haven't you been to any of the committee meetings?"

"It has been *so* warm. And of course while *you* are in charge we all know that everything *must* be going right."

"It's kind of you to say so. You know, wonderful things have been happening at the Mission. We're building a day nursery on the next block to help the working women. Jerry has been awfully kind. Of course you knew about it."

"Yes, of course," said Marcia, not turning a hair.

She lied. I knew that Jerry had kept the matter secret even from Marcia. I figured that the revelation must have been something of a shock to one of her intriguing nature, but she covered her grievance skillfully.

"Jerry is very generous," she said sweetly. "Do tell me about it."

Here Jerry blundered in rather sheepishly. "Oh, I say, Una, that's a secret, you know."

"Oh, is it?" said Una innocently. "I can't see why. Marcia knows. Everybody ought to. It was such a splendid thing to do."

"Jerry is so modest," said Marcia.

"The plans are simply adorable," Una went on quickly. "You know, Jerry, we simply had to have that open-air school on the roof. You know, you didn't object—"

"N—no—of course," said Jerry, shifting his feet.

"And the ward for nursing babies—we *did* put those windows in the west wall. You know we were a little uncertain about that."

"So we were," echoed Jerry dismally.

This was merely the preliminary skirmish with Una's outposts holding their positions close to the enemy's lines. But Marcia was not to be daunted. She opened fire immediately.

"It's simply *dear* of you, Una, to take so much interest in the work. I'm sure Jerry must have frightful difficulties in managing to spend his income. But to have his *oldest friend* to help him must relieve him of a tremendous burden of responsibility."

The outposts withdrew to the main line of skirmirshers and there opened fire again, from cover.

"It isn't so much a matter of friendship as of real interest in the needs of the community, you know. Anyone else would do quite as well as I; for instance, you, Marcia."

"But you see," Marcia countered coolly, "I haven't known Jerry *nearly* so long as you have."

"Haven't you?"

"I don't think so. Have I, Jerry?"

Jerry evaded the issue with some skill.

"Friendships aren't reckoned in terms of time," he put in with a short laugh. "If they were I'd be the most solitary person under the sun."

Marcia merely smiled, saying nothing, and when she joined the talk of another group I saw Una's gaze following her curiously.

She seemed to be able to understand Marcia little better than I did. But in a moment from my seat in the corner just beside them I saw Una look about the room and give a little gasp of pleasure.

"This cabin! Do you remember, Jerry?" she said quietly. "You gave me a cup of tea here and we decided just what you and I were going to do with the wicked world?"

"Oh, don't I? And you told me all about the plague spots?"

"Yes." She gazed out of the window. "You were interesting that day, Jerry."

"Was! I like that."

"So elephantine in your seriousness—"

"Elephantine! Oh, I say—"

"But you *were* nice. I don't think I've ever liked you so much as then. I think you're really much more interesting when you're elephantine. It was quite glorious the way you were planning to go galumphing over all vice and wickedness."

He shook his head soberly.

"I haven't made good, Una."

"Oh, there's still time. The jungle is still there, but it's an awfully big jungle, Jerry, bigger than you thought."

"Yes—bigger and swampier," he said slowly.

"I think if I could see more of you, Una, I might be better."

"I don't know that I've ever denied you the house," she laughed.

"I—I'm coming soon. But I want you to see my place here—the house, I mean. Couldn't you come with your mother and—and sisters and spend a few days up here?"

"Perhaps it would be time enough for me to answer that question when mother does. I—I *am* busy, you know."

"Please! And we can have one of our good old chats."

"Yes," and then mischievously, "but you'd better ask Marcia first, don't you think?"

His gaze fell and he reddened.

"I—I don't quite see what Marcia's got to do with it," he muttered.

"Oh, *don't* you?"

"No."

She smiled and then with a really serious air:

"Well, I do. I'm sorry I intruded, Jerry. I wouldn't have come for the world if I had known—"

"What nonsense you do talk. Promise me you'll come, Una."

"Ask Marcia first."

He laughed uneasily. "What a tease you are!"

"You ought to be very much flattered."

"How?"

"To be worth teasing."

Here they moved slightly away, turning their backs toward me and unfortunately I could hear no more. And so I sat listening to the group around Marcia, who was again enthroned at the tea-table.

I had not met the men, but they were of the usual man-about-town type, "Marcia's ex-es" somebody, I think the mannish Carew girl, amusingly called them. Among them Arthur Colton, married only a year, who already boasted that he was living "the simple double life." Besides the Laidlaws there were the Walsenberg woman, twice a grass widow and still hopeful, and the Da Costa debutante who looked as though butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, giggled constantly and said things which she fondly hoped to be devilish, but which were only absurd. This was the girl, I think, whom Jerry had described as having only five adjectives, all of which she used every minute. Channing Lloyd, a glass of champagne at his elbow, laughed gruffly and filled the room with tobacco smoke. I listened. Small talk, banalities, bits of narrow glimpses of narrow pursuits. I had to admit that Marcia quite dominated this circle, and I understood why. Shallow as she was, she was the only one with the possible exception of Phil Laidlaw who gave any evidence of having done any thinking at all. I might have known as I listened that her conversation had a purpose.

"I claim that obedience to the will of man," Marcia was saying, "has robbed woman of all initiative, all incentive to achievement, all creative faculty, and that only by renouncing man and all his works will she ever be his equal."

"Why don't you renounce 'em then, Marcia?" roared Lloyd, amid laughter.

"I know at least one that I could renounce,' said Marcia, smiling as she lighted a cigarette.

"Me? You couldn't," he returned. "You've tried, you know, but you've got to admit that I'm positively in'spensible to you."

"Do be quiet, Chan. You're idiotic. I'm quite serious."

"You're always serious, but you never mean what you say."

"Oh, don't I?"

"No," he grunted over his glass.

She glanced at him for a moment and their eyes met, hers falling first. Then she turned away. I think that the man's attraction for her was nothing less than his sheer bestiality.

"I believe in a splendid unconventional morality," she went on, musing with half-closed eyes over the ash of her cigarette. "After awhile you men will understand what it means."

"Not I," said Lloyd, who was drinking more than he needed. "If you say that immorality is conventional I'll agree with you, my dear, but morality—" and he drank some champagne, "morality! what rot!"

The others laughed, I'll admit, more at, than with him. But the conversation was sickening enough. I saw Jerry and Una shake hands and come forward and Marcia immediately turned toward them. The end of the battle was not yet, for as Una nodded in the general direction of the group in passing, Marcia spoke her name.

"Ah, Una dear. You're going?"

"I must," with a glance at her wrist watch. "It's getting late."

"What a pity. I wanted to talk to you—about the Mission."

"I'd like to, but—"

"We've just been discussing a theme that I know you're really vitally interested in."

"I?" I could see by the sudden lift of her brows that Una was now on her guard.

"Yes. You believe in women working, in woman's independence, in the New-Thought idea of unconventional morality, don't you?"

"I'm not sure what you mean."

"Simply that women are or should be perfectly capable of looking out for themselves, as much so as men?"

"That depends a great deal upon the woman, I should say," replied Una, smiling tolerantly.

"I was just about to put a hypothetical question. Do you mind listening? A young girl, for instance, pretty, romantic, a trifle venturesome, weary of the banalities of existence, leaves all the tiresome cares of the city and with the wanderlust upon her goes faring forth in search of adventure. A purely hypothetical case, but a typical one. As she wanders through the woods, she comes upon a high stone wall, something like this one of Jerry's, and suddenly remembers that within this wall there lives a young man, beautiful beyond the dreams of the gods. I have said that she is romantic, also venturesome—"

"Her address, please," muttered Lloyd quickly.

"Do be quiet, Chan—" Marcia went on. "Venturesome, modern, moral—"

"It can't be done," muttered the brute again.

"Chan, do be serious. Curiosity overwhelms the girl. Nobody is about. So, putting her fears behind her, she climbs the wall and enters."

The daring impertinence of this recital had stricken Jerry suddenly dumb, but the veins at his temples were swelling with the hot blood that had risen to his face. Una, after a moment of uncertainty, became strangely composed.

"It is a beautiful spot. No one is in sight," Marcia went on amusedly. "The girl ventures further, and finds the beautiful young man catching trout. She talks to him. I think he is amused at her temerity, also perhaps a little flattered at her marks of confidence—"

"Marcia!" It was Jerry's voice, deep, booming, and I had hardly recognized it. But there was a note in it that caused a hush to fall over the room. The girl looked up as though puzzled.

"You interrupt, Jerry—"

"Neither Una nor I are interested in what you're saying," he cried hoarsely, while the rest of the company stared at him.

"*I* am, Jerry," said Una's voice very coolly. Except for Marcia, perhaps, she was the least ruffled person in the room. "I want very much to hear the rest of the story," she added. "It has possibilities."

Marcia laughed.

"Possibilities, yes. There isn't much left to tell except that the girl spent the afternoon and the evening in the cabin with the beautiful young man and then went over the wall the way she came. Now what I wanted to know, Una dear, is whether you think that morality, conventional or unconventional, can stand a test like that."

Una was silent for a moment and then her words came slowly, rather wistfully.

"Was she a friend of yours?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, a friend."

"And did you know her for any length of time to be honorable, upright, decent?"

"Oh, yes, quite so."

Una paused another moment and when she spoke her voice was crystal-clear.

"Then all I would like to say is that the mind that can conceive of evil in such a piece of innocent imprudence is unclean, beyond words! Is that all that you wanted to know?"

Marcia leaned back in her chair holding her breath for a moment and then broke into a peal of laughter.

"There! You see. I knew you would agree with me."

The people in the room looked from one to the other, aware of a hidden meaning in the situation. Channing Lloyd had paused in the act of pouring out another glass of wine and stood blinking heavily. The only sound was a nervous titter from the Da Costa girl. Una looked around from face to face as though seeking those of her friends and then spoke fearlessly.

"You may not know what this hypothetical question means or its answer?" she said with a smile. "I will tell you. I was that girl. Jerry Benham, the man. The place was here. I am accustomed to going where and with whom I please." She tossed her small head proudly, "Those who can see evil where evil doesn't exist are welcome to their opinions. As for my friends—"

Here a chorus of protest went up, from the treble of the Da Costa girl to Laidlaw's deep bass.

"Una—you silly child—of course no one thinks—"

"As for my friends," she repeated, her voice slightly raised, "I will choose them by this token."

I had not misjudged her. Her scorn of Marcia was ineffable, and I think the girl at the tea-urn had a sense of being at a disadvantage, for the idea of Una's frank admission had never entered Marcia's pretty intriguing head. She was hoist with her own petard and covered her confusion by a light laugh which was most unconvincing.

"Of course, Una, I didn't mean—"

But the rest of her sentence was lost in the sudden disintegration of the party into groups, some of which followed Una to the door. Jerry had regained his senses and strode out after her."

"I'm going with you, Una," I heard him say.

"It isn't necessary. I can find the way. Good-by, everybody. No, thanks, Phil."

But Jerry went on with her and I broke through the sympathetic crowd at the doorway and followed. Like Jerry, I too had been stunned, but unlike Jerry, in the reaction I was finding a secret delight in Una's splendid mastery of the situation. The pair were already far in advance of me, Una hurrying sedately, Jerry, his hands deep in his pockets, striding like a furious young god beside her, earnestly talking. It was not until they heard the sound of my hurrying footsteps that they stopped and turned.

"I can't let you go, Miss Habberton," I said breathlessly, "without letting you know how contrite I am at a slip of the tongue which—"

"It doesn't matter in the least, Mr. Canby. I have nothing to regret." And then, with her crooked little smile, "But you might have omitted the details."

"I—I—" I stammered.

"It was I—I who told—" Jerry blurted out. "I am to blame. Why shouldn't I tell? Was there anything to be ashamed of? For you? For me?"

"No, Jerry. The surest proof of it is that I'm not angry with you—with either of you. But I must be going."

"I'm going with you," said Jerry quickly.

"No."

"Let him, Miss Habberton," I put in.

"I had better go alone."

"I forbid it," said Jerry. "The machine is at the upper gate. I'll drive you. Come."

She hesitated. Our glances met. I think she must have seen the eagerness in my face, the friendliness, the admiration. She read too the revolt in Jerry's eyes, the dawning of something like reason and of his grave sense of the injustice that had been done to

her. He pleaded almost piteously—as though her acquiescence were the only sign he could have of her forgiveness.

"Very well," she said at last, "to the station, then."

"No," said Jerry firmly, "to town. I'm going to drive you to town. We've got to have a talk. We've got to—to clear this thing up."

She hesitated again and I think she felt the need of companionship at that moment.

"But your guests—"

"Oh, I'll be here," I said. "They'll be going soon. Jerry can be back in time for the party."

"I'm not going to that party," Jerry muttered savagely.

He meant it. I bade them good-by—watched them until they passed out of sight and hearing, and then sank on a nearby rock, and hugged my knees in quiet ecstasy.

CHAPTER XXI

JERRY ASKS QUESTIONS

Fortunately for me, neither Jack Ballard nor the expected overflow from the Van Wyck house-party came to disturb the serenity of my thoughts, Jack being suddenly called to Newport, the guests having been taken in elsewhere. So I sat up alone for Jerry until late and finally went to bed, happily conscious that my embassy, impossible as it had seemed, had borne fruit after all. Jerry did not go to Marcia Van Wyck's party, and his evening clothes remained where Christopher had laid them out, on the bed in his room. I gave myself an added pleasure in slumber that night by going in and looking at them before I sought my own room. I cannot remember a night when I have slept more soundly and I rose refreshed and intensely eager to hear how things had gone with Jerry and the dear lady whom I had once so inaptly dubbed "the minx." At the breakfast table Poole informed me that Jerry had returned late to the Manor and was sleeping. It was good. The glimmerings of reason that had appeared in the boy during the last few days had been encouraging, and his open revolt against the enchantress had made me hopeful that her dominion over him was not so complete as it had appeared. Viewed from any angle, the conduct of the Van Wyck girl was reprehensible, and admitted of no excuse. She had overshot the mark and had done her target no harm. However warm her friendship with those of her guests who were at the cabin, the comments I had heard convinced me that Jerry and I were not alone in our condemnation. The attack seemed to savor of a lack of finesse, surprising in a person of her cleverness, for had her bias not been so great she should have known that as a gentleman, Jerry must resent so palpable and designing an insult to a guest at Horsham Manor. Her impudence still astounded me. Did she think herself so sure of Jerry that she chose purposely to try him? Or had the point been reached in their amatory relations where she was quite indifferent as to what Jerry might do?

Smoothly as my plan had worked and happily (or unhappily) as Marcia's pique and ill-humor had fitted into it, I could not believe that Jerry's revolt had ended matters. Even if the boy had been willing to end them (a thing of which I was not at all sure), Marcia Van Wyck was not the kind of girl to retire on this ungraceful climax, and Jerry's absence from her house on so important an occasion was nothing less than a notice to those present that he and Marcia were no longer on terms. I had had a sense of the girl's taste for conquest, and the more I thought of her the surer I was that Jerry's championship of Una Habberton would revive whatever remained of the lingering sparks of Marcia's passion.

