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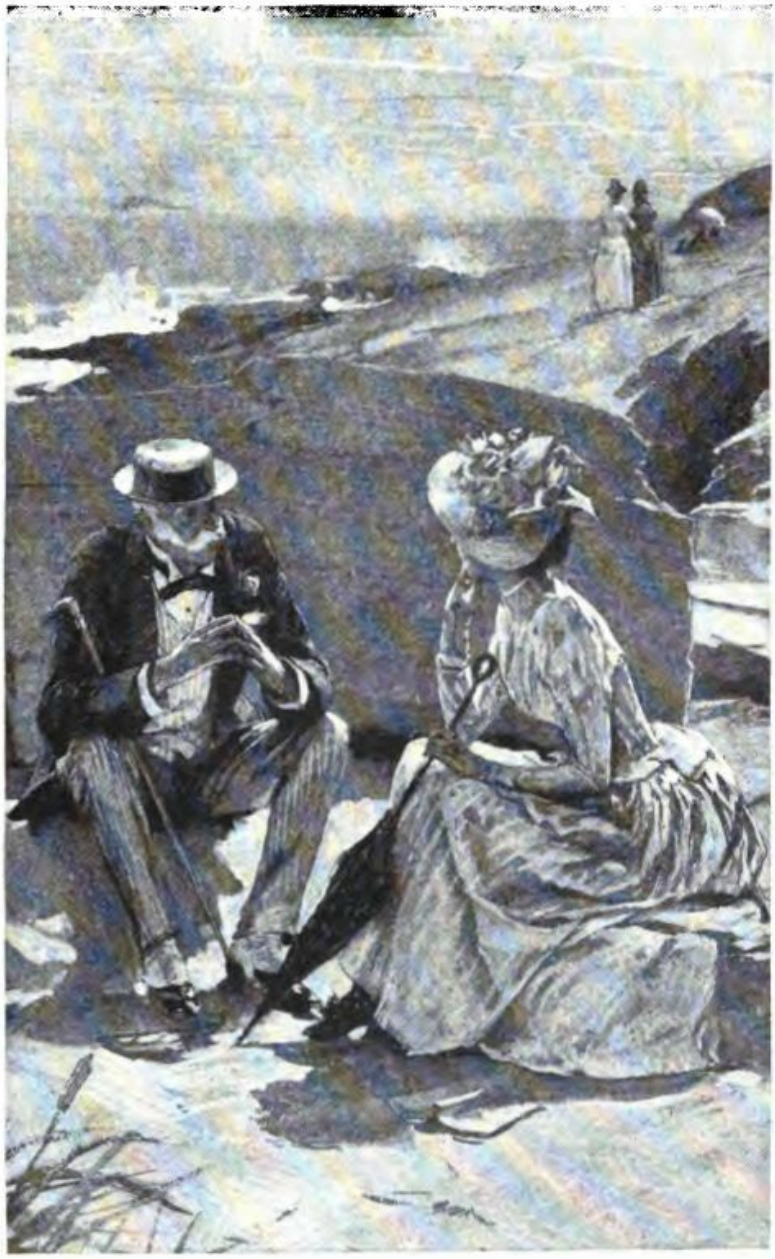
THE UNCLE OF AN ANGEL

By Thomas A. Janvier



"When Miss Lee and Mr. Brown regularly went down to the rocks."
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WHEN Mr. Hutchinson Port, a single gentleman who admitted that he was forty-seven years old and who actually was rising sixty, of strongly fixed personal habits, and with the most positive opinions upon every conceivable subject, came to know that by the death of his widowed sister he had been placed in the position of guardian of that sister's only daughter, Dorothy, his promptly formed and tersely expressed conception of the situation was that the agency by which it had been brought about was distinctively diabolical. The fact may be added that during the subsequent brief term of his guardianship Mr. Port found no more reason for

I.

When Mr. Hutchinson. Port, a single gentleman who admitted that he was forty-seven years old and who actually was rising sixty, of strongly fixed personal habits, and with the most positive opinions upon every conceivable subject, came to know that by the death of his widowed sister he had been placed in the position of guardian of that sister's only daughter, Dorothy, his promptly formed and tersely expressed conception of the situation was that the agency by which it had been brought about was distinctively diabolical. The fact may be added that during the subsequent brief term of his guardianship Mr. Port found no more reason for reversing this hastily formed opinion than did the late King David for reversing his hastily expressed views in regard to the general tendency of mankind towards untruthfulness.

The two redeeming features of Mr. Port's trying situation were that his duties as a guardian did not begin at all until his very unnecessary ward was nearly nineteen years old; and did not begin actively—his ward having elected to remain in France for a season, under the mild direction of the elderly cousin who had been her mother's travelling companion—until she was almost twenty. When she was one-and-twenty, as Mr. Port reflected with much satisfaction, he would be rid of her.

Neither by nature nor by education had Mr. Hutchinson Port been fitted to discharge the duties which thus were thrust upon him. His disposition was introspective—but less in a philosophical sense than a physiological, for the central point of his introspection was his liver. That he made something of a fetich of this organ will not appear surprising when the fact is stated that Mr. Port was a Philadelphian. In that city of eminent good cheer livers are developed to a degree that only Strasburg can emulate.

Naturally, Mr. Port's views of life were bounded, more or less, by what he could eat with impunity; yet beyond this somewhat contracted region his thoughts strayed pleasantly afield into the far wider region of the things which he could not eat with impunity; but which, with a truly Spartan epicureanism, he did eat—and bravely accepted the bilious consequences! The slightly anxious, yet determined, expression that would

appear upon Mr. Port's cleanshaven, ruddy countenance as he settled himself to the discussion of an especially good and especially dangerous dinner betrayed heroic possibilities in his nature which, being otherwise directed, would have won for him glory upon the martial field.

In minor matters—that is to say, in all relations of life not pertaining to eating—Mr. Port was very much what was to be expected of him from his birth and from his environment. Every Sunday, with an exemplary piety, he sat solitary in the great square pew in St. Peter's which had been occupied by successive generations of Ports ever since the year 1761, when the existing church was completed. Every other day of the week, from his late breakfast-time for some hours onward, he sat at his own particular window of the Philadelphia Club and contemplated disparagingly the outside world over the top of his magazine or newspaper. At four, precisely, for his liver's sake, he rode in the Park; and for so stout a gentleman Mr. Port was an excellent horseman.

"And for so stout a gentleman Mr. Port was an excellent horseman."

On rare occasions he dined at his club. Usually, he dined out; for while generally regarded as a very disagreeable person at dinners—because of his habit of finding fault with his food on the dual ground of hygiene and quality—he was in social demand because his presence at a dinner was a sure indication that the giver of it had a good culinary reputation; and in Philadelphia such a reputation is most highly prized. An irrelevant New York person, after meeting Mr. Port at several of the serious dinnerparties peculiar to Philadelphia, had described him as the animated skeleton; and had supplemented this discourteous remark with the still more discourteous observation that as a feature of a feast the Egyptian article was to be preferred—because it did not overeat itself, and did keep its mouth shut. However, Mr. Port's obvious rotundity destroyed what little point was to be found in this meagre witticism; and, if it had not, the fact is well-known in Philadelphia that New Yorkers, being descended not from an honorable Quaker ancestry but from successful operations in Wall Street, are not to be held accountable for their unfortunate but unavoidable manifestations of a frivolity at once inelegant and indecorous.

In regard to his summers, Mr. Port—after a month spent for the good of his liver in taking the waters at the White Sulphur—of course went to Narragan-sett Pier. It may be accepted as an incontrovertible truth that a Philadelphian of a certain class who missed coming to the Pier for August would refuse to believe, for that year at least, in the alternation of the four seasons; while an enforced absence from that damply delightful watering-place for two successive summers very probably would lead to a rejection of the entire Copernican system.

II.

“Poor dear mamma and I did not have a harsh word for years, Uncle Hutchinson,” Miss Lee explained, in the course of the somewhat animated discussion that arose in consequence of Mr. Port’s declaration that a part of their summer would be passed, in accordance with his usual custom, at the White Sulphur, and of Dorothy’s declaration that she did not want to go there. This, her first summer in America, was the third summer after Mrs. Lee’s translation; and since Dorothy had come into colors again she naturally wanted to make the most of them. “No, not a single harsh word did we ever have. We always agreed perfectly, you know; or if mamma thought differently at first she always ended by seeing that my view of the matter was the right one. The only serious difference that I remember since I was quite a little girl was that last autumn in Paris; when I had everything so perfectly arranged for a delightful winter in St. Petersburg, and when mamma was completely set in her own mind that we must go to the south of France. Her cough was getting very bad then, you know, and she said that a winter in Russia certainly would kill her. I don’t think it would have killed her, at least not especially; but the doctor backed mamma up—and said some horrid things to me in his polite French way—and declared that St. Petersburg was not even to be thought of.

“And so, when I found that they were both against me that way, of course I sacrificed my own feelings and told mamma that I would do just what she wanted. And mamma cried and kissed me, and said that I was an angel: wasn’t it sweet of her? To be sure, though, she was having her own way, and I wasn’t; and I think that I was an angel myself, for I did want to go to Russia dreadfully. After all, as things turned out, we might almost as well have gone; for poor dear mamma, you know, died that winter anyway. But I’m glad I did what I could to please her, and that she called me an angel for doing it. Don’t you think that I was one? And don’t you feel, sir, that it is something of an honor to be an angel’s uncle?

“Now suppose I kiss you right on your dear little bald spot.”

“Now suppose I kiss you right on your dear little bald spot, and that we make up our minds not to go to that horrid sulphur place at all. Everybody says that it is old-fashioned and stupid; and that is not the kind of an American watering-place that I want to see, you know. It would have been all very well if we’d gone there while I was in mourning, and had to be proper and quiet and retired, and all that; but I’m not in mourning any longer, Uncle Hutchinson—and you haven’t said yet how you like this breakfast gown. Do you have to be told that white lace over pale-blue silk is very becoming to your angel niece, Uncle Hutchinson? And now you shall have your kiss, and then the matter will be settled.” With which words Miss Lee—a somewhat bewildering but unquestionably delightful effect in blond and blue—fluttered up to her elderly relative, embraced him with a graceful energy, and bestowed upon his bald spot the promised kiss.

“But—but indeed, my dear,” responded Mr. Port, when he had emerged from Miss Lee’s enfolding arms, “you know that going to the White Sulphur is not a mere matter of pleasure with me; it is one of hygienic necessity. You forget, Dorothy”—Mr. Port spoke with a most earnest seriousness—“you forget my liver.”

“Now, Uncle Hutchinson, what is the use of talking about your liver that way? Haven’t you told me a great many times already that it is an hereditary liver, and that nothing you can do to it ever will make it go right? And if it is bound to go wrong anyway, why can’t you just try to forget all about it and have as pleasant a time as possible? That’s the doctrine that I always preached to poor dear mamma—she had an hereditary liver too, you know—and it’s a very good one.

“Anyhow, I’ve heard mamma say countless times that Saratoga was a wonderfully good place for livers; now why can’t we go there? Mamma always said that Saratoga was simply delightful—horse-racing going on all the time, and lovely drives, and rowing on the lake, and dancing all night long, and all sorts of lovely things. Let’s go to Saratoga, Uncle Hutchinson! Mamma said that the food there was delicious—and you know you always are grumbling about the food those sulphur people give you.

“But what really would be best of all for you, Uncle Hutchinson,” Miss Lee continued, with increasing animation, “is Carlsbad. Yes, that’s what you really want—and while you are drinking the horrid waters I can be having a nice time, you know. Then, when you have finished your course, we can take a run into Switzerland; and after that, in the autumn, we might go over to Vienna—you will be delighted with the Vienna restaurants, and they do have such good white wines there. And then, from Vienna, we really can go on and have a winter in Russia. Just think how perfectly delightful it will be to drive about in sledges, all wrapped up in furs”—Mr. Port shuddered; he detested cold weather—“and to go to the court balls, and even, perhaps, to be present the next time they assassinate the Czar! Oh, what a good time we are going to have! Do write at once, this very day, Uncle Hutchinson, to Carlsbad and engage our rooms.”

To a person of Mr. Port’s staid, deliberate temperament this rapid outlining of a year of foreign travel, and this prompt assumption that the outline was to be immediately filled in and made a reality, was upsetting. His mental processes were of the Philadelphia sort, and when Miss Lee had completed the sketch of her European project he still was engaged in consideration of her argument in favor of throwing over the White Sulphur for Saratoga. However, he had comprehended enough of her larger plan to perceive that by accepting Saratoga promptly he might be spared the necessity of combating a far more serious assault upon his peace of mind and digestion. Travel of any sort was loathsome to Mr. Port, for it involved much hasty and inconsiderate eating.

“Very well,” he said, but not cheerfully, for this was the first time in a great many years that he had not made and acted upon plans shaped wholly in his own interest, “we will try Saratoga, since you so especially desire it; but if the waters affect my liver unfavorably we shall go to the White Sulphur at once.”

“What! We are not to go to Carlsbad, then? Oh, Uncle Hutchinson, I had set my heart upon it! Don’t, now don’t be in a hurry to say positively that we won’t go. Think how much good the waters will do you, and think of what a lovely time you can have when your course is over, and you can eat just as much as you want of anything!”

But even by this blissful prospect Mr. Port was not to be lured; and Dorothy, who combined a good deal of the wisdom of the serpent with her presumable innocence of the dove, perceived that it was the part of prudence not further to press for larger victory.

“And from Saratoga, of course, we shall go to the Pier,” said Mr. Port, but with a certain aggressiveness of tone that gave to his assertion the air of a proposition in support of which argument might be required.

“To Narragansett, you mean? Oh, certainly. From what several people have told me about Narragansett I think that it must be quite entertaining, and I want to see it. And of course, Uncle Hutchinson, even if I didn’t care about it at all, I should go all the same; for I want to fall in exactly with your plans and put you to as little trouble as possible, you know. For if your angel wasn’t willing to be self-sacrificing, she really wouldn’t be an angel at all.”

Pleasing though this statement of Early Christian sentiment was, it struck Mr. Port—as he subsequently revolved it slowly in his slowly-moving mind—as lacking a little on the side of practicality; for Miss Lee, so far, unquestionably had contrived to upset with a fine equanimity every one of his plans that was not absolutely identical with her own.

III.

On the whole, the Saratoga expedition was not a success. Even on the journey, coming up by the limited train, Miss Lee was not favorably impressed by the appearance of her fellow-passengers. Nearly all of the men in the car (most of whom immediately betook themselves to the bar-room, euphoniously styled a buffet, at the head of the train) were of a type that would have suggested to one accustomed to American life that variety of it which is found seated in the high places of the government of the city of New York; and the

aggressively dressed and too abundantly jewelled female companions of these men, heavily built, heavy browed, with faces marked in hard lines, and with aggressive eyes schooled to look out upon the world with a necessarily emphatic self-assertion, were of a type that, without special knowledge of American ways, was entirely recognizable. Albeit Miss Lee, having spent much time in the mixed society of various European watering-places, was not by any means an unsophisticated young person, and was not at all a squeamish one, she was sensibly relieved by finding that the chair next to hers was occupied by a silvery-haired old lady of the most unquestionable respectability; and her composure was further restored, presently, by the return to his chair, on the other side of her of Mr. Port: who had betaken himself to what the conductor had told him was the smoking-room, and who, finding himself in a bar-room, surrounded by a throng of hard-drinking, foul-mouthed men, had sacrificed his much-loved cigar in order to free himself from such distinctly offensive surroundings.

At their hotel, and elsewhere, Miss Lee and her uncle encountered many of their fellow-passengers by the limited train, together with others of a like sort which previous trains had brought thither; and while, on the whole, these were about balanced by a more desirable class of visitors, they were in such force as to give to the life of the place a very positive tone.

At the end of a week Dorothy avowed herself disappointed. “I never did think much of poor dear mamma’s taste, you know, Uncle Hutchinson,” she said, with her customary frankness, “and what she found to like in this place I’m sure I can’t imagine. It’s tawdry and it’s vulgar; and as for its morals, I think that it’s worse than Monte Carlo. I suppose that there is a nice side to it, for I do see a few nice people; but, somehow, they all seem to stand off from each other as though they were afraid here to take any chances at all with strangers. And I don’t blame them, Uncle Hutchinson, for I feel just that way myself. What you ought to have done was to have hired a cottage, and then people would have taken the trouble to find out about us; and when they’d found that we were not all sorts of horrid things we should have got into the right set, and no doubt, at least if we’d stayed here through August, we should have had a very nice time.