Jerry joined me in the study later in the morning and sat for awhile reading the newspapers. He was silent, almost morose, and at last got up and walked about the place. I feared for a moment that he had gone to the garage with the intention of getting into his machine, and this I knew meant nothing less than a ride posthaste, to Briar Hills. But he came back presently in a more cheerful mood and after luncheon suggested fishing, a proposal that I instantly fell in with. And so I followed him up stream, my own humor being merely to carry the net, watch him whip the pools and pray that his luck might be good, for a full creel meant good humor and good humor, perhaps confidences.

Fortune favored. By the time we had gotten up the gorge, Jerry was in high spirits, for luck had crowned his skill and at least a dozen fish lay stiffening in the basket, and when we reached the iron grille Jerry emitted a deep sigh of satisfaction, drew out his pipe and sank on a rock to smoke it. I lay back beside him, my hat over my eyes. Nothing stimulates confidences so much as indifference. Jerry glanced at me

once or twice, but I made no sign and after awhile he began talking. Whenever he paused I put in a grunt which encouraged him to go on. That is how I happened to hear about Jerry's ride home with Una Habberton.

It seems that when they got into the machine Una was very quiet and answered his questions only in mono-syllables, but Jerry was patient and all idea of Marcia's party being out of his head, he drove slowly so that he would not reach the city until everything was clear and friendly between them again. Her profile was very sober and demure, he said. He wasn't quite sure for a long time whether she was going to burst into anger, tears, or to laugh. Jerry must have looked sober too and for awhile it couldn't have been a very cheerful ride, but at last the boy saw Una looking at him slantwise and when he turned toward her she burst into the merriest kind of a laugh.

"Oh, Jerry, is it home you're driving me to, or just a funeral?"

He gasped in relief at her sudden change of mood. "I was just waiting," he said quietly. "I didn't want to intrude, Una."

"But you *do* look *so* like the undertaker's assistant," she smiled. "You have no right to be glum. I have. I'm the corpse. A corpse *might* laugh in sheer relief when the lid was screwed down and everything comfortable."

"Una! I don't see anything so funny—"

"My reputation! A trifling thing," she said coolly, "still, I value it."

"*Your* reputation! That's absurd—nothing could hurt *you*. I don't understand."

"I can't quite see yet how it all came out," she went on thoughtfully, "how Marcia knew that I had been inside the wall. Why, Jerry, unless she learned it recently, since I saw you in New York—" she paused.

"No," protested Jerry uncomfortably. "It was last summer—"

"But I had no name to you then—I was merely Una—"

"And I blurted it out, Una, the only name I knew, never thinking that you and Marcia were acquaintances."

"Oh, I see," and she smiled a little. "If my name had been plain Jane or even Mary, my reputation would have been safe."

"What rubbish, Una! Can't a fellow and a girl have a chat without—"

"Yes, but the girl mustn't get through eight-foot walls."

"I don't see what difference that makes." She must have given him a swift glance here. But she laughed again. "You evidently don't realize, Jerry, that monasteries are supposed to be taboo for young girls."

"Yes, but you didn't know about it being a monastery," he said seriously.

"Of course, or I shouldn't have dared. But that makes no difference to Marcia. I was there. You told her. Don't you know, Jerry, that it isn't good form to tell *everything* you know?"

"She guessed it," he muttered. "It's such a lot of talk about nothing." I think Jerry was getting a little warm now. "Suppose you *were* in there, whose affair is it but yours and mine?"

"Everybody's," she shrugged. "Everybody's business! That ought to be inscribed on the tombstone of every dead reputation. *Hic jacet* Una Habberton. Nice girl, but she *would* visit monasteries."

But nothing was humorous to Jerry's mood just then.

"I can't have you talking like that, Una," he said in a suppressed tone. "It's very painful to me. I can't imagine why anyone should try to injure you. They couldn't, you know. You're above all that sort of thing. It's too trivial—"

"Oh, is it? You'll see. All New York will have the story in twenty-four hours. Pretty sort of a tale to get to the Mission! The Mission! If those people heard! Imagine the embroideries! I could never lift my head down there again."

"Let the world go hang. Have you anything to be ashamed of, Una?"

"No."

"Nor I. Very well."

The seriousness that Una attached to the affair, while it bewildered, also inflamed him. "I wish it had been a man who had talked to you the way Marcia did."

Una turned toward him soberly.

"What would you do to him, Jerry?"

He smiled grimly. "I think I'd kill him," he said softly.

I think Jerry's tone must have comforted her, for he said that after that Una grew quieter.

"The world is very intolerant of idyls, Jerry."

They had reached a road which overlooked the river. Long, cool shadows brushed their faces as they rushed on from orchard to meadow, all redolent of sweet odors.

"Why?"

"Because they're a reproach."

"Friendship is no idyl, Una, with us. It's more like reality, isn't it?"

"I hope so."

"Don't you believe it?"

"Yes, I think I do."

He smiled at her gayly.

"I'm sure of it. I'm always myself with you, Una. I seem to want you to know all the things I'm thinking about. That's the surest indication, isn't it? And I want to know what you're thinking about. I feel as though I'd given you too many additional burdens down town, that you may tire this summer."

"Oh, you needn't worry. I'm quite strong."

"I want you to lay out some definite work that I can do, not merely giving money, but myself, my own strength and energy." He laughed. "You know I'm really thinking of asking you to establish a mission for men only, with *me* as the first patient. It does seem to straighten me out somehow, just being with you—keeps me from thinking crooked."

"*Do* you think crooked, Jerry?"

"Yes, often. Things bother me. Then I'm like a child. You've no idea of the vast abyss of my ignorance."

"But you *mustn't* think crooked. I won't have it."

"I can't help it, sometimes. People aren't always what you expect 'em to be. I ought to understand better by this time, but I don't."

"People aren't like books, Jerry. You're sure of books. But with people, you can turn the same page again and again and the printing is different every time."

"People *do* change, don't they?"

"Yes, and the pages are rather smudgy here and there, but you'll learn to read them some day. The office will help you, Jerry, because business people *have* to think straight or be repudiated. You ought to go to the office every day and work—work whether you like it or not. You've got too much money. It's dangerous. You're like a colt just out in the pasture, all hocks and skittishness. Work is the only thing for that. It may be tiresome but you've got to stick at it if it kills you."

"I suppose you're right," he muttered.

"Jerry," she went on rapidly, and I think with a twinkle of mischief in her eye, "all of us have streaks of other people in us. I have, lots of 'em. Sometimes I wonder which part of me is other people and which is me. I think you've even got more different kinds of people in you than I have. Students, philosophers, woodsmen, prize fighters —"

"Una!"

"I must. Everything, almost everything you've been and done I like except—"

"Oh, don't Una—"

"I've got to. You wanted to clear things up between us. That's one of the things we've got to clear up. I don't understand the psychology of the prize ring and I'm not sure that I'd care to understand it. I know that you are strong in body. You should be glad of that, but not so glad as to be vain of it. One doesn't boast of the gifts of the gods. One merely accepts them, thankfully—"

"I was a fool—"

"Say rather, merely an animated biped, an instinct on legs. Is *that* a thing to be proud of—for a man who knows what real ideals are?"

"Don't—"

"Did you discuss Shakespeare and the musical glasses with 'Kid' Spatola?"

"Please!"

"Or the incorporeal nature of the soul with Battling Sagorski?"

"Una!" Her irony was biting him like acid.

"Or did Sagorski make you an accessory before the fact of his next housebreaking expedition?"

"Una, that isn't fair. Sagorski is—"

"He's a second-story man, Jerry, with a beautiful record. Shall I give it to you?"

"Er—no, thanks," gasped Jerry breathlessly. "I can't believe—"

"You missed nothing at the house?"

She waited for his reply.

"I'm not sure *who* took them—"

"But you *did* miss—?"

"Yes, spoons, forks and things—" He broke off exasperated. "Oh, Una, it's cruel of you?"

"No, kind. Sagorski is a smudgy page, Jerry. I happened to have seen it in the records. And there's a woman at the Mission—"

It was Una's turn to pause in sudden solemnity.

"A woman. His wife?" asked Jerry.

"No, just a woman."

"He had treated her badly?"

"Her soul," she replied slowly, "is dead. Her body doesn't matter."

She must have been thankful for the silence that followed? for the look of bewilderment, piteous, I think, it must now have seemed to Una, was in his face again. And before he could question further she had turned the topic.

A little later, I think, personalities began again.

"You're always helping people, Una, always helping," he said slowly. "Does it make you happy?"

"Yes, if I *can* help."

"And you want to help me? I wonder if I'm worth it."

"Yes, I wouldn't bother if you weren't."

"And how do you know I'm worth it?"

"It's my business to know," she said.

Jerry sent the car spinning joyously down a fine stretch of straight empty road. And then when he had reduced the car to a slower pace,

"You know, Una," he laughed, "you do take charge of a fellow, don't you?"

"You need 'mothering'," she smiled.

"Or sistering. I wish I had a sister like you. Fellows ought to have sisters, anyway. People ought to be born in pairs, male and female."

She laughed and then with sudden seriousness:

"But people ought to stand on their feet. All the 'sistering' in the world won't help a lame man to walk."

"I'm not so awfully lame, am I?"

"No. Just limpy. But don't try to run yet, Jerry."

"Oh, I say—"

"Just keep your eyes open. You'll see." And then quietly, "You know Phil Laidlaw, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, fine chap."

"I think it wouldn't harm you to know Phil better. He isn't brilliant, but he's steady,

sure, reliable. And he *stands on his feet*, Jerry, on both of them."

Jerry's comment to me in telling this part of the conversation was amusing. "Phil Laidlaw *is* a good fellow and all that," he muttered, "but hang it all, Roger, you can't stomach having another man's virtues thrust down your throat!"

My own comment may be interesting.

"I don't wonder that she cares for him," I said. "A good match, I should say."

"H—m," replied Jerry. "I can't seem to think of Una married to anybody. She's so much occupied—"

"But she *will* be married some day, my boy. Charity begins at home."

She had used her woman's weapons loyally, at least. I think her comments on Laidlaw must have made Jerry silent for awhile and he told me little of the conversation that followed. But they must have "cleared up" all the things that stood between them. I think the subsequent conversation must have been largely pleasant and personal, for Jerry spoke of the wonderful weather and how Una admired the view they had of the great river from Hoboken with the lights of the towers of Manhattan, like the sparks of some mighty fire, hanging midway in the air.

I was silent when he had concluded. Evidently he wanted me to say something, for he looked at me once or twice as he was refilling his pipe. But I was thinking deeply.

"She's a wonder," he said after awhile. "You know the committee of ladies that's supposed to manage things down town have all gone away, leaving the whole responsibility to Una—the plans, specifications, business arrangements and all."

"As Marcia suggested," I replied, "they're sure that matters are in good hands."

"Yes, she's so sane. That's it. You know when we got to town I took dinner with the family down in Washington Square. Jolly lot of girls, like stair-steps, from eight to eighteen, but not a bit like Una, Roger, and the mother, placid, serene, intelligent with a dignity that seems to go with the house and neighborhood—a dear old lady, not so terribly old, either, and astonishingly well informed—Fine old house, refreshing, cool, mellow with age and decent associations; none of your Louis Quinze business there. I always wondered where Una got her poise. Now I know."

"Had you never called there before?" I asked when he paused to light his pipe.

"No, I always went to her office in the Mission and had her in a different setting, a bare room, desk, filing-cases, placards on the wall, scrupulously neat and business-like, but uncompromising, Roger, and severe. The house makes a better frame for her somehow—"

I knew what he meant, for I had seen her in it, but of course was silent.

"She's doing a tremendous work down town. She *is* the Mission. The superintendent and nurses idolize her. I was questioning her mother about it. Una has a way with her. The women that come there have to be handled carefully, it seems. I'm afraid they're a bad lot, though Una won't talk about 'em. She says I wouldn't understand. I suppose I wouldn't. I've never learned much about women yet, Roger. Funny, too. They seem so easy to understand, and yet they're not. It's the men that bring the women down—ruin them, but I can't see why it couldn't just as well be the other way about. Men are weak, too; why are the men always blamed? That's what I want to know, and what does it all mean? I suppose I'm awfully ignorant. Things go in one ear and out the other without making any impression. I lack something. It's the way I'm made. I've missed something, of the meaning of life, I suppose, because I've lived it all with so few people, you, Una, Uncle Jack—Flynn and the boys—"

"And Marcia," I put in suggestively.

He ignored my remark.

"Most chaps I've met seem to take so much of my knowledge for granted. The boys at Flynn's puzzled me, their strange phrases, hinting at hidden vices, but I wasn't going to question *them*. It's up to you, Roger. I want to know. What is this threat to Una's reputation when Marcia tells of our meeting here alone?"

As I remained resolutely silent, Jerry got up and paced with long strides up and down before me.

"Why shouldn't she and I meet here alone if we want to? And why these absurd restrictions surrounding the life of girls? I've accepted them, as I accept my morning coffee, because they're there. But what do they mean? I know that a girl is more delicate than a boy, a being to be sheltered and cared for; that seems natural. I accept that. But it goes too far. Una does what she pleases. Why shouldn't she? What is the meaning of unconventional morality? And why unconventional? Is morality so vague a term that there can be any sort of doubt as to its real meaning? And is Una any the less moral because she chooses to be unconventional? Una! I'd stake my life

on her morality and innate refinement. No girl sacrifices her youth in the interests of others less fortunate than herself without being fine clear through. Then what did Marcia mean? And what could Una mean when she said her reputation was in danger? The very thought of my having harmed her, even by imputation, in the minds of others makes me desperately unhappy. And what, what on earth could Marcia suspect of me or of Una to place us both in so false a light? What could Marcia mean in speaking in that way about Una's visit here when she herself came—" He bit the word off abruptly and came to a stop. Some instinct—some baser instinct that Marcia was a part of, made frankness impossible. I could have finished his sentence for him but I didn't. Instead, I rose suddenly to a sitting posture, my tongue loosened.

"Bah!" I muttered. "The spleen of a jealous woman; it stops nowhere—at nothing!"

"But what was there in the story," he persisted, "to cause so much tension? I felt it in the air, Roger. It was in the looks of those about me, in Una's face. She was troubled. I had to speak."

"You did well, Jerry. You had to speak—to defend her—"

"Against what?"

"The results of her own imprudence," I said slowly, feeling my way with difficulty. "Una's visits here and at the cabin were not what are called conventional."

"Conventional! Perhaps not. But where does the question of morality come in?" he went on boring straight at the mark.

"It doesn't," I remarked calmly. "It seems to me that Una's reply was quite clear upon that point."

He frowned. "Yes, but she said that Marcia's mind wasn't clean, or that's what she meant. That's a terrible thing to say and Una shouldn't have said it. She shouldn't have, Roger."

"She had to defend herself," I muttered. "That's the privilege of the poorest beast of the woods."