“But we’re not having a nice time, here at this noisy hotel, Uncle Hutchinson, where the band can’t keep quiet for half an hour at a time, and where the only notion that people seem to have of amusement is to overdress themselves and wear diamonds to dinner and sit in crowds on the verandas and dance at night with any stranger who can get another stranger to introduce him and to drive over on fine afternoons to that place by the lake and drink mixed drinks until some of them actually get tipsy. I really think that it all is positively horrid. And so I’m quite willing now to go to the White Sulphur. It is stupid, I know, but I’ve always heard that it is intensely respectable. I will get my packing all done this afternoon, and we will start to-morrow morning; and I think that you’d better go and telegraph for rooms right away.”

But to Dorothy’s surprise, and also to her chagrin, Mr. Port refused to entertain her proposition. He fully agreed with her in her derogatory estimate of Saratoga life as found at Saratoga hotels; and he cherished also a private grief incident to his (mistaken) belief that the cooking was not so good as he remembered it, bright in the glamour of his sound digestion in his youthful past. On the other hand, however, the waters certainly were having a most salutary effect upon his liver; and the move to Virginia would involve spending two days of hot weather in toilsome travel, sustained only by such food as railway restaurants afford. Therefore Mr. Port declared decidedly that until the end of July they would remain where they were—and so gave his niece the doubtful pleasure of an entirely new experience by compelling her to do something that she did not want to do at all. It was a comfort to Mr. Port, in later years, to remember that he had got ahead of Dorothy once, anyhow.

Being a very charming young person, Miss Lee could not, of course, be grumpy; yet grumpiness certainly would have been the proper word with which to describe her mood during her last fortnight at Saratoga had she not possessed such extraordinarily fine gray eyes and such an admirably dimpled chin. The fact must be admitted that she contrived to make her uncle’s life so much of a burden to him that his staying powers were strained to the utmost Indeed, he admitted to himself that he could not have held out against such tactics for another week; and he perceived that he had done injustice to his departed sister in thinking—as he certainly had thought, and even had expressed on more than one occasion in writing—that in permitting her European movements to be shaped in accordance with her daughter’s fancies she had exhibited an inexcusable weakness.

It was a relief to Mr. Port’s mind, and also to his digestion—for Dorothy’s grumpiness produced an effect distinctly bilious—when the end of July arrived and his own and his charming ward’s views once more were brought into harmony by the move to Narragansett Pier. Fortunately, while somewhat disposed to stand upon her own rights, Miss Lee was not a person who bore malice; a pleasing fact that became manifest on the moment that she began to pack her trunks.

“I am afraid, Uncle Hutchinson,” she observed, on the morning that this important step towards departure was taken—“I am afraid that during the past week or so your angel may not have been quite as much of an angel as usual.”

“No,” replied Mr. Port, with a colloquial disregard of grammatical construction, and with perhaps unnecessary emphasis, “I don’t think she has.”

“But from this moment onward,” Dorothy continued, courteously ignoring her uncle’s not too courteous interpolation, and airily relegating into oblivion the recent past, “she expects to manifest her angelic qualities to an extent that will make her appear unfit for earth. Very possibly she may even grow a pair of wings and fly quite away from you, sir—right up among the clouds, where the other angels are! And how would you like that, Uncle Hutchinson?”

In the sincere seclusion of his inner consciousness Mr. Port admitted the thought that if Dorothy had resolved herself into an angelic *vol-au-vent* (a simile that came naturally to his mind) at any time during the preceding fortnight he probably would have accepted the situation with a commendable equanimity. But what he actually said was that her departure in this aerated fashion would make him profoundly miserable. Mr. Port was a little astonished at himself when he was delivered of this gallant speech; for gallant speeches, as he very well knew, were not at all in his line.

On the amicable basis thus established, Miss Lee and her guardian resumed their travels; and, excepting only Mr. Port's personal misery incident to the alimentary exigencies of railway transportation, their journey from the central region of New York to the seaboard of Rhode Island was accomplished without misadventure.

IV.

In regard to Narragansett Pier, Miss Lee's opinions, the which she was neither slow in forming nor unduly cautious in expressing, at first were unfavorable.

"And so *this* is 'the Pier,' is it?" she observed in a tone by no means expressive of approval as she stood on the hotel veranda on the day of her arrival, and contemplated the rather limited prospect that was bounded at one end by the Casino and at the other by the coal-elevator. "If those smelly little stones out there are 'the Rocks' that people talk about at such a rate I must confess that I am disappointed in them"—Mr. Port hastened to assure her that the Rocks were in quite a different direction—"and if that is the Casino, while it seems a nice sort of a place, I really think that they might have managed the arch so as not to have that horrid green house showing under it. And what little poor affairs the hotels are! Really, Uncle Hutchinson, I don't see what there is in this little place to make such a fuss about."

"Dorothy," replied Mr. Port, with much solemnity, "you evidently forget—though I certainly have mentioned the fact to you repeatedly—that the climate of this portion of Rhode Island is the most distinctively antibilious climate to be found upon the whole coast of North America. For persons possessing delicate livers—"

"Oh, bother delicate livers—at least, I beg your pardon, Uncle Hutchinson," for an expression of such positive pain had come into Mr. Port's face at this irreverent reference to an organ that he regarded as sacred that even Dorothy was forced to make some sort of an apology. "Of course I don't want to bother your poor liver more than it is bothered anyway; but, you know, I haven't got a liver, and I don't care for climates a bit. What I mean is: what do people do here to have a good time?"

"In the morning," replied Mr. Port, "they bathe, and in the afternoon they drive to the Point. This morning we shall bathe, Dorothy—bathing is an admirable liver tonic—and this afternoon we shall drive to the Point."

"Good heavens! Is that all?" exclaimed Miss Lee. "Why, it's worse than Saratoga. Do you mean to say, Uncle Hutchinson, that people don't dance here, and don't go yachting, and don't have lunch-parties, and don't play tennis, and don't even have afternoon teas?"

"I believe that some of these things are done here," replied Mr. Port, in a tone that implied that such frivolities were quite beyond the lines of his own personal interests. "Yes," he continued, "I am sure that all of them are done here now—for the Pier is not what it used to be, Dorothy. The quiet air of intense respectability that characterized Narragansett when it was the resort only of a few of the best families of Philadelphia has departed from it—I fear forever! But, thank Heaven, its climatic characteristics remain intact. When you are older, Dorothy, and your liver asserts itself, you will appreciate this incomparable climate at its proper value."

"Well, it hasn't asserted itself yet, you know; and I must say I'm devoutly thankful that something has happened to wake up the quiet and intensely respectable Philadelphians before I had to come here. But I'm very glad, dear Uncle Hutchinson," Miss Lee continued, winningly, "that this climate is so good for you, and I'm sure I hope that you won't have a single bilious attack all the time that you are here. And you'll take your angel to the dances, and to see the tennis, and you'll give her lunch-parties, and you'll take her yachting, won't you, you dear? But I know you will; and if this were not such a very conspicuous place, and might make a scandal, I'd give you a very sweet kiss to pay you in advance for all the trouble that you are going to take to make your angel enjoy herself. You needn't bother about the teas, Uncle Hutchinson—for the most part they're only women, and stupid."

Being still somewhat cast down by painful memories of that trying final fortnight in Saratoga, during which he and his niece had pulled so strongly in opposite directions, Mr. Port heard with a lively alarm this declaration of a plan of campaign which, if carried out, would wreck hopelessly his own comfort of body and peace of mind. Obviously, this was no time for faltering. If the catastrophe was to be averted, he must speak out at once and with a decisive energy.

"I need not tell you, Dorothy," he began, speaking in a most grave and earnest tone, "that it is my desire to discharge in the amplest and kindest manner my duties towards you as a guardian—"

"I'm sure of it, and of course you needn't tell me, you dearest dear—and we might begin with just a little lunch to-day. The breakfast was horrid, and I didn't get half enough even of what there was."

"But I must say now," Mr. Port went on—keenly regretting the unfortunate beginning that he had given to his declaration of independence, but judiciously ignoring Dorothy's shrewd perversion of it—"that your several suggestions literally are impossibilities. I admit that dancing for a short period, at about an hour after each meal, is an admirable exercise that produces a most salutary effect upon the digestive apparatus; but persistent dancing until an unduly late period of the night is a practice as unhygienic as, in the mixed company of a watering-place, it is socially objectionable.

"Tennis is an absurdity worthy of the vacuous minds of those who engage in it.. To suggest that I shall sit in a cramped position in a draughty gallery for several hours at a stretch in order to watch empty-headed young men playing a perverted form of battledoor and shuttlecock across a net, is to imply that they and I are upon the same intellectual level; and this, I trust, is not the case.

"As you certainly should remember, Dorothy, all persons of a bilious habit suffer severely from seasickness; a fact that, of course, disposes effectually of your yachting plans. For you are not desirous, I am sure, of purchasing your own selfish enjoyment—if you possibly can have enjoyment on board a yacht—at the cost of

my intense personal misery.

“But in regard to the lunches, my dear”—Mr. Port’s tone softened perceptibly—“there certainly is something to be said. The food here at the hotel, I admit, is atrocious, and at the Casino it is possible occasionally to procure something eatable. Yes, I shall have much pleasure in giving a lunch this very morning to my angel” (Mr. Port, warming in advance under the genial influence of the croquette and salad that he intended to order, became playful), “for what you said in regard to the breakfast, Dorothy, was quite true—it was abominable. If you will excuse me, I will just step down to the Casino now and give my order; then things will be all ready for us when we get back from the bath.”

And such was Miss Lee’s generalship that she rested content with her success in one direction, and deferred until a more convenient season her further demands. She was a reasonable young woman, and was quite satisfied with accomplishing one thing at a time.

V.

Two or three days later Dorothy advanced her second parallel. In the interval they had bathed every morning and had driven to the Point every afternoon, and they had held converse upon the veranda of the hotel every evening until ten o’clock with certain eminently respectable people from Philadelphia, by whom Dorothy was bored, as she did not hesitate to confess, almost to desperation. Further, Mr. Port had given a lunch-party to which these same Philadelphians were invited; and his niece had informed him, when the festivity was at an end, that if he did anything like that again she certainly would either run away or drown herself. Any trials in this world or any dangers in the next, she declared, were preferable to sitting opposite to such a person as Mrs. Logan Rittenhouse, who talked nothing but uninteresting scandal and crochet, and next to Mr. Pennington Brown, who talked only about peoples’ great-grandfathers and great-aunts.

It was with a lively alarm that Mr. Port noted these signs of discontent, together with returning symptoms of the grumpiness which had disturbed his comfort and digestion at Saratoga; and it was most selfishly in his own self-interest that he tried to think of something that would afford his niece amusement. Miss Lee, when she perceived that her intelligently laid plans were working successfully, was graciously pleased to assist him.

“It is a great pity, Uncle Hutchinson,” she vouchsafed to remark on the fourth day of suppressed domestic sunshine, “that you don’t like tennis. Don’t you think, for your angel’s sake, that you could go for just a little while this afternoon? There’s going to be a capital match this afternoon, and your angel does so want to see it. You haven’t been very—very agreeable the past two or three days, you dear, and I fear that your liver must be a little out of order. Really, you haven’t given your angel a single chance to be affectionate—and unless she can be affectionate and sweet and clinging, and things like that, you know, your poor angel is not happy at all. Suppose we try the tennis for just half an hour or so? It won’t be much of a sacrifice for you, and it will make your angel so happy that she will make herself dearer to you than ever, you precious thing.”

This form of address was disconcerting to Mr. Port, for during the period to which Miss Lee referred he certainly had been trying—not very cleverly, perhaps, for such efforts were not at all in his line, but still to the best of his ability—to make himself as agreeable as possible; and the effort on the part of his niece to be angelic, of which she spoke so confidently, he could not but think had fallen rather more than a little short of absolute success. The one ray of comfort that he extracted from Dorothy’s utterance was her reference to herself as his angel; he had come to understand that the use of this term was a sign of fair weather, and he valued it accordingly. But even for the sake of fair weather Mr. Port was not yet prepared to expose his elderly joints to the draughty discomforts of the galleries overhanging the tennis-court; and he said so, pretty decidedly. Almost anything else he was willing to do, he added, but that particular thing he would not do at all.

“As you please, Uncle Hutchinson,” Dorothy answered, in a tone of gloomy resignation. “I am used to hearing that. It is just what poor dear mamma used to say. She always was willing, you know, to do everything but the thing that I wanted her to do. I remember, just to mention a single instance, how mamma broke up a delightful water party on Windermere that Sir Gordon Graham had arranged expressly for us. The weather was rather misty, as it is apt to be up there, you know, but nothing worth minding when you are well wrapped up. But mamma said that if she went out in such a drizzle she knew her cough would be ever so much worse—and of course she couldn’t really know that it would be worse, for nobody truly knows what the weather is going to do to them—and so she wouldn’t go. And Sir Gordon was very much hurt about it, and never came near us again. And unless I’m very much mistaken, Uncle Hutchinson, mamma’s selfishness that day lost me the chance of being Lady Graham. So I’m used to being treated in this way, and you needn’t at all mind refusing me everything that I ask.” And, being delivered of this discourse, Miss Lee lapsed into a condition of funereal gloom.

At the end of another twenty-four hours Mr. Port knuckled under. “I have been thinking, Dorothy,” he said, “about what you were saying about tennis. It’s a beastly game, but since you insist upon seeing it I’ll take you for a little while this afternoon.” This was not the most gracious form of words in which an invitation could be couched; but Dorothy, who was not a stickler for forms provided she was successful in results, accepted it with alacrity. Later in the day, as they returned from the Casino, she declared:

“Your angel has had a lovely afternoon, Uncle Hutchinson, and she is sure that you have had a lovely afternoon too. And now that you’ve found what fun there is in looking at tennis, we’ll go every day, won’t we, dear? Sometimes, you know, you are just a little, just a very little prejudiced about things; but you are so good and sweet-tempered that your prejudices never last long, and so your angel cannot help loving you a great deal.”

Mr. Port, who was not at all sweet-tempered at that moment, was prepared to reply to the first half of this speech in terms of some emphasis; for he was limping a little, and a shocking twinge took him in his left shoulder when he attempted to raise his arm. But Dorothy's sudden shifting to polite personalities was of a nature to choke off his projected indignant utterance. Yet not feeling by any means prepared to meet in kind her pleasing manifestation of affection, Mr. Port was a little put to it to find any suitable form of response. After a moment's reflection he abandoned the attempt to reply coherently, and contented himself with grunting.

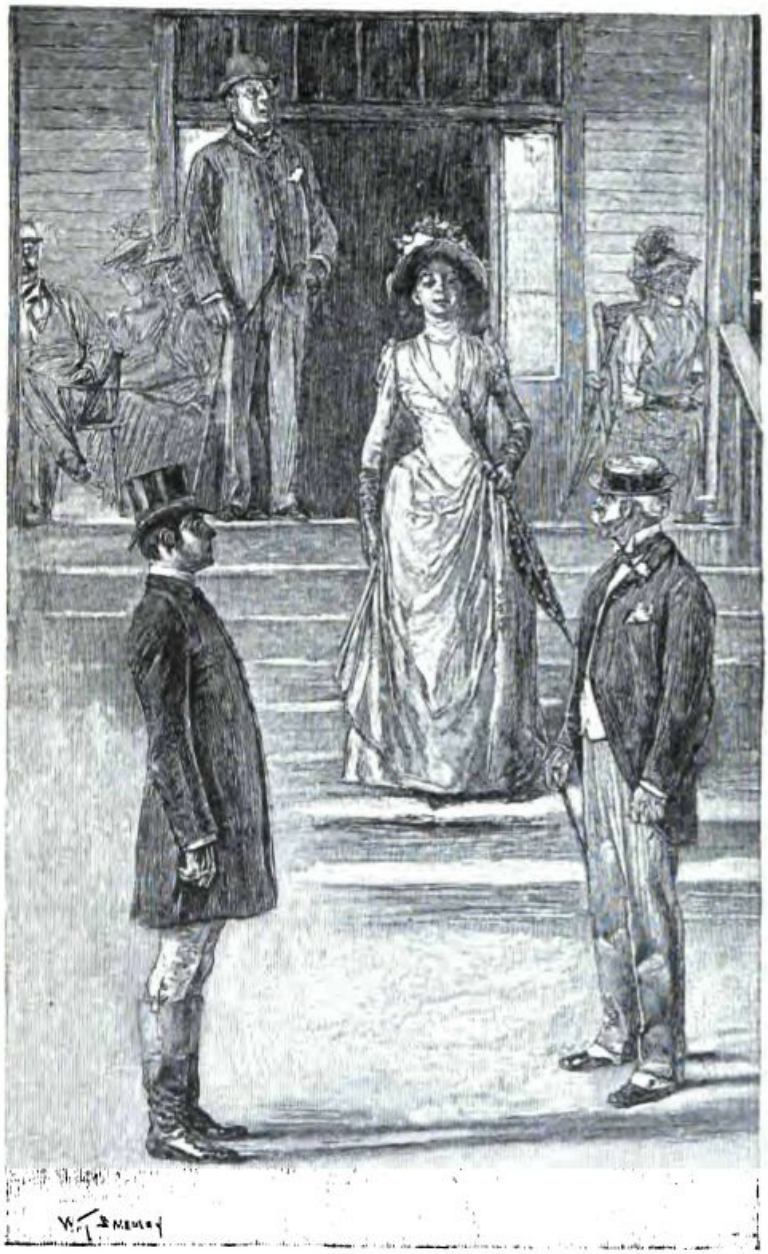
VI.