"Yes," he said slowly, "but it has upset me, given me a new view of things, of women, of life. What is this terrible thing that threatens them, that they fear and court at the hands of men? They act it in their advances and sudden defenses. I've learned that much—Even Una—Why, Roger, there's something that they're more jealous of than they are of life itself. Reputation! That's what Una called it. Una—who's giving up her life to try to make people better! If a girl like Una has to defend herself, then the world is a rotten place and Marcia—"

"And Marcia—"

He walked up and down again muttering.

"She has gone too far, Roger—too far." He paused before me.

"But you haven't answered my questions," he said flatly.

"You've hardly given me time," I said with a smile.

To be truthful, I did not propose to answer them. Aside from a curious shyness born of our long and innocent intimacy which made frankness now seem a violation of the precedent of years, I found that the desire was born in me, born anew with Jerry's awakening consciousness, to stand by my guns, and await the results of his lessons from the world. He must solve the riddle of the Great Experiment alone.

"You haven't answered my questions, Roger," he insisted.

I was unjointing Jerry's rod with scrupulous care.

"I'm not going to," I said quietly.

"You—?" He examined me with a curious expression. "Who else should I go to if not to you?"

I paused a long moment, during which he scraped at the moss with the toe of his boot.

"My dear Jerry," I said. "I am more than convinced since the period of your probation has passed that my mission at Horsham Manor is ended. I was brought here to bring you to manhood with the things that were requisite as well for the body as the soul. I thought I had acquitted myself with tolerable success in obeying the desires of your dead father. But once freed from my influence you took the bit in your teeth and ran the race in your own way. I gave you advice but you wouldn't take it. If you had listened then, I could have helped you now. But you didn't listen. And if I were to warn you, to answer your questions, you wouldn't heed me now. Experience is the great teacher. Seek it. I'm through."

He reddened and took a turn up and down.

"Do you mean that?"

"I do. I meddle with your personal affairs no longer. If I did I should begin at once—" I paused, for an attack on Marcia Van Wyck was trembling at the top of my tongue. "But there—you see we should only quarrel. I don't like your friends. We couldn't agree—"

"You like Una."

"Yes, unqualifiedly. She is one in a million."

"Well, we're agreed on that at least," he said smiling.

There was another silence in which Jerry puffed on his unlighted pipe.

"You know I've invited Una and her mother up here this week and what's better still, they're coming."

This was excellent news. To me it meant that Una thought the boy worth saving from himself and now proposed to carry the war into the enemy's country.

"I'm delighted," I said briefly.

"So am I," he returned thoughtfully. He scraped his pipe, filled it slowly and when it was lighted again, settled down comfortably.

"I think Una has wakened me, Roger. The force of her example is tremendous, her life, her way of thinking of things, her cheerfulness, hopefulness about everybody. I can't make out why Marcia should attack her so unjustly. It wasn't fair."

"It was *cattish*."

"I don't like your saying that," he put in quickly.

"I'm sorry. Can you imagine Una doing a similar thing?"

"No," he admitted, "but Una has been brought up differently."

Another silence. In spite of the recrudescence of Una we were on dangerous ground. But hope had given me temerity. In another moment he was back to the earlier questions.

"I see no reason why you shouldn't answer me, Roger. I've got to know what all this trouble means. If Una has been imprudent I want to know why, still more so, if she is to suffer as a consequence of it. If Marcia's insinuations are cruel I've got to understand what they mean."

"You may take my word for their cruelty," I said dryly and stopped with compressed lips. He clasped his hands over his knees and looked down into the pool before us.

"Do you think you're quite fair with me, Roger? I give you my confidences and you refuse—"

"Half-confidences, Jerry. My usefulness to you is ended. If you would speak, I could perhaps help you, solve some of your problems, answer your questions. But—"

I paused, throwing out my hands in a helpless gesture.

"What more do you want?" he asked.

I took the bull by the horns. I had wanted to for weeks.

"Freely, unreservedly, the nature of your relations with Marcia Van Wyck—"

He rose suddenly, his face flushing darkly and took up his rod and creel.

"If you don't mind my saying so," he muttered, "that is none of your affair."

I rose, though his reproach stung me bitterly.

"Confidences and advice are inseparable," I said coldly.

"You hate Marcia," he mumbled.

"I do."

"Why?"

"Because she's unsound, unsafe, im—"

"Be careful!" he cried.

I shrugged but was silent, I think, from the fear of Jerry's fists which were clenching his rod and creel ominously.

"She's the woman I love," he declared with pathetic drama.

I braved the fists and laughed.

"Tush!" I said.

He was furious. For a moment I thought he was going to strike me. Had he done so I should have been ended there and then, and this interesting history brought to an untimely conclusion on the very eve of its most interesting disclosures.

But he thought better of it and with a shaking forefinger pointed toward the path downstream. "Go, Roger," he said in a trembling voice, "please go."

CHAPTER XXII

THE CHIPMUNK

I obeyed. There was nothing left for me to do. Our afternoon had ended in disaster, but I was not sorry. I had thought from all Jerry had told me that he was beginning to awaken, to rouse himself and tear asunder the web of enchantment that this girl Marcia had woven about him. I had meant to help him lift the veil to let him see her as she was, a beautiful, selfish little sensualist with a silken voice and an empty heart. But the time was not yet. I sighed, lamenting my failure but not regretting my temerity. If he would not waken at least I had the satisfaction of knowing it was not because I had not tried to wake him.

I made my way down over the rocks, casting a glance over my shoulder toward Jerry as I descended. He was following slowly, his hands behind him, his head down, the pipe hanging bowl downward in his teeth. There was anger in his appearance but there was something of reflection, too. Down on a lower level where the going was easier I paused, deliberating whether I shouldn't put my pride in my pocket and braving rebuffs, wait for him. I had half decided to choose this ignominious course when in the path ahead of me at some distance away I espied a figure walking toward me. I was deep in the shadow and the person, a female, had not espied me, but I could see her quite clearly in the sunlight. There was no mistaking her curious gait. It was Marcia Van Wyck, come at pains which must convince of her contrition, to make peace with Jerry.

I looked again to be sure that my eyes had not deceived me and then jumped into the underbrush beside the path and hid myself under a projection of nearby rock. I disliked the girl intensely and hated the sight of her, and this must, I suppose, account for the sudden impulse which led to my undignified retreat. Had I known in advance of the unfortunate situation in which it would have placed me, I should have faced her boldly or have fled miles away from that spot, to be forever associated in my mind with the one really discreditable experience of my career. I have always been, I think, an honorable man and such a paltry sin as eavesdropping had always been beneath me, save on the one occasion when my duty as Jerry's guardian prompted me to listen for a few moments at the cabin window last year when Una and Jerry were settling between them the affairs of the world. That was a pardonable transgression, this, a different affair, for Jerry was now released from my guardianship, a grown man ostensibly capable of managing his own affairs, which, as he had some moments before taken pains to inform me, were none of mine.

But as luck would have it, the girl walking upstream and Jerry walking down, they met in the path just beside the rock behind which I was so uncomfortably reclining and scarcely daring to breathe. I could not see their faces as they came together, but I heard their voices quite Distinctly.

"Marcia!" said Jerry, it seemed a trifle harshly. "What are you doing here?"

With my vision obstructed, the soft tones of her voice seemed to take an added significance.

"I came," she purred, "because, Jerry, I couldn't stay away."

And then, after a pause, her voice even more silken, "You don't seem very glad to see me."

"I—I—your appearance surprised me."

"But now that the surprise is over—*are* you glad to see me?" she asked.

A pause and then I heard him mutter.

"I didn't suppose that—after yesterday *you* would want to see *me*."

"Yesterday," she sighed, "twenty-four hours—an age! The surest proof that I wanted

to see you is that I'm here, that I ran away from a house full of people, just to tell you —"

"Is Channing Lloyd still there?" he broke in harshly.

"Yes, Jerry, he is. But doesn't it mean anything to you that I left him, to come to you?"

"You broke your promise—to give him up—"

"Why, Jerry, I *had* to invite him to my dance. It would have been a slight."

"But you promised. He's a—"

"But I've known him for ages, Jerry. I can't be impolite."

"He's not polite to you, to me, or anybody. I told you I wanted you to give him up."

"You're fearfully exacting," she said, modulating her voice softly.

"He's a cad. I can't understand your inviting him. His very look is an insult, his touch a desecration. I don't like the way he paws you."

"Of course, he—he means nothing by it," she said soothingly. "It's only his way."

"But I don't like his way and I don't like him. I've told you so a good many times."

"You make it very difficult for me. It would have been insulting not to have asked him. We've been very good friends until you came."

"It's a pity I came, then. You've got to choose between us. I've told you that before."

"Why, Jerry, I *have* chosen," she said, her voice softening suspiciously. "How could I ever think of anybody else now that I have you? It's so *absurd* of you to be jealous of Chan. He's not like you, of course, and his manner is a little rough, but he really isn't *nearly* so terrible a person as you think he is." She sighed. "But if you insist, I suppose I shall have to give him up."

"Is it painful to you?" he muttered.

She laughed. "You silly boy, of course not. I *will* give him up. There! Does that settle that matter?"

"I thought it was settled before."

"It was—but—" She paused.

"I don't see how you could want to be with a man I don't like—"

"I don't care for him, Jerry, really I don't. Won't you believe me?"

"I'll believe you when you give him up."

She sighed again, her voice breaking effectively.

"Oh, dear! Do you want me to give up *all* my friends? And is it quite fair?"

"I haven't asked you to give up any of your friends, but Lloyd—"

Well, I've given him up, Jerry. I'll send him home tonight. Don't let's think of him any more. I can't stand having anything come between us again. I can't, Jerry. It makes me so unhappy. I've been wretched since yesterday about Una. That's why I came. I wanted you to know how sorry I am that I spoke to Una the way I did."

"Are you, Marcia?" His voice had softened suddenly and from the shuffling of his feet I think he took a pace toward her.

"Yes, Jerry dear, contrite. I simply couldn't let another hour pass without coming to ask your forgiveness."

He was weakening. Perhaps his arm was around her. I don't know, but his silence was ominous.

"I have been *so* miserable," she murmured. "My conscience has troubled me *terribly*. Oh, I can't tell you how I have suffered. All the evening I thought you would come. I waited for you; I went out on the terrace a hundred times, watching for the lights of your car; but you didn't come, you didn't come, Jerry, and I knew how terribly I had offended you."

I couldn't see her but I'm sure she was wringing her pretty white hands. Jerry must have been deeply moved for his voice was shaky.

"It didn't matter about me, but a visitor, a guest at Horsham Manor, Marcia, a friend —!"

"A friend, yes. Oh, I've been so unhappy about it all—so *miserably* wretched."

Her voice broke and she seemed upon the point of tears.

"Why did you, Marcia? Why did you?" he repeated.

"I—I—" She appeared to break down and weep and Jerry's voice took on a tone of distress.

"Don't, Marcia, please!"

"I—I'm trying not to—but—" and she wept anew.

"Come," said Jerry's voice. "Sit here a moment. I'm sure it can all be explained. It makes me very unhappy to see you so miserable."

They moved nearer and she sat upon the very rock beneath which I lay among the mouldy leaves; so near that I could have reached out and touched the girl's silken ankle with my fingers. Jerry, I think, still stood.

"I don't want to—to make you unhappy," she said in a moment. "And it was all my fault, but I just couldn't—couldn't stand it, Jerry."

"Stand what?"

A pause and then in muffled tones.

"Don't you know? Don't you really understand?"

"No. I—"

"I was mad," she whispered, "mad with jealousy of Una. She was your first love, your first—"

"Marcia! You mustn't. It's absurd."

"No, no," she protested. "I know. Ever since I first learned that she had—had been in here with you, I—I haven't been able to get her out of mind—I may have appeared to, but I'm not one who forgets things easily; and to meet her at the cabin, the very place where I thought I should—should have you all to myself—it was too much. Jerry. I couldn't stand it. Something—something in me rebelled. I grew cold all over and hard against all the world, even you."

"But this was foolish of you. Una, a friend. Surely there was no harm in my seeing her here?"

"It was foolish," there was a slight change in the intonation of her voice here, "but I know the world so much better than you, Jerry. Girls are so designing, so—so untrustworthy."

"You don't know Una if you say that," said Jerry loyally.

"Perhaps I don't. I don't wish to think badly of anyone you call a friend but Una is so—er—so independent—so accustomed to moving with queer people—" She paused a moment again to give her insinuation weight. "I don't know," she sighed. "I thought all sorts of horrible things about you."

"Horrible! How? Why?"

"Oh, Jerry. Think for a moment. It was natural in me, wasn't it? If I hadn't been jealous of you I couldn't have loved you very much, could I?"

"But horrible thoughts! I don't understand. You might think that there was something between Una and me if you chose to be suspicious, but to think unpleasant things of her, I can't see—"

"You're making it very difficult for me—you're so strange," she murmured. "Isn't it something that I've lowered my pride to the earth in coming here to you? That I've given up Chan? That I'm pleading to you for forgiveness?"

"It is, of course. I do forgive you," he murmured

"Oh, Jerry, if you knew how I had longed to hear you say that—if you knew!"

All this while Jerry had been standing beside her in the path while the girl sat on the rock. I could tell this from the sounds of their voices. In spite of her accents of endearment, notes which she played with the deftest touch, I could understand that Master Jerry was still a little upon his dignity.

"I do forgive you," he repeated, "but I don't just know what your insinuations meant, Marcia."

"Insinuations! Oh, Jerry!"

"Well, what were they? You didn't accuse Una of anything, or me. But you meant something—something unpleasant. Una was very much disturbed—"

"Oh, she was?" No self-control could have concealed the tiny note of exultation.

"Yes, disturbed and angry. What did you mean, Marcia?"

There was an effective pause. What grimaces she was making for his benefit I'm sure I can't imagine, but I hope they were worthy of her talents.

"Poor, dear Jerry!" she sighed. "You're so innocent. I sometimes wonder whether you're really as innocent as you seem."

"I'm innocent of wronging Una," he said with some spirit.

She couldn't restrain a short laugh at the ingenuousness of the remark and its tone.

"There are ways and ways of wronging girls, Jerry," she said slowly. I couldn't see her face, of course, but I knew that her eyes must have been searching him sidelong under their lashes with peculiar avidity. "Of course, I don't *say* that there was anything wrong, but you'll admit that Una's hunting you out the way she did was *most* imprudent."

"No, I don't admit it," said Jerry. "If Una was imprudent, so are you, *here*, today."

"Jerry!" The girl started up, one of her tall French heels within reach of my fingers. If her heel had been her vulnerable spot I must have struck it at once, like a viper.

Jerry apparently stood his ground, for the image of Una must have still been fresh in his memory.

"What is the difference, Marcia?" he asked calmly. "Will you tell me? Do you think I could hurt *you*?"

She sank upon the rock again, her tone almost too plaintive.

"You're hurting me now, Jerry—terribly."

"I can't see—"

"That you can't see any difference, between my being here—and Una's."

His voice fell a little.

"Of course, there's a difference. Una is a friend and you—why Marcia—" and he came near her, "of course there's all the difference in the world in *that* way. You're the girl I—I love."

"Jerry!" she whispered.

I was miserable. It was nauseating. Fate was surely unkind to me.

"But I want to be just," he went on clearly. "And I want you to be just. I surely couldn't harm Una any more than I could you."

"Oh, Jerry; I'm sure you kissed her."

"No. Why should I?"

"Because, I thought she might have asked you to."

"She didn't. I suppose it hadn't occurred to her. I'm not much at kissing, Marcia. It's rather meaningless if you don't love a person, isn't it? Kissing ought to be a kind of sacrament. It's a symbol. It must mean something. At least that's the way it seems to me. The girl one loves, Marcia, you—"

He was very close to her now and I think his arms encircled her, for I heard her whisper "Kiss me, Jerry! Kiss me!"

I must have deserved this punishment. Aside from the unhappy nature of my feelings, I was suffering severe bodily discomfort from some small object, a stone, I think, pressed against my ribs. I moved slightly and there was a resounding crackle of broken twigs. The silken foot beside me started suddenly.

"What was that?" whispered the girl.

"Oh," said Jerry, "merely a squirrel or—or a chipmunk." And then more convincingly, "Yes, I think it was a chipmunk."

I held my breath in an agony of apprehension, expecting each second to be hauled out of my retreat by Jerry's muscular hand on my collar, and it was therefore with a feeling of manifest relief that I heard their conversation resumed.

"I'm so glad you think a kiss is a sacrament," she murmured. "It should be—shouldn't it?—a pledge," and then, "But that was *such* a light one, Jerry—"

He kissed her again. There was a long silence—long. She had won.

"Oh, Jerry," she sighed at last, "it is *so* sweet. You have never kissed me like that before. Why, what is the matter?"

Jerry, it seemed, had risen suddenly. "I—I mustn't, Marcia. I mustn't. It is sweet—but—but terrible. I can't tell you—"

"Terrible, Jerry?"

"Yes, I can't explain. It's a kind of profanation—your sanctity. I don't know. It makes me deliriously happy and—horribly miserable."

"But I am yours, Jerry, yours, do you understand? And if I like you to kiss me—"

"I mustn't, Marcia, not here."

He was very much disturbed. "Marcia!" he said in a suppressed tone as he came quickly to her again. "Was *that* what you meant—was *that* why you asked me if I'd kissed Una?"

"I merely wanted—"

"I didn't," he broke in impetuously. "No, no, I didn't. Why, Marcia, it wouldn't have been possible—we were merely friends. Don't think I've ever kissed Una, and don't ever believe she would let me. She wouldn't. She's not in love with me. She wouldn't let me, if I wanted to."

"And you don't want to?"

"No, no. I never think about her in that way. I can't. She's different from you. You allure me. It's subtle. I can't explain. I want to take you in my arms and yet I don't dare, for fear that I may crush you. I might, Marcia. I'm afraid. Just now, the thought of my strength frightened me. Don't let me kiss you like that again, Marcia."

"I'm not afraid," I heard her whisper. "Kiss me again, Jerry."

But he didn't. Apparently he still stood before her at a distance, fearsome of he knew not what.

"Jerry!" she murmured again, in a little tone of petulance.

"Marcia, we—we should be going on," he muttered.

"Ah, Jerry, not yet," she sighed. "Isn't it wonderful that there's no quarrel between us? Just you and I, Jerry, here, alone, like the first man and woman—alone in the world. There's no man in it but you, no woman but me, we're mated, Jerry, like the birds. Don't you hear them singing? The woods are alive with songs of love. And you, Jerry, you stand there staring at me with those great, timid eyes of yours. Why do you stare at me so? Are you frightened? I think that I am stronger than you. It is love that makes me strong. Come to me, Jerry. Kiss me, again."

"Marcia!" he gasped. And then another silence.

"I mustn't."

"I love you, Jerry."

"Will you marry me? Tomorrow!"

"Marriage, Jerry? Yes, some day—"

"Tomorrow—!"

"Aren't you satisfied—with this? The wonder of it."

"But I have no right. I can't explain. It's desecration!"

"A sacrament!" she said.

"A sacrament!"

"You said so."

"Not this, Marcia. A sacrament should be gentle. I want to be gentle in my thoughts of you. But I can't, not now. I could strangle you if you let another man do this, and kill—"

"I love you—when you talk like that. Strangle me if you like, kill me, I'm yours—"

I think that to Marcia, this was the greatest moment of her strange passion. Fear was its dominant motive, Jerry's innocence its inspiration. If he had crushed the breath from her body, I think she would have died rapturously. But Jerry, it seems, tore himself from her and moved some distance away, I think, his head bent into the hollow of his arm, torn between his emotions. I would have given all that I possessed on earth to have caught a glimpse of her face at that moment. Flushed with victory of course—but passion—Bah! I couldn't believe her capable of it. If she had been wholly animal I might have forgiven her everything. But the impression had grown in me with the minutes that all this like everything else she did was false—false penitence, false contrition, false tears, false love and now false passion. She was a mere shell, a

beautiful shell in which one hears the faint murmurs of sweet music, echoes of sounds which might have been but were not. These were the sounds that Jerry heard, echoes of some earlier incarnation in which spiritual beauty had been his fetich. And now, he stood apart, broken, miserable.

"Jerry," I heard her call again softly, "I am not afraid."

That was it. I understood now. What she loved was fear. But Jerry would not come back. I heard his voice faintly.

"We must go, Marcia."

"Why?"

"I have learned; we have no right here—alone, you and I. It's what—what you accused Una of."

"But you and I—Jerry! Am I not different from Una? I have rights. She has none. I've given them to you, and you to me."

"You will marry me, soon?"

"Not if you're going to be so—so—er—inhospitable."

He came forward quickly.

"You know I don't mean that. Would you have me less considerate of your reputation, your peace of mind, than I am of Una's? I want you to understand how deeply I respect you—that I want to treat you with tenderness, with delicacy, with gentle devotion."

I heard her sigh. I'm sure if Jerry's back had been turned she must have yawned. She rose and I heard her slow footsteps join his.

"How you disappoint me!" I heard her murmur and then more faintly: "How terribly you disappoint me! To analyze one's feelings! To think of conventions! Now! What *are* you?"

"Marcia!"

I heard their voices fading into the distance and peered forth. They were walking slowly down the path, away from me. I stirred cautiously, straightened my stiffened legs, rose painfully, and then carefully made my way farther into the forest, through which I plunged headlong, eager to escape the sight of that accursed rock and its harrowing sounds. I had not been far wrong in my estimate of her and of Jerry. I would to God he had strangled her.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY

Una and her mother did not come to Horsham Manor during the following week, and it was early in June before Jerry ordered the rooms to be prepared for them. Jack Ballard, too, having at last found Newport irksome, promised to make up the house-party.

It did not seem to me that Jerry was especially overjoyed at the prospect of these guests. During the week or more that followed his encounter with Marcia in the woods, he had reverted to his former habits of strolling aimlessly about when he wasn't at Briar Hills or in town, at times cheerful enough; at others obstinately morose. But he did not drink. Whatever the differences between us, he evidently thought seriously enough of his word to me to make that promise worth keeping. I know he believed me to be meddlesome and with good reason (if he had known all), but he would not let me leave the Manor. I was a habit with him, a bad habit if you like, but it seemed a necessary one. Nevertheless in spite of the apparently pleasant nature of our relations, there was a coolness between us. Much as he loved me, and I was still sure that Marcia had made no real change in that affection, there was a new reserve in his manner, meant, I think, to show me that I had gone too far and that his affair with Marcia was not to be the subject of further discussion between us.

Had he known how thankful I was for that! I knew all that I wanted to know of Marcia Van Wyck and of their curious relations. And unfortunate as my ambush had seemed, demeaning to my honor and painful to my conscience, I had begun to look upon my venture beneath that infernal rock as a kind of mixed blessing. At least I knew!

Of Una, Jerry said much in terms of real friendship and undisguised admiration—of his visits to her in town and the progress of her work, a frankness which, alas! was

the surest token of his infatuation elsewhere. And yet I could not believe that the boy was any more certain of the real nature of his feeling for Marcia than he had been a month ago. He was still bewildered, hypnotized, obsessed, his joyous days too joyous, his gloomy ones too hopeless. Like a green log, he burned with much crackling or sullenly simmered. But the fire was still there. Nothing had happened that would put it out, not even Una.

As the hour of the visit of the Habbertons approached, I found myself a prey to some misgivings. It was not difficult for me to imagine that the frank nature of Jerry's visits to Una might have given the girl a false notion of the state of Jerry's mind, for it was like the boy to have told her of Marcia's mellifluous contrition which, as I knew, was no more genuine than any other of her carefully planned emotional crises. I did not know what Marcia thought of Una's approaching visit or whether Jerry had even told her of it, but I had no fancy to see Una Habberton again placed in a false position. A visit to Miss Gore made one morning when Jerry was in town at the office showed me that even if Marcia knew of Una's approaching visit, she had not told Miss Gore of it and also revealed the unpleasant fact of Channing Lloyd's presence in the neighborhood, a guest of the Carews and at the very moment of my visit a companion of Marcia in a daylong drive up to Big Westkill Mountain. This was the way she was keeping her promise to give Lloyd up! What a little liar she was!

Of course, having learned wisdom, I said nothing to Miss Gore, but passed a very profitable morning in her society after which she invited me to stay for lunch. I can assure you that after Jerry's glum looks, Miss Gore's amiable conversation and warm hospitality were balm to my wounded spirit. I had no desire to discuss her intangible relative or she, I presume, the unfortunate Jerry, both of us having washed our hands of the entire affair. She was a prudent person, Miss Gore, and though full of the milk of human kindness, not disposed to waste it where it would do no good. I left with the promise to call upon her another morning and read to her a paper I had written for a philosophical magazine upon the "The Identical Character of Thought and Being."

Jack Ballard arrived upon the morning of the appointed day in his own machine, and since Jerry and his other guests were not expected until evening, we had a long afternoon of it together. We took a tramp across the country, and while Jack listened with great interest to my disclosures, I poured out my heart to him, omitting nothing, not even, to salve my self-esteem, my unfortunate experience in eavesdropping. I don't really know why I should have expected his sympathy, but he only laughed, laughed so much and so long that the tears ran down his cheeks and he had to sit down.

"Oh, Pope—a chipmunk! He might at least have allowed you the dignity of a bear or a mountain lion!"

"There are no mountain lions in these parts," I said with some dignity.

"Or a duck-billed platypus. Oh, I say, Pope, it's too rich. I can't help picturing it. Did they coo? Oh, Lord!"

"It was nauseating!" I retorted in accents so genuine that he laughed again.

"It's no laughing matter, I tell you, Jack," I said. "The boy is completely bewitched. He thinks he adores her. He doesn't. I know."

And bit by bit, while his expression grew interested, I told him all that I had heard.

"It's animal, purely animal," I concluded. "And he doesn't know it."

"By George! He's awakening, you think?"

"I'm sure of it. She's leading him on, for the mere sport of the thing. It has been going on for four months now, almost every day. He's pretty desperate. She won't marry him. She doesn't love him. She loves nobody—but herself."

"What will be the end of the matter?" he asked.

I shrugged.

"She'll throw him over when she debases him."

"Debase—!"

"Yes," I said wildly. "I tell you he thinks her an angel, Can't you see? A man doesn't learn that sort of thing—*her* sort of thing—from the woman he loves. It's like hearing impurity from the lips of one's God! And you ask me if she's debasing him! Why, Jack, he's all ideals still. The world has taught him something, but he still holds fast to his childish faith in everyone."

"Bless him! He does." And then, "What can I do, Pope?"

"Nothing. I'm waiting. But I don't like his temper. It's dangerous. I think he's beginning to suspect her sincerity and when he finds out that she's still playing false with Channing Lloyd—then look out!"

"You're going to tell him?"

"No, he'll discover it. She's quite brazen."

He was silent for a while.

"Pope, you surprise me," he muttered at last. "The modern girls, I give them up. There's a name for this sort, perverted coquettes, '*teasers.*' The man of the world abominates them, they're beneath contempt; but Jerry—No," he remarked with a shake of the head, "he wouldn't understand that."

"And when he does?"

"H—m!"

His manner added no encouragement.

"It would serve her jolly well right," he muttered cryptically in a moment.

"What?" I asked.

I think he understood Jerry now as well as I did.

"Violence," he blurted out.

"Ah! Then I'm not a fool. You agree with me."

"I'm glad I'm not in Lloyd's shoes, that's all."

We resumed our walk, turning back toward the Manor, and I told him of how matters stood with Jerry and Una. He had not met her, but he knew her history and was, I think, willing to accept her upon her face value.

"But you can't match mere affection with that sort of witchcraft!" he said. "It's like trying to treat the hydrophobia with eau de Cologne. It can't be done, my boy. Your device does credit to your heart if not to your intelligence. She may come in a pretty bottle which exudes comforting odors but she's not for him."

"You'll be pleasant to her, Jack? She's fond of Jerry, not in love with him, you know, but fond. And doesn't want to see him made a fool of any more than I do."

I owed Una this. Whatever I thought of her feelings toward Jerry, even Jack had no right to be aware of them.

"Pleasant!" he grinned. "Just you watch. I'll be her Fidus Achates. That's my specialty. Pretty, you say?" He kissed the tip of his fingers and gestured lightly toward the heavens. "I'm your man. Well, rather. I'll make Jerry want to pound my head. And if he neglects her for Marcia, I'll pound his."

Una and her mother were having tea with Jerry on the terrace when we reached the Manor. Mrs. Habberton was, as Jerry had described her, "a dear old lady" with calm eyes and level brows, "astonishingly well informed" and immensely proud of her pretty daughter. She was not assertive and while I knew nothing of Mr. Habberton, she somehow conveyed the impression that if there was anything in Mendel's theory of the working of heredity she and her six daughters went a long way toward exemplifying it. There was a genuineness about the pair which was distinctly refreshing to Jack's jaded tastes in fashionable feminine fripperies and he fell into the conversation as smoothly as a finger into a well-fitting glove. Una made no secret of her delight at being at the Manor and her enthusiasm as we wandered over the place brought more than one smile into Jerry's tired face. I know that he enjoyed her being there, but there was a weight upon him which he masked with a dignity that might have deceived others but not Una or me.

"You've been buying too many steamship companies this week. Jerry. I'm sure of it. You're 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.' It's too bad you have a conscience. It must be fearfully inconvenient." And then as we came to the swimming pool, "Isn't it huge? And all of marble! You're the most luxurious creature. I was just wondering —" She paused.

"Wondering what—?"

"How many Blank Street families I could clean in it without even changing the water."

He laughed. "Build one. I'll pay for it."

"It would be *great* for the boys and men, wouldn't it? But, then—" she sighed. "We haven't got our club yet."

He laughed again.

"But you're going to have it, you know, when the day nursery is done."