Encouraged by the success that was attending her unselfish efforts to harmonize her own and her uncle's conceptions of the temporal fitness of things, Miss Lee began to find life at the Pier quite supportable. "There's not much to do here," she declared, with her customary candor, "and the hotels—all ugly and all in a row—make it look like an overgrown charitable institution; and most of the people, I must say, are such a dismal lot that they might very well be the patients out for an airing. But, on the whole, I've been in several worse places, Uncle Hutchinson; and if only you'd take me to a hop now and then, instead of sitting every evening on the pokey hotel veranda talking Philadelphia twaddle with that stuffy old Mr. Pennington Brown, I might have rather a good time here."

"You will oblige me, Dorothy," replied Mr. Port, "by refraining from using such a word as 'stuffy' in connection with a gentleman who belongs to one of the oldest and best families in Philadelphia, and who, moreover, is one of my most esteemed friends."

"But he *is* stuffy, Uncle Hutchinson. He never talks about anything but who peoples' grandfathers and grandmothers were; and *Watson's Annals* seems to be the only book that he ever has heard of. Indeed, I do truly think that he is the very stuffiest and stupidest old gentleman that I ever have known."

Mr. Port made no reply to this sally, for his feelings were such that he deemed it best not to give expression to them in words; but he was not unnaturally surprised, after such a declaration of sentiments on the part of his niece, when she begged to be excused on the ensuing afternoon from her regular drive to the Point, on the ground that she had promised to make an expedition to the Rocks in Mr. Brown's company. Had an opportunity been given him Mr. Port would have asked for an explanation of this phenomenon; but the carriage was in waiting that was to convey his ward and her extraordinary companion to the end of the road at Indian Rock—a slight rheumatic tendency, that he declared was hereditary, rendering it advisable for Mr. Brown to reduce the use of his legs to a minimum—and before Mr. Port could rally his forces they had entered it and had driven away.



"And before Mr. Port could rally his forces they had entered the carriage and had driven away."

In the evening Mr. Port found another surprise awaiting him. Miss Lee presently retired from the veranda for the avowed purpose of searching for a missing fan, thus leaving the two gentlemen together.

"'What a charming girl your niece is, Port!' said Mr. Brown."

"What a charming girl your niece is, Port!" said Mr. Brown, as the fluttering train of Dorothy's dress disappeared through the door-way.

Mr. Port evidently considered that this possibly debatable statement was sufficiently answered by a grunt, for that was all the answer he gave it.

Not permitting his enthusiasm to be checked by this chillingly dubious response, Mr. Brown continued:

"She certainly is one of the most charming girls I have met in a long time, Port. She is not a bit like the average of young girls nowadays. I rarely have known a young person of either sex to be so genuinely interested in genealogy, especially in Philadelphia genealogy; and I must say that her liking for antiquarian matters generally is very remarkable. I envy you, I really envy you, old boy, the blessing of that sweet young creature's constant companionship."

"Umph—do you?" was Mr. Port's concise and rather discouraging reply.

"Indeed I do"—Mr. Brown was too warm to notice the cynical tone of his friend's rejoinder—"and I have been thinking, Port, that we are a pair of selfish old wretches to monopolize every evening in the way that we have been doing this bright young flower. It is a shame for us to keep her in our stupid company—though she tells me that she finds our talk about old people and old times exceedingly interesting—instead of letting her have a little of the young society and a little of the excitement and pleasure of watering-place life. Now, how would it do for us to take her down to the Casino to-night? There is to be a hop to-night, she says; at least, that is to say"—Mr. Brown became somewhat confused—"I heard somewhere that there is to be a hop tonight, and while that sort of thing is pretty stupid for you and me, it isn't a bit stupid for a young and pretty girl like her. So suppose we take her, old man?"

As this amazing proposition was advanced by his elderly friend, Mr. Port's anger and astonishment were aroused together; and his rude rejoinder to it was: "Have you gone crazy, Brown, or has Dorothy been making a fool of you? Has she asked you to ask me to take her to the Casino hop? She knows there is no use in talking to me about it any longer."

"No, certainly not—at least—that is to say—well, no, not exactly," replied Mr. Brown, beginning his sentence with an asperity and positiveness that somehow did not hold out to its end. "She did say to me, I confess, how fond she was of dancing, and how she had refrained from saying much about it to you"—Mr. Port here interpolated a sceptical snort—"because she knew that taking her to the Casino would only bore you. And I do think, Port, that keeping her here with us all the time is grossly selfish; and if you don't want to take her to the hop I hope you'll let her go with me. But what we'd better do, old man, is to take her together—then we can talk to each other just as well, at least nearly as well, as we can here, and we can have the comfort of knowing that she is enjoying herself too. Come, Hutch; we're getting old and rusty, you and I, but let us try at least to keep from degenerating into a pair of selfish old brutes with no care for anybody's comfort but our own."

Mr. Hutchinson Port might have replied with a fair amount of truth that so far as he himself was concerned the degeneration that his friend referred to as desirable to avoid already had taken place. But all of us like most to be credited with the virtues of which we have least, and he therefore accepted as his due Mr. Brown's tribute of implied praise. And the upshot of the matter was that Dorothy, when she returned to the veranda again, was unaffectedly surprised (and considering how carefully she had planned her small campaign she did it very creditably) by discovering that her uncle's edict against the Casino hops had been withdrawn.

VII.

Even Dorothy was disposed to believe that unless some peculiarly favorable combination of circumstances presented itself as a basis for her intelligent manipulation her strong desire for a yacht voyage must remain ungratified; for, now that his liver was decidedly the larger part of him, Mr. Port had a fairly catlike dread of the sea. To be sure, Dorothy's character was a resolute one, and her staying powers were quite remarkable; but in the matter of venturing his bilious body upon the ocean she discovered that her uncle—although now reduced to a fairly satisfactory state of submission in other respects—had a large and powerful will of his own.

Fortune, however, favors the resolute even more decidedly than she favors the brave. This fact Dorothy comprehended thoroughly, and uniformly acted upon. Each time that even a remote possibility of a yacht cruise presented itself she instantly brought her batteries to bear; and, with a nice understanding of her uncle's intellectual peculiarities, she each time treated the matter as though it never before had been discussed.

Therefore it was that when Miss Lee's eyes were gladdened one day—just as she and her uncle were about to begin their lunch on the shady veranda of the Casino—by the sight of a trim schooner yacht sliding down the wind from the direction of Newport, the subject of the cruise was revived with a suddenness and point that Mr. Port found highly disconcerting. The yacht rounded to off the Casino, and the sound of a plunge and a clanking chain floated across the water as her anchor went overboard.

" The yacht rounded to off the casino."

"Oh, isn't she a beauty!" exclaimed Dorothy, with enthusiasm. "Now, Uncle Hutchinson, her owner is coming ashore—they have just brought the gig round to the gangway—and if you don't know him you must get somebody to introduce you to him; and then you must introduce him to me; and then he will ask us to go on a cruise; and of course we will go, and have just the loveliest time in the world. I haven't been on board a yacht for nearly five years (just look at the gig: don't the men pull splendidly?)—not since that nice little Lord Alderhone took poor dear mamma and me up to Norway. We did have such a good time! Poor dear mamma, of course, was desperately sick—she always was horribly sea-sick, you know; but I'm never sea-sick the least bit, and it was perfectly delightful. Look, Uncle Hutchinson, they've made the dock, and now he's coming right up here. What a handsome man he is, and how well he looks in his club uniform! It seems to me I've seen him somewhere. Do you know him, Uncle Hutchinson?"

A serious difficulty under which Mr. Port labored in his dealings with his niece was his inability—due to his Philadelphia habit of mind—to keep up with the exceptionally rapid flow of her ideas. On the present occasion, while he still was engaged in consideration of the irrational proposition that he should court the desperate misery that attends a bilious man at sea by as good as asking to be taken on a yacht voyage, he suddenly found his ideas twisted off into another direction by the reference to his sister's sufferings on a similar occasion in the past; and before he could frame in words the reproof that he was disposed to administer to Dorothy for what he probably would have styled her heartlessness, he found his thoughts shunted to yet another track by a direct question. It is within the bounds of possibility that Miss Lee had arrived at a just estimate of her relative's intellectual peculiarities, and that she even sometimes framed her discourses with a view to taking advantage of them.