"Oh, are we?"

"Of course, that's settled."

We had reached the gymnasium.

"And this is where you—?" A pleading look from Jerry made her pause. "And do you pull all these ropes? What fun! I believe you could have fifty boys in here at once all playing and not one of them in the other's way."

We couldn't help smiling. In spite of herself, she was thinking in terms of her beloved Blank Street.

"You'll have to forgive me, Jerry, if I'm covetous. That's my besetting sin. But it *is* a fine place—so spacious. And it *would* make such an adorable laundry!"

"You shall have one," said Jerry.

The girl laughed.

"No. I won't dare to wish any more. The purse of Fortunatus brought him into evil ways. It must be terrible, Jerry, not to be able to want something."

"But I do want many things."

"Yes. I suppose we all do that," she said, quickly finishing the discussion, but I think she had noticed the sudden drop in Jerry's voice.

From there we went to the museum to look over the specimens, and in a moment Una and Jerry were deep in a butterfly talk. There Jack and I left them, taking Mrs. Habberton into the main hall, where I rang for one of the maids who showed her to her room.

"Well," I asked of Jack. "What do you think of her?"

"What I think is of course a matter of no importance to Jerry. But since you ask, I don't mind telling you that I love her to distraction. Where are the boy's eyes? His ears? And all the rest of his receptive organs? If I were ten years younger—" and he patted his *embonpoint* regretfully, "I'd ask something of her charity, something immediate and practical. She should found the John K. Ballard Home, Pope, a want of mine for many years. But, alas! She has eyes only for Jerry."

"Do you really think so?" I asked.

"Yes, I do. And he's not worth bothering about. He ought to be shot, offhand."

"I entirely agree with you," I smiled.

Dinner that night was gay and most informal. Jack was at his best and gave us in inimitable satire a description of a luncheon at Newport in honor of a prize chow dog attended by all the high-bred pups of Bellview Avenue, including Jack's own bull terrier Scotty, which in an inadvertent moment devoured the small Pekingese of Jack's nearest neighbor, a dereliction of social observance which caused the complete and permanent social ostracism of Scotty—and Jack.

"How terrible!" said Una.

"It was, really, but it was a kind of poetic canine justice, you know. The Pekingese just stared at Scotty and stared without wagging his tail. Very impolite, not wagging your tail at a luncheon. Scotty grew embarrassed and angry and then—just took him at a gulp. It was the easiest way out."

"Or *in*," I suggested.

"Scotty is naturally polite. He never *could* abide a tail that wouldn't wag."

"Nor can I," said Una with a laugh. "Dogs' tails *must* be meant to wag, or what are they there for? I wish people had tails and then you could tell whether they were pleasant or not."

"Some of 'em have," said Jack. "Hoofs too—and horns."

"I don't believe that," she laughed.

Jerry took no animated part in the conversation except when we spoke of Una's work. Then he waxed eloquent until Una stopped him. Mrs. Habberton, I think, watched Jerry a little dubiously as though there was something about him that she couldn't understand. Some feminine instinct was waking. But Una's cheerfulness and interest in all things was unabated. We three men smoked—I, too, for I had lately fallen from grace—with the ladies' permission in the drawing-room where Una played upon the piano and sang. I don't think that Jerry had known about her music for he had said nothing of it to me, and when her voice began softly:

"Oh doux printemps d'autrefois"—

Massenet's "Elegie," as I afterwards learned—a hush fell over the room and we three

men sat staring at the sweet upturned profile, as her lovely throat gave forth the tender sad refrain:

"Oh doux printemps d'autrefois, vertes saisons ou
Vous avez fui pour toujours
Je ne vois plus le ciel bleu
Je n'entends plus les chants joyeux des oiseaux
En emportant mon bonheur,
O bien aimé tu t'en es allé
Et c'est en vain que revient le printemps."

She sang on to the end and long after she had finished we still sat silent, immovable as though fearful to break the spell that was upon us. Jerry was near me and I had caught a glimpse of his face when she began. He glanced toward her, moved slightly forward in his chair and then sat motionless, the puzzled lines in his face relaxing like those of a person passing into sleep. When the last long-drawn sigh died away and merged into the drowsy murmur of the night outside, Jerry's voice broke almost harshly upon the silence.

"I didn't know you could sing like that," he said. "It's wonderful, but so—so hopeless."

"Something more cheerful, dear, 'Der Schmetterling,'" put in her mother.

She sang again, this time lightly, joyously, and we re ponded to her mood like harp-strings all in accord. The room, awakened to melody after the long years of silence, seemed transformed by Una's splendid gift, a fine, clear soprano, not big nor yet thin or reedy, but rounded, full-bodied and deep with feeling. Jerry was smiling now, the shadow seemed to have lifted.

"That's your song. It must have been written for you," he cried. "You *are* the butterfly girl when you sing like that."

"*Bis!*" cried Jack, clapping his hands.

She was very obliging and sang again and again. I was silent and quite content. The shadow did not fall upon Jerry again that night. I was almost ready to believe he had forgotten that such a person as Marcia Van Wyck lived in the world. Who could have resisted the gentle appeal of Una's purity, friendliness and charm? Not I. Nor Jack. He followed the mood of her songs like a huge chameleon, silent when she sang of sadness, tender when she sang of love, and joyous with her joy.

When she got up from the piano he rose.

"I wonder why I can find so few evenings like this," he sighed.

"It's so fearfully old-fashioned, Victorian, to be simple nowadays," she laughed.

"That's it," he cried. "The terror of your modern hostess, simplicity. You can't go out to dine unless some madwoman drags you away from your coffee to the auction table, where other madmen and madwomen scowl at you all the evening over their cards. Or else they dance. Dance! Dance! Hop! Skip! Not like joyous gamboling lambs but with set faces, as though there was nothing else in the world but the martyrdom of their feet. Mad! All mad! Please don't tell me that you dance, Miss Habberton."

"I do," she laughed, "and I love it."

"Youth!" Jack sighed and relapsed into silence.

The evening passed in general conversation, interesting conversation which the world, it seems, has come to think is almost a lost art, not the least interesting part of which was Una's contribution on some of the lighter aspects of Blank Street. And I couldn't help comparing again the philosophy of this girl, the philosophy of helpfulness, with the bestial selfishness of the point of view of the so-called Freudians who, as I have been credibly informed, only live to glut themselves with the filth of their own baser instincts. Self-elimination as against self-expression, or since we are brute-born, merely self-animalization! Una Habberton's philosophy and Marcia Van Wyck's! Any but a blind man could run and read, or if need be, read and run.

Mrs. Habberton was tired and went up early, her daughter accompanying her. I saw Jerry eyeing the girl rather wistfully at the foot of the stair. I think he was pleading with her to come down again but she only smiled at him brightly and I heard her say, "Tomorrow, Jerry."

"Shall we fish?"

"That will be fine."

"Just you and I?"

"If you think," and she laughed with careless gayety, "if you think Marcia won't

object."

"Oh, I say—" But his jaw fell and he frowned a little.

"Good-night, Jerry, dear," she flung at him from the curve of the landing.

"Good-night, Una," he called.

The telephone bell rang the next morning before the breakfast hour and Jerry was called to it. I was in my study and the door was open. I couldn't help hearing. Marcia Van Wyck was on the wire. I couldn't hear her voice but Jerry's replies were illuminating.

"I couldn't," I heard him say, "I had guests to dinner."

Fortunately neither Una nor her mother was down.

"I didn't tell you," he replied to her question. "It was—er—rather sudden. Miss Habberton and her mother. They're staying here for a few days. How are you—? Oh, I don't see why you—What difference does that make—? Won't you come over this afternoon? Please. Why not—? I'm awfully anxious to see you. Why, I couldn't, Marcia, not just now and besides—What—?"

Apparently she had rung off. He tried to get her number and when he got it came away from the instrument suddenly, for the girl had evidently refused to talk to him.

At the breakfast table, to which the ladies but not Jack Ballard descended, he was very quiet. I pitied him, but led the conversation into easy paths in which after a while he joined us. I saw Una glancing at him curiously, but no personal comment passed and when we went out on the shaded terrace to look down toward the lake, over the shimmering summer landscape, Una took a deep breath and then gave a long sigh of delight.

"Isn't it wonderful just to live on a day like this?" And then with a laugh, "Jerry, you simply *must* give us Horsham Manor as a fresh air farm."

He smiled slowly.

"It would do nicely, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, yes, splendidly. Five thousand acres! That would be an acre apiece for every man, woman and child in the whole district. We would build mills by the lake, factories along the road and tenements in groups on the hills over there. It *might* spoil the landscape, but it would be so—er—so satisfying."

"And you'd want *me* to pay the bills," he laughed.

"Oh, yes. Of course. What are bills *for* unless to be paid?"

"Help yourself," he smiled. "Will you have the deeds made out today or wait until next week?"

"I suppose I *might* wait until tomorrow."

"Oh, thanks. And, for the present, we'll go fishing."

"I'll be ready in a moment." And she went upstairs for her hat and gloves.

Already he yielded again to the spell of her comradeship and humor. And a moment later I saw them set off toward the Sweetwater, Una glowing with quiet delight, Jerry slowly showing the infection of her happiness.

The nature of Una's conversation with Jerry during that morning of fishing and in the days that followed must always remain a secret to me. I know that when they returned Jerry was in a cheerful mood and put through an afternoon of tennis with Jack, while Una and her mother knitted in the shade. She was wholesome, that girl, and no one could be with her long without feeling the impress of her personality. But I was not happy. Marcia hung like a millstone around my neck. I knew that it was at the risk of a considerable sacrifice of pride that Una had decided to come with her mother and make this visit. The world and her own frequent contact with women of the baser sort had sharpened her wits and instincts amazingly. I am sure that she was just as well aware of the nature of Jerry's infatuation as though Jerry had told it himself. If Una cared for him as deeply as I had had the temerity to suppose, then her position was difficult—painful and thankless. But whatever her own wish to help him, I am sure that the nature of the desire was unselfish. After events prove that. All that Una saw in the situation of Jerry and Marcia was a friend who needed helping, who was worth helping from the snare of an utterly worldly and heartless woman. I am sure that her knowledge of the world must have made her task seem hopeless and it must have taken some courage to pit her own charm in the lists against one of Marcia's known quality. But if she was unhappy, no sign of it reached my eyes. Only her mother, who sometimes raised her eyes and calmly regarded her daughter, had an inkling of what was in Una's heart.

Jerry went no more to the telephone. I kept an eye on it and I know. And when his car went out, Una or Jack went with him. Three days passed with no telephone calls from Briar Hills. When Jerry's guests were with him, the duties of hospitality seemed sacred to him and he left nothing undone for their comfort or entertainment. At night Una sang to us, and Jerry was himself, but during most of the day he moved mechanically, only speaking to Jack or me when directly addressed.

"Acts like a sleepwalker," said Jack to me. "It's hypnotic, sheer moon-madness!"

Only Una had the power to draw him out of himself. He always had a smile for her and a friendly word, but I knew that *she* knew that she had failed. Jerry was possessed of a devil, a she-devil, that none of the familiar friendly gods could cast out.

The end came soon and with a startling suddenness. We were out driving in Jack's motor one morning before lunch, Jack at the wheel, with Una beside him, Jerry and I in the rear seat, when in passing along a quiet road not far from Briar Hills, we saw at some distance ahead of us and going our way, a red runabout, containing a man and a girl. Jack was running the car very slowly, as the road was none too good, and we ran close up behind the pair before they were aware of us. I saw Jerry lean forward in his seat, peering with the strange set look I had recently seen so often in his eyes. I followed his gaze and, as I looked, the man in the red car put his arm around the girl's neck and she raised her chin and they kissed. All of us saw it. Jack chuckled and blew his horn violently. The pair drew apart suddenly and the man tried quickly to get away, but Jack with a laugh had already put on the power and we passed them before they could get up speed. The girl hid her face but the man was Channing Lloyd.

Jerry had recognized them. I saw him start up in his seat, turning around, but I caught at his wrist and held him. He was deathly pale, ugly, dangerous. But he made no further move. During the ride home he sat as though frozen fast into his seat with no word for me or for our companions, who had not turned or spoken to us. I think that Jack suspected and Una knew and feared to look at Jerry's face. By the time we reached the house Jerry had managed to control himself. The dangerous look upon his face was succeeded by a glacial calm, which lasted through luncheon, of which he ate nothing. Jack did his best to bring an atmosphere of unconcern but failed and we got up from the table aware of impending trouble. Then Jerry disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIV

FEET OF CLAY

It is with some reluctance that I begin these chapters dealing with the most terrible event in Jerry's life, and for that matter the most terrible experience in my own, for as the reader of this history must now be aware, Jerry's life was mine. I had made him, molded him for good or ill according to my own definite plan, by the results of which I had professed myself willing to stand whatever came. Had I known what these results were to be, it would have been better if I had cast myself into the sea than have come to Horsham Manor as Jerry's preceptor, the sponsor for old Benham's theory. But human wisdom is fallible, true virtue a dream. Dust we are and to dust return, groveling meanwhile as best we may, amid the wreck of our illusions. It costs me something to admit the failure of the Great Experiment, its horrible and tragic failure! To lose a hand, an eye, a limb, to be withered by disease, one can replace, repair, renew; but an ideal, a system of philosophy, ingrained into one's very life! It is this that scars and withers the soul.

I must go on, for, after all, it is not my soul that matters, but Jerry's. It was quite an hour after Jerry disappeared before I began to suspect that he had gone to Briar Hills. The last I had seen of him was when he was on his way up the stair to his own room. But when I sought him there a short while afterward, I could not find him, nor was he anywhere in the house. I questioned the servants, telephoned the garage. All the machines, including Jerry's own roadster, were in the building. I went out to question the gardeners and found a man who had seen Jerry awhile before, entering the path into the woods behind the house. Mr. Benham was hatless, the fellow said, and walked rapidly, his head bent. Even then I did not suspect where he was going. I thought that he had merely gone to "walk it off," a phrase we had for our own cure for the doldrums. But as the moments passed and he did not return, I took Jack into confidence, and expressed the fear that he had gone to Briar Hills for a reckoning with Marcia and Lloyd.

A worried look came into Jack's face, but he shrugged his shoulders.

"Let him. It's time. We can't do anything."

"We might try."

"What?"

"Go there before damage is done, bring him home."

"And make ourselves ridiculous."

"Oh, that—! I don't care."

"Well, *I* do. You've got to let this problem work itself out, Pope. It's gone too far. He's on the brink of disillusionment. Let it come, no matter how or what."

"But violence—!"

"Let it come. Better a violence which may cure than this quiet madness that is eating his soul away."

"But Lloyd! Jerry's strength! He might kill the brute."

"Don't fear. If the man would fight Jerry might do him damage. But he'll run, Pope. You can't kill a bounder. The breed is resilient."

"I'm afraid."

"You needn't be. This is the turning point of his affair."

"Perhaps. But in which way will it turn?"

"Wait."