The direct question being the simplest section of Dorothy's complex utterance, Mr. Port abandoned his intended remonstrance and reproof and proceeded to answer it. "Yes," he said, "I know him. It's Van Rensselaer Livingstone. His cousin, Van Ruy-ter Livingstone, married your cousin Grace—Grace Winthrop, you know. He's a great scamp—this one, I mean; gambles, and that sort of thing, I'm told, and drinks, and—and various things. I shall have to speak to him if he sees me, I suppose; but of course I shall not introduce him to you."

"Mr. Van Rensselaer Livingstone! Why so it is! How perfectly delightful! I know him very well, Uncle Hutchinson. He was in Nice the last winter we were there; and he broke the bank at Monaco; and he played that perfectly absurd trick on little Prince Sporetti: cut off his little black mustache when Prince Sporetti was—was not exactly sober, you know, and gummed on a great red mustache instead of it; and then, before the prince was quite himself again, took him to Lady Orrasby's ball. All Nice was in a perfect roar over it. And they had a duel afterwards, and Mr. Livingstone—he is a wonderful shot—instead of hurting the little prince, just shot away the tip of his left ear as nicely as possible. Oh, he is a delightful man—and here he comes." And Dorothy, half rising from her chair, and paying no more attention to Mr. Port's kicks under the table than she did to his smothered verbal remonstrances, extended her well-shaped white hand in the most cordial manner,

and in the most cordial tone exclaimed:

"Won't you speak to me in English, Mr. Livingstone? We talked French, I think it was, the last time we met. And how is your friend Prince Sporetti? Has his ear grown out again? You know my uncle, I think? Mr. Hutchinson Port."

Livingstone took the proffered hand with even more cordiality than it was given, and then extended his own to Mr. Port—who seemed much less inclined to shake it than to bite it.

"I think that we are justified in regarding ourselves as relations now, Miss Lee, since our cousins have married each other, you know. Quite a romance, wasn't it? And how very jolly it is to meet you here—when I thought that you certainly were in Switzerland or Norway, or even over in that new place that people are going to in Roumania! I flatter myself that I always have rather a knack of falling on my feet, but, by Jove, I'm doing it more than usual this morning!"

Miss Lee seemed to be entirely unaware of the fact that her uncle was looking like an animated thunder-cloud. "It is just like a bit out of a delightful novel," was her encouraging response. "A long, low, black schooner suddenly coming in from the seaward and anchoring close off shore, and the hero landing in a little boat just in time to slay the villain and rescue the beautiful bride. Of course I'm the beautiful bride, but my uncle is not a villain, but the very best of guardians—by-the-way, I don't think that you know that poor dear mamma is dead, Mr. Livingstone? Yes, she died only a week or two after you left us. So you see you must be very nice to the villain—and you can begin your kind treatment of him by having lunch with him and with me too. Uncle Hutchinson was *so* pleased when he saw you come ashore. He said that we certainly must capture you, and he sent a man to bring some hot soup for you at once—here it is now." And so it was, for Dorothy herself very thoughtfully had given the order that she now modestly attributed to her uncle.

And so in less than ten minutes from the moment when Mr. Port had informed Dorothy that Van Rensselaer Livingstone was a very objectionable person whom he desired to avoid, and whose introduction to her was not even to be thought of, they all three were lunching together in what to the casual observer seemed to be the most amicable manner possible.

VIII.

"I've run over to look up Mrs. Rattleton," said Livingstone, as he discussed with evident relish the *filet* that Mr. Port charitably hoped would choke him. "Very likely you haven't met her, for she's only just got here. But you'll like her, I know, for she's ever so jolly. She's promised to play propriety for me in a party that we want to make up aboard the yacht. The squadron won't get down from New York for a week yet, and I've come up ahead of it so that we can have a cruise to the Shoals and back before the races. Of course, Miss Lee, you won't fly in the face of Fate, after this providential meeting, by refusing to join our party; at least if you do you will make me wretched to the end of my days. And we will try to make you comfortable on board, sir," he added, politely, turning to Mr. Port. "I have a tolerably fair cook, and ice isn't the only thing in the ice-chest, I assure you."

"How very kind you are, Mr. Livingstone," Dorothy hastened to say, in order to head off her uncle's inevitable refusal. "Of course we will go, with the greatest possible pleasure. It is very odd how things fall out sometimes. Now only this morning I was begging Uncle Hutchinson to take me off yachting, and he was saying how much he enjoyed being at sea, and how he really thought that if it wasn't for his age—wasn't it absurd of him to talk about his age? He is not old at all, the dear!—he would have a yacht of his own. And almost before the words are fairly out of our mouths here you drop from the clouds, or are cast up by the sea, it's all the same thing, and give us both just what we have been longing for. At least, Uncle Hutchinson pretended to be longing for it only in case he could be young enough to enjoy it; but if he doesn't think he's young now, I'd like to know what he'll call himself when he's fifty!" And then, facing around sharply upon her uncle, Dorothy concluded: "The idea of pretending that *you* are too old to go yachting! Really, Uncle Hutchinson, I am ashamed of you!"

As has been intimated, if there was any one subject upon which Mr. Port was especially sensitive, it was the subject of his age. As the parish register of St. Peter's all too plainly proved, he never would see sixty again; but this awkward record was in an out-of-the-way place, and the agreeable fiction that he advanced in various indirect ways to the effect that he was a trifle turned of forty-seven was not likely to be officially contradicted. And it is not impossible, so tenacious was he upon this point, that had the official proof been produced, he would have denied its authenticity. For it was Mr. Port's firm determination still to figure before the world as a youngish, middle-aged man.

To say that Miss Lee deliberately set herself to playing upon this weakness of her guardian's, possibly, remotely possibly, would be doing her injustice. But the fact is obvious that she succeeded by her cleverly turned discourse in landing her esteemed relative fairly between the horns of an exceedingly awkward dilemma: either Mr. Port must accept the invitation and be horribly ill, or he must reject it, and so throw over his pretensions to elderly youth.

For a moment the unhappy gentleman hung in the wind, and Dorothy regretted that she had not made her statement of the case still stronger. Indeed, she was about to supplement it by a remark to the effect that people never thought of giving up yachting until they were turned of sixty, when, to her relief, her uncle slowly filled away on the right tack. His acceptance was expressed in highly ungracious terms; but, as has been said, Dorothy never troubled herself about forms, provided she compassed results. The moment that he had uttered the fatal words, Mr. Port fell to cursing himself in his own mind for being such a fool; but the same reason that had impelled him to give his consent withheld him from retracting it. He knew that he was going to be desperately miserable; but, at least, nobody could say that he was old.

“I’m ever so much obliged to you, Miss Lee, and to you too, Mr. Port,” said Livingstone. “And now, if you’ll excuse me, I’ll go and hunt up Mrs. Rattle-ton, and tell her what a splendid raise I’ve made, and help her organize the rest of the party. We shall have only two more. It’s a bore to have more than six people on board a yacht. I don’t know why it is, I’m sure, but if you have more than six they always get to fighting. Queer, isn’t it?”

“I beg your pardon,” said Mr. Port. “Mrs. Rattleton? May I ask if this is the Mrs. Rattleton from New York who was here last season, the one whose bathing costume was so—so very eccentric, and about whom there was so much very disagreeable talk?”

“Mrs. Rattleton *is* from New York, and she *was* here last season,” Livingstone answered. “But I can’t say that I remember anything eccentric in her bathing costume, except that it was exceedingly becoming; and I certainly never heard any disagreeable talk about her. There may have been such talk about her, but perhaps it was thought just as well not to have it in my presence. Mrs. Rattleton is my cousin, Mr. Port—she was a Van Twiller, you know. Do you happen to remember any of the things that were said about her, and who said them?” Livingstone spoke with extreme courtesy; but there was something in his tone that caused Mr. Port suddenly to think of the tip of Prince Sporetti’s left ear, and that led him to reply hurriedly, and by no means lucidly:

“Certainly—no—yes—that is to say, I can’t exactly remember anything in particular. I’m sure I was led to believe from what was said that she was a very charming woman. No, I don’t remember at all.”

“Ah, perhaps it is just as well,” Livingstone replied, gravely. “But how lucky!” he added; “there she is now. Everybody is at the Casino about this time of day, I fancy. May I bring her over and present her to you, Miss Lee?”