I was helpless. Against my own judgment I did as he bade. We waited. We sat upon the terrace for awhile with the ladies, Jack reading aloud. Una made no comment upon Jerry's absence and gave no sign of her prescience of anything unusual, except the frequent turning of her head toward the house or toward the paths within the range of her vision, as though she hoped every moment that Jerry might appear. The shadows lengthened. Jack challenged the girl to a game of tennis and even offered to play in the double court against us both, but neither of us was willing. I think she knew where Jerry had gone and, like me, was frightened. It was a miserable afternoon. As the dinner hour approached the ladies retired to dress and I gave a sigh of relief. In my anxious state of mind the burden of entertaining them had weighed heavily upon me. It had occurred to me that Una's mother might have thought it strange that Jerry should have left them so suddenly without excuses, for he owed them an explanation at least. I think some inkling of an unusual situation had entered Mrs. Habberton's mind, for when dinner was nearly over and her host had not appeared, she made a vague remark about a letter that had come in the morning which might oblige her to curtail her visit, a tactful anticipation of any situation which might make their stay impossible. The evening dragged hopelessly and the ladies retired early, while at the foot of the stair I made some fatuous remark about Jerry's possibly having been summoned to town. The "good-nights" were said with an excess of cheerfulness on Una's part and my own which did nothing to conceal from either of us the real nature of our anxiety.

Jack and I smoked in the library, discussing every phase of the situation. The coming of night without a word or a sign from the boy had made us both a prey to the liveliest fears. Something had happened to Jerry—What? He had been wild, determined. I could not forget his look. It was the same expression I had seen at Madison Square Garden when he had made his insensate effort to knock Clancy out—a narrow glitter of the eyes, brute-keen and directed by a mind made crafty by desperation. Weary of surmises, at last we relapsed into silence, trying to read. Jack at last dozed over his book and, unable longer to remain seated, I got up, went outside and walked around the house again and again. The garage tempted me. Jerry's machine was inside. Unknown to Jack I would go myself to Briar Hills and see Miss Gore. She would know.

There was a light in the window. I turned the knob and entered. As I did so someone stooping rose and faced me. It was Jerry, a terrible figure, his clothes torn and covered with dirt, his hair matted and hanging over his eyes, which gleamed somberly out of dark circles. He had a wrench in his hand. For a moment in my timidity and uncertainty I thought him mad and about to strike me with it. But he made no move toward me and only hung his head like a whipped dog.

"*You*, Roger?"

"What has happened. Jerry?"

"Nothing. Don't ask."

"But Jack and I have been sitting up for you. We've been worried."

"I know. But it couldn't be helped. Just don't ask me anything, Roger."

I was glad enough to have him safe and apparently quite sane. I don't know why I

should have considered his sanity at that moment of peculiar importance unless because my own mind had been all the afternoon and evening so colored with the impression of his last appearance. I had become so used to the sense of strain, of tension in his condition of mind, that the quiet, rather submissive tone of his voice affected me strangely. It seemed almost as if the disease was passing, that his fever was abated.

"I won't ask you anything, if you don't like, but I think you'd better come to the house and get a hot bath and to bed."

He remained silent for a long moment.

"I'm not going to the house, Roger. I'm going—"

He paused again.

"Going! Where?" I asked.

"I don't know just yet. Away from here, from New York—at once."

"But I can't let you go without—"

He held up his hand and I paused.

"Don't talk, Roger," he said quickly. "Don't question and don't talk. It won't do any good. I had hoped I shouldn't see you. I was waiting—waiting until the lights went out."

"But I couldn't."

"Please!" he said quietly, and then went on.

"I was going to get some things and go during the night. Now you'll have to help me. Tell Christopher to pack a bag—just a clean suit and linen—and bring it here—And—and that's all." He held out his hand with a sober smile. "Good-by, Roger," he finished.

"But I can't let you go like this."

"You've got to. Don't worry. I'm all right. I'm not going to make a fool of myself—or—or drink or anything. I've got to be alone—to do some thinking. I'll write you. Good-by."

"But Una! What shall I say?"

"Una!" He turned away and bent his head. "My God!" he said and then repeated the words below his breath, almost like a prayer, and then, turning, with a wild gesture, "Tell her anything, Roger. Say I'm all right but I can't see her. Say I had a telegram—called West on a Railroad matter—anything. Now go."

He caught me by the hand with a crushing grip while he pushed me toward the door.

"You will not—?"

"I'm all right, quite. Don't fear for me. I'll come back—soon. Now go, old chap. I'll wait for Christopher here. Hurry, please."

He spoke kindly but sharply. I could see that argument was of no avail. His mind was made up and with Jerry that was final. Whatever had happened—and from his appearance I suspected a soul-wrenching struggle—he was at least for the present physically safe and entirely sane. But it was with serious misgivings that I slipped past the somnolent Jack and upstairs to Jerry's room, where I found Christopher and together we packed a bag, descending by the back stairs, where I took the bag from Christopher's hand and sent him to bed.

In a moment I was in the garage with Jerry.

"Oh, *you*—!" he frowned.

"Let me go with you at least as far as town," I pleaded.

"No," gruffly. "No one." He threw the bag into the car and clambered quickly in.

"Here, your cap," I said, handing it to him. Our fingers met. He grasped mine until they pained me.

"Forgive me, Roger. I don't mean to be unkind. You're too good to me."

"Jerry, you fool!" I cried, my eyes wet.

He had started the machine and when I opened the door he moved slowly out.

"Good-by, old Dry-as-dust," he called with a wave of the hand and a rather sinister smile.

"For God's sake no drink, Jerry!" I whispered tensely.

"I promise," he said solemnly. "Good-by!"

And while I watched, he swept noiselessly around the drive and was soon lost in the blur of the trees below.

I walked slowly toward the terrace in the shadow of the trees, deep in bewilderment. What should I say to Una? Half unconsciously I glanced up at her window, the corner one over the terrace. Something white stirred and I thought I heard a sound, a faint sound, and then a strangling hush.

CHAPTER XXV

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS

But all other considerations were as nothing beside the mystery of Jerry's manner and appearance, and his sudden flight filled me with the gravest fears. What had he done at Briar Hills, what horrible thing? Could it be that the boy had—? I shrank in dismay from the terrible thought that came into my mind. I went hurriedly into the house and without ceremony waked the sleeping Jack. He aroused himself with difficulty but when I told him what had happened he came quickly to life.

"You—you're sure you're not mistaken?" he asked, still bewildered.

"Haven't I told you that I saw the boy with my own eyes, that something dreadful has happened today at Briar Hills and that he's flying from the results of it? Come, Jack. We must go there at once."

"By all means," he said, springing up with an air of decision. "My car," and then as we started for the garage, "you don't mean to say that you believe the boy has—?"

The terrible words would not come. The mere thought of mentioning them frightened him as they had done me.

"How can I tell?" I said irritably.

"God knows," he muttered miserably. "Violence—but not—not that."

"Hurry," I muttered. "Hurry."

In a moment we were in the car, rushing through the night toward the lower gate. Briar Hills was not more than four miles from the Manor as the crow flies, but fully twelve by the lower road. Jack wasted no time and we sped along the empty driveways of the estate at a furious pace. The cool damp air of the lowlands refreshed and stimulated us and we were now keenly alert and thinking hard. The lodge gates were kept open now and we went roaring through them and out into the country roads where the going was not so good. Neither of us had dared to repeat our former questions which were still uppermost in our minds. The topic was prohibitive and until we knew something silence were better.

It couldn't have been more than twenty minutes, twenty-five at the most, before we reached the gates of the Van Wyck place, though it seemed an age to me. Then at my suggestion Jack slowed down and we went up the drive as quietly as possible. I don't know what we expected to see when we got there, but the sight of the house with lights burning in the windows here and there did something to reassure us. After debating a plan of action we drove boldly up to the house and got out. The front door upon the veranda was wide open but there was no sound within or without. Jack was for dashing in at once and searching the premises but I took him by the arm.

"Wait," I said, "listen."

Somewhere within I thought I made out the sound of footsteps. "At least someone is about. Where's the bell? We'll ring."

I found it and though the hour was late a maid answered. She came to the door timidly, uncertainly, as though a little frightened.

"This is Mr. Canby," I explained. "I would like to see Miss Gore, please."

"I don't know, sir," she paused and then: "Wait a moment. I'll see—" and went upstairs.

We had been prepared for a wait but Miss Gore appeared almost immediately. She came down calmly, and asked us into the drawing-room.

"I was expecting you," she said with great deliberateness, "and wondered if you'd come."

"Then something—something *has* happened," I broke in hurriedly.

"I don't know what, exactly," she said. "I can't understand. I've thought several things —"

"Is Channing Lloyd here?" I asked excitedly.

"No. He was here to luncheon and went out with Marcia, but he didn't come back—to the house, I mean."

"But you know that he has been seen—since?"

I asked the question in terror and trembling.

"Oh, yes," she said. "One of the gardeners saw him and—"

"And Marcia?" I questioned again.

She pointed upward, where we were conscious again of the steadily moving footsteps.

"She's upstairs in her room."

I think the gasps of relief that came from each of us at this welcome news must have given Miss Gore the true measure of our anxiety, for a thin smile broke on her lips.

"Thank God," I said feelingly. "Then they're safe. What has happened, Miss Gore? Can you tell me? Jerry has gone, fled from Horsham Manor. We feared—the worst."

"I don't know what has happened, Mr. Canby," she admitted. "But it's very strange. I will tell you what I know. Marcia and Mr. Lloyd went out together after luncheon, not in a motor but afoot. I was in the garden in the afternoon cutting roses for the dinner table when I saw a figure skulking near the hedge which leads to the main drive. I wasn't frightened at all, for Dominick, the man who attends to the rose garden, was nearby, but the man's actions were queer and I sent the gardener to inquire. He went and I followed, curiously. Dominick cut across behind the hedges and came out on the lawn quite near the man, who walked with his body slightly inclined and one arm upraised and bent across his face, his hand holding a red handkerchief. I could make out his figure now. I remembered the suit of shepherd's plaid that Channing Lloyd had been wearing. There is no doubt of his identity, for Dominick confirmed me. It was Mr. Lloyd."

"But what was he bending over for?" I asked.

"I can't imagine. When Dominick spoke to him, he merely cursed the man and went on."

"Curious," said Jack thoughtfully.

"Isn't it? I can't make it out at all."

"And Marcia?" I asked.

"She came back much later. I didn't see her for she rushed into her room and locked the door. She's there now. I've tried to get to her. But she won't let me in, won't even answer me. Listen," and she pointed upward. "She's been doing that for hours. I've taken her food. She won't eat or reply. Nothing except, 'Go,' or 'Go away.' I'm at my wit's ends. I seem to be sure, Mr. Canby, that Jerry—"

"Yes," I put in. "You're right, Jerry—was here. Something has happened."

"But what?" she asked.

"He saw them together in the red motor."

"Kissing," put in Jack rather brutally.

"Ah," she said composedly. And then, "Ah, yes, I see, but why Lloyd's curious behavior and Jerry's flight?"

"It's very mysterious."

"Yes, very." Here she rose as with a sudden sense of responsibility and brought the interview to an end. I think she read farther than I did. "At all events we know that they are all alive," she said with a smile. "Perhaps no great damage is done after all."

It seemed as though she were trying to deceive herself or us, but we made no comment, presently taking our departure.

It was not until many months later that I learned what had happened on that dreadful day. Jack Ballard and the Habbertons left Horsham Manor the following afternoon and it was many weeks before I saw Una in New York, for some instinct had restrained me; not until some time after I had Jerry's first letter, just a few lines written from somewhere in Manitoba, merely telling me that he was in good health and asking me not to worry. But brief as it was, this message cheered me inexpressibly.

I could not bring myself to go to Briar Hills again, but managed a meeting with Miss Gore, who told me that Marcia was in a more than usually fiendish temper most of the time—quite unbearable, in fact. She was going away to Bar Harbor, she thought, and the certainty of Miss Gore's tenure of office depended much upon Marcia's treatment of her. They had quarreled. To be a poor relation was one thing, to be a martyr another.

She couldn't understand Marcia's humor, moody and irascible by turns, and once when Miss Gore had mentioned Jerry's name she flew into a towering rage and threw a hair brush through a mirror—a handsome mirror she particularly liked.

Jerry's affair with Marcia was ended. There could be no possible doubt about that. Further than this Miss Gore knew nothing. It was enough. I was content, so content that in my commiseration I held her hand unduly long and she asked me what I was going to do with it, and not knowing I dropped it suddenly and made my exit I fear rather awkwardly. What could I have done with it? A fine woman that, but cryptic.

It was June when Jerry left, not until midwinter that he returned to Horsham Manor. He was very much changed, older-looking, less assertive, quieter, deeper-toned, more thoughtful. It was as though the physical Jerry that I knew had been subjected to some searching test which had eliminated all superfluities, refined the good metal in him, solidified, unified him. And the physical was symbolic of the spiritual change. I knew that since that night in July the world had tried him in its alembic with its severest tests and that he had emerged safely. He was not joyous but he seemed content. Life was no longer a game. It was a study. Bitter as experience had been, it had made him. Perfect he might not be but sound, sane, wholesome. Jerry had grown to be a man!

But Jerry and I were to have new moments of *rapprochement*. As the days of his stay at the Manor went on, our personal relations grew closer. He spoke of his letters to Una and of hers to him, but his remarks about her were almost impersonal. It seemed as though some delicacy restrained him, some newly discovered embarrassment which made the thought of seeing her impossible and so he did not go to pay his respects to her. Indeed, he was content just to stay at the Manor with me. It seemed that the bond between us, the old brotherly bond that had existed before Jerry had gone forth into the world, had been renewed. I would have given my life for him and I think he understood. He was still much worried and talked of doing penance. Poor lad! As though he were not doing penance every moment of his days! I know that he wanted to talk, to tell me what had happened, to ask my advice, to have my judgment of him and of her. But something restrained him, perhaps the memory of the girl he had thought Marcia to be, that sublimated being, in whose veins flowed only the ichor of the gods, the goddess with the feet of clay. I told him that she had been at Bar Harbor with Channing Lloyd and that Miss Gore had told me that the two were much together in town.

"Oh, yes," he said slowly, "I know. They're even reported engaged. Perhaps they are."

There was a long silence. We were sitting in the library late one night, a month at least after he had returned, reading and talking by turns.

"She wasn't worthy of you. Jerry," I remarked.

"No, that's not true," he said, a hand shading his eyes from the lamplight. "It would be a poor creature that wouldn't be worthy of such a beast as I. But she tried me, Roger, terribly."