“Of course you may, Mr. Livingstone. I shall be delighted to meet her. And if she is to matronize me, the sooner that I begin to get accustomed to her severities the better.”

And then Mr. Hutchinson Port suffered a fresh pang of misery when the presentation was accomplished and he was forced to say approximately pleasant things to a lady whose decidedly ballet-like attire in the surf—or, to be precise, on the beach above high-water-mark, where, for some occult reason, she usually saw fit to do the most of her bathing—joined to the exceeding celerity of her conduct generally, had marked her during the preceding season as the conspicuous centre of one phase of life at the Pier. Nor was Mr. Port’s lot made happier as he listened to the brisk discussion that ensued in regard to the organization of the yachting party, and found that its two remaining members were to be drawn, as was only natural, from the eminently meteoric set to which Mrs. Rattleton belonged.

Had time been given Mr. Port for consideration it is probable that he would have collected his mental forces sufficiently to have enabled him to lodge a remonstrance; he might even—though this is doubtful, for Dorothy’s voting power was vigorous—have accomplished a veto. But projects in which Mrs. Rattleton was concerned never went slowly; and in the present case the necessity for getting back in time for the races really compelled haste. And so it came to pass that not until the *Fleetwings* was off the Brenton’s Reef light-ship, with her nose pointed well up into the north-east, was there framed in Mr. Port’s slow-moving mind a suitable line of argument upon which to base a peremptory refusal to go upon the expedition—and by that time he was so excruciatingly ill in his own cabin that coherent utterance and converse with his kind were alike impossible.

So far as Mr. Port was concerned the ensuing six days made up an epoch in his life that can only be described as an agonized blank. And when—as it seemed to him many ages later—the *Fleetwings* once more cast anchor off Narragansett Pier, and he stepped shakily from the schooner’s gig to the Casino dock, the usual plumpness and ruddiness of his face had given place to a yellow leanness, and his weight had been reduced by very nearly twenty pounds. The cruise had been a flying one, or he never would have finished it. After the first six hours he would have landed on a desert island cheerfully—and it is not impossible that a hint from Dorothy as to her uncle’s probable movements should a harbor be made had induced Livingstone to give the land a wide berth.

Dorothy came ashore blooming. “You don’t know, Uncle Hutchinson,” she said, “what a perfectly lovely time I’ve had”—and this cheerful assertion was the literal truth, for Mr. Port had entered his cabin before the yacht had crossed the line between Beaver Tail and Point Judith, and had not emerged from it until the anchor went overboard. “And you don’t know,” Miss Lee went on with effusion, “how grateful your angel is to you for helping her to have such a delightful cruise. I’m sorry that you haven’t been very well, Uncle Hutchinson; but I know that you will be all the better for it. Poor dear mamma, you know, was bilious too, and going to sea always made her wretched; but she used to be wonderfully well always when she got on shore again. And you’ll be wonderfully well too, you dear; and that will be your reward for helping your angel to have such a perfectly delightful time.”

Mr. Port made no reply to this address, for his condition of collapse was too complete to permit him to give form in words to the thoughts of rage and resentment which were burning in the depths of his injured soul. Without a word to one single member of the party, he climbed heavily into a carriage and was driven directly to his hotel—while Dorothy, still under the chaperonage of Mrs. Rattleton, gayly joined the pleasant little lunch-party at the Casino with which the yacht voyage came to an end.

IX.

During the ensuing week, a considerable portion of which Mr. Port passed in the privacy of his own room, the relations between Miss Lee and her guardian were characterized by a chill formality that was ominous of a coming storm. In point of fact, Mr. Port was waiting only until he should fully regain his strength in order to

try conclusions with Dorothy once and for all—and he was most highly resolved that in the impending battle royal he should not suffer defeat. So far, he had gone down in each encounter with his spirited antagonist because the tactics employed against him were of an unfamiliar sort. But he was beginning to get the hang of these tactics now; and he also had got what in fighting parlance would have been styled his second wind. As he thought of the wrongs which had been heaped upon him, rage filled his breast; and the strong determination slowly shaped itself within him that to the finesse of the enemy he would oppose a solid front of brute force.

Astuteness was not the least marked of Miss Lee's many charming characteristics, and although her guardian gave no outward sign of his belligerent intentions, she felt an inward conviction that a decisive trial of strength between them was at hand. Five or six years earlier she had engaged in a trial of this nature with her mother, and had emerged from it victorious. In that case, feminine weakness had yielded to feminine strength. But now the gloomy thought assailed her that her uncle, while closely resembling her mother in the matter of his liver, had in the depths of his torpid nature a substratum of brutal masculine resolution against which, should it fairly be set in array, she might battle in vain. And the upshot of her meditations was the conviction that her only chance of success lay in avoiding a battle by a radical change of base.

An easy way, as she perceived, to effect such a change of base was to marry Van Rensselaer Livingstone. Indeed, his proposal, a couple of days after the yacht voyage ended, came so opportunely that she almost was surprised into accepting it out of hand. But Dorothy was too well balanced a young person to do anything hastily, even to get herself out of a tight place; and while she held Livingstone's proposal under advisement—as a line of retreat kept open for use in case of urgent necessity—she welcomed it less for the possibilities of a safer position that it offered than for those which it suggested to her fertile mind.

Marriage, she decided, was the only way by which she could score a final victory over her uncle, and at the same time spike his guns; but it did not necessarily follow that her marriage must be with Livingstone. Indeed, as her coolly intelligent mind perceived, marrying an unmanageable young man in order to be free of an unmanageable old one would be simply walking out of the frying-pan into the fire—and that was not at all the resolution of her difficulties that Dorothy sought. The plan that now began to shape itself in her mind was one by which both fire and frying-pan would be successfully avoided; and as the more that she examined into it the more desirable it appeared to her, she lost no time in carrying it into effect—whereby, in less than three days' time, she sent Mr. Van Rensselaer Livingstone away in such a rage that he put to sea in the very face of a threatening north-easter, and in a much shorter period she caused her uncle seriously to doubt the evidence of his own senses.

At the end of his week of retirement, Mr. Port found himself in the hale condition of a bilious giant refreshed with blue-pills. He looked a little thinner than when he had started upon his ill-starred cruise, and his usual ruddiness was not as yet fully restored; but he was in capital condition, and a good deal more than ready for Miss Lee to come on. He could not very well, in the nature of the case, start an offensive campaign; but at the very first suggestion on Dorothy's part of the slightest desire to engage again in any of the various forms of frivolous amusement by which she had made his life a burden to him, he was all loaded and primed to go off with a bang that he believed would settle her.

And, such is the perversity of human nature, Mr. Port presently became not a little annoyed by Dorothy's failure to supply the spark that was to touch him off. In fact, her conduct was bewilderingly strange. She drew away from the lively circle of which Mrs. Rattleton was the animated centre and voluntarily associated herself with the elderly and very respectable Philadelphians whoso acquaintance she previously had so emphatically declined. Still further to Mr. Port's astonishment, the lady and gentleman especially singled out by Miss Lee as most in accord with her newly-acquired tastes were the severe Mrs. Logan Rittenhouse and that lady's staid brother, Mr. Pennington Brown.

"The severe Mrs. Logan Rittenhouse."

At the feet of the former, quite literally, she sat as a disciple in crochet; and listened the while with every outward sign of interest to the dull record of South Fourth Street scandals of the past and West Walnut Street scandals of the present which this estimable matron poured into her ears by the hour at a time. And in a quiet corner of the veranda (Mr. Brown's eyesight having failed a little, so that he found reading rather difficult) she read aloud to the latter from *Watson's Annals*; and listened with a pleased satisfaction to his comments upon her selections from this, the Philadelphia Bible, and to the numerous anecdotes of a genealogical and antiquarian cast which thus were recalled to his mind. Possibly the readings from *Watson* were continued in the afternoons—when Miss Lee and Mr. Brown regularly went down to the Rocks. So extraordinary was all this that Mr. Port admitted frankly to himself that he could make neither head nor tail of it; but he had an inborn conviction that such an unnatural state of affairs was not likely to last There was good Scriptural authority, he called to mind grimly, for the assertion that the leopard did not change his spots nor the Ethiopian his skin.

X.

In accordance with the substantial customs of his fellow-citizens, Mr. Port always returned to Philadelphia sharp on the 1st of September—calmly ignoring the heat and the mosquitoes, which are the dominant characteristics of Philadelphia during that month, and resting secure in the knowledge that the course which he pursued was that which his father and his grandfather had pursued before him. It was on the eve of his departure from Narragansett that his doubts and perplexities occasioned by Dorothy's surprising conduct

were resolved.