"She tempted you purposely. It was a game. I saw it. But you, poor blind Jerry—"

"Yes, blind and worse than blind, deaf to the appeals of my friends—you and—and Una, who saw where I did not. Marcia had promised to marry me, Roger, to be my wife. Do you understand what such a promise meant to me then? All ideals and clean thoughts. I worshiped her, did not even dare to touch her—until—Oh, I kissed her, Roger. She taught me—many things, little things, innocent they seemed in themselves at the time, but dangerous to my body and to my soul. I knew nothing. I was like a new-born babe. My God! Roger—if only you had told me! If you had told me—"

"I couldn't then, Jerry," I said softly. "It would have been too late. You wouldn't have believed—"

"No," he muttered, "you're right. I wouldn't have believed anything against her at the time or found a real meaning in the truth. She could have done no wrong. Then I saw her kissing that fellow—you remember? I think the change came in me then, my vision. I seemed to see things differently without knowing why. Rage possessed me, animal rage. I saw red. I wanted to kill."

He rose and paced the length of the room with great strides.

"I mustn't, Roger. I can't say more. It's impossible."

I was silent. A reaction had come.

CHAPTER XXVI

DRYAD AND SATYR

Little by little the story came from him. Perhaps I urged him but I think the larger impelling motive to speak was his conscience which drove him on to confession. He needed another mind, another heart, to help him bear his burden. And the years had taught him that the secrets of his lips were mine. I could be as silent, when I chose, as a mummy. He had not named me old Dry-as-dust for nothing.

It seems that when Jerry left us at the Manor that afternoon and took to the woods he had no very clear notion of what he was going to do. All that he knew was that he could not bear the sight or touch or hearing of his fellow beings, least of all of those of us who were kind to him. In fact, he had no very clear notion of anything, for his brain was whirling with terrible grinding, reiterating blows like machinery that is out of order. What thoughts he had were chaotic, mere fragments of incidents, and conversations jumbled and mostly irrelevant. But the vision of the figures in the automobile dominated all. I am sure that he was mentally unsound and that his actions were instinctive. He walked furiously, because walk he must, because violent physical exercise had always been his panacea, and because the very act of locomotion was an achievement of some sort. After awhile he found himself running swiftly along the paths that led to the Sweetwater, and then following the stream through the gorge in the hills, leaping over the rocks until he reached the wall and the broken grille. There he paused for a moment and tried to reason with himself. But he found that he could not think and that his legs still urged him on. They were bent on carrying him to Briar Hills, he knew that much now, and that he had no power to stop them. The violence of his exercise, he said, had cleared the chaos from his brain and only the vision of the red automobile remained, Marcia's roadster. He knew it well. Had he not driven it? There was no mistake. It crossed his disordered brain that red for a machine was a frightful color, a painful color it seemed to him, and he wondered why he hadn't thought that before. Red, blood color, the color that seemed to be in his eyes at that very moment. All the trees were tinged with it, the rocks, even the pools in the brook, around the edges especially—and they had always seemed so cool, so very cool.

He leaped down the rocks and before he realized it had crawled under the broken railing and was in the forest beyond. He did not run now but walked quickly and with the utmost care over fallen tree-trunks and rocks, avoiding the paths and seeking the deep woods, still moving ever nearer to his goal. He made a wide detour around the Laidlaws' place and went half a mile out of his way to avoid the sight of some farmers working in an open field. As he neared Marcia's land he grew more crafty, even crawling upon his hands and knees across a clearing where there was little cover. He had no notion as yet of what he was going to do when he got there except that he hoped to find the girl and Lloyd together.

He saw the house at last and the garden, from a distance. The house had a red roof. Red again! It glared horribly in the afternoon sunlight. He turned his head so that he might not look at it and moved stealthily around a stone wall toward the woods beyond the garden—Marcia's woods, pine woods they were, their floor carpeted with brown needles where he and she had used to go and walk of an afternoon to the rocks by Sweetwater Spring, the source of the stream, they said, which Jerry had named the "blushful Hippocrene," the fountain of the Muses who met there to do Marcia, their goddess, honor.

Marcia, *his* goddess. And Chan Lloyd! *Would* they be there? He hoped so. The whole success of his venture seemed to depend upon seeing them together. It was her favorite spot. She had led Jerry to believe that the crevice among the rocks by the spring, a natural throne sculptured by nature, was his, his only, and that he was her king. That had always seemed a very beautiful thought to Jerry. She used to sit at his feet, her arms upon his knees, look up at him and tell him of his dominion over her and all the world; her "fighting-god" he had once been, and then again her Pan, and she a dryad or an oread.

Jerry crept nearer, stealthily. He had learned the craft of the woods years ago, and made no sound. He stalked that grove with the keenness of a deerslayer, moving around through the undergrowth until he was quite near the rocks. He could hear no voices as yet, but something told him that they must be there. It was a very secluded spot; it would have been a pity to have had to go on to the house where Miss Gore and the servants would hear and see. He crawled on his hands and knees, approaching slowly and with some pains. He still heard no sound, but at last reached a ridge of rock within a few feet of the spring and heard voices, lowered, guilty

voices they seemed to him. He peered cautiously over. They were there, side by side on the rocky ledge.

Jerry told me that at this moment he seemed suddenly to grow strangely calm. The noises in his head had ceased and he felt a curious sense of quiet exaltation. He couldn't explain this. I think it was a purely mental reaction after many months of spiritual coma. He got to his feet and even before they heard the sounds of his footsteps he stood before them.

They must have been very much alarmed at Jerry's appearance for, after dashing hotfoot through the underbrush and crawling among the rocks, his clothing must have been disarranged and his hair dirty and disordered. The expression of his face, too, in spite of his boasted calm, could hardly have been pleasant to contemplate, for I had had a glimpse of it that morning in the motor and I am sure that for an hour or more he had been mad—quite mad. He said that they sprang apart suddenly and that Lloyd rose with a swaggering air and faced him. But it seemed that the current of Jerry's thought was diverted by Marcia, who had started up and then sank back upon the rock, addressing him in her softest tones.

"Why, Jerry!" she cried. "How you startled me!"

It was the first time, Jerry said, that the caressing tones of the girl's voice had made no impression upon him. In two strides he was alongside of her, within arm's reach of both of them. He looked dangerous, I think, for Lloyd edged off a little. Marcia kept her gaze fixed upon his face and what she read there was hardly reassuring.

"Jerry!" she cried again. "What does this mean? Your clothes are torn; your face scratched. Has—has something happened to you?"

The question was unfortunate, for it loosened Jerry's thick tongue.

"Yes. Something's happened," he muttered, moving a hand across his brows as though to clear his thoughts. And then:

"I've waked up, that's all," he growled.

"Waked! I don't understand," her voice still gentle, appealing, incredulous.

"Yes, awake. You're false as hell."

"Oh," she started back at that and the venturesome Lloyd took a pace forward.

"I say, Benham, I—" He got no further, for Jerry without even looking at him, swept his left arm around, the gesture of a giant bothered by a troublesome insect. But it caught the fellow full in the chest, and sent him reeling backward. Jerry's business just now was with Marcia Van Wyck.

"You understand what I mean," he went on quickly. "You've played false with me. You've always played false. I saw you there this morning kissing this man, the way you kissed me, the way you kiss others for all that I know."

"You're mad. You insult me." She rose, pale and trembling, but facing him hardily.

"No, I'm not mad. Nothing that I can say can insult you."

"Chan!" She appealed.

It was a fatal mistake, for at the word Lloyd came forward again, bent on making some show of resistance. Jerry turned on him with a snarl, for the fellow had foolishly put up his hands. A few blows passed and then—Jerry told what happened rather apologetically—"It was a pity, Roger. It wasn't altogether his fault, but he *is* a bounder. My fist struck his face, seemed to smear it, literally, all into a blot of red. It wasn't like hitting a man in the ring, it was like—like poking a bag full of dirty linen. The whole fabric seemed to give way. He toppled back, turned a complete somersault and collapsed."

I made no comment. I already knew that Lloyd hadn't been killed. The girl Marcia seemed stricken dumb for a moment and found her voice only when Jerry turned toward her again.

"Jerry," she cried. "It is horrible. You're a brute—beast—"

Jerry only pointed at the prostrate figure slowly struggling to its knees.

"Go and kiss him," he cried. "Go. Kiss him now. He's on his knees to you, waiting for you."

While they watched, Lloyd got to his feet, turned one look of terror in Jerry's direction and then fled blindly into the woods, like one possessed of a devil.

Jerry laughed. It couldn't have been very pretty laughter, for the girl covered her face with her hands and shrank away from him.

"How *could* you?" she stammered. "How *could* you?"

"You were mine. He wanted you."

"Jerry—I—. It's all a mistake. You thought you saw us. I haven't kissed—"

"You lie," he came a pace toward her. "I saw you. I'm not a fool—not any longer."

Her gaze met his and fell. There was something in his expression, something of the primitive that tore away all subterfuge.

But she was not without courage.

"And if I did kiss him—what then?" she asked defiantly. "I'll kiss as I please."

"*Will* you?" He caught at her wrist but she eluded him.

"Yes, I will. What right have you to tell me what I shall do or not do? I'll choose my friends as I please and kiss them as I please, Chan or anyone!"

She had not gauged his temper. Perhaps she hadn't read the meaning in his eyes. Perhaps she thought that she could elude him or that the fact that she was on her own land gave her a fancied sense of security.

"You'll not," he cried.

"I will. What right have you to question me? You can amuse yourself with Una."

"Stop!" he thundered.

But she had found her spirit and her confidence in her ability to win him to gentleness by one means or another was returning to her. She was bold now but prepared to melt if the need required it.

"I will not stop," she cried. "You and Una. What right have you to criticize me for what you yourself—"

She stopped abruptly, for he caught her by the arm and held her. Jerry said that even yet he was timid of her delicacy—fearful of the things he had thought her to be. But he still held her, though she struggled to get away from him.

"Let me go, Jerry. You're hurting me. Please let me go."

She felt the first touch of his imperviousness when he refused to release her and chose to change her tone.

"Please let me go, Jerry," she pleaded softly. "Do you think you are treating me kindly, after all—all that is between us? I don't care for Chan—I don't, Jerry. Let me go."

In his eyes she read the new judgment.

"Then you're worse than I supposed," he muttered.

"Worse! Oh, Jerry. Don't look so—so coldly. It hurts me terribly. I must go. I can't stand your looking at me in that way."

She tried to move away, I think she had every intention of taking to her heels if Jerry had only given her the chance. But he wouldn't. He held her and kept her close beside him. He was hurting her wrist cruelly.

"Let me go," she cried, struggling anew.

Her resistance aroused him again. The animal fury of battle had not died out of his eyes. He did not know what he intended to do with her—had no plan, no purpose, he said. What plan or purpose could he have had unless murder? And even in his madness I'm sure that that never occurred to him. But his blood was hot and his anger and bitterness overwhelming. His fear of her delicacy diminished with her struggles, for her resistance inflamed him. He did not know, nor did she just then, that the animal instinct to conquer was what she had taught him, and that the turgid stream of his blood was finding new strength and unreason, a strange new impetus in every struggle. She saw her danger and was powerless to prevent it. She looked over her shoulder helplessly in the direction in which Chan Lloyd had vanished and saw no help from there. Jerry's great strength had never seemed so terrible as now. He caught her by the shoulders and held her, shook her, I think, a little, as one would shake a child, while she still struggled in his grasp. In a moment his grasp loosened a little, then tightened again, for the contact of his fingers with her warm skin was awaking the demon in him, the dormant devil she had put there.

"Oh, you're hurting me so, Jerry—so terribly."

But he did not even hear her voice. His eyes were speaking to hers, holding them with a deathly fascination. If fear was her passion she was drinking it now to the full —fear and the sense of the ruthless power and dominion in this madman of her own

creation. Her hands clasped his shoulders.

"Jerry!" she screamed. "Don't look at me like that. Your eyes burn me."

"Into your soul—I will burn it—blot it out."

"Jerry, forgive me," she sobbed. "I love you."

"You lie."

"I love you. Forgive me!"

"No. You lie!"

Her arms went around his neck. And he crushed her to him, all the length of them in contact. She struggled faintly but her lips sought his in a despairing hope of pity. She found the lips, but no pity. The breath was almost gone from her body. She struggled, fighting hard, breathing his name in little panting sobs. She too was mad now, as much of an animal as Jerry, her blood coursing furiously. Her terror of herself must have been greater even than her terror of him, for she was quivering—shaken by the terrible gusts of his passion.

Suddenly she felt herself released, thrust from him. His fingers bruised the tender flesh of her shoulders but his eyes bruised her more.

"Jerry!"

His hands had caught the two sides of the flimsy shirt-waist at the breast and torn it aside, off her shoulders, off her arms.

"Have pity, Jerry," she whimpered.

"'Have pity, Jerry,' she whimpered."

"Pity, yes," he laughed wildly. "Kiss me. You want to be kissed. I'll kill you with kissing. Death like this—such a death—!"

She struggled more furiously, struck, kissed and struck again. But Jerry's madness triumphed—her own.

At this point Jerry hid his face in his hands, trembling violently.

"I was out of my head, Roger. Tell me that I was, for the love of God. I must have been. It was horrible. I did not know. I can scarcely remember now. Death would have been better—for her, for me—than that. My God! If only you had told me, something. I could have gone away, I think—before—But to have knowledge come

like that, engulfing, flooding, drowning with its terrible bitterness. And Marcia—" He raised his head piteously, "I asked her to marry me, Roger—at once. But she only looked at me with strange eyes.

"'Marriage!' she said, 'My God!' It was almost as though I had uttered a sacrilege.

"I pleaded with her gently, but she shook me off. A fearful change had come over her. She drew away and looked at me with alien eyes.

"'Marriage!' she repeated. '*You!*'

"'Marry me tomorrow, Marcia—'

"She thrust her naked arms in front of her, their tatters flying, the rags of her honor.

"'Oh, God! How I loathe you!'

"'Marcia!'

"'Go away from me. Go!'

"She put her arm before her eyes as though to shut out the sight of me.

"'For God's sake, go,' she repeated, with words that cut like knives. 'Leave me alone, alone.'

"'I must see you—tomorrow.'

"She turned on me furiously.

"'No, no, no,' she screamed, 'not tomorrow—or ever. It would kill me to see you. Kill me. Go away—never comeback. Do you hear? Never! Never!'

"She was in a harrowing condition now, mad where I was quite sane. There was nothing left for me to do. I turned as in a daze into the woods and wandered around as though only half-awake, stupidly trying to plan. At last I went back to the spring. Marcia had gone—gone out of my life—

"That's all, Roger. I wrote to her from New York, from Manitoba, from the ranch in Colorado, repeating my offer of marriage, but she has never answered me. You know the rest—" a slow and rather bitter smile crossed his features. "She goes about—with Lloyd—and others. She is gay. Her picture is in the papers and magazines—at hunt-meets—bazaars. She has forgotten—and I—No, I can never forget. She will dwell with me all the days I live. I can't forget or forgive—myself. Why, Roger, the Mission—the place that I'm giving money to support—to keep those women. You understand—I know now. *She* might be one of them and I—I would have brought her there."

I had been stricken dumb by the fearful revelation of Jerry's sin. I was silent, thinking of new words of comfort for him and for myself—for I was not innocent—but they would not come, and Jerry rose and walked the length of the room. "I've got to get away from it all again—somewhere. I can't stay here. Everything brings it all back. I'm going away."

"Going, Jerry? Where?"

"I don't know. I've made a kind of plan. But I mustn't tell. I don't want you to know or anyone. But I've got to leave here." He smiled a little as he saw the anxious look in my eyes. "Oh, don't worry. I'm going to be all right, I don't drink, you know."

I think he was really a little proud of that admission.

"Are you sure, Jerry," I asked after awhile, "that you care nothing for Marcia?"

He took a turn up and down the room before he replied. And then, quite calmly:

"It's curious, Roger. She has gone out of my life. Gone like—like a burned candle. I do not love her, nor ever could again, and yet I would marry her tomorrow if she would have me. I wrote her again yesterday, and I'm going to try to see her in New York. But I'll fail. My face would always be a reproach to her. I know. She is like that—bitter. I don't know that I can blame her."

It was long past midnight. Jerry went to bed. But I sat oblivious of the passing hours, wide awake, somber, my gaze fixed upon the square of the window which turned from moonlight to dark and then at last shimmered with the dusk of the dawn.

CHAPTER XXVII

REVELATIONS

It was at Jerry's request that I stayed on at Horsham Manor, working as I could upon

my book, and now I think with a new knowledge of the meaning of life as I had learned it through Jerry's failure. I discovered comfort in the words of St. Paul, and prayed that out of spiritual death the seed of a new life might germinate. Jerry had told me nothing on leaving the Manor of his plans or purposes, and I made no move to seek him out, aware of a new confidence growing in me that wherever Jerry was, whatever he was doing, no new harm would come to him. He had found himself at last.

Upon the occasion of my infrequent visits to the city I did myself the honor of calling at the house in Washington Square, where I made the acquaintance of a fair majority of the feminine Habberton family, enjoying long chats with Una in which the bonds of our friendship were still more firmly cemented. She told me much of her work and of course we spoke of Jerry, but if she had any news of him she gave no sign of it, and I always left the house no wiser as to his occupation or whereabouts than when I had entered it. But in the early days of the following autumn something in her manner, I cannot tell what, perhaps the very quality of her content, advised me that she was in some sort of communication with Jerry and that she was no longer borrowing trouble in his behalf. As I made my way back to the Manor in the train next day, I found the conviction growing in my mind that Jerry must be somewhere in New York. Una's orbit had not changed. Could it be that Jerry's was adapting itself to hers? Jack Ballard had told me that Jerry had not been seen at the office and that Ballard, Senior, had washed his hands of him in despair, but had agreed to have large amounts deposited at stated intervals in the bank. Of course this proved nothing, for Jerry might have been using his bank for a forwarding address, but the little I knew fitted surprisingly well with my own guesses as to Jerry's destiny. Perhaps the wish was father to the thought. At any rate, I returned to the Manor and resumed my work with a singularly tranquil mind, aware for the first time in months of a quiet exhilaration which made the mere fact of existence a delight. Perhaps after all I—my philosophy—Jerry—were still to be vindicated!

It was not until the following summer that I learned the truth. An item in the evening paper caught my eye. It told of the wonderful boys' club that was being erected in Blank Street, by an unknown philanthropist. The building was six stories in height, covering half a block, and was to contain a large gymnasium, a marble swimming pool, an auditorium, school-rooms, drill hall for the Boy Scout organization, clubrooms, billiard and pool tables, and sleeping quarters for a small army. The story was written in the form of an interview with the representative of the philanthropist, a Mr. John V. Gillespie, who was seeing personally to every detail of the planning and construction. The boys' club had already been in existence for a year, occupying hired quarters, also under the supervision and control of the aforesaid Gillespie, who, it seemed, had the destinies of the young males of the district in which the building was situated, already in the hollow of his hand. The unknown philanthropist was Jerry, of course. I read between the lines, the marble pool which Una had envied us, the gymnasium, with "ropes to pull." Jerry and Una had frequently discussed the further needs of the district and the prospective boys' club, I knew, was one of her hobbies and his.

As may be imagined not many hours elapsed before I made a pilgrimage to the city and visited the wonderful new structure, already under roof, which was to house the heirs of Jerry's munificence. It was of truly splendid proportions and already gave roughly the shape of its different rooms, which in point of dimensions left nothing to be desired. The operation would, I should think, make short work of a million dollars and, with its endowment, two million perhaps! Jerry was beginning well.

I inquired of the superintendent for Mr. Gillespie and was informed that that gentleman could probably be found at the temporary building in the adjoining street. Thither, therefore, I went, sure that after so great a lapse of time Jerry must pardon my interest and intrusion. I was not surprised to discover that Mr. John V. Gillespie was no less a person than Jerry himself, who was at the moment of my arrival busily engaged with a Scoutmaster, helping to teach the setting-up exercises. I slipped into the room unobtrusively, a place at the rear of the building—a dance hall it had once been, as I afterwards learned—and patched the youngsters going through their drill. Jerry walked around among them, with a word here, a touch on a shoulder there, while the boys struggled manfully for perfection. Jerry was so interested that he would not have seen me had I not risen as he passed my way and offered my hand.

"Roger! By George!"

He clapped his arms around me at once and gave me a bear hug.

"Good old Dry-as-dust!" he cried, "I was wondering how soon you'd find me out."

"You're not angry?"

"Bless your heart! I've been thinking of writing you about everything, but I wanted to wait until things were a little further along."

"But Jerry—"

"Mum's the word," he whispered. "That's not my name down here."

"Yes, I know," I smiled. "I've seen it in the papers."

"Oh! You saw that? And guessed?" he grinned. Then gave some word to the Scoutmaster and led me to his office—a small room beside the entrance at the front of the building—and closed the door. In this better light I had the opportunity to examine him at my leisure while he talked. He was a little thinner in face and body, but not spare or lean. There were no shadows in his eyes, which were finely lighted by his new enthusiasm. The new fire had burned out the old. He was splendid with happiness.

"Oh! You've no idea of the fun I'm getting out of the thing, Roger. It's simply great! These boys are fine to work with. They only need a chance. I've got several hundred of 'em lined up already, all nationalities ready for the melting-pot—Jews, Italians, Irish, all religions. I've got the families lined up, too, been to see 'em all personally. Rough lot, some of 'em—and dirty! Why, Roger, I never knew there was so much filth in all the world. I'm starting to clean up the boys, inside and out, getting them jobs and keeping the idle ones off the streets. Oh! It's going to take time, but we're going to get there in the end. You've seen the new building? Isn't it a corker? I haven't been idle, have I?"

"But how on earth," I asked, "have you managed to preserve your anonymity?"

"Oh, I keep pretty dark. I don't go uptown at all. I made a visit one night to Ballard Senior and made a clean breast of things and at last he gave in. You see he had given me up as an office possibility. In three years, you know, I'll come in—to all the money. In the meanwhile we've fixed things up to provide for our immediate needs down here."

"*Ours?*" I queried with a smile. He colored ever so slightly but went on unperturbed.

"Yes, you know Una's helping me. I couldn't have done a thing without Una. Her experience in dealing with these people has been simply invaluable. I thought—" he stopped to laugh—"I thought that all I had to do was just to spend the money and everything would work out all right. I made a lot of mistakes with these families at first, did a lot of harm in a way, offending the proud ones, spoiling the weak ones and all that, but I've learned a lot since I've been down here. We've devised a plan—a scientific one. It's really beautiful how it works. We're going to make these boys all self-supporting and give 'em an education at the same time: manual training, industrial art and science and all the rest of it. Here! you must go over the building with me. I've got just half an hour."

He snatched up his cap and we went around the corner, going over the building from cellar to roof, Jerry explaining breathlessly and I listening, wondering whether to be most astonished at the extraordinary change in his mode of thought or at the initiative which could have planned and executed so great a project. He spoke of Una constantly, "Una wanted this," or "Una suggested that," or "We had an awful row over the location of this thing, but Una was right." And then as an afterthought, "But then, she almost always is."

He wanted to give her all the credit, you see, and I think she must have deserved a great deal, but I saw in the newborn Jerry enough to convince me of his strength, intelligence and force. All his personality—and I had long known that he had one—had been poured into this fine practical work which at every turn bore the impress of a man's force, plus a woman's intelligence.

To the god from the machine (for as such, in spite of many ungodlike illusions, I still continued to regard myself) it seemed to me that all was going beautifully toward the consummation of my heart's fondest desire. And it was not until the following evening, when Jerry at last managed to find a chance to have a long talk with me, that I learned the truth.

It was a hot night in June. We had climbed to the roof of the new building for a breath of air, forsaking Jerry's small bedroom in the temporary quarters of the club where we had both been perspiring profusely. We sat upon the parapet smoking and talking of Jerry's plans and, since Una and the plans seemed to be a part of each other, of Una.

"I see her constantly, Roger," he said joyously. "We have regular meetings three times a week, sometimes at the Mission—and sometimes at the club, and when there isn't enough daytime—up in Washington Square. She has a wonderful mind for detail—carries everything in her head—figures, everything."

"And you're happy?" I asked.

"Need you ask?" he laughed. "I've never known what life was before. It's great just to live and see things, good, useful things grow under your very eyes, so personal when you've planned 'em yourself."

"And Una?"

"Oh, she's happy too. But then she's always happy, always was. It's her nature. I sometimes think she works a little too hard for her strength, but she never complains." He paused and looked down the side street to where the East River gleamed palely in the dusk night. "You know, Roger, I sometimes wish that she *would* complain. She just goes along, quietly planning—doing, without any fuss, accomplishing things where I fume and fret and get angry. She puts me to shame. She's a wonder—an angel, Roger." He smiled. "And yet she's human enough, always poking fun at a fellow, you know. I'm no match for her; I never was or will be." He grew quiet and neither of us spoke for a long while. We felt the life of the City stirring under us, but overhead were the stars, the same stars that hung above the peace of Horsham Manor, where in the old days we had dreamed our dreams.

"You care for her?" I ventured softly at last.

He did not speak at once. His gaze was afar.

"Care for her?" he murmured after awhile, "God help me! I love her with all the best of me, Roger. I always have loved her. It's so strange to me now that I never knew it before—so strange and pitiful—now when it is too late."

"Too late, boy?" I said with a smile. "Life for you, for you both, is just beginning."

"No, Roger; I would give everything in the world to be able to go to her and ask her to marry me. But I can't—" his voice sank and broke, "after *that*. I'm a beast—unclean."

He rose and took a pace away from me. "We mustn't speak of that—again. It makes me think of what I owe to—the other."

"You owe her nothing. She has refused you. She doesn't care. Her whole life avows it. She has forgotten. Why shouldn't you?"

"I can't forget. And I can't look in Una's eyes, Roger. They're so clear, so trusting; she believes in me—utterly. It's a mockery, to have her near me so much and not be able to tell her—"

"Tell her!" I broke in as he paused, "Waste no time. Tell her that you love her. Don't be a fool. She loves you. She always has. I know it."

He turned quickly, caught me by the shoulders and peered closely into my face. "You think so, Roger? Do you?" he said.

"I'm sure of it; from the very first."

Slowly his hands relaxed and he turned away. "No—I—can't. I would have to tell her all. I owe her that. She would despise me."

"You might at least give her that opportunity," I suggested dryly.

"No," he said softly. "I wouldn't dare. It would make a terrible difference between us. I couldn't."

And then his hand grasping my arm as he pushed me toward the stairway, "Never speak of this again, Roger—do you hear? Never." I nodded and said no more, for he had set me to thinking deeply, and I walked all the way uptown to my hotel turning the matter over in my mind, arriving, before sleep came, at a decision.

In the morning at half-past seven I dared to call Una upon the telephone. I knew her habits and she answered at once, agreeing to give me an hour before she went down town. When I reached the Habberton house she was ready for the street, and when I told her that I had something of importance to talk about, led the way over into the square where we found a deserted bench in a shady spot. It was a joyous morning of flickering sunlight and a pleasant commotion of hurrying people and moving traffic was all about us, in the midst of which we seemed unusually isolated. As I have related, there was a warm friendship between us. The girl knew that her mission at the Manor during Jerry's darkest hour had been an open book to me, but the fact that I knew that she had failed in it had made for no loss of pride. She knew too, I am sure, that I was aware of the real nature of her feelings for Jerry, but my own interest in and affection for them both had given me privileges in her friendship possessed not even by Jerry himself.

I wasted no words, though I chose to be careful in my use of them. With some deliberation, born of the difficulties of this second embassy, I told her all that I knew of Jerry's affair with Marcia Van Wyck, beginning with the parts of it which she knew, and leading by slow degrees to the moment when Jerry had abandoned his guests at the Manor and gone on his madman's quest of vengeance through the woods. I recalled to her the state of his mind, the indubitable evidences of his innocence, and then told of Jerry's meeting with Marcia and Lloyd by the spring in the pine wood. She sat, leaning slightly forward, her gaze on the sunlit arch, her

finely-drawn profile clearly outlined against the shadows of the bushes, saying nothing, listening as though to a twice-told tale. I could not tell all, but something in her calmness advised me that she had already guessed. There was knowledge in her eyes, not the hard knowledge one sees in the eyes of the women of the streets, but knowledge tempered with pity; wisdom tempered with charity for all sin, even for Jerry's. She did not speak for a long while and by this token I think she wished me to take her understanding for granted.

"Mr. Canby," she said at last softly. "I know something of the world, more, I think, in a way than you do, and the more I learn, the less I am inclined to judge. But of all the women in the world with whom I come in contact, the most dangerous, the most difficult to help, is the hypocrite. When a woman is weak one can pity. When she is defiant one can even admire, but the hypocrite is beyond the pale. She will fawn while her heart is untouched, she will assent while her mind is eluding you. And the worst hypocrite is the one who wears the mask of decency over a filthy mind. She is diseased, a moral leper—at large to contaminate. Jerry was helpless from the first. Oh, the pity of it!"

"It was my fault; mine is the blame," I muttered hoarsely.

"No," she said, gently putting her hand over mine. "I would not have you relinquish your idyl even now. Jerry is translated, but he is not changed. It is curious—you will think it strange—but I cannot find it in my heart to judge him. He has suffered much. Perhaps, God knows, a man cannot grow to his full stature except through knowledge of evil! Jerry has grown. He is a man—a man!"

Her eyes sparkled softly and my spirits rose.

"You care for him, Una? You can forgive him?"

"I—I care for him," she murmured. "You know I have, always."

"Can you forgive him?" I repeated. She remained silent and her gaze which sought the distant buildings was troubled. But I had gone too far to pause now.

"He worships you, Una," I blurted out. "He has told me. But he cannot speak. He is unclean, he says. Have pity on him, Una. Forgive him, forgive him—"

She turned toward me, her slate-blue eyes brimming with moisture. And then with one of those sudden transitions that were her greatest mystery and charm, she rose and with a quick touch of her fingers to mine, left me swiftly and in a moment was gone.

I stood a moment bewildered. Then I fingered in my pocket for Miss Gore's new address. That remarkable woman would discern what Una's conduct meant. Queer creatures, women! But interesting, strangely interesting....

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