Being seated in a snug corner of the veranda in company with Mr. Pennington Brown, Mr. Port was smoking a comforting cigar. Mr. Brown, who also was smoking, did not seem to find his cigar comforting. He smoked it in so fitful a fashion that it repeatedly went out; and his nervousness seemed to be increased each time that he lighted it. Further, his comment upon Mr. Port's discourse—which was a more than ordinarily thoughtful and accurate weighing of the relative merits of thin and thick soups—obviously were delivered quite at random. At first Mr. Port was disposed to resent this inattention to his soulful utterances; but as the subject was one in which, as he well knew, his friend was profoundly interested, he presently became uneasy.

"What's the matter, Brown?" he asked, in a tone of kindly concern. "Is your rheumatism bothering you? I've been afraid that your absurd sitting around on rocks with my niece would bring it on again. You're not as young as you once were, Pen, and you've got to take care of yourself."

"I am not aware, Port," Mr. Brown answered rather stiffly, "that I am as yet conspicuously superannuated. Indeed, I never felt younger in my life than I have felt during the past fortnight. I *have* a little touch of rheumatism to-night," he added, frankly, and at the same time gave unintentional emphasis to his admission by catching his breath and almost groaning as he slightly moved his legs, "but it has nothing to do with sitting on the rocks with Dor—with your charming niece. You forget that my rheumatism is hereditary, Port. Why, I had an attack of it when I was only five-and-twenty."

"All the same, you wouldn't have it now if you had spent your afternoons sensibly with me here on a dry veranda, or properly wrapped up in a dry carriage, instead of on damp rocks, with that baggage. What on earth has got into you I can't imagine. If you were twenty years younger, Brown, I should think, yes, positively, I should think that you were in love with her."

"Port," said Mr. Brown, with a tone of resentment in his voice, "I shall be very much obliged if you will not use such language when you are speaking of Miss Lee. She is the best and kindest and noblest woman I ever have met. You have most cruelly misunderstood her. Had you given her half a chance she would have been to you only a source of constant joy."

Mr. Port replied to this emphatic assertion by a low, but most pointedly incredulous, whistle.

"You have not the slightest conception, as such a comment shows," Mr. Brown continued, with increasing asperity, "of the depths of sweetness and tenderness which are in her nature; of her perfect unselfishness; of the gentleness and trustfulness of her heart. She is all that a woman can be, and more. She is—she is an angel!" Mr. Brown's elderly voice trembled as he made this avowal.

As for Mr. Port, his astonishment was almost too deep for words. But he managed to say: "Yes, I suppose she is—at least she has said so often enough herself."

For some seconds there was silence; and then, with a deprecating manner and in a voice from which all trace of resentment had disappeared, Mr. Brown resumed: "Hutch, old man, you and I have been friends these many years together, and you won't fail me in your friendship now, will you? You are right, I *am* in love with this sweet young creature, and she—think of it, Hutch!—she has admitted that she is in love with me; not romantically in love, for that would be, not absurd, of course, but a little unreasonable—for while I'm not at all old, yet I know, of course, that I am not exactly what can be called young—but in love sensibly and rationally. She wants to take care of me, she says, the dear child!" (Mr. Port grunted.) "And she has such clever notions in regard to my health. When we are married—how strange and how delightful it sounds, Hutch!—she says that we will go immediately to Carlsbad, where the waters will do my rheumatism a world of good; and from there, when I am better, we will go on to Vienna, where the dry climate and the white wines, she thinks, still further will benefit me; and from Vienna, in order to set me on my feet completely, we are to go on to the North and spend a winter in Russia—for there is nothing that cures rheumatism so quickly and so thoroughly, she says (though I never should have imagined it) as steady and long-continued cold. Just think of her planning it all out for me so well!

"Yes, Hutch, I love her with all my heart; and what has made me so nervous to-night is the great happiness that has come to me—it only came positively this afternoon—and the dread that perhaps, as her guardian, you know, you might not approve of what we have decided to do. But you do approve, don't you, Hutch? Of course, in a few months she will be her own mistress, and your consent to our marriage, as she very truly says, then will be unnecessary. But even a month seems a desperately long while to wait; and that is the very shortest time, she thinks, in which she could get ready—though the dear child has consented to wait for most of the little things which she wants until we get on the other side." Mr. Port smiled cynically at the announcement of this concession. It struck him that when Dorothy was turned loose among the Paris shops, backed by the capacious purse of a doting elderly husband, she would mow a rather startlingly broad swath. "So you won't oppose our marriage, will you, old man? You will consent to my having this dear young creature for my wife?"

Various emotions found place in Mr. Port's breast as he listened to this extraordinary declaration and appeal. At first he felt a lively anger at Dorothy for having, as he coarsely phrased it in his own mind, so successfully gammoned Mr. Pennington Brown; to this succeeded an involuntary admiration of the clever way in which she had managed it; and then a feeling of profound satisfaction possessed him as there came into his slow-moving mind a realizing sense of his own deliverance. But Mr. Port was not so utterly selfish but that, in the midst of the sunrise of happiness which dawned upon him with the opening of a way by which he decently could get rid of Dorothy, he was assailed by certain qualms of conscience as to the unfairness of thus casting upon his old friend the burden that he had found so hard to bear. For the heaviness of Mr. Port's mental processes prevented him from perceiving, as a shrewder person would have perceived, that Dorothy was not the sort of young woman to engage in an enterprise of this nature without first fully counting the cost. Had he been keener of penetration he would have known that she could be trusted, when safely landed in the high estate of matrimony, to play on skilfully the game that she had so skilfully begun; that in her own interest she would manage matters in such a way as never to arouse in the mind of her elderly husband the awkward suspicion that the scheme of life arranged by his angel apparently with a view solely to his own comfort really was arranged only for the comfort of her angelic self.

It was while Mr. Port wavered among his qualms of conscience, hesitating between his great longing to chuck Dorothy overboard, and so have done with her, and his sense of duty to Mr. Pennington Brown, that the subject of his perplexities herself appeared upon the scene; and her arrival at so critical a juncture seemed to suggest as a remote possibility that she had been all the while snuffing this particular battle from not very far off.

"Dear Uncle Hutchinson," said Miss Lee, with affectionate fervor, "do you think that your angel is most cruel and horrid because she is willing to go off in this way after her own selfish happiness and leave you all alone? But she won't do it, dear, if you would rather have her stay. Her only wish, you know, has been to make you comfortable and happy; and you have been so good and so kind to her that she is ready to sacrifice even her love for your sake. Yes, if you would rather keep her to yourself she will stay. Only if she does stay," and there was a warning tone of deep meaning in Miss Lee's well-modulated voice, "her heart, of course, will be broken, and she will have to ask you to travel" with her for two or three years into out-of-the-way parts of the world (Mr. Port shuddered) "until her poor broken heart gets well. Not that it ever will get quite well again, you know; but she will be brave, and try to pretend for your sake that it has. So it shall be just as you say, dear; only for Pennington's sake, who loves me so much, Uncle Hutchinson, I hope that perhaps you may be willing to let me go."

And having concluded this moving address, Miss Lee extended one of her well-shaped hands to Mr. Pennington Brown—who grasped it warmly, for he was deeply moved by so edifying an exhibition of affectionate and dutiful unselfishness—and with the other applied her handkerchief delicately to her eyes.

Mr. Port was not in the least moved by Dorothy's professions of self-sacrifice; but he was most seriously alarmed by her threat—that opened before him a dismal vista of bilious misery—to cart him for several years about the world on the pretext of a broken heart that required travel for its mending.

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constant fighting and constant travel there is not much choice; for Mr. Port knew from experience how acute is that form of biliousness which results from rage. After all, self-preservation is the first law of nature; and under the stress thus put upon

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surprising that Mr. Port's qualms of conscience incident to his failure to do his duty to his neighbor vanished to the winds.

Mr. Pennington Brown still held Dorothy's hand in his own. "Will you make this great sacrifice, Hutch, for your old friend?" he asked.

Mr. Port hesitated a little, for he felt a good deal like a criminal who is shifting his crime upon an innocent man; and then he answered, rather weakly both in tones and terms: "Why, of course."

"Dear Uncle Hutchinson, how good you are!" exclaimed Miss Lee. "And you really think that you can spare your angel, then?"

And both promptly and firmly Mr. Port answered: "Yes, I really think that I can."

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